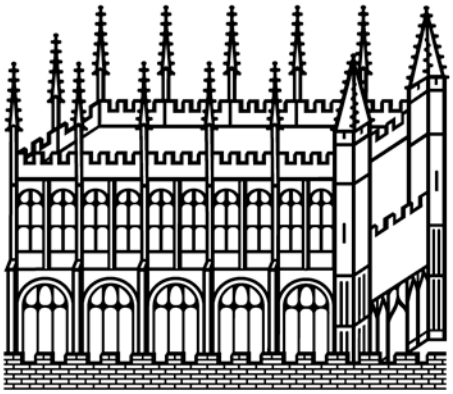

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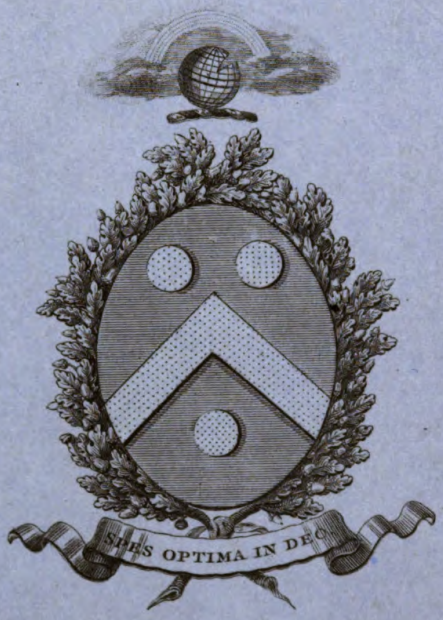
Hope essays 1794



John Thomas Hope.

THE

PLAIN SPEAKER:

OPINIONS

ON

BOOKS, MEN, AND THINGS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO SUCCESS IN LIFE.

ESSAY I.

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO SUCCESS IN LIFE.

It is curious to consider the diversity of men's talents, and the causes of their failure or success, which are not less numerous and contradictory than their pursuits in life. Fortune does not always smile on merit:—"the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:" and even where the candidate for wealth or honours succeeds, it is as often, perhaps, from the qualifications which he wants as from those which he possesses; or the eminence which he is lucky enough to attain, is owing to some faculty or acquirement, which neither he nor any body else suspected. There is a balance of power in the human mind, by which defects frequently assist in furthering our views, as superfluous excellences are converted into the nature of impediments; and again, there is a continual substitution of one talent for another, through which we mistake the appearance for the reality, and judge (by implication) of the means from the

end. So a Minister of State wields the House of Commons by his *manner* alone; while his friends and his foes are equally at a loss to account for his influence, looking for it in vain in the matter or style of his speeches. So the air with which a celebrated barrister waved a white cambrick handkerchief passed for eloquence. So the buffoon is taken for a wit. To be thought wise, it is for the most part only necessary to seem so; and the noisy demagogue is easily translated, by the popular voice, into the orator and patriot. Qualities take their colour from those that are next them, as the cameleon borrows its hue from the nearest object; and unable otherwise to grasp the phantom of our choice or our ambition, we do well to lay violent hands on something else within our reach, which bears a general resemblance to it; and the impression of which, in proportion as the thing itself is cheap and worthless, is likely to be gross, obvious, striking, and effectual. The way to secure success, is to be more anxious about obtaining than about deserving it; the surest hindrance to it is to have too high a standard of refinement in our own minds, or too high an opinion of the discernment of the public. He who is determined not to be satisfied with any thing short of perfection, will

never do any thing at all, either to please himself or others. The question is not what we ought to do, but what we *can* do for the best. An excess of modesty is in fact an excess of pride, and more hurtful to the individual, and less advantageous to society, than the grossest and most unblushing vanity—

> Aspiring to be Gods, if angels fell,
> Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.

If a celebrated artist in our own day had staid to do justice to his principal figure in a generally admired painting, before he had exhibited it, it would never have seen the light. He has passed on to other things more within his power to accomplish, and more within the competence of the spectators to understand. They see what he has done, which is a great deal—they could not have judged of, or given him credit for the *ineffable idea* in his own mind, which he might vainly have devoted his whole life in endeavouring to embody. The picture, as it is, is good enough for the age and for the public. If it had been ten times better, its merits would have been thrown away: if it had been ten times better in the more refined and lofty conception of character and sentiment, and had failed in the more palpable appeal to the senses and pre-

judices of the vulgar, in the usual "appliances and means to boot," it would never have done. The work might have been praised by a few, a very few, and the artist himself have pined in penury and neglect.—Mr. Wordsworth has given us the *essence* of poetry in his works, without the machinery, the apparatus of poetical diction, the theatrical pomp, the conventional ornaments; and we see what he has made of it. The way to fame, through merit alone, is the narrowest, the steepest, the longest, the hardest of all others—(that it is the most certain and lasting, is even a doubt)—the most sterling reputation is, after all, but a species of imposture. As for ordinary cases of success and failure, they depend on the slightest shades of character or turn of accident—"some trick not worth an egg"—

> There 's but the twinkling of a star
> Betwixt a man of peace and war;
> A thief and justice, fool and knave,
> A huffing officer and a slave;
> A crafty lawyer and pick-pocket,
> A great philosopher and a blockhead;
> A formal preacher and a player,
> A learn'd physician and manslayer.

Men are in numberless instances qualified for certain things, for no other reason than because they are qualified for nothing else. Negative

merit is the passport to negative success. In common life, the narrowness of our ideas and appetites is more favourable to the accomplishment of our designs, by confining our attention and ambition to one single object, than a greater enlargement of comprehension or susceptibility of taste, which (as far as the trammels of custom and routine of business are concerned) only operate as diversions to our ensuring the *main-chance;* and, even in the pursuit of arts and science, a dull plodding fellow will often do better than one of a more mercurial and fiery cast—the mere unconsciousness of his own deficiencies, or of any thing beyond what he himself can do, reconciles him to his mechanical progress, and enables him to perform all that lies in his power with labour and patience. By being content with mediocrity, he advances beyond it; whereas the man of greater taste or genius may be supposed to fling down his pen or pencil in despair, haunted with the idea of unattainable excellence, and ends in being nothing, because he cannot be every thing at once. Those even who have done the greatest things, were not always perhaps the greatest men. To do any given work, a man should not be greater in himself than the work he has to do; the faculties which he has beyond this, will be *facul-*

ties to let, either not used, or used idly and unprofitably, to hinder, not to help. To do any one thing best, there should be an exclusiveness, a concentration, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment to that one object; so that the widest range of knowledge and most diffusive subtlety of intellect will not uniformly produce the most beneficial results;—and the performance is very frequently in the inverse ratio, not only of the pretensions, as we might superficially conclude, but of the real capacity. *A part is greater than the whole:* and this old saying seems to hold true in moral and intellectual questions also —in nearly all that relates to the mind of man, which cannot embrace the whole, but only a part.

I do not think (to give an instance or two of what I mean) that Milton's mind was (so to speak) greater than the Paradise Lost; it was just big enough to fill that mighty mould; the shrine contained the Godhead. Shakespear's genius was, I should say, greater than any thing he has done, because it still soared free and unconfined beyond whatever he undertook—ran over, and could not be "constrained by mastery" of his subject. Goldsmith, in his Retaliation, celebrates Burke as one who was

kept back in his dazzling, wayward career, by the supererogation of his talents—

> Though equal to all things, for all things unfit,
> Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit.

Dr. Johnson, in Boswell's Life, tells us that the only person whose conversation he ever *sought* for improvement was George Psalmanazar: yet who knows any thing of this extraordinary man now, but that he wrote about twenty volumes of the Universal History—invented a Formosan alphabet and vocabulary—being a really learned man, contrived to pass for an impostor, and died no one knows how or where! The well known author of the "Enquiry concerning Political Justice," in conversation has not a word to throw at a dog; all the stores of his understanding or genius he reserves for his books, and he has need of them, otherwise there would be *hiatus in manuscriptis*. He says little, and that little were better left alone, being both dull and nonsensical; his talk is as flat as a pancake, there is no leaven in it, he has not dough enough to make a loaf and a cake; he has no idea of any thing till he is wound up, like a clock, not to speak, but to write, and then he seems like a person risen from sleep or from the dead. The author of the *Diversions*

of Purley, on the other hand, besides being the inventor of the theory of grammar, was a politician, a wit, a master of conversation, and overflowing with an *interminable babble*—that fellow had cut and come again in him, and

> " Tongue with a garnish of brains ;"

but it only served as an excuse to cheat posterity of the definition of a verb, by one of those conversational *ruses de guerre* by which he put off his guests at Wimbledon with some teazing equivoque which he would explain the next time they met—and made him die at last with a nostrum in his mouth! The late Professor Porson was said to be a match for the Member for Old Sarum in argument and raillery :—he was a profound scholar, and had wit at will—yet what did it come to? His jests have evaporated with the marks of the wine on the tavern table; the page of Thucydides or Æschylus, which was stamped on his brain, and which he could read there with equal facility backwards or forwards, is contained, after his death, as it was while he lived, just as well in the volume on the library shelf. The man of perhaps the greatest ability now living is the one who has not only done the least, but who is actually incapable of ever doing any thing worthy of him—unless he had a hundred

hands to write with, and a hundred mouths to utter all that it hath entered into his heart to conceive, and centuries before him to embody the endless volume of his waking dreams. Cloud rolls over cloud; one train of thought suggests and is driven away by another; theory after theory is spun out of the bowels of his brain, not like the spider's web, compact and round, a citadel and a snare, built for mischief and for use; but, like the gossamer, stretched out and entangled without end, clinging to every casual object, flitting in the idle air, and glittering only in the ray of fancy. No subject can come amiss to him, and he is alike attracted and alike indifferent to all—he is not tied down to any one in particular—but floats from one to another, his mind every where finding its level, and feeling no limit but that of thought—now soaring with its head above the stars, now treading with fairy feet among flowers, now winnowing the air with winged words—passing from Duns Scotus to Jacob Behmen, from the Kantean philosophy to a conundrum, and from the Apocalypse to an acrostic—taking in the whole range of poetry, painting, wit, history, politics, metaphysics, criticism, and private scandal—every question giving birth to some new thought, and every thought "discoursed in eloquent

music," that lives only in the ear of fools, or in the report of absent friends. Set him to write a book, and he belies all that has been ever said about him—

> Ten thousand great ideas filled his mind,
> But with the clouds they fled, and left no trace behind.

Now there is ———, who never had an idea in his life, and who therefore has never been prevented by the fastidious refinements of self-knowledge, or the dangerous seductions of the Muse, from succeeding in a number of things which he has attempted, to the utmost extent of his dulness, and contrary to the advice and opinion of all his friends. He has written a book without being able to spell, by dint of asking questions—has painted draperies with great exactness, which have passed for finished portraits—daubs in an unaccountable figure or two, with a back-ground, and on due deliberation calls it history—he is dubbed an Associate after being twenty times black-balled, wins his way to the highest honours of the Academy, through all the gradations of discomfiture and disgrace, and may end in being made a foreign Count! And yet (such is the principle of distributive justice in matters of taste) he is just where he was. We judge of men not by what

they do, but by what they are. *Non ex quovis ligno fit Mercurius.* Having once got an idea of ——, it is impossible that any thing he can do should ever alter it—though he were to paint like Raphael and Michael Angelo, no one in the secret would give him credit for it, and "though he had all knowledge, and could speak with the tongues of angels," yet without genius he would be nothing. The original sin of being what he is, renders his good works and most meritorious efforts null and void. "You cannot gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Nature still prevails over art. You look at ——, as you do at a curious machine, which performs certain puzzling operations, and as your surprise ceases, gradually unfolds other powers which you would little expect—but do what it will, it is but a machine still; the *thing* is without a soul!

Respice finem, is the great rule in all practical pursuits: to attain our journey's end, we should look little to the right or to the left; the knowledge of excellence as often deters and distracts, as it stimulates the mind to exertion; and hence we may see some reason, why the general diffusion of taste and liberal arts is not always accompanied with an increase of individual genius.

As there is a degree of dulness and phlegm, which, in the long run, sometimes succeeds better than the more noble and aspiring impulses of our nature (as the beagle by its sure tracing overtakes the bounding stag), so there is a degree of animal spirits and showy accomplishment, which enables its possessors "to get the start of the majestic world," and bear the palm alone. How often do we see vivacity and impertinence mistaken for wit; fluency for argument; sound for sense; a loud or musical voice for eloquence! Impudence again is an equivalent for courage; and the assumption of merit and the possession of it are too often considered as one and the same thing. On the other hand, simplicity of manner reduces the person who cannot so far forego his native disposition as by any effort to shake it off, to perfect insignificance in the eyes of the vulgar, who, if you do not seem to doubt your own pretensions, will never question them; and on the same principle, if you do not try to palm yourself on them for what you are not, will never be persuaded you can be any thing. Admiration, like mocking, is catching: and the good opinion which gets abroad of us begins at home. If a man is not as much astonished at his own acquirements — as proud of and as delighted

with the bauble, as others would be if put into sudden possession of it, they hold that true desert and he must be strangers to each other: if he entertains an idea beyond his own immediate profession or pursuit, they think very wisely he can know nothing at all: if he does not play off the quack or the coxcomb upon them at every step, they are confident he is a dunce and a fellow of no pretensions. It has been sometimes made a matter of surprise that Mr. Pitt did not talk politics out of the House; or that Mr. Fox conversed like any one else on common subjects; or that Walter Scott is fonder of an old Scotch ditty or antiquarian record, than of listening to the praises of the Author of Waverley. On the contrary, I cannot conceive how any one who feels conscious of certain powers, should always be labouring to convince others of the fact; or how a person, to whom their exercise is as familiar as the breath he draws, should think it worth his while to convince them of what to him must seem so very simple, and at the same time, so very evident. I should not wonder, however, if the author of the Scotch Novels laid an undue stress on the praises of the Monastery. We nurse the ricketty child, and prop up our want of self-confidence by the opinion of friends. A

man (unless he is a fool) is never *vain*, but when he stands in need of the tribute of adulation to strengthen the hollowness of his pretensions; nor *conceited*, but when he can find no one to flatter him, and is obliged secretly to pamper his good opinion of himself, to make up for the want of sympathy in others. A *damned* author has the highest sense of his own merits, and an inexpressible contempt for the judgment of his contemporaries; in the same manner that an actor who is hissed or hooted from the stage, creeps into exquisite favour with himself, in proportion to the blindness and injustice of the public. A prose-writer, who has been severely handled in the Reviews, will try to persuade himself that there is nobody else who can write a word of English: and we have seen a poet of our time, whose works have been much, but not (as he thought) sufficiently admired, undertake formally to prove, that no poet, who deserved the name of one, was ever popular in his life-time, or scarcely after his death!

There is nothing that floats a man sooner into the tide of reputation, or oftener passes current for genius, than what might be called *constitutional talent*. A man without this, whatever may be his worth or real powers, will no more

get on in the world than a leaden Mercury will fly into the air; as any pretender with it, and with no one quality beside to recommend him, will be sure either to blunder upon success, or will set failure at defiance. By constitutional talent I mean, in general, the warmth and vigour given to a man's ideas and pursuits by his bodily *stamina*, by mere physical organization. A weak mind in a sound body is better, or at least more profitable, than a sound mind in a weak and crazy conformation. How many instances might I quote! Let a man have a quick circulation, a good digestion, the bulk, and thews, and sinews of a man, and the alacrity, the unthinking confidence inspired by these; and without an atom, a shadow of the *mens divinior*, he shall strut and swagger and vapour and jostle his way through life, and have the upper-hand of those who are his betters in every thing but health and strength. His jests shall be echoed with loud laughter, because his own lungs begin to crow like chanticleer, before he has uttered them; while a little hectic nervous humourist shall stammer out an admirable conceit that is damned in the doubtful delivery—*vox faucibus hæsit.* — The first shall tell a story as long as his arm, without interruption, while the latter stops short in his

attempts from mere weakness of chest: the one shall be empty and noisy and successful in argument, putting forth the most common-place things "with a confident brow and a throng of words, that come with more than impudent sauciness from him," while the latter shrinks from an observation "too deep for his hearers," into the delicacy and unnoticed retirement of his own mind. The one shall never feel the want of intellectual resources, because he can *back* his opinions with his person; the other shall lose the advantages of mental superiority, seek to anticipate contempt by giving offence, court mortification in despair of popularity, and even in the midst of public and private admiration, extorted slowly by incontrovertible proofs of genius, shall never get rid of the awkward, uneasy sense of personal weakness and insignificance, contracted by early and long-continued habit. What imports the inward to the outward man, when it is the last that is the general and inevitable butt of ridicule or object of admiration?—It has been said that a good face is a letter of recommendation. But the finest face will not carry a man far, unless it is set upon an active body, and a stout pair of shoulders. The countenance is the index of a man's talents and attainments: his figure is the

criterion of his progress through life. We may have seen faces that spoke "a soul as fair —

"Bright as the children of yon azure sheen"—

yet that met with but an indifferent reception in the world — and that being supported by a couple of spindle-shanks and a weak stomach, in fulfilling what was expected of them,

"Fell flat, and shamed their worshippers."

Hence the successes of such persons did not correspond with their deserts. There was a natural contradiction between the physiognomy of their minds and bodies! The phrase, "a good-looking man," means different things in town and country; and artists have a separate standard of beauty from other people. A country-squire is thought good-looking, who is in good condition like his horse: a country-farmer, to take the neighbours' eyes, must seem stall-fed, like the prize-ox; they ask, "how he cuts up in the caul, how he tallows in the kidneys." The *letter-of-recommendation* face, in general, is not one that expresses the finer movements of thought or of the soul, but that makes part of a vigorous and healthy form. It is one in which Cupid and Mars take up their quarters, rather than Saturn or Mercury. It may be objected here that some of the greatest

favourites of fortune have been little men. "A little man, but of high fancy," is Sterne's description of Mr. Hammond Shandy. But then they have been possessed of strong fibres and an iron constitution. The late Mr. West said, that Buonaparte was the best-made man he ever saw in his life. In other cases, the gauntlet of contempt which a puny body and a fiery spirit are forced to run, may determine the possessors to aim at great actions; indignation may make men heroes as well as poets, and thus revenge them on the niggardliness of nature and the prejudices of the world. I remember Mr. Wordsworth's saying, that he thought ingenious poets had been of small and delicate frames, like Pope; but that the greatest (such as Shakespear and Milton) had been healthy, and cast in a larger and handsomer mould. So were Titian, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. This is one of the few observations of Mr. Wordsworth's I recollect worth quoting, and I accordingly set it down as his, because I understand he is tenacious on that point.

In love, in war, in conversation, in business, confidence and resolution are the principal things. Hence the poet's reasoning:

> "For women, born to be controll'd,
> Affect the loud, the vain, the bold."

Nor is this peculiar to them, but runs all through life. It is the opinion we appear to entertain of ourselves, from which (thinking we must be the best judges of our own merits) others accept their idea of us on trust. It is taken for granted that every one pretends to the utmost he can do, and he who pretends to little, is supposed capable of nothing. The humility of our approaches to power or beauty ensures a repulse, and the repulse makes us unwilling to renew the application ; for there is pride as well as humility in this habitual backwardness and reserve. If you do not bully the world, they will be sure to insult over you, because they think they can do it with impunity. They insist upon the arrogant assumption of superiority somewhere, and if you do not prevent them, they will practise it on you. Some one must top the part of Captain in the play. Servility however chimes in, and plays Scrub in the farce. Men patronise the fawning and obsequious, as they submit to the vain and boastful. It is the air of modesty and independence, which will neither be put upon itself, nor put upon others, that they cannot endure — that excites all the indignation they should feel for pompous affectation, and all the contempt they do not show to meanness and duplicity. Our indolence, and perhaps

our envy take part with our cowardice and vanity in all this. The obtrusive claims of empty ostentation, played off like the ring on the finger, fluttering and sparkling in our sight, relieve us from the irksome task of seeking out obscure merit: the scroll of virtues written on the bold front, or triumphing in the laughing eye, save us the trouble of sifting the evidence and deciding for ourselves: besides, our self-love receives a less sensible shock from encountering the mere semblance than the solid substance of worth; folly chuckles to find the blockhead put over the wise man's head, and cunning winks to see the knave, by his own good leave, transformed into a saint.

> "Doubtless, the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated, as to cheat."

In all cases, there seems a sort of compromise, a principle of collusion between imposture and credulity. If you ask what sort of adventurers have swindled tradesmen of their goods, you will find they are all *likely* men, with plausible manners or a handsome equipage, hired on purpose: —if you ask what sort of gallants have robbed women of their hearts, you will find they are those who have jilted hundreds before, from which the willing fair conceives the pro-

ject of fixing the truant to herself — so the bird flutters its idle wings in the jaws of destruction, and the foolish moth rushes into the flame that consumes it! *There is no trusting to appearances,* we are told; but this maxim is of no avail, for men are the eager dupes of them. Life, it has been said, is "the art of being well deceived;" and accordingly, hypocrisy seems to be the great business of mankind. The game of fortune is, for the most part, set up with counters; so that he who will not cut in because he has no gold in his pocket, must sit out above half his time, and lose his chance of sweeping the tables. Delicacy is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, considered as rusticity; and sincerity of purpose is the greatest affront that can be offered to society. To insist on simple truth, is to disqualify yourself for place or patronage— the less you deserve, the more merit in their encouraging you; and he who, in the struggle for distinction, trusts to realities and not to appearances, will in the end find himself the object of universal hatred and scorn. A man who thinks to gain and keep the public ear by the force of style, will find it very up-hill work; if you wish to pass for a great author, you ought not to look as if you were ignorant that you had ever written a sentence or discovered a

single truth. If you keep your own secret, be assured the world will keep it for you. A writer, whom I know very well, cannot gain an admission to Drury-lane Theatre, because he does not lounge into the lobbies, or sup at the Shakespear — nay, the same person having written upwards of sixty columns of original matter on politics, criticism, belles-lettres, and *virtù* in a respectable Morning Paper, in a single half-year, was, at the end of that period, on applying for a renewal of his engagement, told by the Editor "he might give in a specimen of what he could do!" One would think sixty columns of the Morning Chronicle were a sufficient specimen of what a man could do. But while this person was thinking of his next answer to Vetus, or his account of Mr. Kean's performance of Hamlet, he had neglected "to point the toe," to hold up his head higher than usual (having acquired a habit of poring over books when young), and to get a new velvet collar to an old-fashioned great coat. These are "the graceful ornaments to the columns of a newspaper — the Corinthian capitals of a polished style!" This unprofitable servant of the press found no difference in himself before or after he became known to the readers of the Morning Chronicle, and it accordingly made no difference in his appearance

or pretensions. "Don't you remember," says Gray, in one of his letters, "Lord C—— and Lord M—— who are now great statesmen, little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my own part, I don't feel myself a bit taller, or older, or wiser, than I did then." It is no wonder that a poet, who thought in this manner of himself, was hunted from college to college,—has left us so few precious specimens of his fine powers, and shrunk from his reputation into a silent grave!

"I never knew a man of genius a coxcomb in dress," said a man of genius and a sloven in dress. I *do* know a man of genius who is a coxcomb in his dress, and in every thing else. But let that pass.

"C'est un mauvais métier que celui de médire."

I also know an artist who has at least the ambition and the boldness of genius, who has been reproached with being a coxcomb, and with affecting singularity in his dress and demeanour. If he is a coxcomb that way, he is not so in himself, but a rattling hair-brained fellow, with a great deal of unconstrained gaiety, and impetuous (not to say turbulent) life of mind! Happy it is when a man's exuberance of self-love flies off to the circumference of a broad-

brimmed hat, descends to the toes of his shoes, or carries itself off with the peculiarity of his gait, or even vents itself in a little professional quackery ; — and when he seems to think sometimes of you, sometimes of himself, and sometimes of others, and you do not feel it necessary to pay to him all the finical devotion, or to submit to be treated with the scornful neglect of a proud beauty, or some Prince Prettyman. It is well to be something besides the coxcomb, for our own sake as well as that of others ; but to be born wholly without this faculty or gift of Providence, a man had better have had a stone tied about his neck, and been cast into the sea.

In general, the consciousness of internal power leads rather to a disregard of, than a studied attention to external appearance. The wear and tear of the mind does not improve the sleekness of the skin, or the elasticity of the muscles. The burthen of thought weighs down the body like a porter's burthen. A man cannot stand so upright or move so briskly under it as if he had nothing to carry in his head or on his shoulders. The rose on the cheek and the canker at the heart do not flourish at the same time ; and he who has much to think of, must take many things to heart ; for thought and feeling are one. He who can truly say, *Nihil*

humani a me alienum puto, has a world of cares on his hands, which nobody knows any thing of but himself. This is not one of the least miseries of a studious life. The common herd do not by any means give him full credit for his gratuitous sympathy with their concerns; but are struck with his lack-lustre eye and wasted appearance. They cannot translate the expression of his countenance out of the vulgate; they mistake the knitting of his brows for the frown of displeasure, the paleness of study for the languor of sickness, the furrows of thought for the regular approaches of old age. They read his looks, not his books; have no clue to penetrate the last recesses of the mind, and attribute the height of abstraction to more than an ordinary share of stupidity. "Mr. —— never seems to take the slightest interest in any thing," is a remark I have often heard made in a whisper. People do not like your philosopher at all, for he does not look, say, or think as they do; and they respect him still less. The majority go by personal appearances, not by proofs of intellectual power; and they are quite right in this, for they are better judges of the one than of the other. There is a large party who undervalue Mr. Kean's acting, (and very properly, as far as they are concerned,) for they can see

that he is a little ill-made man, but they are incapable of entering into the depth and height of the passion in his Othello. A nobleman of high rank, sense, and merit, who had accepted an order of knighthood, on being challenged for so doing by a friend, as a thing rather degrading to him than otherwise, made answer—"What you say, may be very true; but I am a little man, and am sometimes jostled, and treated with very little ceremony in walking along the streets; now the advantage of this new honour will be that when people see the star at my breast, they will every one make way for me with the greatest respect." Pope bent himself double and ruined his constitution by over-study when young. He was hardly indemnified by all his posthumous fame, "the flattery that soothes the dull cold ear of death," nor by the admiration of his friends, nor the friendship of the great, for the distortion of his person, the want of robust health, and the insignificant figure he made in the eyes of strangers, and of Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Not only was his diminutive and mis-shapen form against him in such trivial toys, but it was made a set-off and a bar to his poetical pretensions by his brother-poets, who ingeniously converted the initial and final letters of his name into the invidious

appellation A. P. E. He probably had the passage made under-ground from his garden to his grotto, that he might not be rudely gazed at in crossing the road by some untutored clown; and perhaps started to see the worm he trod upon writhed into his own form, like Elshie the Black Dwarf. Let those who think the mind every thing and the body nothing, "ere we have shuffled off this mortal coil," read that fine moral fiction, or the real story of David Ritchie—believe and tremble *!

It may be urged that there is a remedy for all this in the appeal from the ignorant many to the enlightened few. But the few who are judges of what is called real and solid merit, are

* It is more desirable to be the handsomest than the wisest man in his Majesty's dominions, for there are more people who have eyes than understandings. Sir John Suckling tells us that

He prized black eyes and a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.

In like manner, I would be permitted to say, that I am somewhat sick of this trade of authorship, where the critics look askance at one's best-meant efforts, but am still fond of those athletic exercises, where they do not keep two scores to mark the game, with Whig and Tory notches. The accomplishments of the body are obvious and clear to all: those of the mind are recondite and doubtful, and therefore grudgingly acknowledged, or held up as the sport of prejudice, spite, and folly.

not forward to communicate their occult discoveries to others: they are withheld partly by envy, and partly by pusillanimity. The strongest minds are by rights the most independent and ingenuous: but then they are competitors in the lists, and jealous of the prize. The prudent (and the wise are prudent!) only add their hearty applause to the acclamations of the multitude, which they can neither silence nor dispute. So Mr. Gifford dedicated those verses to Mr. Hoppner, when securely seated on the heights of fame and fortune, which before he thought might have savoured too much of flattery or friendship. Those even who have the sagacity to discover it, seldom volunteer to introduce obscure merit into publicity, so as to endanger their own pretensions: they praise the world's idols, and bow down at the altars which they cannot overturn by violence or undermine by stealth! Suppose literary men to be the judges and vouchers for literary merit:—but it may sometimes happen that a literary man (however high in genius or in fame) has no passion but the love of distinction, and hates every person or thing that interferes with his inadmissible and exorbitant claims. Dead to every other interest, he is alive to that, and starts up, like a serpent when trod upon, out of the slum-

ber of wounded pride. The cold slime of indifference is turned into rank poison at the sight of your approach to an equality or competition with himself. If he is an old acquaintance, he would keep you always where you were, under his feet to be trampled on: if a new one, he wonders he never heard of you before. As you become known, he expresses a greater contempt for you, and grows more captious and uneasy. The more you strive to merit his good word, the farther you are from it. Such characters will not only sneer at your well-meant endeavours, and kept silent as to your good qualities, but are out of countenance, "quite chop-fallen," if they find you have a cup of water, or a crust of bread. It is only when you are in a jail, starved or dead, that their exclusive pretensions are safe, or their Argus-eyed suspicions laid asleep. This is a true copy, nor is it taken from one sitting, or a single subject.—An author now-a-days, to succeed, must be something more than an author, — a nobleman, or rich plebeian: the simple literary character is not enough. "Such a poor forked animal," as a mere poet or philosopher turned loose upon public opinion, has no chance against the flocks of bats and owls that instantly assail him. It is name, it is wealth, it is title and influence that mollifies the tender-

hearted Cerberus of criticism—first, by placing the honorary candidate for fame out of the reach of Grub-street malice; secondly, by holding out the prospect of a dinner or a vacant office to successful sycophancy. This is the reason why a certain Magazine praises Percy Bysshe Shelley, and villifies "Johnny Keats*:" they know very well that they cannot ruin the one in fortune as well as in fame, but they may ruin the other in both, deprive him of a livelihood together with his good name, send him *to Coventry*, and into the Rules of a prison; and this is a double incitement to the exercise of their laudable and legitimate vocation. We do not hear that they plead the good-natured motive of the Editor of the Quarterly Review, that "they did it for his good," because some one, in consequence of that critic's abuse, had sent the author a present of five-and-twenty pounds! One of these writers went so far, in a sort of general profession of literary servility, as to declare broadly that there had been no great English poet, and that no one had a right to pretend to the character of a man of genius in this country, who was not of patrician birth—or connections by marriage! This hook was well baited.

* Written in June 1820.

These are the *doctrines* that enrich the shops,
That pass with reputation through the land,
And bring their authors an immortal name.

It is the sympathy of the public with the spite, jealousy, and irritable humours of the writers, that nourishes this disease in the public mind; this, this "embalms and spices to the April day again," what otherwise "the spital and the lazar-house would heave the gorge at!"

ESSAY II.

ON THE LOOK OF A GENTLEMAN.

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ON THE LOOK OF A GENTLEMAN.

"The nobleman-look? Yes, I know what you mean very well: that look which a nobleman should have, rather than what they have generally now. The Duke of Buckingham (Sheffield*) was a genteel man, and had a great deal the look you speak of. Wycherley was a very genteel man, and had the nobleman-look as much as the Duke of Buckingham.

POPE.

He instanced it too in Lord Peterborough, Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Hinchinbroke, the Duke of Bolton, and two or three more."—SPENCE'S *Anecdotes of Pope.*

I HAVE chosen the above motto to a very delicate subject, which in prudence I might let alone. I, however, like the title; and will try, at least, to make a sketch of it.

What it is that constitutes the look of a gentleman is more easily felt than described. We

* Quere, Villiers, because in another place it is said, that "when the latter entered the presence-chamber, he attracted all eyes by the handsomeness of his person, and the gracefulness of his demeanour."

all know it when we see it; but we do not know how to account for it, or to explain in what it consists. *Causa latet, res ipsa notissima.* Ease, grace, dignity have been given as the exponents and expressive symbols of this look; but I would rather say, that an habitual self-possession determines the appearance of a gentleman. He should have the complete command, not only over his countenance, but over his limbs and motions. In other words, he should discover in his air and manner a voluntary power over his whole body, which with every inflection of it, should be under the controul of his will. It must be evident that he looks and does as he likes, without any restraint, confusion, or awkwardness. He is, in fact, master of his person, as the professor of any art or science is of a particular instrument; he directs it to what use he pleases and intends. Wherever this power and facility appear, we recognise the look and deportment of the gentleman,—that is, of a person who by his habits and situation in life, and in his ordinary intercourse with society, has had little else to do than to study those movements, and that carriage of the body, which were accompanied with most satisfaction to himself, and were calculated to excite the approbation of the beholder. Ease, it might be

observed, is not enough; dignity is too much. There must be a certain *retenu*, a conscious decorum, added to the first,—and a certain "familiarity of regard, quenching the austere countenance of controul," in the other, to answer to our conception of this character. Perhaps propriety is as near a word as any to denote the manners of the gentleman; elegance is necessary to the fine gentleman; dignity is proper to noblemen; and majesty to kings!

Wherever this constant and decent subjection of the body to the mind is visible in the customary actions of walking, sitting, riding, standing, speaking, &c. we draw the same conclusion as to the individual,—whatever may be the impediments or unavoidable defects in the machine, of which he has the management. A man may have a mean or disagreeable exterior, may halt in his gait, or have lost the use of half his limbs; and yet he may shew this habitual attention to what is graceful and becoming in the use he makes of all the power he has left,—in the "nice conduct" of the most unpromising and impracticable figure. A hump-backed or deformed man does not necessarily look like a clown or a mechanic; on the contrary, from his care in the adjustment of his appearance, and his desire to remedy his defects, he for the

most part acquires something of the look of a gentleman. The common nick-name of *My Lord*, applied to such persons, has allusion to this—to their circumspect deportment, and tacit resistance to vulgar prejudice. Lord Ogleby, in the Clandestine Marriage, is as crazy a piece of elegance and refinement, even after he is "wound up for the day," as can well be imagined; yet in the hands of a genuine actor, his tottering step, his twitches of the gout, his unsuccessful attempts at youth and gaiety, take nothing from the nobleman. He has the *ideal* model in his mind, resents his deviations from it with proper horror, recovers himself from any ungraceful action as soon as possible; does all he can with his limited means, and fails in his just pretensions, not from inadvertence, but necessity. Sir Joseph Banks, who was almost bent double, retained to the last the look of a privy-counsellor. There was all the firmness and dignity that could be given by the sense of his own importance to so distorted and disabled a trunk. Sir Charles B-nb-ry, as he saunters down St. James's-street, with a large slouched hat, a lack-lustre eye, and aquiline nose, an old shabby drab-coloured coat, buttoned across his breast without a cape,—with old top-boots, and his hands in his waist-coat or

breeches' pockets, as if he were strolling along his own garden-walks, or over the turf at Newmarket, after having made his bets secure,—presents nothing very dazzling, or graceful, or dignified to the imagination; though you can tell infallibly at the first glance, or even a bow-shot off, that he is a gentleman of the first water (the same that sixty years ago married the beautiful Lady Sarah L-nn-x, with whom the king was in love). What is the clue to this mystery? It is evident that his person costs him no more trouble than an old glove. His limbs are, as it were, left to take care of themselves; they move of their own accord; he does not strut or stand on tip-toe to show

—— how tall
His person is above them all;——

but he seems to find his own level, and wherever he is, to slide into his place naturally; he is equally at home among lords or gamblers; nothing can discompose his fixed serenity of look and purpose; there is no mark of superciliousness about him, nor does it appear as if any thing could meet his eye to startle or throw him off his guard; he neither avoids nor courts notice; but the *archaism* of his dress may be understood to denote a lingering partiality for the costume of the last age, and something like a prescriptive

contempt for the finery of this. The old one-eyed Duke of Queensbury is another example that I might quote. As he sat in his bow-window in Piccadilly, erect and emaciated, he seemed like a nobleman framed and glazed, or a well-dressed mummy of the court of George II.

We have few of these precious specimens of the gentleman or nobleman-look now remaining; other considerations have set aside the exclusive importance of the character, and of course, the jealous attention to the outward expression of it. Where we oftenest meet with it now-a-days, is, perhaps, in the butlers in old families, or the valets, and "gentlemen's gentlemen" of the younger branches. The sleek pursy gravity of the one answers to the stately air of some of their *quondam* masters; and the flippancy and finery of our old-fashioned beaux, having been discarded by the heirs to the title and estate, have been retained by their lacqueys. The late Admiral Byron (I have heard N—— say) had a butler, or steward, who, from constantly observing his master, had so learned to mimic him—the look, the manner, the voice, the bow were so alike—he was so "subdued to the very quality of his lord"—that it was difficult to distinguish them apart. Our modern footmen, as we see them fluttering

and lounging in lobbies, or at the doors of ladies' carriages, bedizened in lace and powder, with ivory-headed cane and embroidered gloves, give one the only idea of the fine gentlemen of former periods, as they are still occasionally represented on the stage; and indeed our theatrical heroes, who top such parts, might be supposed to have copied, as a last resource, from the heroes of the shoulder-knot. We also sometimes meet with a straggling personation of this character, got up in common life from pure romantic enthusiasm, and on absolutely ideal principles. I recollect a well-grown comely haberdasher, who made a practice of walking every day from Bishop'sgate-street to Pall-mall and Bond-street with the undaunted air and strut of a general-officer; and also a prim undertaker, who regularly tendered his person, whenever the weather would permit, from the neighbourhood of Camberwell into the favourite promenades of the city, with a mincing gait that would have become a gentleman-usher of the black-rod. What a strange infatuation to live in a dream of being taken for what one is not,—in deceiving others, and at the same time ourselves; for no doubt these persons believed that they thus appeared to the world in their true characters, and that their

assumed pretensions did no more than justice to their real merits.

> *Dress* makes the man, and want of it the fellow:
> The rest is all but leather and prunella.

I confess, however, that I admire this look of a gentleman, more when it rises from the level of common life, and bears the stamp of intellect, than when it is formed out of the mould of adventitious circumstances. I think more highly of Wycherley than I do of Lord Hinchinbroke, for looking like a lord. In the one, it was the effect of native genius, grace, and spirit; in the other, comparatively speaking, of pride or custom. A visitor complimenting Voltaire on the growth and flourishing condition of some trees in his grounds, "Aye," said the French wit, "they have nothing else to do!" A lord has nothing to do but to look like a lord: our comic poet had somethiug else to do, and did it*!

Though the disadvantages of nature or accident do not act as obstacles to the look of a gentleman, those of education and employment do. A shoe-maker, who is bent in two over his

* Wycherley was a great favourite with the Duchess of Cleveland.

daily task; a taylor who sits cross-legged all day; a ploughman, who wears clog-shoes over the furrowed miry soil, and can hardly drag his feet after him; a scholar who has pored all his life over books,—are not likely to possess that natural freedom and ease, or to pay that strict attention to personal appearances, that the look of a gentleman implies. I might add, that a man-milliner behind a counter, who is compelled to show every mark of complaisance to his customers, but hardly expects common civility from them in return; or a sheriff's officer, who has a consciousness of power, but none of good-will to or from any body,—are equally remote from the *beau ideal* of this character. A man who is awkward from bashfulness is a clown,—as one who is shewing off a number of impertinent airs and graces at every turn, is a coxcomb, or an upstart. Mere awkwardness or rusticity of behaviour may arise, either from want of presence of mind in the company of our *betters*, (the commonest hind goes about his regular business without any of the *mauvaise honte*,) from a deficiency of breeding, as it is called, in not having been taught certain fashionable accomplishments—or from unremitting application to certain sorts of mechanical labour, unfitting the body for general or indif-

ferent uses. (That vulgarity which proceeds from a total disregard of decorum, and want of careful controul over the different actions of the body—such as loud speaking, boisterous gesticulations, &c.—is rather rudeness and violence, than awkwardness or uneasy restraint.) Now the gentleman is free from all these causes of ungraceful demeanour. He is independent in his circumstances, and is used to enter into society on equal terms; he is taught the modes of address and forms of courtesy, most commonly practised and most proper to ingratiate him into the good opinion of those he associates with; and he is relieved from the necessity of following any of those laborious trades or callings which cramp, strain, and distort the human frame. He is not bound to do any one earthly thing; to use any exertion, or put himself in any posture, that is not perfectly easy and graceful, agreeable and becoming. Neither is he (at the present day) required to excel in any art or science, game or exercise. He is supposed qualified to dance a minuet, not to dance on the tight rope—to stand upright, not to stand on his head. He has only to sacrifice to the Graces. Alcibiades threw away a flute, because the playing on it discomposed his features. Take the fine gentleman out of the common

boarding-school or drawing-room accomplishments, and set him to any ruder or more difficult task, and he will make but a sorry figure. Ferdinand in the Tempest, when he is put by Prospero to carry logs of wood, does not strike us as a very heroical character, though he loses nothing of the king's son. If a young gallant of the first fashion were asked to shoe a horse, or hold a plough, or fell a tree, he would make a very ridiculous business of the first experiment. I saw a set of young naval officers, very genteel-looking young men, playing at rackets not long ago, and it is impossible to describe the uncouthness of their motions and unaccountable contrivances for hitting the ball.—Something effeminate as well as common-place, then, enters into the composition of the gentleman: he is a little of the *petit-maître* in his pretensions. He is only graceful and accomplished in those things to which he has paid almost his whole attention,—such as the carriage of his body, and adjustment of his dress; and to which he is of sufficient importance in the scale of society to attract the idle attention of others.

A man's manner of presenting himself in company is but a superficial test of his real qualifications. Serjeant Atkinson, we are assured by Fielding, would have marched, at the head

of his platoon, up to a masked battery, with less apprehension than he came into a room full of pretty women. So we may sometimes see persons look foolish enough on entering a party, or returning a salutation, who instantly feel themselves at home, and recover all their self-possession, as soon as any of that sort of conversation begins from which nine-tenths of the company retire in the extremest trepidation, lest they should betray their ignorance or incapacity. A high spirit and stubborn pride are often accompanied with an unprepossessing and unpretending appearance. The greatest heroes do not shew it by their looks. There are individuals of a nervous habit, who might be said to abhor their own persons, and to startle at their own appearance, as the peacock tries to hide its legs. They are always shy, uncomfortable, restless; and all their actions are, in a manner, at cross-purposes with themselves. This, of course, destroys the look we are speaking of, from the want of ease and self-confidence. There is another sort who have too much negligence of manner and contempt for formal punctilios. They take their full swing in whatever they are about, and make it seem almost necessary to get out of their way. Perhaps something of this bold, licentious, slovenly, lounging charac-

ter may be objected by a fastidious eye to the appearance of Lord C——. It might be said of him, without disparagement, that he looks more like a lord than like a gentleman. We see nothing petty or finical, assuredly,—nothing hard-bound or reined-in,—but a flowing outline, a broad free style. He sits in the House of Commons, with his hat slouched over his forehead, and a sort of stoop in his shoulders, as if he cowered over his antagonists, like a bird of prey over its quarry,—" hatching vain empires." There is an irregular grandeur about him, an unwieldy power, loose, disjointed, " voluminous and vast,"—coiled up in the folds of its own purposes,—cold, death-like, smooth and smiling,—that is neither quite at ease with itself, nor safe for others to approach! On the other hand, there is the Marquis Wellesley, a jewel of a man. He advances into his place in the House of Lords, with head erect, and his best foot foremost. The star sparkles on his breast, and the garter is seen bound tight below his knee. It might be thought that he still trod a measure on soft carpets, and was surrounded, not only by spiritual and temporal lords, but

> Stores of ladies, whose bright eyes
> Rain influence, and judge the prize.

The chivalrous spirit that shines through him, the air of gallantry in his personal as well as rhetorical appeals to the House, glances a partial lustre on the Woolsack as he addresses it; and makes Lord Erskine raise his sunken head from a dream of transient popularity. His heedless vanity throws itself unblushingly on the unsuspecting candour of his hearers, and ravishes mute admiration. You would almost guess of this nobleman beforehand that he was a Marquis--something higher than an earl, and less important than a duke. Nature has just fitted him for the niche he fills in the scale of rank or title. He is a finished miniature-picture set in brilliants: Lord C—— might be compared to a loose sketch in oil, not properly hung. The character of the one is ease, of the other, elegance. Elegance is something more than ease; it is more than a freedom from awkwardness or restraint. It implies, I conceive, a precision, a polish, a sparkling effect, spirited yet delicate, which is perfectly exemplified in Lord Wellesley's face and figure.

The greatest contrast to this little lively nobleman was the late Lord Stanhope. Tall above his peers, he presented an appearance something between a Patagonian chief and one of the Long Parliament. With his long black hair,

"unkempt and wild"—his black clothes, lank features, strange antics, and screaming voice, he was the Orson of debate.

> A Satyr that comes staring from the woods,
> Cannot at first speak like an orator.

Yet he was both an orator and a wit in his way. His harangues were an odd jumble of logic and mechanics, of the Statutes at large and Joe Miller jests, of stern principle and sly humour, of shrewdness and absurdity, of method and madness. What is more extraordinary, he was an honest man. He was out of his place in the House of Lords. He particularly delighted in his eccentric onsets, to make havoc of the bench of bishops. "I like," said he, "to argue with one of my lords the bishops; and the reason why I do so is, that I generally have the best of the argument." He was altogether a different man from Lord Eldon; yet his lordship "gave him good œillades," as he broke a jest, or argued a moot-point, and, while he spoke, smiles, roguish twinkles, glittered in the Chancellor's eyes.

The look of the gentleman, "the nobleman-look," is little else than the reflection of the looks of the world. We smile at those who smile upon us: we are gracious to those who pay their court to us: we naturally acquire con-

fidence and ease when all goes well with us, when we are encouraged by the blandishments of fortune, and the good opinion of mankind. A whole street bowing regularly to a man every time he rides out, may teach him how to pull off his hat in return, without supposing a particular genius for bowing (more than for governing, or any thing else) born in the family. It has been observed that persons who sit for their pictures improve the character of their countenances, from the desire they have to procure the most favourable representation of themselves. "Tell me, pray good Mr. Carmine, when you come to the eyes, that I may call up a look," says the Alderman's wife, in Foote's Farce of Taste. Ladies grow handsome by looking at themselves in the glass, and heightening the agreeable airs and expression of features they so much admire there. So the favourites of fortune adjust themselves in the glass of fashion, and the flattering illusions of public opinion. Again, the expression of face in the gentleman, or thorough-bred man of the world is not that of refinement so much as of flexibility; of sensibility or enthusiasm, so much as of indifference:— it argues presence of mind, rather than enlargement of ideas. In this it differs from the heroic and philosophical look. Instead of an intense

unity of purpose, wound up to some great occasion, it is dissipated and frittered down into a number of evanescent expressions, fitted for every variety of unimportant occurrences: instead of the expansion of general thought or intellect, you trace chiefly the little, trite, cautious, moveable lines of conscious, but concealed self-complacency. If Raphael had painted St. Paul as a gentleman, what a figure he would have made of the great Apostle of the Gentiles—occupied with himself, not carried away, raised, inspired with his subject—insinuating his doctrines into his audience, not launching them from him with the tongues of the Holy Spirit, and with looks of fiery scorching zeal! Gentlemen luckily can afford to sit for their own portraits: painters do not trouble them to sit as studies for history. What a difference is there in this respect between a Madonna of Raphael, and a lady of fashion, even by Vandyke: the former refined and elevated, the latter light and trifling, with no emanation of soul, no depth of feeling,—each arch expression playing on the surface, and passing into any other at pleasure, —no one thought having its full scope, but checked by some other,—soft, careless, insincere, pleased, affected, amiable! The French physiognomy is more cut up and subdivided

into petty lines and sharp angles than any other: it does not want for subtlety, or an air of gentility, which last it often has in a remarkable degree,—but it is the most unpoetical and the least picturesque of all others. I cannot explain what I mean by this variable telegraphic machinery of polite expression better than by an obvious allusion. Every one by walking the streets of London (or any other populous city) acquires a walk which is easily distinguished from that of strangers; a quick flexibility of movement, a smart jerk, an aspiring and confident tread, and an air, as if on the alert to keep the line of march; but for all that, there is not much grace or grandeur in this local strut: you see the person is not a country bumpkin, but you would not say, he is a hero or a sage—because he is a cockney. So it is in passing through the artificial and thickly peopled scenes of life. You get the look of a man of the world: you rub off the pedant and the clown; but you do not make much progress in wisdom or virtue, or in the characteristic expression of either.

The character of a gentleman (I take it) may be explained nearly thus:—A blackguard *(un vaurien)* is a fellow who does not care whom he offends:—a clown is a blockhead who does not know when he offends:—a gentleman is one who understands and shews every mark of deference to

the claims of self-love in others, and exacts it in return from them. Politeness and the pretensions to the character in question have reference almost entirely to this reciprocal manifestation of good-will and good opinion towards each other in casual society. Morality regulates our sentiments and conduct as they have a connection with ultimate and important consequences:—Manners, properly speaking, regulate our words and actions in the routine of personal intercourse. They have little to do with real kindness of intention, or practical services, or disinterested sacrifices; but they put on the garb, and mock the appearance of these, in order to prevent a breach of the peace, and to smooth and varnish over the discordant materials, when any number of individuals are brought in contact together. The conventional compact of good manners does not reach beyond the moment and the company. Say, for instance, that the *rabble*, the labouring and industrious part of the community, are taken up with supplying their own wants, and pining over their own hardships,—scrambling for what they can get, and not refining on any of their pleasures, or troubling themselves about the fastidious pretensions of others: again, there are philosophers who are busied in the pursuit of truth,—

or patriots who are active for the good of their country; but here, we will suppose, are a knot of people got together, who, having no serious wants of their own, with leisure and independence, and caring little about abstract truth or practical utility, are met for no mortal purpose but to say and to do all manner of obliging things, to pay the greatest possible respect, and shew the most delicate and flattering attentions to one another. The politest set of gentlemen and ladies in the world can do no more than this. The laws that regulate this species of select and fantastic society are conformable to its ends and origin. The fine gentleman or lady must not, on any account, say a rude thing to the persons present, but you may turn them into the utmost ridicule the instant they are gone: nay, not to do so is sometimes considered as an indirect slight to the party that remains. You must compliment your bitterest foe to his face, and may slander your dearest friend behind his back. The last may be immoral, but it is not unmannerly. The gallant maintains his title to this character by treating every woman he meets with the same marked and unremitting attention as if she was his mistress: the courtier treats every man with the same professions of esteem and kindness as if he were an accomplice

with him in some plot against mankind. Of course, these professions, made only to please, go for nothing in practice. To insist on them afterwards as literal obligations, would be to betray an ignorance of this kind of interlude, or masquerading in real life. To ruin your friend at play is not inconsistent with the character of a gentleman and a man of honour, if it is done with civility; though to warn him of his danger, so as to imply a doubt of his judgment, or interference with his will, would be to subject yourself to be run through the body with a sword. It is that which wounds the self-love of the individual that is offensive—that which flatters it that is welcome—however salutary the one, or however fatal the other may be. A habit of plain-speaking is totally contrary to the tone of good-breeding. You must prefer the opinion of the company to your own, and even to truth. I doubt whether a gentleman must not be of the Established Church, and a Tory. A true cavalier can only be a martyr to prejudice or fashion. A Whig lord appears to me as great an anomaly as a patriot king. A sectary is sour and unsociable. A philosopher is quite out of the question. He is in the clouds, and had better not be let down on the floor in a basket, to play the blockhead. He is sure to commit

himself in good company—and by dealing always in abstractions, and driving at generalities, to offend against the three proprieties of time, place, and person. Authors are angry, loud, and vehement in argument: the man of more refined breeding, who has been "all tranquillity and smiles," goes away, and tries to ruin the antagonist, whom he could not vanquish in a dispute. The manners of a court and of polished life are by no means downright, straightforward, but the contrary. They have something dramatic in them; each person plays an assumed part; the affected, overstrained politeness and suppression of real sentiment lead to concealed irony, and the spirit of satire and raillery; and hence we may account for the perfection of the genteel comedy of the century before the last, when poets were allowed to mingle in the court-circles, and took their cue from the splendid ring

Of mimic statesmen and their merry king.

The essence of this sort of conversation and intercourse, both on and off the stage, has somehow since evaporated; the disguises of royalty, nobility, gentry have been in some measure seen through: we have become individually of little importance, compared with greater ob-

jects, in the eyes of our neighbours, and even in our own: abstract topics, not personal pretensions, are the order of the day; so that what remains of the character we have been talking of, is chiefly exotic and provincial, and may be seen still flourishing in country-places, in a wholesome state of vegetable decay!

A man may have the manners of a gentleman without having the look, and he may have the character of a gentleman, in a more abstracted point of view, without the manners. The feelings of a gentleman, in this higher sense, only denote a more refined humanity—a spirit delicate in itself, and unwilling to offend, either in the greatest or the smallest things. This may be coupled with absence of mind, with ignorance of forms, and frequent blunders. But the will is good. The spring of gentle offices and true regards is untainted. A person of this stamp blushes at an impropriety he was guilty of twenty years before, though he is, perhaps, liable to repeat it to-morrow. He never forgives himself for even a slip of the tongue, that implies an assumption of superiority over any one. In proportion to the concessions made to him, he lowers his demands. He gives the wall to a beggar*: but does not always bow to great

* The writer of this Essay once saw a Prince of the

men. This class of character have been called "God Almighty's gentlemen." There are not a great many of them.—The *late* G—— D—— was one; for we understand that that gentleman was not able to survive some ill-disposed person's having asserted of him, that he had mistaken Lord Castlereagh for the author of Waverley!

Blood pull off his hat to every one in the street, till he came to the beggarman that swept the crossing. This was a nice distinction. Farther, it was a distinction that the writer of this Essay would not make to be a Prince of the Blood. Perhaps, however, a question might be started in the manner of Montaigne, whether the beggar did not pull off his hat in quality of asking charity, and not as a mark of respect. Now a Prince may decline giving charity, though he is obliged to return a civility. If he does not, he may be treated with disrespect another time, and that is an alternative he is bound to prevent. Any other person might set up such a plea, but the person to whom a whole street had been bowing just before.

ESSAY III.

ON READING OLD BOOKS.

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I HATE to read new books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. It was a long time before I could bring myself to sit down to the Tales of My Landlord, but now that author's works have made a considerable addition to my scanty library. I am told that some of Lady Morgan's are good, and have been recommended to look into Anastasius; but I have not yet ventured upon that task. A lady, the other day, could not refrain from expressing her surprise to a friend, who said he had been reading Delphine:—she asked,—If it had not been published some time back? Women judge of books as they do of fashions or complexions, which are admired only "in their newest gloss." That is not my way. I am not one of those who trouble the circulating libraries much, or pester the booksellers for mail-coach copies of

standard periodical publications. I cannot say that I am greatly addicted to black-letter, but I profess myself well versed in the marble bindings of Andrew Millar, in the middle of the last century; nor does my taste revolt at Thurloe's State Papers, in Russia leather; or an ample impression of Sir William Temple's Essays, with a portrait after Sir Godfrey Kneller in front. I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage:—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and

are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish,—turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimentos* of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash,—but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face,—compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests—dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an

old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recals the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are land-marks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thoughts and for remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap—they give us the best riches—those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with Bruscambille. Give me for this purpose a volume of Peregrine Pickle or Tom Jones. Open either of them any where—at the Memoirs of Lady Vane, or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and Square, or the escape of Molly

Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture—and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying." Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said, that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport one's-self, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and when we first got a peep at the rarée-show of the world, through the glass of fiction—gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages,—or

at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their life-time—the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky—return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me—those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page, are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall-street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time "when I was in my father's house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,"—when I was a little, thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task, and be happy!—Tom Jones, I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke's pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest): but this had a different relish with

it,—" sweet in the mouth," though not " bitter in the belly." It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live—and shewed me groups, " gay creatures" not " of the element," but of the earth; not " living in the clouds," but travelling the same road that I did;—some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke's edition of the British Novelists was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The six-penny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story, where Tom Jones discovers Square behind the blanket; or where Parson Adams, in the inextricable confusion of events, very undesignedly gets to bed to Mrs. Slip-slop. Let me caution the reader against this impression of Joseph Andrews; for there is a picture of Fanny in it which he should not set his heart on, lest he should never meet with any thing like it; or if he should, it would, perhaps, be better for him that he had not. It was just like —— ——! With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight

with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise,—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page!—Let me still recal them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal!* This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

> Oh! Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
> And give those scenes thine everlasting life!

The paradox with which I set out is, I hope, less startling than it was; the reader will, by this time, have been let into my secret. Much about the same time, or I believe rather earlier, I took a particular satisfaction in reading Chubb's Tracts, and I often think I will get them again to wade through. There is a high gusto of polemical divinity in them; and you fancy that you hear a club of shoemakers at Salisbury, debating a disputable text from one

of St. Paul's Epistles in a workmanlike style, with equal shrewdness and pertinacity. I cannot say much for my metaphysical studies, into which I launched shortly after with great ardour, so as to make a toil of a pleasure. I was presently entangled in the briars and thorns of subtle distinctions,—of "fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," though I cannot add that "in their wandering mazes I found no end;" for I did arrive at some very satisfactory and potent conclusions; nor will I go so far, however ungrateful the subject might seem, as to exclaim with Marlowe's Faustus—"Would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book" —that is, never studied such authors as Hartley, Hume, Berkeley, &c. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding is, however, a work from which I never derived either pleasure or profit; and Hobbes, dry and powerful as he is, I did not read till long afterwards. I read a few poets, which did not much hit my taste,—for I would have the reader understand, I am deficient in the faculty of imagination; but I fell early upon French romances and philosophy, and devoured them tooth-and-nail. Many a dainty repast have I made of the New Eloise;—the description of the kiss; the excursion on the water; the letter of St. Preux, recalling the time

of their first loves; and the account of Julia's death; these I read over and over again with unspeakable delight and wonder. Some years after, when I met with this work again, I found I had lost nearly my whole relish for it (except some few parts) and was, I remember, very much mortified with the change in my taste, which I sought to attribute to the smallness and gilt edges of the edition I had bought, and its being perfumed with rose-leaves. Nothing could exceed the gravity, the solemnity with which I carried home and read the Dedication to the Social Contract, with some other pieces of the same author, which I had picked up at a stall in a coarse leathern cover. Of the Confessions I have spoken elsewhere, and may repeat what I have said—"Sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection!" Their beauties are not "scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth," but sown thick on the page, rich and rare. I wish I had never read the Emilius, or read it with less implicit faith. I had no occasion to pamper my natural aversion to affectation or pretence, by romantic and artificial means. I had better have formed myself on the model of Sir Fopling Flutter. There is a class of persons whose virtues and most shining qualities sink in, and

are concealed by, an absorbent ground of modesty and reserve; and such a one I do, without vanity, profess myself*. Now these are the very persons who are likely to attach themselves to the character of Emilius, and of whom it is sure to be the bane. This dull, phlegmatic, retiring humour is not in a fair way to be corrected, but confirmed and rendered desperate, by being in that work held up as an object of imitation, as an example of simplicity and magnanimity—by coming upon us with all the recommendations of novelty, surprise, and superiority to the prejudices of the world—by being stuck upon a pedestal, made amiable, dazzling, a *leurre de dupe!* The reliance on solid worth which it inculcates, the preference of sober truth to gaudy tinsel, hangs like a mill-stone round the neck of the imagination—"a load to sink a navy"—impedes our progress, and blocks up every prospect in life. A man, to get on, to be successful, conspicuous, applauded, should not retire upon the centre of his conscious re-

* Nearly the same sentiment was wittily and happily expressed by a friend, who had some lottery puffs, which he had been employed to write, returned on his hands for their too great severity of thought and classical terseness of style, and who observed on that occasion, that "Modest merit never can succeed!"

sources, but be always at the circumference of appearances. He must envelop himself in a halo of mystery—he must ride in an equipage of opinion—he must walk with a train of self-conceit following him—he must not strip himself to a buff-jerkin, to the doublet and hose of his real merits, but must surround himself with a *cortege* of prejudices, like the signs of the Zodiac—he must seem any thing but what he is, and then he may pass for any thing he pleases. The world love to be amused by hollow professions, to be deceived by flattering appearances, to live in a state of hallucination; and can forgive every thing but the plain, downright, simple honest truth—such as we see it chalked out in the character of Emilius.—To return from this digession, which is a little out of place here.

Books have in a great measure lost their power over me; nor can I revive the same interest in them as formerly. I perceive when a thing is good, rather than feel it. It is true,

Marcian Colonna is a dainty book;

and the reading of Mr. Keats's Eve of Saint Agnes lately made me regret that I was not young again. The beautiful and tender images there conjured up, "come like shadows—so depart." The "tiger-moth's wings," which he

has spread over his rich poetic blazonry, just flit across my fancy; the gorgeous twilight window which he has painted over again in his verse, to me "blushes" almost in vain "with blood of queens and kings." I know how I should have felt at one time in reading such passages; and that is all. The sharp luscious flavour, the fine *aroma* is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left. If any one were to ask me what I read now, I might answer with my Lord Hamlet in the play—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—"*Nothing!*" —They have scarce a meaning. But it was not always so. There was a time when to my thinking, every word was a flower or a pearl, like those which dropped from the mouth of the little peasant-girl in the Fairy tale, or like those that fall from the great preacher in the Caledonian Chapel! I drank of the stream of knowledge that tempted, but did not mock my lips, as of the river of life, freely. How eagerly I slaked my thirst of German sentiment, "as the hart that panteth for the water-springs;" how I bathed and revelled, and added my floods of tears to Goëthe's Sorrows of Werter, and to Schiller's Robbers—

Giving my stock of more to that which had too much!

I read, and assented with all my soul to Coleridge's fine Sonnet, beginning—

> Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,
> If through the shuddering midnight I had sent,
> From the dark dungeon of the tow'r time-rent,
> That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry!

I believe I may date my insight into the mysteries of poetry from the commencement of my acquaintance with the authors of the Lyrical Ballads; at least, my discrimination of the higher sorts—not my predilection for such writers as Goldsmith or Pope: nor do I imagine they will sayI got my liking for the Novelists, or the comic writers,—for the characters of Valentine, Tattle, or Miss Prue, from them. If so, I must have got from them what they never had themselves. In points where poetic diction and conception are concerned, I may be at a loss, and liable to be imposed upon: but in forming an estimate of passages relating to common life and manners, I cannot think I am a plagiarist from any man. I there "know my cue without a prompter." I may say of such studies—*Intus et in cute.* I am just able to admire those literal touches of observation and description, which persons of loftier pretensions overlook and despise. I think I comprehend something of the characteristic

part of Shakspeare; and in him indeed, all is characteristic, even the nonsense and poetry. I believe it was the celebrated Sir Humphrey Davy who used to say, that Shakspeare was rather a metaphysician than a poet. At any rate, it was not ill said. I wish that I had sooner known the dramatic writers contemporary with Shakspeare; for in looking them over about a year ago, I almost revived my old passion for reading, and my old delight in books, though they were very nearly new to me. The Periodical Essayists I read long ago. The Spectator I liked extremely: but the Tatler took my fancy most. I read the others soon after, the Rambler, the Adventurer, the World, the Connoisseur: I was not sorry to get to the end of them, and have no desire to go regularly through them again. I consider myself a thorough adept in Richardson. I like the longest of his novels best, and think no part of them tedious; nor should I ask to have any thing better to do than to read them from beginning to end, to take them up when I chose, and lay them down when I was tired, in some old family mansion in the country, till every word and syllable relating to the bright Clarissa, the divine Clementina, the beautiful Pamela, "with every trick and line of their sweet favour," were once

more "graven in my heart's table *." I have a sneaking kindness for Mackenzie's Julia de Roubignè—for the deserted mansion, and straggling gilliflowers on the mouldering garden-wall; and still more for his Man of Feeling; not that it is better, nor so good; but at the time I read it, I sometimes thought of the heroine, Miss Walton, and of Miss —— together, and "that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken!"—One of the poets that I have always read with most pleasure, and can wander about in for ever with a sort of voluptuous indolence, is Spenser; and I like Chaucer even better. The only writer among the Italians I can pretend to any knowledge of, is Boccacio, and of him I cannot express half my admiration. His story of the Hawk I could read and think of from day to day, just as I would look at a picture of Titian's!—

* During the peace of Amiens, a young English officer, of the name of Lovelace, was presented at Buonaparte's levee. Instead of the usual question, "Where have you served, Sir?" the First Consul immediately addressed him, "I perceive your name, Sir, is the same as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance!" Here was a Consul. The young man's uncle, who was called Lovelace, told me this anecdote while we were stopping together at Calais. I had also been thinking that his was the same name as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance. This is one of my reasons for liking Buonaparte.

I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (Shrewsbury, where Farquhar has laid the plot of his Recruiting Officer) and bringing home with me, "at one proud swoop," a copy of Milton's Paradise Lost, and another of Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution—both which I have still; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past "with all its giddy raptures:" but I am still anxious to preserve its memory, "embalmed with odours."—With respect to the first of these works, I would be permitted to remark here in passing, that it is a sufficient answer to the German criticism which has since been started against the character of Satan *(viz.* that it is not one of disgusting deformity, or pure, defecated malice) to say that Milton has there drawn, not the abstract principle of evil, not a devil incarnate, but a fallen angel. This is the scriptural account, and the poet has followed it. We may safely retain such passages as that well-known one—

——His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness; nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd; and the excess
Of glory obscur'd—

for the theory, which is opposed to them, "falls flat upon the grunsel edge, and shames its worshippers." Let us hear no more then of this monkish cant, and bigotted outcry for the restoration of the horns and tail of the devil!—Again, as to the other work, Burke's Reflections, I took a particular pride and pleasure in it, and read it to myself and others for months afterwards. I had reason for my prejudice in favour of this author. To understand an adversary is some praise: to admire him is more. I thought I did both: I knew I did one. From the first time I ever cast my eyes on any thing of Burke's (which was an extract from his Letter to a Noble Lord in a three-times a week paper, The St. James's Chronicle, in 1796), I said to myself, "This is true eloquence: this is a man pouring out his mind on paper." All other style seemed to me pedantic and impertinent. Dr. Johnson's was walking on stilts; and even Junius's (who was at that time a favourite with me) with all his terseness, shrunk up into little antithetic points and well-trimmed sentences. But Burke's style was forked and playful as the lightning, crested like the serpent. He delivered plain things on a plain ground; but when he rose, there was no end of his flights and circumgyrations—and in this very Letter, "he,

like an eagle in a dove-cot, fluttered *his* Volscians" (the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale *) "in Corioli." I did not care for his doctrines. I was then, and am still, proof against their contagion; but I admired the author, and was considered as not a very staunch partisan of the opposite side, though I thought myself that an abstract proposition was one thing—a masterly transition, a brilliant metaphor, another. I conceived too that he might be wrong in his main argument, and yet deliver fifty truths in arriving at a false conclusion. I remember Coleridge assuring me, as a poetical and political set-off to my sceptical admiration, that Wordsworth had written an Essay on Marriage, which, for manly thought and nervous expression, he deemed incomparably superior. As I had not, at that time, seen any specimens of Mr. Wordsworth's prose style, I could not express my doubts on the subject. If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study, or are beyond my sphere of comprehension. I am too old to be a convert to a new mythology of genius. The niches are occupied, the tables are full. If such is still my admiration of this man's misapplied

* He is there called "Citizen Lauderdale." Is this the present Earl?

powers, what must it have been at a time when I myself was in vain trying, year after year, to write a single Essay, nay, a single page or sentence; when I regarded the wonders of his pen with the longing eyes of one who was dumb and a changeling; and when, to be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words, was the height of an almost hopeless ambition! But I never measured others' excellences by my own defects: though a sense of my own incapacity, and of the steep, impassable ascent from me to them, made me regard them with greater awe and fondness. I have thus run through most of my early studies and favourite authors, some of whom I have since criticised more at large. Whether those observations will survive me, I neither know nor do I much care: but to the works themselves, "worthy of all acceptation," and to the feelings they have always excited in me since I could distinguish a meaning in language, nothing shall ever prevent me from looking back with gratitude and triumph. To have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not to have lived quite in vain.

There are other authors whom I have never read, and yet whom I have frequently had a

great desire to read, from some circumstance relating to them. Among these is Lord Clarendon's History of the Grand Rebellion, after which I have a hankering, from hearing it spoken of by good judges—from my interest in the events, and knowledge of the characters from other sources, and from having seen fine portraits of most of them. I like to read a well-penned character, and Clarendon is said to have been a master in this way. I should like to read Froissart's Chronicles, Hollinshed and Stowe, and Fuller's Worthies. I intend, whenever I can, to read Beaumont and Fletcher all through. There are fifty-two of their plays, and I have only read a dozen or fourteen of them. A Wife for a Month, and Thierry and Theodoret, are, I am told, delicious, and I can believe it. I should like to read the speeches in Thucydides, and Guicciardini's History of Florence, and Don Quixote in the original. I have often thought of reading the Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda, and the Galatea of the same author. But I somehow reserve them like "another Yarrow." I should also like to read the last new novel (if I could be sure it was so) of the author of Waverley:—no one would be more glad than I to find it the best! —

ESSAY IV.

ON PERSONAL CHARACTER.

ESSAY IV.

ON PERSONAL CHARACTER.

"Men palliate and conceal their original qualities, but do not extirpate them." MONTAIGNE'S *Essays.*

No one ever changes his character from the time he is two years old; nay, I might say, from the time he is two hours old. We may, with instruction and opportunity, mend our manners, or else alter for the worse, — "as the flesh and fortune shall serve;" but the character, the internal, original bias, remains always the same, true to itself to the very last —

"And feels the ruling passion strong in death!"

A very grave and dispassionate philosopher (the late celebrated chemist, Mr. Nicholson) was so impressed with the conviction of the instantaneous commencement and development of the character with the birth, that he published a long and amusing article in the Monthly Magazine, giving a detailed account of the progress, history, education, and tempers of two

twins, up to the period of their being *eleven days old.* This is, perhaps, considering the matter too curiously, and would amount to a species of horoscopy, if we were to build on such premature indications; but the germ no doubt is there, though we must wait a little longer to see what form it takes. We need not in general wait long. The Devil soon betrays the cloven foot; or a milder and better spirit appears in its stead. A temper sullen or active, shy or bold, grave or lively, selfish or romantic, (to say nothing of quickness or dulness of apprehension) is manifest very early; and imperceptibly, but irresistibly moulds our inclinations, habits, and pursuits through life. The greater or less degree of animal spirits, — of nervous irritability, — the complexion of the blood, — the proportion of "hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce that strive for mastery," — the Saturnine or the Mercurial, — the disposition to be affected by objects near, or at a distance, or not at all, — to be struck with novelty, or to brood over deep-rooted impresssions, — to indulge in laughter or in tears, the leaven of passion or of prudence that tempers this frail clay, is born with us, and never quits us. "It is not in our stars," in planetary influence, but neither is it owing "to ourselves,

that we are thus or thus." The accession of knowledge, the pressure of circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, does little more than minister occasion to the first predisposing bias–than assist, like the dews of heaven, or retard, like the nipping north, the growth of the seed originally sown in our constitution—than give a more or less decided expression to that personal character, the outlines of which nothing can alter. What I mean is, that Blifil and Tom Jones, for instance, by changing places, would never have changed characters. The one might, from circumstances, and from the notions instilled into him, have become a little less selfish, and the other a little less extravagant; but with a trifling allowance of this sort, taking the proposition *cum grano salis*, they would have been just where they set out. Blifil would have been Blifil still, and Jones what nature intended him to be. I have made use of this example without any apology for its being a fictitious one, because I think good novels are the most authentic as well as most accessible repositories of the natural history and philosophy of the species.

I shall not borrow assistance or illustration from the organic system of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim, which reduces this question to a

small compass and very distinct limits, because I do not understand or believe in it: but I think those who put faith in physiognomy at all, or imagine that the mind is stamped upon the countenance, must believe that there is such a thing as an essential difference of character in different individuals. We do not change our features with our situations; neither do we change the capacities or inclinations which lurk beneath them. A flat face does not become an oval one, nor a pug nose a Roman one, with the acquisition of an office, or the addition of a title. So neither is the pert, hard, unfeeling outline of character turned from selfishness and cunning to openness and generosity, by any softening of circumstances. If the face puts on an habitual smile in the sunshine of fortune, or if it suddenly lowers in the storms of adversity, do not trust too implicitly to appearances; the man is the same at bottom. The designing knave may sometimes wear a vizor, or, "to beguile the time, look like the time;" but watch him narrowly, and you will detect him behind his mask! We recognise, after a length of years, the same well-known face that we were formerly acquainted with, changed by time, but the same in itself; and can trace the features of the boy in the full-grown man. Can we doubt that the

character and thoughts have remained as much the same all that time; have borne the same image and superscription; have grown with the growth, and strengthened with the strength? In this sense, and in Mr. Wordsworth's phrase, "the child's the father of the man" surely enough. The same tendencies may not always be equally visible, but they are still in existence, and break out, whenever they dare and can, the more for being checked. Again, we often distinctly notice the same features, the same bodily peculiarities, the same look and gestures, in different persons of the same family; and find this resemblance extending to collateral branches and through several generations, shewing how strongly nature must have been warped and biassed in that particular direction at first. This pre-determination in the blood has its caprices too, and wayward as well as obstinate fits. The family-likeness sometimes skips over the next of kin or the nearest branch, and re-appears in all its singularity in a second or third cousin, or passes over the son to the grand-child. Where the pictures of the heirs and successors to a title or estate have been preserved for any length of time in Gothic halls and old-fashioned mansions, the prevailing outline and character does not wear out, but may be traced through

its numerous inflections and descents, like the winding of a river through an expanse of country, for centuries. The ancestor of many a noble house has sat for the portraits of his youthful descendants; and still the soul of "Fairfax and the starry Vere," consecrated in Marvel's verse, may be seen mantling in the suffused features of some young court-beauty of the present day. The portrait of Judge Jeffries, which was exhibited lately in the Gallery in Pall Mall—young, handsome, spirited, good-humoured, and totally unlike, at first view, what you would expect from the character, was an exact likeness of two young men whom I knew some years ago, the living representatives of that family. It is curious that, consistently enough with the delineation in the portrait, old Evelyn should have recorded in his Memoirs, that "he saw the Chief-Justice Jeffries in a large company the night before, and that he thought he laughed, drank, and danced too much for a man who had that day condemned Algernon Sidney to the block." It is not always possible to foresee the tyger's spring, till we are in his grasp; the fawning, cruel eye dooms its prey, while it glitters! Features alone do not run in the blood; vices and virtues, genius and folly are transmitted through the

same sure, but unseen channel. There is an involuntary, unaccountable family character, as well as family face; and we see it manifesting itself in the same way, with unbroken continuity, or by fits and starts. There shall be a regular breed of misers, of incorrigible old *hunkses* in a family, time out of mind; or the shame of the thing, and the hardships and restraint imposed upon him while young, shall urge some desperate spendthrift to wipe out the reproach upon his name by a course of extravagance and debauchery; and his immediate successors shall make his example an excuse for relapsing into the old jog-trot incurable infirmity, the grasping and pinching disease of the family again *. A person may be indebted for a nose or an eye, for a graceful carriage or a voluble discourse, to a great-aunt or uncle, whose existence he has scarcely heard of; and distant relations are surprised, on some casual introduction, to

* "I know at this time a person of vast estate, who is the immediate descendant of a fine gentleman, but the great-grandson of a broker, in whom his ancestor is now revived. He is a very honest gentleman in his principles, but cannot for his blood talk fairly: he is heartily sorry for it; but he cheats by constitution, and over-reaches by instinct."—See this subject delightfully treated in the 75th Number of the Tatler, in an account of Mr. Bickerstaff's pedigree, on occasion of his sister's marriage.

find each other an *alter idem.* Country cousins, who meet after they are grown up for the first time in London, often start at the likeness,—it is like looking at themselves in the glass—nay, they shall see, almost before they exchange a word, their own thoughts (as it were) staring them in the face, the same ideas, feelings, opinions, passions, prejudices, likings and antipathies; the same turn of mind and sentiment, the same foibles, peculiarities, faults, follies, misfortunes, consolations, the same self, the same every thing! And farther, this coincidence shall take place and be most remarkable, where not only no intercourse has previously been kept up, not even by letter or by common friends, but where the different branches of a family have been estranged for long years, and where the younger part in each have been brought up in totally different situations, with different studies, pursuits, expectations and opportunities. To assure me that this is owing to circumstances, is to assure me of a gratuitous absurdity, which you cannot know, and which I shall not believe. It is owing, not to circumstances, but to the force of kind, to the stuff of which our blood and humours are compounded being the same. Why should I and an old hair-brained uncle of mine fasten upon the same picture in a Collection,

and talk of it for years after, though one of no particular "mark or likelihood" in itself, but for something congenial in the look to our own humour and way of seeing nature? Why should my cousin L—— and I fix upon the same book, Tristram Shandy,—without comparing notes, have it "doubled down and dog-eared" in the same places, and live upon it as a sort of food that assimilated with our natural dispositions?—"Instinct, Hal, instinct!" They are fools who say otherwise, and have never studied nature or mankind, but in books and systems of philosophy. But, indeed, the colour of our lives is woven into the fatal thread at our births: our original sins, and our redeeming graces are infused into us; nor is the bond, that confirms our destiny, ever cancelled.

> Beneath the hills, amid the flowery groves,
> The generations are prepar'd; the pangs,
> The internal pangs, are ready; the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.

The "winged wounds" that rankle in our breasts to our latest day, were planted there long since, ticketed and labelled on the outside in small but indelible characters, written in our blood, "like that ensanguined flower inscribed with woe:" we are in the toils from the very

first, hemmed in by the hunters; and these are our own passions, bred of our brain and humours, and that never leave us, but consume and gnaw the heart in our short life-time, as worms wait for us in the grave!

Critics and authors, who congregate in large cities, and see nothing of the world but a sort of phantasmagoria, to whom the numberless characters they meet in the course of a few hours are fugitive "as the flies of a summer," evanescent as the figures in a *camera obscura*, may talk very learnedly, and attribute the motions of the puppets to circumstances of which they are confessedly in total ignorance. They see character only in the bust, and have not room (for the crowd) to study it as a whole-length, that is, as it exists in reality. But those who trace things to their source, and proceed from individuals to generals, know better. School-boys, for example, who are early let into the secret, and see the seeds growing, are not only sound judges, but true prophets of character; so that the nick-names they give their play-fellows usually stick by them ever after. The gossips in country-towns, also, who study human nature, not merely in the history of the individual, but in the genealogy of the race, know the comparative anatomy of the minds of

a whole neighbourhood to a tittle, where to look for marks and defects,—explain a vulgarity by a cross in the breed, or a foppish air in a young tradesman by his grandmother's marriage with a dancing-master, and are the only practical conjurors and expert decypherers of the determinate lines of true or supposititious character.

The character of women (I should think it will at this time of day be granted) differs essentially from that of men, not less so than their shape or the texture of their skin. It has been said indeed, "Most women have no character at all,"—and on the other hand, the fair and eloquent authoress of the Rights of Women was for establishing the masculine pretensions and privileges of her sex on a perfect equality with ours. I shall leave Pope and Mary Wolstonecraft to settle that point between them. I should laugh at any one who told me that the European, the Asiatic, and the African character were the same. I no more believe it than I do that black is the same colour as white, or that a straight line is a crooked one. We see in whole nations and large classes the physiognomies, and I should suppose ("not to speak it profanely") the general characters of different animals with which we are acquainted, as of the fox, the wolf, the hog, the goat, the dog, the

monkey; and I suspect this analogy, whether perceived or not, has as prevailing an influence on their habits and actions, as any theory of moral sentiments taught in the schools. Rules and precautions may, no doubt, be applied to counteract the excesses and overt demonstrations of any such characteristic infirmity; but still the disease will be in the mind, an impediment, not a help to virtue. An exception is usually taken to all national or general reflections, as unjust and illiberal, because they cannot be true of every individual. It is not meant that they are; and besides, the same captious objection is not made to the handsome things that are said of whole bodies and classes of men, A lofty panegyric, a boasted virtue will fit the inhabitants of an entire district to a hair; the want of strict universality, of philosophical and abstract truth, is no difficulty here; but if you hint at an obvious vice or defect, this is instantly construed into a most unfair and partial view of the case, and each defaulter throws the imputation from himself and his country with scorn. Thus you may praise the generosity of the English, the prudence of the Scotch, the hospitality of the Irish, as long as you please, and not a syllable is whispered against these sweeping expressions of admira-

tion; but reverse the picture, hold up to censure, or only glance at the unfavourable side of each character (and they themselves admit that they have a distinguishing and generic character as a people), and you are assailed by the most violent clamours, and a confused Babel of noises, as a disseminator of unfounded prejudices, or a libeller of human nature. I am sure there is nothing reasonable in this.—Harsh and disagreeable qualities wear out in nations, as in individuals, from time and intercourse with the world; but it is at the expense of their intrinsic excellences. The vices of softness and effeminacy sink deeper with age, like thorns in the flesh. Single acts or events often determine the fate of mortals, yet may have nothing to do with their general deserts or failings. He who is said to be cured of any glaring infirmity may be suspected never to have had it; and lastly, it may be laid down as a general rule, that mankind improve, by means of luxury and civilization, in social manners, and become more depraved in what relates to personal habits and character. There are few nations, as well as few men (with the exception of tyrants) that are cruel and voluptuous, immersed in pleasure, and bent on inflicting pain on others, at the same time. Ferociousness is the characteris-

tic of barbarous ages, licentiousness of more refined periods *.

I shall not undertake to decide exactly how far the original character may be modified by the general progress of society, or by particular circumstances happening to the individual; but I think the alteration (be it what it may) is more apparent than real, more in conduct than in feeling. I will not deny, that an extreme and violent difference of circumstances (as that between the savage and civilized state) will supersede the common distinctions of character, and prevent certain dispositions and sentiments from ever developing themselves. Yet with reference to this, I would observe, in the first place, that in the most opposite ranks and conditions of life, we find qualities shewing themselves, which we should have least expected, — grace in a cottage, humanity in a bandit, sincerity in courts; and secondly, in ordinary cases, and in the mixed mass of human affairs, the mind contrives to lay hold of those circumstances and motives which suit its own bias and confirm its natural disposition, whatever it may be, gentle

* Fideliter didicisse ingenuas artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

The same maxim does not establish the purity of morals that infers their mildness.

or rough, vulgar or refined, spirited or cowardly, open-hearted or cunning. The will is not blindly impelled by outward accidents, but selects the impressions by which it chooses to be governed, with great dexterity and perseverance. Or the machine may be at the disposal of fortune: the man is still his own master. The soul, under the pressure of circumstances, does not lose its original spring, but, as soon as the pressure is removed, recoils with double violence to its first position. That which any one has been long learning unwillingly, he unlearns with proportionable eagerness and haste. Kings have been said to be incorrigible to experience. The maxim might be extended, without injury, to the benefit of their subjects; for every man is a king (with all the pride and obstinacy of one) in his own little world. It is only lucky that the rest of the species are not answerable for his caprices! We laugh at the warnings and advice of others; we resent the lessons of adversity, and lose no time in letting it appear that we have escaped from its importunate hold. I do not think, with every assistance from reason and circumstances, that the slothful ever becomes active, the coward brave, the headstrong prudent, the fickle steady, the mean generous, the coarse delicate, the ill-tem-

pered amiable, or the knave honest; but that the restraint of necessity and appearances once taken away, they would relapse into their former and real character again:—*Cucullus non facit monachum.* Manners, situation, example, fashion, have a prodigious influence on exterior deportment. But do they penetrate much deeper? The thief will not steal by day; but his having this command over himself does not do away his character or calling. The priest cannot indulge in certain irregularities; but unless his pulse beats temperately from the first, he will only be playing a part through life. Again, the soldier cannot shrink from his duty in a dastardly manner; but if he has not naturally steady nerves and strong resolution,—except in the field of battle, he may be fearful as a woman, though covered with scars and honour. The judge must be disinterested and above suspicion; yet should he have from nature an itching palm, an eye servile and greedy of office, he will somehow contrive to indemnify his private conscience out of his public principle, and husband a reputation for legal integrity, as a stake to play the game of political profligacy with more advantage! There is often a contradiction in character, which is composed of various and unequal parts; and hence there will arise

an appearance of fickleness and inconsistency. A man may be slugglish by the father's side, and of a restless and uneasy temper by the mother's; and he may favour either of these inherent dispositions according to circumstances. But he will not have changed his character, any more than a man who sometimes lives in one apartment of a house and then takes possession of another, according to whim or convenience, changes his habitation. The simply phlegmatic never turns to the truly "fiery quality." So, the really gay or trifling never become thoughtful and serious. The light-hearted wretch takes nothing to heart. He, on whom (from natural carelessness of disposition) "the shot of accident and dart of chance" fall like drops of oil on water, so that he brushes them aside with heedless hand and smiling face, will never be roused from his volatile indifference to meet inevitable calamities. He may try to laugh them off, but will not put himself to any inconvenience to prevent them. I know a man that, if a tiger were to jump into his room, would only play off some joke, some "quip, or crank, or wanton wile" upon him. Mortifications and disappointments may break such a person's heart; but they will be the death of him ere they will make him provident of the future, or willing to

forego one idle gratification of the passing moment for any consideration whatever. The dilatory man never becomes punctual. Resolution is of no avail; for the very essence of the character consists in this, that the present impression is of more efficacy than any previous resolution. I have heard it said of a celebrated writer, that if he had to get a reprieve from the gallows for himself or a friend (with leave be it spoken), and was to be at a certain place at a given time for this purpose, he would be a quarter of an hour behind-hand. What is to be done in this case? Can you talk or argue a man out of his humour? You might as well attempt to talk or argue him out of a lethargy, or a fever. The disease is in the blood: you may see it (if you are a curious observer) meandering in his veins, and reposing on his eye-lids! Some of our foibles are laid in the constitution of our bodies; others in the structure of our minds, and both are irremediable. The vain man, who is full of himself, is never cured of his vanity, but looks for admiration to the last, with a restless, suppliant eye, in the midst of contumely and contempt; the modest man never grows vain from flattery, or unexpected applause, for he sees himself in the diminished scale of other things. He will not "have his nothings mon-

stered." He knows how much he himself wants, how much others have; and till you can alter this conviction in him, or make him drunk by infusing some new poison, some celestial *ichor* into his veins, you cannot make a coxcomb of him. He is too well aware of the truth of what has been said, that "the wisest amongst us is a fool in some things, as the lowest amongst men has some just notions, and therein is as wise as Socrates; so that every man resembles a statue made to stand against a wall, or in a niche; on one side it is a Plato, an Apollo, a Demosthenes; on the other, it is a rough, unformed piece of stone*." Some persons of my acquaintance, who think themselves *teres et rotundus*, and armed at all points with perfections, would not be much inclined to give in to this sentiment, the modesty of which is only equalled by its sense and ingenuity. The man of sanguine temperament is seldom weaned from his castles in the air; nor can you, by virtue of any theory, convert the cold, careful calculator into a wild enthusiast. A self-tormentor is never satisfied, come what will. He always apprehends the worst, and is indefatigable in conjuring up the apparition of danger.

* Richardson's Works, On the Science of a Connoisseur, p. 212.

He is uneasy at his own good fortune, as it takes from him his favourite topic of repining and complaint. Let him succeed to his heart's content in all that is reasonable or important, yet if there is any one thing (and *that* he is sure to find out) in which he does not get on, this embitters all the rest. I know an instance. Perhaps it is myself. Again, a surly man, in spite of warning, neglects his own interest, and will do so, because he has more pleasure in disobliging you than in serving himself. "A friendly man will shew himself friendly," to the last; for those who are said to have been spoiled by prosperity were never really good for any thing. A good-natured man never loses his native happiness of disposition: good temper is an estate for life; and a man born with common sense rarely turns out a very egregious fool. It is more common to see a fool become wise, that is, set up for wisdom, and be taken at his word by fools. We frequently judge of a man's intellectual pretensions by the number of books he writes; of his eloquence by the number of speeches he makes; of his capacity for business, by the number of offices he holds. These are not true tests. Many a celebrated author is a known blockhead (between friends); and many a minister of state, whose gravity and

self-importance pass with the world for depth of thought and weight of public care, is a laughing-stock to his very servants and dependants *. The talents of some men, indeed, which might not otherwise have had a field to display themselves, are called out by extraordinary situations, and rise with the occasion; but for all the routine and mechanical preparation, the pomp and parade and big looks of great statesmen, or what is called merely *filling office*, a very shallow capacity, with a certain immoveableness of countenance, is, I should suppose, sufficient, from what I have seen. Such political machines are not so good as the Mock-Duke in the Honey-Moon. As to genius and capacity for the works of art and science, all that a man

* The reputation is not the man. Yet all true reputation begins and ends in the opinion of a man's intimate friends. He *is* what they think him, and in the last result will be thought so by others. Where there is no solid merit to bear the pressure of personal contact, fame is but a vapour raised by accident or prejudice, and will soon vanish like a vapour or a noisome stench. But he who appears to those about him what he would have the world think him, from whom every one that approaches him in whatever circumstances brings something away to confirm the loud rumour of the popular voice, is alone great in spite of fortune. The malice of friendship, the littleness of curiosity, is as severe a test as the impartiality and enlarged views of history.

really excels in, is his own and incommunicable; what he borrows from others he has in an inferior degree, and it is never what his fame rests on. Sir Joshua observes, that Raphael, in his latter pictures, shewed that he had learnt in some measure the colouring of Titian. If he had learnt it quite, the merit would still have been Titian's; but he did not learn it, and never would. But his expression (his glory and his excellence) was what he had within himself, first and last; and this it was that seated him on the pinnacle of fame, a pre-eminence that no artist, without an equal warrant from nature and genius, will ever deprive him of. With respect to indications of early genius for particular things, I will just mention, that I myself know an instance of a little boy, who could catch the hardest tunes, when between two and three years old, without any assistance but hearing them played on a hand-organ in the street; and who followed the exquisite pieces of Mozart, played to him for the first time, so as to fall in like an echo at the close. Was this accident, or education, or natural aptitude? I think the last. All the presumptions are for it, and there are none against it.

In fine, do we not see how hard certain early impressions, or prejudices acquired later, are to

overcome? Do we not say, habit is a second nature? And shall we not allow the force of nature itself? If the real disposition is concealed for a time and tampered with, how readily it breaks out with the first excuse or opportunity! How soon does the drunkard forget his resolution and constrained sobriety, at sight of the foaming tankard and blazing hearth! Does not the passion for gaming, in which there had been an involuntary pause, return like a madness all at once? It would be needless to offer instances of so obvious a truth. But if this superinduced nature is not to be got the better of by reason or prudence, who shall pretend to set aside the original one by prescription and management? Thus, if we turn to the characters of women, we find that the shrew, the jilt, the coquette, the wanton, the intriguer, the liar, continue all their lives the same. Meet them after the lapse of a quarter or half a century, and they are still infallibly at their old work. No rebuke from experience, no lessons of misfortune, make the least impression on them. On they go; and, in fact, they can go on in no other way. They try other things, but it will not do. They are like fish out of water, except in the element of their favourite vices. They might as well not be, as cease to be what they are by nature and custom. "Can the

Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Neither do these wretched persons find any satisfaction or consciousness of their power, but in being a plague and a torment to themselves and every one else as long as they can. A good sort of woman is a character more rare than any of these, but it is equally durable. Look at the head of Hogarth's Idle Apprentice in the boat, holding up his fingers as horns at Cuckold's Point, and ask what penitentiary, what prison-discipline, would change the form of his forehead, "villainous low," or the conceptions lurking within it? Nothing:—no mother's fearful warnings,—nor the formidable precautions of that wiser and more loving mother, his country! That fellow is still to be met with somewhere in our time. Is he a spy, a jack-ketch, or an underling of office? In truth, almost all the characters in Hogarth are of the class of incorrigibles; so that I often wonder what has become of some of them. Have the worst of them been cleared out, like the breed of noxious animals? Or have they been swept away, like locusts, in the whirlwind of the French Revolution? Or has Mr. Bentham put them into his Panopticon; from which they have come out, so that nobody knows them, like the chimney-sweeper boy at Sadler's Wells, that was thrown into a cauldron and came out a little dapper vo-

lunteer? I will not deny that some of them may, like Chaucer's characters, have been modernised a little; but I think I could re-translate a few of them into their mother-tongue, the original honest *black-letter*. We may refine, we may disguise, we may equivocate, we may compound for our vices, without getting rid of them; as we change our liquors, but do not leave off drinking. We may, in this respect, look forward to a decent and moderate, rather than a thorough and radical reform. Or (without going deep into the political question) I conceive we may improve the mechanism, if not the texture of society; that is, we may improve the physical circumstances of individuals and their general relations to the state, though the internal character, like the grain in wood, or the sap in trees, that still rises, bend them how you will, may remain nearly the same. The clay that the potter uses may be of the same quality, coarse or fine in itself, though he may mould it into vessels of very different shape or beauty. Who shall alter the stamina of national character by any systematic process? Who shall make the French respectable, or the English amiable? Yet the Author of THE YEAR 2500* has done it! Suppose public spirit to become the general

* Mercier.

principle of action in the community — how would it shew itself? Would it not then become the fashion, like loyalty, and have its apes and parrots, like loyalty? The man of principle would no longer be distinguished from the crowd, the *servum pecus imitatorum.* There is a cant of democracy as well as of aristocracy; and we have seen both triumphant in our day. The Jacobin of 1794 was the Anti-Jacobin of 1814. The loudest chaunters of the Pæans of liberty were the loudest applauders of the restored doctrine of divine right. They drifted with the stream, they sailed before the breeze in either case. The politician was changed; the man was the same, the very same!—But enough of this.

I do not know any moral to be deduced from this view of the subject but one, namely, that we should mind our own business, cultivate our good qualities, if we have any, and irritate ourselves less about the absurdities of other people, which neither we nor they can help. I grant there is something in what I have said, which might be made to glance towards the doctrines of original sin, grace, election, reprobation, or the Gnostic principle that acts did not determine the virtue or vice of the character; and in those doctrines, so far as they are deducible from what I have said, I agree — but always with a salvo.

ESSAY V.

ON PEOPLE OF SENSE.

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ON PEOPLE OF SENSE.

People of sense (as they are called) give themselves great and unwarrantable airs over the rest of the world. If we examine the history of mankind, we shall find that the greatest absurdities have been most strenuously maintained by these very persons, who give themselves out as wiser than every body else. The fictions of law, the quibbles of school-divinity, the chicanery of politics, the mysteries of the Cabbala, the doctrine of Divine Right, and the secret of the philosopher's stone,—all the grave impostures that have been acted in the world, have been the contrivance of those who set up for oracles to their neighbours. The learned professions alone have propagated and lent their countenance to as many perverse contradictions and idle fallacies as have puzzled the wits, and set the credulous, thoughtless, unpretending part of mankind together by the ears, ever since the distinction between learning and ignorance subsisted. It is the part of deep in-

vestigators to teach others what they do not know themselves, and to prove by infallible rules the truth of any nonsense they happen to take in their heads, or chuse to give out to amuse the gaping multitude. What every one felt and saw for himself—the obvious dictates of common sense and humanity—such superficial studies as these afforded a very insufficient field for the exercise of reason and abstruse philosophy, in the view of "the demure, grave-looking, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed, green-eyed" despisers of popular opinion; *their* object has regularly been, by taking post in the *terra incognita* of science, to discover what could not be known, and to establish what could be of no use if it were. Hence one age is employed in pulling down what another with infinite pomp and pains has been striving to build up; and our greatest proof of wisdom is to unlearn the follies and prejudices that have been instilled into us by our predecessors. It took ages of ingenuity, of sophistry, and learning, to incorporate the Aristotelian, or scholastic philosophy, into a complete system of absurdity, applicable to all questions, and to all the purposes of life; and it has taken two centuries of metaphysical acuteness and boldness of inquiry, to take to pieces the cumbrous, disproportioned edifice, and to

convert the materials to the construction of the *modern French philosophy*, by means of verbal logic, self-evident propositions, and undoubted axioms—a philosophy just as remote from truth and nature, and setting them equally at defiance. What a number of parties and schools have we in medicine,—all noisy and dogmatical, and agreeing in nothing but contempt and reprobation of each other! Again, how many sects in religion,—all confident of being in the right, able to bring chapter and verse in support of every doctrine and tittle of belief, all ready to damn and excommunicate one another; yet only one, out of all these pretenders to superior wisdom and infallibility, *can* be right; the conclusions of all the others, drawn with such laboured accuracy, and supported with such unbending constancy and solemnity, are, and must be, a bundle of heresies and errors! How many idle schemes and intolerant practices have taken their rise from no better a foundation than a mystic garment, a divining-rod, or Pythagoras's golden thigh!—When Baxter, the celebrated controversial divine, and nonconformist minister in the reign of Charles II. went to preach at Kidderminster, he regularly every Sunday insisted from the pulpit that baptism was necessary to salvation, and

roundly assserted, that "Hell was paved with infants' skulls." This roused the indignation of the poor women of Kidderminster so much, that they were inclined to pelt their preacher as he passed along the streets. His zeal, however, was as great as theirs, and his learning and his eloquence greater; and he poured out such torrents of texts upon them, and such authorities from grave councils and pious divines, that the poor women were defeated, and forced with tears in their eyes, to surrender their natural feelings and unenlightened convictions to the proofs from reason and Scripture, which they did not know how to answer. Yet these untutored, unsophisticated dictates of nature and instinctive affection have, in their turn, triumphed over all the pride of casuistry, and merciless bigotry of Calvinism! We hear it said, that the Inquisition would not have been lately restored in Spain, but for the infatuation and prejudices of the populace. That is, after power and priestcraft have been instilling the poison of superstition and cruelty into the minds of the people for centuries together, hood-winking their understandings, and hardening every feeling of the heart, it is made a taunt and a triumph over this very people (so long the creatures of the government, carefully

moulded by them, like clay in the potter's hands, into vessels, not of honour, but of dishonour) that their prejudices and misguided zeal are the only obstacles that stand in the way of the adoption of more liberal and humane principles. The engines and establishments of tyranny, however, are the work of cool, plotting, specious heads, and not the spontaneous product of the levity and rashness of the multitude. It is a work of time to reconcile them to such abominable and revolting abuses of power and authority, as it is a work of time to wean them from their monstrous infatuation *. We may trace a speculative absurdity or practical enormity of this kind into its tenth or fifteenth century, supported story above story, gloss upon gloss, till it mocks at Heaven, and tramples upon earth, propped up on decrees and councils and synods, and appeals to popes and cardinals and fathers of the church (all grave, reverend men!) with the regular clergy and people at their side battling for it, and others below (schismatics and heretics)

* It appears, notwithstanding, that this sophistical apology for the restoration of the Spanish Inquisition, with the reversion of sovereign power into kingly hands, was false and spurious. The power has once more reverted into the hands of an abused people, and the Inquisition has been abolished.—Since this was written, there has been another turn of the screws, and——But no more on that head.

oppugning it; till in the din and commotion and collision of dry rubs and hard blows, it loses ground, as it rose, century by century; is taken to pieces by timid friends and determined foes; totters and falls, and not a fragment of it is left upon another. A text of Scripture, or a passage in ecclesiastical history, is for one whole century "torn to tatters, to very rags," and wrangled and fought for, as maintaining the doctrine of the true and Catholic church; in the next century after that, the whole body of the Reformed clergy, Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, get hold of it, wrest it out of the hands of their adversaries, and twist and torture it in a thousand different ways, to overturn the abominations of Anti-Christ; in the third a great cabal, a clamour, a noise like the confusion of Babel, jealousies, feuds, heart-burnings, wars in countries, divisions in families, schisms in the church arise, because this text has been thought to favour a lax interpretation of an article of faith, necessary to salvation; and in the fourth century from the time the question began to be agitated with so much heat and fury, it is discovered that no such text existed in the genuine copies. Yet all and each of these, Popes, councils, fathers of the church, reformed leaders, Lutherans, Calvinists, Independents, Presbyte-

rian, sects, schisms, clergy, people, all believe that their own interpretation is the true sense; that, compared with this fabricated and spurious faith of theirs, "the pillar'd firmament is rottenness, and earth's base built on stubble;" and are so far from being disposed to treat the matter lightly, or to suppose it possible that they do not proceed on solid and indubitable grounds in every contradiction they run into, that they would hand over to the civil power, to be consigned to a prison, the galleys, or the stake (as it happened), any one who demurred for a single instant to their being people of sense, gravity, and wisdom. Sense (that is, that sort of sense which consists in pretension and a claim to superiority) is shewn, not in things that are plain and clear, but in deciding upon doubts and difficulties; the greater the doubt, therefore, the greater must be the dogmatism and the consequential airs of those who profess to settle points beyond the reach of the vulgar; nay, to increase the authority of such persons, the utmost stress must be laid on the most frivolous as well as ticklish questions, and the most unconscionable absurdities have always had the stoutest sticklers, and the most numerous victims. The affectation of sense so far,

then, has given birth to more folly and done more mischief than any one thing else.

Hence we may, perhaps, be able to assign one reason, why those arts which do not undertake to unfold mysteries and inculcate dogmas, generally shine out at first with full lustre, because they start from the 'vantage ground of nature, and are not buried under the dust and rubbish of ages of perverse prejudice. Biblical critics were a long time at work to strip Popery of her finery, muffled up as she was in the formal disguises of interest, pride, and bigotry. It was like peeling off the coats of an onion, which is a work of time and patience. Titian, on the other hand, (which our protestant painters are sometimes amazed at) saw the colour of the skin at once, without any intellectual film spread over it; Raphael painted the actions and passions of men, without any indirect process, as he found them. The fine arts, such as painting, which reveals the face of nature, and poetry, which paints the heart of man, are true and unsophisticated, because they are conversant with real objects, and because they are cultivated for amusement without any further view or inference; and please by the truth of imitation only. Yet your *people of sense*, in all ages, have made a point of scouting the arts of paint-

ing, music, and poetry, as frivolous, effeminate, and worthless, as appealing to sentiment and fancy alone, and involving no useful theory or principle, because they afforded them no scope, no opportunity for *darkening knowledge*, and setting up their own blindness and frailty as the measure of abstract truth, and the standard of universal propriety. Poetry acts by sympathy with nature, that is, with the natural impulses, customs, and imaginations of men, and is, on that account, always popular, delightful, and at the same time instructive. It is nature moralizing and *idealizing* for us; inasmuch as, by shewing us things as they are, it implicitly teaches us what they ought to be; and the grosser feelings, by passing through the strainers of this imaginary, wide-extended experience, acquire an involuntary tendency to higher objects. Shakespear was, in this sense, not only one of the greatest poets, but one of the greatest moralists that we have. Those who read him are the happier, better, and wiser for it. No one (that I know of) is the happier, better, or wiser, for reading Mr. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound *. One thing is that nobody reads it. And the reason for one or both is the same, that he is not a poet, but a sophist, a theorist, a contro-

* This was written in Mr. Shelley's life-time.

versial writer in verse. He gives us, for representations of things, rhapsodies of words. He does not lend the colours of imagination and the ornaments of style to the objects of nature, but paints gaudy, flimsy, allegorical pictures on gauze, on the cobwebs of his own brain, "Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire." He assumes certain doubtful speculative notions, and proceeds to prove their truth by describing them in detail as matters of fact. This mixture of fanatic zeal with poetical licentiousness is not quite the thing. The poet describes what he pleases *as* he pleases– if he is not tied down to certain given principles, if he is not to plead prejudice and opinion as his warrant or excuse, we are left out at sea, at the mercy of every reckless fancy-monger, who may be tempted to erect an *ipse dixit* of his own, by the help of a few idle flourishes and extravagant epithets, into an exclusive system of morals and philosophy. The poet describes vividly and individually, so that any general results from what he writes must be from the aggregate of well-founded particulars: to embody an abstract theory, as if it were a given part of actual nature, is an impertinence and indecorum. The charm of poetry, however, depends on the union of fancy with reality, on its finding a tally in the human breast; and

without this, all its tumid efforts will be less pernicious than vain and abortive. Plato shewed himself to be a person of frigid apprehension, "with eye severe and beard of formal cut," when he banished the poets from his Republic, as corrupters of morals, because they described the various passions and affections of the mind. This did not suit with that Procrustes' bed of criticism on which he wished to stretch and lop them; but Homer's imitations of nature have been more popular than Plato's inversions of her; and his morality is at least as sound. The errors of nature are accidental and pardonable; those of science are systematic and incorrigible. The understanding, or reasoning faculty presumes too much over her younger sisters; and yet plays as fantastic tricks as any of them, only with more solemnity, which enhances the evil. We have partly seen what right she has, on the score of past behaviour, to set up for a strict and unerring guide. The haughtiness of her pretensions at present, "full of wise saws and modern instances," is not the most unequivocal pledge of her abandonment of her old errors. To bring down this account then from the ancients to the morderns.

People of sense, the self-conceited wise, are at all times at issue with common sense and feel-

ing. They formerly dogmatised on speculative matters, out of the reach of common apprehension; they now dogmatise with the same headstrong self-sufficiency on practical questions, more within the province of actual inquiry and observation. In this new and more circumscribed career, they set out with exploding the sense of all those who have gone before them, as of too light and fanciful a texture. They make a clear stage of all former opinions—get rid of the *mixed modes* of prejudice, authority, suggestion—and begin *de novo*, with reason for their rule, certainty for their guide, and the greatest possible good as a *sine qua non*. The modern Panoptic and Chreistomathic School of reformers and reconstructors of society propose to do it upon entirely mechanical and scientific principles. Nothing short of that will satisfy their scrupulous pretensions to wisdom and gravity. They proceed by the rule and compass, by logical diagrams, and with none but demonstrable conclusions, and leave all the taste, fancy, and sentiment of the thing to the admirers of Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution. That work is to them a very flimsy and superficial performance, because it is rhetorical and figurative, and they judge of solidity by barrenness, of depth by dryness. Till they see a little farther into it, they

will not be able to answer it, or counteract its influence; and yet that were a task of some importance to atchieve. They say that the proportions are false, because the colouring is fine, which is bad logic. If they do not like a painted statue, a florid argument, that is a matter of taste and not of reasoning. Some may conceive that the gold, the sterling bullion of thought, is the better for being wrought into rich and elegant figures; *they* are the only people who contend that it is the worse on that account. These crude projectors give, in their new plan and elevation of society, neither "princes' palaces nor poor men's cottages," but a sort of log-houses and gable-ends, in which the solid contents and square dimensions are to be ascertained and parcelled out to a nicety; they employ the carpenter, joiner, and bricklayer, but will have nothing to say to the plasterer, painter, paper-hanger, upholsterer, carver and gilder, &c.; so that I am afraid, in this fastidious and luxurious age, they will hardly find tenants for their bare walls and skeletons of houses, run up in haste and by the job. Their system wants *house-warming;* it is destitute of comfort as of outside shew; it has nothing to recommend it but its poverty and nakedness. They profess to set aside and reject all compromise with the prejudices of authority,

the allurements of sense, the customs of the world, and the instincts of nature. They will make a man with a quadrant, as the tailors at Laputa made a suit of clothes. They put the mind into a machine, as the potter puts a lump of clay into a mould, and out it comes in any clumsy or disagreeable shape that they would have it. They hate all grace, ornament, elegance. They are addicted to abstruse science, but sworn enemies to the fine arts. They are a kind of puritans in morals. Do you suppose that the race of the Iconoclasts is dead with the dispute in Laud's time about image-worship? We have just the same set of moon-eyed philosophers in our days, who cannot bear to be dazzled with the sun of beauty. They are only half-alive. They can distinguish the hard edges and determinate outline of things; but are alike insensible to the stronger impulses of passion, to the finer essences of thought. Their intellectual food does not assimilate with the juices of the mind, or turn to subtle spirit, but lies a crude, undigested heap of material substance, begetting only the windy impertinence of words. They are acquainted with the form, not the power of truth; they insist on what is necessary, and never arrive at what is desirable. They refer every thing to utility, and yet banish pleasure

with stoic pride and cynic slovenliness. They talk big of increasing the sum of human happiness, and yet in the mighty grasp and extension of their views, leave hardly any one source from which the smallest ray of satisfaction can be derived. They have an instinctive aversion to plays, novels, amusements of every kind; and this not so much from affectation or want of knowledge, as from sheer incapacity and want of taste. Shew one of these men of narrow comprehension a beautiful prospect, and he wonders you can take delight in what is of no use: you would hardly suppose that this very person had written a book, and was perhaps at the moment holding an argument, to prove that nothing is useful but what pleases. Speak of Shakespear, and another of the same *automatic* school will tell you he has read him, but could find nothing in him. Point to Hogarth, and they do confess there is something in his prints, that, by contrast, throws a pleasing light on their Utopian schemes, and the future progress of society. One of these pseudo-philosophers would think it a disparagement to compare him to Aristotle: he fancies himself as great a man as Aristotle was in his day, and that the world is much wiser now than it was in the time of Aristotle. He would be glad to live the ten remaining years of his life,

a year at a time at the end of the next ten centuries, to see the effect of his writings on social institutions, though posterity will know no more than his contemporaries that so great a man ever existed. So little does he know of himself or the world! Persons of his class, indeed, cautiously shut themselves up from society, and take no more notice of men than of animals; and from their ignorance of what mankind are, can tell exactly what they will be. "What can we reason but from what we know?"—is not their maxim. Reason with them is a mathematical force that acts with most certainty in the absence of experience, in the vacuum of pure speculation. These secure alarmists and dreaming guardians of the state are like superannuated watchmen enclosed in a sentry-box, that never hear "when thieves break through and steal." They put an oil-skin over their heads, that the dust raised by the passions and interests of the countless, ever-moving multitude, may not annoy or disturb the clearness of their vision. They build a Penitentiary, and are satisfied that Dyot-street, Bloomsbury-square, will no longer send forth its hordes of young delinquents, "an aerie of children," the embryo performers on locks and pockets for the next generation. They put men into a Panopticon, like a glass-hive, to carry on

all sorts of handicrafts ("——So work the honey-bees"—) under the omnipresent eye of the inventor, and want and idleness are banished from the world. They propose to erect a Chrestomathic school, by cutting down some fine old trees on the classic ground where Milton thought and wrote, to introduce a rabble of children, who for the Greek and Latin languages, poetry, and history, that fine pabulum of useful enthusiasm, that breath of immortality infused into our youthful blood, that balm and cordial of our future years, are to be drugged with chemistry and apothecaries' receipts, are to be taught to do every thing, and to see and feel nothing; — that the grubbing up of elegant arts and polite literature may be followed by the systematic introduction of accomplished barbarism and mechanical quackery. Such enlightened geniuses would pull down Stonehenge to build pig-sties, and would convert Westminster Abbey into a central House of Correction. It would be in vain to point to the arched windows,

"Shedding a dim, religious light,"

to touch the deep, solemn organ-stop in their ears, to turn to the statue of Newton, to gaze upon the sculptured marble on the walls, to call back the hopes and fears that lie buried there, to

cast a wistful look at Poet's Corner (they scorn the Muse !—all this would not stand one moment in the way of any of the schemes of these retrograde reformers; who, instead of being legislators for the world, and stewards to the intellectual inheritance of nations, are hardly fit to be parish-beadles, or pettifogging attorneys to a litigated estate! "Their speech bewrayeth them." The leader of this class of reasoners does not write to be understood, because he would make fewer converts, if he did. The language he adopts is his own—a word to the wise—a technical and conventional jargon, unintelligible to others, and conveying no idea to himself in common with the rest of mankind, purposely cut off from human sympathy and ordinary apprehension. Mr. Bentham's writings require to be translated into a foreign tongue or his own, before they can be read at all, except by the adepts. This is not a very fair or very wise proceeding. No man who invents words arbitrarily, can be sure that he uses them conscientiously. There is no check upon him in the popular criticism exercised by the mass of readers — there is no clue to propriety in the habitual associations of his own mind. He who pretends to fit words to things, will much oftener accommodate things to words, to answer a theory. Words are a measure of

truth. They ascertain (intuitively) the degrees, inflections, and powers of things in a wonderful manner; and he who voluntarily deprives himself of their assistance, does not go the way to arrive at any very nice or sure results. Language is the medium of our communication with the thoughts of others. But whoever becomes wise, becomes wise by sympathy; whoever is powerful, becomes so by making others sympathize with him. To think justly, we must understand what others mean: to know the value of our thoughts, we must try their effect on other minds. There is this privilege in the use of a conventional style, as there was in that of the learned languages—a man may be as absurd as he pleases without being ridiculous. His folly and his wisdom are alike a secret to the generality. If it were possible to contrive a perfect language, consistent with itself, and answering to the complexity of human affairs, there would be some excuse for the attempt; but he who knows any thing of the nature of language, or of the complexity of human thought, knows that this is impossible. What is gained in formality, is more than lost in force, ease, and perspicuity. Mr. Bentham's language, in short, is like his reasoning, a logical apparatus, which will work infallibly and perform wonders, taking

it for granted that his principles and definitions are universally true and intelligible; but as this is not exactly the case, neither the one nor the other is of much use or authority. Thus, the maxim that "mankind act from calculation" may be, in a general sense, true: but the moment you apply this maxim to subject all their actions systematically and demonstrably to reason, and to exclude passion both in common and in extreme cases, you give it a sense in which the principle is false, and in which all the inferences built upon it (many and mighty, no doubt,) fall to the ground. "Madmen reason." But in what proportion does this hold good? How far does reason guide them, or their madness err? There is a difference between reason and madness in this respect; but according to Mr. Bentham, there can be none; for all men act from calculation, and equally so. "So runs the bond." Passion is liable to be restrained by reason, as drunkenness may be changed to sobriety by some strong motive: but passion is not reason, *i. e.* does not act by the same rule or law; and therefore all that follows is, that men act (according to the common-sense of the thing) either from passion or reason, from impulse or calculation, more or less, as circumstances lead. But no sweeping, metaphysical

conclusion can be drawn from hence, as if reason were absolute, and passion a mere nonentity in the government of the world. People in general, or writers speculating on human actions, form wrong judgments concerning them, because they decide coolly, and at a distance, on what is done in heat and on the spur of the occasion. Man is not a machine; nor is he to be measured by mechanical rules. The decisions of abstract reason would apply to what men might do if all men were philosophers: but if all men were philosophers, there would be no need of systems of philosophy!

The race of alchemists and visionaries is not yet extinct; and, what is remarkable, we find them existing in the shape of deep logicians and enlightened legislators. They have got a menstruum for dissolving the lead and copper of society, and turning it to pure gold, as the adepts of old had a trick for finding the philosopher's stone. The author of St. Leon has represented his hero as possessed of the *elixir vitæ* and *aurum potabile*. The author of the Political Justice has adopted one half of this romantic fiction as a serious hypothesis, and maintains the natural immortality of man, without a figure. The truth is, that persons of the most precise and formal understandings are persons of the

loosest and most extravagant imaginations. Take from them their *norma loquendi*, their literal clue, and there is no absurdity into which they will not fall with pleasure. They have no means or principle of judging of that which does not admit of absolute proof; and between this and the idlest fiction, they perceive no medium:—as those artists who take likenesses with a machine, are quite thrown out in their calculations when they have to rely on the eye or hand alone. People who are accustomed to trust to their imaginations or feelings, know how far to go, and how to keep within certain limits: those who seldom exert these faculties are all abroad, in a wide sea of speculation without rudder or compass, the instant they leave the shore of matter-of-fact or dry reasoning, and never stop short of the last absurdity. They go all lengths, or none. They laugh at poets, and are themselves lunatics. They are the dupes of all sorts of projectors and impostors. Being of a busy, meddlesome turn, they are for reducing whatever comes into their heads (and cannot be demonstrated by mood and figure to amount to a contradiction in terms) to practice. What they would scout in a fiction, they would set about realizing in sober sadness, and melt their fortunes in compassing

what others consider as the amusement of an idle hour. Astolpho's voyage to the moon in Ariosto, they criticize sharply as a quaint and ridiculous burlesque: but if any one had the face seriously to undertake such a thing, they would immediately patronize it, and defy any one to prove by a logical dilemma that the attempt was physically impossible. So, again, we find that painters and engravers, whose attention is confined and rivetted to a minute investigation of actual objects, or of visible lines and surfaces, are apt to fly out into all the extravagance and rhapsodies of the most unbridled fanaticism. Several of the most eminent are at this moment Swedenborgians, animal magnetists, &c. The mind (as it should seem), too long tied down to the evidence of sense and a number of trifling particulars, is wearied of the bondage, revolts at it, and instinctively takes refuge in the wildest schemes and most magnificent contradictions of an unlimited faith. Poets, on the contrary, who are continually throwing off the superfluities of feeling or fancy in little sportive sallies and short excursions with the Muse, do not find the want of any greater or more painful effort of thought; leave the ascent of the "highest Heaven of Invention" as a holiday

task to persons of more mechanical habits and turn of mind; and the characters of poet and sceptic are now often united in the same individual, as those of poet and prophet were supposed to be of old.

ESSAY VI.

ON ANTIQUITY.

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THERE is no such thing as Antiquity in the ordinary acceptation we affix to the term. Whatever is or has been, while it is passing, must be modern. The early ages may have been barbarous in themselves; but they have become *ancient* with the slow and silent lapse of successive generations. The "olden times" are only such in reference to us. The past is rendered strange, mysterious, visionary, awful, from the great gap in time that parts us from it, and the long perspective of waning years. Things gone by and almost forgotten, look dim and dull, uncouth and quaint, from our ignorance of them, and the mutability of customs. But in their day—they were fresh, unimpaired, in full vigour, familiar, and glossy. The Children in the Wood, and Percy's Relics, were once recent productions; and Auld Robin Gray was, in his time, a very common-place

old fellow! The wars of York and Lancaster, while they lasted, were "lively, audible, and full of vent," as fresh and lusty as the white and red roses that distinguished their different banners, though they have since become a bye-word and a solecism in history.

The sun shone in Julius Cæsar's time just as it does now. On the road-side between Winchester and Salisbury are some remains of old Roman encampments, with their double lines of circumvallation (now turned into pasturage for sheep), which answer exactly to the descriptions of this kind in Cæsar's Commentaries. In a dull and cloudy atmosphere, I can conceive that this is the identical spot, that the first Cæsar trod,—and figure to myself the deliberate movements and scarce perceptible march of close-embodied legions. But if the sun breaks out, making its way though dazzling, fleecy clouds, lights up the blue serene, and gilds the sombre earth, I can no long persuade myself that it is the same scene as formerly, or transfer the actual image before me so far back. The brightness of nature is not easily reduced to the low, twilight tone of history; and the impressions of sense defeat and dissipate the faint traces of learning and tradition. It is only by an effort of reason, to which fancy is averse,

that I bring myself to believe that the sun shone as bright, that the sky was as blue, and the earth as green, two thousand years ago as it is at present. How ridiculous this seems; yet so it is!

The *dark* or middle ages, when every thing was hid in the fog and haze of confusion and ignorance, seem, to the same involuntary kind of prejudice, older and farther off, and more inaccessible to the imagination, than the brilliant and well-defined periods of Greece and Rome. A Gothic ruin appears buried in a greater depth of obscurity, to be weighed down and rendered venerable with the hoar of more distant ages, to have been longer mouldering into neglect and oblivion, to be a record and memento of events more wild and alien to our own times, than a Grecian temple.* Amadis de Gaul, and the seven Champions of Christen-

* "The Gothic architecture, though not so ancient as the Grecian, is more so to our imagination, with which the artist is more concerned than with absolute truth."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses*, vol. ii. p. 138.

Till I met with this remark in so circumspect and guarded a writer as Sir Joshua, I was afraid of being charged with extravagance in some of the above assertions. *Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.* It is thus that our favourite speculations are often accounted paradoxes by the ignorant, — while by the learned reader they are set down as plagiarisms.

dom, with me (honestly speaking) rank as contemporaries with Theseus, Pirithous, and the heroes of the fabulous ages. My imagination will stretch no farther back into the commencement of time than the first traces and rude dawn of civilization and mighty enterprise, in either case; and in attempting to force it upwards by the scale of chronology, it only recoils upon itself, and dwindles from a lofty survey of "the dark rearward and abyss of time," into a poor and puny calculation of insignificant cyphers. In like manner, I cannot go back to any time more remote and dreary than that recorded in Stow's and Holingshed's Chronicles, unless I turn to "the wars of old Assaracus and Inachus divine," and the gorgeous events of Eastern history, where the distance of place may be said to add to the length of time and weight of thought. That is old (in sentiment and poetry) which is decayed, shadowy, imperfect, out of date, and changed from what it was. That of which we have a distinct idea, which comes before us entire and made out in all its parts, will have a novel appearance, however old in reality,—and cannot be impressed with the romantic and superstitious character of antiquity. Those times that we can parallel with our own in civilization and knowledge, seem

advanced into the same line with our own in the order of progression. The perfection of art does not look like the infancy of things. Or those times are prominent, and, as it were, confront the present age, that are raised high in the scale of polished sosiety,—and the trophies of which stand out above the low, obscure, grovelling level of barbarism and rusticity. Thus, Rome and Athens were two cities set on a hill, that could not be hid, and that every where meet the retrospective eye of history. It is not the full-grown, articulated, thoroughly accomplished periods of the world, that we regard with the pity or reverence due to age; so much as those imperfect, unformed, uncertain periods, which seem to totter on the verge of non-existence, to shrink from the grasp of our feeble imaginations, as they crawl out of, or retire into, the womb of time, and of which our utmost assurance is to doubt whether they ever were or not!

To give some other instances of this feeling, taken at random: Whittington and his Cat, the first and favourite studies of my childhood, are, to my way of thinking, as old and reverend personages as any recorded in more authentic history. It must have been long before the invention of triple bob-majors, that Bow-bells

rung out their welcome never-to-be-forgotten peal, hailing him Thrice Lord Mayor of London. Does not all we know relating to the site of old London-wall, and the first stones that were laid of this mighty metropolis, seem of a far older date (hid in the lap of "chaos and old night") than the splendid and imposing details of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire?—Again, the early Italian pictures of Cimabue, Giotto, and Ghirlandaio are covered with the marks of unquestionable antiquity; while the Greek statues, done a thousand years before them, shine in glossy, undiminished splendour, and flourish in immortal youth and beauty. The latter Grecian Gods, as we find them there represented, are to all appearance a race of modern fine gentlemen, who *led the life of honour* with their favourite mistresses of mortal or immortal mould,—were gallant, graceful, well-dressed, and well-spoken; whereas the Gothic deities long after, carved in horrid wood or misshapen stone, and worshipped in dreary waste or tangled forest, belong, in the mind's heraldry, to almost as ancient a date as those elder and discarded Gods of the Pagan mythology, Ops, and Rhea and old Saturn,—those strange anomalies of earth and cloudy spirit, born of the elements and conscious will, and clothing them-

selves and all things with shape and formal being. The Chronicle of Brute, in Spenser's Fairy Queen, has a tolerable air of antiquity in it; so in the dramatic line, the Ghost of one of the old kings of Ormus, introduced as Prologue to Fulke Greville's play of Mustapha, is reasonably far-fetched, and palpably obscure. A monk in the Popish Calendar, or even in the Canterbury Tales, is a more questionable and out-of-the-way personage than the Chiron of Achilles, or the priest in Homer. When Chaucer, in his Troilus and Cressida, makes the Trojan hero invoke the absence of light, in these two lines—

> Why proffer'st thou light me for to sell?
> Go sell it them that smallé sele's grave!

he is guilty of an anachronism; or at least I much doubt whether there was such a profession as that of seal-engraver in the Trojan war. But the dimness of the objects and the quaintness of the allusion throw us farther back into the night of time, than the golden, glittering images of the Iliad. The Travels of Anacharsis are less obsolete at this time of day, that Coryate's Crudities, or Fuller's Worthies. "Here is some of the ancient city," said a Roman, taking up a handful of dust from beneath his feet. The ground we tread on is as old as the crea-

tion, though it does not seem so, except when collected into gigantic masses, or separated by gloomy solitudes from modern uses and the purposes of common life. The lone Helvellyn and the silent Andes are in thought coeval with the Globe itself, and can only perish with it. The Pyramids of Egypt are vast, sublime, old, eternal; but Stonehenge, built no doubt in a later day, satisfies my capacity for the sense of antiquity; it seems as if as much rain had drizzled on its grey, withered head, and it had watched out as many winter-nights; the hand of time is upon it, and it has sustained the burden of years upon its back, a wonder and a ponderous riddle, time out of mind, without known origin or use, baffling fable or conjecture, the credulity of the ignorant, or wise men's search.

Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle,
Whether by Merlin's aid, from Scythia's shore
To Amber's fatal plain Pendragon bore,
Huge frame of giant hands, the mighty pile,
T'entomb his Britons slain by Hengist's guile:
Or Druid priests, sprinkled with human gore,
Taught mid thy massy maze their mystic lore:
Or Danish chiefs, enrich'd with savage spoil,
To victory's idol vast, an unhewn shrine,
Rear'd the rude heap, or in thy hallow'd ground
Repose the kings of Brutus' genuine line;
Or here those kings in solemn state were crown'd;

Studious to trace thy wondrous origin,
We muse on many an ancient tale renown'd.

Warton.

So it is with respect to ourselves also; it is the sense of change or decay that marks the difference between the real and apparent progress of time, both in the events of our own lives and the history of the world we live in.

Impressions of a peculiar and accidental nature, of which few traces are left, and which return seldom or never, fade in the distance, and are consigned to obscurity,—while those that belong to a given and definite class are kept up, and assume a constant and tangible form, from familiarity and habit. That which was personal to myself merely, is lost and confounded with other things, like a drop in the ocean; it was but a point at first, which by its nearness affected me, and by its removal becomes nothing; while circumstances of a general interest and abstract importance present the same distinct, well-known aspect as ever, and are durable in proportion to the extent of their influence. Our own idle feelings and foolish fancies we get tired or grow ashamed of, as their novelty wears out; "when we become men, we put away childish things;" but the impressions we derive from the exercise of our higher

faculties last as long as the faculties themselves. They have nothing to do with time, place, and circumstance; and are of universal applicability and recurrence. An incident in my own history, that delighted or tormented me very much at the time, I may have long since blotted from my memory,—or have great difficulty in calling to mind after a certain period; but I can never forget the first time of my seeing Mrs. Siddons act;—which is as if it happened yesterday; and the reason is because it has been something for me to think of ever since. The petty and the personal, that which appeals to our senses and our appetites, passes away with the occasion that gives it birth. The grand and the ideal, that which appeals to the imagination, can only perish with it, and remains with us, unimpaired in its lofty abstraction, from youth to age; as wherever we go, we still see the same heavenly bodies shining over our heads! An old familiar face, the house that we were brought up in, sometimes the scenes and places that we formerly knew and loved, may be changed, so that we hardly know them again; the characters in books, the faces in old pictures, the propositions in Euclid, remain the same as when they were first pointed out to us. There is a continual alternation of generation and decay in

individual forms and feelings, that marks the progress of existence, and the ceaseless current of our lives, borne along with it; but this does not extend to our love of art or knowledge of nature. It seems a long time ago since some of the first events of the French Revolution; the prominent characters that figured then have been swept away and succeeded by others; yet I cannot say that this circumstance has in any way abated my hatred of tyranny, or reconciled my understanding to the fashionable doctrine of Divine Right. The sight of an old newspaper of that date would give one a fit of the spleen for half an hour; on the other hand, it must be confessed, Mr. Burke's Reflections on this subject are as fresh and dazzling as in the year 1791; and his Letter to a Noble Lord is even now as interesting as Lord John Russell's Letter to Mr. Wilberforce, which appeared only a few weeks back. Ephemeral politics and still-born productions are speedily consigned to oblivion; great principles and original works are a match even for time itself!

We may, by following up this train of ideas, give some account why time runs faster as our years increase. We gain by habit and experience a more determinate and settled, that is, a more uniform notion of things. We refer

each particular to a given standard. Our impressions acquire the character of identical propositions. Our most striking thoughts are turned into truisms. One observation is like another, that I made formerly. The idea I have of a certain character or subject is just the same as I had ten years ago. I have learnt nothing since. There is no alteration perceptible, no advance made; so that the two points of time seem to touch and coincide. I get from the one to the other immediately by the familiarity of habit, by the undistinguishing process of abstraction. What I can recal so easily and mechanically does not seem far off; it is completely within my reach, and consequently close to me in apprehension. I have no intricate web of curious speculation to wind or unwind, to pass from one state of feeling and opinion to the other; no complicated train of associations, which place an immeasurable barrier between my knowledge or my ignorance at different epochs. There is no contrast, no repugnance to widen the interval; no new sentiment infused, like another atmosphere, to lengthen the perspective. I am but where I was. I see the object before me just as I have been accustomed to do. The ideas are written down in the brain as in the page of a book—*totidem verbis et literis.* The

mind becomes *stereotyped.* By not going forward to explore new regions, or break up new grounds, we are thrown back more and more upon our past acquisitions; and this habitual recurrence increases the facility and indifference with which we make the imaginary transition. By thinking of what has been, we change places with ourselves, and transpose our personal identity at will; so as to fix the slider of our improgressive continuance at whatever point we please. This is an advantage or a disadvantage, which we have not in youth. After a certain period, we neither lose nor gain, neither add to, nor diminish our stock; up to that period we do nothing else but lose our former notions and being, and gain a new one every instant. Our life is like the birth of a new day; the dawn breaks apace, and the clouds clear away. A new world of thought and observation is opened to our search. A year makes the difference of an age. A total alteration takes place in our ideas, feelings, habits, looks. We outgrow ourselves. A separate set of objects, of the existence of which we had not a suspicion, engages and occupies our whole souls. Shapes and colours of all varieties, and of gorgeous tint, intercept our view of what we were. Life thickens. Time glows on its axle. Every re-

volution of the wheel gives an unsettled aspect to things. The world and its inhabitants turn round, and we forget one change of scene in another. Art woos us; science tempts us into her intricate labyrinths; each step presents unlooked-for vistas, and closes upon us our backward path. Our onward road is strange, obscure, and infinite. We are bewildered in a shadow, lost in a dream. Our perceptions have the brightness and the indistinctness of a trance. Our continuity of consciousness is broken, crumbles, and falls in pieces. We go on, learning and forgetting every hour. Our feelings are chaotic, confused, strange to each other and to ourselves. Our life does not hang together,—but straggling, disjointed, winds its slow length along, stretching out to the endless future—unmindful of the ignorant past. We seem many beings in one, and cast the slough of our existence daily. The birth of knowledge is the generation of time. The unfolding of our experience is long and voluminous; nor do we all at once recover from our surprise at the number of objects that distract our attention. Every new study is a separate, arduous, and insurmountable undertaking. We are lost in wonder at the magnitude, the difficulty, and the interminable prospect. We spell out the first years of our exist-

ence, like learning a lesson for the first time, where every advance is slow, doubtful, interesting; afterwards we rehearse our parts by rote, and are hardly conscious of the meaning. A very short period (from fifteen to twenty-five or thirty) includes the whole map and table of contents of human life. From that time we may be said to live our lives over again, repeat ourselves,—the same thoughts return at stated intervals, like the tunes of a barrel-organ; and the volume of the universe is no more than a form of words and book of reference.

Time in general is supposed to move faster or slower, as we attend more or less to the succession of our ideas, in the same manner as distance is increased or lessened by the greater or less variety of intervening objects. There is, however, a difference in this respect. Suspense, where the mind is engrossed with one idea, and kept from amusing itself with any other, is not only the most uncomfortable, but the most tiresome of all things. The fixing our attention on a single point makes us more sensible of the delay, and hangs an additional weight of fretful impatience on every moment of expectation. People in country places, without employment or artificial resources, complain that time lies heavy on their hands. Its leaden pace is not

occasioned by the quantity of thought, but by vacancy, and the continual, languid craving after excitement. It wants spirit and vivacity to give it motion. We are on the watch to see how time goes; and it appears to lag behind, because, in the absence of objects to arrest our immediate attention, we are always getting on before it. We do not see its divisions, but we feel the galling pressure of each creeping sand that measures out our hours. Again, a rapid succession of external objects and amusements, which leave no room for reflection, and where one gratification is forgotten in the next, makes time pass quickly, as well as delightfully. We do not perceive an extent of surface, but only a succession of points. We are whirled swiftly along by the hand of dissipation, but cannot stay to look behind us. On the contrary, change of scene, travelling through a foreign country, or the meeting with a variety of striking adventures that lay hold of the imagination, and continue to haunt it in a waking dream, will make days seem weeks. From the crowd of events, the number of distinct points of view, brought into a small compass, we seem to have passed through a great length of time, when it is no such thing. In traversing a flat, barren country, the monotony of our ideas fatigues, and makes

the way longer; whereas, if the prospect is diversified and picturesque, we get over the miles without counting them. In painting or writing, hours are melted almost into minutes: the mind, absorbed in the eagerness of its pursuit, forgets the time necessary to accomplish it; and, indeed, the clock often finds us employed on the same thought or part of a picture that occupied us when it struck last. It seems then, there are several other circumstances besides the number and distinctness of our ideas, to be taken into the account in the measure of time, or in considering "whom time ambles withal, whom time gallops withal, and whom he stands still withal *." Time

* "*Rosalind.* Time travels in divers paces with divers persons: I'll tell you who time ambles withal, who time trots withal, who time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.

Orlando. I prythee, who doth he trot withal?

Ros. Marry, he trots hard with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized: if the interim be but a se'nnight, time's pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven years.

Orl. Who ambles time withal?

Ros. With a priest that lacks Latin, and a rich man that hath not the gout; for the one sleeps easily, because he cannot study; and the other lives merrily, because he feels no pain; the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning; the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury. These time ambles with.

wears away slowly with a man in solitary confinement; not from the number or variety of his ideas, but from their weary sameness, fretting like drops of water. The imagination may distinguish the lapse of time by the brilliant variety of its tints, and the many striking shapes it assumes; the heart feels it by the weight of sadness, and "grim-visaged, comfortless despair!"

I will conclude this subject with remarking, that the fancied shortness of life is aided by the apprehension of a future state. The constantly directing our hopes and fears to a higher state of being beyond the present, necessarily brings death habitually before us, and defines the narrow limits within which we hold our frail existence, as mountains bound the horizon, and unavoidably draw our attention to it. This may be one reason among others why the fear of death was a less prominent feature in ancient times than it is at present; because the thoughts of it, and of a future state, were less frequently

Orl. Who doth he gallop withal?

Ros. With a thief to the gallows; for though he go as softly as foot can fall, he thinks himself too soon there.

Orl. Who stays it withal?

Ros. With lawyers in the vacation; for they sleep between term and term, and then they perceive not how time moves."—*As You Like It*, Act III. Scene II.

impressed on the mind by religion and morality. The greater progress of civilization and security in modern times has also considerably to do with our practical effeminacy; for though the old Pagans were not bound to think of death as a religious duty, they never could foresee when they should be compelled to submit to it, as a natural necessity, or accident of war, &c. They viewed death, therefore, with an eye of speculative indifference and practical resolution. That the idea of annihilation did not impress them with the same horror and repugnance as it does the modern believer, or even infidel, is easily accounted for (though a writer in the Edinburgh Review thinks the question insoluble) * from this plain reason, *viz.* that not being

* "On the other point, namely, the dark and sceptical spirit prevalent through the works of this poet (Lord Byron), we shall not now utter all that we feel, but rather direct the notice of our readers to it as a singular phenomenon in the poetry of the age. Whoever has studied the spirit of Greek and Roman literature, must have been struck with the comparative disregard and indifference, wherewith the thinking men of these exquisitely polished nations contemplated those subjects of darkness and mystery which afford at some period or other of his life, so much disquiet —we had almost said so much agony, to the mind of every reflecting modern. It is difficult to account for this in any very satisfactory, and we suspect altogether impossible to

taught from childhood a belief in a future state of existence as a part of the creed of their coun-

do so in any strictly logical, manner. In reading the works of Plato and his interpreter Cicero, we find the germs of all the doubts and anxieties to which we have alluded, so far as these are connected with the workings of our reason. The singularity is. that those clouds of darkness, which hang over the intellect, do not appear, so far as we can perceive, to have thrown at any time any very alarming shade upon the feelings or temper of the ancient sceptic. We should think a very great deal of this was owing to the brilliancy and activity of his southern fancy. The lighter spirits of antiquity, like the more mercurial of our moderns, sought refuge in mere *gaieté du cœur* and derision. The graver poets and philosophers—and poetry and philosophy were in those days seldom disunited—built up some airy and beautiful system of mysticism, each following his own devices, and suiting the erection to his own peculiarities of hope and inclination; and this being once accomplished, the mind appears to have felt quite satisfied with what it had done, and to have reposed amidst the splendours of its sand-built fantastic edifice, with as much security as if it had been grooved and rivetted into the rock of ages. The mere exercise of ingenuity in devising a system furnished consolation to its creators, or improvers. Lucretius is a striking example of all this; and it may be averred that down to the time of Claudian, who lived in the fourth century of our æra, in no classical writer of antiquity do there occur any traces of what moderns understand by the restlessness and discomfort of uncertainty, as to the government of the world and the future destinies of man."—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxx. p. 96, 97. *Article, Childe Harold*, Canto 4.

try, the supposition that there was no such state in store for them, could not shock their feelings, or confound their imagination, in the same manner as it does with us, who have been brought up in such a belief; and who live with those who deeply cherish, and would be unhappy without a full conviction of it. It is the Christian religion alone that takes us to the highest pinnacle of the Temple, to point out to us "the glory hereafter to be revealed," and that makes us shrink back with affright from the precipice of annihilation that yawns below. Those who have never entertained a hope, cannot be greatly staggered by having it struck from under their feet; those who have never been led to expect the reversion of an estate, will not be excessively disappointed at finding that the inheritance has descended to others.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WRITING AND SPEAKING.

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"Some minds are proportioned to that which may be dispatched at once, or within a short return of time: others to that which begins afar off, and is to be won with length of pursuit." LORD BACON.

IT is a common observation, that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well. Not only is it obvious that the two faculties do not always go together in the same proportions: but they are not unusually in direct opposition to each other. We find that the greatest authors often make the worst company in the world; and again, some of the liveliest fellows imaginable in conversation, or extempore speaking, seem to lose all their vivacity and spirit the moment they set pen to paper. For this a greater degree of quickness or slowness of parts, education, habit, temper, turn of mind, and a variety of collateral and predisposing causes are necessary to account. The subject is at least curious, and worthy of an attempt to explain it.

I shall endeavour to illustrate the difference by familiar examples rather than by analytical reasonings. The philosopher of old was not unwise, who defined motion by getting up and walking.

The great leading distinction between writing and speaking is, than more time is allowed for the one than the other: and hence different faculties are required for, and different objects attained by, each. He is properly the best speaker who can collect together the greatest number of apposite ideas at a moment's warning: he is properly the best writer who can give utterance to the greatest quantity of valuable knowledge in the course of his whole life. The chief requisite for the one, then, appears to be quickness and facility of perception — for the other, patience of soul, and a power increasing with the difficulties it has to master. He cannot be denied to be an expert speaker, a lively companion, who is never at a loss for something to say on every occasion or subject that offers: he, by the same rule, will make a respectable writer, who, by dint of study, can find out anything good to say upon any one point that has not been touched upon before, or who, by asking for time, can give the most complete and comprehensive view of any question. The one

must be done off-hand, at a single blow: the other can only be done by a repetition of blows, by having time to think and do better. In speaking, less is required of you, if you only do it at once, with grace and spirit: in writing, you stipulate for all that you are capable of, but you have the choice of your own time and subject. You do not expect from the manufacturer the same dispatch in executing an order that you do from the shopkeeper or warehouseman. The difference of *quicker* and *slower*, however, is not all: that is merely a difference of comparison in doing the same thing. But the writer and speaker have to do things essentially different. Besides habit, and greater or less facility, there is also a certain reach of capacity, a certain depth or shallowness, grossness or refinement of intellect, which marks out the distinction between those whose chief ambition is to shine by producing an immediate effect, or who are thrown back, by a natural bias, on the severer researches of thought and study.

We see persons of that standard or texture of mind that they can do nothing, but on the spur of the occasion: if they have time to deliberate, they are lost. There are others who have no resource, who cannot advance a step by any efforts or assistance, beyond a successful ar-

rangement of common-places: but these they have always at command, at every body's service. There is F——; meet him where you will in the street, he has his topic ready to discharge in the same breath with the customary forms of salutation; he is hand and glove with it; on it goes and off, and he manages it like Wart his caliver.

> Hear him but reason in divinity,
> And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
> You would desire that he were made a prelate.
> Let him but talk of any state-affair,
> You'd say it had been all in all his study.
> Turn him to any cause of policy,
> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter. When he speaks,
> The air, a charter'd libertine, stands still —

but, ere you have time to answer him, he is off like a shot, to repeat the same rounded, fluent observations to others:—a perfect master of the sentences, a walking polemic wound up for the day, a smartly bound political pocket-book! Set the same person to write a common paragraph, and he cannot get through it for very weariness: ask him a question, ever so little out of the common road, and he stares you in the face. What does all this bustle, animation, plausibility, and command of words amount to? A lively

flow of animal spirits, a good deal of confidence, a communicative turn, and a tolerably tenacious memory with respect to floating opinions and current phrases. Beyond the routine of the daily newspapers and coffee-house criticism, such persons do not venture to think at all: or if they did, it would be so much the worse for them, for they would only be perplexed in the attempt, and would perform their part in the mechanism of society with so much the less alacrity and easy volubility.

The most dashing orator I ever heard is the flattest writer I ever read. In speaking, he was like a volcano vomiting out *lava;* in writing, he is like a volcano burnt out. Nothing but the dry cinders, the hard shell remains. The tongues of flame, with which, in haranguing a mixed assembly, he used to illuminate his subject, and almost scorched up the panting air, do not appear painted on the margin of his works. He was the model of a flashy, powerful demagogue —a madman blest with a fit audience. He was possessed, infuriated with the patriotic *mania;* he seemed to rend and tear the rotten carcase of corruption with the remorseless, indecent rage of a wild beast: he mourned over the bleeding body of his country, like another Antony over the dead body of Cæsar, as if he would "move

the very stones of Rome to rise and mutiny:" he pointed to the "Persian abodes, the glittering temples" of oppression and luxury, with prophetic exultation; and, like another Helen, had almost fired another Troy! The lightning of national indignation flashed from his eye; the workings of the popular mind were seen labouring in his bosom: it writhed and swelled with its rank "fraught of aspics' tongues," and the poison frothed over at his lips. Thus qualified, he "wielded at will the fierce democracy, and fulmin'd over" an area of souls, of no mean circumference. He who might be said to have "roared you in the ears of the groundlings an 'twere any lion, aggravates his voice" on paper, "like any sucking-dove." It is not merely that the same individual cannot sit down quietly in his closet, and produce the same, or a correspondent effect—that what he delivers over to the compositor is tame, and trite, and tedious—that he cannot by any means, as it were, "create a soul under the ribs of death"—but sit down yourself, and read one of these very popular and electrical effusions (for they have been published) and you would not believe it to be the same! The thunder-and-lightning mixture of the orator turns out a mere drab-coloured suit in the person of the prose-writer. We wonder

at the change, and think there must be some mistake, some leger-de-main trick played off upon us, by which what before appeared so fine now appears to be so worthless. The deception took place *before;* now it is removed. "Bottom! thou art translated!" might be placed as a motto under most collections of printed speeches that I have had the good fortune to meet with, whether originally addressed to the people, the senate, or the bar. Burke's and Windham's form an exception: Mr. Coleridge's *Conciones ad Populum* do not, any more than Mr. Thelwall's *Tribune.* What we read is the same: what we hear and see is different—"the self-same words, but *not* to the self-same tune." The orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of the voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude, the inexplicable dumb shew and noise,—all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear,"—are no longer there, and without these he is nothing;—his "fire and air" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the God of eloquence and of our idolatry sinks into a common mortal, or an image of lead, with a few labels, nicknames, and party watch-words stuck in his mouth. The truth is, that these always made up the stock of his intellectual wealth; but a certain exaggeration and extravagance of *manner*

covered the nakedness, and swelled out the emptiness of the *matter*: the sympathy of angry multitudes with an impassioned theatrical declaimer supplied the place of argument or wit; while the physical animation and ardour of the speaker evaporated in "sound and fury, signifying nothing," and leaving no trace behind it. A popular speaker (such as I have been here describing) is like a vulgar actor off the stage—take away his cue, and he has nothing to say for himself. Or he is so accustomed to the intoxication of popular applause, that without that stimulus he has no motive or power of exertion left—neither imagination, understanding, liveliness, common sense, words or ideas—he is fairly cleared out; and in the intervals of sober reason, is the dullest and most imbecil of all mortals.

An orator can hardly get beyond *commonplaces*: if he does, he gets beyond his hearers. The most successful speakers, even in the House of Commons, have not been the best scholars or the finest writers—neither those who took the most profound views of their subject, nor who adorned it with the most original fancy, or the richest combinations of language. Those speeches that in general told best at the time, are not now readable. What were the mate-

rials of which they were chiefly composed? An imposing detail of passing events, a formal display of official documents, an appeal to established maxims, an echo of popular clamour, some worn-out metaphor newly vamped-up,—some hackneyed argument used for the hundredth, nay thousandth time, to fall in with the interests, the passions, or prejudices of listening and devoted admirers;—some truth or falsehood, repeated as the Shibboleth of party time out of mind, which gathers strength from sympathy as it spreads, because it is understood or assented to by the million, and finds, in the increased action of the minds of numbers, the weight and force of an instinct. A COMMON-PLACE does not leave the mind "sceptical, puzzled, and undecided in the moment of action:"—"it gives a body to opinion, and a permanence to fugitive belief." It operates mechanically, and opens an instantaneous and infallible communication between the hearer and speaker. A set of cant-phrases, arranged in sounding sentences, and pronounced "with good emphasis and discretion," keep the gross and irritable humours of an audience in constant fermentation; and levy no tax on the understanding. To give a reason for any thing is to breed a doubt of it, which doubt you may not remove in the sequel; either

because your reason may not be a good one, or because the person to whom it is addressed may not be able to comprehend it, or because *others* may not be able to comprehend it. He who offers to go into the grounds of an acknowledged axiom, risks the unanimity of the company "by most admired disorder," as he who digs to the foundation of a building to shew its solidity, risks its falling. But a common-place is enshrined in its own unquestioned evidence, and constitutes its own immortal basis. Nature, it has been said, abhors a *vacuum;* and the House of Commons, it might be said, hates every thing but a common-place!—Mr. Burke did not often shock the prejudices of the House: he endeavoured to *account for them*, to "lay the flattering unction" of philosophy "to their souls." They could not endure him. Yet he did not attempt this by dry argument alone: he called to his aid the flowers of poetical fiction, and strewed the most dazzling colours of language over the Standing Orders of the House. It was a double offence to them—an aggravation of the encroachments of his genius. They would rather "hear a cat mew or an axle-tree grate," than hear a man talk philosophy by the hour—

> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,

And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

He was emphatically called the *Dinner-Bell.* They went out by shoals when he began to speak. They coughed and shuffled him down. While he was uttering some of the finest observations (to speak in compass) that ever were delivered in that House, they walked out, not as the beasts came out of the ark, by twos and by threes, but in droves and companies of tens, of dozens, and scores! Oh! it is "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," when you are in the middle of a delicate speculation to see "a robusteous, periwig-pated fellow" deliberately take up his hat and walk out. But what effect could Burke's finest observations be expected to have on the House of Commons in their corporate capacity? On the supposition that they were original, refined, comprehensive, his auditors had never heard, and assuredly they had never thought of them before: how then should they know that they were good or bad, till they had time to consider better of it, or till they were told what to think? In the mean time, their effect would be to stop the question: they were blanks in the debate: they could at best only be laid aside and left *ad referendum.* What would it signify if four or five persons, at

the utmost, felt their full force and fascinating power the instant they were delivered? They would be utterly unintelligible to nine-tenths of the persons present, and their impression upon any particular individual, more knowing than the rest, would be involuntarily paralysed by the torpedo touch of the elbow of a country-gentleman or city-orator. There is a reaction in insensibility as well as in enthusiasm; and men in society judge not by their own convictions, but by sympathy with others. In reading, we may go over the page again, whenever any thing new or questionable "gives us pause:" besides, we are by ourselves, and it is *a word to the wise.* We are not afraid of understanding too much, and being called upon to unriddle. In hearing we are (saving the mark!) in the company of fools; and time presses. Was the debate to be suspended while Mr. Fox or Mr. Windham took this or that Honourable Member aside, to explain to them *that fine observation* of Mr. Burke's, and to watch over the new birth of their understandings, the dawn of this new light! If we were to wait till Noble Lords and Honourable Gentlemen were inspired with a relish for abstruse thinking, and a taste for the loftier flights of fancy, the business of this great nation would shortly be at a stand.

No: it is too much to ask that our good things should be duly appreciated by the first person we meet, or in the next minute after their disclosure; if the world are a little, a very little, the wiser or better for them a century hence, it is full as much as can be modestly expected!—The impression of any thing delivered in a large assembly must be comparatively null and void, unless you not only understand and feel its value yourself, but are conscious that it is felt and understood by the meanest capacity present. Till that is the case, the speaker is in your power, not you in his. The eloquence that is effectual and irresistible must stir the inert mass of prejudice, and pierce the opaquest shadows of ignorance. Corporate bodies move slow in the progress of intellect, for this reason, that they must keep back, like convoys, for the heaviest sailing vessels under their charge. The sinews of the wisest councils are, after all, impudence and interest: the most enlightened bodies are often but slaves of the weakest intellects they reckon among them, and the best-intentioned are but tools of the greatest hypocrites and knaves.—To conclude what I had to say on the character of Mr. Burke's parliamentary style, I will just give an instance of what I mean in affirming that it was too recondite for his hearers;

and it shall be even in so obvious a thing as a quotation. Speaking of the newfangled French Constitution, and in particular of the King (Louis XVI.) as the chief power in form and appearance only, he repeated the famous lines in Milton describing Death, and concluded with peculiar emphasis,

—— What *seem'd* its head,
The *likeness* of a kingly crown had on.

The person who heard him make the speech said, that, if ever a poet's language had been finely applied by an orator to express his thoughts and make out his purpose, it was in this instance. The passage, I believe, is not in his reported speeches; and I should think, in all likelihood, it "fell still-born" from his lips; while one of Mr. Canning's well-thumbed quotations out of Virgil would electrify the Treasury Benches, and be echoed by all the politicians of his own standing, and the tyros of his own school, from Lord Liverpool in the Upper down to Mr. William Ward in the Lower House.

Mr. Burke was an author before he was a Member of Parliament: he ascended to that practical eminence from "the platform" of his literary pursuits. He walked out of his study into the House. But he never became a thorough-bred debater. He was not "native to

that element," nor was he ever "subdued to the quality" of that motley crew of knights, citizens, and burgesses. The late Lord Chatham was made for, and by it. He seemed to vault into his seat there, like Hotspur, with the exclamation in his mouth—"that Roan shall be my throne." Or he sprang out of the genius of the House of Commons, like Pallas from the head of Jupiter, completely armed. He assumed an ascendancy there from the very port and stature of his mind—from his aspiring and fiery temperament. He vanquished, because he could not yield. He controlled the purposes of others, because he was strong in his own obdurate self-will. He convinced his followers, by never doubting himself. He did not argue, but assert; he took what he chose for granted, instead of making a question of it. He was not a dealer in *moot-points*. He seized on some strong-hold in the argument, and held it fast with a convulsive grasp—or wrested the weapons out of his adversaries' hands by main force. He entered the lists like a gladiator. He made political controversy a combat of personal skill and courage. He was not for wasting time in long-winded discussions with his opponents, but tried to disarm them by a word, by a glance of his eye, so that they

should not dare to contradict or confront him again. He did not wheedle, or palliate, or circumvent, or make a studied appeal to the reason or the passions—he *dictated* his opinions to the House of Commons. "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—But if he did not produce such an effect either by reason or imagination, how did he produce it? The principle by which he exerted his influence over others (and it is a principle of which some speakers that I might mention seem not to have an idea, even in possibility) was sympathy. He himself evidently had a strong possession of his subject, a thorough conviction, an intense interest; and this communicated itself from his *manner*, from the tones of his voice, from his commanding attitudes, and eager gestures, instinctively and unavoidably to his hearers. His will was surcharged with electrical matter like a Voltaic battery; and all who stood within its reach felt the full force of the shock. Zeal will do more than knowledge. To say the truth, there is little knowledge,—no ingenuity, no parade of individual details, not much attempt at general argument, neither wit nor fancy in his speeches —but there are a few plain truths told home: whatever he says, he does not mince the

matter, but clenches it in the most unequivocal manner, and with the fullest sense of its importance, in clear, short, pithy, old English sentences. The most obvious things, as he puts them, read like axioms—so that he appears, as it were, the genius of common sense personified; and in turning to his speeches you fancy that you have met with (at least) one honest statesman!—Lord Chatham commenced his career in the intrigues of a camp and the bustle of a mess-room; where he probably learnt that the way to govern others, is to make your will your warrant, and your word a law. If he had spent the early part of his life, like Mr. Burke, in writing a treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, and in dreaming over the abstract nature and causes of things, he would never have taken the lead he did in the British Senate.

Both Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt (though as opposite to each other as possible) were essentially speakers, not authors, in their mode of oratory. Beyond the moment, beyond the occasion, beyond the immediate power shewn, astonishing as that was, there was little remarkable or worth preserving in their speeches. There is no thought in them that implies a habit of deep and refined reflection (more than we are accustomed ordinarily to find in people of

education); there is no knowledge that does not lie within the reach of obvious and mechanical search; and as to the powers of language, the chief miracle is, that a source of words so apt, forcible, and well-arranged, so copious and unfailing, should have been found constantly open to express their ideas without any previous preparation. Considered as written style, they are not far out of the common course of things; and perhaps it is assuming too much, and making the wonder greater than it is, with a very natural love of indulging our admiration of extraordinary persons, when we conceive that parliamentary speeches are in general delivered without any previous preparation. They do not, it is true, allow of preparation at the moment, but they have the preparation of the preceding night, and of the night before that, and of nights, weeks, months, and years of the same endless drudgery and routine, in going over the same subjects, argued (with some paltry difference) on the same grounds. *Practice makes perfect.* He who has got a speech by heart on any particular occasion, cannot be much gravelled for lack of matter on any similar occasion in future. Not only are the topics the same; the very same phrases—whole batches of them,—are served up as the Order

of the Day; the same parliamentary bead-roll of grave impertinence is twanged off, in full cadence, by the Honourable Member or his Learned and Honourable Friend; and the well-known, voluminous, calculable periods roll over the drowsy ears of the auditors, almost before they are delivered from the vapid tongue that utters them! It may appear, at first sight, that here are a number of persons got together, picked out from the whole nation, who can speak at all times upon all subjects in the most exemplary manner; but the fact is, they only repeat the same things over and over on the same subjects,—and they obtain credit for general capacity and ready wit, like Chaucer's Monk, who, by having three words of Latin always in his mouth, passed for a great scholar.

> A few termes coude he, two or three,
> That he had learned out of som decree;
> No wonder is, he herd it all the day.

Try them on any other subject *out of doors*, and see how soon the extempore wit and wisdom "will halt for it." See how few of those who have distinguished themselves *in* the House of Commons have done any thing *out of it*; how few that have, shine *there!* Read over the collections of old Debates, twenty, forty, eighty, a hundred years ago; they are the same *mutatis*

mutandis, as those of yesterday. You wonder to see how little has been added; you grieve that so little has been lost. Even in their own favourite topics, how much are they to seek! They still talk gravely of the Sinking Fund in St. Stephen's Chapel, which has been for some time exploded as a juggle by Mr. Place of Charing-Cross; and a few of the principles of Adam Smith, which every one else had been acquainted with long since, are just now beginning to dawn on the collective understanding of the two Houses of Parliament. Instead of an exuberance of sumptuous matter, you have the same meagre standing dishes for every day in the year. You must serve an apprenticeship to a want of originality, to a suspension of thought and feeling. You are in a go-cart of prejudices, in a regularly constructed machine of pretexts and precedents; you are not only to wear the livery of other men's thoughts, but there is a House-of-Commons jargon which must be used for every thing. A man of simplicity and independence of mind cannot easily reconcile himself to all this formality and mummery; yet woe to him that shall attempt to discard it! You can no more move against the stream of custom, than you can make head against a crowd of people; the mob of lords and gentle-

men will not let you speak or think but as they do. You are hemmed in, stifled, pinioned, pressed to death,—and if you make one false step, are "trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude!" Talk of mobs! Is there any body of people that has this character in a more consummate degree than the House of Commons? Is there any set of men that determines more by acclamation, and less by deliberation and individual conviction? That is moved more *en masse*, in its aggregate capacity, as brute force and physical number? That judges with more Midas ears, blind and sordid, without discriminaton of right and wrong? The greatest test of courage I can conceive, is to speak truth in the House of Commons. I have heard Sir Francis Burdett say things there which I could not enough admire; and which he could not have ventured upon saying, if, besides his honesty, he had not been a man of fortune, of family, of character,—aye, and a very good-looking man into the bargain! Dr. Johnson had a wish to try his hand in the House of Commons. An elephant might as well have been introduced there, in all the forms: Sir William Curtis makes a better figure. Either he or the Speaker (Onslow) must have resigned. The orbit of his intellect was not the one in which

the intellect of the house moved by ancient privilege. *His* common-places were not *their* common-places.—Even Horne Tooke failed, with all his *tact*, his self-possession, his ready talent, and his long practice at the hustings. He had weapons of his own, with which he wished to make play, and did not lay his hand upon the established levers for wielding the House of Commons. A succession of dry, sharp-pointed sayings, which come in excellently well in the pauses or quick turns of conversation, do not make a speech. A series of drops is not a stream. Besides, he had been in the practice of rallying his guests and tampering with his subject; and this ironical tone did not suit his new situation. He had been used to "give his own little Senate laws," and when he found the resistance of the great one more than he could manage, he shrunk back from the attempt, disheartened and powerless. It is nothing that a man can talk (the better, the worse it is for him) unless he can talk in trammels; he must be drilled into the regiment; he must not run out of the course! The worst thing a man can do is to set up for a wit there—or rather (I should say) for a humourist—to say odd out-of-the-way things, to ape a character, to play the clown or

the wag in the House. This is the very forlorn hope of a parliamentary ambition. They may tolerate it till they know what you are at, but no longer. It may succeed once or twice, but the third time you will be sure to break your neck. They know nothing of you, or your whims, nor have they time to look at a puppet-show. "They look only at the stop-watch, my Lord!" We have seen a very lively sally of this sort which failed lately. The House of Commons is the last place where a man will draw admiration by making a jest of his own character. But if he has a mind to make a jest of humanity, of liberty, and of common sense and decency, he will succeed well enough!

The only person who ever "hit the House between wind and water" in this way,—who made sport for the Members, and kept his own dignity (in our time at least), was Mr. Windham. He carried on the traffic in parliamentary conundrums and enigmas with great *eclat* for more than one season. He mixed up a vein of characteristic eccentricity with a succession of far-fetched and curious speculations, very pleasantly. Extremes meet; and Mr. Windham overcame the obstinate attachment of his hearers to fixed opinions by the force of paradoxes. He startled his bed-rid audience effectually. A

paradox was a treat to them, on the score of novelty at least; "the sight of one," according to the Scotch proverb, "was good for sore eyes." So Mr. Windham humoured them in the thing for once. He took all sorts of commonly received doctrines and notions (with an understood reserve)—reversed them, and set up a fanciful theory of his own, instead. The changes were like those in a pantomime. Ask the first old woman you met her opinion on any subject, and you could get at the statesman's; for his would be just the contrary. He would be wiser than the old woman at any rate. If a thing had been thought cruel, he would prove that it was humane; if barbarous, manly; if wise, foolish; if sense, nonsense. His creed was the antithesis of common sense, loyalty excepted. Economy he could turn into ridicule, "as a saving of cheese-parings and candle-ends;"—and total failure was with him "negative success." He had no occasion, in thus setting up for original thinking, to inquire into the truth or falsehood of any proposition, but to ascertain whether it was currently believed in, and then to contradict it point-blank. He made the vulgar prejudices of others "servile ministers" to his own solecisms. It was not easy always to say whether he was in jest or earnest—but he contrived

to hitch his extravagances into the midst of some grave debate; the House had their laugh for nothing; the question got into shape again, and Mr. Windham was allowed to have been more *brilliant* than ever *.

Mr. Windham was, I have heard, a silent man in company. Indeed his whole style was an artificial and studied imitation, or capricious caricature of Burke's bold, natural, discursive manner. This did not imply much spontaneous power or fertility of invention; he was an intellectual posture-master, rather than a man of real elasticity and vigour of mind. Mr. Pitt was also, I believe, somewhat taciturn and reserved. There was nothing clearly in the subject-matter of his speeches to connect with the ordinary topics of discourse, or with any given aspect of human life. One would expect him to be quite as much in the clouds as the automaton chess-player, or the last new Opera-singer. Mr. Fox said little in private, and complained

* It must be granted, however, that there was something *piquant* and provoking in his manner of "making the worse appear the better reason." In keeping off the ill odour of a bad cause, he applied hartshorn and burnt feathers to the offended sense; and did not, like Mr. Canning, treat us with the faded flowers of his oratory, like the faint smell of a perfumer's shop, or try to make Government "love-locks" of dead men's hair!

that in writing he had no style. So (to compare great things with small) Jack Davies, the unrivalled racket-player, never said any thing at all in company, and was what is understood by a modest man. When the racket was out of his hand, his occupation, his delight, his glory, (that which he excelled all mankind in) was gone! So when Mr. Fox had no longer to keep up the ball of debate, with the floor of Saint Stephen's for a stage, and the world for spectators of the game, it is hardly to be wondered at that he felt a little at a loss—without his usual train of subjects, the same crowd of associations, the same spirit of competition, or stimulus to extraordinary exertion. The excitement of leading in the House of Commons (which, in addition to the immediate attention and applause that follows, is a sort of whispering gallery to all Europe) must act upon the brain like brandy or laudanum upon the stomach; and must, in most cases, produce the same debilitating effects afterwards. A man's faculties must be quite exhausted, his virtue gone out of him. That any one accustomed all his life to the tributary roar of applause from the great council of the nation, should think of dieting himself with the prospect of posthumous fame as an author, is like offering a confirmed

dram-drinker a glass of fair water for his morning's draught. Charles Fox is not to be blamed for having written an indifferent history of James II. but for having written a history at all. It was not his business to write a history —his business was *not to have made any more Coalitions!* But he found writing so dull, he thought it better to be a colleague of Lord Grenville! He did not want style (to say so is nonsense, because the style of his speeches was just and fine)—he wanted a sounding-board in the ear of posterity to try his periods upon. If he had gone to the House of Commons in the morning, and tried to make a speech fasting, when there was nobody to hear him, he might have been equally disconcerted at his want of style. The habit of speaking is the habit of being heard, and of wanting to be heard; the habit of writing is the habit of thinking aloud, but without the help of an echo. The orator sees his subject in the eager looks of his auditors; and feels doubly conscious, doubly impressed with it in the glow of their sympathy; the author can only look for encouragement in a blank piece of paper. The orator feels the impulse of popular enthusiasm,

—— like proud seas under him:

the only Pegasus the writer has to boast, is the

hobby-horse of his own thoughts and fancies. How is he to get on then? From the lash of necessity. We accordingly see persons of rank and fortune continually volunteer into the service of oratory—and the State; but we have few authors who are not paid by the sheet!—I myself have heard Charles Fox engaged in familiar conversation. It was in the Louvre. He was describing the pictures to two persons that were with him. He spoke rapidly, but very unaffectedly. I remember his saying—"All those blues and greens and reds are the Guercinos; you may know them by the colours." He set Opie right as to Domenichino's Saint Jerome. "You will find," he said, "though you may not be struck with it at first, that there is a great deal of truth and good sense in that picture." There was a person at one time a good deal with Mr. Fox, who, when the opinion of the latter was asked on any subject, very frequently interposed to give the answer. This sort of tantalizing interruption was ingeniously enough compared by some one, to walking up Ludgate-hill, and having the spire of St. Martin's constantly getting in your way, when you wish to see the dome of St. Paul's!—Burke, it is said, conversed as he spoke in public, and as he wrote. He was communicative, diffuse,

magnificent. "What is the use," said Mr. Fox to a friend, "of Sheridan's trying to swell himself out in this manner, like the frog in the fable?"—alluding to his speech on Warren Hastings's trial. "It is very well for Burke to express himself in that figurative way. It is natural to him; he talks so to his wife, to his servants, to his children; but as for Sheridan, he either never opens his mouth at all, or if he does, it is to utter some joke. It is out of the question for him to affect these *Orientalisms*." Burke once came into Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting-room, when one of his pupils was sitting for one of the sons of Count Ugolino; this gentleman was personally introduced to him;—"Ah! then," said Burke, "I find that Mr. N-- has not only a head that would do for Titian to paint, but is himself a painter." At another time, he came in when Goldsmith was there, and poured forth such a torrent of violent personal abuse against the King, that they got to high words, and Goldsmith threatened to leave the room if he did not desist. Goldsmith bore testimony to his powers of conversation. Speaking of Johnson, he said, "Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" With respect to his facility in composition, there are contradictory accounts. It has been stated by some, that he wrote out a

plain sketch first, like a sort of dead colouring, and added the ornaments and tropes afterwards. I have been assured by a person who had the best means of knowing, that the *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the most rapid, impetuous, glancing, and sportive of all his works) was printed off, and the proof sent to him: and that it was returned to the printing-office with so many alterations and passages interlined, that the compositors refused to correct it as it was—took the whole matter in pieces, and re-set the copy. This looks like elaboration and afterthought. It was also one of Burke's latest compositions.* A regularly bred speaker would have made up his mind beforehand; but Burke's mind being, as originally constituted and by its first bias, that of an author, never became set. It was in further search and progress. It had an internal spring left. It was not tied down to the printer's form. It could still project itself into new beauties, and explore strange regions from the unwearied impulse of its own delight or curiosity. Perhaps among the passages interlined, in this case, were the description of the

* Tom Paine, while he was busy about any of his works, used to walk out, compose a sentence or paragraph in his head, come home and write it down, and never altered it afterwards. He then added another, and so on, till the whole was completed.

Duke of Bedford, as " the Leviathan among all the creatures of the crown,"—the *catalogue raisonnée* of the Abbé Sieyes's pigeon-holes,—or the comparison of the English Monarchy to " the proud keep of Windsor, with its double belt of kindred and coeval towers." Were these to be given up? If he had had to make his defence of his pension in the House of Lords, they would not have been ready in time, it appears; and, besides, would have been too difficult of execution on the spot: a speaker must not set his heart on such forbidden fruit. But Mr. Burke was an author, and the press did not " shut the gates of *genius* on mankind." A set of oratorical flourishes, indeed, is soon exhausted, and is generally all that the extempore speaker can safely aspire to. Not so with the resources of art or nature, which are inexhaustible, and which the writer has time to seek out, to embody, and to fit into shape and use, if he has the strength, the courage, and patience to do so.

There is then a certain range of thought and expression beyond the regular rhetorical routine, on which the author, to vindicate his title, must trench somewhat freely. The proof that this is understood to be so, is, that what is called an oratorical style is exploded from all good writing; that we immediately lay down an article,

even in a common newspaper, in which such phrases occur as "the Angel of Reform," "the drooping Genius of Albion;" and that a very brilliant speech at a loyal dinner-party makes a very flimsy, insipid pamphlet. The orator has to get up for a certain occasion a striking compilation of partial topics, which, "to leave no rubs or botches in the work," must be pretty familiar, as well as palatable to his hearers; and in doing this, he may avail himself of all the resources of an artificial memory. The writer must be original, or he is nothing. He is not to take up with ready-made goods; for he has time allowed him to create his own materials, to make novel combinations of thought and fancy, to contend with unforeseen difficulties of style and execution, while we look on, and admire the growing work in secret and at leisure. There is a degree of finishing as well as of solid strength in writing, which is not to be got at every day, and we can wait for perfection. The author owes a debt to truth and nature which he cannot satisfy at sight, but he has pawned his head on redeeming it. It is not a string of clap-traps to answer a temporary or party-purpose,—violent, vulgar, and illiberal,—but general and lasting truth that we require at his hands. We go to him as pupils, not as partisans. We have a right to expect

from him profounder views of things; finer observations; more ingenious illustrations; happier and bolder expressions. He is to give the choice and picked results of a whole life of study; what he has struck out in his most felicitous moods, has treasured up with most pride, has laboured to bring to light with most anxiety and confidence of success. He may turn a period in his head fifty different ways, so that it comes out smooth and round at last. He may have caught a glimpse of a simile, and it may have vanished again: let him be on the watch for it, as the idle boy watches for the lurking-place of the adder. We can wait. He is not satisfied with a reason he has offered for something; let him wait till he finds a better reason. There is some word, some phrase, some idiom that expresses a particular idea better than any other, but he cannot for the life of him recollect it: let him wait till he does. Is it strange that among twenty thousand words in the English language, the one of all others that he most needs should have escaped him? There are more things in nature than there are words in the English language, and he must not expect to lay rash hands on them all at once.

> Learn to *write* slow: all other graces
> Will follow in their proper places.

You allow a writer a year to think of a subject; he should not put you off with a truism at last. You allow him a year more to find out words for his thoughts; he should not give us an echo of all the fine things that have been said a hundred times.* All authors, however, are not so squeamish; but take up with words and ideas as they find them delivered down to them. Happy are they who write Latin verses! Who copy the style of Dr. Johnson! Who hold up the phrase of ancient Pistol! They do not trouble themselves with those hair-breadth distinctions of thought or meaning that puzzle nicer heads—let us leave them to their repose! A person in habits of composition often hesitates in conversation for a particular word: it is because he is in search of the best word, and *that* he cannot hit upon. In writing he would stop till it came.† It is not true, however, that the scholar could avail himself of a more ordinary word if he chose, or readily acquire a command of ordinary language; for his associations are habitually in-

* Just as a poet ought not to cheat us with lame metre and defective rhymes, which might be excusable in an improvisatori versifier.

† That is essentially a bad style which seems as if the person writing it never stopped for breath, nor gave himself a moment's pause, but strove to make up by redundancy and fluency for want of choice and correctness of expression.

tense, not vague and shallow; and words occur to him only as *tallies* to certain modifications of feeling. They are links in the chain of thought. His imagination is fastidious, and rejects all those that are "of no mark or likelihood." Certain words are in his mind indissolubly wedded to certain things; and none are admitted at the *levée* of his thoughts, but those of which the banns have been solemnised with scrupulous propriety. Again, the student finds a stimulus to literary exertion, not in the immediate *éclat* of his undertaking, but in the difficulty of his subject, and the progressive nature of his task. He is not wound up to a sudden and extraordinary effort of presence of mind; but is for ever awake to the silent influxes of things, and his life is one long labour. Are there no sweeteners of his toil? No reflections, in the absence of popular applause or social indulgence, to cheer him on his way? Let the reader judge. *His* pleasure is the counterpart of, and borrowed from the same source as the writer's. A man does not read out of vanity, nor in company, but to amuse his own thoughts. If the reader, from disinterested and merely intellectual motives, relishes an author's "fancies and good nights," the last may be supposed to have relished them no less. If he laughs at a joke, the inventor chuckled

over it to the full as much. If he is delighted with a phrase, he may be sure the writer jumped at it; if he is pleased to cull a straggling flower from the page, he may believe that it was plucked with no less fondness from the face of nature. Does he fasten, with gathering brow and looks intent, on some difficult speculation? He may be convinced that the writer thought it a fine thing to split his brain in solving so curious a problem, and to publish his discovery to the world. There is some satisfaction in the contemplation of power; there is also a little pride in the conscious possession of it. With what pleasure do we read books! If authors could but feel this, or remember what they themselves once felt, they would need no other temptation to persevere.

To conclude this account with what perhaps I ought to have set out with, a definition of the character of an author. There are persons who in society, in public intercourse, feel no excitement,

> "Dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm,"

but who, when left alone, can lash themselves into a foam. They are never less alone than when alone. Mount them on a dinner-table, and they have nothing to say; shut them up in a room by themselves, and they are inspired.

They are "made fierce with dark keeping." In revenge for being tongue-tyed, a torrent of words flows from their pens, and the storm which was so long collecting comes down apace. It never rains but it pours. Is not this strange, unaccountable? Not at all so. They have a real interest, a real knowledge of the subject, and they cannot summon up all that interest, or bring all that knowledge to bear, while they have any thing else to attend to. Till they can do justice to the feeling they have, they can do nothing. For this they look into their own minds, not in the faces of a gaping multitude. What they would say (if they could) does not lie at the orifices of the mouth ready for delivery, but is wrapped in the folds of the heart and registered in the chambers of the brain. In the sacred cause of truth that stirs them, they would put their whole strength, their whole being into requisition; and as it implies a greater effort to drag their words and ideas from their lurking-places, so there is no end when they are once set in motion. The whole of a man's thoughts and feelings cannot lie on the surface, made up for use; but the whole must be a greater quantity, a mightier power, if they could be got at, layer under layer, and brought into play by the levers of imagination and reflection. Such a person

then sees farther and feels deeper than most others. He plucks up an argument by the roots, he tears out the very heart of his subject. He has more pride in conquering the difficulties of a question, than vanity in courting the favour of an audience. He wishes to satisfy himself before he pretends to enlighten the public. He takes an interest in things in the abstract more than by common consent. Nature is his mistress, truth his idol. The contemplation of a pure idea is the ruling passion of his breast. The intervention of other people's notions, the being the immediate object of their censure or their praise, puts him out. What will tell, what will produce an effect, he cares little about; and therefore he produces the greatest. The *personal* is to him an impertinence; so he conceals himself and writes. Solitude "becomes his glittering bride, and airy thoughts his children." Such a one is a true author; and not a member of any Debating Club, or Dilettanti Society whatever!*

* I have omitted to dwell on some other differences of body and mind that often prevent the same person from shining in both capacities of speaker and writer. There are natural impediments to public speaking, such as the want of a strong voice and steady nerves. A high authority of the present day (Mr. Canning) has thought this a matter of so much

importance, that he goes so far as even to let it affect the constitution of Parliament, and conceives that gentlemen who have not bold foreheads and brazen lungs, but modest pretensions and patriotic views, should be allowed to creep into the great assembly of the nation through the avenue of close boroughs, and not be called upon "to face the storms of the hustings." In this point of view, Stentor was a man of genius, and a noisy jack-pudding may cut a considerable figure in the "Political House that Jack built." I fancy Mr. C. Wynne is the only person in the kingdom who has fully made up his mind that a total defect of voice is the most necessary qualification for a Speaker of the House of Commons!

ESSAY VIII.

ON A PORTRAIT OF AN ENGLISH LADY, BY VANDYKE.

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The portrait I speak of is in the Louvre, where it is numbered 416, and the only account of it in the *Catalogue* is that of a *Lady and her daughter.* It is companion to another whole-length by the same artist, No. 417, of a *Gentleman and a little girl.* Both are evidently English.

The face of the lady has nothing very remarkable in it, but that it may be said to be the very perfection of the English female face. It is not particularly beautiful, but there is a sweetness in it, and a goodness conjoined, which is inexpressibly delightful. The smooth ivory forehead is a little ruffled, as if some slight cause of uneasiness, like a cloud, had just passed over it. The eyes are raised with a look of timid attention; the mouth is compressed with modest sensibility; the complexion is delicate and clear; and over the whole figure (which is seated) there reign the utmost propriety and

decorum. The habitual gentleness of the character seems to have been dashed with some anxious thought or momentary disquiet, and, like the shrinking flower, in whose leaves the lucid drop yet trembles, looks out and smiles at the storm that is overblown. A mother's tenderness, a mother's fear, appears to flutter on the surface, and on the extreme verge of the expression, and not to have quite subsided into thoughtless indifference or mild composure. There is a reflection of the same expression in the little child at her knee, who turns her head round with a certain appearance of constraint and innocent wonder; and perhaps it is the difficulty of getting her to sit (or to sit still) that has caused the transient contraction of her mother's brow,—that lovely, unstained mirror of pure affection, too fair, too delicate, too soft and feminine for the breath of serious misfortune ever to come near, or not to crush it. It is a face, in short, of the greatest purity and sensibility, sweetness and simplicity, or such as Chaucer might have described

" Where all is conscience and tender heart."

I have said that it is an English face; and I may add (without being invidious) that it is not a French one. I will not say that they have no face to equal this; of that I am not a judge; but

I am sure they have no face equal to this, in the qualities by which it is distinguished. They may have faces as amiable, but then the possessors of them will be conscious of it. There may be equal elegance, but not the same ease; there may be even greater intelligence, but without the innocence; more vivacity, but then it will run into petulance or coquetry; in short, there may be every other good quality but a total absence of all pretension to or wish to make a display of it, but the same unaffected modesty and simplicity. In French faces (and I have seen some that were charming both for the features and expression) there is a varnish of insincerity, a something theatrical or meretricious; but here, every particle is pure to the "last recesses of the mind." The face (such as it is, and it has a considerable share both of beauty and meaning) is without the smallest alloy of affectation. There is no false glitter in the eyes to make them look brighter; no little wrinkles about the corners of the eye-lids, the effect of self-conceit; no pursing up of the mouth, no significant leer, no primness, no extravagance, no assumed levity or gravity. You have the genuine text of nature without gloss or comment. There is no heightening of conscious charms to produce greater effect, no studying of airs and graces in the

glass of vanity. You have not the remotest hint of the milliner, the dancing-master, the dealer in paints and patches. You have before you a real English lady of the seventeenth century, who looks like one, because she cannot look otherwise; whose expression of sweetness, intelligence, or concern is just what is natural to her, and what the occasion requires; whose entire demeanour is the emanation of her habitual sentiments and disposition, and who is as free from guile or affectation as the little child by her side. I repeat that this is not the distinguishing character of the French physiognomy, which, at its best, is often spoiled by a consciousness of what it is, and a restless desire to be something more.

Goodness of disposition, with a clear complexion and handsome features, is the chief ingredient in English beauty. There is a great difference in this respect between Vandyke's portraits of women and Titian's, of which we may find examples in the Louvre. The picture, which goes by the name of his *Mistress*, is one of the most celebrated of the latter. The neck of this picture is like a broad crystal mirror; and the hair which she holds so carelessly in her hand is like meshes of beaten gold. The eyes which roll in their ample sockets, like two shining orbs, and which are turned away from the

spectator, only dart their glances the more powerfully into the soul; and the whole picture is a paragon of frank cordial grace, and transparent brilliancy of colouring. Her tight boddice compresses her full but finely proportioned waist; while the tucker in part conceals and almost clasps the snowy bosom. But you never think of any thing beyond the personal attractions, and a certain sparkling intelligence. She is not marble, but a fine piece of animated clay. There is none of that retired and shrinking character, that modesty of demeanour, that sensitive delicacy, that starts even at the shadow of evil—that are so evidently to be traced in the portrait by Vandyke. Still there is no positive vice, no meanness, no hypocrisy, but an unconstrained elastic spirit of self-enjoyment, more bent on the end than scrupulous about the means; with firmly braced nerves, and a tincture of vulgarity. She is not like an English lady, nor like a lady at all; but she is a very fine servant-girl, conscious of her advantages, and willing to make the most of them. In fact, Titian's *Mistress* answers exactly, I conceive, to the idea conveyed by the English word, *sweetheart*.—The Marchioness of Guasto is a fairer comparison. She is by the supposition a lady, but still an Italian one. There is a

honeyed richness about the texture of the skin, and her air is languid from a sense of pleasure. Her dress, though modest, has the marks of studied coquetry about it; it touches the very limits which it dares not pass; and her eyes which are bashful and downcast, do not seem to droop under the fear of observation, but to retire from the gaze of kindled admiration,

—— "As if they thrill'd
Frail hearts, yet quenched not!"

One might say, with Othello, of the hand with which she holds the globe that is offered to her acceptance ——

———— "This hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and pray'r,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For here's a young and *melting* devil here,
That commonly rebels.

The hands of Vandyke's portrait have the purity and coldness of marble. The colour of the face is such as might be breathed upon it by the refreshing breeze; that of the Marchioness of Guasto's is like the glow it might imbibe from a golden sunset. The expression in the English lady springs from her duties and her affections; that of the Italian Countess inclines more to her ease and pleasures. The Marchioness of Guasto was one of three sisters, to whom, it is said, the inhabitants of Pisa pro-

posed to pay divine honours, in the manner that beauty was worshipped by the fabulous enthusiasts of old. Her husband seems to have participated in the common infatuation, from the fanciful homage that is paid to her in this alllegorical composition; and if she was at all intoxicated by the incense offered to her vanity, the painter must be allowed to have "qualified" the expression of it "very craftily."

I pass on to another female face and figure, that of the Virgin, in the beautiful picture of the *Presentation in the Temple*, by Guido. The expression here is *ideal*, and has a reference to visionary objects and feelings. It is marked by an abstraction from outward impressions, a downcast look, an elevated brow, an absorption of purpose, a stillness and resignation, that become the person and the scene in which she is engaged. The colour is pale or gone; so that purified from every grossness, dead to worldly passions, she almost seems like a statue kneeling. With knees bent, and hands uplifted, her motionless figure appears supported by a soul within, all whose thoughts, from the low ground of humility, tend heavenward. We find none of the triumphant buoyancy of health and spirit as in the *Titian's Mistress*, nor the luxurious softness of the portrait

of the Marchioness of Guasto, nor the flexible, tremulous sensibility, nor the anxious attention to passing circumstances, nor the familiar look of the lady by Vandyke; on the contrary, there is a complete unity and concentration of expression, the whole is wrought up and moulded into one intense feeling, but that feeling fixed on objects remote, refined, and etherial as the form of the fair supplicant. A still greater contrast to this internal, or as it were, *introverted* expression, is to be found in the group of female heads by the same artist, Guido, in his picture of the *Flight of Paris and Helen.* They are the three last heads on the left-hand side of the picture. They are thrown into every variety of attitude, as if to take the heart by surprise at every avenue. A tender warmth is suffused over their faces; their head-dresses are airy and fanciful, their complexion sparkling and glossy; their features seem to catch pleasure from every surrounding object, and to reflect it back again. Vanity, beauty, gaiety glance from their conscious looks and wreathed smiles, like the changing colours from the ring-dove's neck. To sharpen the effect and point the moral, they are accompanied by a little negro-boy, who holds up the train of elegance, fashion, and voluptuous grace!

Guido was the "genteelest" of painters; he was a poetical Vandyke. The latter could give, with inimitable and perfect skill, the airs and graces of people of fashion under their daily and habitual aspects, or as he might see them in a looking-glass. The former saw them in his "mind's eye," and could transform them into supposed characters and imaginary situations. Still the elements were the same. Vandyke gave them with the *mannerism* of habit and the individual details; Guido, as they were rounded into grace and smoothness by the breath of fancy, and borne along by the tide of sentiment. Guido did not want the *ideal* faculty, though he wanted strength and variety. There is an effeminacy about his pictures, for he gave only the different modifications of beauty. It was the Goddess that inspired him, the Siren that seduced him; and whether as saint or sinner, was equally welcome to him. His creations are as frail as they are fair. They all turn on a passion for beauty, and without this support, are nothing. He could paint beauty combined with pleasure or sweetness, or grief, or devotion; but unless it were the ground-work aud the primary condition of his performance, he became insipid, ridiculous, and extravagant. There is one thing to be said in his favour; he knew his own

powers or followed his own inclinations; and the delicacy of his *tact* in general prevented him from attempting subjects uncongenial with it. He "trod the primrose path of dalliance," with equal prudence and modesty. That he is a little monotonous and tame, is all that can be said against him; and he seldom went out of his way to expose his deficiencies in a glaring point of view. He came round to subjects of beauty at last, or gave them that turn. A story is told of his having painted a very lovely head of a girl, and being asked from whom he had taken it, he replied, "From his old man!" This is not unlikely. He is the only great painter (except Correggio) who appears constantly to have subjected what he saw to an imaginary standard. His Magdalens are more beautiful than sorrowful; in his Madonnas there is more of sweetness and modesty than of elevation. He makes but little difference between his heroes and his heroines; his angels are women, and his women angels! If it be said that he repeated himself too often, and has painted too many Magdalens and Madonnas, I can only say in answer, "Would he had painted twice as many!" If Guido wanted compass and variety in his art, it signifies little, since what he wanted is abundantly supplied by others. He had soft-

ness, delicacy and *ideal* grace in a supreme degree, and his fame rests on these as the cloud on the rock. It is to the highest point of excellence in any art or department that we look back with gratitude and admiration, as it is the highest mountain-peak that we catch in the distance, and lose sight of only when it turns to air.

I know of no other difference between Raphael and Guido, than that the one was twice the man the other was. Raphael was a bolder genius, and invented according to nature: Guido only made draughts after his own disposition and character. There is a common cant of criticism which makes Titian merely a colourist. What he really wanted was invention: he had expression in the highest degree. I declare I have seen heads of his with more meaning in them than any of Raphael's. But he fell short of Raphael in this, that (except in one or two instances) he could not heighten and adapt the expression that he saw to different and more striking circumstances. He gave more of what he saw than any other painter that ever lived, and in the imitative part of his art had a more universal genius than Raphael had in composition and invention. Beyond the actual and habitual look of nature, however, "the demon that he served" deserted him, or became

a very tame one. Vandyke gave more of the general air and manners of fashionable life than of individual character; and the subjects that he treated are neither remarkable for intellect nor passion. They are people of polished manners, and placid constitutions; and many of the very best of them are "stupidly good." Titian's portraits, on the other hand, frequently present a much more formidable than inviting appearance. You would hardly trust yourself in a room with them. You do not bestow a cold, leisurely approbation on them, but look to see what they may be thinking of you, not without some apprehension for the result. They have not the clear smooth skins or the even pulse that Vandyke's seem to possess. They are, for the most part, fierce, wary, voluptuous, subtle, haughty. Raphael painted Italian faces as well as Titian. But he threw into them a character of intellect rather than of temperament. In Titian the irritability takes the lead, sharpens and gives direction to the understanding. There seems to be a personal controversy between the spectator and the individual whose portrait he contemplates, which shall be master of the other. I may refer to two portraits in the Louvre, the one by Raphael, the other by Titian, (Nos. 1153 and 1210,) in illustration of these remarks.

I do not know two finer or more characteristic specimens of these masters, each in its way. The one is of a student dressed in black, absorbed in thought, intent on some problem, with the hands crossed and leaning on a table for support, as it were to give freer scope to the labour of the brain, and though the eyes are directed towards you, it is with evident absence of mind. Not so the other portrait, No. 1210. All its faculties are collected to see what it can make of you, as if you had intruded upon it with some hostile design, it takes a defensive attitude, and shews as much vigilance as dignity. It draws itself up, as if to say, "Well, what do you think of me?" and exercises a discretionary power over you. It has "an eye to threaten and command," not to be lost in idle thought, or in ruminating over some abstruse, speculative proposition. It is this intense personal character which, I think, gives the superiority to Titian's portraits over all others, and stamps them with a living and permanent interest. Of other pictures you tire, if you have them constantly before you; of his, never. For other pictures have either an abstracted look and you dismiss them, when you have made up your mind on the subject as a matter of criticism; or an heroic look, and you cannot be always strain-

ing your enthusiasm; or an insipid look, and you sicken of it. But whenever you turn to look at Titian's portraits, they appear to be looking at you; there seems to be some question pending between you, as though an intimate friend or inveterate foe were in the room with you; they exert a kind of fascinating power; and there is that exact resemblance of individual nature which is always new and always interesting, because you cannot carry away a mental abstraction of it, and you must recur to the object to revive it in its full force and integrity. I would as soon have Raphael's or most other pictures hanging up in a Collection, that I might pay an occasional visit to them: Titian's are the only ones that I should wish to have hanging in the same room with me for company!

Titian in his portraits appears to have understood the principle of historical design better than any body. Every part tells, and has a bearing on the whole. There is no one who has such simplicity and repose—no violence, no affectation, no attempt at forcing an effect; insomuch that by the uninitiated he is often condemned as unmeaning and insipid. A turn of the eye, a compression of the lip decides the point. He just draws the face out of its most ordinary state, and gives it the direction he would have

it take; but then every part takes the same direction, and the effect of this united impression (which is absolutely momentary and all but habitual) is wonderful. It is that which makes his portraits the most natural and the most striking in the world. It may be compared to the effect of a number of small loadstones, that by acting together lift the greatest weights. Titian seized upon the lines of character in the most original and connected point of view. Thus in his celebrated portrait of Hippolito de Medici, there is a keen, sharpened expression that strikes you, like a blow from the spear that he holds in his hand. The look goes through you; yet it has no frown, no startling gesticulation, no affected penetration. It is quiet, simple, but it almost withers you. The whole face and each separate feature is cast in the same acute or wedge-like form. The forehead is high and narrow, the eye-brows raised and coming to a point in the middle, the nose straight and peaked, the mouth contracted and drawn up at the corners, the chin acute, and the two sides of the face slanting to a point. The number of acute angles which the lines of the face form, are, in fact, a net entangling the attention and subduing the will. The effect is felt at once, though it asks time and consideration to under-

stand the cause. It is a face which you would beware of rousing into anger or hostility, as you would beware of setting in motion some complicated and dangerous machinery. The possessor of it, you may be sure, is no trifler. Such, indeed, was the character of the man. This is to paint true portrait and true history. So if our artist painted a mild and thoughtful expression, all the lines of the countenance were softened and relaxed. If the mouth was going to speak, the whole face was going to speak. It was the same in colour. The gradations are infinite, and yet so blended as to be imperceptible. No two tints are the same, though they produce the greatest harmony and simplicity of tone, like flesh itself. "If," said a person, pointing to the shaded side of a portrait of Titian, "you could turn this round to the light, you would find it would be of the same colour as the other side!" In short, there is manifest in his portraits a greater tenaciousness and identity of impression than in those of any other painter. Form, colour, feeling, character, seemed to adhere to his eye, and to become part of himself; and his pictures, on this account, "leave stings" in the minds of the spectators! There is, I grant, the same personal appeal, the same point-blank look in some of Raphael's portraits (see those of a

Princess of Arragon and of Count Castiglione, No. 1150 and 1151) as in Titian: but they want the texture of the skin and the minute individual details to stamp them with the same reality. And again, as to the uniformity of outline in the features, this principle has been acted upon and carried to excess by Kneller and other artists. The eyes, the eye-brows, the nose, the mouth, the chin, are rounded off as if they were turned in a *lathe*, or as a peruke-maker arranges the curls of a wig. In them it is vile and mechanical, without any reference to truth of character or nature; and instead of being pregnant with meaning and originality of expression, produces only insipidity and monotony.

Perhaps what is offered above as a key to the peculiar expression of Titian's heads may also serve to explain the difference between painting or copying a portrait. As the perfection of his faces consists in the entire unity and coincidence of all the parts, so the difficulty of ordinary portrait-painting is to bring them to bear at all, or to piece one feature, or one day's labour on to another. In copying, this difficulty does not occur at all. The human face is not one thing, as the vulgar suppose, nor does it remain always the same. It has infinite varieties.

which the artist is obliged to notice and to reconcile, or he will make strange work. Not only the light and shade upon it do not continue for two minutes the same: the position of the head constantly varies (or if you are strict with a sitter, he grows sullen and stupid,) each feature is in motion every moment, even while the artist is working at it, and in the course of a day the whole expression of the countenance undergoes a change, so that the expression which you gave to the forehead or eyes yesterday is totally incompatible with that which you have to give to the mouth to-day. You can only bring it back again to the same point or give it a consistent construction by an effort of imagination, or a strong feeling of character; and you must connect the features together less by the eye than by the mind. The mere setting down what you see in this medley of successive, teazing, contradictory impressions, would never do; either you must continually efface what you have done the instant before, or if you retain it, you will produce a piece of patchwork, worse than any caricature. There must be a comprehension of the whole, and in truth a *moral sense* (as well as a literal one) to unravel the confusion, and guide you through the labyrinth of shifting muscles and features. You must feel what *this*

means, and dive into the hidden soul, in order to know whether *that* is as it ought to be; for you cannot be sure that it remains as it was. Portrait-painting is, then, painting from recollection and from a conception of character, with the object before us to assist the memory and understanding. In copying, on the contrary, one part does not run away and leave you in the lurch, while you are intent upon another. You have only to attend to what is before you, and finish it carefully a bit at a time, and you are sure that the whole will come right. One might parcel it out into squares, as in engraving, and copy one at a time, without seeing or thinking of the rest. I do not say that a conception of the whole, and a feeling of the art will not abridge the labour of copying, or produce a truer likeness; but it is the changeableness or identity of the object that chiefly constitutes the difficulty or facility of imitating it, and, in the latter case, reduces it nearly to a mechanical operation. It is the same in the imitation of *still-life*, where real objects have not a principle of motion in them. It is as easy to produce a *fac-simile* of a table or a chair as to copy a picture, because these things do not stir from their places any more than the features of a portrait stir from theirs. You may there-

fore bestow any given degree of minute and continued attention on finishing any given part without being afraid that when finished it will not correspond with the rest. Nay, it requires more talent to copy a fine portrait than to paint an original picture of a table or a chair, for the picture has a soul in it, and the table has not.—It has been made an objection (and I think a just one) against the extreme high-finishing of the drapery and back-grounds in portraits (to which some schools, particularly the French, are addicted), that it gives an unfinished look to the face, the most important part of the picture. A lady or a gentleman cannot sit quite so long or so still as a lay-figure, and if you finish up each part according to the length of time it will remain in one position, the face will seem to have been painted for the sake of the drapery, not the drapery to set off the face. There is an obvious limit to every thing, if we attend to common sense and feeling. If a carpet or a curtain will admit of being finished more than the living face, we finish them less because they excite less interest, and we are less willing to throw away our time and pains upon them. This is the unavoidable result in a natural and well regulated style of art; but what is to be said of a school where no interest is felt in any thing, where no-

thing is known of any object but that it is there, and where superficial and petty details which the eye can explore, and the hand execute, with persevering and systematic indifference, constitute the soul of art?

The expression is the great difficulty in history or portrait-painting, and yet it is the great clue to both. It renders forms doubly impressive from the interest and signification attached to them, and at the same time renders the imitation of them critically nice, by making any departure from the line of truth doubly sensible. Mr. Coleridge used to say, that what gave the romantic and mysterious interest to Salvator's landscapes was their containing some implicit analogy to human or other living forms. His rocks had a latent resemblance to the outline of a human face; his trees had the distorted jagged shape of a satyr's horns and grotesque features. I do not think this is the case; but it may serve to supply us with an illustration of the present question. Suppose a given outline to represent a human face, but to be so disguised by circumstances and little interruptions as to be mistaken for a projecting fragment of a rock in a natural scenery. As long as we conceive of this outline merely as a representation of a rock

or other inanimate substance, any copy of it, however rude, will seem the same and as good as the original. Now let the disguise be removed and the general resemblance to a human face pointed out, and what before seemed perfect, will be found to be deficient in the most essential features. Let it be further understood to be a profile of a particular face that we know, and all likeness will vanish from the want of the individual expression, which can only be given by being felt. That is, the imitation of external and visible form is only correct or nearly perfect, when the information of the eye and the direction of the hand are aided and confirmed by the previous knowledge and actual feeling of character in the object represented. The more there is of character and feeling in any object, and the greater sympathy there is with it in the mind of the artist, the closer will be the affinity between the imitation and the thing imitated; as the more there is of character and expression in the object without a proportionable sympathy with it in the imitator, the more obvious will this defect and the imperfection of the copy become. That is, expression is the great test and measure of a genius for painting, and the fine arts. The mere imitation of *still-life*, however perfect, can never furnish

proofs of the highest skill or talent; for there is an inner sense, a deeper intuition into nature that is never unfolded by merely mechanical objects, and which, if it were called out by a new soul being suddenly infused into an inanimate substance, would make the former unconscious representation appear crude and vapid. The eye is sharpened and the hand made more delicate in its tact,

> "While by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

We not only *see*, but *feel* expression, by the help of the finest of all our senses, the sense of pleasure and pain. He then is the greatest painter who can put the greatest quantity of expression into his works, for this is the nicest and most subtle object of imitation; it is that in which any defect is soonest visible, which must be able to stand the severest scrutiny, and where the power of avoiding errors, extravagance, or tameness can only be supplied by the fund of moral feeling, the strength or delicacy of the artist's sympathy with the ideal object of his imitation. To see or imitate any given sensible object is one thing, the effect of attention and practice; but to give expression to a face is to collect its meaning from a thousand other

sources, is to bring into play the observation and feeling of one's whole life, or an infinity of knowledge bearing upon a single object in different degrees and manners, and implying a loftiness and refinement of character proportioned to the loftiness and refinement of expression delineated. Expression is of all things the least to be mistaken, and the most evanescent in its manifestations. Pope's lines on the character of women may be addressed to the painter who undertakes to embody it.

> "Come then, the colours and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick it off in air;
> Chuse a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch, ere it change, the Cynthia of the minute."

It is a maxim among painters that no one can paint more than his own character, or more than he himself understands or can enter into. Nay, even in copying a head, we have some difficulty in making the features unlike our own. A person with a low forehead or a short chin puts a constraint on himself in painting a high forehead or a long chin. So much has sympathy to do with what is supposed to be a mere act of servile imitation!—To pursue this argument one step farther. People sometimes wonder what difficulty there can be in painting, and ask what you have to do but to set down what

you see? This is true, but the difficulty is to see what is before you. This is at least as difficult as to learn any trade or language. We imagine that we see the whole of nature, because we are aware of no more than we see of it. We also suppose that any given object, a head, a hand, is one thing, because we see it at once, and call it by one name. But how little we see or know, even of the most familiar face, beyond a vague abstraction, will be evident to every one who tries to recollect distinctly all its component parts, or to draw the most rude outline of it for the first time; or who considers the variety of surface, the numberless lights and shades, the tints of the skin, every particle and pore of which varies, the forms and markings of the features, the combined expression, and all these caught (as far as common use is concerned) by a random glance, and communicated by a passing word. A student, when he first copies a head, soon comes to a stand, or is at a loss to proceed from seeing nothing more in the face than there is in his copy. After a year or two's practice he never knows when to have done, and the longer he has been occupied in copying a face or any particular feature, sees more and more in it, that he has left undone and can never hope to do. There have been only four or five

painters who could ever produce a copy of the human countenance really fit to be seen; and even of these few none was ever perfect, except in giving some single quality or partial aspect of nature, which happened to fall in with his own particular studies and the bias of his genius, as Raphael the drawing, Rembrandt the light and shade, Vandyke ease and delicacy of appearance, &c. Titian gave more than any one else, and yet he had his defects. After this, shall we say that any, the commonest and most uninstructed spectator sees the whole of nature at a single glance, and would be able to stamp a perfect representation of it on the canvass, if he could embody the image in his mind's eye?

I have in this Essay mentioned one or two of the portraits in the Louvre that I like best. The two landscapes which I should most covet, are the one with a Rainbow by Rubens, and the Adam and Eve in Paradise by Poussin. In the first, shepherds are reposing with their flocks under the shelter of a breezy grove, the distances are of air, and the whole landscape seems just washed with the shower that has passed off. The Adam and Eve by Poussin is the full growth and luxuriant expansion of the principle of vegetation. It is the first lovely dawn of creation, when nature played her virgin fancies wild; when all was

sweetness and freshness, and the heavens dropped fatness. It is the very *ideal* of landscape-painting, and of the scene it is intended to represent. It throws us back to the first ages of the world, and to the only period of perfect human bliss, which is, however, on the point of being soon disturbed.* I should be contented with these four or five pictures, the Lady by Vandyke, the Titian, the Presentation in the Tem-

* I may be allowed to mention here (not for the sake of invidious comparison, but to explain my meaning,) Mr. Martin's picture of Adam and Eve asleep in Paradise. It has this capital defect, that there is no *repose* in it. You see two insignificant naked figures, and a preposterous architectural landscape, like a range of buildings over-looking them. They might as well have been represented on the top of the pinnacle of the Temple, with the world and all the glories thereof spread out before them. They ought to have been painted imparadised in one another's arms, shut up in measureless content, with Eden's choicest bowers closing round them, and Nature stooping to clothe them with vernal flowers. Nothing could be too retired, too voluptuous, too sacred from "day's garish eye;" on the contrary, you have a gaudy panoramic view, a glittering barren waste, a triple row of clouds, of rocks, and mountains, piled one upon the other, as if the imagination already bent its idle gaze over that wide world which was so soon to be our place of exile, and the aching, restless spirit of the artist was occupied in building a stately prison for our first parents, instead of decking their bridal bed, and wrapping them in a short-lived dream of bliss.

ple, the Rubens, and the Poussin, or even with faithful copies of them, added to the two which I have of a youug Neapolitan Nobleman and of the Hippolito de Medici; and which, when I look at them, recal other times and the feelings with which they were done. It is now twenty years since I made those copies, and I hope to keep them while I live. It seems to me no longer ago than yesterday. Should the next twenty years pass as swiftly, forty years will have glided by me like a dream. By this kind of speculation I can look down as from a slippery height on the beginning, and the end of life beneath my feet, and the thought makes me dizzy!

My taste in pictures is, I believe, very different from that of rich and princely collectors. I would not give two-pence for the whole Gallery at Fonthill. I should like to have a few pictures hung round the room, that speak to me with well-known looks, that touch some string of memory—not a number of varnished, smooth, glittering gewgaws. The taste of the Great in pictures is singular, but not unaccountable. The King is said to prefer the Dutch to the Italian school of painting; and if you hint your surprise at this, you are looked upon as a very Gothic and *outrè* sort of person. You are told,

however, by way of consolation,—"To be sure, there is Lord Carlisle likes an Italian picture—Mr. Holwell Carr likes an Italian picture—the Marquis of Stafford is fond of an Italian picture—Sir George Beaumont likes an Italian picture!" These, notwithstanding, are regarded as quaint and daring exceptions to the established rule; and their preference is a species of *leze majesté* in the Fine Arts, as great an eccentricity and want of fashionable etiquette, as if any gentleman or nobleman still preferred old claret to new, when the King is known to have changed his mind on this subject; or was guilty of the offence of dipping his fore-finger and thumb in the middle of a snuff-box, instead of gradually approximating the contents to the edge of the box, according to the most approved models. One would imagine that the great and exalted in station would like lofty subjects in works of art, whereas they seem to have an almost exclusive predilection for the mean and mechanical. One would think those whose word was law, would be pleased with the great and striking effects of the pencil;* on the

* The Duke of Wellington, it is said, cannot enter into the merits of Raphael; but he admires "the spirit and fire" of Tintoret. I do not wonder at this bias. A sentiment probably never dawned upon his Grace's mind; but he may be

contrary, they admire nothing but the little and elaborate. They have a fondness for cabinet and *furniture* pictures, and a proportionable antipathy to works of genius. Even art with them must be servile, to be tolerated. Perhaps the seeming contradiction may be explained thus. Such persons are raised so high above the rest of the species, that the more violent and agitating pursuits of mankind appear to them like the turmoil of ants on a mole-hill. Nothing interests them but their own pride and self-importance. Our passions are to them an impertinence; an expression of high sentiment they rather shrink from as a ludicrous and upstart assumption of equality. They therefore like what glitters to the eye, what is smooth to the touch; but they shun, by an instinct of sovereign taste, whatever has a soul in it, or implies a reciprocity of feeling. The Gods of the earth can have no interest in any thing human; they are cut off from all sympathy with the "bosoms and businesses of men." Instead of requiring to be wound up beyond their habitual feeling of stately dignity, they wish to

supposed to relish the dashing execution and *hit or miss* manner of the Venetian artist. Oh, Raphael! well is it that it was one who did not understand thee, that blundered upon the destruction of humanity!

have the springs of over-strained pretension let down, to be relaxed with "trifles light as air," to be amused with the familiar and frivolous, and to have the world appear a scene of *still-life*, except as they disturb it! The little in thought and internal sentiment is a natural relief and set off to the oppressive sense of external magnificence. Hence kings babble and repeat they know not what. A childish dotage often accompanies the consciousness of absolute power. Repose is somewhere necessary, and the soul sleeps while the senses gloat around! Besides, the mechanical and high-finished style of art may be considered as something *done to order*. It is a task to be executed more or less perfectly, according to the price given, and the industry of the artist. We stand by, as it were, to see the work done, insist upon a greater degree of neatness and accuracy, and exercise a sort of petty, jealous jurisdiction over each particular. We are judges of the minuteness of the details, and though ever so nicely executed, as they give us no ideas beyond what we had before, we do not feel humbled in the comparison. The artizan scarcely rises into the artist; and the name of genius is degraded rather than exalted in his person. The performance is so far ours that we have paid for it, and the highest price is all

that is necessary to produce the highest finishing. But it is not so in works of genius and imagination. Their price is above rubies. The inspiration of the Muse comes not with the *fiat* of a monarch, with the donation of a patron; and, therefore, the Great turn with disgust or effeminate indifference from the mighty masters of the Italian school, because such works baffle and confound their self-love, and make them feel that there is something in the mind of man which they can neither give nor take away.

"Quam nihil ad tuum, Papiniane, ingenium!"

ESSAY IX.

ON NOVELTY AND FAMILIARITY.

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" *Horatio.* Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Hamlet. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense."

SHAKESPEAR represents his *Grave-digger* as singing while he is occupied in his usual task of flinging the skulls out of the earth with his spade. On this he takes occasion to remark, through one of his speakers, the effect of habit in blunting our sensibility to what is painful or disgusting in itself. " Custom hath made it a property of easiness in him." To which the other is made to reply in substance, that those who have the least to do have the finest feelings generally. The minds and bodies of those who are enervated by luxury and ease, and who have not had to encounter the wear-and-tear of life, present a soft, unresisting surface to outward impressions, and are endued with a greater degree of susceptibility to pleasure and pain. Habit in most cases hardens and encrusts, by taking away the keener edge of our sensations:

but does it not in others quicken and refine, by giving a mechanical facility, and by engrafting an acquired sense? Habit may be said in technical language to add to our irritability and lessen our sensibility, or to sharpen our active perceptions, and deaden our passive ones. Practice makes perfect—experience makes us wise. The one refers to what we have to do, the other to what we feel. I will endeavour to explain the distinction, and to give some examples in each kind.

Clowns, servants, and common labourers have, it is true, hard and coarse hands, because they are accustomed to hard and coarse employments; but mechanics, artizans, and artists of various descriptions, who are as constantly employed, though on works demanding greater skill and exactness, acquire a proportionable nicety and discrimination of tact with practice and unremitted application. A working jeweller can perceive slight distinctions of surface, and make the smallest incisions in the hardest substances from mere practice: a woollen-draper perceives the different degrees of the fineness in cloth, on the same principle; a watch-maker will insert a great bony fist, and perform the nicest operations among the springs aad wheels of a complicated and curious machinery, where the soft delicate hand of a woman or a child

would make nothing but blunders. Again, a blind man shews a prodigious sagacity in hearing and almost *feeling* objects at a distance from him. His other senses acquire an almost preternatural quickness from the necessity of recurring to them oftener, and relying on them more implicitly, in consequence of the privation of sight. The musician distinguishes tones and notes, the painter expressions and colours, from constant habit and unwearied attention, that are quite lost upon the common observer. The critic discovers beauties in a poem, the poet features in nature, that are generally overlooked by those who have not employed their imaginations or understandings on these particular studies. Whatever art or science we devote ourselves to, we grow more perfect in with time and practice. The range of our perceptions is at once enlarged and refined. But—there lies the question that must "give us pause"—is the pleasure increased in proportion to our habitual and critical discernment, or does not our familiarity with nature, with science, and with art, breed an indifference for those objects we are most conversant with and most masters of? I am afraid the answer, if an honest one, must be on the unfavourable side; and that from the moment that we can be said to understand any subject

thoroughly, or can execute any art skilfully, our pleasure in it will be found to be on the decline. No doubt, that with the opening of every new inlet of ideas, there is unfolded a new source of pleasure; but this does not last much longer than the first discovery we make of this *terra incognita;* and with the closing up of every avenue of novelty, of curiosity, and of mystery, there is an end also of our transport, our wonder, and our delight; or it is converted into a very sober, rational, and household sort of satisfaction.

There is a craving after information, as there is after food; and it is in supplying the void, in satisfying the appetite, that the pleasure in both cases chiefly consists. When the uneasy want is removed, both the pleasure and the pain cease. So in the acquisition of knowledge or of skill, it is the transition from perplexity and helplessness, that relieves and delights us; it is the surprise occasioned by the unfolding of some new aspect of nature, that fills our eyes with tears and our hearts with joy; it is the fear of not succeeding, that makes success so welcome, and a giddy uncertainty about the extent of our acquisitions, that makes us drunk with unexpected possession. We are happy not in the total amount of our knowledge, but in the last addition we have made to it, in the removal of some obstacle, in the drawing aside of some

veil, in the contrast between the obscurity of night and the brightness of the dawn. But objects are magnified in the mist aad haze of confusion; the mind is most open to receive striking impressions of things in the outset of its progress. The most trivial pursuits or successes then agitate the whole brain; whereas afterwards the most important only occupy one corner of it. The facility which habit gives in admitting new ideas, or in reflecting upon old ones, renders the exercise of intellectual activity a matter of comparative insignificance; and by taking away the resistance and the difficulty, takes away the liveliness of impulse that imparts a sense of pleasure or of pain to the soul. No one reads the same book twice over with the same satisfaction. It is not that our knowledge of it is not greater the second time than the first: but our interest in it is less, because the addition we make to our knowledge the second time is very trifling, while in the first perusal it was all *clear gain*. Thus in youth and childhood every step is fairy-ground, because every step is an advance in knowledge and pleasure, opens new prospects, and excites new hopes, as in after-years, though we may enlarge our circle a little, and measure our way more accurately, yet in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we only retrace our steps, and repeat the same

dull round of weariness and disappointment. Knowledge is power; but it is not pleasure, except when it springs immediately out of ignorance and incapacity. An actor, who plays a character for the hundred and fortieth time, understands and perhaps performs it better; but does he feel the part, has he the same pleasure in it as he had the first time? The wonder is how he can go through with it at all; nor could he, were he not supported by the plaudits of the audience, who seem like new friends to him, or urged on by the fear of disgrace, to which no man is ever reconciled.

I will here take occasion to suggest what appears to me the true state of the question, whether a great actor is enabled to embody his part from feeling or from study. I think at the time from neither; but merely (or chiefly at least) from habit. But I think he must have felt the character in the first instance with all the enthusiasm of nature and genius, or he never would have distinguished himself in it. To say that the intellect alone can determine or supply the movements or the language of passion, is little short of a contradiction in terms. Substituting the head for the heart is like saying that the eye is a judge of sounds or the ear of colours. If a man in cold blood knows how another feels in a fit of passion, it is from having been in a passion

himself before. Nor can the indifferent observation of the outward signs attain to the truth of nature, without the inward sympathy to impel us forward, and to tell us where to stop. Without that living criterion, we shall be either tame and mechanical, or turgid and extravagant. The study of individual models produces imitators and mannerists: the study of general principles produces pedants. It is feeling alone that makes up for the deficiencies of either mode of study; that expands the meagreness of the one, that unbends the rigidity of the other, that floats a man into the tide of popularity, and electrifies an audience. It is feeling, or it is hope and fear, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, that is the original source of the effects in nature which are brought forward on the stage; and assuredly it is a sympathy with this feeling, that must dictate the truest and most natural imitations of them. To suppose that a person altogether dead to these primary passions of the human breast can make a great actor, or feign the effects while he is entirely ignorant of the cause, is no less absurd than to suppose that I can describe a place which I never saw, or mimic a voice which I never heard, or speak a language which I never learnt. An actor void of genius and passion may be taught

to strut about the stage, and mouth out his words with mock-solemnity, and give himself the airs of a great actor, but he will never *be* one. He may express his own emptiness and vanity, and make people stare, but he will not "send the hearers weeping to their beds." The true, original master-touches that go to the heart, must come from it. There is neither truth or beauty without nature. Habit may repeat the lesson that is thus learnt, just as a poet may transcribe a fine passage without being affected by it at the time; but he could not have written it in the first instance without feeling the beauty of the object he was describing, or without having been deeply impressed with it in some moment of enthusiasm. It was then that his genius was inspired, his style formed, and the foundation of his fame laid. People tell you that Sterne was hard-hearted; that the author of Waverley is a mere worldling; that Shakespear was a man without passions. Do not believe them. Their passions might have worn themselves out with constant over-excitement, so that they only knew how they formerly felt; or they might have the controul over them; or from their very compass and variety they might have kept one another in check, so that none got very much a-head, and broke out into extravagant and overt acts.

But those persons must have experienced the feelings they express, and entered into the situations they describe so finely, at some period or other of their lives: the sacred source from whence the tears trickle down the cheeks of others, was once full, though it may be now dried up; and in all cases where a strong impression of truth and nature is conveyed to the minds of others, it must have previously existed in an equal or greater degree in the mind producing it. Perhaps it does not strictly follow, that

"They best can paint them, who have felt them most."

To do this in perfection other qualifications may be necessary: language may be wanting where the heart speaks, but that the tongue or the pen or pencil can describe the workings of nature with the highest truth and eloquence without being prompted or holding any communication with the heart, past, present, or to come, I utterly deny. When Talma, in the part of Œdipus, after the discovery of his misfortune, slowly raises his hands and joins them together over his head in an attitude of despair, I conceive it is because in the extremity of his anguish, and in the full sense of his ghastly and desolate situation, he feels a want of something as a shield or covering to protect him from the weight that is

ready to fall and crush him, and he makes use of that fine and impressive action for this purpose:—not that I suppose he is affected in this manner every time he repeats it, but he never would have thought of it but from having this deep and bewildering feeling of weight and oppression, which naturally suggested it to his imagination, and at the same time assured him that it was just. Feeling is in fact the scale that weighs the truth of all original conceptions. When Mrs. Siddons played the part of Mrs. Beverley in the Gamester, and on Stukely's abrupt declaration of his unprincipled passion at the moment of her husband's imprisonment, threw into her face that noble succession of varying emotions, first seeming not to understand him, then, as her doubt is removed, rising into sudden indignation, then turning to pity, and ending in a burst of hysteric scorn and laughter, was this the effect of stratagem or forethought as a painter arranges a number of colours on his palette? No—but by placing herself amply in the situation of her heroine, and entering into all the circumstances, and feeling the dignity of insulted virtue aud misfortune, that wonderful display of keen and high-wrought expressions burst from her involuntarly at the same moment, and kindled her face almost into

a blaze of lightning. Yet Mrs. Siddons is sometimes accused of being cold and insensible. I do not wonder that she may seem so after exertions such as these; as the Sybils of old after their inspired prophetic fury sunk upon the ground, breathless and exhausted. But that any one can embody high thoughts and passions without having the prototypes in their own breast, is what I shall not believe upon hearsay, and what I am sure cannot be proved by argument.

It is a common complaint, that actors and actresses are dull when off the stage. I do not know that it is the case; but I own I should be surprised if it were otherwise. Many persons expect from the *éclat* with which they appear in certain characters to find them equally brilliant in company, not considering that the effect they produce in their artificial characters is the very circumstance that must disqualify them for producing any in ordinary cases. They who have intoxicated and maddened multitudes by their public display of talent, can rarely be supposed to feel much stimulus in entertaining one or two friends, or in being the life of a dinner-party. She who perished over-night by the dagger or the bowl as Cassandra or Cleopatra, may be allowed to sip her tea in silence, and not to

be herself again, till she revives in Aspasia. A tragic tone does not become familiar conversation, and any other must come very awkwardly and reluctantly from a great tragic actress. At least, in the intervals of her professional paroxysms, she will hardly set up for a verbal critic or *blue-stocking*. Comic actors again have their repartees put into their mouths, and must feel considerably at a loss when their cue is taken from them. The most sensible among them are modest and silent. It is only those of second-rate pretensions who think to make up for the want of original wit by practical jokes and *slang* phrases. *Theatrical* manners are, I think, the most repulsive of all others.—Actors live on applause, and drag on a laborious artificial existence by the administration of perpetual provocatives to their sympathy with the public gratification—I will not call it altogether *vanity* in them who delight to make others laugh, any more than in us who delight to laugh with them. They have a significant phrase to express the absence of a proper sense in the audience — "there was not a hand in the house." I have heard one of the most modest and meritorious of them declare, that if there was nobody else to applaud, he should like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation. There cannot be a greater mis-

take than to suppose that singers dislike to be encored. There is often a violent opposition out of compassion, with cries of "shame, shame!" when a young female debutante is about to be *encored* twice in a favourite air, as if it were taking a cruel advantage of her—instead of the third, she would be glad to sing it for the thirtieth time, and "die of an *encore* in *operatic* pain!" The excitement of public applause at last becomes a painful habit, and either in indolent or over-active temperaments produces a corresponding craving after privacy and leisure. Mr. L—— a short time ago was in treaty for a snug little place near his friend Mr. M—— at Highgate, on which he had so set his heart, that when the bargain failed, he actually shed tears like a child. He has a right to blubber like a school-boy whenever he pleases, who almost every night of his life makes hundreds of people laugh till they forget they are no longer schoolboys. I hope, if this should prove a hard winter, he will again wrap himself up in flannel and *lamb's-wool*, take to his fire-side, and read the English Novelists once more fairly through. Let him have these lying on his table, Hogarth's prints hung round the room, and with his own face to boot, I defy the world to match them again! There is something very amiable and

praise-worthy in the friendships of the two ingenious actors I have just alluded to: from the example of contrast and disinterestedness it affords, it puts me in mind of that of Rosinante and Dapple. These Arcadian retirements and ornamented retreats are, I suspect, tantalising and unsatisfactory resources to the favourites of the town. The constant fever of applause, and of anxiety to deserve it, which produces the wish for repose, disables them from enjoying it. Let the *calenture* be as strong as it will, the eye of the pit is upon them in the midst of it: the smile of the boxes, the roar of the gallery, pierces through their holly-hedges, and overthrows all their pastoral theories. Of the public as of the sex it may be said, when one has once been a candidate for their favours,

"There is no living with them, nor without them!"

I wish the late Mr. Kemble had not written that stupid book about Richard III. and closed a proud theatrical career with a piece of literary foppery. Yet why do I wish it if it pleased him, since it made no alteration in my opinion respecting him? Its dry details, its little tortuous struggles after contradiction, nay, its fulsome praises of a kindred critic, Mr. Gifford (what will not a retired tragedian do for a niche in the

Quarterly Review ?) did not blot from my memory his stately form, his noble features, in which old Rome saw herself revived, his manly sense and plaintive tones, that were an echo to deep-fraught sentiment; nor make me forget another volume published and suppressed long before, a volume of poems addressed to Mrs. Inchbald, " the silver-voiced Anna." Both are dead. Such is the stuff of which our lives are made—bubbles that reflect the glorious features of the universe, and that glance a passing shadow, a feeble gleam, on those around them!

Mrs. Siddons was in the meridian of her reputation when I first became acquainted with the stage. She was an established veteran, when I was an unfledged novice; and, perhaps, played those scenes without emotion, which filled me, and so many others, with delight and awe. So far I had the advantage of her, and of myself too. I did not then analyse her excellences as I should now, or divide her merits into physical and intellectual advantages, or see that her majestic form rose up against misfortune in equal sublimity, an antagonist power to it—but the total impression (unquestioned, unrefined upon) overwhelmed and drowned me in a flood of tears. I was stunned and torpid after seeing her in any of her great parts. I was uneasy,

and hardly myself, but I felt (more than ever) that human life was something very far from being indifferent, and I seemed to have got a key to unlock the springs of joy and sorrow in the human heart. This was no mean possession, and I availed myself of it with no sparing hand. The pleasure I anticipated at that time in witnessing her dullest performance, was certainly greater than I should have now in seeing her in the most brilliant. The very sight of her name in the play-bills in Tamerlane, or Alexander the Great, threw a light upon the day, and drew after it a long trail of Eastern glory, a joy and felicity unutterable, that has since vanished in the mists of criticism and the glitter of idle distinctions. I was in a trance, and my dreams were of mighty empires fallen, of vast burning zones, of waning time, of Persian thrones and them that sat on them, of sovereign beauty, and of victors vanquished by love. Death and Life played their pageant before me. The gates were unbarred, the folding doors of fancy were thrown open, and I saw all that mankind had been, or that I myself could conceive, pass in sudden and gorgeous review before me. No wonder that the huge, dim, disjointed vision should enchant and startle me. One reason why our first impressions are so strong

and lasting is that they are *whole-length* ones. We afterwards divide and compare, and judge of things only as they differ from other things. At first we measure them from the ground, take in only the groups and masses, and are struck with the entire contrast to our former ignorance and inexperience. If we apprehend only a vague gaudy outline, this is not a disadvantage; for we fill it up with our desires and fancies, which are most potent in their capacity to create good or evil. The first glow of passion in the breast throws its radiance over the opening path of life; and it is wonderful how much of the volume of our future existence the mere title-page discloses. The results do not indeed exactly correspond with our expectations; but our passions survive their first eager ebullition and bitter disappointment, the bulk of our sensations consists of broken vows and fading recollections; and it is not astonishing that there is so near a resemblance between our earliest anticipations and our latest sigh, since we obstinately believe things to be to the last, what we at first wished to find them.

"Hope travels through, nor quits us till we die."

Our existence is a tissue of passion, and our successive years only present us with fainter and fainter copies of the first proof-impressions.

"The dregs of life," therefore, contain very little of force or spirit which

—— "the first spritely runnings could not give."

Imagination is, in this sense, sometimes truer than reality; for our passions being "compacted of imagination," and our desires whetted by impatience and delay, often lose some of their taste and essence with possession. So in youth we look forward to the advances of age, and feel them more strongly than when they arrive; nor is this more extraordinary than that from the height of a precipice the descent below should make us giddy, and that we should be less sensible of it when we come to the ground. Experience can teach us little, I suspect, after the first unfolding of our faculties, and the first strong excitement of outward objects. It can only add to or take away from our original impressions, and the imagination can make out the addition as largely or feel the privation as sharply as the senses. The little it can teach us, which is to moderate our chagrins and sober our expectations to the dull standard of reality, we will not learn. "Reason panders will;" and if we have been disappointed forty times, we are only the more resolved that the forty-first time shall make up for all the rest, and our hope grows desperate as the chances are against it. A man who is wary, is so na-

turally; he who is of a sanguine and credulous disposition, will continue so in spite of warning; we hearken to no voice but that of our secret inclinations and native bias. Mr. Wordsworth being asked why he admired the sleep of infancy, said he thought "there was a grandeur in it;" the reason of which is partly owing to the contrast of total unconsciousness to all the ills of life, and partly that it is the germ implying all the future good; an untouched, untold treasure. In the outset of life, all that is to come of it seems to press with double force upon the heart, aud our yearnings after good and dread of evil are in proportion to the little we have known of either. The first ebullitions of hope and fear in the human heart lift us to heaven, or sink us to the abyss; but when served out to us in dribblets and palled by repetition, they lose their interest and effect. Or the dawn of experience, like that of day, shews the wide prospect stretched out before us, and dressed in its liveliest colours; as we proceed, we tire of the length of the way and complain of its sameness. The path of life is stripped of its freshness and beauty; and as we grow acquainted with them, we become indifferent to weal or woe.

The best part of our lives we pass in count-

ing on what is to come; or in fancying what may have happened in real or fictitious story to others. I have had more pleasure in reading the adventures of a novel (and perhaps changing situations with the hero) than I ever had in my own. I do not think any one can feel much happier—a greater degree of heart's ease—than I used to feel in reading Tristram Shandy, and Peregrine Pickle, and Tom Jones, and the Tatler, and Gil Blas of Santillane, and Werter, and Boccacio. It was some years after that I read the last, but his tales

> "Dallied with the innocence of love,
> Like the old Time."

The story of Frederigo Alberigi affected me as if it had been my own case, and I saw his hawk upon her perch in the clear, cold air, "and how fat and fair a bird she was," as plain as ever I saw a picture of Titian's; and felt that I should have served her up as he did, as a banquet for his mistress, who came to visit him at his own poor farm. I could wish that Lord Byron had employed himself while in Italy in rescuing such a writer as Boccacio from unmerited obloquy, instead of making those notable discoveries, that Pope was a poet, and that Shakespear was not one! Mrs. Inchbald was always a great favourite with me. There is the true soul of

woman breathing from what she writes, as much as if you heard her voice. It is as if Venus had written books. I first read her *Simple Story* (of all places in the world) at M———. No matter where it was; for it transported me out of myself. I recollect walking out to escape from one of the tenderest parts, in order to return to it again with double relish. An old crazy hand-organ was playing Robin Adair, a summer-shower dropped manna on my head, and slaked my feverish thirst of happiness. Her heroine, Miss Milner, was at my side. My dream has since been verified:—how like it was to the reality! In truth, the reality itself was but a dream. Do I not still see that "simple movement of her finger" with which Madame Basil beckoned Jean Jacques to the seat at her feet, the heightened colour that tinged her profile as she sat at her work netting, the bunch of flowers in her hair? Is not the glow of youth and beauty in her cheek blended with the blushes of the roses in her hair? Do they not breathe the breath of love? And (what though the adventure was unfinished by either writer or reader) is not the blank filled up with the rare and subtle spirit of fancy, that imparts the fullness of delight to the air-drawn creations of brain? I once sat on a sunny bank in a field in

which the green blades of corn waved in the fitful northern breeze, and read the letter in the *New Eloise*, in which St. Preux describes the Pays de Vaud. I never felt what Shakespear calls my "glassy essence," so much as then. My thoughts were pure and free. They took a tone from the objects before me, and from the simple manners of the inhabitants of mountain-scenery, so well described in the letter. The style gave me the same sensation as the drops of morning dew before they are scorched by the sun; and I thought Julia did well to praise it. I wished I could have written such a letter. That wish, enhanced by my admiration of genius and the feeling of the objects around me, was accompanied with more pleasure than if I had written fifty such letters, or had gained all the reputation of its immortal author! Of all the pictures, prints, or drawings I ever saw, none ever gave me such satisfaction as the rude etchings at the top of Rousseau's *Confessions*. There is a necromantic spell in the outlines. Imagination is a witch. It is not even said anywhere that such is the case, but I had got it in my head that the rude sketches of old-fashioned houses, stone-walls, and stumps of trees represented the scenes at Annecy and Vevay, where he who relished all more sharply than others, and by his

own intense aspirations after good had nearly delivered mankind from the yoke of evil, first drew the breath of hope. Here love's golden rigol bound his brows, and here fell from it. It was the partition-wall between life and death to him, and all beyond it was a desert!.....

"And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail."

I used to apply this line to the distant range of hills in a paltry landscape, which however had a tender vernal tone and a dewy freshness. I could look at them till my eyes filled with tears, and my heart dissolved in faintness. Why do I recal the circumstance after a lapse of years with so much interest? Because I felt it then. Those feeble outlines were linked in my mind to the purest, fondest yearnings after good, that dim, airy space contained my little all of hope, buoyed up by charming fears; the delight with which I dwelt upon it, enhanced by my ignorance of what was in store for me, was free from mortal grossness, familiarity or disappointment, and I drank pleasure out of the bosom of the silent hills and gleaming vallies as from a cup filled to the brim with love-philtres and poisonous sweetness by the sorceress, Fancy!

Mr. Opie used to consider it as an error to suppose that an artist's first works were neces-

sarily crude and raw, and that he went on regularly improving on them afterwards. On the contrary, he maintained that they had the advantage of being done "with all his heart, and soul, and might;" that they contained his best thoughts, those which his genius most eagerly prompted, and which he had matured and treasured up longest, from the first dawn of art and nature on his mind; and that his subsequent works were rather after-thoughts, and the leavings and *make-shifts* of his invention. There is a great deal of truth in this view of the matter. *Poeta nascitur, non fit*; that is, it is the strong character and impulse of the mind that forces out its way and stamps itself upon outward objects, not that is elicited and laboriously raised into artificial importance by contrivance and study. An *improving* actor, artist, or poet never becomes a great one. I have known such in my time, who were always advancing by slow and sure steps to the height of their profession; but in the mean time, some man of genius rose, and passing them, at once seized on the top-most round of ambition's ladder, so that they still remained in the second class. A volcano does not give warning when it will break out, nor a thunder-bolt send word of its approach. Mr. Kean stamped himself the first night in Shy-

lock; he never did any better. Mr. Kemble is the only great and truly impressive actor I remember, who rose to his stately height by the interposition of art and gradations of merit. A man of genius is *sui generis*—to be known, he need only to be seen—you can no more dispute whether he is one, than you can dispute whether it is a panther that is shewn you in a cage. Mrs. Siddons did not succeed the first time she appeared on the London boards, but then it was in Garrick's time, who sent her back to the country. He startled and put her out in some part she had to play with him, by the amazing vividness and intrepidity of his style of acting. Yet old Dr. Chauncey who frequented Sir Joshua Reynolds's, said that he was not himself in his latter days, that he got to play harlequin's tricks, and was too much in the trammels of the stage, and was quite different from what he was when he came out at Goodman's-Fields, when he surprised the town in Richard, as if he had dropped from the clouds, and his acting was all fire and air. Mrs. Siddons was hardly satisfied with the admiration of those who had only seen her latter performances, which were distinguished chiefly by their towering height and marble outline. She has been heard to exclaim, "You have seen me only in Lady Macbeth and Queen

Katherine, and Belvidera and Jane Shore—you should have seen me when I played these characters alternately with Juliet, and Desdemona, and Calista, and the Mourning Bride, night after night, when I first came from Bath!" If she indeed filled these parts with a beauty and tenderness equal to the sublimity of her other performances, one had only to see her in them and die! Lord Byron says, that Lady Macbeth died when Mrs. Siddons left the stage. Could not even her acting help him to understand Shakespear?—Sir Joshua Reynolds at a late period saw some portraits he had done in early life, and lamented the little progress he had made. Yet he helonged to the laborious and *climbing* class. No one generation improves much upon another; no one individual improves much upon himself. What we impart to others we have within us, and we have it almost from the first. The strongest insight we obtain into nature is that which we receive from the broad light thrown upon it by the sudden developement of our own faculties and feelings.

Even in science the greatest discoveries have been made at an early age. Sir Isaac Newton was not twenty when he saw the apple fall to the ground. Harvey, I believe, discovered the circulation of the blood at eighteen. Berkeley

was only six and twenty when he published his Essay on Vision. Hartley's great principle was developed in an inaugural dissertation at College. Hume wrote his Treatise on Human Nature while he was yet quite a young man. Hobbes put forth his metaphysical system very soon after he quitted the service of Lord Bacon. I believe also that Galileo, Leibnitz, and Euler commenced their career of discovery quite young; and I think it is only then, before the mind becomes set in its own opinions or the dogmas of others, that it can have vigour or elasticity to throw off the load of prejudice and seize on new and extensive combinations of things. In exploring new and doubtful tracts of speculation, the mind strikes out true and original views; as a drop of water hesitates at first what direction it shall take, but afterwards follows its own course. The very oscillation of the mind in its first perilous and staggering search after truth, brings together extreme arguments and illustrations, that would never occur in a more settled and methodised state of opinion, and felicitous suggestions turn up when we are trying experiments on the understanding, of which we can have no hope when we have once made up our minds to a conclusion, and only go over the previous steps that led to it. So that the greater

number of opinions we have formed, we are less capable of forming new ones, and slide into common-places, according as we have them at hand to resort to. It is easier taking the beaten path than making our way over bogs and precipices. The great difficulty in philosophy is to come to every question with a mind fresh and unshackled by former theories, though strengthened by exercise and information; as in the practice of art, the great thing is to retain our admiration of the beautiful in nature, together with the power to imitate it, and not, from a want of this original feeling, to be enslaved by formal rules, or dazzled by the mere difficulties of execution. Habit is necessary to give power: but with the stimulus of novelty, the love of truth and nature ceases through indolence or insensibility. Hence wisdom too commonly degenerates into prejudice; and skill into pedantry. Ask a metaphysician what subject he understands best; and he will tell you that which he knows the least about. Ask a musician to play a favourite tune, and he will select an air the most difficult of execution. If you ask an artist his opinion of a picture, he will point to some defect in perspective or anatomy. If an opera-dancer wishes to impress you with an idea of his grace and accomplishments, he

will throw himself into the most distorted attitude possible. Who would not rather see a dance in the forest of Montmorenci on a summer's evening by a hundred laughing peasant-girls and their partners, who come to this scene for several miles round, rushing through the forest-glades, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, than all the *pirouettes*, *pied-a-plombs*, and *entrechats*, performed at the French Opera by the whole *corps de ballet?* Yet the first only just contrive to exert their heels, and not put their partners out, whilst the last perform nothing but feats of dexterity and miracles of skill—not one of which they could ever perform, if they had not lost every idea of natural grace, ease, or decorum in habitual callousness or professional vanity, or had one feeling left which prompts their rustic rivals to run through the mazes of the dance

"With heedless haste and giddy cunning,"

while the leaves tremble to the festive sounds of music, and the air circles in gladder currents to their joyous movements!—There was a dance in the pantomime at Covent-Garden two years ago, which I could have gone to see every night. I *did* go to see it every night that I could make an excuse for that purpose. It was nothing; it was childish. Yet I could not keep away from

it. Some young people came out of a large twelfth-cake, dressed in full court-costume, and danced a quadrille, and then a minuet, to some divine air. Was it that it put me in mind of my school-boy days, and of the large bunch of lilac that I used to send as a present to my partner? Or of times still longer past, the court of Louis XIV. the Duke de Nemours and the Princess of Cleves? Or of the time when she who was all grace moved in measured steps before me, and wafted me into Elysium? I know not how it was; but it came over the sense with a power not to be resisted,

> "Like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour."

I mention these things to shew, as I think, that pleasures are not

> "Like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, the bloom is shed,
> Or like the snow, falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever;
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
> Evanishing amid the storm."

On the contrary, I think they leave traces of themselves behind them, durable and delightful even in proportion to the regrets accompanying

them, and which we relinquish only with our being. The most irreconcileable disappointments are perhaps those which arise from our obtaining all we wish.

The Opera-figurante despises the peasant-girl that dances on the green, however much happier she may be or may be thought by the first. The one can do what the other cannot. Pride is founded not on the sense of happiness, but on the sense of power; and this is one great source of self-congratulation, if not of self-satisfaction. This, however, is continually increasing, or at least renewing with our advances in skill and the conquest of difficulties; and, accordingly, there is no end of it while we live or till our faculties decay. He who undertakes to master any art or science has cut himself out work enough to last the rest of his life, and may promise himself all the enjoyment that is to be found in looking down with self-complacent triumph on the inferiority of others, or all the torment that there is in envying their success. There is no danger that the machine will ever stand still afterwards. Mandeville has endeavoured to shew that if it were not for envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, mankind would perish of pure chagrin and *ennui;* and I am not in the humour to contradict him. — The same spirit of emu-

lation that urges us on to surpass others, supplies us with a new source of satisfaction (of something which is at least the reverse of indifference and apathy) in the indefatigable exertion of our faculties and the perception of new and minor shades of distinction. These, if not so delightful, are more subtle, and may be multiplied indefinitely. They borrow something of taste and pleasure from their first origin, till they dwindle away into mere abstractions. The exercise, whether of our minds or bodies, sharpens and gives additional alacrity to our active impressions, as the indulgence of our sensibility, whether to pleasure or pain, blunts our passive ones. The will to do, the power to think, is a progressive faculty, though not the capacity to feel. Otherwise, the business of life could not go on. If it were necessity alone that oiled the springs of society, people would grow tired and restive, they would lie down and die. But with use there comes a habit, a positive need of something to keep off the horror of vacancy. The sense of power has a sense of pleasure annexed to it, or what is practically tantamount, an impulse, an endeavour, that carries us through the most tiresome drudgery or the hardest tasks. Indolence is a part of our nature too. There is a *vis inertiæ* at first, a difficulty in beginning or

in leaving off. I have spun out this Essay in a good measure from the dread I feel of entering upon new subjects.—Some such reasoning is necessary to account for the headstrong and incorrigible violence of the passions when the will is once implicated. So in ambition, in avarice, in the love of gaming and of drinking (where the strong stimulus is the chief excitement), there is no hope of any termination, of any pause or relaxation; but we are hurried forward, as by a fever, when all sense of pleasure is dead, and we only persevere as it were out of contradiction, and in defiance of the obstacles, the mortifications and privations we have to encounter. The resistance of the will to outward circumstances, its determination to create its own good or evil, is also a part of the same constitution of the mind. The solitary captive can make a companion of the spider that straggles into his cell, or find amusement in counting the nails in his dungeon-door; while the proud lord that placed him there feels the depth of solitude in crowded ball-rooms and hot theatres, and turns with weariness from the scenes of luxury and dissipation. Defoe's romance is the finest possible exemplification of the manner in which our internal resources increase with our external wants.

Our affections are enlarged and unfolded with

time and acquaintance. If we like new books, new faces, new scenes, or *hanker* after those we have never seen, we also like old books, old faces, old haunts,

> " Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness have grown."

If we are repelled after a while by familiarity, or when the first gloss of novelty wears off, we are brought back from time to time by recurring recollections, and are at last wedded to them by a thousand associations. Passion is the undue irritation of the will from indulgence or opposition: imagination is the anticipation of unknown good: affection is the attachment we form to any object from its being connected with the habitual impression of numberless sources and ramifications of pleasure. The heart is the most central of all things. Our duties also (in which either our affections or our understandings are our teachers) are uniform, and must find us at our posts. If this is ever difficult at first, it is always easy in the end. The last pleasure in life is the sense of discharging our duty.

Our physical pleasures (unless as they depend on imagination and opinion) undergo less alteration, and are even more lasting than any others. They return with returning appetite,

and are as good as new. We do not read the same book twice two days following, but we had rather eat the same dinner two days following than go without one. Our intellectual pleasures, which are spread out over a larger surface, are variable for that very reason, that they tire by repetition, and are diminished in comparison *. Our physical ones have but one condition for their duration and sincerity, *viz.* that they shall be unforced and natural. Our passions of a grosser kind wear out before our senses: but in ordinary cases they grow indolent and conform to habit, instead of becoming impatient and inordinate from a desire of change, as we are satisfied with more moderate bodily exercise in age or middle life than we are in youth.—Upon the whole, there are many things to prop up and reinforce our fondness for existence, after the intoxication of our first acquaintance with it is

* I remember Mr. Wordsworth saying, that he thought we had pleasanter days in the outset of life, but that our years slid on pretty even one with another, as we gained in variety and richness what we lost in intensity. This balance of pleasure can however only be hoped for by those who retain the best feelings of their early youth, and sometimes deign to look out of their own minds into those of others: for without this we shall grow weary of the continual contemplation of self, particularly as that self will be a very shabby one.

over; health, a walk and the appetite it creates, a book, the doing a good-natured or friendly action, are satisfactions that hold out to the last; and with these, and any others to aid us that fall harmlessly in our way, we may make a shift for a few seasons, after having exhausted the short-lived transports of an eager and enthusiastic imagination, and without being under the necessity of hanging or drowning ourselves as soon as we come to years of discretion.

ESSAY X.

ON OLD ENGLISH WRITERS AND SPEAKERS.

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When I see a whole row of standard French authors piled up on a Paris book-stall, to the height of twenty or thirty volumes, shewing their mealy coats to the sun, pink, blue, and yellow, they seem to me a wall built up to keep out the intrusion of foreign letters. There is scarcely such a thing as an English book to be met with, unless, perhaps, a dusty edition of Clarissa Harlowe lurks in an obscure corner, or a volume of the Sentimental Journey perks its well-known title in your face*. But there is a huge column of Voltaire's works complete in sixty volumes, another (not so frequent) of

* A splendid edition of Goldsmith has been lately got up under the superintendance of Mr. Washington Irvine, with a preface and a portrait of each author. By what concatenation of ideas that gentleman arrived at the necessity of placing his own portrait before a collection of Goldsmith's works, one must have been early imprisoned in transatlantic solitudes to understand.

Rousseau's in fifty, Racine in ten volumes, Moliere in about the same number, La Fontaine, Marmontel, Gil Blas, for ever; Madame Sevigné's Letters, Pascal, Montesquieu, Crebillon, Marivaux, with Montaigne, Rabelais, and the grand Corneille more rare; and eighteen full-sized volumes of La Harpe's criticism, towering vain-gloriously in the midst of them, furnishing the streets of Paris with a graduated scale of merit for all the rest, and teaching the very *garçons perruquiers* how to measure the length of each act of each play by a stop-watch, and to ascertain whether the angles at the four corners of each classic volume are right ones. How climb over this lofty pile of taste and elegance to wander down into the bogs and wastes of English or of any other literature, "to this obscure and wild?" Must they "on that fair mountain leave to feed, to batten on this moor?" Or why should they? Have they not literature enough of their own, and to spare, without coming to us? Is not the public mind crammed, choaked with French books, pictures, statues, plays, operas, newspapers, parties, and an incessant farrago of words, so that it has not a moment left to look at home into itself, or abroad into nature? Must they cross the Channel to increase the

vast stock of impertinence, to acquire foreign tastes, suppress native prejudices, and reconcile the opinions of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews? It is quite needless. There is a project at present entertained in certain circles, to give the French a taste for Shakespear. They should really begin with the English *. Many of their own best authors are neglected; others, of whom new Editions have been printed, lie heavy on the booksellers' hands. It is by an especial dispensation of Providence that languages wear out; as otherwise we should be buried alive under a load of books and knowledge. People talk of a philosophical and universal language. We have enough to do to understand our own, and to read a thousandth part (perhaps not the best) of what is written in

* I would as soon try to remove one side of the Seine or of the Thames to the other. By the time an author begins to be much talked of abroad, he is going out of fashion at home. We have many little Lord Byrons among ourselves, who think they can write nearly, if not quite as well. I am not anxious to spread Shakespear's fame, or to increase the number of his admirers. "What's he that wishes for more men from England?" &c. It is enough if he is admired by all those who understand him. He may be very inferior to many French writers, for what I know; but I am quite sure he is superior to all English ones. We may say that, without national prejudice or vanity.

it. It is ridiculous and monstrous vanity. We would set up a standard of general taste and of immortal renown; we would have the benefits of science and of art universal, because we suppose our own capacity to receive them unbounded; and we would have the thoughts of others never die, because we flatter ourselves that our own will last for ever; and like the frog imitating the ox in the fable, we burst in the vain attempt. Man, whatever he may think, is a very limited being; the world is a narrow circle drawn about him; the horizon limits our immediate view; immortality means a century or two. Languages happily restrict the mind to what is of its own native growth and fitted for it, as rivers and mountains bound countries; or the empire of learning, as well as states, would become unwieldy and overgrown. A little importation from foreign markets may be good; but the home production is the chief thing to be looked to.

"The proper study of the *French* is *French!*"

No people can act more uniformly upon a conviction of this maxim, and in that respect I think they are much to be commended.

Mr. Lamb has lately taken it into his head to read St. Evremont, and works of that stamp.

I neither praise nor blame him for it. He observed, that St. Evremont was a writer half-way between Montaigne and Voltaire, with a spice of the wit of the one and the sense of the other. I said I was always of opinion that there had been a great many clever people in the world, both in France and England, but I had been sometimes rebuked for it. Lamb took this as a slight reproach; for he has been a little exclusive and national in his tastes. He said that Coleridge had lately given up all his opinions respecting German literature, that all their high-flown pretensions were in his present estimate sheer cant and affectation, and that none of their works were worth any thing but Schiller's and the early ones of Goethè. "What," I said, "my old friend Werter! How many battles have I had in my own mind, and compunctious visitings of criticism to stick to my old favourite, because Coleridge thought nothing of it! It is hard to find one's-self right at last!" I found they were of my mind with respect to the celebrated FAUST—that it is a mere piece of abortive perverseness, a wilful evasion of the subject and omission of the characters; that it is written on the absurd principle that as to produce a popular and powerful effect is not a proof of the highest genius, so to produce no effect at all

is an evidence of the highest poetry—and in fine, that the German play is not to be named in a day with Marlowe's. Poor Kit! How Lord Byron would have sneered at this comparison between the boasted modern and a contemporary of Shakespear's! Captain Medwin or his Lordship must have made a mistake in the enumeration of plays of that period still acted. There is one of Ben Jonson's, "Every Man in his Humour;" and one of Massinger's, "A new Way to Pay old Debts;" but there is none of Ford's either acted or worth acting, except "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," and that would no more bear acting than Lord Byron and Goethè together could have written it.

This account of Coleridge's vacillations of opinion on such subjects might be adduced to shew that our love for foreign literature is an acquired or rather an assumed taste; that it is, like a foreign religion, adopted for the moment, to answer a purpose or to please an idle humour; that we do not enter into the *dialect* of truth and nature in their works as we do in our own; and that consequently our taste for them seldom becomes a part of ourselves, that "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength," and only quits us when we die. Probably it is this acquaintance with, and pretended admira-

tion of, extraneous models, that adulterates and spoils our native literature, that polishes the surface but undermines its basis, and by taking away its original simplicity, character, and force, makes it just tolerable to others, and a matter of much indifference to ourselves. When I see Lord Byron's poems stuck all over Paris, it strikes me as ominous of the decline of English genius: on the contrary, when I find the Scotch Novels in still greater request, I think it augurs well for the improvement of French taste *.

* I have heard the popularity of Sir Walter Scott in France ingeniously, and somewhat whimsically traced to Buonaparte. He did not like the dissipation and frivolity of Paris, and relegated the country-gentlemen to their seats for eight months in the year. Here they yawn and gasp for breath, and would not know what to do without the aid of the author of Waverley. They ask impatiently when the "Tales of the Crusaders" will be out; and what you think of "Red-gauntlet?" To the same cause is to be attributed the change of manners. *Messieurs, je veux des mœurs*, was constantly in the French Ruler's mouth. Manners, according to my informant, were necessary to consolidate his plans of tyranny;—how, I do not know. Forty years ago no man was ever seen in company with *Madame sa femme*. A Comedy was written on the *ridicule* of a man being in love with his wife. Now he must be with her three-and-twenty hours out of the four-and-twenty; it is from this that they date the decline of happiness in France; and the unfortunate couple endeavour to pass the time and get rid of *ennui* as well as they can, by reading the Scotch Novels together.

There was advertised not long ago in Paris an Elegy on the Death of Lord Byron, by his friend Sir Thomas More,—evidently confounding the living bard with the old statesman. It is thus the French in their light, salient way transpose every thing. The mistake is particularly ludicrous to those who have ever seen Mr. Moore, or Mr. Shee's portrait of him in Mr. Hookham's shop, and who chance to see Holbein's head of Sir Thomas More in the Louvre. There is the same difference that there is between a surly English mastiff and a little lively French pug. Mr. Moore's face is gay and smiling enough, old Sir Thomas's is severe, not to say sour. It seems twisted awry with difficult questions, and bursting asunder with a ponderous load of meaning. Mr. Moore has nothing of this painful and puritanical cast. He floats idly and fantastically on the top of the literature of his age; his renowned and almost forgotten namesake has nearly sunk to the bottom of his. The author of Utopia was no flincher, he was a martyr to his opinions, and was burnt to death for them—the most heroic action of Mr. Moore's life is, the having burnt the Memoirs of his friend!

The expression in Holbein's pictures conveys a faithful but not very favourable notion of the literary character of that period. It is painful,

dry, and laboured. Learning was then an ascetic, but recluse and profound. You see a weight of thought and care in the studious heads of the time of the Reformation, a sincerity, an integrity, a sanctity of purpose, like that of a formal dedication to a religious life, or the inviolability of monastic vows. They had their work to do; we reap the benefits of it. We skim the surface, and travel along the high road. They had to explore dark recesses, to dig through mountains, and make their way through pathless wildernesses. It is no wonder they looked grave upon it. The seriousness, indeed, amounts to an air of devotion; and it has to me something fine, manly, and *old English* about it. There is a heartiness and determined resolution; a willingness to contend with opposition; a superiority to ease and pleasure; some sullen pride, but no trifling vanity. They addressed themselves to study as to a duty, and were ready to "leave all and follow it." In the beginning of such an era, the difference between ignorance and learning, between what was commonly known and what was possible to be known, would appear immense; and no pains or time would be thought too great to master the difficulty. Conscious of their own deficiencies and the scanty information of those about them, they would be

glad to look out for aids and support, and to put themselves apprentices to time and nature. This temper would lead them to exaggerate rather than to make light of the difficulties of their undertaking; and would call forth sacrifices in proportion. Feeling how little they knew, they would be anxious to discover all that others had known, and instead of making a display of themselves, their first object would be to dispel the mist and darkness that surrounded them. They did not cull the flowers of learning, or pluck a leaf of laurel for their own heads, but tugged at the roots and very heart of their subject, as the woodman tugs at the roots of the gnarled oak. The sense of the arduousness of their enterprise braced their courage, so that they left nothing half done. They inquired *de omne scibile et quibusdam aliis.* They ransacked libraries, they exhausted authorities. They acquired languages, cousulted books, and decyphered manuscripts. They devoured learning, and swallowed antiquity whole, and (what is more) digested it. They read incessantly, and remembered what they read, from the zealous interest they took in it. Repletion is only bad, when it is accompanied with apathy and want of exercise. They laboured hard, and shewed great activity both of reasoning and spe-

culation. Their fault was that they were too prone to unlock the secrets of nature with the key of learning, and often to substitute authority in the place of argument. They were also too polemical; as was but naturally to be expected in the first breaking up of established prejudices and opinions. It is curious to observe the slow progress of the human mind in loosening and getting rid of its trammels, link by link, and how it crept on its hands and feet, and with its eyes bent on the ground, out of the cave of Bigotry, making its way through one dark passage after another; those who gave up one half of an absurdity contending as strenuously for the remaining half, the lazy current of tradition stemming the tide of innovation, and making an endless struggle between the two. But in the dullest minds of this period there was a deference to the opinions of their leaders; an imposing sense of the importance of the subject, of the necessity of bringing all the faculties to bear upon it; a weight either of armour or of internal strength, a zeal either *for* or *against*; a head, a heart, and a hand, a holding out to the death for conscience sake, a strong spirit of proselytism — no flippancy, no indifference, no compromising, no pert shallow scepticism, but truth was supposed indissolubly knit to good,

knowledge to usefulness, and the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind to hang in the balance. The pure springs of a lofty faith (so to speak) had not then descended by various gradations from their skyey regions and cloudy height, to find their level in the smooth, glittering expanse of modern philosophy, or to settle in the stagnant pool of stale hypocrisy! A learned man of that day, if he knew no better than others, at least knew all that they did. He did not come to his subject, like some dapper barrister who has never looked at his brief, and trusts to the smartness of his wit and person for the agreeable effect he means to produce, but like an old and practised counsellor, covered over with the dust and cobwebs of the law. If it was a speaker in Parliament, he came prepared to handle his subject, armed with cases and precedents, the constitution and history of Parliament from the earliest period, a knowledge of the details of business and the local interests of the country; in short, he had taken up *the freedom of the House*, and did not treat the question like a cosmopolite, or a writer in a Magazine. If it were a divine, he knew the Scriptures and the Fathers, and the Councils and the Commentators by heart, and thundered them in the ears of his astonished audience. Not a trim essay or a

tumid oration, patronising religion by modern sophisms, but the Law and the Prophets, the chapter and the verse. If it was a philosopher, Aristotle and the Schoolmen were drawn out in battle-array against you:—if an antiquarian, the Lord bless us! There is a passage in Selden's notes on Drayton's Poly-Olbion, in which he elucidates some point of topography by a reference not only to Stowe and Holinshed and Camden and Saxo-Grammaticus and Dugdale and several other authors that we are acquainted with, but to twenty obscure names, that no modern reader ever heard of; and so on through the notes to a folio volume, written apparently for relaxation. Such were the intellectual amusements of our ancestors! Learning then ordinarily lay-in of folio volumes: now she litters octavos and duodecimos, and will soon, as in France, miscarry of half sheets! Poor Job Orton! why should I not record a jest of his (perhaps the only one he ever made) emblematic as it is of the living and the learning of the good old times? The Rev. Job Orton was a Dissenting Minister in the middle of the last century, and had grown heavy and gouty by sitting long at dinner and at his studies. He could only get down stairs at last by spreading the folio volumes of Caryl's Commentaries upon

Job on the steps and sliding down them. Surprised one day in his descent, he exclaimed, "You have often heard of Caryl upon Job—now you see Job upon Caryl!" This same quaint-witted gouty old gentleman seems to have been one of those "superior, happy spirits," who slid through life on the rollers of learning, enjoying the good things of the world and laughing at them, and turning his infirmities to a livelier account than his patriarchal name-sake. Reader, didst thou ever hear either of Job Orton or of Caryl on Job? I daresay not. Yet the one did not therefore slide down his theological staircase the less pleasantly; nor did the other compile his Commentaries in vain! For myself, I should like to browze on folios, and have to deal chiefly with authors that I have scarcely strength to lift, that are as solid as they are heavy, and if dull, are full of matter. It is delightful to repose on the wisdom of the ancients; to have some great name at hand, besides one's own initials always staring one in the face: to travel out of one's-self into the Chaldee, Hebrew, and Egyptian characters; to have the palm-trees waving mystically in the margin of the page, and the camels moving slowly on in the distance of three thousand years. In that dry desert of learning, we gather strength and

patience, and a strange and insatiable thirst of knowledge. The ruined monuments of antiquity are also there, and the fragments of buried cities (under which the adder lurks) and cool springs, and green sunny spots, and the whirlwind and the lion's roar, and the shadow of angelic wings. To those who turn with supercilious disgust from the ponderous tomes of scholastic learning, who never felt the witchery of the Talmuds and the Cabbala, of the Commentators and the Schoolmen, of texts and authorities, of types and anti-types, hieroglyphics and mysteries, dogmas and contradictions, and endless controversies and doubtful labyrinths, and quaint traditions, I would recommend the lines of Warton written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon :

" Deem not devoid of elegance the sage,
By fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,
Of painful pedantry the poring child,
Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,
Now sunk by time and Henry's fiercer rage.
Thinkst thou the warbling Muses never smiled
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts, on themes (unclassic falsely styled)
Intent. While cloister'd piety displays
Her mouldering scroll, the piercing eye explores
New manners and the pomp of elder days;
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

This Sonnet, if it were not for a certain intricacy in the style, would be a perfect one: at any rate, the thought it contains is fine and just. Some of the *caput mortuum* of learning is a useful ballast and relief to the mind. It must turn back to the acquisitions of others as its natural sustenance and support; facts must go hand in hand with feelings, or it will soon prey like an empty stomach on itself, or be the sport of the windy impertinence of ingenuity self-begotten. Away then with this idle cant, as if every thing were barbarous and without interest, that is not the growth of our own times and of our own taste; with this everlasting evaporation of mere sentiment, this affected glitter of style, this equivocal generation of thought out of ignorance and vanity, this total forgetfulness of the subject, and display of the writer, as if every possible train of speculation must originate in the pronoun *I*, and the world had nothing to do but to look on and admire. It will not do to consider all truth or good as a reflection of our own pampered and inordinate self-love; to resolve the solid fabric of the universe into an essence of Della-Cruscan witticism and conceit. The perpetual search after effect, the premature and effeminate indulgence of nervous sensibility, defeats and wears itself out. We cannot

make an abstraction of the intellectual ore from the material dross, of feelings from objects, of results from causes. We must get at the kernel of pleasure through the dry and hard husk of truth. We must wait nature's time. These false births weaken the constitution. It has been observed that men of science live longer than mere men of letters. They exercise their understandings more, their sensibility less. There is with them less *wear and tear* of the irritable fibre, which is not shattered and worn to a very thread. On the hill of science, they keep an eye intent on truth and fame :

" Calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains,"—

while the man of letters mingles in the crowd below, courting popularity and pleasure. His is a frail and feverish existence accordingly, and he soon exhausts himself in the tormenting pursuit—in the alternate excitement of his imagination and gratification of his vanity.

———" Earth destroys
Those raptures duly : Erebus disdains ! "

Lord Byron appears to me to have fairly run himself out in his debilitating intercourse with the wanton Muse. He had no other idea left but that of himself and the public—he was uneasy unless he was occupied in administering repeated

provocatives to idle curiosity, and receiving strong doses of praise or censure in return: the irritation at last became so violent and importunate, that he could neither keep on with it nor take any repose from it. The glistering orb of heated popularity

"Glared round his soul and mocked his closing eye-lids."

The successive endless Cantos of Don Juan were the quotidian that killed him!—Old Sir Walter will last long enough, stuffing his wallet and his "wame," as he does, with mouldy fragments and crumbs of comfort. He does not "spin his brains," but something much better. The cunning *chield*, the old *canty gaberlunzie* has got hold of another clue—that of nature and history—and long may he spin it, "even to the crack of doom," watching the threads as they are about to break through his fringed eye-lids, catching a tradition in his mouth like a trap, and heaping his forehead with facts, till it shoves up the Baronet's blue bonnet into a Baron's crown, and then will the old boy turn in his chair, rest his chin upon his crutch, give a last look to the Highlands, and with his latest breath, thank God that he leaves the world as he found it! And so he will pretty nearly with one exception, the Scotch Novels. They are a small addition to this round world of ours. We and they shall

jog on merrily together for a century or two, I hope, till some future Lord Byron asks, "Who reads Sir Walter Scott now?" There is the last and almost worst of them. I would take it with me into a wilderness. Three pages of poor Peter Peebles will at any time redeem three volumes of Red-Gauntlet. And Nanty Ewart is even better with his steady walk upon the deck of the Jumping Jenny and his story of himself, "and her whose foot (whether he came in or went out) was never off the stair." There you came near me, there you touched me, old true-penny! And then again the catch that blind Willie and his wife and the boy sing in the hollow of the heath—there is more mirth and heart's ease in it than in all Lord Byron's Don Juan, or Mr. Moore's Lyrics. And why? Because the author is thinking of beggars and a beggar's brat, and not of himself while he writes it. He looks at nature, sees it, hears it, feels it, and believes that it exists, before it is printed, hot-pressed, and labelled on the back, *By the Author of Waverley.* He does not fancy, nor would he for one moment have it supposed, that his name and fame compose all that is worth a moment's consideration in the universe. This is the great secret of his writings—a perfect indifference to self. Whether it is the same in his

politics, I cannot say. I see no comparison between his prose writing and Lord Byron's poems. The only writer that I should hesitate about is Wordsworth. There are thoughts and lines of his that to me shew as fine a mind, a subtler sense of beauty than any thing of Sir Walter's, such as those above quoted, and that other line in the Laodamia—

"Elysian beauty, melancholy grace."

I would as soon have written that line as have carved a Greek statue. But in this opinion I shall have three or four with me, and all the rest of the world against me. I do not dislike a House-of-Commons Minority in matters of taste —that is, one that is select, independent, and has a proxy from posterity.—To return to the question with which I set out.

Learning is its own exceeding great reward; and at the period of which we speak, it bore other fruits, not unworthy of it. Genius, when not smothered and kept down by learning, blazed out triumphantly over it; and the Fancy often rose to a height proportioned to the depth to which the Understanding had struck its roots. After the first emancipation of the mind from the trammels of Papal ignorance and superstition, people seemed to be in a state of breathless wonder at the new light that was

suffered to break in upon them. They were startled as "at the birth of nature from the unapparent deep." They seized on all objects that rose in view with a firm and eager grasp, in order to be sure whether they were imposed upon or not. The mind of man, "pawing to get free" from custom and prejudice, struggled and plunged, and like the fabled Pegasus, opened at each spring a new source of truth. Images were piled on heaps, as well as opinions and facts, the ample materials for poetry or prose, to which the bold hand of enthusiasm applied its torch, and kindled it into a flame. The accumulation of past records seemed to form the frame-work of their prose, as the observation of external objects did of their poetry—

"Whose body nature was, and *man* the soul."

Among poets they have to boast such names, for instance, as Shakespear, Spenser, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, Webster, Deckar, and soon after, Milton; among prose-writers, Selden, Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Baxter, and Sir Thomas Brown; for patriots, they have such men as Pym, Hampden, Sydney; and for a witness of their zeal and piety, they have Fox's Book of Martyrs, instead of which we have Mr. Southey's Book of the Church, and a whole host of renegades! Perhaps Jeremy Taylor and also

Beaumont and Fletcher may be mentioned as rather exceptions to the gravity and severity I have spoken of as characteristic of our earlier literature. It is true, they are florid and voluptuous in their style, but they still keep their state apart, and there is an eloquence of the heart about them, which seems to gush from the "pure well of English undefiled." The one treats of sacred things with a vividness and fervour as if he had a revelation of them: the others speak of human interests with a tenderness as if man's nature were divine. Jeremy Taylor's pen seems to have been guided by the very spirit of joy and youth, but yet with a sense of what was due to the reverence of age, and "tears of pious awe, that feared to have offended." Beaumont and Fletcher's love-scenes are like the meeting of hearts in Elysium. Let any one have dwelt on any object with the greatest fondness, let him have cherished the feeling to the utmost height, and have it put to the test in the most trying circumstances, and he will find it described to the life in Beaumont and Fletcher. Our modern dramatists (with one exception *), appeal not to nature or the heart, but—to the readers of modern poetry. Words

* The author of Virginius.

and paper, each *couleur de rose*, are the two requisites of a fashionable style. But the glossy splendour, the voluptuous glow of the obsolete, old-fashioned writers just mentioned has nothing artificial, nothing meretricious in it. It is the luxuriance of natural feeling and fancy. I should as soon think of accusing the summer-rose of vanity for unfolding its leaves to the dawn, or the hawthorn that puts forth its blossoms in the genial warmth of spring, of affecting to be fine. We have heard a good deal of the pulpit-eloquence of Bossuet and other celebrated preachers of the time of Fenelon; but I doubt much whether all of them together could produce any number of passages to match the best of those in the Holy Living and Dying, or even Baxter's severe but thrilling denunciations of the insignificance and nothingness of life and the certainty of a judgment to come. There is a fine portrait of this last-named powerful controversialist, with his high forehead and black velvet cap, in Calamy's Non-Conformist's Memorial, containing an account of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers at the Restoration of Charles II. This was a proud list for Old England; and the account of their lives, their zeal, their eloquence and sufferings for conscience sake, is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the human

mind. How high it can soar in faith! How nobly it can arm itself with resolution and fortitude! How far it can surpass itself in cruelty and fraud! How incapable it seems to be of good, except as it is urged on by the contention with evil! The retired and inflexible descendants of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers and their adherents are gone with the spirit of persecution that gave a soul and body to them; and with them, I am afraid, the spirit of liberty, of manly independence, and of inward self-respect is nearly extinguished in England. There appears to be no natural necessity for evil, but that there is a perfect indifference to good without it. One thing exists and has a value set upon it only as it has a foil in some other; learning is set off by ignorance, liberty by slavery, refinement by barbarism. The cultivation and attainment of any art or excellence is followed by its neglect and decay; and even religion owes its zest to the spirit of contradiction; for it flourishes most from persecution and hostile factions. Mr. Irvine speaks of the great superiority of religion over every other motive, since it enabled its professors to "endure having hot molten lead poured down their throats." He forgets that it was religion that poured it down their throats, and that this prin

ciple, mixed with the frailty of human passion, has often been as ready to inflict, as to endure. I could make the world good, wise, happy to-morrow, if, when made, it would be contented to remain so without the alloy of mischief, misery, and absurdity: that is, if every possession did not require the principle of contrast, contradiction, and excess, to enliven and set it off and keep it at a safe distance from sameness and insipidity.

The different styles of art and schools of learning vary and fluctuate on this principle. After the Restoration of Charles, the grave, enthusiastic, puritanical, "prick-eared" style became quite exploded, and a gay and piquant style, the reflection of courtly conversation and polished manners, and borrowed from the French, came into fashion, and lasted till the Revolution. Some examples of the same thing were given in the time of Charles I. by Sir J. Suckling and others, but they were eclipsed and overlaid by the prevalence and splendour of the opposite examples. It was at its height, however, in the reign of the restored monarch, and in the witty and licentious writings of Wycherley, Congreve, Rochester, and Waller. Milton alone stood out as a partisan of the old Elizabethan school. Out of compliment, I sup-

pose, to the Houses of Orange and Hanover, we sobered down, after the Revolution, into a strain of greater demureness, and into a Dutch and German fidelity of imitation of domestic manners and individual character, as in the periodical Essayists, and in the works of Fielding and Hogarth. Yet, if the two last-named painters of manners are not English, who are so? I cannot give up my partiality to them for the fag-end of a theory. They have this mark of genuine English intellect, that they constantly combine truth of external observation with strength of internal meaning. The Dutch are patient observers of nature, but want character and feeling. The French, as far as we have imitated them, aim only at the pleasing, and glance over the surfaces of words and things. Thus has our literature descended (according to the foregoing scale) from the tone of the pulpit to that of the court or drawing-room, from the drawing-room into the parlour, and from thence, if some critics say true, into the kitchen and ale-house. It may do even worse than that!

French literature has undergone great changes in like manner, and was supposed to be at its height in the time of Louis XIV. We sympathise less, however, with the pompous and set

speeches in the tragedies of Racine and Corneille, or in the serious comedies of Moliere, than we do with the grotesque farces of the latter, with the exaggerated descriptions and humour of Rabelais (whose wit was a madness, a drunkenness), or with the accomplished humanity, the easy style, and gentlemanly and scholar-like sense of Montaigne. But these we consider as in a great measure English, or as what the old French character inclined to, before it was corrupted by courts and academies of criticism. The exquisite graces of La Fontaine, the indifferent sarcastic tone of Voltaire and Le Sage, who make light of every thing, and who produce their greatest effects with the most imperceptible and rapid touches, we give wholly to the constitutional genius of the French, and despair of imitating. Perhaps in all this we proceed by guess-work at best. Nations (particularly rival nations) are bad judges of one another's literature or physiognomy. The French certainly do not understand *us*: it is most probable we do not understand *them*. How slowly great works, great names make their way across the Channel! M. Tracey's "Ideologie" has not yet been heard of among us, and a Frenchman who asks if you have read it, almost subjects himself to the suspicion of being the author. They have also

their little sects and parties in literature, and though they do not nickname and vilify their rivals, as is done with us (thanks to the national politeness); yet if you do not belong to the prevailing party, they very civilly suppress all mention of you, your name is not noticed in the Journals, nor your work inquired for at the shops *.

Those who explain every thing by final causes (that is, who deduce causes from effects) might avail themselves of their privilege on this occasion. There must be some checks to the excessive increase of literature as of population, or we should be overwhelmed by it; and they are happily found in the envy, dulness, prejudices, and vanity of mankind. While we think we are weighing the merits of an author, we are indulging our own national pride, indolence, or ill-humour, by laughing at what we do not understand, or condemning what thwarts our inclinations. The French reduce all philosophy to a

* In Paris, to be popular, you must wear out, they say, twenty pair of pumps and twenty pair of silk stockings, in calls upon the different Newspaper Editors. In England, you have only to give in your resignation at the Treasury, and you receive your passport to the John Bull Parnassus; otherwise you are shut out and made a bye word. Literary jealousy and littleness is still the motive, politics the pretext, and blackguardism the mode.

set of agreeable sensations: the Germans reduce the commonest things to an abstruse metaphysics. The one are a mystical, the other a superficial people. Both proceed by the severest logic; but the real guide to their conclusions is the proportion of phlegm or mercury in their dispositions. When we appeal to a man's reason against his inclinations, we speak a language without meaning, and which he will not understand. Different nations have favourite modes of feeling and of accounting for things to please themselves and fall in with their ordinary habits; and our different systems of philosophy, literature, and art meet, contend, and repel one another on the confines of opinion, because their elements will not amalgamate with our several humours, and all the while we fancy we settle the question by an abstract exercise of reason, and by laying down some refined and exclusive standard of taste. There is no great harm in this delusion, nor can there be much in seeing through it; for we shall still go on just as we did before *.

* Buonaparte got a committee of the French Institute to draw up a report of the Kantean Philosophy; he might as well have ordered them to draw up a report of the geography of the moon. It is difficult for an Englishman to understand Kant; for a Frenchman impossible. The latter has a certain routine of phrases into which his ideas run habitually as into a mould, and you cannot get him out of them.

ESSAY XI.

MADAME PASTA AND MADEMOISELLE MARS.

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I LIKED Mademoiselle Mars exceedingly well, till I saw Madame Pasta whom I liked so much better. The reason is, the one is the perfection of French, the other of natural acting. Madame Pasta is Italian, and she might be English—Mademoiselle Mars belongs emphatically to her country; the scene of her triumphs is Paris. She plays naturally too, but it is French nature. Let me explain. She has, it is true, none of the vices of the French theatre, its extravagance, its flutter, its grimace, and affectation, but her merit in these respects is as it were negative, and she seems to put an artificial restraint upon herself. There is still a pettiness, an attention to *minutiæ*, an etiquette, a mannerism about her acting: she does not give an entire loose to her feelings, or trust to the unpremeditated and habitual impulse of her situation. She has greater elegance, perhaps, and precision of style than Madame Pasta, but not half her boldness

or grace. In short, every thing she does is voluntary, instead of being spontaneous. It seems as if she might be acting from marginal directions to her part. When not speaking, she stands in general quite still. When she speaks, she extends first one hand and then the other, in a way that you can foresee every time she does so, or in which a machine might be elaborately constructed to develope different successive movements. When she enters, she advances in a straight line from the other end to the middle of the stage with the slight unvarying trip of her country-women, and then stops short, as if under the drill of a *fugal-man*. When she speaks, she articulates with perfect clearness and propriety, but it is the facility of a singer executing a difficult passage. The case is that of habit, not of nature. Whatever she does, is right in the intention, and she takes care not to carry it too far; but she appears to say beforehand, "*This* I will do, I must not do *that*." Her acting is an inimitable study or consummate rehearsal of the part as a preparatory performance: she hardly yet appears to have assumed the character; something more is wanting, and that something you find in Madame Pasta. If Mademoiselle Mars has to smile, a slight and evanescent expression of pleasure

passes across the surface of her face; twinkles in her eyelids, dimples her chin, compresses her lips, and plays on each feature: when Madame Pasta smiles, a beam of joy seems to have struck upon her heart, and to irradiate her countenance. Her whole face is bathed and melted in expression, instead of its glancing from particular points. When she speaks, it is in music. When she moves, it is without thinking whether she is graceful or not. When she weeps, it is a fountain of tears, not a few trickling drops, that glitter and vanish the instant after. The French themselves admire Madame Pasta's acting, (who indeed can help it?) but they go away thinking how much one of her simple movements would be improved by their extravagant gesticulations, and that her noble, natural expression would be the better for having twenty airs of mincing affectation added to it. In her Nina there is a listless vacancy, an awkward grace, a want of *bienseance*, that is like a child or a changeling, and that no French actress would venture upon for a moment, lest she should be suspected of a want of *esprit* or of *bon mien*. A French actress always plays before the court; she is always in the presence of an audience, with whom she first settles her personal pretensions by a significant hint or side-glance, and then as

much nature and simplicity as you please. Poor Madame Pasta thinks no more of the audience than Nina herself would, if she could be observed by stealth, or than the fawn that wounded comes to drink, or the flower that droops in the sun or wags its sweet head in the gale. She gives herself entirely up to the impression of the part, loses her power over herself, is led away by her feelings either to an expression of stupor or of artless joy, borrows beauty from deformity, charms unconsciously, and is transformed into the very being she represents. She does not act the character—she *is* it, looks it, breathes it. She does not study for an effect, but strives to possess herself of the feeling which should dictate what she is to do, and which gives birth to the proper degree of grace, dignity, ease, or force. She makes no point all the way through, but her whole style and manner is in perfect keeping, as if she were really a love-sick, care-crazed maiden, occupied with one deep sorrow, and who had no other idea or interest in the world. This alone is true nature and true art. The rest is sophistical; and French art is not free from the imputation; it never places an implicit faith in nature but always mixes up a certain portion of art, that is, of consciousness and affectation with it. I shall

illustrate this subject from a passage in Shakespear.

" *Polixenes.*—Shepherdess,
(A fair one are you) well you fit our ages
With flow'rs of winter.
Perdita.—Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gilliflowers,
Which some call nature's bastards; of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren, and I care not
To get slips of them.
Polix.—Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?
Perdita.—For I have heard it said,
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.
Polix.—Say, there be,
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; so o'er that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art,
That nature makes; you see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentle scyon to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
Which does mend nature, change it rather; but
The art itself is nature.
Perdita.—So it is.
Polix.—Then make your garden rich in gilliflowers,
And do not call them bastards.
Perdita.—I 'll not put
A dibble in earth, to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I should wish
This youth to say, 'twere well; and only therefore
Desire to breed by me."—*Winter's Tale, Act IV.*

Madame Pasta appears to be of Perdita's mind in respect to her acting, and I applaud her resolution heartily. We English are charged unjustly with wishing to disparage the French: we cannot help it; there is a natural antipathy between the two nations. Thus unable to deny their theatrical merit, we are said insidiously to have invented the appellation, *French nature*, to explain away or throw a stigma on their most successful exertions:

> —— "Though that their art be nature,
> We throw such changes of vexation on it,
> As it may lose some colour."

The English are a heavy people, and the most like a stone of all others. The French are a lively people, and more like a feather. They are easily moved and by slight causes, and each part of the impression has its separate effect: the English, if they are moved at all (which is a work of time and difficulty), are moved altogether, or in mass, and the impression, if it takes root, strikes deep and spreads wide, involving a number of other impressions in it. If a fragment of a rock wrenched from its place rolls slowly at first, gathers strength and fury as it proceeds, tears up every thing in its way, and thunders to the plain below, there is something noble and imposing in the sight, for it is an image

of our own headlong passions and the increasing vehemence of our desires. But we hate to see a feather launched into the air and driven back on the hand that throws it, shifting its course with every puff of wind, and carried no farther by the strongest than by the slightest impulse. It is provoking (is it not?) to see the strength of the blow always defeated by the very insignificance and want of resistance in the object, and the impulse received never answering to the impulse given. It is the very same fluttering, fidgetting, tantalizing, inconsequential, ridiculous process that annoys us in the French character. There seems no *natural* correspondence between objects and feelings, between things and words. By yielding to every impulse at once, nothing produces a powerful or permanent impression; nothing produces an aggregate impression, for every part tells separately. Every idea turns off to something else, or back upon itself; there is no progress made, no blind impulse, no accumulation of imagination with circumstances, no absorption of all other feelings in one overwhelming one, that is, no keeping, no *momentum*, no integrity, no totality, no inflexible sincerity of purpose, and it is this resolution of the sentiments into their detached points and first impressions, so that they do not

take an entire and involuntary hold of them, but either they can throw them off from their lightness, or escape from them by reason of their minuteness, that we English complain of as French nature or a want of nature, for by nature is only meant that the mind identifies itself with something so as to be no longer master of itself, and the French mind never identifies itself with any thing, but always has its own consciousness, its own affectation, its own gratification, its own slippery inconstancy or impertinent prolixity interposed between the object and the impression. It is this theatrical or artificial nature with which we cannot and will not sympathise, because it circumscribes the truth of things and the capacities of the human mind within the petty round of vanity, indifference, and physical sensations, stunts the growth of imagination, effaces the broad light of nature, and requires us to look at all things through the prism of their petulance and self-conceit. The French in a word leave *sincerity* out of their nature (not moral but imaginative sincerity) cut down the varieties of feeling to their own narrow and superficial standard, and having clipped and adulterated the current coin of expression, would pass it off as sterling gold. We cannot make an exchange with them. They are affected by things in a different manner from us, not

in a different degree; and a mutual understanding is hopeless. We have no dislike to foreigners as such: on the contrary, a rage for foreign artists and works of art is one of our foibles. But if we give up our national pride, it must be to our taste and understandings. Nay, we adopt the manners and the fashions of the French, their dancing and their cooking,—not their music, not their painting, not their poetry, not their metaphysics, not their style of acting. If we are sensible of our own stupidity, we cannot admire *their* vivacity; if we are sick of our own awkwardness, we like it better than their grace; we cannot part with our grossness for their refinement; if we would be glad to have our lumpish clay animated, it must be with true Promethean heat, not with painted phosphorus: they are not the Frankensteins that must perform this feat. Who among us in reading Schiller's Robbers for the first time ever asked if it was German or not? Who in reading Klopstock's Messiah did not object that it was German, not because it was German, but because it was heavy; that is, because the imagination and the heart do not act like a machine, so as to be wound up or let down by the pulleys of the will? Do not the French complain (and complain justly), that a picture is English, when it is

coarse and unfinished, and leaves out the details which are one part of nature? Do not the English remonstrate against this defect too, and endeavour to cure it? But it may be said we relish Schiller, because he is barbarous, violent, and like Shakespear. We have the Cartoons of Raphael then, and the Elgin marbles; and we profess to admire and understand these too, and I think without any affectation. The reason is that there is no affectation in them. We like those noble outlines of the human face at Hampton Court; the sustained dignity of the expression; the broad, ample folds of the drapery; the bold, massive limbs; there is breath and motion in them, and we would willingly be so transformed and spiritualised: but we do not want to have our heavy, stupid faces flittered away into a number of glittering points or transfixed into a smooth petrifaction on French canvas. Our faces, if wanting in expression, have a settled purpose in them; are as solid as they are stupid; and we are at least flesh and blood. We also like the sway of the limbs and negligent grandeur of the Elgin marbles; in spite of their huge weight and manly strength, they have the buoyancy of a wave of the sea, with all the ease and softness of flesh: they fall into attitudes of themselves: but if they

were put into attitudes by the genius of Opera-dancing, we should feel no disposition to imitate or envy them, any more than we do the Zephyr and Flora graces of French statuary. We prefer a single head of Chantry's to a quarry of French sculpture. The English are a modest people, except in comparing themselves with their next neighbours, and nothing provokes their pride in this case, so much as the self-sufficiency of the latter. When Madame Pasta walks in upon the stage, and looks about her with the same unconsciousness or timid wonder as the young stag in the forest; when she moves her limbs as carelessly as a tree its branches; when she unfolds one of her divine expressions of countenance, which reflect the inmost feelings of the soul, as the calm, deep lake reflects the face of heaven; do we not sufficiently admire her, do we not wish her ours, and feel, with the same cast of thought and character, a want of glow, of grace, and ease in the expression of what we feel? We bow, like Guiderius and Arviragus in the cave when they saw Imogen, as to a thing superior. On the other hand, when Mademoiselle Mars comes on the stage, something in the manner of a fantoccini figure slid along on a wooden frame, and making directly for the point at which

her official operations commence—when her face is puckered into a hundred little expressions like the wrinkles on the skin of a bowl of cream, set in a window to cool, her eyes peering out with an ironical meaning, her nose pointing it, and her lips confirming it with a dry pressure—we admire indeed, we are delighted, we may envy, but we do not sympathise or very well know what to make of it. We are not electrified, as in the former instance, but *animal-magnetised* *. We can manage pretty well with any one feeling or expression (like a clown that must be taught his letters one at a time) if it keeps on in the same even course, that expands and deepens by degrees, but we are distracted and puzzled, or at best only amused with that sort of expression which is hardly itself for two moments together, that shifts from point to point, that seems to have no place to rest on, no impulse to urge it forward, and might as well be twenty other things at the

* Even her *j'existe* in Valeria (when she first acquires the use of sight) is pointed like an epigram, and *put in italics*, like a technical or metaphysical distinction, instead of being a pure effusion of joy. Accordingly a French pit-critic took up the phrase, insisting that *to exist* was common to all things, and asked what the expression was in the original German. This treatment of passion is *topical* and extraneous, and seldom strikes at the seat of the disorder, the heart.

same time—where tears come so easily they can hardly be real, where smiles are so playful they appear put on, where you cannot tell what you are to believe, for the parties themselves do not know whether they are in jest or earnest, where the whole tone is ironical, conventional, and where the difference between nature and art is nearly imperceptible. This is what we mean by French nature, *viz.* that the feelings and ideas are so slight and discontinuous that they can be changed for others like a dress or vizor; or else, to make up for want of truth and breadth, are caricatured into a mask. This is the defect of their tragedy, and the defect and excellence of their comedy; the one is a pompous abortion, the other a *fac-simile* of life, almost too close to be agreeable. A French comic actor might be supposed to have left his shop for half an hour to shew himself upon a stage—there is no difference, worth speaking of, between the man and the actor—whether on the stage or at home, he is equally full of gesticulation, equally voluble, and without meaning—as their tragic actors are solemn puppets, moved by rules, pulled by wires, and with their mouths stuffed with rant and bombast. This is the harm that can be said of them: they themselves are doubtless best acquainted with the good, and are not

too diffident to tell it. Though other people abuse them, they can still praise themselves! I once knew a French lady who said all manner of good things and forgot them the next moment; who maintained an argument with great wit and eloquence, and presently after changed sides, without knowing that she had done so; who invented a story and believed it on the spot; who wept herself and made you weep with the force of her descriptions, and suddenly drying her eyes, laughed at you for looking grave. Is not this like acting? Yet it was not affected in her, but natural, involuntary, incorrigible. The hurry and excitement of her natural spirits was like a species of intoxication, or she resembled a child in thoughtlessness and incoherence. She was a Frenchwoman. It was nature, but nature that had nothing to do with truth or consistency.

In one of the Paris Journals lately, there was a criticism on two pictures by Girodet of Bonchamps and Cathelineau, Vendean chiefs. The paper is well written, and points out the defects of the portraits very fairly and judiciously. These persons are there called "Illustrious Vendeans." The dead dogs of 1812 are the illustrious Vendeans of 1824. Monsieur Chateaubriand will have it so, and the French are too

polite a nation to contradict him. They split on this rock of complaisance, surrendering every principle to the fear of giving offence, as we do on the opposite one of party-spirit and rancorous hostility, sacrificing the best of causes, and our best friends to the desire of giving offence, to the indulgence of our spleen, and of an ill-tongue. We apply a degrading appellation, or bring an opprobrious charge against an individual; and such is our tenaciousness of the painful and disagreeable, so fond are we of brooding over grievances, so incapable are our imaginations of raising themselves above the lowest scurrility or the dirtiest abuse, that should the person attacked come out an angel from the contest, the prejudice against him remains nearly the same as if the charge had been fully proved. An unpleasant association has been created, and this is too delightful an exercise of the understanding with the English public easily to be parted with. John Bull would as soon give up an estate as a bug-bear. Having been once gulled, they are not soon *ungulled.* They are too knowing for that. Nay, they resent the attempt to undeceive them as an injury. The French apply a brilliant epithet to the most vulnerable characters; and thus gloss over a life of treachery or infamy. With them the immediate

or last impression is every thing: with us, the first, if it is sufficiently strong and gloomy, never wears out! The French critic observes that M. Girodet has given General Bonchamps, though in a situation of great difficulty and danger, a calm and even smiling air, and that the portrait of Cathelineau, instead of a hero, looks only like an angry peasant. In fact, the lips in the first portrait are made of marmalade, the complexion is cosmetic, and the smile ineffably engaging; while the eye of the peasant Cathelineau darts a beam of light, such as no eye, however illustrious, was ever illumined with. But so it is, the Senses, like a favourite lap-dog, are pampered and indulged at any expence: the Imagination, like a gaunt hound, is starved and driven away. Danger and death, and ferocious courage and stern fortitude, however the subject may exact them, are uncourtly topics and kept out of sight: but smiling lips and glistening eyes are pleasing objects, and there you find them. *The style of portrait requires it.* It is of this varnish and glitter of sentiment that we complain (perhaps it is no business of ours) as what must forever intercept the true feeling and genuine rendering of nature in French art, as what makes it spurious and counterfeit, and strips it of simplicity, force and grandeur. Whatever pleases, what-

ever strikes, holds out a temptation to the French artist too strong to be resisted, and there is too great a sympathy in the public mind with this view of the subject, to quarrel with or severely criticise what is so congenial with its own feelings. A premature and superficial sensibility is the grave of French genius and of French taste. Beyond the momentary impulse of a lively organisation, all the rest is mechanical and pedantic; they give you rules and theories for truth and nature, the Unities for poetry, and the dead body for the living soul of art. They colour a Greek statue ill and call it a picture: they paraphrase a Greek tragedy, and overload it with long-winded speeches, and think they have a national drama of their own. Any other people would be ashamed of such preposterous pretensions. In invention, they do not get beyond models; in imitation, beyond details. Their microscopic vision hinders them from seeing nature. I observed two young students the other day near the top of Montmartre, making oil sketches of a ruinous hovel in one corner of the road. Paris lay below, glittering grey and gold (like a spider's web) in the setting sun, which shot its slant rays upon their shining canvas, and they were busy in giving the finishing touches. The little outhouse was in

itself picturesque enough: it was covered with moss, which hung down in a sort of drooping form as the rain had streamed down it, and the walls were loose and crumbling in pieces. Our artists had repaired every thing: not a stone was out of its place: no traces were left of the winter's flaw in the pendent moss. One would think the bricklayer and gardener had been regularly set to work to do away every thing like sentiment or keeping in the object before them. Oh, Paris! it was indeed on this thy weak side (thy inability to connect any two ideas into one) that thy barbarous and ruthless foes entered in!—

The French have a great dislike to any thing obscure. They cannot bear to suppose for a moment there should be any thing they do not understand: they are shockingly afraid of being *mystified.* Hence they have no idea either of mental or aerial perspective. Every thing must be distinctly made out and in the foreground; for if it is not so clear that they can take it up bit by bit, it is wholly lost upon them, and they turn away as from an unmeaning blank. This is the cause of the stiff, unnatural look of their portraits. No allowance is made for the veil that shade as well as an oblique position casts over the different parts of the face; every fea-

ture, and every part of every feature is given with the same flat effect, and it is owing to this perverse fidelity of detail, that that which is literally true, is naturally false. The side of a face seen in perspective does not present so many markings as the one that meets your eye full: but if it is put into the *vice* of French portrait, wrenched round by incorrigible affectation and conceit (that insist upon knowing all that is there, and set it down formally, though it is not to be seen), what can be the result, but that the portrait will look like a head stuck in a vice, will be flat, hard, and finished, will have the appearance of reality and at the same time look like paint; in short, will be a French portrait? That is, the artist, from a pettiness of view and want of more enlarged and liberal notions of art, comes forward not to represent nature, but like an impertinent commentator to explain what she has left in doubt, to insist on that which she passes over or touches only slightly, to throw a critical light on what she casts into shade, and to pick out the details of what she blends into masses. I wonder they allow the existence of the term *clair-obscur* at all, but it is a word; and a word is a thing they can repeat and remember. A French gentleman formerly asked me what I thought of a landscape in their

Exhibition. I said I thought it too clear. He made answer that he should have conceived that to be impossible. I replied, that what I meant was, that the parts of the several objects were made out with too nearly equal distinctness all over the picture; that the leaves of the trees in shadow were as distinct as those in light, the branches of the trees at a distance as plain as of those near. The perspective arose only from the diminution of objects, and there was no interposition of air. I said, one could not see the leaves of a tree a mile off, but this, I added, appertained to a question in metaphysics. He shook his head, thinking that a young Englishman could know as little of abstruse philosophy as of fine art, and no more was said. I owe to this gentleman (whose name was Merrimee, and who I understand is still living,) a grateful sense of many friendly attentions and many useful suggestions, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations.

Some one was observing of Madame Pasta's acting, that its chief merit consisted in its being natural. To which it was replied, "Not so, for that there was an ugly and a handsome nature." There is an old proverb, that "Home is home, be it never so homely:" and so it may be said of nature; that whether ugly or handsome, it is

nature still. Besides beauty, there is truth, which is always one principal thing. It doubles the effect of beauty, which is mere affectation without it, and even reconciles us to deformity. Nature, the truth of nature in imitation, denotes a given object, a "foregone conclusion" in reality, to which the artist is to conform in his copy. In nature real objects exist, real causes act, which are only supposed to act in art; and it is in the subordination of the uncertain and superficial combinations of fancy to the more stable and powerful law of reality that the perfection of art consists. A painter may arrange fine colours on his palette; but if he merely does this, he does nothing. It is accidental or arbitrary. The difficulty and the charm of the combination begins with the truth of imitation, that is, with the resemblance to a given object in nature, or in other words, with the strength, coherence, and justness of our impressions, which must be verified by a reference to a known and determinate class of objects as the test. Art is so far the developement or the communication of knowledge, but there can be no knowledge unless it be of some given or standard object which exists independently of the representation and bends the will to an obedience to it. The strokes of the pencil are what the artist pleases,

are mere idleness and caprice without meaning, unless they point to nature. Then they are right or wrong, true or false, as they follow in her steps and copy her style. Art must anchor in nature, or it is the sport of every breath of folly. Natural objects convey given or intelligible ideas which art embodies and represents, or it represents nothing, is a mere chimera or bubble; and, farther, natural objects or events cause certain feelings, in expressing which art manifests its power, and genius its prerogative. The capacity of expressing these movements of passion is in proportion to the power with which they are felt; and this is the same as sympathy with the human mind placed in actual situations, and influenced by the real causes that are supposed to act. Genius is the power which equalises or identifies the imagination with the reality or with nature. Certain events happening to us naturally produce joy, others sorrow, and these feelings, if excessive, lead to other consequences, such as stupor or ecstacy, and express themselves by certain signs in the countenance or voice or gestures; and we admire and applaud an actress accordingly, who gives these tones and gestures as they would follow in the order of things, because we then know that her mind has been affected in like manner, that she

enters deeply into the resources of nature, and understands the riches of the human heart. For nothing else can impel and stir her up to the imitation of the truth. The way in which real causes act upon the feelings is not arbitrary, is not fanciful; it is as true as it is powerful and unforeseen; the effects can only be similar when the exciting causes have a correspondence with each other, and there is nothing like feeling *but* feeling. The sense of joy can alone produce the smile of joy; and in proportion to the sweetness, the unconsciousness, and the expansion of the last, we may be sure is the fulness and sincerity of the heart from which it proceeds. The elements of joy at least are there, in their integrity and perfection. The death or absence of a beloved object is nothing as a word, as a mere passing thought, till it comes to be dwelt upon, and we begin to feel the revulsion, the long dreary separation, the stunning sense of the blow to our happiness, as we should in reality. The power of giving this sad and bewildering effect of sorrow on the stage is derived from the force of sympathy with what we should feel in reality. That is, a great histrionic genius is one that approximates the effects of words, or of supposed situations on the mind, most nearly to the deep and vivid effect of real and inevitable ones.

Joy produces tears: the violence of passion turns to childish weakness; but this could not be foreseen by study, nor taught by rules, nor mimicked by observation. Natural acting is therefore fine, because it implies and calls forth the most varied and strongest feelings that the supposed characters and circumstances can possibly give birth to: it reaches the height of the subject. The conceiving or entering into a part in this sense is every thing: the acting follows easily and of course. But art without nature is a nick-name, a word without meaning, a conclusion without any premises to go upon. The beauty of Madame Pasta's acting in Nina proceeds upon this principle. It is not what she does at any particular juncture, but she seems to be the character, and to be incapable of divesting herself of it. This is true acting: any thing else is playing tricks, may be clever and ingenious, is French Opera-dancing, recitation, heroics or hysterics—but it is not true nature or true art.

ESSAY XII.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, RACINE, AND SHAKESPEAR.

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THE argument at the end of the last Essay may possibly serve to throw some light on the often agitated and trite question, Whether we receive more pleasure from an Opera or a Tragedy, from the words or the pantomime of a fine dramatic representation? A musician I can conceive to declare, sincerely and conscientiously, in favour of the Opera over the theatre, for he has made it his chief or exclusive study. But I have heard some literary persons do the same; and in them it appears to me to be more the affectation of candour, than candour itself. "The still small voice is wanting" in this preference; for however lulling or overpowering the effect of music may be at the time, we return to nature at last; it is there we find solidity and repose, and it is from this that the understanding ought to give its casting vote. Indeed there is a sense of reluctance and a sort of critical remorse in the opposite course as in

giving up an old prejudice or a friend to whom we are under considerable obligations; but this very feeling of the conquest or sacrifice of a prejudice is a tacit proof that we are wrong; for it arises only out of the strong interest excited in the course of time, and involved in the nature and principle of the drama.

Words are the signs which point out and define the objects of the highest import to the human mind; and speech is the habitual, and as it were most *intimate* mode of expressing those signs, the one with which our practical and serious associations are most in unison. To give a deliberate verdict on the other side of the question seems, therefore, effeminate and unjust. A rose is delightful to the smell, a pine-apple to the taste. The nose and the palate, if their opinion were asked, might very fairly give it in favour of these against any rival sentiment; but the head and the heart cannot be expected to become accomplices against themselves. We cannot pay a worse compliment to any pleasure or pursuit than to surrender the pretensions of some other to it. Every thing stands best on its own foundation. A sound expresses, for the most part, nothing but itself; a word expresses a million of sounds. The thought or impression of the

moment is one thing, and it may be more or less delightful; but beyond this, it may relate to the fate or events of a whole life, and it is this moral and intellectual perspective that words convey in its full signification and extent, and that gives a proportionable superiority in weight, in compass, and dignity to the denunciations of the tragic Muse. The language of the understanding is necessary to a rational being. Man is dumb and prone to the earth without it. It is that which opens the vista of our past or future years. Otherwise a cloud is upon it, like the mist of the morning, like a veil of roses, an exhalation of sweet sounds, or rich distilled perfumes; no matter what—it is the nerve or organ that is chiefly touched, the sense that is wrapped in ecstacy or waked to madness; the man remains unmoved, torpid, and listless, blind to causes and consequences, which he can never remain satisfied without knowing, but seems shut up in a cell of ignorance, baffled and confounded. Sounds without meaning are like a glare of light without objects; or, an Opera is to a Tragedy what a transparency is to a picture. We are delighted because we are dazzled. But words are a key to the affections. They not only excite feelings, but they point to the *why* and *wherefore*.

Causes march before them, and consequences follow after them. They are links in the chain of the universe, and the grappling-irons that bind us to it. They open the gates of Paradise, and reveal the abyss of human woe.

> "Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
> Die in a word; such is the breath of kings."

But in this respect all men who have the use of speech are kings. It is words that constitute all but the present moment, but the present object. They may not and they do not give the whole of any train of impressions which they suggest; but they alone answer in any degree to the truth of things, unfold the dark labyrinth of fate, or unravel the web of the human heart; for they alone describe things in the order and relation in which they happen in human life. Men do not dance or sing through life; or an Opera or a ballet would "come home to the bosoms and businesses of men," in the same manner that a Tragedy or Comedy does. As it is, they do not piece on to our ordinary existence, nor go to enrich our habitual reflections. We wake from them as from a drunken dream, or a last night's debauch; and think of them no more, till the actual impression is repeated.—On the other hand, panto-

mime action (as an exclusive and new species of the drama) is like tragedy obtruncated and thrown on the ground, gasping for utterance and struggling for breath. It is a display of the powers of art, I should think more wonderful than satisfactory. There is a stifling sensation about it. It does not throw off "the perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart," but must rather aggravate and tighten the pressure.

> "Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

This is perhaps the cause of our backwardness to admit a comparison between Mrs. Siddons and Palarini, between Shakespear and Vigano. Poetry and words speak a language proper to humanity; every other is comparatively foreign to it. The distinction here laid down is important, and should be kept sacred. Even in speaking a foreign language, words lose half their meaning, and are no longer an echo to the sense; virtue becomes a cant-term, vice sounds like an agreeable novelty, and ceases to shock. How much more must this effect happen, if we lay aside speech (our distinguishing faculty) altogether, or try to "gabble most brutishly," measure good and evil by the steps of a dance, and breathe our souls away in dying

swan-like symphonies! But it may be asked, how does all this affect my favourite art of painting? I leave somebody else to answer that question. It will be a good exercise for their ingenuity, if not for their ingenuousness.

I proceed to the more immediate object of this Essay, which was to distinguish between the talents of Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakespear. The subject occurred to me from some conversation with a French lady, who entertains a project of introducing Shakespear in France. As I demurred to the probability of this alteration in the national taste, she endeavoured to overcome my despondency by several lively arguments, and among other things, urged the instantaneous and universal success of the Scotch Novels among all ranks and conditions of the French people. As Shakespear had been performing quarantine among them for a century and a half to no purpose, I thought this circumstance rather proved the difference in the genius of the two writers than a change in the taste of the nation. Madame B. stoutly maintained the contrary opinion: and when an Englishman argues with a Frenchwoman, he has very considerable odds against him. The only advantage you have in this case is that you can plead inability to ex-

press yourself properly, and may be supposed to have a meaning where you have none. An eager manner will supply the place of distinct ideas, and you have only not to surrender in form, to appear to come off with flying colours. The not being able to make others understand me, however, prevents me from understanding myself, and I was by no means satisfied with the reasons I alleged in the present instance. I tried to mend them the next day, and the following is the result.—It was supposed at one time that the genius of the Author of Waverley was confined to Scotland; that his Novels and Tales were a bundle of national prejudices and local traditions, and that his superiority would desert him, the instant he attempted to cross the Border. He made the attempt, however, and contrary to these unfavourable prognostics, succeeded. Ivanhoe, if not equal to the very best of the Scotch Novels, is very nearly so; and the scenery and manners are truly English. In Quentin Durward, again, he made a descent upon France, and gained new laurels, instead of losing his former ones. This seemed to bespeak a versatility of talent and a plastic power, which in the first instance had been called in question. A Scotch mist had been suspected to hang its mystery over the page; his imagination was

borne up on Highland superstitions and obsolete traditions, "sailing with supreme dominion" through the murky regions of ignorance and barbarism; and if ever at a loss, his invention was eked out and *got a cast* by means of ancient documents and the records of criminal jurisprudence or fanatic rage. The Black Dwarf was a paraphrase of the current anecdotes of David Ritchie, without any additional point or interest, and the story of Effie Deans had slept for a century in the law reports and depositions relative to the Heart of Mid-Lothian. To be sure, nothing could be finer or truer to nature; for the human heart, whenever or however it is wakened, has a stirring power in it, and as to the truth of nature, nothing can be more like nature than facts, if you know where to find them. But as to sheer invention, there appeared to be about as much as there is in the getting up the melo-dramatic representation of the Maid and the Magpye from the *Causes Celebres*. The invention is much greater and the effect is not less in Mrs. Inchbald's NATURE AND ART, where there is nothing that can have been given *in evidence* but the Trial-Scene near the end, and even that is not a legal anecdote, but a pure dramatic fiction. Before I proceed, I may as well dwell on this point a little. The heroine

of the story, the once innocent and beautiful Hannah, is brought by a series of misfortunes and crimes (the effect of a misplaced attachment) to be tried for her life at the Old Bailey, and as her Judge, her former lover and seducer, is about to pronounce sentence upon her, she calls out in an agony—"Oh! not from YOU!" and as the Hon. Mr. Norwynne proceeds to finish his solemn address, falls in a swoon, and is taken senseless from the bar. I know nothing in the world so affecting as this. Now if Mrs. Inchbald had merely found this story in the Newgate-Calendar, and transplanted it into a novel, I conceive that her merit in point of genius (not to say feeling) would be less than if having all the other circumstances given, and the apparatus ready, and this exclamation alone left blank, she had filled it up from her own heart, that is, from an intense conception of the situation of the parties, so that from the harrowing recollections passing through the mind of the poor girl so circumstanced, this uncontrolable gush of feeling would burst from her lips. Just such I apprehend, generally speaking, is the amount of the difference between the genius of Shakespear and that of Sir Walter Scott. It is the difference between *originality* and the want of it, between writing and transcribing. Al-

most all the finest scenes and touches, the great master-strokes in Shakespear are such as must have belonged to the class of invention, where the secret lay between him and his own heart, and the power exerted is in adding to the given materials and working something out of them: in the Author of Waverley, not all, but the principal and characteristic beauties are such as may and do belong to the class of compilation, that is, consist in bringing the materials together and leaving them to produce their own effect. Sir Walter Scott is much such a writer as the Duke of Wellington is a General (I am prophaning a number of great names in this article by unequal comparisons). The one gets a hundred thousand men together, and wisely leaves it to them to fight out the battle, for if he meddled with it, he might spoil sport: the other gets an innumerable quantity of facts together, and lets them tell their own story, as best they may. The facts are stubborn in the last instance as the men are in the first, and in neither case is *the broth spoiled by the cook.* This abstinence from interfering with their resources, lest they should defeat their own success, shews great modesty and self-knowledge in the compiler of romances and the leader of armies, but little boldness or inventiveness of

genius. We begin to measure Shakespear's height from the superstructure of passion and fancy he has raised out of his subject and story, on which too rests the triumphal arch of his fame: if we were to take away the subject and story, the portrait and history from the Scotch Novels, no great deal would be left worth talking about.

No one admires or delights in the Scotch Novels more than I do; but at the same time when I hear it asserted that his mind is of the same class with Shakespear's, or that he imitates nature in the same way, I confess I cannot assent to it. No two things appear to me more different. Sir Walter is an imitator of nature and nothing more; but I think Shakespear is infinitely more than this. The creative principle is every where restless and redundant in Shakespear, both as it relates to the invention of feeling and imagery; in the Author of Waverley it lies for the most part dormant, sluggish, and unused. Sir Walter's mind is full of information, but the "*o'er-informing power*" is not there. Shakespear's spirit, like fire, shines through him: Sir Walter's, like a stream, reflects surrounding objects. It is true, he has shifted the scene from Scotland into England and France, and the manners and characters are

strikingly English and French; but this does not prove that they are not local, and that they are not borrowed, as well as the scenery and costume, from comparatively obvious and mechanical sources. Nobody from reading Shakespear would know (except from the *Dramatis Personæ)* that Lear was an English king. He is merely a king and a father. The ground is common: but what a well of tears has he dug out of it! The tradition is nothing, or a foolish one. There are no data in history to go upon; no advantage is taken of costume, no acquaintance with geography or architecture or dialect is necessary: but there is an old tradition, human nature—an old temple, the human mind—and Shakespear walks into it and looks about him with a lordly eye, and seizes on the sacred spoils as his own. The story is a thousand or two years old, and yet the tragedy has no smack of antiquarianism in it. I should like very well to see Sir Walter giving us a tragedy of this kind, a huge "globose" of sorrow, swinging round in mid-air, independent of time, place, and circumstance, sustained by its own weight and motion, and not propped up by the levers of custom, or patched up with quaint, old-fashioned dresses, or set off by grotesque backgrounds or rusty armour, but in which the mere paraphor-

nalia and accessories were left out of the question, and nothing but the soul of passion and the pith of imagination was to be fonnd. "A Dukedom to a beggarly *denier*," he would make nothing of it. Does this prove he has done nothing, or that he has not done the greatest things? No, but that he is not like Shakespear. For instance, when Lear says, "The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me!" there is no old Chronicle of the line of Brute, no *black-letter* broad-side, no tattered ballad, no vague rumour, in which this exclamation is registered; there is nothing romantic, quaint, mysterious in the objects introduced: the illustration is borrowed from the commonest and most casual images in nature, and yet it is this very circumstance that lends its extreme force to the expression of his grief by shewing that even the lowest things in creation and the last you would think of had in his imagination turned against him. All nature was, as he supposed, in a conspiracy against him, and the most trivial and insignificant creatures concerned in it were the most striking proofs of its malignity and extent. It is the depth of passion, however, or of the poet's sympathy with it, that distinguishes this character of torturing familiarity in them, invests them

with corresponding importance, and suggests them by the force of contrast. It is not that certain images are surcharged with a prescriptive influence over the imagination from known and existing prejudices, so that to approach or even mention them is sure to excite a pleasing awe and horror in the mind (the effect in this case is mostly mechanical)—the whole sublimity of the passage is from the weight of passion thrown into it, and this is the poet's own doing. This is not trick, but genius. Meg Merrilies on her death-bed says, "Lay my head to the East!" Nothing can be finer or more thrilling than this in its way; but the author has little to do with it. It is an Oriental superstition; it is a proverbial expression; it is part of the gibberish (sublime though it be) of her gipsey clan!—"Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this pass." This is not a cant-phrase, nor the fragment of an old legend, nor a mysterious spell, nor the butt-end of a wizard's denunciation. It is the mere natural ebullition of passion, urged nearly to madness, and that will admit no other cause of dire misfortune but its own, which swallows up all other griefs. The force of despair hurries the imagination over the boundary of fact and common sense, and renders the transition sublime; but there is no pre-

cedent or authority for it, except in the general nature of the human mind. I think, but am not sure that Sir Walter Scott has imitated this turn of reflection, by making Madge Wildfire ascribe Jenny Deans's uneasiness to the loss of her baby, which had unsettled her own brain. Again, Lear calls on the Heavens to take his part, for "they are old like him." Here there is nothing to prop up the image but the strength of passion, confounding the infirmity of age with the stability of the firmament, and equalling the complainant, through the sense of suffering and wrong, with the Majesty of the Highest. This finding out a parallel between the most unlike objects, because the individual would wish to find one to support the sense of his own misery and helplessness, is truly Shakespearian; it is an instinctive law of our nature, and the genuine inspiration of the Muse. Racine (but let me not anticipate) would make him pour out three hundred verses of lamentation for his loss of kingdom, his feebleness, and his old age, coming to the same conclusion at the end of every third couplet, instead of making him grasp at once at the Heavens for support. The witches in Macbeth are traditional, preternatural personages; and there Sir Walter would have left them after making what use of them he pleased as a sort of

Gothic machinery. Shakespear makes something more of them, and adds to the mystery by explaining it.

> " The earth hath bubbles as the water hath,
> And these are of them."

We have their physiognomy too—

> ——— " and enjoin'd silence,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lip."

And the mode of their disappearance is thus described—

> " And then they melted into thin air."

What an idea is here conveyed of silence and vacancy! The geese of Micklestane Muir (the country-woman and her flock of geese turned into stone) in the Black Dwarf, are a fine and petrifying metamorphosis; but it is the tradition of the country and no more. Sir Walter has told us nothing farther of it than the first clown whom we might ask concerning it. I do not blame him for that, though I cannot give him credit for what he has not done. The poetry of the novel is a *fixture* of the spot. Meg Merrilies I also allow, with all possible good-will, to be a most romantic and astounding personage; yet she is a little melo-dramatic. Her exits and entrances are pantomimic, and her long red

cloak, her elf-locks, the rock on which she stands, and the white cloud behind her are, or might be made the property of a theatre. Shakespear's witches are nearly exploded on the stage. Their broomsticks are left; their metaphysics are gone, buried five editions deep in Captain Medwin's Conversations! The passion in Othello is made out of nothing but itself; there is no external machinery to help it on; its highest intermediate agent is an old-fashioned pocket-handkerchief. Yet "there's magic in the web" of thoughts and feelings, done after the commonest pattern of human life. The power displayed in it is that of intense passion and powerful intellect, wielding every-day events, and imparting its force to them, not swayed or carried along by them as in a go-cart. The splendour is that of genius darting out its forked flame on whatever comes in its way, and kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection, whether it be flax or iron. The colouring, the form, the motion, the combination of objects depend on the pre-disposition of the mind, moulding nature to its own purposes; in Sir Walter the mind is as wax to circumstances, and owns no other impress. Shakespear is a half-worker with nature. Sir Walter is like a man who has got a romantic

spinning-jenny, which he has only to set a going, and it does his work for him much better and faster than he can do it for himself. He lays an embargo on "all appliances and means to boot," on history, tradition, local scenery, costume and manners, and makes his characters chiefly up of these. Shakespear seizes only on the ruling passion, and miraculously evolves all the rest from it. The eagerness of desire suggests every possible event that can irritate or thwart it, foresees all obstacles, catches at every trifle, clothes itself with imagination, and tantalises itself with hope; "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt," starts at a phantom, and makes the universe tributary to it, and the play-thing of its fancy. There is none of this over-weening importunity of the imagination in the Author of Waverley, he does his work well, but in another-guess manner. His imagination is a matter-of-fact imagination. To return to Othello. Take the celebrated dialogue in the third act. "'Tis common." There is nothing but the writhings and contortions of the heart, probed by affliction's point, as the flesh shrinks under the surgeon's knife. All its starts and flaws are but the conflicts and misgivings of hope and fear, in the most ordinary but trying circumstances. The "Not a jot, not a jot," has no-

thing to do with any old legend or prophecy. It is only the last poor effort of human hope, taking refuge on the lips. When after being infected with jealousy by Iago, he retires apparently comforted and resigned, and then without any thing having happened in the interim, returns stung to madness, crowned with his wrongs, and raging for revenge, the effect is like that of poison inflaming the blood, or like fire inclosed in a furnace. The sole principle of invention is the sympathy with the natural revulsion of the human mind, and its involuntary transition from false security to uncontrolable fury. The springs of mental passion are fretted and wrought to madness, and produce this explosion in the poet's breast. So when Othello swears "By yon *marble* heaven," the epithet is suggested by the hardness of his heart from the sense of injury: the texture of the outward object is borrowed from that of the thoughts: and that noble simile, "Like the Propontic," &c. seems only an echo of the sounding tide of passion, and to roll from the same source, the heart. The dialogue between Hubert and Arthur, and that between Brutus and Cassius are among the finest illustrations of the same principle, which indeed is every where predominant (perhaps to a fault) in Shakespear. His genius is like the

Nile overflowing and enriching its banks; that of Sir Walter is like a mountain-stream rendered interesting by the picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery. Shakespear produces his most striking dramatic effects out of the workings of the finest and most intense passions; Sir Walter places his *dramatis personæ* in romantic situations, and subjects them to extraordinary occurrences, and narrates the results. The one gives us what we see and hear; the other what we *are*. Hamlet is not a person whose nativity is cast, or whose death is foretold by portents: he weaves the web of his destiny out of his own thoughts, and a very quaint and singular one it is. We have, I think, a stronger fellow-feeling with him than we have with Bertram or Waverley. All men feel and think, more or less: but we are not all foundlings, Jacobites, or astrologers. We might have been overturned with these gentlemen in a stage-coach: we seem to have been school-fellows with Hamlet at Wittenberg.

I will not press this argument farther, lest I should make it tedious, and run into questions I have no intention to meddle with. All I mean to insist upon is, that Sir Walter's *forte* is in the richness and variety of his materials, and Shakespear's in the working them up. Sir Walter is

distinguished by the most amazing retentiveness of memory, and vividness of conception of what would happen, be seen, and felt by every body in given circumstances; as Shakespear is by inventiveness of genius, by a faculty of tracing and unfolding the most hidden yet powerful springs of action, scarce recognised by ourselves, and by an endless and felicitous range of poetical illustration, added to a wide scope of reading and of knowledge. One proof of the justice of these remarks is, that whenever Sir Walter comes to a truly dramatic situation, he declines it or fails. Thus in the Black Dwarf, all that relates to the traditions respecting this mysterious personage, to the superstitious stories founded on it, is admirably done and to the life, with all the spirit and freedom of originality: but when he comes to the last scene for which all the rest is a preparation, and which is full of the highest interest and passion, nothing is done; instead of an address from Sir Edward Mauley, recounting the miseries of his whole life, and withering up his guilty rival with the recital, the Dwarf enters with a strange rustling noise, the opposite doors fly open, and the affrighted spectators rush out like the figures in a pantomime. This is not dramatic, but melo-dramatic. There is a palpable disappointment and falling-off, where

the interest had been worked up to the highest pitch of expectation. The gratifying of this appalling curiosity and interest was all that was not done to Sir Walter's hand; and this he has failed to do. All that was known *about* the Black Dwarf, his figure, his desolate habitation, his unaccountable way of life, his wrongs, his bitter execrations against intruders on his privacy, the floating and exaggerated accounts of him, all these are given with a masterly and faithful hand, this is matter of description and narrative: but when the true imaginative and dramatic part comes, when the subject of this disastrous tale is to pour out the accumulated and agonising effects of all this series of wretchedness and torture upon his own mind, that is, when the person is to speak from himself and to stun us with the recoil of passion upon external agents or circumstances that have caused it, we find that it is Sir Walter Scott and not Shakespear that is his counsel-keeper, that the author is a novelist and not a poet. All that is gossipped in the neighbourhood, all that is handed down in print, all of which a drawing or an etching might be procured, is gathered together and communicated to the public: what the heart whispers to itself in secret, what the imagination tells in thunder, this alone is want-

ing, and this is the great thing required to make good the comparison in question. Sir Walter has not then imitated Shakespear, but he has given us nature, such as he found and could best describe it; and he resembles him only in this, that he thinks of his characters and never of himself, and pours out his works with such unconscious ease and prodigality of resources that he thinks nothing of them, and is even greater than his own fame.

The genius of Shakespear is dramatic, that of Scott narrative or descriptive, that of Racine is didactic. He gives, as I conceive, the *common-places* of the human heart better than any one, but nothing or very little more. He enlarges on a set of obvious sentiments and well-known topics with considerable elegance of language and copiousness of declamation, but there is scarcely one stroke of original genius, nor any thing like imagination in his writings. He strings together a number of moral reflections, and instead of reciting them himself, puts them into the mouths of his *dramatis personæ*, who talk well about their own situations and the general relations of human life. Instead of laying bare the heart of the sufferer with all its bleeding wounds and palpitating fibres, he puts into his hand a common-place book, and he

reads us a lecture from this. This is not the essence of the drama, whose object and privilege it is to give us the extreme and subtle workings of the human mind in individual circumstances, to make us sympathise with the sufferer, or feel as we should feel in his circumstances, not to tell the indifferent spectator what the indifferent spectator could just as well tell him. Tragedy is human nature tried in the crucible of affliction, not exhibited in the vague theorems of speculation. The poet's pen that paints all this in words of fire and images of gold is totally wanting in Racine. He gives neither external images nor the internal and secret workings of the human breast. Sir Walter Scott gives the external imagery or machinery of passion; Shakespear the soul; and Racine the moral or argument of it. The French object to Shakespear for his breach of the Unities, and hold up Racine as a model of classical propriety, who makes a Greek hero address a Grecian heroine as *Madame*. Yet this is not barbarous—Why? Because it is French, and because nothing that is French can be barbarous in the eyes of this frivolous and pedantic nation, who would prefer a peruke of the age of Louis XIV. to a simple Greek head-dress!

ESSAY XIII.

ON DEPTH AND SUPERFICIALITY.

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ON DEPTH AND SUPERFICIALITY.

I WISH to make this Essay a sort of study of the meaning of several words, which have at different times a good deal puzzled me. Among these are the words, *wicked*, *false* and *true*, as applied to feeling; and lastly, *depth* and *shallowness*. It may amuse the reader to see the way in which I work out some of my conclusions under-ground, before throwing them up on the surface.

A great but useless thinker once asked me, if I had ever known a child of a naturally wicked disposition? and I answered, "Yes, that there was one in the house with me that cried from morning to night, *for spite*." I was laughed at for this answer, but still I do not repent it. It appeared to me that this child took a delight in tormenting itself and others; that the love of tyrannising over others and subjecting them to its caprices was a full compensation for the beating it received, that the screams it uttered soothed its peevish, turbulent spirit, and that it had a positive pleasure in pain from the sense

of power accompanying it. *His principiis nascuntur tyranni, his carnifex animus.* I was supposed to magnify and over-rate the symptoms of the disease, and to make a childish humour into a bugbear; but, indeed, I have no other idea of what is commonly understood by wickedness than that perversion of the will or love of mischief for its own sake, which constantly displays itself (though in trifles and on a ludicrously small scale) in early childhood. I have often been reproached with extravagance for considering things only in their abstract principles, and with heat and ill-temper, for getting into a passion about what no ways concerned me. If any one wishes to see me quite calm, they may cheat me in a bargain, or tread upon my toes; but a truth repelled, a sophism repeated, totally disconcerts me, and I lose all patience. I am not, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, *a good-natured man*; that is, many things annoy me besides what interferes with my own ease and interest. I hate a lie; a piece of injustice wounds me to the quick, though nothing but the report of it reach me. Therefore I have made many enemies and few friends; for the public know nothing of well-wishers, and keep a wary eye on those that would reform them. Coleridge used to com-

plain of my irascibility in this respect, and not without reason. Would that he had possessed a little of my tenaciousness and jealousy of temper; and then, with his eloquence to paint the wrong, and acuteness to detect it, his country and the cause of liberty might not have fallen without a struggle! The craniologists give me *the organ of local memory*, of which faculty I have not a particle, though they may say that my frequent allusions to conversations that occurred many years ago prove the contrary. I once spent a whole evening with Dr. Spurzheim, and I utterly forget all that passed, except that the Doctor *waltzed* before we parted! The only faculty I do possess, is that of a certain morbid interest in things, which makes me equally remember or anticipate by nervous analogy whatever touches it; and for this our nostrum-mongers have no specific organ, so that I am quite left out of their system. No wonder that I should pick a quarrel with it! It vexes me beyond all bearing to see children kill flies for sport; for the principle is the same as in the most deliberate and profligate acts of cruelty they can afterwards exercise upon their fellow-creatures. And yet I let moths burn themselves to death in the candle, for it makes me mad; and I say it is in vain to prevent fools from

rushing upon destruction. The author of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," (who sees farther into such things than most people,) could not understand why I should bring a charge of *wickedness* against an infant before it could speak, merely for squalling and straining its lungs a little. If the child had been in pain or in fear, I should have said nothing, but it cried only to vent its passion and alarm the house, and I saw in its frantic screams and gestures that great baby, the world, tumbling about in its swaddling-clothes, and tormenting itself and others for the last six thousand years! The plea of ignorance, of folly, of grossness, or selfishness makes nothing either way: it is the downright love of pain and mischief for the interest it excites, and the scope it gives to an abandoned will, that is the root of all the evil, and the original sin of human nature. There is a love of power in the mind independent of the love of good, and this love of power, when it comes to be opposed to the spirit of good, and is leagued with the spirit of evil to commit it with greediness, is wickedness. I know of no other definition of the term. A person who does not foresee consequences is a fool: he who cheats others to serve himself is a knave: he who is immersed in sensual pleasure is a

brute; but he alone, who has a pleasure in injuring another, or in debasing himself, that is, who does a thing with a particular relish because he ought not, is properly wicked. This character implies the fiend at the bottom of it; and is mixed up pretty plentifully (according to my philosophy) in the untoward composition of human nature. It is this craving after what is prohibited, and the force of contrast adding its zest to the violations of reason and propriety, that accounts for the excesses of pride, of cruelty, and lust; and at the same time frets and vexes the surface of life with petty evils, and plants a canker in the bosom of our daily enjoyments. Take away the enormities dictated by the wanton and pampered pride of human will, glutting itself with the sacrifice of the welfare of others, or with the desecration of its own best feelings, and also the endless bickerings, heart-burnings, and disappointments produced by the spirit of contradiction on a smaller scale, and the life of man would "spin round on its soft axle," unharmed and free, neither appalled by huge crimes, nor infested by insect follies. It might, indeed, be monotonous and insipid; but it is the hankering after mischievous and violent excitement that leads to this result, that causes that indifference to good

and proneness to evil, which is the very thing complained of. The griefs we suffer are for the most part of our own seeking and making; or we incur or inflict them, not to avert other impending evils, but to drive off *ennui*. There must be a spice of mischief and wilfulness thrown into the cup of our existence to give it its sharp taste and sparkling colour. I shall not go into a formal argument on this subject, for fear of being tedious, nor endeavour to enforce it by extreme cases for fear of being disgusting; but shall content myself with some desultory and familiar illustrations of it.

I laugh at those who deny that we ever wantonly or unnecessarily inflict pain upon others, when I see how fond we are of ingeniously tormenting ourselves. What is sullenness in children or grown people but revenge against ourselves? We had rather be the victims of this absurd and headstrong feeling, than give up an inveterate purpose, retract an error, or relax from the intensity of our will, whatever it may cost us. A surly man is his own enemy, and knowingly sacrifices his interest to his ill-humour, because he would at any time rather disoblige you than serve himself, as I believe I have already shewn in another place. The reason is, he has a natural aversion to every thing

agreeable or happy—he turns with disgust from every such feeling, as not according with the severe tone of his mind—and it is in excluding all interchange of friendly affections or kind offices that the ruling bias and the chief satisfaction of his life consist. Is not every country-town supplied with its scolds and scandal-mongers? The first cannot cease from plaguing themselves and every body about them with their senseless clamour, because the rage of words has become by habit and indulgence a thirst, a fever on their parched tongue; and the others continue to make enemies by some smart hit or sly insinuation at every third word they speak, because with every new enemy there is an additional sense of power. One man will sooner part with his friend than his joke, because the stimulus of saying a good thing is irritated, instead of being repressed, by the fear of giving offence, and by the imprudence or unfairness of the remark. Malice often takes the garb of truth. We find a set of persons who pride themselves on being *plain-spoken people*, that is, who blurt out every thing disagreeable to your face, by way of wounding your feelings and relieving their own, and this they call honesty. Even among philosophers we may have noticed those who are not contented to

inform the understandings of their readers, unless they can shock their prejudices; and among poets those who tamper with the rotten parts of their subject, adding to their fancied pretensions by trampling on the sense of shame. There are rigid reasoners who will not be turned aside from following up a logical argument by any regard to consequences, or the "compunctious visitings of nature," (such is their love of truth) —I never knew one of these scrupulous and hard-mouthed logicians who would not falsify the facts and distort the inference in order to arrive at a distressing and repulsive conclusion. Such is the fascination of what releases our own will from thraldom, and compels that of others reluctantly to submit to terms of our dictating! We feel our own power, and disregard their weakness and effeminacy with prodigious self-complacency. Lord Clive, when a boy, saw a butcher passing with a calf in a cart. A companion whom he had with him said, "I should not like to be that butcher!"—"I should not like to be that calf," replied the future Governor of India, laughing at all sympathy but that with his own sufferings. The "wicked" Lord Lyttleton (as he was called) dreamt a little before his death that he was confined in a huge subterranean vault (the inside of this round globe)

where as far as eye could see, he could discern no living object, till at last he saw a female figure coming towards him, and who should it turn out to be, but Mother Brownrigg, whom of all people he most hated! That was the very reason why he dreamt of her.

"You ask her crime: she whipp'd two 'prentices to death,
And hid them in the coal-hole."

POETRY OF THE ANTI-JACOBIN.

I do not know that hers is exactly a case in point; but I conceive that in the well-known catastrophe here alluded to, words led to blows, bad usage brought on worse from mere irritation and opposition, and that, probably, even remorse and pity urged on to aggravated acts of cruelty and oppression, as the only means of drowning reflection on the past in the fury of present passion. I believe that remorse for past offences has sometimes made the greatest criminals, as the being unable to appease a wounded conscience renders men desperate; and if I hear a person express great impatience and uneasiness at some error that he is liable to, I am tolerably sure that the conflict will end in a repetition of the offence. If a man who got drunk over-night, repents bitterly next morning, he will get drunk again at night; for both in his repentance and his self-gratification he is

led away by the feeling of the moment. But this is not wickedness, but despondency and want of strength of mind; and I only attribute wickedness to those who carry their wills in their hands, and who wantonly and deliberately suffer them to tyrannize over conscience, reason, and humanity, and who even draw an additional triumph from this degrading conquest. The wars, persecutions, and bloodshed, occasioned by religion, have generally turned on the most trifling differences in forms and ceremonies; which shews that it was not the vital interests of the questions that were at stake, but that these were made a handle and pretext to exercise cruelty and tyranny on the score of the most trivial and doubtful points of faith. There seems to be a love of absurdity and falshood as well as mischief in the human mind, and the most ridiculous as well as barbarous superstitions have on this account been the most acceptable to it. A lie is welcome to it, for it is, as it were, its own offspring; and it likes to believe, as well as act, whatever it pleases, and in the pure spirit of contradiction. The old idolatry took vast hold of the earliest ages; for to believe that a piece of painted stone or wood was a God (in the teeth of the fact) was a fine exercise of the imagination; and modern fana-

ticism thrives in proportion to the quantity of contradictions and nonsense it pours down the throats of the gaping multitude, and the jargon and mysticism it offers to their wonder and credulity. *Credo quia impossibile est,* is the standing motto of bigotry and superstition; that is, I believe, because to do so is a favourite act of the will, and to do so in defiance of common sense and reason enhances the pleasure and the merit (ten-fold) of this indulgence of blind faith and headstrong imagination. Methodism, in particular, which at once absolves the understanding from the rules of reasoning, and the conscience from the restraints of morality, throwing the whole responsibility upon a vicarious righteousness and an abstract belief, must, besides its rant, its vulgarity, and its amatory style, have a double charm both for saints and sinners. I have also observed a sort of *fatuity,* an indolence or indocility of the will to circumstances, which I think has a considerable share in the common affairs of life. I would willingly compound for all the mischiefs that are done me voluntarily, if I could escape those which are done me without any motive at all, or even with the best intentions. For instance, if I go to a distance where I am anxious to receive an answer to my letters, I am sure to be kept in suspense. My friends are aware of

this, as also of my impatience and irritability; and they cannot prevail on themselves to put an end to this dramatic situation of the parties. There is pleasure (an innocent and well-meaning one) in keeping a friend in suspense, in not putting one's-self out of one's way for his ill humours and apprehensions (though one would not for the world do him a serious injury), as there is in dangling the finny prey at the end of a hook, or in twirling round a cock-chaffer after sticking a pin through him at the end of a string,—there is no malice in the case, no deliberate cruelty, but the buzzing noise and the secret consciousness of superiority to any annoyance or inconvenience ourselves lull the mind into a delightful state of listless torpor and indifference. If a letter requires an immediate answer, send it by a private hand to save postage. If our messenger falls sick or breaks a leg and begs us to forward it by some other means, return it him again, and insist on its being conveyed according to its first destination. His cure may be slow but sure. In the mean time our friend can wait. We have done our duty in writing the letter, and are in no hurry to *receive* it! We know the contents, and they are matters of perfect indifference to us. No harm is meant by all this, but a great deal

of mischief may accrue. There is, in short, a sluggishness and untractableness about the will, that does not easily put itself in the situation of others, and that consults its own bias best by giving itself no trouble about them. Human life is so far a game of cross-purposes. If we wish a thing to be kept secret, it is sure to transpire; if we wish it to be known, not a syllable is breathed about it. This is not meant; but it happens so from mere simplicity and thoughtlessness. No one has ever yet seen through all the intricate folds and delicate involutions of our self-love, which is wrapped up in a set of smooth flimsy pretexts like some precious jewel in covers of silver paper.

I proceed to say something of the words *false* and *true*, as applied to moral feelings. It may be argued that this is a distinction without a difference; for that as feelings only exist by being *felt*, wherever, and in so far as they exist, they must be true, and that there can be no falsehood or deception in the question. The distinction between true and false pleasure, between real and seeming good, would be thus done away with; for the reality and the appearance are here the same. And this would be the case if our sensations were simple and detached, and one had no influence on another.

But it is in their secret and close dependence one on another, that the distinction here spoken of takes its rise. That then is *true* or *pure* pleasure that has no alloy or drawback in some other consideration; that is free from remorse and alarm; and that will bear the soberest reflection; because there is nothing that, upon examination, can be found acting indirectly to check and throw a damp upon it. On the other hand, we justly call those pleasures *false* and *hollow*, not merely which are momentary and ready to elude our grasp, but which, even at the time, are accompanied with such a consciousness of other circumstances as must embitter and undermine them. For instance, putting morality quite out of the question; is there not an undeniable and wide difference between the gaiety and animal spirits of one who indulges in a drunken debauch to celebrate some unexpected stroke of good fortune, and his who does the same thing to drown care for the loss of all he is worth? The outward objects, the immediate and more obvious sensations are, perhaps, very much the same in the latter case as in the former,—the rich viands, the sparkling wines, the social merriment, the wit, the loud laughter, and the maddening brain, but the still small voice is wanting, there is a reflec-

tion at bottom, that however stifled and kept down, poisons and spoils all, even by the violent effort to keep it from intruding; the mirth in the one case is forced, in the other is natural; the one reveller is (we all know by experience) a gay, laughing wretch, the other a happy man. I profess to speak of human nature as I find it; and the circumstance that any distinction I can make may be favourable to the theories of virtue, will not prevent me from setting it down, from the fear of being charged with cant and prejudice. Even in a case less palpable than the one supposed, where "some sweet oblivious antidote" has been applied to the mind, and it is lulled to temporary forgetfulness of its immediate cause of sorrow, does it therefore cease to gnaw the heart by stealth; are no traces of it left in the care-worn brow or face; is the state of mind the same as it was; or is there the same buoyancy, freedom, and erectness of spirit as in more prosperous circumstances? On the contrary, it is torpid, vexed, and sad, enfeebled or harassed, and weighed down by the corroding pressure of care, whether it thinks of it or not. The pulse beats slow and languid, the eye is dead; no object strikes us with the same alacrity; the avenues to joy or content are shut; and life becomes a burthen and a perplexing

mystery. Even in sleep, we are haunted with the broken images of distress or the mockery of bliss, and we in vain try to still the idle tumult of the heart. The constantly tampering with the truth, the putting off the day of reckoning, the fear of looking our situation in the face, gives the mind a wandering and unsettled turn, makes our waking thoughts a troubled dream, or sometimes ends in madness, without any violent paroxysm, without any severe pang, without any *overt act*, but from that silent operation of the mind which preys internally upon itself, and works the decay of its powers the more fatally, because we dare not give it open and avowed scope. Do we not, in case of any untoward accident or event, know, when we wake in the morning, that something is the matter, before we recollect what it is? The mind no more recovers its confidence and serenity after a staggering blow, than the haggard cheek and sleepless eye their colour and vivacity, because we do not see them in the glass. Is it to be supposed that there is not a firm and healthy tone of the mind as well as of the body; or that when this has been deranged, we do not feel pain, lassitude, and fretful impatience, though the local cause or impression may have been withdrawn? Is the state of the mind or of

the nervous system, and its disposition or indisposition to receive certain impressions from the remains of others still vibrating on it, nothing? Shall we say that the laugh of a madman is sincere; or that the wit we utter in our dreams is sterling? We often feel uneasy at something, without being able to tell why, or attribute it to a wrong cause. Our unconscious impressions necessarily give a colour to, and re-act upon our conscious ones; and it is only when these two sets of feeling are in accord, that our pleasures are true and sincere; where there is a discordance and misunderstanding in this respect, they are said (not absurdly as is pretended) to be false and hollow. There is then a serenity of virtue, a peace of conscience, a confidence in success, and a pride of intellect, which subsist and are a strong source of satisfaction independently of outward and immediate objects, as the general health of the body gives a glow and animation to the whole frame, notwithstanding a scratch we may have received in our little finger, and certainly very different from a state of sickness and infirmity. The difficulty is not so much in supposing one mental cause or phenomenon to be affected and imperceptibly moulded by another, as in setting limits to the everlasting ramifications of

our impressions, and in defining the obscure and intricate ways in which they communicate together. Suppose a man to labour under an habitual indigestion. Does it not oppress the very sun in the sky, beat down all his powers of enjoyment, and imprison all his faculties in a living tomb? Yet he perhaps long laboured under this disease, and felt its withering effects, before he was aware of the cause. It was not the less real on this account; nor did it interfere the less with the sincerity of his other pleasures, tarnish the face of nature, and throw a gloom over every thing. "He was hurt, and knew it not." Let the pressure be removed, and he breathes freely again; his spirits run with a livelier current, and he greets nature with smiles; yet the change is in him, not in her. Do we not pass the same scenery that we have visited but a little before, and wonder that no object appears the same, because we have some secret cause of dissatisfaction? Let any one feel the force of disappointed affection, and he may forget and scorn his error, laugh and be gay to all outward appearance, but the heart is not the less seared and blighted ever after. The splendid banquet does not supply the loss of appetite, nor the spotless ermine cure the itching palm, nor gold nor jewels redeem a lost

name, nor pleasure fill up the void of affection, nor passion stifle conscience. Moralists and divines say true, when they talk of the "unquenchable fire, and the worm that dies not." The human soul is not an invention of priests, whatever fables they have engrafted on it; nor is there an end of all our natural sentiments because French philosophers have not been able to account for them!—Hume, I think, somewhere contends that all satisfactions are equal *, because the cup can be no more than full. But surely, though this is the case, one cup holds more than another. As to mere negative satisfaction, the argument may be true. But as to positive satisfaction or enjoyment, I see no more how this must be equal, than how the heat of a furnace must in all cases be equally intense. Thus, for instance, there are many things with which we are contented, so as not to feel an uneasy desire after more, but yet we have a much higher relish of others. We may eat a mutton-chop without complaining, though we should consider a haunch of venison as a greater luxury if we had it. Again, in travelling abroad, the mind acquires a restless and vagabond habit. There is more of hurry and novelty, but less of

* See also Search's "Light of Nature Pursued," in which the same sophism is insisted on.

sincerity and certainty in our pursuits than at home. We snatch hasty glances of a great variety of things, but want some central point of view. After making the grand tour, and seeing the finest sights in the world, we are glad to come back at last to our native place and our own fireside. Our associations with it are the most stedfast and habitual, we there feel most at home and at our ease, we have a resting place for the sole of our foot, the flutter of hope, anxiety, and disappointment is at an end, and whatever our satisfactions may be, we feel most confidence in them, and have the strongest conviction of their truth and reality. There is then a true and a false or spurious in sentiment as well as in reasoning, and I hope the train of thought I have here gone into may serve in some respects as a clue to explain it.

The hardest question remains behind. What is *depth*, and what is *superficiality?* It is easy to answer that the one is what is obvious, familiar, and lies on the surface, and that the other is recondite and hid at the bottom of a subject. The difficulty recurs—What is meant by lying on the surface, or being concealed below it, in moral and metaphysical questions? Let us try for an analogy. *Depth* consists then in tracing any number of particular effects to a general

principle, or in distinguishing an unknown cause from the individual and varying circumstances with which it is implicated, and under which it lurks unsuspected. It is in fact resolving the concrete into the abstract. Now this is a task of difficulty, not only because the abstract naturally merges in the concrete, and we do not well know how to set about separating what is thus jumbled or cemented together in a single object, and presented under a common aspect; but being scattered over a larger surface, and collected from a number of undefined sources, there must be a strong feeling of its weight and pressure, in order to dislocate it from the object and bind it into a principle. The impression of an abstract principle is faint and doubtful in each individual instance; it becomes powerful and certain only by the repetition of the experiment, and by adding the last results to our first hazardous conjectures. We thus gain a distinct hold or clue to the demonstration, when a number of vague and imperfect reminiscences are united and drawn out together, by tenaciousness of memory and conscious feeling, in one continued act. So that the depth of the understanding or reasoning in such cases may be explained to mean, that there is a pile of *implicit* distinctions analyzed from a great va-

riety of facts and observations, each supporting the other, and that the mind, instead of being led away by the last or first object or detached view of the subject that occurs, connects all these into a whole from the top to the bottom, and by its intimate sympathy with the most obscure and random impressions that tend to the same result, evolves a principle of abstract truth. Two circumstances are combined in a particular object to produce a given effect: how shall I know which is the true cause, but by finding it in another instance? But the same effect is produced in a third object, which is without the concomitant circumstance of the first or second case. I must then look out for some other latent cause in the rabble of contradictory pretensions huddled together, which I had not noticed before, and to which I am eventually led by finding a necessity for it. But if my memory fails me, or I do not seize on the true character of different feelings, I shall make little progress, or be quite thrown out in my reckoning. Insomuch that according to the general diffusion of any element of thought or feeling. and its floating through the mixed mass of human affairs, do we stand in need of a greater quantity of that refined experience I have spoken of, and of a quicker and firmer tact in

connecting or distinguishing its results. However, I must make a reservation here. Both knowledge and sagacity are required, but sagacity abridges and anticipates the labour of knowledge, and sometimes jumps instinctively at a conclusion ; that is, the strength or fineness of the feeling, by association or analogy, sooner elicits the recollection of a previous and forgotten one in different circumstances, and the two together, by a sort of internal evidence and collective force, stamp any proposed solution with the character of truth or falsehood. Original strength of impression is often (in usual questions at least) a substitute for accumulated weight of experience ; and intensity of feeling is so far synonimous with depth of understanding. It is that which here gives us a contentious and palpable consciousness of whatever affects it in the smallest or remotest manner, and leave to us the hidden springs of thought and action through our sensibility and jealousy of whatever touches them.—To give an illustration or two of this very abstruse subject.

Elegance is a word that means something different from ease, grace, beauty, dignity ; yet it is akin to all these ; but it seems more particularly to imply a sparkling brilliancy of effect with finish and precision. We do not apply the

term to great things; we should not call an epic poem or a head of Jupiter *elegant*, but we speak of an elegant copy of verses, an elegant head-dress, an elegant fan, an elegant diamond brooch, or bunch of flowers. In all these cases (and others where the same epithet is used) there is something little and comparatively trifling in the objects and the interest they inspire. So far I deal chiefly in examples, conjectures, and negatives. But this is far from a definition. I think I know what personal beauty is, because I can say in one word what I mean by it, viz. *harmony of form*; and this idea seems to me to answer to all the cases to which the term personal beauty, is ever applied. Let us see if we cannot come to something equally definitive with respect to the other phrase. Sparkling effect, finish, and precision, are characteristic, as I think, of elegance, but as yet I see no reason why they should be so, any more than why blue, red, and yellow, should form the colours of the rainbow. I want a common idea as a link to connect them, or to serve as a substratum for the others. Now suppose I say that elegance is beauty, or at least *the pleasurable* in little things: we then have a ground to rest upon at once. For elegance being beauty or pleasure in little or slight impressions, precision,

finish, and polished smoothness follow from this definition as matters of course. In other words, for a thing that is little to be beautiful, or at any rate to please, * it must have precision of outline, which in larger masses and gigantic forms is not so indispensable. In what is small, the parts must be finished, or they will offend. Lastly, in what is momentary and evanescent, as in dress, fashions, &c. there must be a glossy and sparkling effect, for brilliancy is the only virtue of novelty. That is to say, by getting the primary conditions or essential qualities of elegance in all circumstances whatever, we see how these branch off into minor divisions in relation to form, details, colour, surface, &c. and rise from a common ground of abstraction into all the variety of consequences and examples. The Hercules is not elegant; the Venus is simply beautiful. The French, whose ideas of beauty or grandeur never amount to more than an elegance, have no relish for Rubens, nor will they understand this definition.

When Sir Isaac Newton saw the apple fall, it was a very simple and common observation, but it suggested to his mind the law that holds the universe together. What then was the process

* I have said before that this is a study, not a perfect demonstration. I am no merchant in metaphysics.

in this case? In general, when we see any thing fall, we have the idea of a particular direction, of *up* and *down* associated with the motion by invariable and every day's experience. The earth is always (as we conceive) under our feet, and the sky above our heads, so that according to this local and habitual feeling, all heavy bodies must everlastingly fall in the same direction downwards, or parallel to the upright position of our bodies. Sir Isaac Newton by a bare effort of abstraction, or by a grasp of mind comprehending all the possible relations of things, got rid of this prejudice, turned the world as it were on its back, and saw the apple fall not *downwards*, but simply *towards* the earth, so that it would fall *upwards* on the same principle, if the earth were above it, or towards it at any rate in whatever direction it lay. This highly abstracted view of the case answered to all the phenomena of nature, and no other did; and this view he arrived at by a vast power of comprehension, retaining and reducing the contradictory phenomena of the universe under one law, and counteracting and banishing from his mind that almost invincible and instinctive association of *up* and *down* as it relates to the position of our own bodies and the gravitation of all others to the earth in the same direction.

From a circumscribed and partial view we make that, which is general, particular: the great mathematician here spoken of, from a wide and comprehensive one, made it general again, or he perceived the essential condition or cause of a general effect, and that which acts indispensably in all circumstances, separate from other accidental and arbitrary ones.

I lately heard an anecdote related of an American lady (one of two sisters) who married young and well, and had several children; her sister, however, was married soon after herself to a richer husband, and had a larger (if not finer) family, and after passing several years of constant repining and wretchedness, she died at length of pure envy. The circumstance was well known, and generally talked of. Some one said on hearing this, that it was a thing that could only happen in America; that it was a trait of the republican character and institutions, where alone the principle of mutual jealousy, having no high and distant objects to fix upon, and divert it from immediate and private mortifications, seized upon the happiness or outward advantages even of the nearest connexions as its natural food, and having them constantly before its eyes, gnawed itself to death upon them. I assented to this remark, and I confess

it struck me as shewing a deep insight into human nature. Here was a sister envying a sister, and that not for objects that provoke strong passion, but for common and contentional advantages, till it ends in her death. They were also represented as good and respectable people. How then is this extraordinary developement of an ordinary human frailty to be accounted for? From the peculiar circumstances? These were the country and state of society. It was in America that it happened. The democratic level, the flatness of imagery, the absence of those towering and artificial heights that in old and monarchical states act as conductors to attract aud carry off the splenetic humours and rancorous hostilities of a whole people, and to make common and petty advantages sink into perfect insignificance, were full in the mind of the person who suggested the solution; and in this dearth of every other mark or vent for it, it was felt intuitively, that the natural spirit of envy and discontent would fasten upon those that were next to it, and whose advantages, there being no great difference in point of elevation, would gall in proportion to their proximity and repeated recurrence. The remote and exalted advantages of birth and station in countries where the social

fabric is constructed of lofty and unequal materials, necessarily carry the mind out of its immediate and domestic circle; whereas, take away those objects of imaginary spleen and moody speculation, and they leave, as the inevitable alternative, the envy and hatred of our friends and neighbours at every advantage we possess, as so many eye-sores and stumbling-blocks in their way, where these selfish principles have not been curbed or given way altogether to charity and benevolence. The fact, as stated in itself, is an anomaly: as thus explained, by combining it with a general state of feeling in a country, it seems to point out a great principle in society. Now this solution would not have been attained but for the deep impression which the operation of certain general causes of moral character had recently made, and the quickness with which the consequences of its removal were felt. I might give other instances, but these will be sufficient to explain the argument, or set others upon elucidating it more clearly.

Acuteness is depth, or sagacity in connecting individual effects with individual causes, or *vice versâ*, as in stratagems of war, policy, and a knowledge of character and the world. Comprehension is the power of combining a vast

number of particulars in some one view, as in mechanics, or the game of chess, but without referring them to any abstract or general principle. A *common-place* differs from an abstract discourse in this, that it is trite and vague, instead of being new and profound. It is a common-place at present to say that heavy bodies fall by attraction. It would always have been one to say that this falling is the effect of a law of nature, or the will of God. This is assigning a general but not adequate cause.

The depth of passion is where it takes hold of circumstances too remote or indifferent for notice from the force of association or analogy, and turns the current of other passions by its own. Dramatic power in the depth of the knowledge of the human heart, is chiefly shewn in tracing this effect. For instance, the fondness displayed by a mistress for a lover (as she is about to desert him for a rival) is not mere hypocrisy or art to deceive him, but nature, or the reaction of her pity, or parting tenderness towards a person she is about to injure, but does not absolutely hate. Shakespear is the only dramatic author who has laid open this reaction or involution of the passions in a manner worth speaking of. The rest are common place declaimers, and may be very fine poets, but not

deep philosophers.—There is a depth even in superficiality, that is, the affections cling round obvious and familiar objects, not recondite and remote ones; and the intense continuity of feeling thus obtained, forms the depth of sentiment. It is that that redeems poetry and romance from the charge of superficiality. The habitual impressions of things are, as to feeling, the most refined ones. The painter also in his mind's eye penetrates beyond the surface or husk of the object, and sees into a labyrinth of forms, an abyss of colour. My head has grown giddy in following the windings of the drawing in Raphael, and I have gazed on the breadth of Titian, where infinite imperceptible gradations were blended in a common mass, as into a dazzling mirror. This idea is more easily transferred to Rembrandt's chiaro-scura, where the greatest clearness and the nicest distinctions are observed in the midst of obscurity. In a word, I suspect depth to be that strength, and at the same time subtlety of impression, which will not suffer the slightest indication of thought or feeling to be lost, and gives warning of them, over whatever extent of surface they are diffused, or under whatever disguises of circumstances they lurk.

ESSAY XIV.

ON RESPECTABLE PEOPLE.

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THERE is not any term that is oftener misapplied, or that is a stronger instance of the abuse of language, than this same word *respectable*. By a *respectable man* is generally meant a person whom there is no reason for respecting, or none that we choose to name: for if there is any good reason for the opinion we wish to express, we naturally assign it as the ground of his respectability. If the person whom you are desirous to characterise favourably, is distinguished for his good-nature, you say that he is a good-natured man; if by his zeal to serve his friends, you call him a friendly man; if by his wit or sense, you say that he is witty or sensible; if by his honesty or learning, you say so at once; but if he is none of these, and there is no one quality which you can bring forward to justify the high opinion you would be thought to entertain of him, you then take the question for granted, and jump at a conclusion, by observing gravely, that "he is a very

respectable man." It is clear, indeed, that where we have any striking and generally admitted reasons for respecting a man, the most obvious way to ensure the respect of others, will be to mention his estimable qualities; where these are wanting, the wisest course must be to say nothing about them, but to insist on the general inference which we have our particular reasons for drawing, only vouching for its authenticity. If, for instance, the only motive we have for thinking or speaking well of another is, that he gives us good dinners, as this is not a valid reason to those who do not, like us, partake of his hospitality, we may (without going into particulars) content ourselves with assuring them, that he is a most respectable man: if he is a slave to those above him, and an oppressor of those below him, but sometimes makes us the channels of his bounty or the tools of his caprice, it will be as well to say nothing of the matter, but to confine ourselves to the safer generality, that he is a person of the highest respectability: if he is a low dirty fellow, who has amassed an immense fortune, which he does not know what to do with, the possession of it alone will guarantee his respectability, if we say nothing of the manner in which he has come by it, or in which he spends it. A man

may be a knave or a fool, or both (as it may happen) and yet be a most respectable man, in the common and authorized sense of the term, provided he saves appearances, and does not give common fame a handle for no longer keeping up the imposture. The best title to the character of respectability lies in the convenience of those who echo the cheat, and in the conventional hypocrisy of the world. Any one may lay claim to it who is willing to give himself airs of importance, and can find means to divert others from inquiring too strictly into his pretensions. It is a disposable commodity,—not a part of the man, that sticks to him like his skin, but an appurtenance, like his goods and chattels. It is meat, drink, and clothing to those who take the benefit of it by allowing others the credit. It is the current coin, the circulating medium, in which the factitious intercourse of the world is carried on, the bribe which interest pays to vanity. Respectability includes all that vague and undefinable mass of respect floating in the world, which arises from sinister motives in the person who pays it, and is offered to adventitious and doubtful qualities in the person who receives it. It is spurious and nominal; hollow and venal. To suppose that it is to be taken literally or applied to ster-

ling merit, would betray the greatest ignorance of the customary use of speech. When we hear the word coupled with the name of any individual, it would argue a degree of romantic simplicity to imagine that it implies any one quality of head or heart, any one excellence of body or mind, any one good action or praise-worthy sentiment; but as soon as it is mentioned, it conjures up the ideas of a handsome house with large acres round it, a sumptuous table, a cellar well stocked with excellent wines, splendid furniture, a fashionable equipage, with a long list of elegant contingencies. It is not what a man *is*, but what he *has*, that we speak of in the significant use of this term. He may be the poorest creature in the world in himself, but if he is well to do, and can spare some of his superfluities, if he can lend us his purse or his countenance upon occasion, he then "buys golden opinions" of us;—it is but fit that we should speak well of the bridge that carries us over, and in return for what we can get from him, we embody our servile gratitude, hopes, and fears, in this word *respectability*. By it we pamper his pride, and feed our own necessities. It must needs be a very honest uncorrupted word that is the go-between in this disinterested kind of traffic. We do not think of applying this word to a great

poet or a great painter, to the man of genius, or the man of virtue, for it is seldom we can *spunge* upon them. It would be a solecism for any one to pretend to the character who has a shabby coat to his back, who goes without a dinner, or has not a good house over his head. He who has reduced himself in the world by devoting himself to a particular study, or adhering to a particular cause, occasions only a smile of pity or a shrug of contempt at the mention of his name; while he who has raised himself in it by a different course, who has become rich for want of ideas, and powerful from want of principle, is looked up to with silent homage, and passes for a respectable man. "The learned pate ducks to the golden fool." We spurn at virtue and genius in rags; and lick the dust in the presence of vice and folly in purple. When Otway was left to starve after having produced "Venice Preserv'd," there was nothing in the phrenzied action with which he devoured the food that choked him, to provoke the respect of the mob, who would have hooted at him the more for knowing that he was a poet. Spenser, kept waiting for the hundred pounds which Burleigh grudged him "for a song," might feel the mortification of his situation; but the statesman never felt any diminution of his Sovereign's

regard in consequence of it. Charles the Second's neglect of his favourite poet Butler did not make him look less gracious in the eyes of his courtiers, or of the wits and critics of the time. Burns's embarrassments, and the temptations to which he was exposed by his situation, degraded him; but left no stigma on his patrons, who still meet to celebrate his memory, and consult about his monument, in the face of day. To enrich the mind of a country by works of art or science, and leave yourself poor, is not the way for any one to rank as respectable, at least in his life-time:—to oppress, to enslave, to cheat, and plunder it, is a much better way. "The time gives evidence of it." But the instances are common.

Respectability means a man's situation and success in life, not his character or conduct. The city merchant never loses his respectability till he becomes a bankrupt. After that, we hear no more of it or him. The Justice of the Peace, and the Parson of the parish, the Lord and the Squire, are allowed, by immemorial usage, to be very respectable people, though no one ever thinks of asking why. They are a sort of fixtures in this way. To take an example from one of them. The Country Parson may pass his whole time, when he is not employed in the

cure of souls, in flattering his rich neighbours, and leaguing with them to *snub* his poor ones, in seizing poachers, and encouraging informers; he may be exorbitant in exacting his tithes, harsh to his servants, the dread and bye-word of the village where he resides, and yet all this, though it may be notorious, shall abate nothing of his respectability. It will not hinder his patron from giving him another living to play the petty tyrant in, or prevent him from riding over to the Squire's in his carriage and being well received, or from sitting on the bench of Justices with due decorum and with clerical dignity. The poor Curate, in the mean time, who may be a real comfort to the bodies and minds of his parishioners, will be passed by without notice. Parson Adams, drinking his ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen, makes no very respectable figure; but Sir Thomas himself was right worshipful, and his widow a person of honour!—A few such historiographers as Fielding would put an end to the farce of respectability, with several others like it. Peter Pounce, in the same author, was a consummation of this character, translated into the most vulgar English. The character of Captain Blifil, his epitaph, and funeral sermon, are worth tomes of casuistry and patched-up theories of moral sentiments.

Pope somewhere exclaims, in his fine indignant way,

> " What can ennoble sots, or knaves, or cowards?
> Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

But this is the heraldry of poets, not of the world. In fact, the only way for a poet now-a-days to emerge from the obscurity of poverty and genius, is to prostitute his pen, turn literary pimp to some borough-mongering lord, canvass for him at elections, and by this means aspire to the same importance, and be admitted on the same respectable footing with him as his valet, his steward, or his practising attorney. A Jew, a stock-jobber, a war-contractor, a successful monopolist, a Nabob, an India Director, or an African slave-dealer, are all very respectable people in their turn. A Member of Parliament is not only respectable, but *honourable*;—" all honourable men!" Yet this circumstance, which implies such a world of respect, really means nothing. To say of any one that he is a Member of Parliament, is to say, at the same time, that he is not at all distinguished as such. No body ever thought of telling you, that Mr. Fox or Mr. Pitt were Members of Parliament. Such is the constant difference between names and things!

The most mischievous and offensive use of

this word has been in politics. By respectable people (in the fashionable cant of the day) are meant those who have not a particle of regard for any one but themselves, who have feathered their own nests, and only want to lie snug and warm in them. They have been set up and appealed to as the only friends of their country and the Constitution, while in truth they were friends to nothing but their own interest. With them all is well, if they are well off. They are raised by their lucky stars above the reach of the distresses of the community, and are cut off by their situation and sentiments, from any sympathy with their kind. They would see their country ruined before they would part with the least of their superfluities. Pampered in luxury and their own selfish comforts, they are proof against the calls of patriotism, and the cries of humanity. They would not get a scratch with a pin to save the universe. They are more affected by the overturning of a plate of turtle-soup than by the starving of a whole county. The most desperate characters, picked from the most necessitous and depraved classes, are not worse judges of politics than your true, staunch, thorough-paced "lives and fortunes men," who have what is called a *stake* in the country, and see every thing through the medium of their

cowardly and unprincipled hopes and fears.—London is, perhaps, the only place in which the standard of respectability at all varies from the standard of money. There things go as much by appearance as by weight; and he may be said to be a respectable man who cuts a certain figure in company by being dressed in the fashion, and venting a number of common-place things with tolerable grace and fluency. If a person there brings a certain share of information and good manners into mixed society, it is not asked, when he leaves it, whether he is rich or not. Lords and fiddlers, authors and common councilmen, editors of newspapers and parliamentary speakers meet together, and the difference is not so much marked as one would suppose. To be an Edinburgh Reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society.

ESSAY XIII.

ON THE JEALOUSY AND THE SPLEEN OF PARTY.

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ON THE JEALOUSY AND THE SPLEEN OF PARTY.

"It is michin-malico, and means mischief."—HAMLET.

I was sorry to find the other day, on coming to Vevey, and looking into some English books at a library there, that Mr. Moore had taken an opportunity, in his "Rhymes on the Road," of abusing Madame Warens, Rousseau, and men of genius in general. *It 's an ill bird*, as the proverb says. This appears to me, I confess, to be *pick-thank* work, as needless as it is ill-timed, and, considering from whom it comes, particularly unpleasant. In conclusion, he thanks God with the Levite, that "he is not one of those," and would rather be any thing, a worm, the meanest thing that crawls, than numbered among those who give light and law to the world by an excess of fancy and intellect *. Perhaps

* "Out on the craft—I 'd rather be
One of those hinds that round me tread,
With just enough of sense to see
The noon-day sun that 's o'er my head,

Posterity may take him at his word, and no more trace be found of his "Rhymes" upon the onward tide of time than of

> "the snow-falls in the river,
> A moment white, then melts for ever!"

It might be some increasing consciousness of the frail tenure by which he holds his rank among the great heirs of Fame, that urged our Bard to pawn his reversion of immortality for an indulgent smile of patrician approbation, as he raised his puny arm against "the mighty dead," to lower by a flourish of his pen the aristocracy of letters nearer to the level of the aristocracy of rank — two ideas that keep up a perpetual *see-saw* in Mr. Moore's mind like buckets in a well, and to which he is always ready to lend a helping hand, according as he is likely to be hoisted up, or in danger of being let down with either of them. The mode in which our author proposes to correct the extravagance of public opinion, and qualify the interest taken in such persons as Rousseau and Madame de Warens, is singular enough, and savours of the late un-

> Than thus with high-built genius curs'd,
> That hath no heart for its foundation,
> Be all at once that 's brightest—worst—
> Sublimest—meanest in creation.
>
> RHYMES ON THE ROAD.

lucky bias of his mind: — it is by referring us to what the well-bred people in the neighbourhood thought of Rousseau and his pretensions a hundred years ago or thereabouts. "*So shall their anticipation prevent our discovery!*"

> "And doubtless 'mong the grave and good
> And gentle of their neighbourhood,
> *If known at all*, they were but known
> As strange, low people, low and bad,
> Madame herself to footmen prone,
> And her young *pauper*, all but mad."

This is one way of reversing the judgment of posterity, and setting aside the *ex-post-facto* evidence of taste and genius. So, after "all that's come and gone yet,"—after the anxious doubts and misgivings of his mind as to his own destiny—after all the pains he took to form himself in solitude and obscurity—after the slow dawn of his faculties, and their final explosion, that like an eruption of another Vesuvius, dazzling all men with its light, and leaving the burning lava behind it, shook public opinion, and overturned a kingdom — after having been "the gaze and shew of the time"—after having been read by all classes, criticised, condemned, admired in every corner of Europe — after bequeathing a name that at the end of half a century is never repeated but with emotion as ano-

ther name for genius and misfortune — after having given us an interest in his feelings as in our own, and drawn the veil of lofty imagination or of pensive regret over all that relates to his own being, so that we go a pilgrimage to the places where he lived, and recall the names he loved with tender affection (worshipping at the shrines where his fires were first kindled, and where the purple light of love still lingers —"Elysian beauty, melancholy grace!")—after all this, and more, instead of taking the opinion which one half of the world have formed of Rousseau with eager emulation, and the other have been forced to admit in spite of themselves, we are to be sent back by Mr. Moore's eaves-dropping Muse to what the people in the neighbourhood thought of him *(if* ever they thought of him at all) before he had shewn any one proof of what he was, as the fairer test of truth and candour, and as coming nearer to the standard of greatness, that is, of *something asked to dine out*, existing in the author's own mind.

"This, this is the unkindest cut of all."

Mr. Moore takes the inference which he chuses to attribute to the neighbouring gentry concerning "the pauper lad," namely, that "he was mad," because he was poor, and flings it to the

passengers out of a landau and four as the true version of his character by the fashionable and local authorities of the time. He need not have gone out of his way to Charmettes merely to drag the reputations of Jean Jacques and his mistress after him, chained to the car of aristocracy, as "people low and bad," on the strength of his enervated sympathy with the genteel conjectures of the day as to what and who they were — we have better and more authentic evidence. What would he say if this method of neutralising the voice of the public were applied to himself, or to his friend Mr. Chantry; if we were to deny that the one ever rode in an open carriage *tête-à-tête* with a lord, because his father stood behind a counter, or were to ask the sculptor's customers when he drove a milk-cart what we are to think of his bust of Sir Walter? *It will never do.* It is the peculiar hardship of genius not to be recognized with the first breath it draws — often not to be admitted even during its life-time — to make its way slow and late, through good report and evil report, "through clouds of detraction, of envy and lies" — to have to contend with the injustice of fortune, with the prejudices of the world,

"Rash judgments and the sneers of selfish men"—

to be shamed by personal defects, to pine in obscurity, to be the butt of pride, the jest of fools, the bye-word of ignorance and malice — to carry on a ceaseless warfare between the consciousness of inward worth and the slights and neglect of others, and to hope only for its reward in the grave and in the undying voice of fame: — and when, as in the present instance, that end has been marvellously attained and a final sentence has been passed, would any one but Mr. Moore wish to shrink from it, to revive the injustice of fortune and the world, and to abide by the idle conjectures of a fashionable *cotérie* empannelled on the spot, who would come to the same shallow conclusion whether the individual in question were an idiot or a God? There is a degree of gratuitous impertinence and frivolous servility in all this not easily to be accounted for or forgiven.

There is something more particularly offensive in the cant about "people low and bad" applied to the intimacy between Rousseau and Madame Warens, inasmuch as the volume containing this nice strain of morality is dedicated to Lord Byron, who was at that very time living on the very same sentimental terms with an Italian lady of rank, and whose MEMOIRS Mr. Moore has since thought himself called

upon to suppress, out of regard to his Lordship's character and to that of his friends, *most* of whom were not "low people." Is it quality, not charity, that with Mr. Moore covers all sorts of slips?

> "But 'tis the fall degrades her to a whore;
> Let Greatness own her, and she 's mean no more!"

What also makes the *dead-set* at the heroine of the "Confessions" seem the harder measure, is, that it is preceded by an effusion to Mary Magdalen in the devotional style of Madame Guyon, half amatory, half pious, but so tender and rapturous that it dissolves Canova's marble in tears, and heaves a sigh from Guido's canvas. The melting pathos that trickles down one page is frozen up into the most rigid morality, and hangs like an icicle upon the next. Here Thomas Little smiles and weeps in ecstacy; there Thomas Brown (not "the younger," but the elder surely) frowns disapprobation, and meditates dislike. Why, it may be asked, does Mr. Moore's insect-Muse always hover round this alluring subject, "now in glimmer and now in gloom" — now basking in the warmth, now writhing with the smart—now licking his lips at it, now making wry faces — but always fidgetting and fluttering about the same gaudy, luscious topic, either in flimsy raptures or trumpery horrors? I hate, for my own part, this alter-

nation of meretricious rhapsodies and methodistical cant, though the one generally ends in the other. One would imagine that the author of "Rhymes on the Road" had lived too much in the world, and understood the tone of good society too well to link the phrases "people *low* and *bad*" together as synonymous. But the crossing the Alps has, I believe, given some of our fashionables a shivering-fit of morality, as the sight of Mont Blanc convinced our author of the Being of a God * — they are seized with an amiable horror and remorse for the vices of others (of course so much worse than their own,) so that several of our *blue-stockings* have got the *blue-devils*, and Mr. Moore, as the Squire of Dames, chimes in with the cue that is given him. The panic, however, is not universal. He must have heard of the romping, the languishing, the masquerading, the intriguing, and the Platonic attachments of English ladies of the highest quality and Italian Opera-singers. He must

* The poet himself, standing at the bottom of it, however diminutive in appearance, was a much greater proof of his own argument than a huge, shapeless lump of ice. But the immensity, the solitude, the barrenness, the immoveableness of the masses, so different from the whirl, the tinsel, the buzz and the ephemeral nature of the objects which occupy and dissipate his ordinary attention, gave Mr. Moore a turn for reflection, and brought before him the abstract idea of infinity and of the cause of all things.

know what Italian manners are — what they were a hundred years ago, at Florence or at Turin, * better than I can tell him. Not a word does he hint on the subject. No: the elevation and splendour of the examples dazzle him; the extent of the evil overpowers him; and he chooses to make Madame Warens the scape-goat of his little budget of querulous casuistry, as if her errors and irregularities were to be set down to the account of the genius of Rousseau and of modern philosophy, instead of being the result of the example of the privileged class to which she belonged, and of the licentiousness of the age and country in which she lived. She appears to have been a handsome, well-bred, fascinating, condescending *demirep* of that day, like any of the author's fashionable acquaintances in the present, but the eloquence of her youthful *protegè* has embalmed her memory, and thrown the illusion of fancied perfections and of hallowed regrets over her frailties; and it is this that Mr. Moore cannot excuse, and that draws down upon her his pointed hostility of attack, and rouses all the venom of his moral indignation. Why does he not, in like manner, pick a quarrel with that celebrated

* Madame Warens resided for some time at Turin, and was pensioned by the Court.

monument in the *Pere la Chaise*, brought there

"From Paraclete's white walls and silver springs;"

or why does he not leave a lampoon, instead of an elegy, on Laura's tomb? The reason is, he *dare* not. The cant of morality is not here strong enough to stem the opposing current of the cant of sentiment, to which he by turns commits the success of his votive rhymes.

Not content with stripping off the false colours from the frail fair (one of whose crimes it is not to have been young) the poet makes a "swan-like end," and falls foul of men of genius, fancy, and sentiment in general, as impostors and mountebanks, who feel the least themselves of what they describe and make others feel. I beg leave to enter my flat and peremptory protest against this view of the matter, as an impossibility. I am not absolutely blind to the weak sides of authors, poets, and philosophers (for "'tis my vice to spy into abuses") but that they are not generally in earnest in what they write, that they are not the dupes of their own imaginations and feelings, before they turn the heads of the world at large, is what I must utterly deny. So far from the likelihood of any such antipathy between their sentiments and their professions, from their being

recreants to truth and nature, quite callous and insensible to what they make such a rout about, it is pretty certain that whatever they make others feel in any marked degree, they must themselves feel first; and further, they must have this feeling all their lives. It is not a fashion got up and put on for the occasion; it is the very condition and ground-work of their being. What the reader is and feels at the instant, *that* the author is and feels at all other times. It is stamped upon him at his birth; it only quits him when he dies. His existence is intellectual, *ideal:* it is hard to say he takes no interest in what he is. His passion is beauty; his pursuit is truth. On whomsoever else these may sit light, to whomever else they may appear indifferent, whoever else may play at fast-and-loose with them, may laugh at or despise them, may take them up or lay them down as it suits their convenience or pleasure, it is not so with him. He cannot shake them off, or play the hypocrite or renegado, if he would. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" They are become a habit, a second nature to him. He is *totus in illis:* he has no other alternative or resource, and cannot do without them. The man of fashion may resolve to study as a condescension, the man of business as a relaxation,

the idler to employ his time. But the poet is "married to immortal verse," the philosopher to lasting truth. Whatever the reader thinks fine in books (and Mr. Moore acknowledges that fine and rare things are to be found there) assuredly existed before in the living volume of the author's brain: that which is a passing and casual impression in the one case, a floating image, an empty sound, is in the other an heir-loom of the mind, the very form into which it is warped and moulded, a deep and inward harmony that flows on for ever, as the springs of memory and imagination unlock their secret stores. "Thoughts that glow, and words that burn," are his daily sustenance. He leads a spiritual life, and walks with God. The personal is, as much as may be, lost in the universal. He is Nature's high-priest, and his mind is a temple where she treasures up her fairest and loftiest forms. These he broods over, till he becomes enamoured of them, inspired by them, and communicates some portion of his ethereal fires to others. For these he has given up every thing, wealth, pleasure, ease, health; and yet we are to be told he takes no interest in them, does not enter into the meaning of the words he uses, or feel the force of the ideas he imprints upon the brain of others. *Let us give*

the Devil his due. An author, I grant, may be deficient in dress or address, may neglect his person and his fortune —

> " But his soul is fair,
> Bright as the children of yon azure sheen :"

he may be full of inconsistencies elsewhere, but he is himself in his books: he may be ignorant of the world we live in, but that he is not at home and enchanted with that fairy-world which hangs upon his pen, that he does not reign and revel in the creations of his own fancy, or tread with awe and delight the stately domes and empyrean palaces of eternal truth, the portals of which he opens to us, is what I cannot take Mr. Moore's word for. He does not "give us reason with his rhyme." An author's appearance or his actions may not square with his theories or his descriptions, but his mind is seen in his writings, as his face is in the glass. All the faults of the literary character, in short, arise out of the predominance of the professional *mania* of such persons, and their absorption in those *ideal* studies and pursuits, their affected regard to which the poet tells us is a mere mockery, and a bare-faced insult to people of plain, strait-forward, practical sense and unadorned pretensions, like himself. Once more, I cannot believe it. I think that Milton did

not dictate "Paradise Lost" *by rote* (as a mouthing player repeats his part) that Shakespear worked himself up with a certain warmth to express the passion in Othello, that Sterne had some affection for My Uncle Toby, Rousseau a *hankering* after his dear Charmettes, that Sir Isaac Newton really forgot his dinner in his fondness for fluxions, and that Mr. Locke prosed in sober sadness about the malleability of gold. Farther, I have no doubt that Mr. Moore himself is not an exception to this theory — that he has infinite satisfaction in those tinkling rhymes and those glittering conceits with which the world are so taken, and that he had very much the same sense of mawkish sentiment and flimsy reasoning in inditing the stanzas in question that many of his admirers must have experienced in reading them!—In turning to the "Castle of Indolence" for the lines quoted a little way back, I chanced to light upon another passsage which I cannot help transcribing:

"I care not, Fortune, what you me deny:
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shews her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns by living stream at eve:
Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
And I their toys to the great children leave:
Of fancy, reason, virtue nought can me bereave."

Were the sentiments here so beautifully expressed mere affectation in Thomson; or are we to make it a rule that as a writer imparts to us a sensation of disinterested delight, he himself has none of the feeling he excites in us? This is one way of shewing our gratitude, and being even with him. But perhaps Thomson's works may not come under the intention of Mr. Moore's strictures, as they were never (like Rousseau's) excluded from the libraries of English Noblemen!

"Books, dreams are each a world, and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good;
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness may grow."

Let me then conjure the gentle reader, who has ever felt an attachment to books, not hastily to divorce them from their authors. Whatever love or reverence may be due to the one, is equally owing to the other. The volume we prize may be little, old, shabbily bound, an imperfect copy, does not step down from the shelf to give us a graceful welcome, nor can it extend a hand to serve us in extremity, and so far may be like the author: but whatever there is of truth or good or of proud consolation or of cheering hope in the one, all this existed in a greater degree in the imagination and the heart and brain of the other. To cherish the work

and *damn* the author is as if the traveller who slakes his thirst at the running stream, should revile the spring-head from which it gushes. I do not speak of the degree of passion felt by Rousseau towards Madame Warens, nor of his treatment of her, nor her's of him: but that he thought of her for years with the tenderest yearnings of affection and regret, and felt towards her all that he has made his readers feel, this I cannot for a moment doubt. * So far, then, he is no impostor or juggler. Still less could he have given a new and personal character to the literature of Europe, and changed the tone of sentiment and the face of society, if he had not felt the strongest interest in persons and things, or had been the heartless pretender he is sometimes held out to us.

The tone of politics and of public opinion has

* What the nature of his attachment was is probably best explained by his cry, "Ah! voila de la pervenche!" with which all Europe has rung; or by the beginning of the last of the "Reveries of a Solitary Walker," "Aujourd'hui jour de Pâques fleuries, il y a précisément cinquante ans de ma premiere connaissance avec Madame de Warens." But it is very possible our lively Anacreon does not understand these long-winded retrospects; and agrees with his friend Lord Byron, who professed never to feel any thing seriously for more than a day!

undergone a considerable and curious change, even in the few short years I can remember. In my time, that is, in the early part of it, the love of liberty (at least by all those whom I came near) was regarded as the dictate of common sense and common honesty. It was not a question of depth or learning, but an instinctive feeling, prompted by a certain generous warmth of blood in every one worthy the name of Briton. A man would as soon avow himself to be a pimp or a pickpocket as a tool or a pander to corruption. This was the natural and at the same time the national feeling. Patriotism was not at variance with philanthropy. To take an interest in humanity, it was only thought necessary to have the form of a man: to espouse its cause, nothing was wanting but to be able to articulate the name. It was not inquired what coat a man wore, where he was born or bred, what was his party or his profession, to qualify him to vote on this broad and vital question — to take his share in advancing it, was the undisputed birth-right of every free-man. No one was too high or too low, no one was too wise or too simple to join in the common cause. It would have been construed into lukewarmness and cowardice not to have done so. The voice as of one crying in the wilderness had gone

forth—" Peace on earth, and good-will towards men!" The dawn of a new era was at hand. Might was no longer to lord it over right, opinion to march hand in hand with falsehood. The heart swelled at the mention of a public as of a private wrong—the brain teemed with projects for the benefit of mankind. History, philosophy, all well-intentioned and well-informed men agreed in the same conclusion. If a good was to be done, let it—if a truth was to be told, let it! There could be no harm in that: it was only necessary to distinguish right from wrong, truth from lies, to know to which we should give the preference. A rose was then doubly sweet, the notes of a thrush went to the heart, there was " a witchery in the soft blue sky" because we could feel and enjoy such things by the privilege of our common nature, " not by the sufferance of supernal power," and because the common feelings of our nature were not trampled upon and sacrificed in scorn to shew and external magnificence. Humanity was no longer to be crushed like a worm, as it had hitherto been—power was to be struck at, wherever it reared its serpent crest. It had already roamed too long unchecked. Kings and priests had played the game of violence and fraud for thousands of years into each other's hands, on pre-

tences that were now seen through, and were no farther feasable. The despot's crown appeared tarnished and blood-stained: the cowl of superstition fell off, that had been so often made a cloak for tyranny. The doctrine of the *Jus Divinum* "squeaked and gibbered in our streets," ashamed to shew its head: Holy Oil had lost its efficacy, and was laughed at as an exploded mummery. Mr. Locke had long ago (in his *Treatise of Government*, written at the express desire of King William) settled the question as it affected our own Revolution (and naturally every other) in favour of liberal principles as a part of the law of the land and as identified with the existing succession. Blackstone and De Lolme (the loudest panegyrists of the English Constitution) founded their praise on the greater alloy of Liberty implied in it. Tyranny was on the wane, at least in theory: public opinion might be said to rest on an inclined plane, tending more and more from the heights of arbitrary power and individual pretension to the level of public good; and no man of common sense or reading would have had the face to object as a bar to the march of truth and freedom —

"The right divine of Kings to govern wrong!"

No one had then dared to answer the claim of a whole nation to the choice of a free government with the impudent taunt, "Your King is at hand!" Mr. Burke had in vain sung his *requiem* over the "age of chivalry:" Mr. Pitt mouthed out his speeches on the existence of social order to no purpose: Mr. Malthus had not cut up Liberty by the roots by passing "the grinding law of necessity" over it, and entailing vice and misery on all future generations as their happiest lot: Mr. Ricardo had not pared down the schemes of visionary projectors and idle talkers into the form of Rent: Mr. Southey had not surmounted his cap of Liberty with the laurel wreath; nor Mr. Wordsworth proclaimed Carnage as "God's Daughter;" nor Mr. Coleridge, to patch up a rotten cause, written the FRIEND. Every thing had not then been done (or had, "like a devilish engine, back recoiled upon itself") to stop the progress of truth, to stifle the voice of humanity, to break in pieces and defeat opinion by sophistry, calumny, intimidation, by tampering with the interests of the proud and selfish, the prejudices of the ignorant, the fears of the timid, the scruples of the good, and by resorting to every subterfuge which art could devise to perpetuate the abuses of power. Freedom then stood erect, crowned with orient

light, " with looks commercing with the skies :" —since then, she has fallen by the sword and by slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword; by her own headlong zeal or the watchful malice of her foes, and through that one unrelenting purpose in the hearts of Sovereigns to baffle, degrade, and destroy the People, whom they had hitherto considered as their property, and whom they now saw (oh! unheard-of presumption) setting up a claim to be free. This claim has been once more set aside, annulled, overthrown, trampled upon with every mark of insult and ignominy, in word or deed; and the consequence has been that all those who had stood forward to advocate it have been hurled into the air with it, scattered, stunned, and have never yet recovered from their confusion and dismay. The shock was great, as it was unexpected; the surprise extreme: Liberty became a sort of bye-word; and such was the violence of party-spirit and the desire to retaliate former indignities, that all those who had ever been attached to the fallen cause seemed to have suffered contamination and to labour under a stigma. The Party (both of Whigs and Reformers) were left completely in the lurch; and (what may appear extraordinary at first sight) instead of wishing to strengthen their cause, took every method to

thin their ranks and make the terms of admission to them more difficult. In proportion as they were scouted by the rest of the world, they grew more captious, irritable, and jealous of each other's pretensions. The general obloquy was so great that every one was willing to escape from it in the crowd, or to curry favour with the victors by denouncing the excesses or picking holes in the conduct of his neighbours. While the victims of popular prejudice and ministerial persecution were eagerly sought for, no one was ready to own that he was one of the set. Unpopularity "doth part the flux of company." Each claimed an exception for himself or party, was glad to have any loop-hole to hide himself from this "open and apparent shame," and to shift the blame from his own shoulders, and would by no means be mixed up with Jacobins and Levellers—the terms with which their triumphant opponents qualified indiscriminately all those who differed with them in any degree. Where the cause was so disreputable, the company should be select. As the flood-gates of Billingsgate abuse and courtly malice were let loose, each *coterie* drew itself up in a narrower circle: the louder and more sweeping was the storm of Tory spite without, the finer were the distinctions, the more fastidious the precautions used with-

in. The Whigs, completely cowed by the Tories, threw all the odium on the Reformers; who in return with equal magnanimity vented their stock of spleen and vituperative rage on the Whigs. The common cause was forgot in each man's anxiety for his own safety and character. If any one, bolder than the rest, wanted to ward off the blows that fell in showers, or to retaliate on the assailants, he was held back or turned out as one who longed to bring an old house about their ears. One object was to give as little offence as possible to "the powers that be"—to lie by, to trim, to shuffle, to wait for events, to be severe on our own errors, just to the merits of a prosperous adversary, and not to throw away the scabbard or make reconciliation hopeless. Just as all was hushed up, and the "chop-fallen" Whigs were about to be sent for to Court, a great cloutering blow from an incorrigible Jacobin might spoil all, and put off the least chance of anything being done "for the good of the country," till another reign or the next century. But the great thing was to be genteel, and keep out the rabble. They that touch pitch are defiled. "No connection with the mob," was labelled on the back of every friend of the People. Every pitiful retainer of Opposition took care to disclaim all affinity with

such fellows as Hunt, Carlisle, or Cobbett.* As it was the continual drift of the Ministerial writers to confound the different *grades* of their antagonists, so the chief dread of the Minority was to be confounded with the populace, the *Canaille*, &c. They would be thought neither *with* the Government or *of* the People. They are an awkward mark to hit at. It is true they have no superfluous popularity to throw away upon others, and they may be so far right in being shy in the choice of their associates. They are critical in examining volunteers into the service. It is necessary to ask leave of a number of circumstances equally frivolous and vexatious, before you can enlist in their skeleton-regiment. Thus you must have a good coat to your back; for they have no uniform to give you. You must bring a character in your pocket; for they have no respectability to lose. If you have any scars to shew, you had best hide them, or procure a certificate for your pacific behaviour from the opposite side, with whom they wish to stand well, and not to be always wounding the feelings of distinguished individuals. You must have

* Mr. Pitt and Mr. Windham were not so nice. They were intimate enough with such a fellow as Cobbett, while he chose to stand by them.

vouchers that you were neither born, bred, nor reside within the Bills of Mortality, or Mr. Theodore Hook will cry Cockney"! You must have studied at one or other of the English Universities, or Mr. Croker will prove every third word to be a *Bull.* If you are a patriot and a martyr to your principles, this is a painful consideration, and must act as a draw-back to your pretensions, which would have a more glossy and creditable appearance, if they had never been tried. If you are a lord or a dangler after lords, it is well: the glittering star hides the plebeian stains, the obedient smile and habitual cringe of approbation are always welcome. A courtier abuses courts with a better grace: for one who has held a place to rail at place-men and pensioners shews candour and a disregard to self. There is nothing low, vulgar, or disreputable in it!—I doubt whether this *martinet* discipline and spruceness of demeanour is favourable to the popular side. The Tories are not so squeamish in their choice of tools. If a writer comes up to a certain standard of dulness, impudence, and want of principle, nothing more is expected. There is fat M——, lean J——, black C——, flimsy H——, lame G——, and one-eyed M——: do they not form an impenetrable phalanx round the throne, and worthy of it!

Who ever thought of inquiring into the talents, qualifications, birth, or breeding of a Government-scribbler? If the workman is fitted to the work, they care not one straw what you or I say about him. This shews a confidence in themselves, and is the way to assure others. The Whigs, who do not feel their ground so well, make up for their want of strength by a proportionable want of spirit. Their cause is ticklish, and they support it by the least hazardous means. Any violent or desperate measures on their part might recoil upon themselves.

> "When they censure the age,
> They are cautious and sage,
> Lest the courtiers offended should be."

Whilst they are pelted with the most scurrilous epithets and unsparing abuse, they insist on language the most classical and polished in return; and if any unfortunate devil lets an expression or allusion escape that stings, or jars the tone of good company, he is given up without remorse to the tender mercies of his foes for this infraction of good manners and breach of treaty. The envy or cowardice of these half-faced friends of liberty regularly sacrifices its warmest defenders to the hatred of its enemies — mock-patriotism and effeminate self-love ratifying the lists of proscription made out by ser-

vility and intolerance. This is base, and contrary to all the rules of political warfare. What! if the Tories give a man a bad name, must the Whigs hang him? If a writer annoys the first, must he alarm the last? Or when they find he has irritated his and their opponents beyond all forgiveness and endurance, instead of concluding from the abuse heaped upon him that he has "done the State some service," must they set him aside as an improper person merely for the odium which he has incurred by his efforts in the common cause, which, had they been of no effect, would have left him still fit for their purposes of negative success and harmless opposition? Their ambition seems to be to exist by sufferance; to be safe in a sort of conventional insignificance; and in their dread of exciting the notice or hostility of the lords of the earth, they are like the man in the storm who silenced the appeal of his companion to the Gods — "Call not so loud, or they will hear us!" One would think that in all ordinary cases honesty to feel for a losing cause, capacity to understand it, and courage to defend it, would be sufficient introduction and recommendation to fight the battles of a party, and serve at least in the ranks. But this of Whig Opposition is, it seems, a peculiar case. There

is more in it than meets the eye. The *corps* may one day be summoned to pass muster before Majesty, and in that case it will be expected that they should be of *crack* materials, without a stain and without a flaw. Nothing can be too elegant, too immaculate and refined for their imaginary return to office. They are in a pitiable dilemma—having to reconcile the hopeless reversion of court-favour with the most distant and delicate attempts at popularity. They are strangely puzzled in the choice and management of their associates. Some of them must undergo a thorough ventilation and perfuming, like poor Morgan, before Captain Whiffle would suffer him to come into his presence. Neither can any thing base and plebeian be supposed to "come betwixt the wind and their nobility." As their designs are doubtful, their friends must not be suspected: as their principles are popular, their pretensions must be proportionably aristocratic. The reputation of Whiggism, like that of women, is a delicate thing, and will bear neither to be blown upon or handled. It has an ill odour, which requires the aid of fashionable essences and court-powders to carry it off. It labours under the frown of the Sovereign: and swoons at the shout and pressure of the People. Even in its present

forlorn and abject state, it relapses into convulsions if any low fellow offers to lend it a helping hand: those who would have their overtures of service accepted must be bedizened and sparkling all over with titles, wealth, place, connections, fashion (in lieu of zeal and talent), as a set-off to the imputation of low designs and radical origin; for there is nothing that the patrons of the People dread so much as being identified with them, and of all things the patriotic party abhor (even in their dreams) a *misalliance* with the rabble!

Why must I mention the instances, in order to make the foregoing statement intelligible or credible? I would not, but that I and others have suffered by the weakness here pointed out; and I think the cause must ultimately suffer by it, unless some antidote be applied by reason or ridicule. Let one example serve for all. At the time that Lord Byron thought proper to join with Mr. Leigh Hunt and Mr. Shelley in the publication called the LIBERAL, Blackwood's Magazine overflowed, as might be expected, with tenfold gall and bitterness; the John Bull was outrageous; and Mr. Jerdan black in the face at this unheard-of and disgraceful union. But who would have supposed that Mr. Thomas Moore and Mr. Hobhouse,

those staunch friends and partisans of the people, should also be thrown into almost hysterical agonies of well-bred horror at the coalition between their noble and ignoble acquaintance, between the Patrician and "the Newspaper-Man?" Mr. Moore darted backwards and forwards from Cold-Bath-Fields' Prison to the Examiner-Officer, from Mr. Longman's to Mr. Murray's shop, in a state of ridiculous trepidation, to see what was to be done to prevent this degradation of the aristocracy of letters, this indecent encroachment of plebeian pretensions, this undue extension of patronage and compromise of privilege. The Tories were shocked that Lord Byron should grace the popular side by his direct countenance and assistance — the Whigs were shocked that he should share his confidence and counsels with any one who did not unite the double recommendations of birth and genius — but themselves! Mr. Moore had lived so long among the Great that he fancied himself one of them, and regarded the indignity as done to himself. Mr. Hobhouse had lately been black-balled by the Clubs, and must feel particularly sore and tenacious on the score of public opinion. Mr. Shelley's father, however, was an older Baronet than Mr. Hobhouse's — Mr. Leigh Hunt was "to the full as genteel a

man" as Mr. Moore in birth, appearance, and education — the pursuits of all four were the same, the Muse, the public favour, and the public good! Mr. Moore was himself invited to assist in the undertaking, but he professed an utter aversion to, and warned Lord Byron against having any concern with, *joint-publications*, as of a very neutralizing and levelling description. He might speak from experience. He had tried his hand in that Ulysses' bow of critics and politicians, the Edinburgh Review, though his secret had never transpired. Mr. Hobhouse too had written Illustrations of Childe Harold (a sort of partnership concern) —yet to quash the publication of the LIBERAL, he seriously proposed that his Noble Friend should write once a week *in his own name* in the Examiner — the Liberal scheme, he was afraid, might succeed: the Newspaper one, he knew, could not. I have been whispered that the Member for Westminster (for whom I once gave an ineffectual vote) has also conceived some distaste for me — I do not know why, except that I was at one time named as the writer of the famous *Trecenti Juravimus* Letter to Mr. Canning, which appeared in the Examiner and was afterwards suppressed. He might feel the disgrace of such a supposition: I con-

fess I did not feel the honour. The cabal, the bustle, the significant hints, the confidential rumours were at the height when, after Mr. Shelley's death, I was invited to take part in this obnoxious publication (obnoxious alike to friend and foe) — and when the *Essay on the Spirit of Monarchy* appeared, (which must indeed have operated like a bomb-shell thrown into the *coteries* that Mr. Moore frequented, as well as those that he had left,) this gentleman wrote off to Lord Byron, to say that "there was a taint in the Liberal, and that he should lose no time in getting out of it." And this from Mr. Moore to Lord Byron — the last of whom had just involved the publication, against which he was cautioned as having a taint in it, in a prosecution for libel by his *Vision of Judgment*, and the first of whom had scarcely written any thing all his life that had not a taint in it. It is true, the Holland-House party might be somewhat staggered by a *jeu-d'esprit* that set their Blackstone and De Lolme theories at defiance, and that they could as little write as answer. But it was not that. Mr. Moore also complained that "I had spoken against Lalla Rookh," though he had just before sent me his "Fudge Family." Still it was not that. But at the time he sent me that

very delightful and spirited publication, my little bark was seen "hulling on the flood" in a kind of dubious twilight, and it was not known whether I might not prove a vessel of gallant trim. Mr. Blackwood had not then directed his Grub-street battery against me: but as soon as this was the case, Mr. Moore was willing to "whistle me down the wind, and let me prey at fortune;" not that I "proved haggard," but the contrary. It is sheer cowardice and want of heart. The sole object of the set is not to stem the tide of prejudice and falsehood, but to get out of the way themselves. The instant another is assailed (however unjustly), instead of standing manfully by him, they *cut* the connection as fast as possible, and sanction by their silence and reserve the accusations they ought to repel. *Sauve qui peut* — every one has enough to do to look after his own reputation or safety without rescuing a friend or propping up a falling cause. It is only by keeping in the back-ground on such occasions (like Gil Blas when his friend Ambrose Lamela was led by in triumph to the *auto-da-fe)* that they can escape the like honours and a summary punishment. A shower of mud, a flight of nick-names (glancing a little out of their original direction) might obscure the last glimpse of Royal favour,

or stop the last gasp of popularity. Nor could they answer it to their Noble friends and more elegant pursuits to be seen in such company, or to have their names coupled with similar outrages. Their sleek, glossy, aspiring pretensions should not be exposed to vulgar contamination, or to be trodden under foot of a swinish multitude. Their birth-day suits (unused) should not be dragged through the kennel, nor their "tricksy" laurel-wreaths stuck in the pillory. This would make them equally unfit to be taken into the palaces of princes or the carriages of peers. If excluded from both, what would become of them? The only way, therefore, to avoid being implicated in the abuse poured upon others is to pretend that it is just — the way not to be made the object of the *hue and cry* raised against a friend is to aid it by underhand whispers. It is pleasant neither to participate in disgrace nor to have honours divided. The more Lord Byron confined his intimacy and friendship to a few persons of middling rank, but of extraordinary merit, the more it must redound to his and their credit — the lines of Pope,

> "To view with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts which caused himself to rise,"—

might still find a copy in the breast of more than

one scribbler of politics and fashion. Mr. Moore might not think without a pang of the author of Rimini sitting at his ease with the author of Childe Harold; Mr. Hobhouse might be averse to see my dogged prose bound up in the same volume with his Lordship's splendid verse, and assuredly it would not facilitate his admission to the Clubs, that his friend Lord Byron had taken the Editor of the Examiner by the hand, and that their common friend Mr. Moore had taken no active steps to prevent it!

Those who have the least character to spare, can the least afford to part with their good word to others: a losing cause is always most divided against itself. If the Whigs are fastidious, the Reformers are sour. If the first are frightened at the least breath of scandal, the last are disgusted with the smallest approach to popularity. The one desert you, if all men do not speak well of you: the other never forgive your having shaken off the *incognito* which they assume so successfully, or your having escaped from the Grub into the Butterfly state. The one require that you should enjoy the public favour in its newest gloss: with the other set, the smallest elegance of pretension or accomplishment is fatal. The Whigs never stomached the account of the "Characters of Shakespear's Plays" in

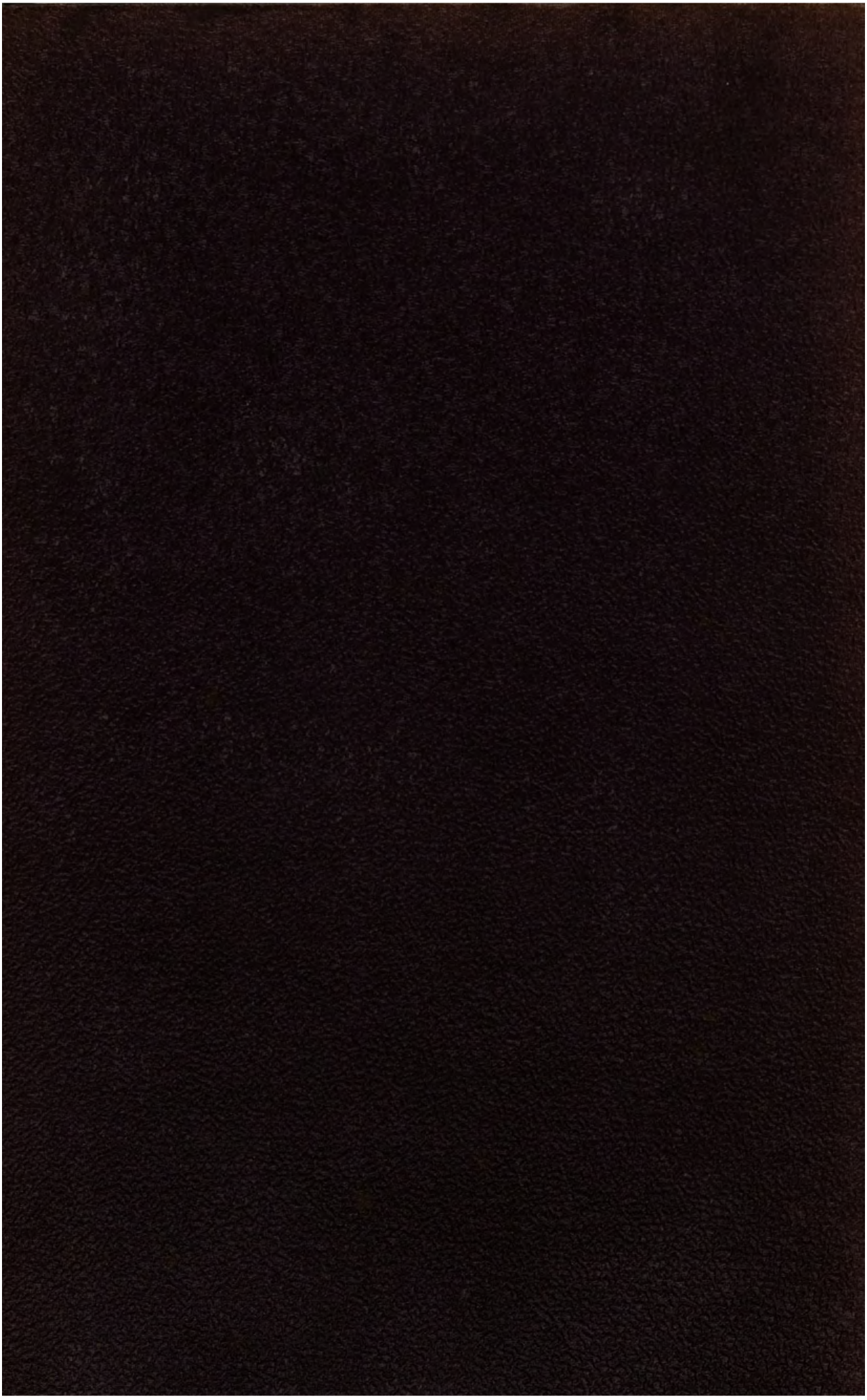
the Quarterly: the Reformers never forgave me for writing them at all, or for being suspected of an inclination to the *belles-lettres.* "The Gods," they feared, "had made me poetical;" and poetry with them is "not a true thing." To please the one, you must be a *dandy:* not to incur the censure of the other, you must turn cynic. The one are on the alert to know what the world think or say of you: the others make it a condition that you shall fly in the face of all the world, to think and say exactly as they do. The first thing the Westminster Review did was to attack the Edinburgh. The fault of the one is too great a deference for established and prevailing opinions: that of the other is a natural antipathy to every thing with which any one else sympathises. They do not trim, but they are rivetted to their own sullen and violent prejudices. They think to attract by repulsion, to force others to yield to their opinion by never giving up an inch of ground, and to cram the truth down the throats of their starveling readers, as you cram turkeys with gravel and saw-dust. They would gain proselytes by proscribing all those who do not take their Shiboleth, and advance a cause by shutting out all that can adorn or strengthen it. They would exercise a monstrous ostracism on

every ornament of style or blandishment of sentiment; and unless they can allure by barrenness and deformity, and convince you *against the grain*, think they have done nothing. They abjure Sir Walter's novels and Mr. Moore's poetry as light and frivolous: who but they! Nothing satisfies or gives them pleasure that does not give others pain: they scorn to win you by flattery and fair words; they set up their grim, bare idols, and expect you to fall down and worship them; and truth is with them a Sphinx, that in embracing pierces you to the heart. All this they think is the effect of philosophy; but it is temper, and a bad, sour, cold, malignant temper into the bargain. If the Whigs are too effeminate and susceptible of extraneous impressions, these underlings are too hard and tenacious of their own *. They are certainly the least amiable people in the world. Nor are they likely to reform others by

* One of them tried the other day to persuade people to give up the Classics and learn Chinese, because he has a place in the India House. To those who are connected with the tea-trade, this may be of immediate practical interest, but not therefore to all the world. These prosaical visionaries are a species by themselves. It is a matter of fact, that the natives of the South Sea Islands speak a language of their own, and if we were to go there, it might be of more use to us than Greek and Latin — but *not till then!*

their self-willed dogmatism and ungracious manner. If they had this object at heart, they would correct both (for true humanity and wisdom are the same), but they would rather lose the cause of human kind than not shock and offend while they would be thought only anxious to convince, as Mr. Place lost Mr. Hobhouse his first election by a string of radical resolutions, which so far gained their end. — One is hard-bested in times like these, and between such opposite factions, when almost every one seems to pull his own way, and to make his principles a stalking-horse to some private end; when you offend some without conciliatiug others; when you incur most blame, where you expected most favour; when a universal outcry is raised against you on one side, which is answered by as dead a silence on the other; when none but those who have the worst designs appear to know their own meaning or to be held together by any mutual tie, and when the only assurance you can obtain that your intentions have been upright, or in any degree carried into effect, is that you are the object of *their* unremitting obloquy and ill-will. If you look for any other testimony to it, you will look in vain. The Tories know their enemies: the People do not know their friends. The frown and the

lightning glance of power is upon you, and points out the path of honour and of duty: but you can hope to receive no note of encouragement or approbation from the painted booths of Whig Aristocracy, or the sordid styes of Reform!

THE END.

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