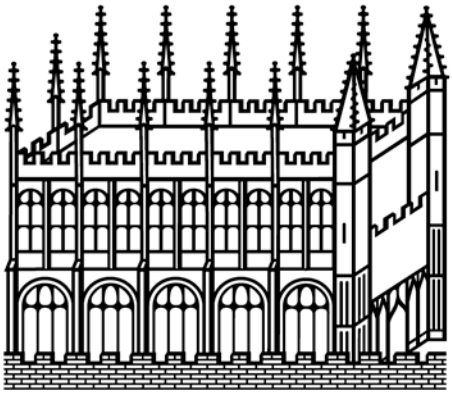

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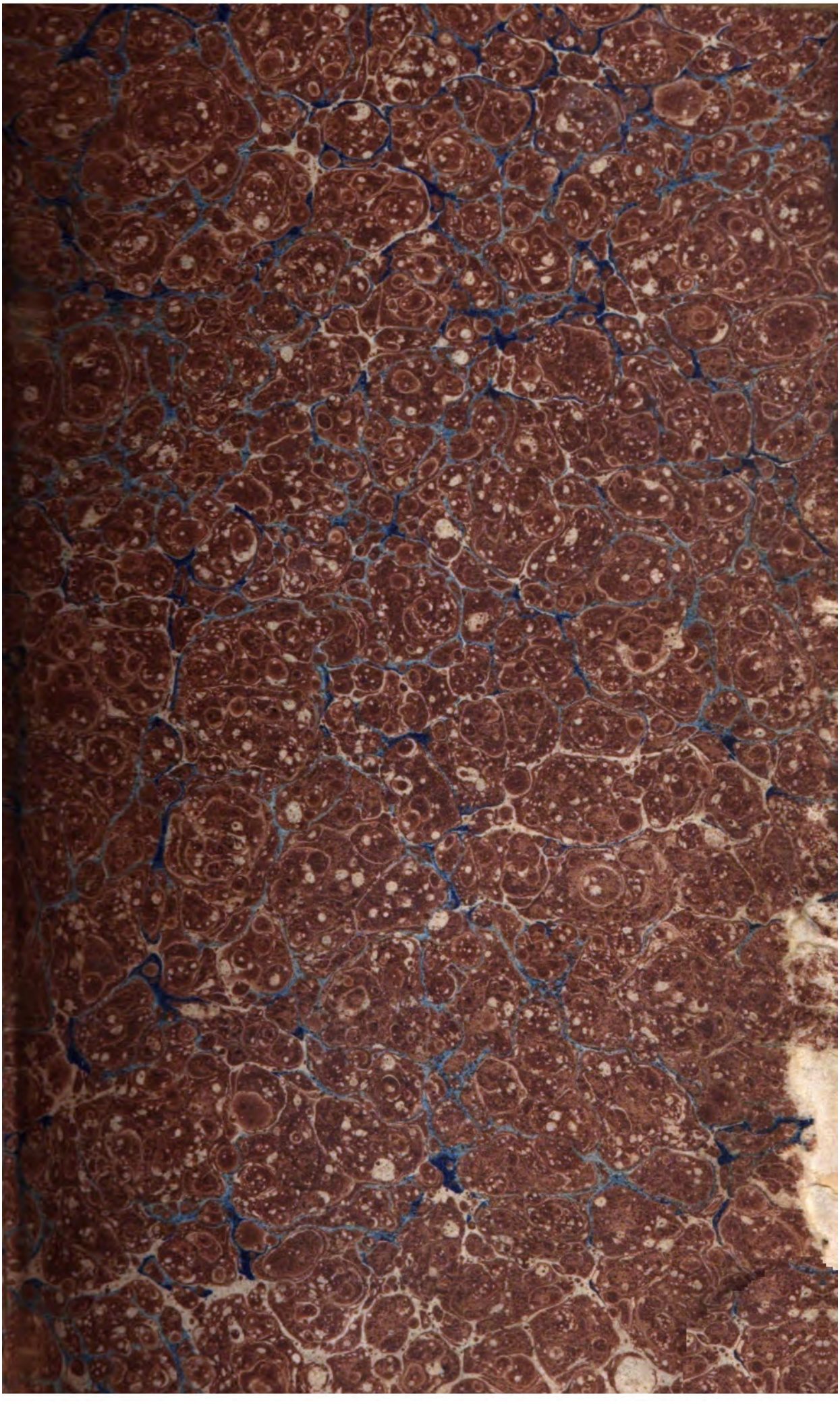

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ESSAYS,

ON

MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS;

WITH

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

PRESENT STATE OF POLITE LEARNING.

BY

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, M. B.

BELFAST:

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CONTENTS.

Page

Preface..... 3

ESSAYS.

No.

1. Description of various Clubs..... 6
2. Specimen of a Magazine in Miniature..... 17
3. Asem, an Eastern Tale..... 21
4. On the English Clergy, and popular Preachers 30
5. A Reverie at the Boar's-Head Tavern, East-cheap..... 35
6. Adventures of a Strolling Player..... 51
7. Rules enjoined to be observed at a Russian Assembly..... 62
8. Biographical Memoir, supposed to be written by the Ordinary of Newgate..... 64
9. On National Concord..... 67
10. Female Warriors..... 70
11. On National Prejudice..... 75
12. On Taste..... 80
13. Cultivation of Taste..... 89
14. Origin of Poetry..... 101
15. Poetry distinguished from other writing..... 114
16. On Metaphor..... 126
17. On Hyperbole..... 146
18. On Versification..... 151

No. Page
19. Schools of Music, Objections thereto, and Answers 156
20. On Carolan, the Irish Bard 164
21. On the Tenants of the Leasowes 166
22. On Sentimental Comedy 171
23. Scotch Marriages 176
24. On the Dignity of Human Nature 180

AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRESENT STATE OF POLITE LEARNING.

Chap. Page
1. Introduction 187
2. The Causes which contribute to the Decline of Learning 189
3. A View of the Obscure Ages 198
4. Of the present State of Polite Learning in Italy 201
5. Of Polite Learning in Germany 205
6. Of Polite Learning in Holland, and some other countries of Europe 209
7. Of Polite Learning in France 214
8—9. Of Learning in Great Britain 222
10. Of rewarding Genius in England 223
11. Of the Marks of Literary Decay in France and England 234
12. Of the Stage 242
13. Of Universities 246
14. The Conclusion 252
The Preface to the Roman History 255
The Preface to a History of England 259
The Preface to a History of the Earth, &c. 263

ESSAYS,

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED

IN THE YEAR 1765.

PREFACE.

THE following Essays have already appeared at different times, and in different publications. The pamphlets in which they were inserted being generally unsuccessful, these shared the common fate, without assisting the bookseller's aims, or extending the writer's reputation. The public were too strenuously employed with their own follies, to be assiduous in estimating mine; so that many of my best attempts in this way, have fallen victims to the transient topic of the times—the ghost in Cock-Lane, or the siege of Ticonderago.

But though they have passed pretty silently into the world, I can by no means complain of their circulation. The magazines and papers of the day have indeed been liberal enough in this respect. Most of these essays have been regularly reprinted twice or thrice a year, and conveyed to the public through the kennel of some engaging publication. If there be a pride in multiplied editions, I have seen some of my labours sixteen times reprinted, and claimed by different parents as their own. I have seen them flourished at the beginning with praise, and signed at the end with the names of Philantos, Philalethes, Philalutheros, and Philanthropos. These gentlemen have kindly stood sponsors to my productions, and to flatter me more, have always passed them as their own.

It is time, however, at last to vindicate my claims; and as these entertainers of the public, as they call themselves, have partly lived upon me for some years, let me now try if I cannot live a little upon myself. I would desire in this case, to imitate that fat man, whom I have somewhere heard of in a shipwreck, who, when the sailors, pressed by famine, were taking slices from his posteriors to satisfy their hunger, insisted, with great justness, on having the first cut for himself.

Yet after all, I cannot be angry with any who have taken it into their heads to think, that whatever I write is worth reprinting, particularly when I consider how great a majority will think it scarcely worth reading. Trifling and superficial, are terms of reproach that are easily objected, and that carry an air of penetration in the observer. These faults have been objected to the following essays; and it must be owned, in some measure, that the charge is true. However, I could have made them more metaphysical had I thought fit; but I would ask, whether in a short essay it is not necessary to be superficial? Before we have prepared to enter into the depths of a subject in the usual forms, we have arrived at the bottom of our scanty page, and thus lose the honours of a victory, by too tedious a preparation for the combat.

There is another fault in this collection of trifles, which I fear will not be so easily pardoned. It will be alleged, that the humour of them (if any be found) is stale and hackneyed. This may be true enough, as matters now stand, but I may with great truth assert, that the humour was new when I wrote it. Since that time indeed, many of the topics which were first started here, have been hunted down, and many of the thoughts blown upon. In

fact, these essays were considered as quietly laid in the grave of oblivion; and our modern compilers, like sextons and executioners, think it their undoubted right to pillage the dead.

However, whatever right I have to complain of the public, they can as yet have no just reason to complain of me. If I have written dull essays, they have hitherto treated them as dull essays. Thus far we are at least upon a par; and until they think fit to make me their humble debtor by praise, I am resolved not to lose a single inch of my self-importance. Instead, therefore, of attempting to establish a credit amongst them, it will perhaps be wiser to apply to some more distant correspondent, and as my drafts are in some danger of being protested at home, it may not be imprudent upon this occasion, to draw my bills upon posterity. Mr. Posterity, sir, nine hundred and ninety-nine years after sight hereof, pay the bearer, or order, a thousand pounds' worth of praise, free from all deductions whatsoever, it being a commodity that will then be very serviceable to him, and place it to the account of, &c.

ESSAY I.

DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS CLUBS.

I REMEMBER to have read in some philosopher, (I believe in Tom Brown's works) that let a man's character, sentiments, or complexion, be what they will, he can find company in London to match them. If he be splenetic, he may every day meet companions on the seats in St. James's-Park, with whose groans he may mix his own, and pathetically talk of the weather. If he be passionate, he may vent his rage among the old orators at Slaughter's coffee-house, and damn the nation, because it keeps him from starving. If he be phlegmatic, he may sit in silence at the Hum-drum club in Ivy-Lane; and if actually mad, he may find very good company in Moor-fields, either at Bedlam, or the Foundry, ready to cultivate a nearer acquaintance.

But although such as have a knowledge of the town, may easily class themselves with tempers congenial to their own, a countryman who comes to live in London finds nothing more difficult. With regard to myself, none ever tried with more assiduity, or came off with such indifferent suceess. I spent a whole season in the search, during which time, my name has been enrolled in societies, lodges, convocations, and meetings without number. To some, I was introduced by a friend; to others, invited by an advertisement: to these I introduced myself, and

to those I changed my name, to gain admittance. In short, no coquette was ever more solicitous to match her ribands to her complexion, than I to suit my club to my temper, for I was too obstinate to bring my temper to conform to it.

The first club I entered upon coming to town, was that of the Choice Spirits. The name was entirely suited to my taste; I was a lover of mirth, good-humour, and even sometimes of fun, from my childhood.

As no other passport was requisite but the payment of two shillings at the door, I introduced myself without further ceremony to the members, who were already assembled, and had for some time begun upon business. The Grand, with a mallet in his hand, presided at the head of the table. I could not avoid, upon my entrance, making use of all my skill in physiognomy, in order to discover that superiority of genius, in men who had taken a title so superior to the rest of mankind. I expected to see the lines of every face marked with strong thinking; but though I had some skill in this science, I could for my life discover nothing but a pert simper, flat, or profound stupidity.

My speculations were soon interrupted by the Grand, who had knocked down Mr. Spriggins for a song. I was upon this whispered by one of the company who sat next me, that I should now see something touched off to a nicety, for Mr. Spriggins was going to give us Mad Tom in all its glory. Mr. Spriggins endeavoured to excuse himself; for, as he was to act a madman and a king, it was impossible to go through the part properly without a crown and chains. His excuses were over-ruled by a great majority, and with much vociferation. The president or-

dered up the jack-chain, and, instead of a crown, our performer covered his brows with an inverted jordan. After he had rattled his chain, and shook his head, to the great delight of the whole company, he began his song. As I have heard few young fellows offer to sing in company that did not expose themselves, it was no great disappointment to me to find Mr. Spriggins among the number; however, not to seem an odd fish, I rose from my seat in rapture, cried out, bravo! encore! and slapped the table as loud as any of the rest.

The gentleman who sat next me seemed highly pleased with my taste, and the ardour of my approbation; and whispering, told me that I had suffered an immense loss; for had I come a few minutes sooner, I might have heard Gee ho Dobbin sung in a tip-top manner by the pimple-nosed spirit at the president's right elbow; but he was evaporated before I came.

As I was expressing my uneasiness at this disappointment, I found the attention of the company employed upon a fat figure, who, with a voice more rough than the Staffordshire giant's, was giving us the "Softly Sweet in Lydian measure" of Alexander's Feast. After a short pause of admiration, to this succeeded a Welch dialogue, with the humours of Teague and Taffy: after that came on Old Jackson, with a story between every stanza: next was sung the Dust-cart, and then Solomon's Song. The glass began now to circulate pretty freely; those who were silent when sober, would now be heard in their turn; every man had his song, and he saw no reason why he should not be heard as well as any of the rest; one begged to be heard while he gave Death and the Lady in high taste; another sung to a plate which he kept trund-

ling on the edges; nothing was now heard but singing; voice rose above voice, and the whole became one universal shout, when the landlord came to acquaint the company, that the reckoning was drank out! Rabelais calls the moments in which a reckoning is mentioned, the most melancholy of our lives: never was so much noise so quickly quelled, as by this short but pathetic oration of our landlord; drank out was echoed in a tone of discontent round the table: drank out already! that was very odd: that so much punch could be drank out already: impossible! The landlord, however, seemed resolved not to retreat from his first assurances; the company was dissolved, and a president chosen for the night ensuing.

A friend of mine, to whom I was complaining some time after of the entertainment I have been describing, proposed to bring me to the club that he frequented; which he fancied would suit the gravity of my temper exactly. "We have at the Muzzy Club," says he, "no riotous mirth, nor awkward ribaldry; no confusion or bawling; all is conducted with wisdom and decency; besides, some of our members are worth forty thousand pounds; men of prudence and foresight every one of them: these are the proper acquaintance, and to such I will to-night introduce you." I was charmed at the proposal; to be acquainted with men worth forty thousand pounds, and to talk wisdom the whole night, were offers that threw me into rapture.

At seven o'clock, I was accordingly introduced by my friend, not indeed to the company; for though I made my best bow, they seemed insensible of my approach, but to the table at which they were sitting. Upon my entering the room, I could not avoid feeling a secret venera-

tion from the solemnity of the scene before me; the members kept a profound silence, each with a pipe in his mouth, and a pewter pot in his hand, and with faces that might easily be construed into absolute wisdom. Happy society, thought I to myself, where the members think before they speak, deliver nothing rashly, but convey their thoughts to each other pregnant with meaning, and matured by reflection.

In this pleasing speculation I continued a full half hour, expecting each moment that somebody would begin to open his mouth; every time the pipe was laid down, I expected it was to speak, but it was only to spit. At length, resolving to break the charm myself, and overcome their extreme diffidence, for to this I imputed their silence, I rubbed my hands, and looking as wise as possible, observed that the nights began to grow a little coolish at this time of the year. This, as it was directed to none of the company in particular, none thought himself obliged to answer; wherefore I continued still to rub my hands and look wise. My next effort was addressed to a gentleman who sat next me; to whom I observed, that the beer was extremely good: my neighbour made no reply, but by a large puff of tobacco-smoke.

I now began to be uneasy in this dumb society, till one of them a little relieved me, by observing that bread had not risen these three weeks: "Ay," says another, still keeping the pipe in his mouth, "that puts me in mind of a pleasant story about that—hem—very well; you must know—but, before I begin—Sir, my service to you—where was I?"

My next club goes by the name of the Harmonical Society; probably from that love of order and friendship

which every person commends in institutions of this nature. The landlord was himself the founder. The money spent is four-pence each; and they sometimes whip for a double reckoning. To this club few recommendations are requisite, except the introductory four-pence and my landlord's good word, which, as he gains by it, he never refuses.

We all here talked and behaved as every body else usually does on his club-night; we discussed the topic of the day, drank each other's healths, snuffed the candles with our fingers, and filled our pipes from the same plate of tobacco. The company saluted each other in the common manner. Mr. Bellows-mender hoped Mr. Curry-comb-maker had not caught cold going home the last club night; and he returned the compliment by hoping that young Master Bellows-mender had got well again of the chin-cough. Doctor Twist told us a story of a parliament-man with whom he was intimately acquainted; while the bug-man, at the same time, was telling a better story of a noble lord with whom he could do any thing. A gentleman in a black wig and leather breeches, at the other end of the table, was engaged in a long narrative of the Ghost in Cock-Lane: he had read it in the papers of the day, and was telling it to some that sat next him, who could not read. Near him, Mr. Dibbins was disputing on the old subject of religion with a Jew Pedlar, over the table, while the president vainly knocked down Mr. Leathersides for a song. Besides the combinations of these voices, which I could hear altogether, and which formed an upper part to the concert, there were several others playing under parts by themselves, aud endeavouring to fasten on some luckless neighbour's ear,

who was himself bent upon the same design against some other.

We have often heard of the speech of a corporation, and this induced me to transcribe a speech of this club, taken in short-hand, word for word, as it was spoken by every member of the company. It may be necessary to observe, that the man who told of the ghost had the loudest voice, and the longest story to tell, so that his continuing narrative filled every chasm in the conversation:—

"So, sir, d'ye perceive me, the ghost giving three loud raps at the bed-post—says my lord to me, my dear Smokeum, you know there is no man upon the face of the earth for whom I have so high—a damnable false heretical opinion of all sound doctrine and good learning; for I'll tell it aloud, and spare not that—Silence for a song; Mr. Leathersides for a song—"As I was a walking upon the highway, I met a young damsel"—Then what brings you here? says the parson to the ghost—Sanconiathan, Manetho, and Berosus—The whole way from Islington turnpike to Dog-house-bar—Damn—As for Abel Drugger, sir, he's damn'd low in it; my 'prentice boy has more of the gentleman than he—For murder will out one time or other; and none but a ghost, you know, gentlemen, can—Damme if I dont; for my friend, whom you know, gentlemen, and who is a parliament-man, a man of consequence, a dear honest creature, to be sure, we were laughing last night at—Death and damnation upon all his posterity by simply, barely tasting—Sour grapes, as the fox said once when he could not reach them; and I'll, I'll tell you a story about that that will make you burst your sides with laughing: A fox once—

Will nobody listen to the song—"As I was a walking upon the highway, I met a young damsel both buxom and gay"—No ghost, gentlemen, can be murdered; nor did I ever hear but of one ghost killed in all my life, and that was stabbed in the belly with a—My blood and soul if I don't—Mr. Bellows-mender, I have the honour of drinking your very good health—Blast me if I do—dam—blood—bugs—fire—whizz—blid--tit--rat--trip."——The rest all riot, nonsense, and rapid confusion.

Were I to be angry at men for being fools, I could here find ample room for declamation; but alas! I have been a fool myself; and why should I be angry with them for being something so natural to every child of humanity?

Fatigued with this society, I was introduced the following night to a club of fashion. On taking my place, I found the conversation sufficiently easy, and tolerably good-humoured; for my lord and Sir Paul were not yet arrived. I now thought myself competely fitted, and resolving to seek no further, determined to take up my residence here for the winter; while my temper began to open insensibly to the cheerfulncss I saw diffused on every face in the room: but the delusion soon vanquished, when the waiter came to apprise us that his lordship and Sir Paul were just arrived.

From this moment, all our felicity was at an end; our new guests bustled into the room, and took their seats at the head of the table. Adieu now all confidence; every creature strove who should most recommend himself to our members of distinction. Each seemed quite regardless of pleasing any but our new guests; and what be-

fore wore the appearance of friendship, was now turned into rivalry.

Yet I could not observe, that amidst all this flattery and obsequious attention, our great men took any notice of the rest of the company. Their whole discourse was addressed to each other. Sir Paul told his lordship a long story of Moravia the Jew; and his lordship gave Sir Paul a very long account of his new method of managing silk-worms; he led him, and consequently the rest of the company, through all the stages of feeding, sunning, and hatching, with an episode on mulberry-trees, a digression upon grass seeds, and a long parenthesis about his new postilion. In this manner we travelled on, wishing every story to be the last; but all in vain,

"Hills over hills, and Alps on Alps arose."

The last club in which I was enrolled a member, was a society of moral philosophers, as they called themselves, who assembled twice a week, in order to show the absurdity of the present mode of religion, and establish a new one in its stead.

I found the members very warmly disputing when I arrived; not indeed about religion or ethics, but about who had neglected to lay down his preliminary sixpence upon entering the room. The president swore that he had laid his own down, and so swore all the company.

During this contest, I had an opportunity of observing the laws, and also the members of the society. The president, who had been, as I was told, lately a bankrupt, was a tall pale figure with a long black wig; the next to him was dressed in a large white wig and a black cravat;

a third, by the brownness of his complexion seemed a native of Jamaica; and a fourth, by his hue appeared to be a blacksmith. But their rules will give the most just idea of their learning and principles:—

"I. We being a laudable society of moral philosophers, intends to dispute twice a-week about religion and priest-craft: leaving behind us old wives' tales, and following good learning and sound sense: and if so be, that any other persons has a mind to be of the society, they shall be entitled so to do, upon paying the sum of three shillings, to be spent by the company in punch.

"II. That no member get drunk before nine of the clock, upon pain of forfeiting three-pence, to be spent by the company in punch.

"III. That as members are sometimes apt to go away without paying, every person shall pay sixpence upon his entering the room; and all disputes shall be settled by a majority; and all fines shall be paid in punch.

"IV. That sixpence shall be every night given to the president, in order to buy books of learning for the good of the society; the president has already put himself to a good deal of expense, in buying books for the club; particularly the works of Tully, Socrates, and Cicero, which he will soon read to the society.

"V. All them who brings a new argument against religion, and who, being a philosopher, and a man of learning, as the rest of us is, shall be admitted to the freedom of the society, upon paying sixpence only, to be spent in punch.

"VI. Whenever we are to have an extraordinary meet-

ing, it shall be advertised by some outlandish name in the newspapers.

SAUNDERS MAC WILD, President,
ANTHONY BLEWIT, Vice-president,
(his + mark.)
WILLIAM TURPIN, Secretary.

ESSAY II.

SPECIMEN OF A MAGAZINE IN MINIATURE.

WE essayists, who are allowed but one subject at a time, are by no means so fortunate as the writers of magazines, who write upon several. If a magaziner be dull upon the Spanish war, he soon has us up again with the ghost in Cock-Lane; if the reader begins to doze upon that, he is quickly roused by an eastern tale; tales prepare us for poetry, and poetry for the meteorological history of the weather. It is the life and soul of a magazine, never to be long dull upon one subject; and the reader, like the sailor's horse, has at least the comfortable refreshment of having the spur often changed.

As I see no reason why they should carry off all the rewards of genius, I have some thoughts for the future of making this essay a magazine in miniature: I shall hop from subject to subject; and, if properly encouraged, I intend in time to adorn my feuille volant with pictures. But to begin in the usual form, with

A Modest Address to the Public.

The public has been so often imposed upon by the unperforming promises of others, that it is with the utmost modesty we assure them of our inviolable design of giv-

ing the very best collection that ever astonished society. The public we honour and regard; and therefore to instruct and entertain them is our highest ambition, with labours calculated as well for the head as the heart. If four extraordinary pages of letter-press be any recommendation of our wit, we may at least boast the honour of vindicating our own abilities. To say more in favour of the Infernal Magazine, would be unworthy the public; to say less, would be injurious to ourselves. As we have no interested motives for this undertaking, being a society of gentlemen of distinction, we disdain to eat or write like hirelings; we are all gentlemen resolved to sell our sixpenny magazine merely for our own amusement.

Be careful to ask for the Infernal Magazine.

Dedication to that most ingenious of all Patrons, the Tripoline Ambassador.

May it please your EXCELLENCY,

As your taste in the fine arts is universally allowed and admired, permit the authors of the Infernal Magazine to lay the following sheets humbly at your Excellency's toe; and should our labours ever have the happiness of one day adorning the courts of Fez, we doubt not that the influence wherewith we are honoured, shall be ever retained, with the most warm ardour by,

May it please your Excellency,

Your most devoted humble servants.

The Authors of the INFERNAL MAGAZINE.

A Speech spoken by the Indigent Philosopher, to persuade his Club at Cateaton to declare War against Spain.

My honest friends and brother politicians, I perceive that the intended war with Spain makes many of you

uneasy. Yesterday, as we were told, the stocks rose, and you were glad; to-day they fall, and you are again miserable. But, my dear friends, what is the rising or the falling of the stocks to us, who have no money? Let Nathan Ben Funk, the Dutch Jew, be glad or sorry for this; but my good Mr. Bellows-mender, what is all this to you or me? You must mend broken bellows, and I write bad prose as long as we live, whether we like a Spanish war or not. Believe me, my honest friends, whatever you may talk of liberty and your own reason, both that liberty and reason are conditionally resigned by every poor man in every society; and, as we are born to work, so others are born to watch over us while we are working. In the name of common sense then, my good friends, let the great keep watch over us, and let us mind our business, and perhaps we may at last get money ourselves, and set beggars at work in our turn. I have a Latin sentence that is worth its weight in gold, and which I shall beg leave to translate for your instruction. An author, called Lilly's Grammar, finely observes, that "Æs in præsenti perfectum format;" that is, "Ready money makes a perfect man;" let us then get ready money; and let them that will, spend theirs by going to war with Spain.

Rules for Behaviour, drawn up by the Indigent Philosopher.

If you be a rich man, you may enter the room with three loud hems, march deliberately up to the chimney, and turn your back to the fire. If you be a poor man, I would advise you to shrink into the room as fast as you can, and place yourself as usual, upon a corner of a chair in a remote corner.

When you are desired to sing in company, I would

advise you to refuse; for it is a thousand to one but that you torment us with affectation, or a bad voice.

If you be young, and live with an old man, I would advise you not to like gravy; I was disinherited myself for liking gravy.

Don't laugh much in public; the spectators that are not as merry as you, will hate you, either because they envy your happiness, or fancy themselves the subject of your mirth.

Rules for raising the Devil. Translated from the Latin of Danæus de Sortiariis; a writer contemporary with Calvin, and one of the Reformers of our Church.

The person who desires to raise the Devil, is to sacrifice a dog, a cat, and a hen, all of his own property, to Beelzebub. He is to swear an eternal obedience, and then to receive a mark in some unseen place, either under the eye-lid, or in the roof of the mouth, inflicted by the Devil himself. Upon this, he has power given him over three spirits; one for earth, another for air, and a third for the sea. Upon certain times, the Devil holds an assembly of magicians, in which each is to give an account of what evil he has done, and what he wishes to do. At this assembly, he appears in the shape of an old man, or often like a goat, with large horns. They upon this occasion renew their vows of obedience; and then form a grand dance in honour of their false deity. The Devil instructs them in every method of injuring mankind, in gathering poisons, and of riding upon occasion through the air. He shows them the whole method, upon examination, of giving evasive answers; his spirits have power to assume the form of angels of light, and there is but one method

of detecting them; viz. to ask them in proper form, what method is the most certain to propagate the faith over all the world? To this they are not permitted by the Superior Power, to make a false reply; nor are they willing to give the true one, wherefore they continue silent, and are thus detected.

ESSAY III.

ASEM, AN EASTERN TALE.

WHERE Tauris lifts its head above the storm, and presents nothing to the sight of the distant traveller, but a prospect of nodding rocks, falling torrents, and all the variety of tremendous nature; on the bleak bosom of this frightful mountain, secluded from society, and detesting the ways of men, lived Asem, the man-hater.

Asem had spent his youth with men, had shared in their amusements, and had been taught to love his fellow-creatures with the most ardent affection; but from the tenderness of his disposition he exhausted all his fortune in relieving the wants of the distressed. The petitioner never sued in vain, the weary traveller never passed his door; he only desisted from doing good, when he had no longer the power of relieving.

From a fortune thus spent in benevolence, he expected a grateful return from those he had formerly relieved; and made his application with confidence of redress: the ungrateful world soon grew weary of his importunity; for pity is but a short lived passion. He soon therefore began to view mankind in a very different light from that in which he had before beheld them: he per-

ceived a thousand vices he had never before suspected to exist: wherever he turned, ingratitude, dissimulation, and treachery, contributed to increase his detestation of them. Resolved, therefore, to continue no longer in a world which he hated, and which repaid his detestation with contempt, he retired to this region of sterility, in order to brood over his resentment in solitude, and converse with the only honest heart he knew—namely, with his own.

A cave was his only shelter from the inclemency of the weather; fruits gathered with difficulty from the mountain's side his only food: and his drink was fetched with danger and toil from the headlong torrent. In this manner he lived, sequestered from society, passing the hours in meditation, and sometimes exulting that he was able to live independently of his fellow-creatures.

At the foot of the mountain, an extensive lake displayed its glassy bosom; reflecting on its broad surface the impending horrors of the mountain. To this capacious mirror he would sometimes descend, and reclining on its steep banks, cast an eager look on the smooth expanse that lay before him. "How beautiful," he often cried, "is nature! how lovely even in her wildest scenes! How finely contrasted is the level plain that lies beneath me, with yon awful pile that hides its tremendous head in clouds! But the beauty of these scenes is no way comparable with their utility; hence a hundred rivers are supplied, which distribute health and verdure to the various countries through which they flow. Every part of the universe is beautiful, just, and wise, but man; vile man is a solecism in nature, the only monster in the creation. Tempests and whirlwinds have their use, but

vicious ungrateful man is a blot in the fair page of universal beauty. Why was I born of that detested species, whose vices are almost a reproach to the wisdom of the divine Creator? Were men entirely free from vice, all would be uniformity, harmony, and order. A world of moral rectitude should be the result of a perfect moral agent. Why, why then, O Alla! must I be thus confined in darkness, doubt, and despair?"

Just as he uttered the word despair, he was going to plunge into the lake beneath him, at once to satisfy his doubts, and put a period to his anxiety, when he perceived a most majestic being walking on the surface of the water, and approaching the bank on which he stood. So unexpected an object at once checked his purpose; he stopped, contemplated, and fancied he saw something awful and divine in his aspect.

"Son of Adam," cried the genius, "stop thy rash purpose; the Father of the Faithful has seen thy justice, thy integrity, thy miseries, and hath sent me to afford and administer relief. Give me thine hand, and follow without trembling wherever I shall lead; in me behold the Genius of Conviction, kept by the Great Prophet, to turn from their errors those who go astray, not from curiosity, but a rectitude of intention. Follow me, and be wise."

Asem immediately descended upon the lake, and his guide conducted him along the surface of the water, till, coming near the centre of the lake, they both began to sink; the waters closed over their heads; they descended several hundred fathoms, till Asem, just ready to give up his life as inevitably lost, found himself with his celestial guide in another world, at the bottom of the waters,

where human foot had never trod before. His astonishment was beyond description, when he saw a sun like that he had left, a serene sky over his head, and blooming verdure under his feet.

"I plainly perceive your amazement," said the genius; "but suspend it for a while. This world was formed by Alla, at the request, and under the inspection, of our great Prophet; who once entertained the same doubts which filled your mind when I found you, and from the consequence of which you were so lately rescued. The rational inhabitants of this world are formed agreeable to your own ideas; they are absolutely without vice. In other respects it resembles your earth, but differs from it in being wholly inhabited by men who never do wrong. If you find this world more agreeable than that you so lately left, you have free permission to spend the remainder of your days in it; but permit me for some time to attend you, that I may silence your doubts, and make you better acquainted with your company and your new habitation."

"A world without vice! rational beings without immorality!" cried Asem in a rapture; "I thank thee, O Alla, who has at length heard my petitions; this, this indeed will produce happiness, ecstacy, and ease. O! for an immortality, to spend it among men who are incapable of ingratitude, injustice, fraud, violence, and a thousand other crimes, that render society miserable."

"Cease thine acclamations," replied the genius. "Look around thee; reflect on every object and action before us, and communicate to me the result of thine observations. Lead wherever you think proper, I shall be your attendant and instructor." Asem and his companion

travelled on in silence for some time, the former being entirely lost in astonishment; but at last recovering his former serenity, he could not help observing, that the face of the country bore a near resemblance to that he had left, except that this subterranean world still seemed to retain its primeval wildness.

"Here," cried Asem, "I perceive animals of prey, and others that seem only designed for their subsistence; it is the very same in the world over our heads. But had I been permitted to instruct our Prophet, I would have removed this defect, and formed no voracious or destructive animals, which only prey on the other parts of the creation." "Your tenderness for inferior animals is, I find, remarkable," said the genius smiling: "but with regard to meaner creatures, this world exactly resembles the other; and indeed for obvious reasons; for the earth can support a more considerable number of animals, by their thus becoming food for each other, than if they had lived entirely on her vegetable productions. So that animals of different natures, thus formed, instead of lessening their multitude, subsist in the greatest number possible. But let us hasten on to the inhabited country before us, and see what that offers for instruction."

They soon gained the utmost verge of the forest, and entered the country inhabited by men without vice; and Asem anticipated in idea the rational delight he hoped to experience in such an innocent society. But they had scarcely left the confines of the wood, when they beheld one of the inhabitants flying with hasty steps, and terror in his countenance, from an army of squirrels that closely pursued him. "Heavens!" cried Asem, "why does he fly? What can he fear from animals so contemptible?"

He had scarcely spoken, when he perceived two dogs pursuing another of the human species, who, with equal terror and haste, attempted to avoid them. "This," cried Asem to his guide, "is truly surprising; nor can I conceive the reason for so strange an action."—"Every species of animals," repled the genius, "has of late grown very powerful in this country; for the inhabitants at first thinking it unjust to use either fraud or force in destroying them, theyhave insensibly increased, and now frequently ravage their harmless frontiers." "But they should have been destroyed," cried Asem; "you see the consequence of such neglect."—"Where is then that tenderness you so lately expressed for subordinate animals?" replied the genius, smiling; "you seem to have forgot that branch of justice." "I must acknowledge my mistake," returned Asem, "I am now convinced, that we must be guilty of tyranny and injustice to the brute creation, if we would enjoy the world ourselves. But let us no longer observe the duty of man to these irrational creatures, but survey their connexions with one another."

As they walked further up the country, the more he was surprised to see no vestiges of handsome houses, no cities, nor any mark of elegant design. His conductor perceiving his surprise, observed, that the inhabitants of this new world were perfectly content with their ancient simplicity; each had a house, which, though homely, was sufficient to lodge his little family; they were too good to build houses, which could only increase their own pride, and the envy of the spectator; what they built was for convenience, and not for show." "At least, then," said Asem, "they have neither architects, painters, nor statuaries, in their society; but these are idle arts, and

may be spared. However, before I spend much more time, you should have my thanks for introducing me into the society of some of their wisest men: there is scarcely any pleasure to me equal to a refined conversation; there is nothing of which I am so much enamoured as wisdom."—"Wisdom!" replied his instructor, "how ridiculous! We have no wisdom here, for we have no occasion for it; true wisdom is only a knowledge of our own duty, and the duty of others to us; but of what use is such wisdom here, each intuitively performs what is right in himself, and expects the same from others! If by wisdom, you should mean vain curiosity, and empty speculation, as such pleasures have their origin in vanity, luxury, or avarice, we are too good to pursue them."—"All this may be right," says Asem; "but methinks I observe a solitary disposition prevail among the people, each family keeps separately within their own precincts, without society, or without intercourse."—"That indeed is true," replied the other; "here is no established society; nor should there be any: all societies are made either through fear or friendship; the people we are among are too good to fear each other; and there are no motives to private friendship, where all are equally meritorious."—"Well then," said the sceptic, "as I am to spend my time here, if I am to have neither the polite arts, nor wisdom, nor friendship, in such a world I should be glad at least of an easy companion, who may tell me his thoughts, and to whom I may communicate mine."—"And to what purpose should either do this?" says the genius: "flattery or curiosity are vicious motives, and never allowed of here; and wisdom is out of the question."

"Still however," said Asem, "the inhabitants must be

happy; each is contented with his own possessions, nor avariciously endeavours to heap up more than is necessary for his own subsistence: each has therefore leisure for pitying those that stand in need of his compassion." He had scarcely spoken, when his ears were assaulted with the lamentations of a wretch who sat by the way side, and in the most deplorable distress, seemed gently to murmur at his own misery. Asem immediately ran to his relief, and found him in the last stage of a consumption. "Strange," cried the son of Adam, "that men who are free from vice, should thus suffer so much misery without relief!"—"Be not surprised," said the wretch who was dying; "would it not be the utmost injustice for beings, who have only just sufficient to support themselves, and are content with a bare subsistence, to take it from their own mouths to put it into mine? They never are possessed of a single meal more than is necessary; and what is barely necessary cannot be dispensed with."—"They should have been supplied with more than is necessary," cried Asem; "and yet I contradict my own opinion but a moment before: all is doubt, perplexity, and confusion. Even the want of ingratitude is no virtue here, since they never received a favour. They have, however, another excellence yet behind; the love of their country is still I hope one of their darling virtues."—"Peace, Asem," replied the guardian, with a countenance not less severe than beautiful; "nor forfeit all thy pretensions to wisdom; the same selfish motives by which we prefer our own interest to that of others, induce us to regard our country preferable to that of another. Nothing less than universal benevolence is free from vice, and that you see is practised here."—"Strange!" cries

the disappointed pilgrim, in an agony of distress; "what sort of a world am I now introduced to? There is scarcely a single virtue, but that of temperence, which they practise; and in that they are no way superior to the very brute creation. There is scarcely an amusement which they enjoy; fortitude, liberality, friendship, wisdom, conversation, and love of country, all are virtues entirely unknown here; thus it seems, that to be unacquainted with vice, is not to know virtue. Take me, O my genius! back to that very world which I have despised; a world which has Alla for its contriver is much more wisely formed than that which has been projected by Mahomet. Ingratitude, contempt, and hatred, I can now suffer, for perhaps I have deserved them. When I arraigned the wisdom of Providence, I only showed my own ignorance; henceforth, let me keep from vice myself, and pity it in others."

He had scarcely ended, when the genius, assuming an air of terrible complacency, called all his thunders around him, and vanished in a whirlwind; Asem, astonished at the terror of the scene, looked for his imaginary world, when, casting his eyes around, he perceived himself in the very situation, and in the very place, where he first began to repine and despair: his right foot had been just advanced to take the fatal plunge, nor had it been yet withdrawn; so instantly did Providence strike the series of truths just imprinted on his soul. He now departed from the water-side in tranquillity, and leaving his horrid mansion, travelled to Segestan, his native city; where he diligently applied himself to commerce, and put in practice that wisdom he had learned in solitude. The frugality of a few years, soon produced opulence; the number

of his domestics increased; his friends came to him from every part of the city; nor did he receive them with disdain: and a youth of misery was concluded with an old age of elegance, affluence, and ease.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE ENGLISH CLERGY, AND POPULAR PREACHERS.

It is allowed on all hands, that our English divines receive a more liberal education, and improve that education by frequent study, more than any others of this reverend profession in Europe. In general also, it may be observed, that a greater degree of gentility is affixed to the character of a student in England than elsewhere; by which means, our clergy have an opportunity of seeing better company while young, and of sooner wearing off those prejudices which they are apt to imbibe even in the best regulated universities, and which may be justly termed the vulgar errors of the wise.

Yet with all these advantages, it is very obvious, that the clergy are no where so little thought of by the populace, as here; and though our divines are foremost with respect to abilities, yet they are found last in the effects of their ministry; the vulgar in general appearing no way impressed with a sense of religious duty. I am not for whining at the depravity of the times, or for endeavouring to paint a prospect more gloomy than in nature; but certain it is, no person who has travelled, will contradict me, when I aver, that the lower orders of mankind

in other countries testify on every occasion the profoundest awe of religion; while in England they are scarcely awakened into a sense of its duties, even in circumstances of the greatest distress.

This dissolute and fearless conduct, foreigners are apt to attribute to climate and constitution: may not the vulgar, being pretty much neglected in our exhortations from the pulpit, be a conspiring cause? Our divines seldom stoop to their mean capacities; and they who want instruction most, find least in our religious assemblies.

Whatever may become of the higher orders of mankind, who are generally possessed of collateral motives to virtue, the vulgar should be particularly regarded, whose behaviour in civil life is totally hinged upon their hopes and fears. Those who constitute the basis of the great fabric of society, should be particularly regarded; for in policy, as in architecture, ruin is most fatal when it begins from the bottom.

Men of real sense and understanding prefer a prudent mediocrity to a precarious popularity; and, fearing to outdo their duty, leave it half done. Their discourses from the pulpit are generally dry, methodical, and unaffecting; delivered with the most insipid calmness; insomuch, that, should the peaceful preacher lift his head over the cushion, which alone he seems to address, he might discover his audience, instead of being awakened to remorse, actually sleeping over his methodical and laboured composition.

This method of preaching is however by some called an address to reason, and not to the passions; this is styled the making of converts from conviction: but such are indifferently acquainted with human nature, who are

not sensible, that men seldom reason about their debaucheries till they are committed; reason is but a weak antagonist when headlong passion dictates; in all such cases, we should arm one passion against another; it is with the human mind as in nature; from the mixture of two opposites, the result is most frequently neutral tranquillity. Those who attempt to reason us out of our follies, begin at the wrong end; since the attempt naturally presupposes us capable of reason; but to be made capable of this, is one great point of the cure.

There are but few talents requisite, to become a popular preacher, for the people are easily pleased if they perceive any endeavours in the orator to please them; the meanest qualifications will work this effect, if the preacher sincerely sets about it. Perhaps little indeed, very little more is required, than sincerity and assurance; and a becoming sincerity is always certain of producing a becoming assurance. "Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum tibi ipsi," is so trite a quotation, that it almost demands an apology to repeat it; yet, though all allow the justice of the remark, how few do we find put it in practice! Our orators, with the most faulty bashfulness, seem impressed rather with an awe of their audience than with a just respect for the truths they are about to deliver; they, of all professions, seem the most bashful, who have the greatest right to glory in their commission.

The French preachers generally assume all the dignity which becomes men who are ambassadors from Christ: the English divines, like erroneous envoys, seem more solicitous not to offend the court to which they are sent, than to drive home the interest of their employer. The Bishop of Massillon, in the first sermon he ever preached,

found the whole audience, upon his getting into the pulpit, in a disposition no way favourable to his intentions; their nods, whispers, or drowsy behaviour, showed him that there was no great profit to be expected from his sowing in a soil so improper; however, he soon changed the disposition of his audience by his manner of beginning. 'If,' says he, "a cause, the most important that could be conceived, were to be tried at the bar, before qualified judges; if this cause interested ourselves in particular; if the eyes of the whole kingdom were fixed upon the event; if the most eminent counsel were employed on both sides; and if we had heard from our infancy of this yet undetermined trial, would you not all sit with due attention, and warm expectation, to the pleadings on each side? Would not all your hopes and fears be hinged upon the final decision? And yet, let me tell you, you have this moment a cause of much greater importance before you; a cause where not one nation, but all the world, are spectators; tried, not before a fallible tribunal, but the awful throne of heaven, where not your temporal and transitory interests are the subject of debate, but your eternal happiness or misery, where the cause is still undetermined; but perhaps, the very moment I am speaking may fix the irrevocable decree that shall last for ever; and yet, notwithstanding all this, you can hardly sit with patience to hear the tidings of your own salvation; I plead the cause of heaven, and I am scarcely attended to, &c."

The style, the abruptness of a beginning like this, in the closet would appear absurd; but in the pulpit it is attended with the most lasting impressions; that style, which in the closet might justly be called flimsy, seems the true mode of eloquence here. I never read a fine

composition, under the title of a sermon, that I do not think the author has miscalled his piece; for the talents to be used in writing well, entirely differ from those of speaking well. The qualifications for speaking, as has been already observed, are easily acquired; they are accomplishments which may be taken up by every candidate who will be at the pains of stooping. Impressed with a sense of the truths he is about to deliver, a preacher disregards the applause or the contempt of his audience, and he insensibly assumes a just and manly sincerity. With this talent alone, we see what crowds are drawn around enthusiasts, even destitute of common sense; what numbers converted to Christianity! Folly may sometimes set an example for wisdom to practise; and our regular divines may borrow instruction from even Methodists, who go their circuits, and preach prizes among the populace. Even Whitfield may be placed as a model to some of our young divines; let them join to their own good sense his earnest manner of delivery.

It will be perhaps objected, that by confining the excellencies of a preacher to proper assurance, earnestness, and openess of style, I make the qualifications too trifling for estimation: there will be something called oratory brought up on this occasion; action, attitude, grace, elocution, may be repeated, as absolutely necessary to complete the character; but let us not be deceived; common sense is seldom swayed by fine tones, musical periods, just attitudes, or the display of a white handkerchief; oratorial behavour, except in very able hands indeed, generally sinks into awkward and paltry affectation.

It must be observed, however, that these rules are calculated only for him who would instruct the vulgar, who

stand in most need of instruction; to address philosophers, and to obtain the character of a polite preacher among the polite, a much more useless, though more sought for character, requires a different method of proceeding. All I shall observe on this head is, to entreat the polemic divine, in his controversy with the Deists, to act rather offensively than to defend; to push home the grounds of his belief, and the impracticability of theirs, rather than to spend time in solving the objections of every opponent. "It is ten to one," says a late writer on the art of war, "but that the assailant, who attacks the enemy in his trenches, is always victorious."

Yet, upon the whole, our clergy might employ themselves more to the benefit of society, by declining all controversy, than by exhibiting even the profoundest skill in polemic disputes; their contests with each other, often turn on speculative trifles; and their disputes with the Deists are almost at an end, since they can have no more than victory, and that they are already possessed of, as their antagonists have been driven into a confession of the necessity of revelation, or an open avowal of Atheism. To continue the dispute longer, would only endanger it; the sceptic is ever expert at puzzling a debate which he finds himself unable to continue; "and, like an olympic boxer, generally fights best when undermost."

ESSAY V.

A REVERIE AT THE BOAR'S-HEAD TAVERN, EASTCHEAP.

The improvements we make in mental acquirements only render us each day more sensible of the defects of

our constitution; with this in view therefore, let us often recur to the amusements of youth; endeavour to forget age and wisdom, and as far as innocence goes, be as much a boy as the best of them.

Let idle declaimers mourn over the degeneracy of the age; but in my opinion, every age is the same. This I am sure of, that man in every season is a poor fretful being, with no other means to escape the calamities of the times, but by endeavouring to forget them; for if he attempts to resist, he is certainly undone. If I feel poverty and pain, I am not so hardy as to quarrel with the executioner, even while under correction: I find myself no way disposed to make fine speeches, while I am making wry faces. In a word, let me drink when the fit is on, to make me insensible; and drink when it is over, for joy that I feel pain no longer.

The character of old Falstaff, even with all his faults, gives me more consolation than the most studied efforts of wisdom. I here behold an agreeable old fellow, forgetting age, and showing me the way to be young at sixty-five. Sure I am well able to be as merry, though not so comical as he—Is it not in my power to have though not so much wit, at least as much vivacity?—Age, care, wisdom, reflection, begone!—I give you to the winds. Let's have t'other bottle: here's to the memory of Shakespeare, Falstaff, and all the merry men of Eastcheap.

Such were the reflections that naturally arose, while I sat at the Boar's-head tavern, still kept at Eastcheap. Here, by a pleasant fire, in the very room where old Sir John Falstaff cracked his jokes, in the very chair which was sometimes honoured by prince Henry, and sometimes

polluted by his immoral, merry companions, I sat and ruminated on the follies of youth; wished to be young again; but was resolved to make the best of life while it lasted, and now and then compared past and present times together. I considered myself as the only living representative of the old knight, and transported my imagination back to the times when the prince and he gave life to the revel, and made even debauchery not disgusting. The room also conspired to throw my reflections back into antiquity: the oak floor, the Gothic windows, and the ponderous chimney-piece, had long withstood the tooth of time; the watchman had gone twelve; my companions had all stolen off; and none now remained with me but the landlord. From him I could have wished to know the history of a tavern, that had such a long succession of customers: I could not help thinking, that an account of this kind would be a pleasing contrast of the manners of different ages; but my landlord could give me no information. He continued to dose and sot, and tell a tedious story, as most other landlords usually do; and, though he said nothing, yet was never silent: one good joke followed another good joke; and the best joke of all was generally begun towards the end of a bottle. I found at last, however, his wine and his conversation operate by degrees: he insensibly began to alter his appearance. His cravat seemed quilled into a ruff, and his breeches swelled out into a fardingale. I now fancied him changing sexes; and as my eyes began to close in slumber, I imagined my fat landlord actually converted into as fat a landlady. However, sleep made few changes in my situation; the tavern, the apartment, and the table, continued as before; nothing suffer-

ed mutation but my host, who was fairly altered into a gentlewoman, whom I knew to be dame Quickly, mistress of this tavern in the days of Sir John; and the liquor we were drinking, which seemed converted into sack and sugar.

"My dear Mrs. Quickly," cried I, (for I knew her perfectly well at first sight) "I am heartily glad to see you. How have you left Falstaff, Pistol, and the rest of our friends below stairs? Brave and hearty I hope!" "In good sooth," replied she, "he did deserve to live for ever; but he maketh foul work on't where he hath flitted. Queen Proserpine and he have quarelled for his attempting a rape upon her divinity; and were it not that she still had bowels of compassion, it more than seems probable he might have been now sprawling in Tartarus."

I now found, that spirits still preserve the frailties of the flesh; and that, according to the laws of criticism and dreaming, ghosts have been known to be guilty of even more than platonic affection: wherefore, as I found her too much moved on such a topic to proceed, I was resolved to change the subject; and desiring she would pledge me in a bumper, observed with a sigh, that our sack was nothing now to what it was in former days: "Ah, Mrs. Quickly, those were merry times when you drew sack for Prince Henry; men were twice as strong, and twice as wise, and much braver, and ten thousand times more charitable than now. Those were the times! The battle of Agincourt was a victory indeed! Ever since that we have only been degenerating; and I have lived to see the day, when drinking is no longer fashionable. When men wear clean shirts, and women show their necks and arms; all are degenerated, Mrs. Quickly; and we shall probably,

in another century, be frittered away into beaus or monkeys. Had you been on earth, to see what I have seen, it would congeal all the blood in your body (your soul I mean.) Why, our very nobility now have the intolerable arrogance, in spite of what is every day remonstrated from the press, our very nobility, I say, have the assurance to frequent assemblies, and presume to be as merry as the vulgar. See, my very friends have scarcely manhood enough to sit to it till eleven; and I only am left to make a night on't. Pr'ythee do me the favour to console me a little for their absence, by the story of your own adventure, or the history of the tavern where we are now sitting: I fancy the narrative may have something singular."

"Observe this apartment," interrupted my companion, "of neat device and excellent workmanship. In this room I have lived, child, woman, and ghost, more than three hundred years: I am ordered by Pluto to keep an annual register of every transaction that passeth here; and I have whilom compiled three hundred tomes, which eftsoons may be submitted to thy regards."—"None of your whiloms or eftsoons, Mrs. Quickly, if you please," I replied; "I know you can talk every whit as well as I can: for, as you have lived here so long, it is but natural to suppose you should learn the conversation of the company. Believe me, dame, at best, you have neither too much sense, nor too much language to spare; so give me both as well as you can; but first my service to you—old women should water their clay a little now and then; and now to your story."

"The story of my own adventures," replied the vision, "is but short and unsatisfactory; for believe me, Mr. Rigmarole, believe me, a woman with a butt of sack at

her elbow is never long-lived. Sir John's death afflicted me to such a degree, that I sincerely believe, to drown sorrow, I drank more liquor myself than I drew for my customers; my grief was sincere, and the sack was excellent. The prior of a neighbouring convent, (for our priors then had as much power as a Middlesex justice now) he, I say, it was, who gave me a license for keeping a disorderly house; upon conditions I should never make hard bargains with the clergy, that he should have a bottle of sack every morning, and the liberty of confessing which of my girls he thought proper, in private every night. I had continued for several years to pay this tribute; and he, it must be confessed, continued as rigorously to exact it. I grew old insensibly; my customers continued, however, to compliment my looks while I was by, but I could hear them say, I was wearing, when my back was turned. The prior, however, still was constant, and so were half his convent; but one fatal morning he missed the usual beverage, for I had incautiously drank overnight the last bottle myself. What will you have on't? The very next day Doll Tearsheet and I were sent to the house of correction, and accused of keeping a low bawdy-house. In short, we were so well purified there with stripes, mortification, and penance, that we were afterwards utterly unfit for worldly conversation: though sack would have killed me, had I stuck to it; yet I soon died for want of a drop of something comfortable, and fairly left my body to the care of the beadle.

"Such is my own history; but that of the tavern, where I have ever since been stationed, affords greater variety. In the history of this, which is one of the oldest in London, you may view the different manners, pleasures, and

follies, of men at different periods. You will find mankind neither better nor worse now than formerly: the vices of an uncivilized people are generally more detestable, though not so frequent, as those in polite society. It is the same luxury, which formerly stuffed your alderman with plum-porridge, and now crams him with turtle. It is the same low ambition, that formerly induced a courtier to give up his religion to please his king, and now persuades him to give up his conscience to please his minister. It is the same vanity, that formerly stained our ladies cheeks and necks with woad, and now paints them with carmine. Your ancient Briton formerly powdered his hair with red earth, like brick-dust, in order to appear frightful; your modern Briton cuts his hair on the crown, and plaisters it with hog's-lard and flour; and this to make him look killing. It is the same vanity, the same folly, and the same vice, only appearing different, as viewed through the glass of fashion. In a word, all mankind are a—"

"Sure the woman is dreaming," interrupted I. "None of your reflections, Mrs. Quickly, if you love me; they only give me the spleen. Tell me your history at once. I love stories, but hate reasoning."

"If you please then, sir," returned my companion, "I'll read you an abstract, which I made of the three hundred volumes I mentioned just now.

"My body was no sooner laid in the dust, than the prior and several of his convent came to purify the tavern from the pollutions with which they said I had filled it. Masses were said in every room; reliques were exposed upon every piece of furniture, and the whole house washed with a deluge of holy water. My habitation was soon

converted into a monastery: instead of customers now applying for sack and sugar, my rooms were crowded with images, reliques, saints, whores, and friars. Instead of being a scene of occasional debauchery, it was now filled with continual lewdness. The prior led the fashion, and the whole convent imitated his pious example. Matrons came hither to confess their sins, and to commit new. Virgins came hither, who seldom went virgins away. Nor was this a convent peculiarly wicked; every convent at that period was equally fond of pleasure, and gave a boundless loose to appetite. The laws allowed it; each priest had a right to a favourite companion, and a power of discarding her as often as he pleased. The laity grumbled, quarrelled with their wives and daughters, hated their confessors, and maintained them in opulence and ease. These, these were happy times, Mr. Rigmarole; these were times of piety, bravery, and simplicity!"—"Not so very happy neither, good madam; pretty much like the present; those that labour, starve; and those that do nothing, wear fine clothes, and live in luxury."

"In this manner the fathers lived for some years without molestation; they transgressed, confessed themselves to each other, and were forgiven. One evening, however, our prior keeping a lady of distinction somewhat too long at confession, her husband unexpectedly came upon them, and testified all the indignation which was natural upon such an occasion. The prior assured the gentleman, that it was the Devil who put it into his heart; and the lady was very certain, that she was under the influence of magic, or she could never have behaved in so unfaithful a manner. The husband, however, was not to be put off by such evasions, but summoned both before the tribunal

of justice. His proofs were flagrant, and he expected large damages. Such indeed he had a right to expect, were the tribunals of those days constituted in the same manner as they are now. The cause of the priest was to be tried before an assembly of priests; and a layman was to expect redress only from their impartiality and candour. What plea then do you think the prior made to obviate this accusation? He denied the fact, and challenged the plaintiff to try the merits of their cause by single combat. It was a little hard, you may be sure, upon the poor gentleman, not only to be made a cuckold, but to be obliged to fight a duel into the bargain; yet such was the justice of the times. The prior threw down his glove, and the injured husband was obliged to take it up, in token of his accepting the challenge. Upon this the priest supplied his champion, for it was not lawful for the clergy to fight; and the defendant and plaintiff, according to custom, were put in prison; both ordered to fast and pray, every method being previously used to induce both to a confession of the truth. After a month's imprisonment, the hair of each was cut, the bodies anointed with oil, the field of battle appointed and guarded by soldiers, while his majesty presided over the whole in person. Both the champions were sworn not to seek victory either by fraud or magic. They prayed and confessed upon their knees; and, after these ceremonies, the rest was left to the courage and conduct of the combatants. As the champion whom the prior had pitched upon, had fought six or eight times upon similar occasions, it was no way extraordinary to find him victorious in the present combat. In short, the husband was discomfited; he was taken from the field of battle, stripped to his shirt,

and, after one of his legs had been cut off, as justice ordained in such cases, he was hanged as a terror to future offenders. These, these were the times, Mr. Rigmarole; you see how much more just, and wise, and valiant, our ancestors were than us!"—"I rather fancy, madam, that the times then were pretty much like our own: where a multiplicity of laws gives a judge as much power as a want of law; since he is ever sure to find among the number, some to countenance his partiality."

"Our convent, victorious over their enemies, now gave a loose to every demonstration of joy. The lady became a nun, the prior was made a bishop, and three Wickliffites were burned in the illuminations and fire-works that were made on the present occasion. Our convent now began to enjoy a very high degree of reputation. There was not one in London, that had the character of hating heretics so much as ours. Ladies of the first distinction chose from our convent their confessors; in short, it flourished, and might have flourished to this hour, but for a fatal accident which terminated in its overthrow. The lady, whom the prior had placed in a nunnery, and whom he continued to visit for some time with great punctuality, began at last to perceive that she was quite forsaken. Secluded from conversation, as usual, she now entertained the visions of a devotee, found herself strangely disturbed, but hesitated in determining whether she was possessed by an angel or a demon. She was not long in suspense; for upon vomiting a large quantity of crooked pins, and finding the palms of her hands turned outwards, she quickly concluded, that she was possessed by the devil. She soon lost entirely the use of speech; and when she seemed to speak, every body that was present, per-

ceived that her voice was not her own, but that of the Devil within her. In short, she was bewitched; and all the difficulty lay in determining who it could be that bewitched her. The nuns and the monks all demanded the magician's name, but the Devil made no reply; for he knew they had no authority to ask questions. By the rules of witchcraft, when an evil spirit has taken possession, he may refuse to answer any questions asked him, unless they are put by a bishop, and to these he is obliged to reply. A bishop, therefore, was sent for, and now the whole secret came out: the Devil reluctantly owned that he was a servant of the prior; that by his command he resided in his present habitation, and that without his command, he was resolved to keep in possession. The bishop was an able exorcist; he drove the Devil out by force of mystical arms; the prior was arraigned for witchcraft; the witnesses were strong and numerous against him; not less than fourteen persons being by, who heard the Devil talk Latin. There was no resisting such a cloud of witnesses; the prior was condemned; and he who had assisted at so many burnings, was burned himself in turn. These were times, Mr. Rigmarole: the people of those times were not infidels, as now, but sincere believers!"—"Equally faulty with ourselves; they believed what the Devil was pleased to tell them; and we seem resolved at last, to believe neither God nor Devil."

"After such a stain upon the convent, it was not to be supposed it could subsist any longer; the fathers were ordered to decamp, and the house was once again converted into a tavern. The king conferred it on one of his cast mistresses; she was constituted landlady, by royal authority; and as the tavern was in the neighbourhood of the

court, and the mistress a very polite woman, it began to have more business than ever, and sometimes took not less than four shillings a day.

"But perhaps you are desirous of knowing what were the peculiar qualifications of a woman of fashion at that period; and in a description of the present landlady, you will have a tolerable idea of all the rest. This lady was the daughter of a nobleman, and received such an education in the country, as became her quality, beauty, and great expectations. She could make shifts and hose for herself and all the servants of the family, when she was twelve years old. She knew the names of the four-and-twenty letters, so that it was impossible to bewitch her; and this was a greater piece of learning than any lady in the whole country could pretend to. She was always up early, and saw breakfast served in the great hall by six o'clock. At this scene of festivity, she generally improved good humour, by telling her dreams, relating stories of spirits, several of which she herself had seen; and one of which, she was reported to have killed with a black-hafted knife. Hence she usually went to make pastry in the larder; and here she was followed by her sweethearts, who were much helped on in conversation, by struggling with her for kisses. About ten, miss generally went to play at hot-cockles and blind-man's-buff in the parlour; and when the young folks (for they seldom played at hot-cockles when grown old,) were tired of such amusements, the gentlemen entertained miss with the history of their greyhounds, bear-beatings, and victories at cudgel-playing. If the weather was fine, they ran at the ring, shot at butts, while miss held in her hand a riband, with which she adorned the conqueror. Her mental qualifications

were exactly fitted to her external accomplishments. Before she was fifteen, she could tell the story of Jack the Giant Killer; could name every mountain that was inhabited by fairies; knew a witch at first sight; and could repeat four Latin prayers without a prompter. Her dress was perfectly fashionable; her arms and her hair were completely covered; a monstrous ruff was put round her neck, so that her head seemed like that of John the Baptist placed in a charger. In short, when completely equipped, her appearance was so very modest, that she discovered little more than her nose. These were the times, Mr. Rigmarole, when every lady that had a good nose, might set up for a beauty; when every woman that could tell stories, might be cried up for a wit."—"I am as much displeased at those dresses which conceal too much, as at those which discover too much: I am equally an enemy to a female dunce or a female pedant."

"You may be sure, that miss chose a husband with qualifications resembling her own; she pitched upon a courtier, equally remarkable for hunting and drinking, who had given several proofs of his great virility among the daughters of his tenants and domestics. They fell in love at first sight, (for such was the gallantry of the times,) were married, came to court, and madam appeared with superior qualifications. The king was struck with her beauty. All property was at the king's command; the husband was obliged to resign all pretensions in his wife to the sovereign, whom God had anointed to commit adultery where he thought proper. The king loved her for some time; but at length repenting of his misdeeds, and instigated by his father-confessor, from a principle of conscience, removed her from his levee to the bar of this tavern, and

took a new mistress in her stead. Let it not surprise you, to behold the mistress of a king degraded to so humble an office. As the ladies had no mental accomplishments, a good face was enough to raise them to the royal couch; and she, who was this day a royal mistress, might the next, when her beauty palled upon enjoyment, be doomed to infamy and want.

"Under the care of this lady, the tavern grew into great reputation; the courtiers had not yet learned to game, but they paid it off by drinking; drunkenness is ever the vice of a barbarous, and gaming of a luxurious age. They had not such frequent entertainments as the moderns have, but were more expensive and more luxurious in those they had. All their fooleries were more elaborate, and more admired by the great and the vulgar than now. A courtier has been known to spend his whole fortune at a single feast, a king to mortgage his dominions, to furnish out the frippery of a tournament. There were certain days appointed for riot and debauchery, and to be sober at such times, was reputed a crime. Kings themselves set the example; and I have seen monarchs in this room drunk before the entertainment was half concluded. These were the times, sir, when kings kept mistresses, and got drunk in public; they were too plain and simple in those happy times, to hide their vices, and act the hypocrite, as now."—"Lord! Mrs. Quickly," interrupting her, "I expected to have heard a story, and here you are going to tell me I know not what, of times and vices; pr'ythee, let me entreat thee once more to waive reflections, and give thy history without deviation."

"No lady upon earth," continued my visionary correspondent, "knew how to put off her damaged wine or wo-

men with more art than she. When these grew flat, or those paltry, it was but changing the names; the wine became excellent, and the girls agreeable. She was also possessed of the engaging leer, the chuck under the chin, winked at a double-entendre, could nick the opportunity of calling for something comfortable, and perfectly understood the discreet moments when to withdraw. The gallants of these times pretty much resembled the bloods of ours; they were fond of pleasure, but quite ignorant of the art of refining upon it; thus a court-bawd of those times, resembled the common low-lived harridan of a modern bagnio. Witness, ye powers of debauchery, how often I have been present at the various appearances of drunkenness, riot, guilt, and brutality! A tavern is the true picture of human infirmity: in history, we find only one side of the age exhibited to our view; but in the accounts of a tavern, we see every age equally absurd and equally vicious.

"Upon this lady's decease, the tavern was successively occupied by adventurers, bullies, pimps, and gamesters. Towards the conclusion of the reign of Henry VII. gaming was more universally practised in England than even now. Kings themselves have been known to play off at Primero, not only all the money and jewels they could part with, but the very images in churches. The last Henry played away, in this very room, not only the four great bells of St. Paul's cathedral, but the fine image of St. Paul, which stood upon the top of the spire, to Sir Miles Partridge, who took them down the next day, and sold them by auction. Have you then any cause to regret being born in the times you now live? or do you still believe that human nature continues to run on de-

clining every age? If we observe the actions of the busy part of mankind, your ancestors will be found infinitely more gross, servile, and even dishonest, than you. If, forsaking history, we only trace them in their hours of amusement and dissipation, we shall find them more sensual, more entirely devoted to pleasure, and infinitely more selfish.

"The last hostess of note I find upon record, was Jane Rouse. She was born among the lower ranks of the people; and, by frugality and extreme complaisance, contrived to acquire a moderate fortune: this she might have enjoyed for many years, had she not unfortunately quarrelled with one of her neighbours, a woman who was in high repute for sanctity through the whole parish. In the times of which I speak, two women seldom quarrelled, that one did not accuse the other of witchcraft, and she who first contrived to vomit crooked pins was sure to come off victorious. The scandal of a modern tea-table differs widely from the scandal of former times: the fascination of a lady's eyes at present is regarded as a compliment; but if a lady formerly should be accused of having witchcraft in her eyes, it were much better both for her soul and body that she had no eyes at all.

"In short, Jane Rouse was accused of witchcraft; and though she made the best defence she could, it was all to no purpose; she was taken from her own bar to the bar of the Old Bailey, condemned, and executed accordingly. These were times, indeed! when even women could not scold in safety.

"Since her time, the tavern underwent several revolutions, according to the spirit of the times, or the disposition of the reigning monarch. It was this day a brothel,

and the next, a conventicle for enthusiasts. It was one year noted for harbouring Whigs, and the next infamous for a retreat to Tories. Some years ago, it was in high vogue; but at present it seems declining. This only may be remarked in general, that whenever taverns flourish most, the times are the most extravagant and luxurious."—"Lord! Mrs. Quickly," interrupted I, "you have really deceived me; I expected a romance, and here you have been this half-hour giving me only a description of the spirit of the times: if you have nothing but tedious remarks to communicate, seek some other hearer; I am determined to hearken only to stories."

I had scarcely concluded, when my eyes and ears seemed open to my landlord, who had been all this while giving me an account of the repairs he had made in the house, and was now got into the story of the cracked glass in the dining-room.

ESSAY VI.

ADVENTURES OF A STROLLING PLAYER.

I AM fond of amusement, in whatever company it is to be found; and wit, though dressed in rags, is ever pleasing to me. I went some days ago to take a walk in St. James's Park, about the hour in which company leave it to go to dinner. There were but few in the walks; and those who stayed, seemed by their looks rather more willing to forget that they had an appetite, than gain one. I sat down on one of the benches, at the other end of which was seated a man in very shabby clothes.

We continued to groan, to hem, and to cough, as

usual upon such occasions, and at last ventured upon conversation. "I beg pardon, sir," cried I, "but I think I have seen you before; your face is familiar to me."—"Yes, sir," replied he, "I have a good familiar face, as my friends tell me. I am as well known in every town in England, as the dromedary, or live crocodile. You must understand, sir, that I have been these sixteen years Merry Andrew to a puppet-show: last Bartholomew fair, my master and I quarrelled, beat each other, and parted; he to sell his puppets to the pincushion-makers in Rosemary-lane, and I to starve in St. James's Park."

"I am sorry, sir, that a person of your appearance should labour under any difficulties."—"O sir," returned he, "my appearance is very much at your service; but though I cannot boast of eating much, yet there are few that are merrier: if I had twenty thousand a-year, I should be very merry; and, thank the Fates, though not worth a groat, I am very merry still. If I have threepence in my pocket, I never refused to be my three halfpence; and if I have no money, I never scorn to be treated by any that are kind enough to pay my reckoning. What think you, sir, of a steak and a tankard? you shall treat me now; and I will treat you again, when I find you in the park in love with eating, and without money to pay for a dinner."

As I never refuse a small expense for the sake of a merry companion, we instantly adjourned to a neighbouring ale-house, and in a few moments had a frothing tankard, and a smoking steak, spread on the table before us. It is impossible to express how much the sight of such good cheer improved my companion's vivacity. "I like this dinner, sir," says he, "for three reasons: first, be-

cause I am naturally fond of beef; secondly, because I am hungry; and, thirdly and lastly, because I get it for nothing: no meat eats so sweet, as that for which we do not pay."

He therefore now fell to, and his appetite seemed to correspond with his inclination. After dinner was over, he observed, that the steak was tough; "and yet, sir," returns he, "bad as it was, it was a rump-steak to me. O the delights of poverty and a good appetite! We beggars are the very foundlings of Nature; the rich she treats like an arrant step-mother; they are pleased with nothing; cut a steak from what part you will, and it is insupportably tough; dress it up with pickles, and even pickles cannot procure them an appetite. But the whole creation is filled with good things for the beggar: Calvert's butt out-tastes Champagne, and Sedgeley's home-brewed excels Tokay. Joy, joy, my blood! though our estates lie no where, we have fortunes wherever we go. If an inundation sweeps away half the grounds of Cornwall, I am content; I have no lands there: if the stocks sink, that gives me no uneasiness; I am no Jew." The fellow's vivacity, joined to his poverty, I own, raised my curiosity to know something of his life and circumstances; and I entreated that he would indulge my desire. "That I will, sir," said he, "and welcome; only let us drink to prevent our sleeping; let us have another tankard while we are awake; let us have another tankard; for, ah, how charming a tankard looks when full!

"You must know, then, that I am very well descended; my ancestors have made some noise in the world; for my mother cried oysters, and my father beat a drum. I am told we have even had some trumpeters in our fa-

mily. Many a nobleman cannot show so respectable a genealogy; but that is neither here nor there. As I was their only child, my father designed to breed me up to his own employment, which was that of a drummer to a puppet-show. Thus the whole employment of my younger years was that of interpreter to Punch and King Solomon in all his glory. But though my father was very fond of instructing me in beating all the marches and points of war, I made no very great progress, because I naturally had no ear for music; so at the age of fifteen I went and listed for a soldier. As I had ever hated beating a drum, so I soon found that I disliked carrying a musket also; neither the one trade nor the other were to my taste, for I was by nature fond of being a gentleman; besides, I was obliged to obey my captain; he has his will, I have mine, and you have yours; now I very reasonably concluded, that it was much more comfortable for a man to obey his own will, than another's.

"The life of a soldier soon, therefore, gave me the spleen: I asked leave to quit the service; but as I was tall and strong, my captain thanked me for my kind intention, and said, because he had a regard for me, we should not part. I wrote to my father a very dismal penitent letter, and desired that he would raise money to pay for my discharge; but the good man was as fond of drinking as I was, (sir, my service to you) and those who are fond of drinking never pay for other people's discharges: in short, he never answered my letter. What could be done? If I have not money, said I to myself, to pay for my discharge, I must find an equivalent some other way: and that must be by running away. I deserted, and that

answered my purpose every bit as well as if I had bought my discharge.

"Well, I was now fairly rid of my military employment; I sold my soldier's clothes, bought worse, and, in order not to be overtaken, took the most unfrequented roads possible. One evening, as I was entering a village, I perceived a man, whom I afterwards found to be the curate of the parish, thrown from his horse in a miry road, and almost smothered in the mud. He desired my assistance: I gave it, and drew him out with some difficulty. He thanked me for my trouble, and was going off; but I followed him home, for I loved always to have a man thank me at his own door. The curate asked a hundred questions—whose son I was—from whence I came—and whether I would be faithful? I answered him greatly to his satisfaction; and gave myself one of the best characters in the world for sobriety, (sir, I have the honour of drinking your health,) discretion and fidelity. To make a long story short, he wanted a servant, and hired me. With him I lived but two months; we did not much like each other; I was fond of eating, and he gave me but little to eat; I loved a pretty girl, and the old woman, my fellow-servant, was ill-natured and ugly. As they endeavoured to starve me between them, I made a pious resolution to prevent their committing murder; I stole the eggs as soon as they were laid; I emptied every unfinished bottle that I could lay my hands on; whatever eatable came in my way was sure to disappear; in short, they found I would not do; so I was discharged one morning, and paid three shillings and sixpence for two months' wages.

"While my money was getting ready, I employed my-

self in making preparations for my departure; two hens were hatching in an out-house, I went and took the eggs from habit, and not to separate the parents from the children, I lodged hens and all in my knapsack. After this piece of frugality, I returned to receive my money; and with my knapsack on my back, and a staff in my hand, I bid adieu, with tears in my eyes, to my old benefactor. I had not gone far from the house, when I heard behind me the cry of stop thief! but this only increased my despatch; it would have been foolish to stop, as I knew the voice could not be levelled at me. But hold, I think I passed these two months at the curate's without drinking. Come, the times are dry, and may this be my poison, if ever I spent two more pious, stupid months, in all my life!

"Well, after travelling some days, whom should I light upon, but a company of strolling players. The moment I saw them at a distance, my heart warmed to them; I had a sort of natural love for every thing of the vagabond order: they were employed in settling their baggage, which had been overturned in a narrow way; I offered my assistance, which they accepted; and we soon became so well acquainted, that they took me as a servant. This was a paradise to me; they sung, danced, drank, eat, and travelled, all at the same time. By the blood of the Mirabels, I thought I had never lived till then; I grew as merry as a grig, and laughed at every word that was spoken. They liked me as much as I liked them; I was a very good figure, as you see; and, though I was poor, I was not modest.

"I love a straggling life above all things in the world; sometimes good, sometimes bad; to be warm to-day, and

cold to-morrow; to eat when one can get it, and drink when (the tankard is out) it stands before me. We arrived that evening at Tenterden, and took a large room at the Grey-hound; where we resolved to exhibit Romeo and Juliet, with the funeral procession, the grave, and the garden-scene. Romeo was to be performed by a gentleman from the Theatre-Royal in Drury-lane; Juliet, by a lady who had never appeared on any stage before; and I was to snuff the candles; all excellent in our way. We had figures enough, but the difficulty was to dress them. The same coat that served Romeo, turned with a blue lining outwards, served for his friend Mercutio; a large piece of crape, sufficed at once for Juliet's petticoat and pall; a pestle and mortar from a neighbouring apothecary's, answered all the purposes of a bell; and our landlord's own family, wrapped in white sheets, served to fill up the procession. In short, there were but three figures among us that might be said to be dressed with any propriety; I mean the nurse, the starved apothecary, and myself. Our performance gave universal satisfaction; the whole audience were enchanted with our powers.

"There is one rule by which a strolling player may be ever secure of success: that is, in our theatrical way of expressing it, to make a great deal of the character. To speak and act as in common life, is not playing, nor is it what people come to see; natural speaking, like sweet wine, runs glibly over the palate, and scarcely leaves any taste behind it; but being high in a part, resembles vinegar, which grates upon the taste, and one feels it while he is drinking. To please in town or country, the way is to cry, wring, cringe into attitudes, mark the emphasis, slap the pockets, and labour like one in the falling sick-

ness: that is the way to work for applause; that is the way to gain it.

"As we received much reputation for our skill on this first exhibition, it was but natural for me to ascribe part of the success to myself; I snuffed the candles, and let me tell you, that without a candle-snuffer, the piece would lose half its embellishments. In this manner we continued a fortnight, and drew tolerable houses; but the evening before our intended departure, we gave out our very best piece, in which all our strength was to be exerted. We had great expectations from this, and even doubled our prices; when, behold! one of the principal actors fell ill of a violent fever. This was a stroke like thunder to our little company; they were resolved to go in a body, to scold the man for falling sick at so inconvenient a time, and that too of a disorder that threatened to be expensive; I seized the moment, and offered to act the part myself in his stead. The case was desperate: they accepted my offer; and I accordingly sat down, with the part in my hand, and a tankard before me, (sir, your health) and studied the character, which was to be rehearsed the next day, and played soon after.

"I found my memory excessively helped by drinking: I learned my part with astonishing rapidity, and bid adieu to snuffing candles ever after. I found that nature had designed me for more noble employments, and I was resolved to take her when in the humour. We got together in order to rehearse; and I informed my companions, masters now no longer, of the surprising change I felt within me. Let the sick man, said I, be under no uneasiness to get well again; I'll fill his place to universal satisfaction; he may even die if he thinks proper; I'll

engage that he shall never be missed. I rehearsed before them, strutted, ranted, and received applause. They soon gave out, that a new actor of eminence was to appear, and immediately all the genteel places were bespoke. Before I ascended the stage, however, I concluded within myself, that, as I brought money to the house, I ought to have my share in the profits. Gentlemen, said I, addressing our company, I don't pretend to direct you; far be it from me to treat you with so much ingratitude; you have published my name in the bills with the utmost good-nature; and as affairs stand, cannot act without me: so, gentlemen, to show you my gratitude, I expect to be paid for my acting as much as any of you, otherwise I declare off. I'll brandish my snuffers, and clip candles as usual. This was a very disagreeable proposal, but they found that it was impossible to refuse it; it was irresistible, it was adamant: they consented, and I went on in King Bajazet; my frowning brows, bound with a stocking stuffed into a turban, while on my captive arms I brandished a jack-chain. Nature seemed to have fitted me for the part; I was tall, and had a loud voice; my very entrance excited universal applause; I looked round on the audience with a smile, and made a most low and graceful bow, for that is the rule among us. As it was a very passionate part, I invigorated my spirits with three full glasses (the tankard is almost out) of brandy. By Alla! it is almost inconceivable how I went through it; Tamerlane was but a fool to me; though he was sometimes loud enough too, yet I was still louder than he: but then, besides, I had attitudes in abundance: in general, I kept my arms folded up thus, upon the pit of my stomach; it is the way at Drury-lane, and has always a

fine effect. The tankard would sink to the bottom before I could get through the whole of my merits: in short, I came off like a prodigy; and such was my success, that I could ravish the laurels even from a sirloin of beef. The principal gentlemen and ladies of the town came to me, after the play was over, to compliment me upon my success; one praised my voice, another my person: 'Upon my word,' says the squire's lady, 'he will make one of the finest actors in Europe; I say it, and I think I am something of a judge.'——Praise in the beginning is agreeable enough, and we receive it as a favour; but when it comes in great quantities, we regard it only as a debt, which nothing but our merits could extort: instead of thanking them, I internally applauded myself. We were desired to give our piece a second time; we obeyed; and I was applauded even more than before.

"At last we left the town, in order to be at a horse-race at some distance from thence. I shall never think of Tenterden without tears of gratitude and respect. The ladies and gentlemen there, take my word for it, are very good judges of plays and actors. Come, let us drink their healths, if you please, sir. We quitted the town, I say; and there was a wide difference between my coming in and going out; I entered the town a candle-snuffer, and I quitted it a hero!——Such is the world; little to-day, and great to-morrow. I could say a great deal more upon that subject, something truly sublime, upon the ups and downs of fortune; but it would give us both the spleen, and so I shall pass it over.

"The races were ended before we arrived at the next town, which was no small disappointment to our company; however, we were resolved to take all we could get.

I played capital characters there too, and came off with my usual brilliancy. I sincerely believe I should have been the first actor of Europe, had my growing merit been properly cultivated; but there came an unkindly frost, which nipped me in the bud, and levelled me once more down to the common standard of humanity. I played Sir Harry Wildair; all the country ladies were charmed; if I but drew out my snuff-box, the whole house was in a roar of rapture; when I exercised my cudgel, I thought they would have fallen into convulsions.

"There was here a lady who had received an education of nine months in London; and this gave her pretensions to taste, which rendered her the indisputable mistress of the ceremonies wherever she came. She was informed of my merits; every body praised me; yet she refused at first going to see me perform; she could not conceive, she said, any thing but stuff from a stroller; talked something in praise of Garrick, and amazed the ladies with her skill in enunciations, tones, and cadences; she was at last, however, prevailed upon to go; and it was privately intimated to me, what a judge was to be present at my next exhibition: however, no way intimidated, I came on in Sir Harry, one hand stuck in my breeches, and the other in my bosom, as usual at Drury-lane; but instead of looking at me, I perceived the whole audience had their eyes turned upon the lady who had been nine months in London; from her they expected the decision which was to secure the general's truncheon in my hand, or sink me down into a theatrical letter-carrier. I opened my snuff-box, took snuff; the lady was solemn, and so were the rest; I broke my cudgel on Alderman Smug-

gler's back; still gloomy, melancholy all; the lady groaned and shrugged her shoulders; I attempted by laughing myself, to excite at least a smile, but the devil a cheek could I perceive wrinkled into sympathy. I found it would not do; all my good-humour now became forced; my laughter was converted into hysteric grinning; and while I pretended spirits, my eye showed the agony of my heart: in short, the lady came with an intention to be displeased, and displeased she was; my fame expired; I am here, and (the tankard is no more!)"

ESSAY VII.

RULES ENJOINED TO BE OBSERVED AT A RUSSIAN ASSEMBLY.

When Catharina Alexowna was made Empress of Russia, the women were in an actual state of bondage; but she undertook to introduce mixed assemblies, as in other parts of Europe: she altered the women's dress, by substituting the fashions of England; instead of furs, she brought in the use of taffety and damask; and cornets and commodes, instead of caps of sable. The women now found themselves no longer shut up in separate apartments, but saw company, visited each other, and were present at every entertainment.

But as the laws to this effect were directed to a savage people, it is amusing enough, the manner in which the ordinances ran. Assemblies were quite unknown among them; the Czarina was satisfied with introducing them, for she found it impossible to render them polite. An ordinance was therefore published according to their no-

tions of breeding, which, as it is a curiosity, and has never before been printed that we know of, we shall give our readers.

"I. The person at whose house the assembly is to be kept shall signify the same by hanging out a bill, or by giving some other public notice, by way of advertisement, to persons of both sexes.

"II. The assembly shall not be open sooner than four or five o'clock in the afternoon, nor continue longer than ten at night.

"III. The master of the house shall not be obliged to meet his guests, or conduct them out, or keep them company; but though he is exempt from all this, he is to find them chairs, candles, liquors, and all other necessaries that company may ask for; he is likewise to provide them with cards, dice, and every necessary for gaming.

"IV. There shall be no fixed hour for coming or going away; it is enough for a person to appear in the assembly.

"V. Every one shall be free to sit, walk, or game as he pleases; nor shall any one go about to hinder him, or take exceptions at what he does, upon pain of emptying the great eagle (a pint bowl full of brandy); it shall likewise be sufficient, at entering or retiring, to salute the company.

"VI. Persons of distinction, noblemen, superior officers, merchants, and tradesmen of note, head-workmen, especially carpenters, and persons employed in chancery, are to have liberty to enter the assemblies; as likewise their wives and children.

"VII. A particular place shall be assigned the footmen, except those of the house, that there may be room enough in the apartments designed for the assembly.

"VIII. No ladies are to get drunk upon any pretence whatsoever: nor shall gentlemen be drunk before nine.

"IX. Ladies who play at forfeitures, questions and commands, &c. shall not be riotous; no gentleman shall attempt to force a kiss, and no person shall offer to strike a woman in the assembly, under pain of future exclusion."

Such are the statutes upon this occasion, which, in their very appearance, carry an air of ridicule and satire. But politeness must enter every country by degrees; and these rules resemble the breeding of a clown; awkward, but sincere.

ESSAY VIII.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR,

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY THE ORDINARY OF NEWGATE.

MAN is a most frail being, incapable of directing his steps, unacquainted with what is to happen in this life; and perhaps no man is a more manifest instance of the truth of this maxim, than Mr. The. Cibber, just now gone out of the world. Such a variety of turns of fortune, yet such a persevering uniformity of conduct, appears in all that happened in his short span, that the whole may be looked upon as one regular confusion: every action of his life was matter of wonder and surprise, and his death was an astonishment.

This gentleman was born of creditable parents, who gave him a very good education, and a great deal of good learning, so that he could read and write before he was sixteen. However, he early discovered an inclination to follow lewd courses; he refused to take the advice of his

parents, and pursued the bent of his inclination: he played at cards on Sundays; called himself a gentleman; fell out with his mother and laundress; and even in these early days, his father was frequently heard to observe, that young The.—would be hanged.

As he advanced in years, he grew more fond of pleasure; would eat an ortolan for dinner, though he begged the guinea that bought it; and was once known to give three pounds for a plate of green peas, which he had collected over-night as charity for a friend in distress: he ran into debt with every body that would trust him, and none could build a sconce better than he: so that his creditors swore with one accord that The.—would be hanged.

But as getting into debt, by a man who had no visible means but impudence for subsistence, is a thing that every reader is not acquainted with, I must explain that point a little, and that to his satisfaction.

There are three ways of getting into debt; first, by pushing a face; as thus; "You, Mr. Lutestring, send me home six yards of that paduasoy, dam'me;—but, harkee, don't think I ever intend to pay you for it, dam'me." At this the mercer laughs heartily; cuts off the paduasoy, and sends it home; nor is he, till too late, surprised to find the gentleman had said nothing but truth, and kept his word.

The second method of running into debt is called fineering; which is getting goods made up in such a fashion, as to be unfit for every other purchaser; and if the tradesman refuses to give them credit, then threaten to leave them upon his hands.

But the third and best method is called, "Being the

good customer." The gentleman first buys some trifle, and pays for it in ready money; he comes a few days after with nothing about him but bank-bills, and buys, we will suppose, a sixpenny tweezer-case; the bills are too great to be changed, so he promises to return punctually the day after, and pay for what he has bought. In this promise he is punctual; and this is repeated for eight or ten times, till his face is well known, and he has got at last the character of a good customer. By this means, he gets credit for something considerable, and then never pays for it.

In all this, the young man who is the unhappy subject of our present reflections, was very expert; and could face, fineer, and bring custom to a shop with any man in England; none of his companions could exceed him in this; and his very companions at last said that The.—would be hanged.

As he grew old, he grew never the better; he loved ortolans and green peas as before; he drank gravy soup when he could get it, and always thought his oysters tasted best when he got them for nothing, or which was just the same, when he bought them upon tick: thus the old man kept up the vices of the youth, and what he wanted in power, he made up by inclination; so that all the world thought that old The.—would be hanged.

And now, reader, I have brought him to his last scene; a scene where perhaps my duty should have obliged me to assist. You expect, perhaps, his dying words, and the tender farewell he took of his children; you expect an account of his coffin and white gloves, his pious ejaculations, and the papers he left behind him. In this I cannot indulge your curiosity; for, oh! the mysteries of Fate, The.—was drowned!

"Reader," as Hervey saith, "pause and ponder, and ponder and pause; who knows what thy own end may be!"

ESSAY IX.

ON NATIONAL CONCORD.

I TAKE the liberty to communicate to the public a few loose thoughts upon a subject, which, though often handled, has not yet, in my opinion, been fully discussed; I mean national concord, or unanimity, which in this kingdom has been considered generally as a bare possibility, that existed no where but in speculation. Such an union is, perhaps, neither to be expected nor wished for in a country, whose liberty depends rather upon the genius of the people, than upon any precautions which they have taken in a constitutional way for the guard and preservation of this inestimable blessing.

There is a very honest gentleman, with whom I have been acquainted these thirty years, during which there has not been one speech uttered against the ministry in Parliament, nor struggle at an election for a burgess to serve in the House of Commons, nor a pamphlet published in opposition to any measure of the administration, nor even a private censure passed in his hearing upon the misconduct of any person concerned in public affairs, but he is immediately alarmed, and loudly exclaims against such factious doings, in order to set the people by the ears together, at such a delicate juncture. "At any other time," says he, "such opposition might not be improper, and I don't question the facts that are alleged; but at this crisis, sir, to inflame the nation! --the man de-

serves to be punished as a traitor to his country." In a word, according to this gentleman's opinion, the nation has been in a violent crisis at any time these thirty years; and were it possible for him to live another century, he would never find any period, at which a man might with safety impugn the infallibility of a minister.

The case is no more than this: my honest friend has invested his whole fortune in the stocks, on government security, and trembles at every whiff of popular discontent. Were every British subject of the same tame and timid disposition, Magna Charta (to use the coarse phrase of Oliver Cromwell,) would be no more regarded by an ambitious prince, than magna f—ta; and the liberties of England expire without a groan. Opposition, when restrained within due bounds, is the salubrious gale that ventilates the opinions of the people, which might otherwise stagnate into the most abject submission. It may be said to purify the atmosphere of politics; to dispel the gross vapours raised by the influence of ministerial artifice and corruption, until the constitution, like a mighty rock, stands full disclosed to the view of every individual who dwells within the shade of its protection. Even when this gale blows with augmented violence, it generally tends to the advantage of the commonwealth; it awakes the apprehension, and consequently arouses all the faculties of the pilot at the helm, who redoubles his vigilance and caution, exerts his utmost skill, and becoming acquainted with the nature of the navigation, in a little time learns to suit his canvass to the roughness of the sea, and the trim of the vessel. Without these intervening storms of opposition to exercise his faculties, he would become enervate, negligent, and presumptuous;

and in the wantonness of his power, trusting to some deceitful calm, perhaps hazard a step that would wreck the constitution. Yet there is a measure in all things. A moderate frost will fertilize the glebe with nitrous particles, and destroy the eggs of pernicious insects, that prey upon the fancy of the year: but if this frost increases in severity and duration, it will chill the seeds, and even freeze up the roots of vegetables; it will check the bloom, nip the buds, and blast all the promise of the spring. The vernal breeze that drives the fogs before it, that brushes the cobwebs from the boughs, that fans the air, and fosters vegetation, if augmented to a tempest, will strip the leaves, overthrow the tree, and desolate the garden. The auspicious gale, before which the trim vessel ploughs the bosom of the sea, while the mariners are kept alert in duty and in spirits, if converted to a hurricane, overwhelms the crew with terror and confusion. The sails are rent, the cordage cracked, the masts give way; the master eyes the havock with mute despair, and the vessel founders in the storm. Opposition, when confined within its proper channel, sweeps away those beds of soil, and banks of sand, which corruptive power had gathered; but when it overflows its banks, and deluges the plain, its course is marked by ruin and devastation.

The opposition necessary in a free state, like that of Great Britain, is not at all incompatible with that national concord, which ought to unite the people on all emergencies, in which the general safety is at stake. It is the jealousy of patriotism, not the rancour of party; the warmth of candour, not the virulence of hate; a transient dispute among friends, not an implacable feud that admits of no reconciliation. The history of all ages, teems

with the fatal effects of internal discord; and were history and tradition annihilated, common sense would plainly point out the mischiefs that must arise from want of harmony and national union. Every school-boy can have recourse to the fable of the rods, which, when united in a bundle, no strength could bend; but when separated into single twigs, a child could break with ease.

ESSAY X.

FEMALE WARRIORS.

I HAVE spent the greater part of my life in making observations on men and things, and in projecting schemes for the advantage of my country; and though my labours met with an ungrateful return, I will still persist in my endeavours for its service, like that venerable, unshaken, and neglected patriot, Mr. Jacob Henriquez, who, though of the Hebrew nation, hath exhibited a shining example of Christian fortitude and perseverance.[1] And here my conscience urges me to confess, that the hint upon which the following proposals are built, was taken from an advertisement of the said patriot Henriquez, in which he gave the public to understand, that Heaven had indulged him with "seven blessed daughters." Blessed they are, no doubt, on account of their own and their father's vir-

[1] A man well known at this period, (1762) as well as during many preceding years, for the numerous schemes he was daily offering to various ministers, for the purpose of raising money by loans, paying off the national incumbrances, &c. &c. none of which, however, were ever known to have received the smallest notice.

tues: but more blessed may they be, if the scheme I offer should be adopted by the legislature.

The proportion which the number of females born in these kingdoms bears to the male children, is, I think, supposed to be as thirteen to fourteen. but as women are not so subject as the other sex to accidents and intemperance, in numbering adults we shall find the balance on the female side. If, in calculating the numbers of the people, we take in the multitudes that emigrate to the plantations, whence they never return, those that die at sea, and make their exit at Tyburn, together with the consumption of the present war, by sea and land, in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, in the German and Indian oceans, in Old France, New France, North America, the Leeward Islands, Germany, Africa, and Asia, we may fairly state the loss of men during the war at one hundred thousand. If this be the case, there must be a superplus of the other sex, amounting to the same number, and this superplus will consist of women able to bear arms; as I take it for granted, that all those who are fit to bear children are likewise fit to bear arms. Now as we have seen the nation governed by old women, I hope to make it appear, that it may be defended by young women; and surely this scheme will not be rejected as unnecessary at such a juncture,[1] when our armies, in the four quarters of the globe, are in want of recruits; when we find ourselves entangled in a new war with Spain, on the eve of a rupture in Italy, and indeed in a fair way of being obliged to make head against all the great potentates of Europe.

But, before I unfold my design, it may be necessary to

[1] In the year 1762.

obviate, from experience as well as argument, the objections which may be made to the delicate frame and tender disposition of the female sex, rendering them incapable of the toils, and insuperably averse to the horrors of war. All the world has heard of the nation of Amazons, who inhabited the banks of the river Thermodoon in Cappadocia; who expelled their men by force of arms, defended themselves by their own prowess, managed the reins of government, prosecuted the operations in war, and held the other sex in the utmost contempt. We are informed by Homer, that Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, acted as auxiliary to Priam, and fell valiantly fighting in his cause, before the walls of Troy. Quintus Curtius tells us, that Thalestris brought one hundred armed Amazons in a present to Alexander the Great. Diodorus Siculus expressly says, there was a nation of female warriors in Africa, who fought against the Lybian Hercules. We read in the Voyages of Columbus, that one of the Carribbee islands was possessed by a tribe of female warriors, who kept all the neighbouring Indians in awe. But we need not go farther than our own age and country to prove, that the spirit and constitution of the fair sex, are equal to the dangers and fatigues of war. Every novice who has read the authentic and important History of the Pirates, is well acquainted with the exploits of two heroines, called Mary Read and Anne Bonny. I myself have had the honour to drink with Anne Cassier, alias Mother Wade, who had distinguished herself among the Bucaniers of America, and in her old age kept a punch-house in Port-Royal, of Jamaica. I have likewise conversed with Moll Davis, who had served as a dragoon in all Queen Anne's wars, and was admitted on the pension of

Chelsea. The late war with Spain, and even the present, hath produced instances of females enlisting both in the land and sea service, and behaving with remarkable bravery in the disguise of the other sex. And who has not heard of the celebrated Jenny Cameron, and some other enterprising ladies of North Britain, who attended a certain adventurer in all his expeditions, and headed their respective clans in a military character? That strength of body is often equal to the courage of mind implanted in the fair sex, will not be denied by those who have seen the water-women of Plymouth; the female drudges of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland; the fish-women of Billingsgate; the weeders, podders, and hoppers, who swarm in the fields; and the bunters who swagger in the streets of London; not to mention the indefatigable trulls who follow the camp, and keep up with the line of march, though loaded with bantlings and other baggage.

There is scarcely a street in this metropolis without one or more viragos, who discipline their husbands, and domineer over the whole neighbourhood. Many months are not elapsed since I was witness to a pitched battle between two athletic females, who fought with equal skill and fury, until one of them gave out, after having sustained seven falls on the hard stones. They were both stripped to the under-petticoat; their breasts were carefully swathed with handkerchiefs; and as no vestiges of features were to be seen in either when I came up, I imagined the combatants were of the other sex, until a bystander assured me of the contrary, giving me to understand, that the conqueror had lain in about five weeks of twin bastards, begot by her second, who was an Irish chairman. When I see the avenues of the Strand beset

every night with troops of fierce Amazons, who, with dreadful imprecations, stop, and beat, and plunder passengers, I cannot help wishing, that such martial talents were converted to the benefit of the public; and that those who are so loaded with temporal fire, and so little afraid of eternal fire, should, instead of ruining the souls and bodies of their fellow-citizens, be put in a way of turning their destructive qualities against the enemies of the nation.

Having thus demonstrated that the fair sex are not deficient in strength and resolution, I would humbly propose, that as there is an excess on their side, in quantity, to the amount of one hundred thousand, part of that number may be employed in recruiting the army, as well as in raising thirty new Amazonian regiments, to be commanded by females, and serve in regimentals adapted to their sex. The Amazons of old appeared with the left breast bare, an open jacket and trowsers, that descended no farther than the knee; the right breast was destroyed, that it might not impede them in bending the bow, or darting the javelin; but there is no occasion for this cruel excision in the present discipline, as we have seen instances of women who handle the musket, without finding any inconvenience from that protuberance.

As the sex love gaiety, they may be clothed in vests of pink satin, and open drawers of the same, with buskins on their feet and legs, their hair tied behind, and floating on their shoulders, and their hats adorned with white feathers: they may be armed with light carabines, and long bayonets, without the incumbrance of swords or shoulder-belts. I make no doubt but many young ladies of figure and fashion will undertake to raise companies

at their own expense, provided they like their colonels; but I must insist upon it, if this scheme should be embraced, that Mr. Henriquez's seven blessed daughters may be provided with commissions, as the project is in some measure owing to the hints of that venerable patriot. I moreover give it as my opinion, that Mrs. Kitty Fisher[1] shall have the command of a battalion, and the nomination of her own officers, provided she will warrant them all sound, and be content to wear proper badges of distinction.

A female brigade, properly disciplined and accoutred, would not, I am persuaded, be afraid to charge a numerous body of the enemy, over whom they would have a manifest advantage; for if the barbarous Scythians were ashamed to fight with the Amazons who invaded them, surely the French, who pique themselves on their sensibility and devotion to the fair sex, would not act upon the offensive against a band of female warriors, arrayed in all the charms of youth and beauty.

ESSAY XI.

ON NATIONAL PREJUDICE.

As I am one of that sauntering tribe of mortals who spend the greatest part of their time in taverns, coffee-houses, and other places of public resort, I have thereby an opportunity of observing an infinite variety of characters, which, to a person of a contemplative turn, is a much higher entertainment than a view of all the curio-

[1] A celebrated courtezan of that time.

sities of art or nature. In one of these my late rambles, I accidentally fell into the company of half-a-dozen gentlemen, who were engaged in a warm dispute about some political affair; the decision of which, as they were equally divided in their sentiments, they thought proper to refer to me, which naturally drew me in for a share of the conversation.

Amongst a multiplicity of other topics, we took occasion to talk of the different characters of the several nations of Europe; when one of the gentlemen, cocking his hat, and assuming such an air of importance as if he had possessed all the merit of the English nation in his own person, declared, that the Dutch were a parcel of avaricious wretches; the French a set of flattering sycophants; that the Germans were drunken sots, and beastly gluttons; and the Spaniards proud, haughty, and surly tyrants; but that in bravery, generosity, clemency, and in every other virtue, the English excelled all the rest of the world.

This very *learned* and *judicious remark* was received with a general smile of approbation by all the company —all, I mean, but your humble servant; who, endeavouring to keep my gravity as well as I could, and reclining my head upon my arm, continued for some time in a posture of affected thoughtfulness, as if I had been musing on something else, and did not seem to attend to the subject of conversation; hoping by these means to avoid the disagreeable necessity of explaining myself, and thereby depriving the gentleman of his imaginary happiness.

But my pseudo-patriot had no mind to let me escape so easily. Not satisfied that his opinion should pass without contradiction, he was determined to have it rati-

fied by the suffrage of every one in the company; for which purpose, addressing himself to me, with an air of inexpressible confidence, he asked me if I was not of the same way of thinking. As I am never forward in giving my opinion, especially when I have reason to believe that it will not be agreeable; so, when I am obliged to give it, I always hold it for a maxim to speak my real sentiments. I therefore told him, that for my own part, I should not have ventured to talk in such a peremptory strain, unless I had made the tour of Europe, and examined the manners of these several nations with great care and accuracy: that perhaps a more impartial judge would not scruple to affirm, that the Dutch were more frugal and industrious, the French more temperate and polite, the Germans more hardy, and patient of labour and fatigue, and the Spaniards more staid and sedate, than the English; who, though undoubtedly brave and generous, were at the same time rash, headstrong, and impetuous; too apt to be elated with prosperity, and to despond in adversity.

I could easily perceive, that all the company began to regard me with a jealous eye before I had finished my answer, which I had no sooner done, than the patriotic gentleman observed, with a contemptuous sneer, that he was greatly surprised how some people could have the conscience to live in a country which they did not love, and to enjoy the protection of a government, to which in their hearts they were inveterate enemies. Finding that by this modest declaration of my sentiments, I had forfeited the good opinions of my companions, and given them occasion to call my political principles in question, and well knowing that it was in vain to argue with men

who were so very full of themselves, I threw down my reckoning, and retired to my own lodgings, reflecting on the absurd and ridiculous nature of national prejudice and prepossession.

Among all the famous sayings of antiquity, there is none that does greater honour to the author, or affords greater pleasure to the reader (at least, if he be a person of a generous and benevolent heart) than that of the philosopher; who, being asked what countryman he was, replied, that he was "a citizen of the world." How few are there to be found in modern times who can say the same, or whose conduct is consistent with such a profession! We are now become so much Englishmen, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Spaniards, or Germans, that we are no longer citizens of the world; so much the natives of one particular spot, or members of one petty society, that we no longer consider ourselves as the general inhabitants of the globe, or members of that grand society which comprehends the whole human kind.

Did these prejudices prevail only among the meanest and lowest of the people, perhaps they might be excused, as they have few, if any, opportunities of correcting them by reading, travelling, or conversing with foreigners; but the misfortune is, that they infect the minds, and influence the conduct, even of our gentlemen; of those, I mean, who have every title to this appellation, but an exemption from prejudice, which, however, in my opinion, ought to be regarded as the characteristical mark of a gentleman; for, let a man's birth be ever so high, his station ever so exalted, or his fortune ever so large, yet if he is not free from national and other prejudices, I should make bold to tell him, that he had a low and vulgar mind, and had

no just claim to the character of a gentleman. And, in fact, you will always find, that those are most apt to boast of national merit, who have little or no merit of their own to depend on; than which, to be sure, nothing is more natural: the slender vine twists around the sturdy oak, for no other reason in the world, but because it has not strength sufficient to support itself.

Should it be alleged in defence of national prejudice, that it is the natural and necessary growth of love to our country, and that therefore the former cannot be destroyed without hurting the latter, I answer, that this is a gross fallacy and delusion. That it is the growth of love to our country, I will allow; but that it is the natural and necessary growth of it, I absolutely deny. Superstition and enthusiasm, too, are the growth of religion; but who ever took it in his head to affirm, that they are the necessary growth of this noble principle? They are, if you will, the bastard sprouts of this heavenly plant, but not its natural and genuine branches, and may safely enough be lopped off, without doing any harm to the parent stock; nay, perhaps, till once they are lopped off, this goodly tree can never flourish in perfect health and vigour.

Is it not very possible that I may love my own country, without hating the natives of other countries? that I may exert the most heroic bravery, the most undaunted resolution in defending its laws and liberty, without despising all the rest of the world as cowards and poltroons? Most certainly it is: and if it were not——but what need I suppose what is absolutely impossible?—But if it were not, I must own, I should prefer the title of the ancient philosopher, viz. a Citizen of the World, to that of an Englishmen, a Frenchman, an European, or to any other appellation whatever.

ESSAY XII.

ON TASTE.

Amidst the frivolous pursuits and pernicious dissipations of the present age, a respect for the qualities of the understanding still prevails to such a degree, that almost every individual pretends to have a taste for the belles lettres. The spruce prentice sets up for a critic, and the puny beau piques himself upon being a connoisseur. Without assigning causes for this universal presumption, we shall proceed to observe, that if it was attended with no other inconvenience than that of exposing the pretender to the ridicule of those few who can sift his pretensions, it might be unnecessary to undeceive the public, or to endeavour at the reformation of innocent folly, productive of no evil to the commonwealth. But in reality, this folly is productive of manifold evils to the community. If the reputation of taste can be acquired, without the least assistance of literature, by reading modern poems, and seeing modern plays, what person will deny himself the pleasure of such an easy qualification? Hence the youth of both sexes are debauched to diversion, and seduced from much more profitable occupations into idle endeavours after literary fame; and a superficial false taste, founded on ignorance and conceit, takes possession of the public. The acquisition of learning, the study of nature, is neglected as superfluous labour; and the best faculties of the mind remain unexercised, and indeed unopened by the power of thought and reflection. False taste will not only diffuse itself through all our amuse-

ments, but even influence our moral and political conduct; for what is false taste but want of perception to discern propriety, and distinguish beauty?

It has been often alleged, that taste is a natural talent, as independent of art as strong eyes, or a delicate sense of smelling; and without all doubt, the principal ingredient in the composition of taste, is a natural sensibility, without which it cannot exist; but it differs from the senses in this particular, that they are finished by nature; whereas taste cannot be brought to perfection without proper cultivation: for taste pretends to judge not only of nature, but also of art; and that judgment is founded upon observation and comparison.

What Horace has said of genius is still more applicable to taste:

Naturâ fieret laudabile carmen, an arte,
Quæsitum est. Ego nec studium sine divite venâ,
Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium: alterius sic
Altera poscit opem res, & conjurat amicè.

HOR. ART. POET.

'Tis long disputed, whether poets claim,
From *art* or *nature* their best right to fame;
But *art*, if not enriched by nature's vein,
And a rude *genius* of uncultured strain,
Are useless both; but when in friendship joined,
A mutual succour in each other find.

FRANCIS.

We have seen *genius* shine without the help of *art;* but *taste* must be cultivated by art, before it will produce agreeable fruit. This, however, we must still inculcate with Quintilian, that study, precept, and observation will nought avail, without the assistance of nature.

Illud tamen inprimis testandum est, nihil præcepta atque artes valere, nisi adjuvante naturâ.

Yet, even though Nature has done her part, by implanting the seeds of taste, great pains must be taken, and great skill exerted, in raising them to a proper pitch of vegetation. The judicious tutor must gradually and tenderly unfold the mental faculties of the youth committed to his charge. He must cherish his delicate perception; store his mind with proper ideas; point out the different channels of observation; teach him to compare objects; to establish the limits of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood; to distinguish beauty from tinsel, and grace from affectation; in a word, to strengthen and improve by culture, experience, and instruction, those natural powers of feeling and sagacity, which constitute the faculty called taste, and enable the professor to enjoy the delights of the belles lettres.

We cannot agree in opinion with those, who imagine that Nature has been equally favourable to all men, in conferring upon them a fundamental capacity, which may be improved to all the refinement of taste and criticism. Every day's experience convinces us of the contrary. Of two youths educated under the same preceptor, instructed with the same care, and cultivated with the same assiduity, one shall not only comprehend, but even anticipate the lessons of his master, by dint of natural discernment; while the other toils in vain to imbibe the least tincture of instruction. Such indeed is the distinction between genius and stupidity, which every man has an opportunity of seeing among his friends and acquaintance. Not that we ought too hastily to decide upon the

natural capacities of children, before we have maturely considered the peculiarity of disposition, and the bias by which genius may be strangely warped from the common path of education. A youth, incapable of retaining one rule of grammar, or of acquiring the least knowledge of the classics, may nevertheless make great progress in mathematics; nay, he may have a strong genius for the mathematics, without being able to comprehend a demonstration of Euclid; because his mind conceives in a peculiar manner, and is so intent upon contemplating the object in one particular point of view, that it cannot perceive it in any other. We have known an instance of a boy, who, while his master complained that he had not capacity to comprehend the properties of a right-angled triangle, had actually, in private, by the power of his genius, formed a mathematical system of his own, discovered a series of curious theorems, and even applied his deductions to practical machines of surprising construction. Besides, in the education of youth, we ought to remember, that some capacities are like the *pyra præconia*; they soon blow, and soon attain to all that degree of maturity which they are capable of acquiring; while, on the other hand, there are geniuses of slow growth, that are late in bursting the bud, and long in ripening. Yet the first shall yield a faint blossom, and insipid fruit; whereas the produce of the other shall be distinguished and admired for its well-concocted juice and exquisite flavour. We have known a boy of five years of age surprise every body by playing on the violin, in such a manner as seemed to promise a prodigy in music. He had all the assistance that art could afford; by the age of ten his genius was at the ακμη; yet, after that period, notwith-

standing the most intense application, he never gave the least signs of improvement. At six, he was admired as a miracle of music; at six-and-twenty, he was neglected as an ordinary fiddler. The celebrated Dean Swift was a remarkable instance in the other extreme. He was long considered as an incorrigible dunce, and did not obtain his degree at the university, but *ex speciali gratia:* yet, when his powers began to unfold, he signalized himself by a very remarkable superiority of genius. When a youth, therefore, appears dull of apprehension, and seems to derive no advantage from study and instruction, the tutor must exercise his sagacity in discovering whether the soil be absolutely barren, or sown with seed repugnant to its nature, or of such a quality as requires repeated culture, and length of time, to set its juices in fermentation. These observations, however, relate to capacity in general, which we ought carefully to distinguish from taste. Capacity implies the power of retaining what is received; taste is the power of relishing or rejecting whatever is offered for the entertainment of the imagination. A man may have capacity to acquire what is called learning and philosophy; but he must have also sensibility, before he feels those emotions with which taste receives the impressions of beauty.

Natural taste is apt to be seduced and debauched by vicious taste and bad example. There is a dangerous tinsel in false taste, by which the unwary mind and young imagination are often fascinated. Nothing has been so often explained, and yet so little understood, as simplicity in writing. Simplicity, in this acceptation, has a larger signification than either the ἁπλοον of the Greeks, or the *simplex* of the Latins; for it implies beauty. It

is the ἁπλοον και ἡδυ of Demetrius Phalerus, the *simplex munditiis* of Horace, and expressed by one word, *nâiveté*, in the French language. It is in fact no other than beautiful nature, without affectation or extraneous ornament. In statuary, it is the Venus of Medicis; in architecture, the Pantheon. It would be an endless task to enumerate all the instances of this natural simplicity, that occur in poetry and painting among the ancients and moderns. We shall only mention two examples of it, the beauty of which consists in the pathetic.

Anaxagoras, the philosopher and preceptor of Pericles, being told that both his sons were dead, laid his hand upon his heart, and, after a short pause, consoled himself with a reflection couched in three words: ηδειν θνητους γεγεννηκος, "I knew they were mortal." The other instance we select from the tragedy of Macbeth. The gallant Macduff being informed that his wife and children were murdered by order of the tyrant, pulls his hat over his eyes, and his internal agony bursts out into an exclamation of four words, the most expressive perhaps that ever were uttered; "He has no children." This is the energetic language of simple nature, which is now grown into disrepute. By the present mode of education, we are forcibly warped from the bias of nature, and all simplicity in manners is rejected. We are taught to disguise and distort our sentiments, until the faculty of thinking is diverted into an unnatural channel; and we not only relinquish and forget, but also become incapable of our original dispositions. We are totally changed into creatures of art and affectation. Our perception is abused, and even our senses are perverted. Our minds lose their native force and flavour. The imagination, sweated by

artificial fire, produces nought but vapid bloom. The genius, instead of growing like a vigorous tree, extending its branches on every side, and bearing delicious fruit, resembles a stunted ewe, tortured into some wretched form, projecting no shade, displaying no flower, diffusing no fragrance, yielding no fruit, and affording nothing but a barren conceit, for the amusement of the idle spectator.

Thus debauched from Nature, how can we relish her genuine productions? As well might a man distinguish objects through a prism, that presents nothing but a variety of colours to the eye; or a maid pining in the green sickness prefer a biscuit to a cinder. It has been often alleged that the passions can never be wholly deposited; and that by appealing to these, a good writer will always be able to force himself into the hearts of his readers; but even the strongest passions are weakened, nay sometimes totally extinguished, by mutual opposition, dissipation, and acquired insensibility. How often at the theatre is the tear of sympathy, and the burst of laughter, repressed by a ridiculous species of pride, refusing approbation to the author and actor, and renouncing society with the audience! This seeming insensibility is not owing to any original defect. Nature has stretched the string, though it has long ceased to vibrate. It may have been displaced and distracted by the violence of pride; it may have lost its tone through long disuse; or be so twisted or overstrained, as to produce the most jarring discords.

If so little regard is paid to Nature, when she knocks so powerfully at the breast, she must be altogether neglected and despised in her calmer mood of serene tranquillity, when nothing appears to recommend her but

simplicity, propriety, and innocence. A person must have delicate feelings that can taste the celebrated repartee in Terence: *Homo sum; nihil humani á me alienum puto:* "I am a man; therefore think I have an interest in every thing that concerns humanity." A clear blue sky, spangled with stars, will prove an insipid object to eyes accustomed to the glare of torches and tapers, gilding and glitter; eyes that will turn with disgust from the green mantle of the spring, so gorgeously adorned with buds and foliage, flowers and blossoms, to contemplate a gaudy silken robe, striped and intersected with unfriendly tints, that fritter the masses of light and distract the vision, pinked into the most fantastic forms, flounced and furbelowed, and fringed with all the littleness of art unknown to elegance.

Those ears that are offended by the notes of the thrush, the blackbird, and the nightingale, will be regaled and ravished by the squeaking fiddle, touched by a musician who has no other genius than that which lies in his fingers; they will even be entertained with the rattling of coaches, and the alarming knock, by which the doors of fashionable people are so loudly distinguished. The sense of smelling, that delights in the scent of excrementitious animal juices, such as musk, civet, and urinous salts, will loathe the fragrance of new-mown hay, the sweetbriar, the honeysuckle, and the rose. The organs that are gratified with the taste of sickly veal, bled into a palsy, crammed fowls, and dropsical brawn, pease without substance, peaches without taste, and pine-apples without flavour, will certainly nauseate the native, genuine, and salutary taste of Welch beef, Banstead mutton, and barn-door fowls, whose juices are concocted by a natural di-

gestion, and whose flesh is consolidated by free air and exercise. In such a total perversion of the senses, the ideas must be misrepresented; the powers of the imagination disordered, and the judgment of consequence unsound. The disease is attended with a false appetite, which the natural food of the mind will not satisfy. It will prefer Ovid to Tibullus, and the rant of Lee to the tenderness of Otway. The soul sinks into a kind of sleepy idiotism; and is diverted by toys and baubles, which can only be pleasing to the most superficial curiosity. It is enlivened by a quick succession of trivial objects, that glisten and dance before the eye; and, like an infant, is kept awake and inspirited by the sound of a rattle. It must not only be dazzled and aroused, but also cheated, hurried and perplexed by the artifice of deception, business, intricacy, and intrigue; a kind of low juggle, which may be termed the legerdemain of genius.

In this state of depravity, the mind cannot enjoy, nor indeed distinguish, the charms of natural and moral beauty and decorum. The ingenuous blush of native innocence, the plain language of ancient faith and sincerity, the cheerful resignation to the will of Heaven, the mutual affection of the charities, the voluntary respect paid to superior dignity or station, the virtue of beneficence, extended even to the brute creation; nay, the very crimson glow of health, and swelling lines of beauty, are despised, detested, scorned, and ridiculed, as ignorance, rudeness, rusticity, and superstition. Thus we see how moral and natural beauty are connected; and of what importance it is, even to the formation of taste, that the manners should be severely superintended. This is a task which ought to take the lead of science; for we

will venture to say, that virtue is the foundation of taste; or rather, that virtue and taste are built upon the same foundation of sensibility, and cannot be disjoined without offering violence to both. But virtue must be informed, and taste instructed, otherwise they will both remain imperfect and ineffectual.

Qui didicit patriæ quid debeat, et quid amicis,
Quo sit amore parens, quo frater amandus, et hospes,
Quod sit Conscripti, quod judicis officium, quæ
Partes in bellum missi ducis; ille profecto
Reddere personæ scit convenientia cuique.

HOR.

The critic, who with nice discernment knows
What to his country and his friends he owes;
How various nature warms the human breast,
To love the parent, brother, friend, or guest;
What the great functions of our judges are,
Of senators, and generals sent to war;
He can distinguish, with unerring art,
The strokes peculiar to each different part.

Thus we see taste is composed of nature, improved by art; of feeling tutored by instruction.

ESSAY XIII.

CULTIVATION OF TASTE.

HAVING explained what we conceive to be true taste, and in some measure accounted for the prevalence of vitiated taste, we should proceed to point out the most effectual manner in which a natural capacity may be improved into a delicacy of judgment, and an intimate acquaintance with the belles lettres. We shall take it for granted,

that proper means have been used to form the manners, and attach the mind to virtue. The heart cultivated by precept, and warmed by example, improves in sensibility, which is the foundation of taste. By distinguishing the influence and scope of morality, and cherishing the ideas of benevolence, it acquires a habit of sympathy, which tenderly feels responsive, like the vibration of unisons, every touch of moral beauty. Hence it is that a man of a social heart, entendered by the practice of virtue, is awakened to the most pathetic emotions by every uncommon instance of generosity, compassion, and greatness of soul. Is there any man so dead to sentiment, so lost to humanity, as to read unmoved the generous behaviour of the Romans to the States of Greece, as it is recounted by Livy, or embellished by Thomson, in his poem of Liberty? Speaking of Greece, in the decline of her power, when her freedom no longer existed, he says;

> As at her Isthmian games, a fading pomp,
> Her full assembled youths innumerous swarmed,
> On a tribunal raised Flaminius[1] sat:
> A victor he from the deep phalanx pierced
> Of iron-coated Macedon, and back
> The Grecian tyrant to his bounds repelled.
> In the high thoughtless gaiety of game,
> While sport alone their unambitious hearts
> Possessed, the sudden trumpet, sounding hoarse,
> Bade silence o'er the bright assembly reign.
> Then thus a herald—"To the States of Greece,
> The Roman people, unconfined, restore
> Their countries, cities, liberties, and laws;
> Taxes remit, and garrisons withdraw."
> The crowd, astonished half, and half informed,

[1] His real name was Quintus Flaminius.

Stared dubious round; some questioned, some exclaimed,
(Like one who dreaming, between hope and fear,
Is lost in anxious joy) "Be that again—
Be that again proclaimed distinct and loud!"
Loud and distinct it was again proclaimed;
And still as midnight in the rural shade,
When the gale slumbers, they the words devoured.
Awhile severe amazement held them mute,
Then bursting broad, the boundless shout to heaven
From many a thousand hearts extatic sprung!
On every hand rebellowed to them joy;
The swelling sea, the rocks, and vocal hills—
Like bacchanals they flew,
Each other straining in a strict embrace,
Nor strained a slave; and loud acclaims, till night,
Round the proconsul's tent repeated rung.

To one acquainted with the genius of Greece, the character and disposition of that polished people, admired for science, renowned for an unextinguishable love of freedom; nothing can be more affecting than this instance of generous magnanimity of the Roman people, in restoring them, unasked, to the full fruition of those liberties which they had so unfortunately lost.

The mind of sensibility is equally struck by the generous confidence of Alexander, who drinks without hesitation the potion presented by his physician, Philip, even after he had received intimation that poison was contained in the cup; a noble and pathetic scene, which hath acquired new dignity and expression under the inimitable pencil of La Sueur. Humanity is melted into tears of tender admiration, by the deportment of Henry IV. of France, while his rebellious subjects compelled him to form the blockade of his capital. In chastising his enemies, he could not but remember they were his people; and knowing they were reduced to the extremity of fa-

mine, he generously connived at the methods practised to supply them with provision. Chancing one day to meet two peasants, who had been detected in these practices, as they were led to execution they implored his clemency, declaring, in the sight of Heaven, they had no other way to procure subsistence for their wives and children. He pardoned them on the spot, and giving them all the money that was in his purse, "Henry of Bearne is poor," said he: "had he more money to afford, you should have it—go home to your families in peace; and remember your duty to God, and your allegiance to your sovereign." Innumerable examples of the same kind may be selected from history, both ancient and modern, the study of which we would therefore strenuously recommend.

Historical knowledge indeed becomes necessary on many other accounts, which in its place we will explain: but as the formation of the heart is of the first consequence, and should precede the cultivation of the understanding, such striking instances of superior virtue ought to be culled for the perusal of the young pupil, who will read them with eagerness, and revolve them with pleasure. Thus the young mind becomes enamoured of moral beauty, and the passions are listed on the side of humanity. Meanwhile, knowledge of a different species will go hand in hand with the advances of morality, and the understanding be gradually extended. Virtue and sentiment reciprocally assist each other; and both conduce to the improvement of perception. While the scholar's chief attention is employed in learning the Latin and Greek languages, and this is generally the task of childhood and early youth, it is even then the business of the preceptor to give his mind a turn for observation, to

direct his powers of discernment, to point out the distinguishing marks of character, and dwell upon the charms of moral and intellectual beauty, as they may chance to occur in the classics that are used for his instruction. In reading Cornelius Nepos, and Plutarch's Lives, even with a view to grammatical improvement only, he will insensibly imbibe and learn to compare ideas of greater importance. He will become enamoured of virtue and patriotism, and acquire a detestation for vice, cruelty, and corruption. The perusal of the Roman story in the works of Florus, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus, will irresistibly engage his attention, expand his conception, cherish his memory, exercise his judgment, and warm him with a noble spirit of emulation. He will contemplate with love and admiration the disinterested candour of Aristides, surnamed the Just, whom the guilty cabals of his rival, Themistocles, exiled from his ungrateful country, by a sentence of ostracism. He will be surprised to learn, that one of his fellow-citizens, an illiterate artisan, bribed by his enemies, chancing to meet him in the street, without knowing his person, desired he would write Aristides on his shell (which was the method those plebeians used to vote against delinquents,) when the innocent patriot wrote his own name without complaint or expostulation. He will, with equal astonishment, applaud the inflexible integrity of Fabricius, who preferred the poverty of innocence to all the pomp of affluence, with which Pyrrhus endeavoured to seduce him from the arms of his country. He will approve with transport the noble generosity of his soul in rejecting the proposal of that prince's physician, who offered to take him off by poison; and in send-

ing the caitiff bound to his sovereign, whom he would have so basely and cruelly betrayed.

In reading the ancient authors, even for the purposes of school education, the unformed taste will begin to relish the irresistible energy, greatness, and sublimity of Homer; the serene majesty, the melody, and pathos of Virgil; the tenderness of Sappho and Tibullus; the elegance and propriety of Terence; the grace, vivacity, satire, and sentiment of Horace.

Nothing will more conduce to the improvement of the scholar in his knowledge of the languages, as well as in taste and morality, than his being obliged to translate choice parts and passages of the most approved classics, both poetry and prose, especially the latter; such as the orations of Demosthenes and Isocrates, the Treatise of Longinus on the Sublime, the Commentaries of Cæsar, the Epistles of Cicero, and the Younger Pliny, and the two celebrated Speeches in the Catilinarian Conspiracy, by Sallust. By this practice, he will become more intimate with the beauties of the writing and the idioms of the language from which he translates; at the same time, it will form his style, and by exercising his talent of expression, make him a more perfect master of his mother tongue. Cicero tells us, that in translating two orations, which the most celebrated orators of Greece pronounced against each other, he performed this task, not as a servile interpreter, but as an orator, preserving the sentiments, forms, and figures of the original, but adapting the expression to the taste and manners of the Romans. "*In quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omnium verborum vimque servavi;*" "In which I did not think it was necessary to translate literally word

for word, but I preserved the natural and full scope of the whole." Of the same opinion was Horace, who says, in his Art of Poetry,

Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus
Interpres:—

Nor word for word translate with painful care.

Nevertheless, in taking the liberty here granted, we are apt to run into the other extreme, and substitute equivalent thoughts and phrases, till hardly any features of the original remain. The metaphors of figures, especially in poetry, ought to be as religiously preserved as the images of painting, which we cannot alter or exchange without destroying, or injuring, at least, the character and style of the original.

In this manner, the preceptor will sow the seeds of that taste, which will soon germinate, rise, blossom, and produce perfect fruit, by dint of future care and cultivation. In order to restrain the luxuriancy of the young imagination, which is apt to run riot, to enlarge the stock of ideas, exercise the reason, and ripen the judgment, the pupil must be engaged in the severer study of science. He must learn geometry, which Plato recommends for strengthening the mind, and enabling it to think with precision. He must be made acquainted with geography and chronology, and trace philosophy through all her branches. Without geography and chronology he will not be able to acquire a distinct idea of history; nor judge of the propriety of many interesting scenes, and a thousand allusions, that present themselves in the works of genius. Nothing opens the mind so much as the researches of philosophy; they inspire us with sublime con-

ceptions of the Creator, and subject, as it were, all nature to our command. These bestow that liberal turn of thinking, and, in a great measure, contribute to that universality in learning, by which a man of taste ought to be eminently distinguished. But history is the inexhaustible source from which he will derive his most useful knowledge respecting the progress of the human mind, the constitution of government, the rise and decline of empires, the revolution of arts, the variety of character, and the vicissitudes of fortune.

The knowledge of history enables the poet not only to paint characters, but also to describe magnificent and interesting scenes of battle and adventure. Not that the poet or painter ought to be restrained to the letter of historical truth. History represents what has really happened in nature; the other arts exhibit what might have happened, with such exaggeration of circumstance and feature as may be deemed an improvement on nature. but this exaggeration must not be carried beyond the bounds of probability: and these, generally speaking, the knowledge of history will ascertain. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find a man actually existing, whose proportions should answer to those of the Greek statue, distinguished by the name of the Apollo of Belvidere; or to produce a woman similar in proportion of parts to the other celebrated piece, called the Venus de Medicis; therefore it may be truly affirmed, that they are not conformable to the real standard of nature: nevertheless, every artist will own that they are the very archetypes of grace, elegance, and symmetry; and every judging eye must behold them with admiration, as improvements on the lines and lineaments of nature. The

truth is, the sculptor or statuary composed the various proportions in nature from a great number of different subjects, every individual of which he found imperfect or defective in some one particular, though beautiful in all the rest; and from these observations, corroborated by taste and judgment, he formed an ideal pattern, according to which his idea was modelled, and produced in execution.

Every body knows the story of Zeuxis, the famous painter of Heraclea, who, according to Pliny, invented the *chiaro oscuro*, or disposition of light and shade, among the ancients, and excelled all his contemporaries in the chromatique, or art of colouring. This great artist being employed to draw a perfect beauty, in the character of Helen, to be placed in the Temple of Juno, culled out five of the most beautiful damsels the city could produce. and selecting what was excellent in each, combined them in one picture, according to the predisposition of his fancy, so that it shone forth an amazing model of perfection.[1] In like manner, every man of genius, regulated by true taste, entertains in his imagination an ideal beauty, conceived and cultivated as an improvement upon nature: and this we refer to the article of invention.

It is the business of art to imitate nature, but not with

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[1] Præbet igitur mihi quæso, inquit, ex istis virginibus formosissimas, dum pingo id, quod pollicitus sum vobis, ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo veritas transferatur.—Ille autem quinque delegit.—Neque enim putavit omnia, quæ quæreret ad venustatem, uno in corpore se reperire posse; ideo quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura expolivit.—*Cic. Lib. 2. de Inv. cap. 1.*

a servile pencil; and to choose those attitudes and dispositions only, which are beautiful and engaging. With this view, we must avoid all disagreeable prospects of nature, which excite the ideas of abhorrence and disgust. For example, a painter would not find his account in exhibiting the resemblance of a dead carcase, half consumed by vermin, or of swine wallowing in ordure, or of a beggar lousing himself on a dunghill, though these scenes should be painted never so naturally, and all the world must allow that the scenes were taken from nature; because the merit of the imitation would be greatly over-balanced by the vile choice of the artist. There are, nevertheless, many scenes of horror, which please in the representation, from a certain interesting greatness, which we shall endeavour to explain, when we come to consider the sublime.

Were we to judge every production by the rigorous rules of nature, we should reject the Iliad of Homer, the Æneid of Virgil, and every celebrated tragedy of antiquity, and the present times, because there is no such thing in nature as a Hector or Turnus talking in hexameter, or an Othello in blank verse: we should condemn the Hercules of Sophocles, and the Miser of Moliere, because we never knew a hero so strong as the one, or a wretch so sordid as the other. But if we consider poetry as an elevation of natural dialogue, as a delightful vehicle for conveying the noblest sentiments of heroism and patriot virtue, to regale the sense with the sounds of musical expression, while the fancy is ravished with enchanting images, and the heart warmed to rapture and ecstasy, we must allow that poetry is a perfection to which nature would gladly aspire; and that though it surpasses, it does not

deviate from her, provided the characters are marked with propriety, and sustained with genius. Characters, therefore, both in poetry and painting, may be a little overcharged or exaggerated, without offering violence to nature; nay, they must be exaggerated, in order to be striking, and to preserve the idea of imitation, whence the reader and spectator derive, in many instances, their chief delight. If we meet a common acquaintance in the street, we see him without emotion; but should we chance to spy his portrait well executed, we are struck with pleasing admiration. In this case, the pleasure arises entirely from the imitation. We every day hear unmoved the natives of Ireland and Scotland speaking their own dialects; but should an Englishman mimic either, we are apt to burst out into a loud laugh of applause, being surprised and tickled by the imitation alone, though at the same time, we cannot but allow that the imitation is imperfect. We are more affected by reading Shakespeare's description of Dover Cliff, and Otway's picture of the Old Hag, than we should be, were we actually placed on the summit of the one, or met in reality with such a beldame as the other; because in reading these descriptions, we refer to our own experience, and perceive with surprise the justness of the imitations. But if it is so close as to be mistaken for nature, the pleasure then will cease, because the μιμησις, or imitation, no longer appears.

Aristotle says, that all poetry and music is imitation,[1] whether epic, tragic, or comic—whether vocal or instru-

[1] Ἐποποιϊα δη και ἡ της τραγῳδιας ποιησις, ετι δε κωμῳδια και ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικη, και της αὐλητικης ἡ πλειστη και κιθαριστικης, πασαι τυγχανουσιν ουσαι μιμησεις το συνολον.

mental, from the pipe or the lyre. He observes, that in man there is a propensity to imitate, even from his infancy; that the first perceptions of the mind are acquired by imitation; and seems to think, that the pleasure derived from imitation is the gratification of an appetite implanted by nature. We should rather think the pleasure it gives arises from the mind's contemplating that excellency of art, which thus rivals nature, and seems to vie with her in creating such a striking resemblance of her works. Thus the arts may be justly termed imitative, even in the article of invention: for in forming a character, contriving an incident, and describing a scene, he must still keep nature in view, and refer every particular of his invention to her standard; otherwise his production will be destitute of truth and probability, without which the beauties of imitation cannot subsist. It will be a monster of incongruity, such as Horace alludes to, in the beginning of his Epistle to the Pisos:

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem, mulier formosa superne:
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

Suppose a painter to a human head
Should join a horse's neck, and wildly spread
The various plumage of the feathered kind
O'er limbs of different beasts absurdly joined;
Or if he gave to view a beauteous maid,
Above the waist with every charm arrayed;
Should a foul fish her lower parts unfold,
Would you not laugh such pictures to behold?

The magazine of nature supplies all those images which mpose the most beautiful imitations. This the artist

examines occasionally, as he would consult a collection of masterly sketches; and selecting particulars for his purpose, mingles the ideas with a kind of enthusiasm, or το θειον, which is that gift of Heaven we call genius, and finally produces such a whole as commands admiration and applause.

ESSAY XIV.

ORIGIN OF POETRY.

The study of polite literature is generally supposed to include all the liberal arts of poetry, painting, sculpture, music, eloquence, and architecture. All these are founded on imitation; and all of them mutually assist and illustrate each other. But as painting, sculpture, music, and architecture, cannot be perfectly attained without long practice of manual operation, we shall distinguish them from poetry and eloquence, which depend entirely on the faculties of the mind; and on these last, as on the arts which immediately constitute the belles lettres, employ our attention in the present inquiry; or, if it should run to a greater length than we propose, it shall be confined to poetry alone; a subject that comprehends, in its full extent, the province of taste, or what is called polite literature; and differs essentially from eloquence, both in its end and origin.

Poetry sprang from ease, and was consecrated to pleasure; whereas eloquence arose from necessity, and aims at conviction. When we say poetry sprang from ease, perhaps we ought to except that species of it which owed its rise to inspiration and enthusiasm, and properly be-

longed to the culture of religion. In the first ages of mankind, and even in the original state of nature, the unlettered mind must have been struck with sublime conceptions, with admiration and awe, by those great phenomena, which, though every day repeated, can never be viewed without internal emotion. Those would break forth in exclamations expressive of the passion produced, whether surprise or gratitude, terror or exultation. The rising, the apparent course, the setting, and seeming renovation of the sun; the revolution of light and darkness; the splendour, change, and circuit of the moon; and the canopy of heaven, bespangled with stars, must have produced expressions of wonder and adoration. "O! glorious luminary! great eye of the world! source of that light which guides my steps! of that heat which warms me when chilled with cold! of that influence which cheers the face of nature! whither dost thou retire every evening with the shades? Whence dost thou spring every morning with renovated lustre, and never-fading glory? Art not thou the Ruler, the Creator, the God, of all that I behold? I adore thee as thy child, thy slave, thy suppliant! I crave thy protection, and the continuance of thy goodness! Leave me not to perish with cold, nor to wander solitary in utter darkness! Return, return, after thy wonted absence: drive before thee the gloomy clouds that would obscure the face of nature. The birds begin to warble, and every animal is filled with gladness at thy approach: even the trees, the herbs, and the flowers, seem to rejoice with fresher beauties, and send forth a grateful incense to thy power, whence their origin is derived!" A number of individuals, inspired with the same ideas, would join in these

orisons, which would be accompanied with corresponding gesticulations of the body. They would be improved by practice, and grow regular from repetition. The sounds and gestures would naturally fall into measured cadence. Thus the song and dance will be produced and a system of worship being formed, the muse would be consecrated to the purposes of religion.

Hence those forms of thanksgivings and litanies of supplication with which the religious rites of all nations, even the most barbarous, are at this day celebrated, in every quarter of the known world. Indeed, this is a circumstance in which all nations surprisingly agree, how much soever they may differ in every other article of laws, customs, manners, and religion. The ancient Egyptians celebrated the festivals of their god Apis with hymns and dances. The superstition of the Greeks, partly derived from the Egyptians, abounded with poetical ceremonies, such as choruses and hymns, sung and danced at their apotheoses, sacrifices, games, and divinations. The Romans had their *carmen seculare*, and Salian priests, who on certain festivals sung and danced through the streets of Rome. The Israelites were famous for this kind of exultation: "And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances, and Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord," &c. "And David danced before the Lord with all his might." The psalms composed by this monarch, the songs of Deborah and Isaiah, are further confirmations of what we have advanced.

From the Phœnicians the Greeks borrowed the cursed Orthyan song, when they sacrificed their children to Di-

ana. The poetry of the bards constituted great part of the religious ceremonies among the Gauls and Britons; and the carousals of the Goths were religious institutions, celebrated with songs of triumph. The Mahometan dervise dances to the sound of the flute, and whirls himself round until he grows giddy, and falls into a trance. The Marabous compose hymns in praise of Allah. The Chinese celebrate their grand festivals with processions of idols, songs, and instrumental music. The Tartars, Samoiedes, Laplanders, Negroes, even the Caffres, called Hottentots, solemnize their worship (such as it is) with songs and dancing; so that we may venture to say, poetry is the universal vehicle in which all nations have expressed their most sublime conceptions.

Poetry was, in all appearance, previous to any concerted plan of worship, and to every established system of legislation. When certain individuals, by dint of superior prowess or understanding, had acquired the veneration of their fellow-savages, and erected themselves into divinities on the ignorance and superstition of mankind; then mythology took place, and such a swarm of deities arose, as produced a religion replete with the most shocking absurdities. Those, whom their superior talents had deified, were found to be still actuated by the most brutal passions of human nature; and, in all probability, their votaries were glad to find such examples to countenance their own vicious inclinations. Thus fornication, incest, rape, and even bestiality, were sanctified by the amours of Jupiter, Pan, Mars, Venus, and Apollo. Theft was patronized by Mercury; drunkenness by Bacchus; and cruelty by Diana. The same heroes and legislators, those who delivered their country, founded cities, established

societies, invented useful arts, or contributed in any eminent degree to the security and happiness of their fellow-creatures, were inspired by the same lusts and appetites, which domineered among the inferior classes of mankind; therefore every vice incident to human nature was celebrated in the worship of one or other of these divinities; and every infirmity consecrated by public feast and solemn sacrifice. In these institutions the poet bore a principal share. It was his genius that contrived the plan, that executed the form of worship, and recorded in verse the origin and adventures of their gods and demi-gods. Hence the impurities and horrors of certain rites; the groves of Paphos and Baal Peor; the orgies of Bacchus; the human sacrifices to Moloch and Diana. Hence the theogony of Hesiod; the theology of Homer; and those innumerable maxims scattered through the ancient poets, inviting mankind to gratify their sensual appetites, in imitation of the gods, who were certainly the best judges of happiness. It is well known, that Plato expelled Homer from his commonwealth, on account of the infamous characters by which he has distinguished his deities, as well as for some depraved sentiments which he found diffused through the course of the Iliad and Odyssey. Cicero enters into the spirit of Plato, and exclaims, in his first book "De Natura Deorum," *Nec multa absurdiora sunt ea, quæ, poetarum vocibus fusa, ipsa suavitate nocuerunt: qui, et ira inflammatos, et libidine furentes, induxerunt Deos, feceruntque ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnera videremus: odia præterea, dissidia, discordias, ortus, interitus, querelas, lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantiâ libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus mortalesque ex immortali procreatos.* "Nor are those

things much more absurd, which, flowing from the poet's tongue, have done mischief even by the sweetness of his expression. The poets have introduced gods inflamed with anger, and enraged with lust; and even produced before our eyes, their wars, their wrangling, their duels, and their wounds. They have exposed, besides, their antipathies, animosities, and dissensions; their origin and death; their complaints and lamentations; their appetites, indulged to all manner of excess; their adulteries; their fetters; their amorous commerce with the human species, and from immortal parents derived a mortal offspring."

As the festivals of the gods necessarily produced good cheer, which was often carried to riot and debauchery, mirth of consequence prevailed; and this was always attended with buffoonery. Taunts and jokes, and raillery and repartee, would necessarily ensue; and individuals would contend for the victory, in wit and genius. These contests would in time be reduced to some regulations, for the entertainment of the people thus assembled, and some prize would be decreed to him who was judged to excel his rivals. The candidates for fame and profit being thus stimulated, would task their talents, and naturally recommend these alternate recriminations to the audience, by clothing them with a kind of poetical measure, which should bear a near resemblance to prose. Thus, as the solemn service of the day was composed in the most sublime species of poetry, such as the ode or hymn, the subsequent altercation was carried on in iambics, and gave rise to satire. We are told by the Stagirite, that the highest species of poetry was employed in celebrating great actions; but the humbler sort used in this kind of conten-

tion;[1] and that in the ages of antiquity there were some bards that professed heroics, and some that pretended to iambics only.

'Οι μεν ἡρωικων, οἱ δε ιαμβων ποιηται.

To these rude beginnings we not only owe the birth of satire, but likewise the origin of dramatic poetry. Tragedy herself, which afterwards attained to such dignity as to rival the epic muse, was at first no other than a trial of crambo, or iambics, between two peasants, and a goat was the prize, as Horace calls it, *vile certamen ob hircum;* "a mean contest for a he-goat." Hence the name τραγωδια, signifying the goat-song, from τραγος *hircus*, and ωδη *carmen*.

Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum,
Mox etiam agrestes Satyros nudavit, et asper
Incolumi gravitate jocum tentavit, eo quod
Illecebris erat et gratá novitate morandus
Spectator, functusque sacris, et potus et exlex.

HOR.

The tragic bard, a goat his humble prize,
Bade satyrs naked and uncouth arise;
His muse severe, secure, and undismayed,
The rustic joke in solemn strain conveyed;
For novelty alone he knew could charm
A lawless crowd, with wine and feasting warm.

Satire then was originally a clownish dialogue in loose iambics, so called, because the actors were disguised like satyrs, who not only recited the praises of Bacchus, or

[1] 'Οι μεν γαρ σεμνοτεροι, τας καλας εμιμουντο πραξεις —οἱ δε ευτελεστεροι, τας των φαυλων, πρωτον ψογους ποιουντες.

some other deity, but interspersed their hymns with sarcastic jokes and altercation. Of this kind is the *Cyclop* of Euripides, in which Ulysses is the principal actor. The Romans also had their *Atellanæ*, or interludes of the same nature, so called, from the city of *Atella*, where they were first acted: but these were highly polished in comparison of the original entertainment, which was altogether rude and innocent. Indeed the *Cyclop* itself, though composed by the accomplished Euripides, abounds with such impurity, as ought not to appear on the stage of any civilized nation.

It is very remarkable that the *Atellanæ*, which were in effect tragi-comedies, grew into such esteem among the Romans, that the performers in these pieces enjoyed several privileges, which were refused to the ordinary actors. They were not obliged to unmask, like the other players, when their action was disagreeable to the audience. They were admitted into the army, and enjoyed the privileges of free citizens, without incurring that disgrace, which was affixed to the characters of other actors.[1] The poet Laberius, who was of equestrian order, being pressed by Julius Cæsar to act a part in his own performance, complied with great reluctance, and complained of the dishonour he had incurred, in his prologue preserved by Macrobius, which is one of the most elegant morsels of antiquity.

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[1] Cum artem ludicram, scenamque totam probro ducerent, genus id hominum non modo honore civium reliquorum carere, sed etiam tribu moveri notationi censoria voluerunt.

Cic. apud S. Aug. de Civit. Dei.

Tragedy and comedy flowed from the same fountain, though their streams were soon divided. The same entertainment, which, under the name of *tragedy*, was rudely exhibited by clowns, for the prize of a goat, near some rural altar of Bacchus, assumed the appellation of *comedy*, when it was transferred into cities, and represented with a little more decorum in a cart or waggon, that strolled from street to street, as the name κωμωδια implies, being derived from κωμη a street, and ωδη a poem. To this origin, Horace alludes in these lines:

Dicitur et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis
Quæ canerent agerentque peruncti fæcibus ora.

Thespis, inventor of dramatic art,
Conveyed his vagrant actors in a cart:
High o'er the crowd the mimic tribe appeared,
And played, and sung, with lees of wine besmeared.

Thespis is called the inventor of the dramatic art, because he raised the subject from clownish altercation to the character and exploits of some hero: he improved the language and versification, and relieved the chorus by the dialogue of two actors. This was the first advance towards that consummation of genius and art, which constitutes what is now called a perfect tragedy. The next great improver was Æschylus, of whom the same critic says,

Post hunc personæ pallæque repertor honestæ
Æschylus, et modicis instravit pulpita tignis;
Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno.

Then Æschylus a decent vizard used;
Built a low stage; the flowing robe diffused:
In language more sublime, two actors rage,
And in the graceful buskin tread the stage.

The dialogue which Thespis introduced, was called the *episode*, because it was an addition to the former subject, namely, the praises of Bacchus; so that now tragedy consisted of two distinct parts, independent of each other; the old *recitative*, which was the *chorus*, sung in honour of the gods; and the *episode*, which turned upon the adventures of some hero. This episode being found very agreeable to the people, Æschylus, who lived about half a century after Thespis, still improved the drama, united the chorus to the episode, so as to make them both parts or members of one fable, multiplied the actors, contrived the stage, and introduced the decorations of the theatre; so that Sophocles, who succeeded Æschylus, had but one step to surmount, in order to bring the drama to perfection. Thus tragedy was gradually detached from its original institution, which was entirely religious. The priests of Bacchus loudly complained of this innovation by means of the episode, which was foreign to the intention of the chorus; and hence arose the proverb of "*Nihil ad Dionysium*," "Nothing to the purpose." Plutarch himself mentions the episode as a perversion of tragedy, from the honour of the gods to the passions of men: but, notwithstanding all opposition, the new tragedy succeeded to admiration; because it was found the most pleasing vehicle of conveying moral truths, of meliorating the heart, and extending the interests of humanity.

Comedy, according to Aristotle, is the younger sister of tragedy. As the first originally turned upon the praises of the gods, the latter dwelt on the follies and vices of mankind. Such, we mean, was the scope of that species of poetry which acquired the name of comedy, in contradiction to the tragic muse: for in the beginning

they were the same. The foundation, upon which comedy was built, we have already explained to be the practice of satirical repartee or altercation, in which individuals exposed the follies and frailties of each other, on public occasions of worship and festivity.

The first regular plan of comedy is said to have been the *Margites* of Homer, exposing the idleness and folly of a worthless character; but of this performance we have no remains. That division, which is termed the *ancient comedy*, belongs to the labours of Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes, who were contemporaries, and flourished at Athens about four hundred and thirty years before the Christian era. Such was the license of the muse at this period, that, far from lashing vice in general characters, she boldly exhibited the exact portrait of every individual, who had rendered himself remarkable or notorious, by his crimes, folly, or debauchery. She assumed every circumstance of his external appearance, his very attire, air, manner, and even his name: according to the observation of Horace,

. . . . . Poetæ
. . . . . quorum Comœdia prisca virorum est:
Si quis erat dignus describi, quod malus, aut fur,
Quod mœchus foret, aut sicarius, aut alioqui
Famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.

The comic poets, in its earliest age,
Who formed the manners of the Grecian stage—
Was there a villain who might justly claim
A better right of being damned to fame,
Rake, cut-throat, thief, whatever was his crime,
They boldly stigmatized the wretch in rhyme.

Eupolis is said to have satirized Alcibiades in this manner, and to have fallen a sacrifice to the resentment of

that powerful Athenian: but others say, he was drowned in the Hellespont, during a war against the Lacedemonians; and that, in consequence of this accident, the Athenians passed a decree, that no poet should ever bear arms.

The comedies of Cratinus are recommended by Quintilian for their eloquence; and Plutarch tells us, that even Pericles himself could not escape the censure of this poet.

Aristophanes, of whom there are eleven comedies still extant, enjoyed such a pre-eminence of reputation, that the Athenians, by a public decree, honoured him with a crown made of a consecrated olive-tree, which grew in the citadel, for his care and success in detecting and exposing the vices of those who govern the commonwealth. Yet this poet, whether impelled by mere wantonness of genius, or actuated by malice and envy, could not refrain from employing the shafts of his ridicule against Socrates, the most venerable character of Pagan antiquity. In the comedy of the Clouds, this virtuous philosopher was exhibited on the stage under his own name, in a cloak, exactly resembling that which Socrates wore, in a mask, modelled from his features, disputing publicly on the nature of right and wrong. This was undoubtedly an instance of the most flagrant licentiousness; and what renders it the more extraordinary, the audience received it with great applause, even while Socrates himself sat publicly in the theatre. The truth is, the Athenians were so fond of ridicule, that they relished it even when employed against the gods themselves, some of whose characters were very roughly handled by Aristophanes and his rivals in reputation.

We might here draw a parallel between the inhabitants of Athens and the natives of England, in point of constitution, genius, and disposition. Athens was a free state like England, that piqued itself upon the influence of the democracy. Like England, its wealth and strength depended upon its maritime power, and it generally acted as umpire in the disputes that arose among its neighbours. The people of Athens, like those of England, were remarkably ingenious, and made great progress in the arts and sciences. They excelled in poetry, history, philosophy, mechanics, and manufactures; they were acute, discerning, disputatious, fickle, wavering, rash, and combustible: and, above all other nations in Europe, addicted to ridicule; a character which the English inherit in a very remarkable degree.

If we may judge from the writings of Aristophanes, his chief aim was to gratify the spleen, and excite the mirth of his audience; of an audience too, that would seem to have been uninformed by taste, and altogether ignorant of decorum; for his pieces are replete with the most extravagant absurdities, virulent slander, impiety, impurities, and low buffoonery. The comic muse, not contented with being allowed to make free with the gods and philosophers, applied her scourge so severely to the magistrates of the commonwealth, that it was thought proper to restrain her within bounds by a law, enacting that no person should be stigmatized under his real name; and thus the chorus was silenced. In order to elude the penalty of this law, and gratify the taste of the people, the poets began to substitute fictitious names, under which they exhibited particular characters in such lively colours, that the resemblance could not possibly be mis-

taken or overlooked. This practice gave rise to what is called the *middle comedy*, which was but of short duration: for the legislature, perceiving that the first law had not removed the grievance against which it was provided, issued a second ordinance, forbidding, under severe penalties, any real or family occurrences to be represented. This restriction was the immediate cause of improving comedy into a general mirror, held forth to reflect the various follies and foibles incident to human nature; a species of writing called the *new comedy*, introduced by Diphilus and Menander, of whose works nothing but a few fragments remain.

ESSAY XV.

POETRY DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER WRITING.

Having communicated our sentiments touching the origin of poetry, by tracing tragedy and comedy to their common source, we shall now endeavour to point out the criteria, by which poetry is distinguished from every other species of writing. In common with other arts, such as statuary and painting, it comprehends imitation, invention, composition, and enthusiasm. Imitation is indeed the basis of all the liberal arts; invention and enthusiasm constitute genius, in whatever manner it may be displayed. Eloquence of all sorts admits of enthusiasm. Tully says, an orator should be *vehemens ut procella, excitatus ut torrens, incensus ut fulmen; tonat, fulgurat, et rapidis eloquentiæ fluctibus cuncta proruit et proturbat.* "Violent as a tempest, impetuous as a torrent, and glow-

ing intense like the red bolt of heaven, he thunders, lightens, overthrows, and bears down all before him, by the irresistible tide of eloquence." This is the *mens divinior atque os magna sonaturum* of Horace. This is the talent,

> ——*Meum qni pectus inaniter angit,*
> *Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,*
> *Ut magus.*
>
> With passions not my own who fires my heart;
> Who with unreal terrors fills my breast,
> As with a magic influence possessed.

We are told, that Michael Angelo Buonaroti used to work at his statues in a fit of enthusiasm, during which he made the fragments of the stone fly about him with surprising violence. The celebrated Lully being one day blamed for setting nothing to music but the languid verses of Quinault, was animated with the reproach, and running in a fit of enthusiasm to his harpsichord, sung in recitative and accompanied four pathetic lines from the Iphigenia of Racine, with such expression as filled the hearers with astonishment and horror.

Though versification be one of the criteria that distinguish poetry from prose, yet it is not the sole mark of distinction. Were the histories of Polybius and Livy simply turned into verse, they would not become poems; because they would be destitute of those figures, embellishments, and flights of imagination, which display the poet's art and invention. On the other hand, we have many productions that justly lay claim to the title of poetry, without having the advantage of versification; witness the Psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, with many beautiful hymns, descriptions, and rhapsodies, to

be found in different parts of the Old Testament; some of them the immediate production of divine inspiration: witness the Celtic fragments, which have lately appeared in the English language, and are certainly replete with poetical merit. But though good versification alone will not constitute poetry, bad versification alone will certainly degrade and render disgustful the sublimest sentiments and finest flowers of imagination. This humiliating power of bad verse appears in many translations of the ancient poets; in Ogilby's Homer, Trapp's Virgil, and frequently in Creech's Horace. This last indeed is not wholly devoid of spirit, but it seldom rises above mediocrity; and, as Horace says,

> ..... *Mediocribus esse poetis*
> *Non homines, non Dî, non concessere columnæ.*
>
> But God and man and lettered post denies,
> That poets ever are of middling size.

How is that beautiful ode, beginning with "*Justum et tenacem propositi virum*," chilled and tamed by the following translation:

> He who by principle is swayed,
> In truth and justice still the same,
> Is neither of the crowd afraid,
> Though civil broils the state inflame;
> Nor to a haughty tyrant's frown will stoop,
> Nor to a raging storm, when all the winds are up.
>
> Should Nature with convulsions shake,
> Struck with the fiery bolts of Jove,
> The final doom and dreadful crack
> Cannot his constant courage move.

That long Alexandrine—"Nor to a raging storm, when all the winds are up," is drawling, feeble, swoln with a

pleonasm or tautology, as well as deficient in the rhyme; and as for the "dreadful crack" in the next stanza, instead of exciting terror, it conveys a low and ludicrous idea. How much more elegant and energetic is this paraphrase of the same ode, inserted in one of the volumes of Hume's History of England:

The man whose mind, on virtue bent,
Pursues some greatly good intent
With undiverted aim,
Serene beholds the angry crowd;
Nor can their clamours fierce and loud
His stubborn honour tame.

Nor the proud tyrant's fiercest threat,
Nor storms, that from their dark retreat
The lawless surges wake;
Nor Jove's dread bolt, that shakes the pole,
The firmer purpose of his soul
With all its power can shake.

Should Nature's frame in ruins fall,
And Chaos o'er the sinking ball
Resume primeval sway,
His courage Chance and Fate defies,
Nor feels the wreck of earth and skies
Obstruct its destined way.

If poetry exists independent of versification, it will naturally be asked, how then is it to be distinguished? Undoubtedly, by its own peculiar expression: it has a language of its own, which speaks so feelingly to the heart, and so pleasingly to the imagination, that its meaning cannot possibly be misunderstood by any person of delicate sensations. It is a species of painting with words, in which the figures are happily conceived, ingeniously arranged, affectingly expressed, and recommended with all the warmth and harmony of colouring: it con-

sists of imagery, description, metaphors, similes, and sentiments, adapted with propriety to the subject, so contrived and executed, as to sooth the ear, surprise and delight the fancy, mend and melt the heart, elevate the mind, and please the understanding. According to Flaccus,

Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetæ;
Aut simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitæ.

Poets would profit or delight mankind,
And with th' amusing show th' instructive joined.

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci,
Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo.

Profit and pleasure mingled thus with art,
To sooth the fancy and improve the heart.

Tropes and figures are likewise liberally used in rhetoric; and some of the most celebrated orators have owned themselves much indebted to the poets. Theophrastus expressly recommends the poets for this purpose. From their source, the spirit and energy, the pathetic, the sublime, and the beautiful, are derived.[1] But these figures must be more sparingly used in rhetoric than in poetry, and even then mingled with argumentation, and a detail of facts altogether different from poetical narration. The poet, instead of simply relating the incident, strikes off a glowing picture of the scene, and exhibits it in the most lively colours to the eye of the imagination. "It is reported that Homer was blind," says Tully in his Tusculan Questions, "yet his poetry is no other than painting. What country, what climate, what ideas, battles, commo-

[1] Namque ab his (scilicet poetis) et in rebus spiritus, et in verbis sublimitas, et in affectibus motus omnis, et in personis decor petitur. *Quintilian*, l. x.

tions, and contests of men, as well as of wild beasts, has he not painted in such a manner as to bring before our eyes those very scenes, which he himself could not behold!"[1] We cannot therefore subscribe to the opinion of some ingenious critics, who have blamed Mr. Pope for deviating in some instances from the simplicity of Homer, in his translation of the Iliad and Odyssey. For example, the Grecian bard says simply, the sun rose; and his translator gives us a beautiful picture of the sun rising. Homer mentions a person who played upon the lyre; the translator sets him before us warbling to the silver strings. If this be a deviation, it is at the same time an improvement. Homer himself, as Cicero observes above, is full of this kind of painting, and particularly fond of description, even in situations where the action seems to require haste. Neptune, observing from Samothrace the discomfiture of the Grecians before Troy, flies to their assistance, and might have been wafted thither in half a line; but the bard describes him, first, descending the mountain on which he sat; secondly, striding towards his palace Ægæ, and yoking his horses; thirdly, he describes him putting on his armour; and lastly, ascending his car, and driving along the surface of the sea. Far from being disgusted by these delays, we are delighted with the particulars of the description. Nothing can be more sublime, than the circumstance of the mountain's trembling beneath the footsteps of an immortal:

..... Τρεμε δ' ὑρεα μακρα και ὑλη
Ποσσιν ὑπ' αθανατοισι Ποσειδαωνος ιοντος.

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[1] Quæ regio, quæ ora, quæ species formæ, quæ pugna, qui motus hominum, qui ferarum, non ita expictus est, ut quæ ipse non viderit, nos ut videremus, effecerit!

But his passage to the Grecian fleet is altogether transporting.

Βηδ' ἐλαων ἐπι κυματ', &c.

He mounts the car, the golden scourge applies,
He sits superior, and the chariot flies;
His whirling wheels the glassy surface sweep;
Th' enormous monsters, rolling o'er the deep,
Gambol around him on the watery way,
And heavy whales in awkward measures play;
The sea subsiding, spreads a level plain,
Exults and crowns the monarch of the main;
The parting waves before his coursers fly;
The wandering waters leave his axle dry.

With great veneration for the memory of Mr. Pope, we cannot help objecting to some lines of this translation. We have no idea of the sea's exulting and crowning Neptune, after it had subsided into a level plain. There is no such image in the original. Homer says, the whales exulted, and knew, or owned their king; and that the sea parted with joy; γηθοσυνη δε θαλασσα διιφαλο. Neither is there a word of the wandering waters; we therefore think the lines might be thus altered to advantage:

They knew and owned the monarch of the main;
The sea subsiding spreads a level plain;
The curling waves before his coursers fly;
The parting surface leaves his brazen axle dry.

Besides the metaphors, similes, and allusions of poetry, there is an infinite variety of tropes or turns of expression, occasionally disseminated through works of genius, which serve to animate the whole, and distinguish the glowing effusions of real inspiration from the cold efforts of mere science. These tropes consist of a certain happy

choice and arrangement of words, by which ideas are artfully disclosed in a great variety of attitudes; of epithets, and compound epithets; of sounds collected in order to echo the sense conveyed; of apostrophes; and, above all, the enchanting use of the prosopopœia, which is a kind of magic, by which the poet gives life and motion to every inanimate part of nature. Homer, describing the wrath of Agamemnon, in the first book of the Iliad, strikes off a glowing image in two words:

—οσσε δ' ὁι πυρι λαμπεϊοωνϊι εικϊην.

—And from his eye-balls *flashed the living fire.*

This indeed is a figure, which has been copied by Virgil, and almost all the poets of every age—*oculis* micat *acribus ignis*—ignescunt iræ: *auris dolor ossibus* ardet. Milton, describing Satan in hell, says,

With head uplift above the wave, and eye
That *sparkling blazed!*—
He spake: and to confirm his words outflew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim. The sudden *blaze*
Far round *illumined* hell—

There are certain words in every language particularly adapted to the poetical expression: some from the image or idea they convey to the imagination; and some from the effect they have upon the ear, The first are truly *figurative;* the others may be called *emphatical.*—Rollin observes, that Virgil has upon many occasions poetized (if we may be allowed the expression) a whole sentence by means of the same word, which is *pendere.*

Ite meæ, felix quondam pecus, ite capellæ.
Non ego vos posthac, viridi projectus in antro,
Dumosa pendere procul de rupe videbo.

At ease reclined beneath the verdant shade,
No more shall I behold my happy flock
Aloft *hang* browsing on the tufted rock.

Here the word *pendere* wonderfully improves the landscape, and renders the whole passage beautifully picturesque. The same figurative verb we meet with in many different parts of the Æneid.

Hi summo in fluctu pendent, *his unda* dehiscens
Terram inter fluctus aperit.

These on the mountain billow *hung*; to those
The *yawning waves* the yellow sand disclose.

In this instance, the words *pendent* and *dehiscens*, *hung* and *yawning*, are equally poetical. Addison seems to have had this passage in his eye, when he wrote his hymn, which is inserted in the Spectator.

—For though in dreadful worlds we *hung*,
High on the broken wave.

And in another piece of a like nature, in the same collection:

Thy Providence my life sustained,
And all my wants redrest,
When in the silent womb I lay,
And *hung* upon the breast.

Shakespeare, in his admired description of Dover cliff, uses the same expression:

. . . . . half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!

Nothing can be more beautiful than the following picture, in which Milton has introduced the same expressive tint:

. . . . . he, on his side,
Leaning half-raised, with looks of cordial love
Hung over her enamoured——

We shall give one example more from Virgil, to show in what a variety of scenes it may appear with propriety and effect. In describing the progress of Dido's passion for Æneas, the poet says,

Iliacos iterum demens audire labores
Exposcit, pendetque *iterum narrantis ab ore.*

The woes of Troy once more she begged to hear;
Once more the mournful tale employed his tongue,
While in fond rapture on his lips she *hung*.

The reader will perceive, in all these instances, that no other word could be substituted with equal energy, indeed no other word could be used without degrading the sense, and defacing the image.

There are many other verbs of poetical import fetched from nature, and from art, which the poet uses to advantage both in a literal and metaphorical sense; and these have been always translated for the same purpose from one language to another; such as *quasso, concutio, cio, suscito, lenio, sævio, mano, fluo, ardeo, mico, aro*, to shake, to wake, to rouse, to sooth, to rage, to flow, to shine or blaze, to plough.—Quassantia *tectum limina, Æneas casu* concussus *acerbo—Ære* ciere *viros, Martemque accendere cantu—Æneas acuit Martem et se* suscitat *ira—Impium* lenite *clamorem.* Lenibant *curas—Ne* sævi *magna sacerdos—Sudor ad imos* manabat *talos—Suspensæque diu lacrymæ* fluxere *per ora—Juvenali* ardebat *amore*—Micat *æreus ensis—Nullum maris æquor* arandum. It will be unnecessary to insert examples of the same nature from the English poets.

The words we term *emphatical*, are such as by their sound express the sense they are intended to convey; and with these the Greek abounds above all other languages,

not only from its natural copiousness, flexibility, and significance, but also from the variety of its dialects, which enables a writer to vary his terminations occasionally, as the nature of the subject requires, without offending the most delicate ear, or incurring the imputation of adopting vulgar provincial expressions. Every smatterer in Greek can repeat

Βη δ' ακεων παρα θινα πολυφλοισβοιο θαλασσης.

In which the two last words wonderfully echo to the sense, conveying the idea of the sea dashing on the shore. How much more significant in sound than that beautiful image of Shakespeare—

"The sea, that on th' unnumbered pebbles beats."

And yet, if we consider the strictness of propriety, this last expression would seem to have been selected on purpose to concur with the other circumstances, which are brought together to ascertain the vast height of Dover cliff: for the poet adds, "cannot be heard so high." The place where Gloster stood was so high above the surface of the sea, that the Φλοισβος, or *dashing*, could not be heard: and therefore an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare might with some plausibility affirm, the poet had chosen an expression in which that sound is not at all conveyed.

In the very same page of Homer's Iliad, we meet with two other striking instances of the same sort of beauty. Apollo, incensed at the insults his priest had sustained, descends from the top of Olympus, with his bow and quiver rattling on his shoulder as he moved along:

Εκλαγξαν δ' αρ' οιστοι επ' ωμων.

Here the sound of the word Εκλαγξαν admirably expresses the clanking of armour; as the third line after this surprisingly imitates the twanging of a bow.

Δεινη δε κλαγγη γενετ' αργυρεοιο βιοιο.

In shrill-toned murmurs sung the twanging bow.

Many beauties of the same kind are scattered through Homer, Pindar, and Theocritus, such as the βομβευσσα μελισσα, *susurrans apicula:* the ἁδυ ψιθυρισμα, *dulcem susurrum;* and the μακωδιαι for the sighing of the pine.

The Latin language teems with sounds adapted to every situation, and the English is not destitute of this significant energy. We have the *cooing* turtle, the *sighing* reed, the *warbling* rivulet, the *sliding* stream, the *whispering* breeze, the glance, the gleam, the flash, the *bickering* flame, the *dashing* wave, the *gushing* spring, the *howling* blast, the *rattling* storm, the *pattering* shower, the *crimp* earth, the *mouldering* tower, the *twanging* bowstring, the *clanging* arms, the *clanking* chains, the *twinkling* stars, the *tinkling* chords, the *trickling* drops, the *twittering* swallow, the *cawing* rook, the *screeching* owl; and a thousand other words and epithets wonderfully suited to the sense they imply.

Among the select passages of poetry which we shall insert by way of illustration, the reader will find instances of all the different tropes and figures which the best authors have adopted in the variety of their poetical works, as well as of the apostrophe, abrupt transition, repetition, and prosopopœia.

In the mean time, it will be necessary still further to analyse those principles which constitute the essence of poetical merit; to display those delightful parterres, that

teem with the fairest flowers of imagination, and distinguish between the gaudy offspring of a cold insipid fancy, and the glowing progeny, diffusing sweets, produced and invigorated by the sun of genius.

ESSAY XVI.

ON METAPHOR.

Of all the implements of poetry, the metaphor is the most generally and successfully used, and indeed may be termed the muse's caduceus, by the power of which she enchants all nature. The metaphor is a shorter simile, or rather a kind of magical coat, by which the same idea assumes a thousand different appearances. Thus the word *plough*, which originally belongs to agriculture, being metaphorically used, represents the motion of a ship at sea, and the effects of old age upon the human countenance—

> —Ploughed the bosom of the deep—
> And Time had ploughed his venerable front.

Almost every verb, noun substantive, or term of art in any language, may be in this manner applied to a variety of subjects with admirable effect; but the danger is in sowing metaphors too thick, so as to distract the imagination of the reader, and incur the imputation of deserting nature, in order to hunt after conceits. Every day produces poems of all kinds so inflated with metaphor, that they may be compared to the gaudy bubbles blown up from a solution of soap. Longinus is of opinion, that a multitude of metaphors is never excusable, except in those cases when the passions are rous-

ed, and like a winter torrent, rush down impetuous, sweeping them with collective force along. He brings an instance of the following quotation from Demosthenes. "Men," says he, "profligates, miscreants, and flatterers, who, having severally preyed upon the bowels of their country, at length betrayed her liberty; first to Philip, and now again to Alexander: who, placing the chief felicity of life in the indulgence of infamous lusts and appetites, overturned in the dust that freedom and independence, which was the chief aim and end of all our worthy ancestors."[1]

Aristotle and Theophrastus seem to think it is rather too bold and hazardous to use metaphors so freely, without interposing some mitigating phrase; such as, "if I may be allowed the expression," or some equivalent excuse. At the same time, Longinus finds fault with Plato for hazarding some metaphors, which indeed appear to be equally affected and extravagant, when he says, "the government of a state should not resemble a bowl of hot fermenting wine, but a cool and moderate beverage, *chastised by the sober deity*"—a metaphor that signifies nothing more than "mixed or lowered with water." Demetrius Phalereus justly observes, that though a judicious

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[1] Ἀνθρωποι, φησι, μιαροι, και αλαζορες, και κολακες, ηκρωληριασμενοι τας ἑαυλων ἑκαζοι παλριδας, την ελευθεριαν προπεποκοτες, προτερον Φιλιππῳ, νυν δ' Αλεξανδρῳ τη γαζρι μελρυλες και τοις αισχιζοις την ευδαιμονιαν, την δ' ελευθεριαν, και το μηδενα εχειν δεσποτην ἀ τοις πρόλεροιν. Ἑλλησιν οροι των αγαθων ησαν και κανονες, ανατετροφοτες

use of metaphors wonderfully raises, sublimes, and adorns oratory or elocution, yet they should seem to flow naturally from the subject; and too great a redundancy of them inflates the discourse to a mere rhapsody. The same observation will hold in poetry; and the more liberal or sparing use of them will depend in a great measure on the nature of the subject.

Passion itself is very figurative, and often bursts out into metaphors; but in touching the pathos, the poet must be perfectly well acquainted with the emotions of the human soul, and carefully distinguish between those metaphors which rise glowing from the heart, and those cold conceits which are engendered in the fancy. Should one of these last unfortunately intervene, it will be apt to destroy the whole effect of the most pathetical incident or situation. Indeed, it requires the most delicate taste, and a consummate knowledge of propriety, to employ metaphors in such a manner, as to avoid what the ancients called the το ψυχρον, the *frigid*, or false sublime. Instances of this kind were frequent even among the correct ancients. Sappho herself is blamed for using the hyperbole λευκοτεροι χιονος, *whiter than snow*. Demetrius is so nice as to be disgusted at the simile of *swift as the wind;* though, in speaking of a race-horse, we know from experience that this is not even a hyperbole. He would have had more reason to censure that kind of metaphor, which Aristotle styles καθ' ενεργειαν, exhibiting things inanimate as endued with sense and reason; such as that of the sharp-pointed arrow *eager* to take wing among the crowd. "Οξυβελης καθ' ὁμιλον επιπλεσθαι μενεαινων." Not but that in descriptive poetry this figure is often allowed and admired. The *cruel* sword,

the *ruthless* dagger, the *ruffian* blast, are epithets which frequently occur. The *faithful* bosom of the earth, the *joyous* boughs, the trees that *admire their images* reflected in the stream, and many other examples of this kind, are found disseminated through the works of our best modern poets; yet still they must be sheltered under the privilege of the *poetica licentia;* and, except in poetry, they would give offence.

More chaste metaphors are freely used in all kinds of writing; more sparingly in history; and more abundantly in rhetoric: we have seen that Plato indulges in them even to excess. The orations of Demosthenes are animated, and even inflamed with metaphors, some of them so bold as even to entail upon him the censure of the critics.

"Then I did not yield to Python, the orator, when he *overflowed* you with a tide of eloquence." Cicero is still more liberal in the use of them; he ransacks all nature, and pours forth a redundancy of figures, even with a lavish hand. Even the chaste Xenophon, who generally illustrates his subject by way of simile, sometimes ventures to produce an expressive metaphor, such as part of the phalanx *fluctuated* in the march: and indeed nothing can be more significant than this word εξεκυμηνε, to represent a body of men staggered, and on the point of giving way. Armstrong has used the word *fluctuate* with admirable efficacy, in his philosophical poem, entitled, *The Art of Preserving Health.*

> O! when the growling winds contend, and all
> The sounding forest *fluctuates* in the storm,
> To sink in warm repose, and hear the din
> Howl o'er the steady battlements——

The word *fluctuate* on this occasion not only exhibits an idea of struggling, but also echoes to the sense like the εφριξεν δε μαχη of Homer; which, by the by, it is impossible to render into English: for the verb φρισσω signifies not only to stand erect like prickles, as a grove of lances, but also to make a noise like the crashing of armour, the hissing of javelins, and the splinters of spears.

Over and above an excess of figures, a young author is apt to run into a confusion of mixed metaphors, which leave the sense disjointed, and distract the imagination. Shakespeare himself is often guilty of these irregularities. The soliloquy in Hamlet, which we have so often heard extolled in terms of admiration, is, in our opinion, a heap of absurdities, whether we consider the situation, the sentiment, the argumentation, or the poetry. Hamlet is informed by the ghost, that his father was murdered, and therefore he is tempted to murder himself, even after he had promised to take vengeance on the usurper, and expressed the utmost eagerness to achieve this enterprize. It does not appear that he had the least reason to wish for death; but every motive, which may be supposed to influence the mind of a young prince, concurred to render life desirable—revenge towards the usurper; love for the fair Ophelia; and the ambition of reigning. Besides, when he had an opportunity of dying without being accessary to his own death; when he had nothing to do but, in obedience to his uncle's command, to allow himself to be conveyed quietly to England, where he was sure of suffering death; instead of amusing himself with meditations on mortality, he very wisely consulted the means of self-preservation, turned the tables upon his attendants, and returned to Denmark. But granting him to have

been reduced to the lowest state of despondence, surrounded with nothing but horror and despair, sick of this life, and eager to tempt futurity, we shall see how far he argues like a philosopher.

In order to support this general charge against an author so universally held in veneration, whose very errors have helped to sanctify his character among the multitude, we will descend to particulars, and analyze this famous soliloquy.

Hamlet having assumed the disguise of madness, as a cloak, under which he might the more effectually revenge his father's death upon the murderer and usurper, appears alone upon the stage in a pensive and melancholy attitude, and communes with himself in these words:

To be, or not to be? That is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them?—To die—to sleep—
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ach, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.—To die—to sleep—
To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub—
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.——There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his *quietus* make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardles bear,
To groan and sweat under a weary life,

But that the dread of something after death
(That undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns) puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn away,
And lose the name of action.

We have already observed, that there is not any apparent circumstance in the fate or situation of Hamlet, that should prompt him to harbour one thought of self-murder; and therefore these expressions of despair imply an impropriety in point of character. But, supposing his condition was truly desperate, and he saw no possibility of repose but in the uncertain harbour of death, let us see in what manner he argues on that subject. The question is, "To be, or not to be?" to die by my own hand, or live and suffer the miseries of life. He proceeds to explain the alternative in these terms: "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer, or endure the frowns of fortune, or to take arms, and by opposing, end them." Here he deviates from his first proposition, and death is no longer the question. The only doubt is, whether he will stoop to misfortune, or exert his faculties in order to surmount it. This surely is the obvious meaning, and indeed the only meaning that can be implied in these words:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them.

He now drops this idea, and reverts to his reasoning on death, in the course of which he owns himself deterred from suicide by the thoughts of what may follow death:

——the dread of something after death
(That undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns.)

This might be a good argument in a Heathen or Pagan, and such indeed Hamlet really was; but Shakespeare has already represented him as a good Catholic, who must have been acquainted with the truths of revealed religion, and says expressly in this very play,

——Had not the Everlasting fixed
His canon 'gainst self-murder.

Moreover, he had just been conversing with his father's spirit, piping hot from purgatory, which we presume is not within the *bourne* of this world. The dread of what may happen after death, says he,

Makes us rather bear those *ills* we have,
Than fly to *others* that we know not of.

This declaration at least implies some knowledge of the other world, and expressly asserts, that there must be *ills* in that world, though what kind of *ills* they are, we do not know. The argument therefore may be reduced to this lemma: this world abounds with *ills* which I feel; the other world abounds with *ills*, the nature of which I do not know: therefore, I will rather bear those *ills* I have, "than fly to *others* which I know not of:" a deduction amounting to a certainty with respect to the only circumstance that could create a doubt—namely, whether in death he should rest from his misery; and if

he was certain there were evils in the next world, as well as in this, he had no room to reason at all about the matter. What alone could justify his thinking on this subject, would have been the hope of flying from the ills of this world, without encountering any *others* in the next.

Nor is Hamlet more accurate in the following reflection:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

A bad conscience will make us cowards; but a good conscience will make us brave. It does not appear that any thing lay heavy on his conscience; and from the premises we cannot help inferring, that conscience in this case was entirely out of the question. Hamlet was deterred from suicide by a full conviction, that in flying from one sea of troubles which he did know, he should fall into *another* which he did not know.

His whole chain of reasoning, therefore, seems inconsistent and incongruous. "I am doubtful whether I should live, or do violence upon my own life: for I know not whether it is more honourable to bear misfortune patiently, than to exert myself in opposing misfortune, and by opposing, end it." Let us throw it into the form of a syllogism, it will stand thus: "I am oppressed with ills: I know not whether it is more honourable to bear those ills patiently, or to end them by taking arms against them; *ergo*, I am doubtful whether I should slay myself or live. To die is no more than to sleep; and to *say* that by a sleep we end the heart-ach, &c. 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." Now to *say it* was of no consequence unless it had been true. "I am afraid of the dreams that may happen in that sleep of death;

and I choose rather to bear those ills I have in this life, than fly to *other ills* in that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller ever returns. I have ills that are almost insupportable in this life. I know not what is in the next, because it is an undiscovered country: *ergo*, I would rather bear those ills I have, than fly to others which I know not of." Here the conclusion is by no means warranted by the premises, "I am sore afflicted in this life; but I will rather bear the afflictions of this life, than plunge myself in the afflictions of another life: *ergo*, conscience makes cowards of us all." But this conclusion would justify the logician in saying, *negatur consequens*; for it is entirely detached both from the major and minor proposition.

This soliloquy is not less exceptionable in the propriety of expression, than in the chain of argumentation.—"To die—to sleep—no more," contains an ambiguity which all the art of punctuation cannot remove; for it may signify that "to die is to sleep no more;" or the expression "no more," may be considered as an abrupt apostrophe in thinking, as if he meant to say—"no more of that reflection."

"Ay, there's the rub"—is a vulgarism beneath the dignity of Hamlet's character, and the words that follow leave the sense imperfect:

> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause.

Not the dreams that might come, but the fear of what dreams might come, occasioned the pause or hesitation. *Respect* in the same line may be allowed to pass for consideration: but

Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

according to the invariable acceptation of the words *wrong* and *contumely*, can signify nothing but the wrongs sustained by the oppressor, and the contumely or abuse thrown upon the proud man; though it is plain that Shakespeare used them in a different sense; neither is the word *spurn* a substantive; yet as such he has inserted it in these lines:

The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes.

If we consider the metaphors of the soliloquy, we shall find them jumbled together in a strange confusion.

If the metaphors were reduced to painting, we should find it a very difficult task, if not altogether impracticable, to represent with any propriety outrageous Fortune using her slings and arrows, between which indeed there is no sort of analogy in nature. Neither can any figure be more ridiculously absurd than that of a man taking arms against a sea, exclusive of the incongruous medley of slings, arrows, and seas, justled within the compass of one reflection. What follows is a strange rhapsody of broken images, of sleeping, dreaming, and shifting off a *coil*, which last conveys no idea that can be represented on canvass. A man may be exhibited shuffling off his garments or his chains; but how he could shuffle off a *coil*, which is another name for noise and tumult, we cannot comprehend. Then we have "long-lived Calamity," and "Time armed with whips and scorns;" and patient "Merit spurned at by Unworthiness;" and "Misery with a bare bodkin going to make his own *quietus*," which at best is but a mean metaphor. These are followed by fi-

gures "sweating under fardles of burdens," "puzzled with doubts," "shaking with fears," and "flying from evils." Finally, we see "resolution sicklied o'er with pale thought," a conception like that of representing health by sickness; and a "current of pith turned away so as to lose the name of action," which is both an error in fancy, and a solecism in sense. In a word, this soliloquy may be compared to the *Ægri somnia*, and the *Tabula, cujus vanæ fingentur species.*

But while we censure the chaos of broken, incongruous metaphors, we ought also to caution the young poet against the opposite extreme of pursuing a metaphor until the spirit is quite exhausted in a succession of cold conceits; such as we see in the following letter, said to be sent by Tamerlane to the Turkish Emperor Bajazet: "Where is the monarch that dares oppose our arms? Where is the potentate who doth not glory in being numbered among our vassals? As for thee, descended from a Turcoman mariner, since the vessel of thy unbounded ambition hath been wrecked in the gulph of thy self love, it would be proper that thou shouldest furl the sails of thy temerity; and cast the anchor of repentance in the port of sincerity and justice, which is the harbour of safety; lest the tempest of our vengeance make thee perish in the sea of that punishment thou hast deserved."

But if these laboured conceits are ridiculous in poetry, they are still more inexcusable in prose; such as we find them frequently occur in Strada's Bellum Belgicum. *Vix descenderat à prætoria navi Cæsar; cùm fœda ilico exorta in portu tempestas, classem impetu disjecit, prætoriam hausit; quasi non vecturam amplius Cæsarem Cæsarisque fortunam.* "Cæsar had scarcely set his feet on

shore, when a terrible tempest arising, shattered the fleet even in the harbour, and sent to the bottom the prætorian ship, as if he resolved it should no longer carry Cæsar and his fortunes."

Yet this is modest in comparison of the following flowers: *Alii, pulsis è tormento catenis discerpti sectique, dimidiato corpore pugnabant sibi superstites, ac peremptæ partis ultores.* "Others, dissevered and cut in twain by chain-shot, fought with one half of their bodies that remained, in revenge for the other half that was slain."

Homer, Horace, and even the chaste Virgil, is not free from conceits. The latter, speaking of a man's hand cut off in battle, says,

Te decisa suum, Laride, dextera quærit:
Semianimesque micant digiti, ferrumque retractant:

thus enduing the amputated hand with sense and volition. This, to be sure, is a violent figure, and hath been justly condemned by some accurate critics; but we think they are too severe in extending the same censure to some other passages in the most admired authors.

Virgil, in his Sixth Eclogue, says,

Omnia quæ, Phœbo quondam meditante, beatus
Audiit Eurotas, jussitque ediscere lauros,
Ille canit.

Whate'er when Phœbus blessed th' Arcadian plain
Eurotas heard and taught his bays the strain,
The senior sung——

And Pope has copied the conceit in his Pastorals:

Thames heard the numbers as he flowed along,
And bade his willows learn the mourning song.

Vida thus begins his First Eclogue:

Dicite, vos musæ, et juvenum memorate querelas;
Dicite: nam moras ipsas ad carmina cautes,
Et requiésse suos perhibent vaga flumina cursus.

Say, heavenly muse, their youthful frays rehearse;
Begin, ye daughters of immortal verse;
Exulting rocks have owned the power of song,
And rivers listened as they flowed along.

Racine adopts the same bold figure in his Phædra:

Le flot qui l' apporta recule epouvanté:

The wave that bore him backwards shrunk appalled.

Even Milton has indulged himself in the same license of expression—

.... As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabæan odour from the spicy shore
Of Araby the blessed; with such delay
Well pleased, they slack their course, and many a league
Cheered with the grateful smell, old ocean smiles.

Shakespeare says,

..... I've seen
The ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam
To be exalted with the threatening clouds.

And indeed more correct writers, both ancient and modern, abound with the same kind of figure, which is reconciled to propriety, and even invested with beauty, by the efficacy of the prosopopœia, which personifies the object. Thus, when Virgil says Enipeus heard the songs of Apollo, he raises up, as by enchantment, the idea of a river god crowned with sedges, his head raised above the stream, and in his countenance the expression of pleased attention. By the same magic, we see, in the couplet

quoted from Pope's Pastorals, old father Thames leaning upon his urn, and listening to the poet's strain.

Thus in the regions of poetry, all nature, even the passions and affections of the mind, may be personified into picturesque figures, for the entertainment of the reader. Ocean smiles or frowns, as the sea is calm or tempestuous; a triton rules on every angry billow; every mountain has its nymph; every stream its naiad; every tree its hamadryad; and every art its genius. We cannot therefore assent to those, who censure Thomson as licentious for using the following figure:

> O vale of bliss! O softly swelling hills!
> On which the power of cultivation lies,
> And joys to see the wonders of his toil.

We cannot conceive a more beautiful image than that of the genius of agriculture distinguished by the implements of his art, embrowned with labour, glowing with health, crowned with a garland of foliage, flowers, and fruit, lying stretched at his ease on the brow of a gently swelling hill, and contemplating with pleasure the happy effects of his own industry.

Neither can we join issue against Shakespeare for this comparison, which hath likewise incurred the censure of the critics:

> . . . . . The nobler sister of Poplicola,
> The moon of Rome; chaste as the icicle
> That's curdled by the frost from purest snow,
> And hangs on Dian's temple——

This is no more than illustrating a quality of the mind, by comparing it with a sensible object. If there is no impropriety in saying such a man is true as steel, firm as

a rock, inflexible as an oak, unsteady as the ocean, or in describing a disposition cold as ice, or fickle as the wind, and these expressions are justified by constant practice; we shall hazard an assertion, that the comparison of a chaste woman to an icicle is proper and picturesque, as it obtains only in the circumstances of cold and purity; but that the addition of its being curdled from the purest snow, and hanging on the temple of Diana, the patroness of virginity, heightens the whole into a most beautiful simile, that gives a very respectable and amiable idea of the character in question.

The simile is no more than an extended metaphor, introduced to illustrate and beautify the subject: it ought to be apt, striking, properly pursued, and adorned with all the graces of poetical melody. But a simile of this kind ought never to proceed from the mouth of a person under any great agitation of spirit; such as a tragic character overwhelmed with grief, distracted by contending cares, or agonizing in the pangs of death. The language of passion will not admit simile, which is always the result of study and deliberation. We will not allow a hero the privilege of a dying swan, which is said to chant its approaching fate in the most melodious strain; and therefore nothing can be more ridiculously unnatural, than the representation of a lover dying upon the stage with a laboured simile in his mouth.

The orientals, whose language was extremely figurative, have been very careless in the choice of their similes: provided the resemblance obtained in one circumstance, they minded not whether they disagreed with the subject in every other respect. Many instances of this defect in congruity may be culled from the most sublime parts of Scripture.

Homer has been blamed for the bad choice of his similes on some particular occasions. He compares Ajax to an ass in the Iliad, and Ulysses to a steak broiling on the coals in the Odyssey. His admirers have endeavoured to excuse him, by reminding us of the simplicity of the age in which he wrote; but they have not been able to prove, that any ideas of dignity or importance were, even in those days, affixed to the character of an ass, or the quality of a beef-collop; therefore, they were very improper illustrations for any situation in which a hero ought to be represented.

Virgil has degraded the wife of King Latinus, by comparing her, when she was actuated by the fury, to a top which the boys lash for diversion. This, doubtless, is a low image, though in other respects the comparison is not destitute of propriety; but he is much more justly censured for the following simile, which has no sort of reference to the subject. Speaking of Turnus, he says,

.... Medio dux agmine Turnus
Vertitur arma tenens, et toto vertice supra est.
Ceu septem surgens sedatis amnibus altus
Per tacitum Ganges: aut pingut flumine Nilus
Cum refluit campis, et jam se condidit alveo.

But Turnus, chief amidst the warrior train,
In armour towers the tallest on the plain.
The Ganges, thus by seven rich streams supplied,
A mighty mass devolves in silent pride.
Thus Nilus pours from his prolific urn,
When from the fields o'erflowed, his vagrant streams return.

These, no doubt, are majestic images; but they bear no sort of resemblance to a hero glittering in armour at the head of his forces.

Horace has been ridiculed by some shrewd critics for this comparison, which, however, we think is more defensible than the former. Addressing himself to Munatius Plancus, he says,

Albus ut obscuro deterget nubila cælo
Sæpe Notus, neque parturit imbres
Perpetuos: sic tu sapiens finire memento
Tristitiam, vitæque labores
Molli, Plance, mero.

As Notus often, when the welkin lowers,
Sweeps off the clouds, nor teems perpetual showers,
So let thy wisdom, free from anxious strife,
In mellow wine dissolve the cares of life.

DUNKIN.

The analogy, it must be confessed, is not very striking; but, nevertheless, it is not altogether void of propriety. The poet reasons thus: As the south wind, though generally attended with rain, is often known to dispel the clouds, and render the weather serene; so do you, though generally on the rack of thought, remember to relax sometimes, and drown your cares in wine. As the south wind is not always moist, so you ought not always to be dry.

A few instances of inaccuracy, or mediocrity, can never derogate from the superlative merit of Homer and Virgil, whose poems are the great magazines replete with every species of beauty and magnificence, particularly abounding with similes which astonish, delight, and transport the reader.

Every simile ought not only to be well adapted to the subject, but also to include every excellence of description, and to be coloured with the warmest tints of poetry. Nothing can be more happily hit off, than the following

in the Georgics, to which the poet compares Orpheus lamenting his lost Eurydice:

Qualis populeâ mœrens Philomela sub umbrâ
Amissos queritur fœtus, quos durus arator
Observans nido implumes detraxit; at illa
Flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
Integrat, et mœstis late loca questibns implet.

So Philomela from th' umbrageous wood
In strains melodious mourns her tender brood,
Snatched from the nest by some rude ploughman's hand:
On some lone bough the warbler takes her stand;
The live-long night she mourns the cruel wrong;
And hill and dale resound the plaintive song.

Here we not only find the most scrupulous propriety, and the happiest choice, in comparing the Thracian bard to Philomel the poet of the grove; but also the most beautiful description, containing a fine touch of the pathos, in which last particular indeed, Virgil, in our opinion, excels all other poets, whether ancient or modern.

One would imagine, that nature had exhausted itself in order to embellish the poems of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, with similes and metaphors. The first of these very often uses the comparison of the wind, the whirlwind, the hail, the torrent, to express the rapidity of his combatants; but when he comes to describe the velocity of the immortal horses that drew the chariot of Juno, he raises his ideas to the subject, and, as Longinus observes, measures every leap by the whole breadth of the horizon.

Οσσον δ' ηεροειδες ανηρ ιδεν οφθαλμοισιν
Ημενος εν σκοπιη, λευσσων επι οινοπα ποντον,
Τοσσον επιθρωσκουσι θεων υψηχεες ιπποι.

Far as a watchman from some rock on high
O'er the wide main extends his boundless eye;
Through such a space of air, with thund'ring sound,
At every leap the immortal coursers bound.

The celerity of this goddess seems to be a favourite idea with the poet; for in another place he compares it to the thought of a traveller revolving in his mind the different places he had seen, and passing through them in imagination more swift than the lightning flies from east to west.

Homer's best similes have been copied by Virgil, and almost every succeeding poet, howsoever they may have varied in the manner of expression. In the third book of the Iliad, Menelaus seeing Paris, is compared to a hungry lion espying a hind or goat:

Ωσε λεων εχαρη μεγαλῳ επι σωματι κυρσας
Εὑρων η ελαφον κεραον, η αγριον αιγα, &c.

So joys the lion, if a branching deer,
Or mountain goat, his bulky prize appear:
In vain the youths oppose, the mastiffs bay,
The lordly savage rends the panting prey.
Thus fond of vengeance, with a furious bound,
In clanging arms he leaps upon the ground.

The Mantuan bard, in the tenth book of the Æneid, applies the same simile to Mezentius, when he beholds Acron in the battle:

Impastus stabula alta leo ceu sæpe peragrans
(Suadet enim vesana fames) si forte fugacem
Conspexit capream, aut surgentem in cornua cervum;
Gaudet hians immane, comasque arrexit, et hæret
Visceribus super accumbens: lavit improba teter
Ora cruor.

Then, as a hungry lion, who beholds
A gamesome goat who frisks about the folds,
Or beamy stag that grazes on the plain;
He runs, he roars, he shakes his rising mane;
He grins, and opens wide his greedy jaws,
The prey lies panting underneath his paws:
He fills his famished maw, his mouth runs o'er
With unchewed morsels, while he churns the gore.

DRYDEN.

The reader will perceive, that Virgil has improved the simile in one particular, and in another fallen short of his original. The description of the lion shaking his mane, opening his hideous jaws, distained with the blood of his prey, is great and picturesque: but, on the other hand, he has omitted the circumstance of devouring it without being intimidated or restrained by the dogs and youths that surround him; a circumstance that adds greatly to our idea of his strength, intrepidity, and importance.

ESSAY XVII.

ON HYPERBOLE.

Of all the figures in poetry, that called the hyperbole is managed with the greatest difficulty. The hyperbole is an exaggeration with which the muse is indulged, for the better illustration of her subject when she is warmed into enthusiasm. Quintilian calls it an ornament of the bolder kind. Demetrius Phalereus is still more severe. He says, the hyperbole is of all forms of speech the most frigid. Μαλιστα δε ἡ Ὑπερβολη ψυχροτατον παντων: but this must be understood with some grains of allow-

ance. Poetry is animated by the passions; and all the passions exaggerate. Passion itself is a magnifying medium. There are beautiful instances of hyperbole in the Scripture, which a reader of sensibility cannot read without being strongly affected. The difficulty lies in choosing such hyperboles as the subject will admit of; for, according to the definition of Theophrastus, the frigid in style is that which exceeds the expression suitable to the subject. The judgment does not revolt against Homer, for representing the horses of Ericthonius running over the standing corn without breaking off the heads, because the whole is considered as a fable, and the north wind is represented as their sire; but the imagination is a little startled, when Virgil, in imitation of this hyperbole, exhibits Camilla as flying over it without even touching the tops.

Illa vel intactæ segetis per summa volaret
Gramina:——

This elegant author, we are afraid, has upon some other occasions degenerated into the frigid, in straining to improve upon his great master.

Homer, in the Odyssey, a work which Longinus does not scruple to charge with bearing the marks of old age, describes a storm, in which all the four winds were concerned together.

Συν δ' Ευρος τε Νοτος τ' επεσε, Ζεφυρος τε δυσαης,
Και Βορεης αιθρηγενετης μεγα λυμα κυλινδων.

We know that such a contention of contrary blasts could not possibly exist in nature; for even in hurricanes the winds blow alternately from different points of the compass. Nevertheless, Virgil adopts the description, and adds to its extravagance:

Incubuere mari, totumque à sedibus imis
Una Eurusque Notusque ruunt, creberque procellis
Africus.

Here the winds not only blow together, but they turn the whole body of the ocean topsy-turvy.

East, west, and south, engage with furious sweep,
And from its lowest bed upturn the foaming deep.

The north wind, however, is still more mischievous:—

..... Stridens aquilone procella
Velum adversa ferit, fluctusque ad sidera tollit.

The sail then Boreas rends with hideous cry,
And whirls the madd'ning billows to the sky.

The motion of the sea between Scylla and Charybdis is still more magnified; and Ætna is exhibited as throwing out volumes of flames, which brush the stars.[1] Such expressions as these are not intended as a real representation of the thing specified; they are designed to strike the reader's imagination; but they generally serve as marks of the author's sinking under his own ideas, who, apprehensive of injuring the greatness of his own conception, is hurried into excess and extravagance.

Quintilian allows the use of hyperbole, when words are wanting to express any thing in its just strength, or due energy: then, he says, it is better to exceed in expression, than fall short of the conception: but he likewise observes,

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[1] Speaking of the first, he says,
Tollimur in cœlum curvato gurgite, et iidem
Subductâ ad manes imos descendimus undâ.
Of the other,
Attollitque globos flammarum, et sidera lambit.

that there is no figure or form of speech so apt to run into fustian. *Nec alia magis via in κακοζηλιαν itur.*

If the chaste Virgil has thus trespassed upon poetical probability, what can we expect from Lucan but hyperboles even more ridiculously extravagant? He represents the winds in contest, the sea in suspense, doubting to which it shall give way. He affirms, that its motion would have been so violent as to produce a second deluge, had not Jupiter kept it under by the clouds; and as to the ship, during this dreadful uproar, *the sails touch the clouds, while the keel strikes the ground.*

Nubila tanguntur velis, et terra carina.

This image of dashing water at the stars, Sir Richard Blackmore has produced in colours truly ridiculous. Describing spouting whales in his Prince Arthur, he makes the following comparison:

Like some prodigious water-engine. made
To play on heaven, if fire should heaven invade.

The great fault in all these instances, is a deviation from propriety, owing to the erroneous judgment of the writer, who, endeavouring to captivate the admiration with novelty, very often shocks the understanding with extravagance. Of this nature is the whole description of the Cyclops, both in the Odyssey of Homer, and in the Æneid of Virgil. It must be owned, however, that the Latin poet, with all his merit, is more apt than his great original to dazzle us with false fire, and practise upon the imagination with gay conceits, that will not bear the critic's examination. There is not in any of Homer's works now subsisting, such an example of the false sublime, as

Virgil's description of the thunder-bolts forging under the hammers of the Cyclops:

Tres imbris torti radios, tres nubis aquosæ
Addiderant, rutili tres ignis et alitis Austri.

Three rays of writhen rain, of fire three more,
Of winged southern winds, and cloudy store,
As many parts, the dreadful mixture frame.

DRYDEN.

This is altogether a fantastic piece of affectation, of which we can form no sensible image, and serves to chill the fancy, rather than warm the admiration of a judging reader.

Extravagant hyperbole is a weed that grows in great plenty through the works of our admired Shakespeare. In the following description, which hath been much celebrated, one sees he has had an eye to Virgil's thunder-bolts:

O, then I see queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fancy's midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies,
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep:
Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web;
The collars, of the *moonshine's watery beams*, &c.

Even in describing fantastic beings, there is a propriety to be observed; but surely nothing can be more revolting to common sense, than this numbering of the *moon beams* among the other implements of queen Mab's harness, which, though extremely slender and diminutive, are ne-

vertheless objects of the touch, and may be conceived capable of use.

The ode and satire admit of the boldest hyperboles: such exaggerations suit the impetuous warmth of the one; and in the other, have a good effect in exposing folly, and exciting horror against vice. They may be likewise successfully used in comedy, for moving and managing the powers of ridicule.

ESSAY XVIII.

ON VERSIFICATION.

Verse is a harmonious arrangement of long and short syllables, adapted to different kinds of poetry, and owes its origin entirely to the measured cadence, or music, which was used when the first songs or hymns were recited. This music, divided into different parts, required a regular return of the same measure; and thus every *strophe*, *antistrophe*, and *stanza*, contained the same number of feet. To know what constituted the different kinds of rythmical feet among the ancients, with respect to the number and quantity of their syllables, we have nothing to do but to consult those who have written on grammar and prosody: it is the business of a schoolmaster, rather than the accomplishment of a man of taste.

Various essays have been made in different countries to compare the characters of ancient and modern versification, and to point out the difference beyond any possibility of mistake. But they have made distinctions, where in fact there was no difference, and left the criterion unobserved. They have transferred the name of

rhyme to a regular repetition of the same sound at the end of the line, and set up this vile monotony as the characteristic of modern verse, in contradistinction to the feet of the ancients, which they pretend the poetry of modern languages will not admit.

Rhyme, from the Greek word Ρυθμος, is nothing else but number, which was essential to the ancient, as well as to the modern versification. As to the jingle of similar sounds, though it was never used by the ancients in any regular return, in the middle or at the end of the line, and was by no means deemed essential to the versification, yet they did not reject it as a blemish, where it occurred without the appearance of constraint. We meet with it often in the epithets of Homer, ——Αργυρεοιο Βιοιο —Ανακ Ανδρων Αγαμεμνων—almost the whole first ode of Anacreon is what we call rhyme. The following line of Virgil has been admired for the similitude of sound in the first two words:

Ore, *Are*thusa, tuo Siculis confunditur undis.

Rythmus, or number, is certainly essential to verse, whether in the dead or living languages; and the real difference between the two is this: the number in ancient verse relates to the feet, and in modern poetry to the syllables; for, to assert that modern poetry has no feet, is a ridiculous absurdity. The feet, that principally enter into the composition of Greek and Latin verses, are either of two or three syllables: those of two syllables are either both long, as the spondee; or both short, as the pyrrhic; or one short and the other long, as the iambic; or one long, and the other short, as the trochee. Those of three syllables are the dactyl, of one long and two

short syllables; the anapest, of two short, and one long; the tribrachium, of three short; and the molossus, of three long.

From the different combinations of these feet, restricted to certain numbers, the ancients formed their different kinds of verses, such as the hexameter, or heroic, distinguished by six feet dactyls and spondees, the fifth being always a dactyl, and the last a spondee: *e. g.*

1 2 3 4 5 6
Principi-is obs-ta, se-ro medi-cina pa-ratur.

The pentameter of five feet; dactyls and spondees, or of six, reckoning two cæsuras.

1 2 3 4 5 6
Cum mala per lon-gas invalu-ere mo-ras.

They had likewise the iambic of three sorts, the dimeter, the trimeter, and the tetrameter, and all the different kinds of lyric verse specified in the odes of Sappho, Alcæus, Anacreon, and Horace. Each of these was distinguished by the number, as well as by the species of their feet; so that they were doubly restricted. Now all the feet of the ancient poetry are still found in the versification of living languages; for as cadence was regulated by the ear, it was impossible for a man to write melodious verse, without naturally falling into the use of ancient feet, though perhaps he neither knows their measure nor denomination. Thus Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, and all our poets, abound with dactyls, spondees, trochees, anapests, &c. which they used indiscriminately in all kinds of composition, whether tragic, epic, pastoral or ode, having in this particular greatly the advantage of the ancients, who were restricted to par-

ticular kinds of feet in particular kinds of verse. If we then are confined with the fetters of what is called rhyme, they were restricted to particular species of feet; so that the advantages and disadvantages are pretty equally balanced: but indeed the English are more free in this particular, than any other modern nation. They not only use blank verse in tragedy, and the epic, but even in lyric poetry. Milton's translation of Horace's Ode to Pyrrha is universally known, and generally admired; in our opinion, much above its merit. There is an ode extant without rhyme, addressed to evening, by the late Mr. Collins, much more beautiful; and Mr. Wharton, with some others, has happily succeeded in divers occasional pieces, that are free of this restraint: but the number in all of these depends upon the syllables, and not upon the feet, which are unlimited.

It is generally supposed, that the genius of the English language will not admit of Greek or Latin measure: but this, we apprehend, is a mistake, owing to the prejudice of education. It is impossible that the same measure, composed of the same times, should have a good effect upon the ear in one language, and a bad effect in another. The truth is, we have been accustomed from our infancy to the numbers of English poetry, and the very sound and signification of the words, dispose the ear to receive them in a certain manner; so that its disappointment must be attended with a disagreeable sensation. In imbibing the first rudiments of education, we acquire, as it were, another ear for the numbers of Greek and Latin poetry; and this being reserved entirely for the sounds and significations of the words that constitute those dead languages, will not easily accommodate itself

to the sounds of our vernacular tongue, though conveyed in the same time and measure. In a word, Latin and Greek have annexed to them the ideas of the ancient measure, from which they are not easily disjoined. But we will venture to say, this difficulty might be surmounted by an effort of attention, and a little practice; and in that case, we should in time be as well pleased with English as with Latin hexameters.

Sir Philip Sydney is said to have miscarried in his essays; but his miscarriage was no more than that of failing in an attempt to introduce a new fashion. The failure was not owing to any defect or imperfection in the scheme, but to the want of taste, to the irresolution and ignorance of the public. Without all doubt, the ancient measure, so different from that of modern poetry, must have appeared remarkably uncouth to people in general, who were ignorant of the classics; and nothing but the countenance and perseverance of the learned could reconcile them to the alteration. We have seen several late specimens of English hexameters and sapphics, so happily composed, that by attaching them to the idea of ancient measure, we found them in all respects as melodious and agreeable to the ear, as the works of Virgil and Anacreon, or Horace.

Though the number of syllables distinguishes the nature of the English verse from that of the Greek and Latin, it constitutes neither harmony, grace, nor expression. These must depend upon the choice of words, the seat of the accent, the pause, and the cadence. The accent, or tone, is understood to be an elevation or sinking of the voice in reciting: the pause is a rest, that divides the verse into two parts, each of them called a hemistich.

The pause and accent in English poetry vary occasionally, according to the meaning of the words; so that the hemistich does not always consist of an equal number of syllables; and this variety is agreeable, as it prevents a dull repetition of regular stops, like those in the French versification, every line of which is divided by a pause exactly in the middle. The cadence comprehends that poetical style, which animates every line; that propriety, which gives strength and expression; that numerosity, which renders the verse smooth, flowing, and harmonious; that significancy, which marks the passions, and in many cases made the sound an echo to the sense. The Greek and Latin languages, in being copious and ductile, are susceptible of a vast variety of cadences, which the living languages will not admit: and of these a reader of any ear will judge for himself.

ESSAY XIX.

SCHOOLS OF MUSIC, OBJECTIONS THERETO, AND ANSWERS.

A SCHOOL in the polite arts properly signifies that succession of artists, which has learned the principles of the art from some eminent master, either by hearing his lessons, or studying his works; and consequently, who imitate his manner, either through design or from habit. Musicians seem agreed in making only three principal schools in music; namely, the school of Pergolese, in Italy; of Lully, in France; and of Handel, in England; though some are for making Rameau the founder of a new school, different from those of the former, as he is the inventor of beauties peculiarly his own.

Without all doubt, Pergolese's music deserves the first rank: though excelling neither in variety of movements, number of parts, nor unexpected flights, yet he is universally allowed to be the musical Raphael of Italy. This great master's principal art consisted in knowing how to excite our passions by sounds, which seem frequently opposite to the passion they would express: by slow solemn sounds he is sometimes known to throw us into all the rage of battle; and even by faster movements he excites melancholy in every heart, that sounds are capable of affecting. This is a talent that seems born with the artist. We are unable to tell why such sounds affect us: they seem no way imitative of the passion they would express, but operate upon us by an inexpressible sympathy; the original of which is as inscrutable as the secret springs of life itself. To this excellence he adds another, in which he is superior to every other artist of the profession, the happy transition from one passion to another. No dramatic poet better knows to prepare his incidents than he: the audience are pleased in those intervals of passion, with the delicate, the simple harmony, if I may so express it, in which the parts are all thrown into fugues, or often are barely unison. His melodies also, where no passion is expressed, give equal pleasure from this delicate simplicity: and I need only instance that song in the *Serva Padrona*, which begins *Lo conosco a quegl' occelli,* as one of the finest instances of excellence in the duo.

The Italian artists in general have followed his manner, yet seem fond of embellishing the delicate simplicity of the original. Their style in music seems somewhat to resemble that of Seneca in writing, where there are some

beautiful starts of thought; but the whole is filled with studied elegance and unaffecting affectation.

Lully, in France, first attempted the improvement of their music, which in general resembled that of our old solemn chants in churches. It is worthy of remark in general, that the music of every country is solemn in proportion as the inhabitants are merry; or, in other words, the merriest, sprightliest nations, are remarked for having the slowest music; and those, whose character it is to be melancholy, are pleased with the most brisk and airy movements. Thus, in France, Poland, Ireland, and Switzerland, the national music is slow, melancholy, and solemn; in Italy, England, Spain, and Germany, it is faster, proportionably as the people are grave. Lully only changed a bad manner which he found, for a bad one of his own. His drowsy pieces are played still to the most sprightly audience that can be conceived; and even though Rameau, who is at once a musician and philosopher, has shown both by precept and example, what improvements French music may still admit of; yet his countrymen seem little convinced by his reasonings, and the Pont-neuf taste, as it is called, still prevails in their best performances.

The English school was first planned by Purcel: he attempted to unite the Italian manner that prevailed in his time, with the ancient Celtic carol, and the Scotch ballad, which probably had also its origin in Italy; for some of the best Scotch ballads ("The Broom of Cowden-knows," for instance,) are still ascribed to David Rizzio. But be that as it will, his manner was something peculiar to the English; and he might have continued as head of the English school, had not his merits been entirely

eclipsed by Handel. Handel, though originally a German, yet adopted the English manner: he had long laboured to please by Italian composition, but without success; and though his English oratorios are accounted inimitable, yet his Italian operas are fallen into oblivion. Pergonese excelled in passionate sublimity; Lully was remarkable for creating a new species of music, where all is elegant, but nothing passionate or sublime: Handel's true characteristic is sublimity; he has employed all the variety of sounds and parts in all his pieces; the performances of the rest may be pleasing, though executed by few performers; his require the full band. The attention is awakened, the soul is roused up at his pieces; but distinct passion is seldom expressed. In this particular he has seldom found success: he has been obliged, in order to express passion, to imitate words by sounds, which, though it gives the pleasure which imitation always produces, yet it fails of exciting those lasting affections, which it is in the power of sounds to produce. In a word, no man ever understood harmony so well as he; but in melody he has been exceeded by several.

[The following objections to the preceding Essay having been addressed to Dr. Smollett (as the Editor of the British Magazine, in which it first appeared;) that gentleman, with equal candour and politeness, communicated the MS. to Dr. Goldsmith, who returned his answers to the objector in the notes annexed.—Ed.]

Permit me to object against some things advanced in the paper on the subject of The different Schools of Music. The author of this article seems too hasty in degrad-

ing the harmonious Purcel[1] from the head of the English school, to erect in his room a foreigner, (Handel) who has not yet formed any school.[2] The gentleman, when he comes to communicate his thoughts upon the different schools of painting, may as well place Rubens

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[1] Had the objector said *melodious* Purcel, it had testified at least a greater acquaintance with music, and Purcel's peculiar excellence. Purcel in melody is frequently great; his song made in his last sickness, called Rosy Bowers, is a fine instance of this; but in harmony he is far short of the meanest of our modern composers; his fullest harmonies being exceedingly simple. His opera of Prince Arthur, the words of which were Dryden's, is reckoned his finest piece. But what is that, in point of harmony, to what we every day hear from modern masters? In short, with respect to genius, Purcel had a fine one: he greatly improved an art but little known in England before his time: for this he deserves our applause; but the present prevailing taste in music is very different from what he left it; and who was the improver since his time we shall see by and by.

[2] Handel may be said, as justly as any man, not Pergolese excepted, to have founded a new school of music. When he first came into England, his music was entirely Italian: he composed for the opera; and though even then his pieces were liked, yet did they not meet with universal approbation. In those he has too servilely imitated the modern vitiated Italian taste, by placing what foreigners call the *point d'orgue* too closely and injudiciously. But in his oratorios he is perfectly an original genius. In these, by steering between the manners of Italy and England, he has struck out new harmonies, and formed a species of music different from all others. He has left some excellent and eminent scholars, particularly Worgan and Smith, who compose nearly in his manner; a manner as different from Purcel's, as from that of modern Italy. Consequently, Handel may be placed at the head the English school.

at the head of the English painters, because he left some monuments of his art in England.[3] He says, that Handel, though *originally* a German, (as most certainly he was, and continued so to his last breath), yet adopted the English manner.[4] Yes, to be be sure, just as much as

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[3] The objector will not have Handel's school to be called an English school, because he was a German. Handel, in a great measure, found in England those essential differences which characterise his music; we have already shown that he had them not upon his arrival. Had Rubens come over to England but moderately skilled in his art; had he learned here all his excellency in colouring, and correctness of designing; had he left several scholars excellent in his manner behind him; I should not scruple to call the school erected by him, the English school of painting. Not the country in which a man is born, but his peculiar style, either in painting or in music, that constitutes him of this or that school. Thus Champagne, who painted in the manner of the French school, is always placed among the painters of that school, though he was born in Flanders, and should consequently, by the objector's rule, be placed among the Flemish painters. Kneller is placed in the German school, and Ostade in the Dutch, though born in the same city. Primatice, who may be truly said to have founded the Roman school, was born in Bologna; though if his country was to determine his school, he should have been placed in the Lombard. There might several other instances be produced; but these, it is hoped, will be sufficient to prove, that Handel, though a German, may be placed at the head of the English school.

[4] Handel was originally a German; but by a long continuance in England, he might have been looked upon as naturalized to the country. I do not pretend to be a fine writer: however, if the gentleman dislikes the expression (although he must be convinced it is a common one,) I wish it were mended.

Rubens the painter did. Your correspondent, in the course of his discoveries, tells us besides, that some of the best Scotch ballads ("The Broom of Cowdenknows," for instance,) are still ascribed to David Rizzio.[5] This Rizzio must have been a most original genius, or have possessed extraordinary imitative powers, to have come, so advanced in life as he did, from Italy, and strike so far out of the common road of his own country's music.

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[5] I said that they were ascribed to David Rizzio. That they are, the objector need only look into Mr. Oswald's Collection of Scotch Tunes, and he will there find, not only "The Broom of Cowdenknows," but also "The Black Eagle," and several other of the best Scotch tunes, ascribed to him. Though this might be a sufficient answer, yet I must be permitted to go further, to tell the objector the opinions of our best modern musicians in this particular. It is the opinion of the melodious Geminiani, that we have in the dominions of Great Britain no original music, except the Irish; the Scotch and English being originally borrowed from the Italians. And that his opinion in this respect is just, (for I would not be swayed merely by authorities,) it is very reasonable to suppose, first, from the conformity between the Scotch and ancient Italian music. They, who compare the old French Vandevilles, brought from Italy by Rinuccini, with those pieces ascribed to David Rizzio, who was pretty nearly contemporary with him, will find a strong resemblance, notwithstanding the opposite characters of the two nations, which have preserved those pieces. When I would have them compared, I mean I would have their bases compared, by which the similitude may be most exactly seen. Secondly, it is reasonable from the ancient music of the Scotch, which is still preserved in the Highlands, and which bears no resemblance at all to the music of the Low Country. The Highland tunes are sung to Irish words, and flow entirely in the Irish manner. On

A mere fiddler,[6] a shallow coxcomb, a giddy, insolent, worthless fellow, to compose such pieces as nothing but genuine sensibility of mind, and a exquisite feeling of those passions which animate only the finest souls, could dictate; and in a manner, too, so extravagantly distant from that, to which he had all his life been accustomed! It is impossible. He might indeed have had presumption enough to add some flourishes to a few favourite airs, like a cobbler of old plays, when he takes it upon him to mend Shakespeare. So far he might go; but further it is impossible for any one to believe, that has but just ear enough to distinguish between the Italian and Scotch music, and is disposed to consider the subject with the least degree of attention.

March 18, 1760. S. R.

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the other hand, the Lowland music is always sung to English words.

[6] David Rizzio was neither a mere fiddler, nor a shallow coxcomb, nor a worthless fellow, nor a stranger in Scotland. He had indeed been brought over from Piedmont, to be put at the head of a band of music, by King James V., one of the most elegant princes of his time, an exquisite judge of music, as well as of poetry, architecture, and all the fine arts. Rizzio, at the time of his death, had been above twenty years in Scotland; he was secretary to the queen, and at the same time an agent from the Pope; so that he could not be so obscure as he has been represented.

ESSAY XX.

ON CAROLAN, THE IRISH BARD.

THERE can be perhaps no greater entertainment than to compare the rude Celtic simplicity with modern refinement. Books, however, seem incapable of furnishing the parallel; and to be acquainted with the ancient manners of our own ancestors, we should endeavour to look for their remains in those countries, which, being in some measure retired from an intercourse with other nations, are still untinctured with foreign refinement, language, or breeding.

The Irish will satisfy curiosity in this respect, preferably to all other nations I have seen. They, in several parts of that country, still adhere to their ancient language, dress, furniture, and superstitions; several customs exist among them, that still speak their original; and in some respects, Cæsar's description of the ancient Britons is applicable to them.

Their bards, in particular, are still held in great veneration among them: those traditional heralds are invited to every funeral, in order to fill up the intervals of the howl with their songs and harps. In these they rehearse the actions of the ancestors of the deceased, bewail the bondage of their country under the English government, and generally conclude with advising the young men and maidens to make the best use of their time, for they will soon, for all their present bloom, be stretched under the table, like the dead body before them.

Of all the bards this country ever produced, the last and the greatest was CAROLAN THE BLIND. He was at

once a poet, a musician, a composer, and sung his own verses to his harp. The original natives never mention his name without rapture; both his poetry and music they have by heart; and even some of the English themselves, who have been transplanted there, find his music extremely pleasing. A song, beginning "O'Rourke's noble fare will ne'er be forgot," translated by Dean Swift, is of his composition; which, though perhaps by this means the best known of his pieces, is yet by no means the most deserving. His songs, in general, may be compared to those of Pindar, as they have frequently the same flights of imagination, and are composed, (I don't say written, for he could not write) merely to flatter some man of fortune upon some excellence of the same kind. In these, one man is praised for the excellence of his stable, as in Pindar; another, for his hospitality; a third, for the beauty of his wife and children; and a fourth, for the antiquity of his family. Whenever any of the original natives of distinction were assembled at feasting or revelling, Carolan was generally there, where he was always ready with his harp to celebrate their praises. He seemed by nature formed for his profession; for as he was born blind, so also he was possessed of a most astonishing memory, and a facetious turn of thinking, which gave his entertainers infinite satisfaction. Being once at the house of an Irish nobleman, where there was a musician present, who was eminent in the profession, Carolan immediately challenged him to a trial of skill. To carry the jest forward, his lordship persuaded the musician to accept the challenge, and he accordingly played over on his fiddle the fifth concerto of Vivaldi. Carolan, immediately taking his harp, played over the whole piece after him, without missing a

note, though he had never heard it before; which produced some surprise: but their astonishment increased, when he assured them he could make a concerto in the same taste himself, which he instantly composed, and that with such spirit and elegance, that it may compare (for we have it still,) with the finest compositions of Italy.

His death was not less remarkable than his life. Homer was never more fond of a glass than he; he would drink whole pints of Usquebaugh, and, as he used to think, without any ill consequence. His intemperance, however, in this respect, at length brought on an incurable disorder, and when just at the point of death, he called for a cup of his beloved liquor. Those who were standing round him, surprised at the demand, endeavoured to persuade him to the contrary; but he persisted; and, when the bowl was brought him, attempted to drink, but could not; wherefore, giving away the bowl, he observed with a smile, that it would be hard if two such friends as he and the cup should part at least without kissing; and then expired.

ESSAY XXI.

ON THE TENANTS OF THE LEASOWES.

Of all men, who form gay illusions of distant happiness, perhaps a poet is the most sanguine. Such is the ardour of his hopes, that they often are equal to actual enjoyment; and he feels more in expectance, than actual fruition. I have often regarded a character of this kind with some degree of envy. A man possessed of such warm imagination, commands all nature, and arrogates possessions, of

which the owner has a blunter relish. While life continues, the alluring prospect lies before him; he travels in the pursuit with confidence, and resigns it only with his last breath.

It is this happy confidence which gives life its true relish, and keeps up our spirits amidst every distress and disappointment. How much less would be done, if a man knew how little he can do! How wretched a creature would he be, if he saw the end as well as the beginning of his projects! He would have nothing left, but to sit down in torpid despair, and exchange employment for actual calamity.

I was led into this train of thinking, upon lately visiting[1] the beautiful gardens of the late Mr. Shenstone, who was himself a poet, and possessed of that warm imagination, which made him ever foremost in the pursuit of flying happiness. Could he but have foreseen the end of all his schemes, for whom he was improving, and what changes his designs were to undergo, he would have scarcely amused his innocent life with what, for several years, employed him in a most harmless manner, and abridged his scanty fortune. As the progress of this improvement is a true picture of sublunary vicissitude, I could not help calling up my imagination, which, while I walked pensively along, suggested the following reverie.

As I was turning my back upon a beautiful piece of water, enlivened with cascades and rock-work, and entering a dark walk, by which ran a prattling brook, the genius of the place appeared before me; but more resembling the god of Time, than him more particularly ap-

[1] 1773.

pointed to the care of gardens. Instead of shears, he bore a scythe; and he appeared rather with the implements of husbandry, than those of a modern gardener. Having remembered this place in its pristine beauty, I could not help condoling with him on its present ruinous situation. I spoke to him of the many alterations which had been made, and all for the worse; of the many shades which had been taken away, of the bowers that were destroyed by neglect, and the hedge-rows that were spoiled by clipping. The genius, with a sigh, received my condolement, and assured me, that he was equally a martyr to ignorance and taste, to refinement and rusticity. Seeing me desirous of knowing further, he went on:

"You see, in the place before you, the paternal inheritance of a poet; and to a man content with little, fully sufficient for his subsistence; but a strong imagination, and a long acquaintance with the rich, are dangerous foes to contentment. Our poet, instead of sitting down to enjoy life, resolved to prepare for its future enjoyment; and set about converting a place of profit into a scene of pleasure. This he at first supposed could be accomplished at a small expense; and he was willing for a while to stint his income, to have an opportunity of displaying his taste. The improvement in this manner went forward; one beauty attained led him to wish for some other; but he still hoped that every emendation would be the last. It was now therefore found, that the improvement exceeded the subsidy, that the place was grown too large and too fine for the inhabitant. But that pride which was once exhibited, could not retire; the garden was made for the owner, and though it was become unfit for him, he could not willingly resign it to another. Thus,

the first idea of its beauties contributing to the happiness of his life, was found unfaithful; so that, instead of looking within for satisfaction, he began to think of having recourse to the praises of those who came to visit his improvement.

"In consequence of this hope, which now took possession of his mind, the gardens were opened to the visits of every stranger; and the country flocked round to walk, to criticise, to admire, and to do mischief. He soon found, that the admirers of his taste left by no means such strong marks of their applause, as the envious did of their malignity. All the windows of his temples, and the walls of his retreats, were impressed with the characters of profaneness, ignorance, and obscenity; his hedges were broken, his statues and urns defaced, and his lawns worn bare. It was now, therefore, necessary to shut up the gardens once more, and to deprive the public of that happiness, which had before ceased to be his own.

"In this situation, the poet continued for a time in the character of a jealous lover, fond of the beauty he keeps, but unable to supply the extravagance of every demand. The garden by this time was completely grown and finished; the marks of art were covered up by the luxuriance of nature; the winding walks were grown dark; the brook assumed a natural sylvage; and the rocks were covered with moss. Nothing now remained but to enjoy the beauties of the place, when the poor poet died, and his garden was obliged to be sold for the benefit of those who had contributed to its embellishment.

"The beauties of the place had now for some time been celebrated as well in prose as in verse; and all men of taste wished for so envied a spot, where every urn was

marked with the poet's pencil, and every walk awakened genius and meditation. The first purchaser was one Mr. Truepenny, a button-maker, who was possessed of three thousand pounds, and was willing also to be possessed of taste and genius.

"As the poet's ideas were for the natural wildness of the landscape, the button-maker's were for the more regular production of art. He conceived, perhaps, that as it is a beauty in a button to be of a regular pattern, so the same regularity ought to obtain in a landscape. Be this as it will, he employed the shears to some purpose; he clipped up the hedges, cut down the gloomy walks, made vistos upon the stables and hog-styes, and showed his friends that a man of taste should always be doing.

"The next candidate for taste and genius was a captain of a ship, who bought the garden because the former possessor could find nothing more to mend; but unfortunately he had taste too. His great passion lay in building, in making Chinese temples, and cage-work summer-houses. As the place before had an appearance of retirement, and inspired meditation, he gave it a more peopled air; every turning presented a cottage, or ice-house, or a temple; the improvement was converted into a little city, and it only wanted inhabitants to give it the air of a village in the East-Indies.

"In this manner, in less than ten years, the improvement has gone through the hands of as many proprietors, who were all willing to have taste, and to show their taste too. As the place had received its best finishing from the hand of the first possessor, so every innovator only lent a hand to do mischief. Those parts, which were obscure, have been enlightened; those walks, which led naturally, have

been twisted into serpentine windings. The colour of the flowers of the field is not more various than the variety of tastes that have been employed here, and all in direct contradiction to the original aim of the first improver. Could the original possessor but revive, with what a sorrowful heart would he look upon his favourite spot again! He would scarcely recollect a dryad or a wood-nymph of his former acquaintance, and might perhaps find himself as much a stranger in his own plantation, as in the deserts of Siberia."

ESSAY XXII.

ON SENTIMENTAL COMEDY.

The theatre, like all other amusements, has its fashions and its prejudices; and when satiated with its excellence, mankind begin to mistake change for improvement. For some years, tragedy was the reigning entertainment; but of late it has entirely given way to comedy, and our best efforts are now exerted in these lighter kinds of composition. The pompous train, the swelling phrase, and the unnatural rant, are displaced for that natural portrait of human folly and frailty, of which all are judges, because all have sat for the picture.

But as in describing nature, it is presented with a double face, either of mirth or sadness, our modern writers find themselves at a loss which chiefly to copy from; and it is now debated, whether the exhibition of human distress is likely to afford the mind more entertainment, than that of human absurdity?

Comedy is defined by Aristotle to be a picture of the frailties of the lower part of mankind, to distinguish it from tragedy, which is an exhibition of the misfortunes of the great. When comedy, therefore, ascends to produce the characters of princes or generals upon the stage, it is out of its walk, since low life and middle life are entirely its object. The principal question therefore is, whether in describing low or middle life, an exhibition of its follies be not preferable to a detail of its calamities? Or, in other words, which deserves the preference? The weeping sentimental comedy, so much in fashion at present,[1] or the laughing, and even low comedy, which seems to have been last exhibited by Vanbrugh and Cibber?

If we apply to authorities, all the great masters in the dramatic art have but one opinion. Their rule is, that as tragedy displays the calamities of the great, so comedy should excite our laughter, by ridiculously exhibiting the follies of the lower part of mankind. Boileau, one of the best modern critics, asserts, that comedy will not admit of tragic distress:

Le comique, ennemi des soupirs et des pleurs,
N'admet point dans ses vers des tragiques douleurs.

Nor is this rule without the strongest foundation in nature, as the distresses of the mean by no means affect us so strongly as the calamities of the great. When tragedy exhibits to us some great man fallen from his height, and struggling with want and adversity, we feel his situation in the same manner as we suppose he himself must feel, and our pity is increased in proportion to the height

[1] 1773.

from which he fell. On the contrary, we do not so strongly sympathize with one born in humbler circumstances, and encountering accidental distress: so that while we melt for Belisarius, we scarcely give halfpence to the beggar who accosts us in the street. The one has our pity; the other our contempt. Distress, therefore, is the proper object of tragedy, since the great excite our pity by their fall; but not equally so of comedy, since the actors employed in it are originally so mean, that they sink but little by their fall.

Since the first origin of the stage, tragedy and comedy have run in distinct channels, and never till of late encroached upon the provinces of each other. Terence, who seems to have made the nearest approaches, always judiciously stops short before he comes to the downright pathetic; and yet he is even reproached by Cæsar for wanting the *Vis Comica*. All the other comic writers of antiquity aim only at rendering folly or vice ridiculous, but never exalt their characters into buskined pomp, or make what Voltaire humorously calls *a Tradesman's Tragedy*.

Yet, notwithstanding this weight of authority, and the universal practice of former ages, a new species of dramatic composition has been introduced under the name of *sentimental* comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses, rather than the faults of mankind, make our interest in the piece. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his favourite foible. In these plays, almost all the characters are good, and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their *tin* mo-

ney on the stage; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended; and the comedy aims at touching our passions, without the power of being truly pathetic. In this manner, we are likely to lose one great source of entertainment on the stage; for while the comic poet is invading the province of the tragic muse, he leaves her lovely sister quite neglected. Of this, however, he is no ways solicitous, as he measures his fame by his profits.

But it will be said, that the theatre is formed to amuse mankind, and that it matters little, if this end be answered, by what means it is obtained. If mankind find delight in weeping at comedy, it would be cruel to abridge them in that or any other innocent pleasure. If those pieces are denied the name of comedies, yet call them by any other name, and if they are delightful, they are good. Their success, it will be said, is a mark of their merit; and it is only abridging our happiness, to deny us an inlet to amusement.

These objections, however, are rather specious than solid. It is true, that amusement is a great object of the theatre; and it will be allowed, that these sentimental pieces do often amuse us: but the question is, whether the true comedy would not amuse us more? The question is, whether a character supported throughout a piece with its ridicule still attending, would not give us more delight than this species of bastard tragedy, which only is applauded because it is new?

A friend of mine, who was sitting unmoved at one of

these sentimental pieces, was asked how he could be so indifferent. "Why truly," says he, "as the hero is but a tradesman, it is indifferent to me whether he be turned out of his counting-house on Fish-street Hill, since he will still have enough left to open shop in St. Giles's."

The other objection is as ill grounded; for though we should give these pieces another name, it will not mend their efficacy. It will continue a kind of *mulish* production, with all the defects of its opposite parents, and marked with sterility. If we are permitted to make comedy weep, we have an equal right to make tragedy laugh, and to set down in blank verse the jests and repartees of all the attendants in a funeral procession.

But there is one argument in favour of sentimental comedy, which will keep it on the stage, in spite of all that can be said against it. It is of all others the most easily written. Those abilities, that can hammer out a novel, are fully sufficient for the production of a sentimental comedy. It is only sufficient to raise the characters a little; to deck out the hero with a riband, or give the heroine a title; then to put an insipid dialogue, without character or humour, into their mouths; give them mighty good hearts, very fine clothes, furnish a new set of scenes, make a pathetic scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation through the whole; and there is no doubt but all the ladies will cry, and all the gentlemen applaud.

Humour at present seems to be departing from the stage; and it will soon happen, that our comic players will have nothing left for it but a fine coat and a song. It depends upon the audience, whether they will actually drive those poor merry creatures from the stage, or sit at

a play as gloomy as at the tabernacle. It is not easy to recover an art when once lost; and it will be but a just punishment, that when, by our being too fastidious, we have banished humour from the stage, we should ourselves be deprived of the art of laughing.

ESSAY XXIII.

SCOTCH MARRIAGES.

As I see you are fond of gallantry, and seem willing to set young people together as soon as you can, I cannot help lending my assistance to your endeavours, as I am greatly concerned in the attempt. You must know, sir, that I am landlady of one of the most noted inns on the road to Scotland, and have seldom less than eight or ten couples a-week, who go down rapturous lovers, and return man and wife.

If there be in this world an agreeable situation, it must be that in which a young couple find themselves when just let loose from confinement, and whirling off to the land of promise. When the post-chaise is driving off, and the blinds are drawn up, sure nothing can equal it. And yet, I do not know how, what with the fears of being pursued, or the wishes for greater happiness, not one of my customers but seems gloomy and out of temper. The gentlemen are all sullen, and the ladies discontented.

But if it be so going down, how is it with them coming back? Having been for a fortnight together, they are then mighty good company to be sure. It is then the young lady's indiscretion stares her in the face; and

the gentleman himself finds that much is to be done before the money comes in.

For my own part, sir, I was married in the usual way; all my friends were at the wedding; I was conducted with great ceremony from the table to the bed: and I do not find that it any ways diminished my happiness with my husband, while, poor man! he continued with me. For my part, I am entirely for doing things in the old family way: I hate your new-fashioned manners, and never loved an outlandish marriage in my life.

As I have had numbers call at my house, you may be sure I was not idle in inquiring who they were, and how they did in the world after they left me. I cannot say that I ever heard much good come of them; and of a history of twenty-five, that I noted down in my leger, I do not know a single couple that would not have been full as happy if they had gone the plain way to work, and asked the consent of their parents. To convince you of it, I will mention the names of a few, and refer the rest to some fitter opportunity.

Imprimis, Miss Jenny Hastings went down to Scotland with a tailor, who, to be sure, for a tailor, was a very agreeable sort of a man. But I do not know how, he did not take proper measure of the young lady's disposition: they quarrelled at my house on their return; so she left him for a cornet of dragoons, and he went back to his shopboard.

Miss Rachel Runfort went off with a grenadier. They spent all their money going down; so that he carried her down in a post-chaise, and coming back, she helped to carry his knapsack.

Miss Racket went down with her lover in their own

phaeton; but upon their return, being very fond of driving, she would be every now and then for holding the whip. This bred a dispute; and before they were a fortnight together, she felt that he could exercise the whip on somebody else besides the horses.

Miss Meekly, though all compliance to the will of her lover, could never reconcile him to the change of his situation. It seems he married her, supposing that she had a large fortune; but being deceived in their expectations, they parted, and they now keep separate garrets in Rosemary-lane.

The next couple of whom I have any account, actually lived together in great harmony and uncloying kindness for no less than a month; but the lady, who was a little in years, having parted with her fortune to her dearest life, he left her, to make love to that better part of her, which he valued more.

The next pair consisted of an Irish fortune-hunter, and one of the prettiest modestest ladies that ever my eyes beheld. As he was a well-looking gentleman, all dressed in lace, and as she seemed very fond of him, I thought they were blessed for life. Yet I was quickly mistaken. The lady was no better than a common woman of the town, and he was no better than a sharper; so they agreed upon a mutual divorce; he now dresses at the York Ball, and she is in keeping by the member for our borough in parliament.

In this manner we see, that all those marriages in which there is interest on one side, and disobedience on the other, are not likely to promise a long harvest of delights. If our fortune-hunting gentlemen would but speak out, the young lady, instead of a lover, would often

find a sneaking rogue, that only wanted the lady's purse, and not her heart. For my own part, I never saw any thing but design and falsehood in every one of them; and my blood has boiled in my veins when I saw a young fellow of twenty kneeling at the feet of a twenty thousand pounder, professing his passion, while he was taking aim at her money. I do not deny but there may be love in a Scotch marriage, but it is generally all on one side.

Of all the sincere admirers I ever knew, a man of my acquaintance, who, however, did not run away with his mistress to Scotland, was the most so. An old exciseman of our town, who, as you may guess, was not very rich, had a daughter, who, as you shall see, was not very handsome. It was the opinion of every body, that this young woman would not soon be married, as she wanted two main articles, beauty and fortune. But for all this, a very well-looking man, that happened to be travelling those parts, came and asked the exciseman for his daughter in marriage. The exciseman, willing to deal openly by him, asked if he had seen the girl; "for," says he, "she is hump-backed."—"Very well," cried the stranger, "that will do for me."—"Ay," says the exciseman, "but my daughter is as brown as a berry."—"So much the better," cried the stranger; "such skins wear well."—"But she is bandy-legged," says the excisemen. "No matter," cries the other; "her petticoats will hide that defect."—"But then she is very poor, and wants an eye."—"Your description delights me," cries the stranger: "I have been looking out for one of her make; for I keep an exhibition of wild beasts, and intend to show her off for a Chimpanzee."

ESSAY XXIV.

ON THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

MANKIND have ever been prone to expatiate in the praise of human nature. The dignity of man is a subject that has always been the favourite theme of humanity; they have declaimed with that ostentation which usually accompanies such as are sure of having a partial audience; they have obtained victories, because there were none to oppose. Yet from all I have ever read or seen, men appear more apt to err by having too high, than by having too despicable an opinion of their nature; and by attempting to exalt their original place in the creation, depress their real value in society.

The most ignorant nations have always been found to think most highly of themselves. The Deity has ever been thought peculiarly concerned in their glory and preservation; to have fought their battles, and inspired their teachers: their wizrads are said to be familiar with heaven: and every hero has a guard of angels, as well as men, to attend him. When the Portuguese first came among the wretched inhabitants of the coast of Africa, these savage nations readily allowed the strangers more skill in navigation and war; yet still considered them at best but as useful servants, brought to their coast by their guardian serpent, to supply them with luxuries they could have lived without. Though they could grant the Portuguese more riches, they could never allow them to have such a king as their Tottimondelem, who wore a bracelet of shells round his neck, and whose legs were covered with ivory.

In this manner, examine a savage in the history of his country and predecessors, you ever find his warriors able to conquer armies, and his sages acquainted with more than possible knowledge: human nature is to him an unknown country; he thinks it capable of great things, because he is ignorant of its boundaries; whatever can be conceived to be done, he allows to be possible, and whatever is possible he conjectures must have been done. He never measures the actions and powers of others by what himself is able to perform, nor makes a proper estimate of the greatness of his fellows, by bringing it to the standard of his own capacity. He is satisfied to be one of a country where mighty things have been; and imagines the fancied power of others reflects a lustre on himself. Thus, by degrees he loses the idea of his own insignificance in a confused notion of the extraordinary powers of humanity, and is willing to grant extraordinary gifts to every pretender, because unacquainted with their claims.

This is the reason why demi-gods and heroes have ever been erected in times or countries of ignorance and barbarity: they addressed a people who had high opinions of human nature, because they were ignorant how far it could extend; they addressed a people who were willing to allow that men should be gods, because they were yet imperfectly acquainted with God and with man. These impostors knew, that all men are naturally fond of seeing something very great made from the little materials of humanity; that ignorant nations are not more proud of building a tower to reach heaven, or a pyramid to last for ages, than of raising up a demi-god of their own country and creation. The same pride that erects a colossus or a pyra-

mid, instals a god or a hero: but though the adoring savage can raise his colossus to the clouds, he can exalt the hero not one inch above the standard of humanity; incapable, therefore, of exalting the idol, he debases himself, and falls prostrate before him.

When man has thus acquired an erroneous idea of the dignity of his species, he and the gods become perfectly intimate; men are but angels, angels are but men, nay, but servants that stand in waiting to execute human commands. The Persians, for instance, thus address their prophet Haly: "I salute thee, glorious Creator, of whom the sun is but the shadow. Masterpiece of the lord of human creatures, great star of justice and religion, the sea is not rich and liberal, but by the gifts of thy munificent hands. The angel treasurer of heaven reaps his harvest in the fertile gardens of the purity of thy nature. The *primum mobile* would never dart the ball of the sun through the trunk of heaven, were it not to serve the morning, out of the extreme love she has for thee. The angel Gabriel, messenger of truth, every day kisses the groundsel of thy gate. Were there a place more exalted than the most high throne of God, I would affirm it to be thy place, O master of the faithful! Gabriel, with all his art and knowledge, is but a mere scholar to thee." Thus, my friend, men think proper to treat angels; but if, indeed, there be such an order of beings, with what a degree of satirical contempt must they listen to the songs of little mortals thus flattering each other! thus to see creatures, wiser indeed than the monkey, and more active than the oyster, claiming to themselves a mastery of heaven! minims, the tenants of an atom, thus arrogating a partnership in the creation of universal nature! Surely Heaven is kind, that launches no

thunder at those guilty heads; but it is kind, and regards their follies with pity, nor will destroy creatures that it loved into being.

But whatever success this practice of making demi-gods might have been attended with in barbarous nations, I do not know that any man became a god in a country where the inhabitants were refined. Such countries generally have too close an inspection into human weakness to think it invested with celestial power. They sometimes, indeed, admit the gods of strangers, or of their ancestors, who had their existence in times of obscurity; their weakness being forgotten, while nothing but their power and their miracles were remembered. The Chinese, for instance, never had a god of their own country; the idols which the vulgar worship at this day were brought from the barbarous nations around them. The Roman emperors, who pretended to divinity, were generally taught by a poniard that they were mortal; and Alexander, though he passed among barbarous countries for a real god, could never persuade his polite countrymen into a similitude of thinking. The Lacedæmonians shrewdly complied with his commands, by the following sarcastic edict:

Εἰ Αλεξανδρος θελεται ειναι Θεος, Θεος εστω.

AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

Present State

OF

POLITE LEARNING.

Εμοι προς φιλοσοφους εστι φιλια· προς μεν τοι σοφιστας η γραμματιστας· ουτε νυν εστι φιλια ουτε υστερον ποτε γενοιτο.

Tolerabile si Ædificia nostra diruerent Ædificandi capaces.

THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS WORK APPEARED IN 1759, AND THE SECOND WAS PRINTED IN 1774.

AN INQUIRY,

&c.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

It has been so long the practice to represent literature as declining, that every renewal of this complaint now comes with diminished influence. The public has been so often excited by a false alarm, that at present the nearer we approach the threatened period of decay, the more our security increases.

It will now probably be said, that taking the decay of genius for granted, as I do, argues either resentment or partiality. The writer, possessed of fame, it may be asserted, is willing to enjoy it without a rival, by lessening every competitor; or, if unsuccessful, he is desirous to turn upon others the contempt which is levelled at himself; and being convicted at the bar of literary justice, hopes for pardon, by accusing every brother of the same profession.

Sensible of this, I am at a loss where to find an apology for persisting to arraign the merit of the age; for joining in a cry, which the judicious have long since left to be kept up by the vulgar; and for adopting the sentiments of the multitude, in a performance that at best can please only a few.

Complaints of our degeneracy in literature as well as in morals, I own, have been frequently exhibited of late; but seem to be enforced more with the ardour of devious declamation, than the calmness of deliberate inquiry. The dullest critic, who strives at a reputation for delicacy, by showing he cannot be pleased, may pathetically assure us, that our taste is upon the decline; may consign every modern performance to oblivion, and bequeath nothing to posterity, except the labours of our ancestors or his own. Such general invective, however, conveys no instruction: all it teaches is, that the writer dislikes an age by which he is probably disregarded. The manner of being useful on the subject would be to point out the symptoms, to investigate the causes, and direct to the remedies of the approaching decay. This is a subject hitherto unattempted in criticism; perhaps it is the only subject in which criticism can be useful.

How far the writer is equal to such an undertaking the reader must determine; yet, perhaps, his observations may be just, though his manner of expressing them should only serve as an example of the errors he undertakes to reprove.

Novelty. however, is not permitted to usurp the place of reason; it may attend, but shall not conduct the inquiry. But it should be observed, that the more original any performance is, the more it is liable to deviate; for cautious stupidity is always in the right.

CHAP. II.

THE CAUSES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECLINE OF LEARNING.

If we consider the revolutions which have happened in the commonwealth of letters, survey the rapid progress of learning in one period of antiquity, or its amazing decline in another, we shall be almost induced to accuse Nature of partiality, as if she had exhausted all her efforts in adorning one age, while she left the succeeding entirely neglected. It is not to Nature, however, but to ourselves alone, that this partiality must be ascribed; the seeds of excellence are sown in every age, and it is wholly owing to a wrong direction in the passions or pursuits of mankind, that they have not received the proper cultivation.

As in the best regulated societies, the very laws which at first give the government solidity, may in the end contribute to its dissolution, so the efforts which might have promoted learning in its feeble commencement, may, if continued, retard its progress. The paths of science, which were at first intricate, because untrodden, may at last grow toilsome, because too much frequented. As learning advances, the candidates for its honours become more numerous, and the acquisition of fame more uncertain; the modest may despair of attaining it, and the opulent think it too precarious to pursue. Thus the task of supporting the honour of the times may at last devolve on indigence and effrontery, while learning must partake of the contempt of its professors.

To illustrate these assertions, it may be proper to take a slight review of the decline of ancient learning; to consider how far its depravation was owing to the impossibility of supporting continued perfection; in what respects it proceeded from voluntary corruption; and how far it was hastened on by accident. If modern learning be compared with ancient in these different lights, a parallel between both, which has hitherto produced only vain dispute, may contribute to amusement, perhaps to instruction. We shall thus be enabled to perceive what period of antiquity the present age most resembles, whether we are making advances towards excellence, or retiring again to primeval obscurity; we shall thus be taught to acquiesce in those defects which it is impossible to prevent; and reject all faulty innovations, though offered under the specious titles of improvement.

Learning, when planted in any country, is transient and fading, nor does it flourish till slow gradations of improvement have naturalized it to the soil. It makes feeble advances, begins among the vulgar, and rises into reputation among the great. It cannot be established in a state at once, by introducing the learned of other countries; these may grace a court, but seldom enlighten a kingdom. Ptolemy, Philadelphus, Constantine, Porphyrogeneta, Alfred, or Charlemagne, might have invited learned foreigners into their dominions, but could not establish learning. While in the radiance of royal favour, every art and science seemed to flourish; but when that was withdrawn, they quickly felt the rigours of a strange climate, and with exotic constitutions perished by neglect.

As the arts and sciences are slow in coming to matu-

rity, it is requisite, in order to their perfection, that the state should be permanent which gives them reception. There are numberless attempts without success, and experiments without conclusion, between the first rudiments of an art, and its utmost perfection; between the outlines of a shadow, and the picture of an Apelles. Leisure is required to go through the tedious interval, to join the experience of predecessors to our own, or enlarge our views by building on the ruined attempts of former adventurers. All this may be performed in a society of long continuance; but if the kingdom be but of short duration, as was the case of Arabia, learning seems coeval, sympathizes with its political struggles, and is annihilated in its dissolution.

But permanence in a state is not alone sufficient; it is requisite also for this end that it should be free. Naturalists assure us, that all animals are sagacious in proportion as they are removed from the tyranny of others: in native liberty, the elephant is a citizen, and the beaver an architect; but whenever the tyrant man intrudes upon their community, their spirit is broken, they seem anxious only for safety, and their intellects suffer an equal diminution with their prosperity. The parallel will hold with regard to mankind: fear naturally represses invention; benevolence, ambition; for in a nation of slaves, as in the despotic governments of the east, to labour after fame, is to be a candidate for danger.

To attain literary excellence also, it is requisite that the soil and climate should, as much as possible, conduce to happiness. The earth must supply man with the necessaries of life, before he has leisure or inclination to pursue more refined enjoyments. The climate also must

be equally indulgent; for, in too warm a region, the mind is relaxed into languor, and by the opposite excess is chilled into torpid inactivity.

These are the principal advantages which tend to the improvement of learning; and all these were united in the states of Greece and Rome.

We must now examine what hastens or prevents its decline.

Those who behold the phenomena of Nature, and content themselves with the view, without inquiring into their causes, are perhaps wiser than is generally imagined. In this manner, our rude ancestors were acquainted with facts; and poetry, which helped the imagination and the memory, was thought the most proper vehicle for conveying their knowledge to posterity. It was the poet who harmonized the ungrateful accents of his native dialect, who lifted it above common conversation, and shaped its rude combinations into order. From him the orator formed a style; and though poetry first rose out of prose, in turn it gave birth to every prosaic excellence. Musicial period, concise expression, and delicacy of sentiment, were all excellencies derived from the poet; in short, he not only preceded, but formed the orator, philosopher, and historian.

When the observations of past ages were collected, philosophy next began to examine their causes. She had numberless facts from which to draw proper inferences; and poetry had taught her the strongest expression to enforce them. Thus the Greek philosophers, for instance, exerted all their happy talents in the investigation of truth, and the production of beauty. They saw that there was more excellence in captivating the judgment than in

raising a momentary astonishment: in their arts, they imitated only such parts of nature as might please in the representation; in the sciences, they cultivated such parts of knowledge as it was every man's duty to know. Thus learning was encouraged, protected, honoured; and in its turn, it adorned, strengthened, and harmonized the community.

But as the mind is vigorous and active, and experiment is dilatory and painful, the spirit of philosophy being excited, the reasoner, when destitute of experiment, had recourse to theory, and gave up what was useful, for refinement.

Critics, sophists, grammarians, rhetoricians, and commentators, now began to figure in the literary commonwealth. In the dawn of science, such are generally modest, and not entirely useless; their performances serve to mark the progress of learning, though they seldom contribute to its improvement. But as nothing but speculation was required in making proficients in their respective departments, so neither the satire nor the contempt of the wise, though Socrates was of the number; nor the laws levelled at them by the state, though Cato was in the legislature, could prevent their approaches.[1] Possessed of all the advantages of unfeeling dullness, laborious, insensible, and persevering, they still proceeded mending and mending every work of genius; or, to speak without irony, undermining all that was polite and useful. Libraries were loaded, but not enriched, with their labours; while the fatigue of reading their explanatory comments was tenfold that which might suffice for un-

[1] Vide Sueton. Hist. Gram.

derstanding the original; and their works effectually increased our application, by professing to remove it.

Against so obstinate and irrefragable an enemy, what could avail the unsupported sallies of genius, or the opposition of transitory resentment? In short, they conquered by persevering, claimed the right of dictating upon every work of taste, sentiment, or genius, and at last, when destitute of other employment, like the supernumerary domestics of the great, made work for each other.

They now took upon them to teach poetry to those who wanted genius; and the power of disputing to those who knew nothing of the subject in debate. It was observed how some of the most admired poets had copied nature. From these they collected dry rules, dignified with long names, and such were obtruded upon the public for their improvement. Common sense would be apt to suggest, that the art might be studied to more advantage rather by imitation than precept. It might suggest, that those rules were collected, not from nature, but a copy of nature, and would consequently give us still fainter resemblances of original beauty. It might still suggest, that explained wit makes but a feeble impression; that the observations of others are soon forgotten; those made by ourselves are permanent and useful. But, it seems, understandings of every size were to be mechanically instructed in poetry. If the reader was too dull to relish the beauties of Virgil, the comment of Servius was ready to brighten his imagination; if Terence could not raise him to a smile, Evantius was at hand with a long-winded scholium to increase his titillation. Such rules are calculated to make blockheads talk; but all the lemmata of the Lyceum are unable to give him feeling.

But it would be endless to recount all the absurdities which were hatched in the schools of those specious idlers; be it sufficient to say, that they increased as learning improved, but swarmed on its decline. It was then that every work of taste was buried in long comments; every useful subject in morals was distinguished away into casuistry, and doubt and subtilty characterized the learning of the age. Metrodorus, Valerius Probus, Aullus Gellius, Pedianus, Boethius, and a hundred others, to be acquainted with whom might show much reading, and but little judgment; these, I say, made choice each of an author, and delivered all their load of learning on his back; shame to our ancestors, many of their works have reached our times entire, while Tacitus himself has suffered mutilation!

In a word, the commonwealth of literature was at last wholly overrun by these studious triflers. Men of real genius were lost in the multitude; or, as in a world of fools, it were folly to aim at being an only exception, obliged to conform to every prevailing absurdity of the times. Original productions seldom appeared, and learning, as if grown superannuated, bestowed all its panegyric upon the vigour of its youth, and turned encomiast upon its former achievements.

It is to these, then, that the depravation of ancient polite learning is principally to be ascribed. By them, it was separated from common sense, and made the proper employment of speculative idlers. Men bred up among books, and seeing nature only by reflection, could do little, except hunt after perplexity and confusion. The public, therefore, with reason, rejected learning, when thus rendered barren, though voluminous; for we may

be assured, that the generality of mankind never lose a passion for letters while they continue to be either amusing or useful.

It was such writers as these, that rendered learning unfit for uniting and strengthening civil society, or for promoting the views of ambition. True philosophy had kept the Grecian states cemented into one effective body, more than any law for that purpose; and the Etrurian philosophy, which prevailed in the first ages of Rome, inspired those patriot virtues which paved the way to universal empire. But by the labours of commentators, when philosophy became abstruse, or triflingly minute; when doubt was presented instead of knowledge; when the orator was taught to charm the multitude with the music of his periods, and pronounced a declamation that might be sung as well as spoken, and often upon subjects wholly fictitious; in such circumstances, learning was entirely unsuited to all the purposes of government, or the designs of the ambitious. As long as the sciences could influence the state, and its politics were strengthened by them, so long did the community give them countenance and protection. But the wiser part of mankind would not be imposed upon by unintelligible jargon; nor, like the knight in Pantagruel, swallow a chimera for a breakfast, though even cooked by Aristotle. As the philosopher grew useless in the state, he also became contemptible. In the times of Lucian, he was chiefly remarkable for his avarice, his impudence, and his beard.

Under the auspicious influence of genius, arts and sciences grew up together, and mutually illustrated each other. But when once pedants became lawgivers, the sciences began to want grace, and the polite arts solidity;

these grew crabbed and sour, those meretricious and gaudy; the philosopher became disgustingly precise, and the poet, ever straining after grace, caught only finery.

These men also contributed to obstruct the progress of wisdom, by addicting their readers to one particular sect, or some favourite science. They generally carried on a petty traffic in some little creek; within that, they busily plied about, and drove an insignificant trade; but never ventured out into the great ocean of knowledge, nor went beyond the bounds that chance, conceit, or laziness had first prescribed their inquiries. Their disciples, instead of aiming at being originals themselves, became imitators of that merit alone which was constantly proposed for their admiration. In exercises of this kind, the most stupid are generally most successful; for there is not in nature a more imitative animal than a dunce.

Hence ancient learning may be distinguished into three periods: its commencement, or the age of poets; its maturity, or the age of philosophers; and its decline, or the age of critics. In the poetical age, commentators were very few, but might have, in some respects, been useful. In its philosophical, their assistance must necessarily become obnoxious; yet, as if the nearer we approached perfection, the more we stood in need of their directions, in this period they began to grow numerous. But when polite learning was no more, then it was those literary lawgivers made the most formidable appearance.

Corruptissima republica, plurimæ leges.——TACIT.

But let us take a more distinct view of those ages of ignorance, in which false refinement had involved mankind; and see how far they resemble our own.

CHAP. III.

A VIEW OF THE OBSCURE AGES.

WHATEVER the skill of any country may be in the sciences, it is from its excellence in polite learning alone that it must expect a character from posterity. The poet and the historian are they who diffuse a lustre upon the age, and the philosopher scarcely acquires any applause, unless his character be introduced to the vulgar by their mediation.

The obscure ages, which succeeded the decline of the Roman empire, are a striking instance of the truth of this assertion. Whatever period of those ill-fated times we happen to turn to, we shall perceive more skill in the sciences among the professors of them, more abstruse and deeper inquiry into every philosophical subject, and a greater show of subtilty and close reasoning, than in the most enlightened ages of all antiquity. But their writings were mere speculative amusements, and all their researches exhausted upon trifles. Unskilled in the arts of adorning their knowledge, or adapting it to common sense, their voluminous productions rest peacefully in our libraries, or at best are inquired after from motives of curiosity, not by the scholar, but the virtuoso.

I am not insensible, that several late French historians have exhibited the obscure ages in a very different light; they have represented them as utterly ignorant both of arts and sciences, buried in the profoundest darkness, or only illuminated with a feeble gleam, which, like an expiring taper, rose and sunk by intervals. Such asser-

tions, however, though they serve to help out the declaimer, should be cautiously admitted by the historian. For instance, the tenth century is particularly distinguished by posterity with the appellation of obscure. Yet, even in this the reader's memory may possibly suggest the names of some, whose works, still preserved, discover a most extensive erudition, though rendered almost useless by affectation and obscurity. A few of their names and writings may be mentioned, which will serve at once to confirm what I assert, and give the reader an idea of what kind of learning an age declining into obscurity chiefly chooses to cultivate.

About the tenth century flourished Leo the philosopher. We have seven volumes folio of his collections of laws, published at Paris, 1647. He wrote upon the art military, and understood also astronomy and judicial astrology. He was seven times more voluminous than Plato.

Solomon, the German, wrote a most elegant dictionary of the Latin tongue, still preserved in the university of Louvain; Pantaleon, in the lives of his illustrious countrymen, speaks of it in the warmest strains of rapture. Dictionary writing was at that time much in fashion.

Constantine Porphyrogeneta was a man universally skilled in the sciences. His tracts on the administration of an empire, on tactics, and on laws, were published some years since at Leyden. His court, for he was an emperor of the east, was resorted to by the learned from all parts of the world.

Luitprandus was a most voluminous historian, and particularly famous for the history of his own times. The compliments paid him as a writer are said to exceed even

his own voluminous productions. I cannot pass over one of a later date made him by a German divine; *Luitprandus nunquam Luitprando dissimilis.*

Alfric composed several grammars and dictionaries, still preserved among the curious.

Pope Sylvester the Second, wrote a treatise on the sphere, on arithmetic, and geometry, published some years since at Paris.

Michael Psellus lived in this age, whose books on the sciences, I will not scruple to assert, contain more learning than those of any one of the earlier ages: his erudition was indeed amazing, and he was as voluminous as he was learned. The character given him by Allatius has, perhaps, more truth in it than will be granted by those who have seen none of his productions. There was, says he, no science with which he was unacquainted; none which he did not write something upon; and none which he did not leave better than he found it. To mention his works would be endless. His commentaries on Aristotle alone amount to three folios.

Bertholdus Teutonicus, a very voluminous historian, was a politician, and wrote against the government under which he lived; but most of his writings, though not all, are lost.

Constantius Afer was a philosopher and physician. We have remaining but two volumes folio of his philological performances. However, the historian who prefixes the life of the author to his works, says, that he wrote many more, as he kept on writing during the course of a long life.

Lambertus published an universal history about this time, which has been printed at Frankfort in folio. An

universal history in one folio! If he had consulted with his bookseller, he would have spun it out to ten at least; but Lambertus might have had too much modesty.

By this time the reader perceives the spirit of learning which at that time prevailed. The ignorance of the age was not owing to a dislike of knowledge, but a false standard of taste was erected, and a wrong direction given to philosophical inquiry. It was the fashion of the day to write dictionaries, commentaries, and compilations, and to evaporate in a folio the spirit that could scarcely have sufficed for an epigram. The most barbarous times had men of learning, if commentators, compilers, polemic divines, and intricate metaphysicians, deserved the title.

I have mentioned but a very inconsiderable number of the writers in this age of obscurity. The multiplicity of their publications will at least equal those of any similar period of the most polite antiquity. As, therefore, the writers of those times are almost entirely forgotten, we may infer that the number of publications alone will never secure any age whatsoever from oblivion. Nor can printing, contrary to what Mr. Baumelle has remarked, prevent literary decline for the future, since it only increases the number of books, without advancing their intrinsic merit.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE PRESENT STATE OF POLITE LEARNING IN ITALY.

From ancient we are now come to modern times; and in running over Europe, we shall find, that, wherever learn-

ing has been cultivated, it has flourished by the same advantages as in Greece and Rome; and that, wherever it has declined, it sinks by the same causes of decay.

Dante, the poet of Italy, who wrote in the thirteenth century, was the first who attempted to bring learning from the cloister into the community, and paint human nature in a language adapted to modern manners. He addressed a barbarous people in a method suited to their apprehensions; united purgatory and the river Styx, St. Peter and Virgil, heaven and hell together, and shows a strange mixture of good sense and absurdity. The truth is, he owes most of his reputation to the obscurity of the times in which he lived. As in the land of Benin, a man may pass for a prodigy of parts who can read, so in an age of barbarity a small degree of excellence ensures success. But it was great merit in him to have lifted up the standard of nature, in spite of all the opposition and the persecution he received from contemporary criticism. To this standard every succeding genius resorted; the germ of every art and science began to unfold, and to imitate nature, was found to be the surest way of imitating antiquity. In a century or two after, modern Italy might justly boast of rivalling ancient Rome; equal in some branches of polite learning, and not far surpassed in others.

They soon, however, fell from emulating the wonders of antiquity into simple admiration. As if the word had been given, when Vida and Tasso wrote on the arts of poetry, the whole swarm of critics was up; the Speronis of the age attempted to be awkwardly merry; and the Virtuosi and the Nascotti sat upon the merits of every contemporary performance. After the age of Clement

VII. the Italians seemed to think that there was more merit in praising or censuring well, than in writing well; almost every subsequent performance since that time being designed rather to show the excellence of the critic's taste than his genius; one or two poets indeed seem at present born to redeem the honour of their country. Metastasio had restored nature in all her simplicity. And Maffei is the first that has introduced a tragedy among his countrymen without a love-plot. Perhaps the Samson of Milton, and the Athalia of Racine, might have been his guides in such an attempt. But two poets in an age are not sufficient to revive the splendour of decaying genius; nor should we consider them as the standard by which to characterize a nation. Our measures of literary reputation must be taken rather from that numerous class of men who, placed above the vulgar, are yet beneath the great, and who confer fame on others, without receiving any portion of it themselves.

In Italy, then, we shall no where find a stronger passion for the arts of taste, yet no country making more feeble efforts to promote either. The Virtuosi and Filosofi seem to have divided the Encyclopædia between each other; both inviolably attached to their respective pursuits, and from an opposition of character each holding the other in the most sovereign contempt. The Virtuosi, professed critics of beauty in the works of art, judge of medals by the smell, and pictures by feeling. In statuary, hang over a fragment with the most ardent gaze of admiration; though wanting the head and the other extremities, if dug from a ruin, the *Torse* becomes inestimable. An unintelligible monument of Etruscan barbarity cannot be sufficiently prized; and any thing from Her-

culaneum excites rapture. When the intellectual taste is thus decayed, its relish becomes false, and, like that of sense, nothing will satisfy but what is best suited to feed the disease.

Poetry is no longer among them an imitation of what we see, but of what a visionary might wish. The zephyr breathes the most exquisite perfume, the trees wear eternal verdure; fauns, and dryads, and hamadryads, stand ready to fan the sultry shepherdess. Who has forgot indeed the prettinesses with which Guarini's shepherdesses have been reproached? but it is so simple and innocent as often to have no meaning. Happy country, where the pastoral age begins to revive! Where the wits even of Rome are united into a rural group of nymphs and swains, under the appellation of modern Arcadians. Where, in the midst of porticos, processions, and cavalcades, abbés turned shepherds, and shepherdesses without sheep, indulge their innocent *divertimenti*.

The Filosofi are entirely different from the former. As those pretend to have got their knowledge from conversing with the living and polite, so these boast of having theirs from books and study. Bred up all their lives in colleges, they have there learned to think in track, servilely to follow the leader of their sect, and only to adopt such opinions as their universities, or the inquisition, are pleased to allow. By these means they are behind the rest of Europe in several modern improvements. Afraid to think for themselves; and their universities seldom admit opinions as true, till universally received among the rest of mankind. In short, were I to personize my ideas of learning in this country, I would represent it in the tawdry habits of the stage, or else in the more homely guise of bearded school philosophy.

CHAP. V.

OF POLITE LEARNING IN GERMANY.

If we examine the state of learning in Germany, we shall find that the Germans early discovered a passion for polite literature; but unhappily, like conquerors, who, invading the dominion of others, leave their own to desolation, instead of studying the German tongue, they continued to write in Latin; thus, while they cultivated an obsolete language, and vainly laboured to apply it to modern manners, they neglected their own.

At the same time also, they began at the wrong end, I mean by being commentators; and though they have given many instances of their industry, they have scarcely afforded any of genius. If criticism could have improved the taste of a people, the Germans would have been the most polite nation alive. We shall no where behold the learned wear a more important appearance than here; no where more dignified with professorships, or dressed out in the fopperies of scholastic finery. However, they seem to earn all the honours of this kind which they enjoy. Their assiduity is unparalleled; and did they employ half those hours on study which they bestow on reading, we might be induced to pity as well as praise their painful pre-eminence. But guilty of a fault too common to great readers, they write through volumes, while they do not think through a page. Never fatigued themselves, they think the reader can never be weary; so they drone on, saying all that can be said on the subject, not selecting what may be advanced to the purpose.

Were angels to write books they never would write folios. But let the Germans have their due: if they are dull, no nation alive assumes a more laudable solemnity, or better understands all the decorums of stupidity. Let the discourse of a professor run on never so heavily, it cannot be irksome to his dozing pupils, who frequently lend him sympathetic nods of approbation. I have sometimes attended their disputes at gradation. On this occasion, they often dispense with their gravity, and seem really all alive. The disputes are managed between the followers of Cartesius, whose exploded system they continue to call the new philosophy, and those of Aristotle. Though both parties are in the wrong, they argue with an obstinacy worthy the cause of truth. Nego, Probo, and Distinguo grow loud; the disputants become warm, the moderator cannot be heard, the audience take part in the debate, till at last the whole hall buzzes with sophistry and error.

There are, it is true, several societies in this country which are chiefly calculated to promote knowledge. His late Majesty, as Elector of Hanover, has established one at Gottingen, at an expense of not less than a hundred thousand pounds. This university has already pickled monsters, and dissected live puppies without number. Their transactions have been published in the learned world at proper intervals since their institution; and will, it is hoped, one day give them just reputation. But had the fourth part of the immense sum above-mentioned been given in proper rewards to genius, in some neighbouring countries, it would have rendered the name of the donor immortal, and added to the real interests of society.

Yet it ought to be observed, that of late learning has been patronized here by a prince, who, in the humblest station, would have been the first of mankind. The society established by the King of Prussia at Berlin is one of the finest literary institutions that any age or nation has produced. This academy comprehends all the sciences under four different classes; and although the object of each is different, and admits of being separately treated, yet these classes mutually influence the progress of each other, and concur in the same general design. Experimental philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, and polite literature, are here carried on together. The members are not collected from among the students of some obscure seminary, or the wits of a metropolis, but chosen from all the literati of Europe, supported by their bounty, and ornamented by the productions of their royal founder. We can easily discern how much such an institution excels any other now subsisting. One fundamental error among societies of this kind, is their addicting themselves to one branch of science, or some particular part of polite learning. Thus, in Germany, there are no where so many establishments of this nature; but as they generally profess the promotion of natural or medical knowledge, he who reads their Acta will only find an obscure farrago of experiments, most frequently terminated by no resulting phenomena. To make experiments is, I own, the only way to promote natural knowledge; but to treasure up every unsuccessful inquiry into nature, or to communicate every experiment without conclusion, is not to promote science, but to oppress it. Had the members of these societies enlarged their plans, and taken in art as well as science, one part of knowledge would have re-

pressed any faulty luxuriance in the other, and all would have mutually assisted each other's promotion. Besides, the society which, with a contempt of all collateral assistance, admits of members skilled in one science only, whatever their diligence or labour may be, will lose much time in the discovery of such truths as are well known already to the learned in a different line; consequently their progress must be slow in gaining a proper eminence from which to view their subject, and their strength will be exhausted in attaining the station whence they should have set out. With regard to the Royal Society of London, the greatest, and perhaps the oldest institution of the kind, had it widened the basis of its institution, though they might not have propagated more discoveries, they would probably have delivered them in a more pleasing and compendious form. They would have been free from the contempt of the ill-natured, and the raillery of the wit, for which, even candour must allow, there is but too much foundation. But the Berlin academy is subject to none of all these inconveniences; but every one of its individuals is in a capacity of deriving more from the common stock than he contributes to it, while each academician serves as a check upon the rest of his fellows.

Yet, very probably, even this fine institution will soon decay. As it rose, so it will decline with its great encourager. The society, if I may so speak, is artificially supported; the introduction of foreigners of learning was right; but in adopting a foreign language also, I mean the French, in which all the transactions are to be published, and questions debated: in this there was an error. As I have already hinted, the language of the natives of every country should be also the language of its polite

learning. To figure in polite learning, every country should make their own language from their own manners; nor will they ever succeed by introducing that of another, which has been formed from manners which are different. Besides, an academy composed of foreigners must still be recruited from abroad, unless all the natives of the country to which it belongs, are in a capacity of becoming candidates for its honours or rewards. While France, therefore, continues to supply Berlin, polite learning will flourish; but when royal favour is withdrawn, learning will return to its natural country.

CHAP. VI.

OF POLITE LEARNING IN HOLLAND, AND SOME OTHER COUNTRIES OF EUROPE.

Holland, at first view, appears to have some pretensions to polite learning. It may be regarded as the great emporium, not less of literature than of every other commodity. Here, though destitute of what may be poperly called a language of their own, all the languages are understood, cultivated, and spoken. All useful inventions in arts, and new discoveries in science, are published here almost as soon as at the places which first produced them. Its individuals have the same faults, however, with the Germans, of making more use of their memory than their judgment. The chief employment of their literati is to criticise, or answer the new performances which appear elsewhere.

A dearth of wit in France or England naturally pro-

duces a scarcity in Holland. What Ovid says of Echo, may be applied here, "*Nec loqui prius ipsa didicit nec reticere loquenti.*" They wait till something new comes out from others; examine its merits, and reject it, or make it reverberate through the rest of Europe.

After all, I know not whether they should be allowed any national character for polite learning. All their taste is derived to them from neighbouring nations, and that in a language not their own. They somewhat resemble their brokers, who trade for immense sums without having any capital.

The other countries of Europe may be considered as immersed in ignorance, or making but feeble efforts to rise. Spain has long fallen from amazing Europe with her wit, to amusing them with the greatness of her Catholic credulity. Rome considers her as the most favourite of all her children; and school-divinity still reigns there in triumph. In spite of all attempts of the Marquis D'Ensanada, who saw with regret the barbarity of his countrymen, and bravely offered to oppose it, by introducing new systems of learning, and suppressing the seminaries of monastic ignorance; in spite of the ingenuity of Padré Feio, whose book of vulgar errors so finely exposes the monkish stupidity of the times, the religious have prevailed. Ensanada has been banished, and now lives in exile; Feio has incurred the hatred and contempt of every bigot whose errors he has attempted to oppose, and feels, no doubt, the unremitting displeasure of the priesthood. Persecution is a tribute the great must ever pay for pre-eminence.

It is a little extraordinary, however, how Spain, whose genius is naturally fine, should be so much behind the rest

of Europe in this particular: or why school-divinity should hold its ground there for nearly six hundred years. The reason must be, that philosophical opinions, which are otherwise transient, acquire stability in proportion as they are connected with the laws of the country; and philosophy and law have been no where so closely united as here.

Sweden has of late made some attempts in polite learning, in its own language. Count Tessin's instructions to the prince, his pupil, are no bad beginning. If the Muses can fix their residence so far northward, perhaps no country bids so fair for their reception. They have, I am told, a language, rude, but energetic; if so, it will bear a polish: they have also a jealous sense of liberty, and that strength of thinking peculiar to northern climates, without its attendant ferocity. They will certainly, in time, produce somewhat great, if their intestine divisions do not unhappily prevent them.

The history of polite learning in Denmark may be comprised in the life of one single man; it rose and fell with the late famous Baron Holberg. This was, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary personages that has done honour to the present century. His being the son of a private sentinel did not abate the ardour of his ambition: for he learned to read, though without a master. Upon the death of his father, being left entirely destitute, he was involved in all that distress which is common among the poor, and of which the great have scarcely any idea. However, though only a boy of nine years old, he still persisted in pursuing his studies, travelled about from school to school, and begged his learning and his bread. When at the age of seventeen, instead of applying himself to any of the lower occupations, which seem best adapted to such

circumstances, he was resolved to travel for improvement, from Norway, the place of his birth, to Copenhagen, the capital city of Denmark. He lived there by teaching French; at the same time avoiding no opportunity of improvement that his scanty funds could permit. But his ambition was not to be restrained, or his thirst of knowledge satisfied, until he had seen the world. Without money, recommendations, or friends, he undertook to set out upon his travels, and make the tour of Europe on foot. A good voice, and a trifling skill in music, were the only finances he had to support an undertaking so extensive; so he travelled by day, and at night sung at the doors of peasants' houses, to get himself a lodging. In this manner, while yet very young, Holberg passed through France, Germany, and Holland; and coming over to England, took up his residence for two years in the university of Oxford. Here he subsisted by teaching French and music; and wrote his universal history, his earliest, but worst performance. Furnished with all the learning of Europe, he at last thought proper to return to Copenhagen, where his ingenious productions quickly gained him that favour he deserved. He composed not less than eighteen comedies; those in his own language are said to excel, and those which are translated into French have peculiar merit. He was honoured with nobility, and enriched by the bounty of the king; so that a life begun in contempt and penury, ended in opulence and esteem.

Thus, we see in what a low state polite learning is, in the countries I have mentioned—either past its prime, or not yet arrived at maturity. And though the sketch I have drawn be general, yet it was, for the most part, taken upon the spot. I am sensible, however, of the impropriety

of national reflection; and did not truth bias me more than inclination in this particular, I should, instead of the account already given, have presented the reader with a panegyric on many of the individuals of every country, whose merits deserve the warmest strains of praise. Apostol Zeno, Algarotti, Goldoni, Muratori, and Stay, in Italy; Haller, Klopstock, and Rabner, in Germany; Muschenbrook, and Gaubius, in Holland: all deserve the highest applause. Men like these, united by one bond, pursuing one design, spend their labour and their lives in making their fellow-creatures happy, and in repairing the breaches caused by ambition. In this light, the meanest philosopher, though all his possessions are his lamp or his cell, is more truly valuable, than he whose name echoes to the shout of the million, and who stands in all the glare of admiration. In this light, though poverty and contemptuous neglect are all the wages of his good will from mankind, yet the rectitude of his intention is an ample recompense; and self-applause for the present, and the alluring prospect of fame for futurity, reward his labours. The perspective of life brightens upon us, when terminated by an object so charming. Every intermediate image of want, banishment, or sorrow, receives a lustre from its distant influence. With this in view, the patriot, philosopher, and poet, have often looked with calmness on disgrace and famine, and rested on their straw with cheerful serenity. Even the last terrors of departing nature abate of their severity, and look kindly on him who considers his sufferings as a passport to immortality, and lays his sorrows on the bed of fame.

CHAP. VII.

OF POLITE LEARNING IN FRANCE.

We have hitherto seen, that wherever the poet was permitted to begin by improving his native language, polite learning flourished; but where the critic undertook the same task, it has never risen to any degree of perfection. Let us now examine the merits of modern learning in France and England; where, though it may be on the decline, yet it is still capable of retrieving much of its former splendour. In other places, learning has not yet been planted, or has suffered a total decay. To attempt amendment there, would be only like the application of remedies to an insensible or a mortified part; but here there is still life, and there is hope. And indeed the French themselves are so far from giving into any despondence of this kind, that on the contrary they admire the progress they are daily making in every science; that levity, for which we are apt to despise this nation, is probably the principal source of their happiness. An agreeable oblivion of past pleasures, a freedom from solicitude about future ones, and a poignant zest of every present enjoyment, if they be not philosophy, are at least excellent substitutes. By this they are taught to regard the period in which they live with admiration. The present manners and the present conversation surpass all that preceded. A similar enthusiasm as strongly tinctures their learning and their taste: while we, with a despondence characteristic of our nation, are for removing back British excellence to the reign of Queen Eliza-

beth, our more happy rivals of the continent cry up the writers of the present times with rapture, and regard the age of Lewis XV. as the true Augustan age of France.

The truth is, their present writers have not fallen so far short of the merits of their ancestors as ours have done. That self-sufficiency now mentioned, may have been of service to them in this particular. By fancying themselves superior to their ancestors, they have been encouraged to enter the lists with confidence; and by not being dazzled at the splendour of another's reputation, have sometimes had sagacity to mark out an unbeaten path to fame for themselves.

Other causes also may be assigned, that their second growth of genius is still more vigorous than ours. Their encouragements to merit are more skilfully directed, the link of patronage and learning still continues unbroken. The French nobility have certainly a most pleasing way of satisfying the vanity of an author, without indulging his avarice. A man of literary merit is sure of being caressed by the great, though seldom enriched. His pension from the crown just supplies half a competence, and the sale of his labours makes some small addition to his circumstances; thus the author leads a life of splendid poverty, and seldom becomes wealthy, or indolent enough, to discontinue an exertion of those abilities by which he rose. With the English it is different: our writers of rising merit are generally neglected; while the few of an established reputation are overpaid by luxurious affluence. The young encounter every hardship which generally attends upon aspiring indigence; the old enjoy the vulgar, and perhaps the more prudent satisfaction of putting riches in competition with fame. Those are often seen

to spend their youth in want and obscurity; these are sometimes found to lead an old age of indolence and avarice. But such treatment must naturally be expected from Englishmen, whose national character it is, to be slow and cautious in making friends, but violent in friendships once contracted. The English nobility, in short, are often known to give greater rewards to genius than the French; who, however, are much more judicious in the application of their empty favours.

The fair sex in France have also not a little contributed to prevent the decline of taste and literature, by expecting such qualifications in their admirers. A man of fashion at Paris, however contemptible we may think him here, must be acquainted with the reigning modes of philosophy, as well as of dress, to be able to entertain his mistress agreeably. The sprightly pedants are not to be caught by dumb show, by the squeeze of a hand, or the ogling of a broad eye; but must be pursued at once through all the labyrinths of the Newtonian system, or the metaphysics of Locke. I have seen as bright a circle of beauty at the chemical lectures of Rouelle, as gracing the court at Versailles. And indeed wisdom never appears so charming as when graced and protected by beauty.

To these advantages, may be added the reception of their language in the different courts of Europe. An author who excels is sure of having all the polite for admirers, and is encouraged to write by the pleasing expectation of universal fame. Add to this, that those countries who can make nothing good from their own language, have lately begun to write in this; some of whose productions contribute to support the present literary reputation of France.

There are therefore many among the French who do honour to the present age, and whose writings will be transmitted to posterity with an ample share of fame; some of the most celebrated are as follow:

Voltaire, whose voluminous, yet spirited productions, are too well known to require an eulogy; does he not resemble the champion mentioned by Xenophon, of great reputation in all the gymnastic exercises united, but inferior to each champion singly, who excels only in one?

Montesquieu, a name equally deserving fame with the former; the Spirit of Laws is an instance how much genius is able to lead learning. His system has been adopted by the literati; and yet is it not possible for opinions equally plausible to be formed upon opposite principles, if a genius like his could be found to attempt such an undertaking? He seems more a poet than a philosopher.

Rousseau, of Geneva; a professed man-hater, or more properly speaking, a philosopher enraged with one-half of mankind, because they unavoidably make the other half unhappy. Such sentiments are generally the result of much good nature, and little experience.

Pyron, an author possessed of as much wit as any man alive, yet with as little prudence to turn it to his own advantage. A comedy of his, called "La Metromanie," is the best theatrical production that has appeared of late in Europe. But I know not whether I should most commend his genius, or censure his obscenity; his Ode à Priape, has justly excluded him from a place in the academy of Belles Lettres. However, the good-natured Montesquieu, by his interest, procured the starving bard

a trifling pension. His own epitaph was all the revenge he took upon the academy for being repulsed.

Cy Git Pyron qui ne fut jamais rien
Pas même Academicien.

Crebillon, junior; a writer of real merit, but guilty of the same indelicate faults with the former. Wit employed in dressing up obscenity, is like the art used in painting a corpse; it may be thus rendered tolerable to one sense, but fails not quickly to offend some other.

Gresset is agreeable and easy. His comedy called the Mechant, and a humorous poem, entitled "Ververt," have original merit. He was bred a Jesuit, but his wit procured his dismission from the society. This last work particularly could expect no pardon from the convent, being a satire against nunneries!

D'Alembert has united an extensive skill in scientifical learning, with the most refined taste for the polite arts. His excellence in both has procured him a seat in each academy.

Diderot is an elegant writer, and subtile reasoner. He is the supposed author of the famous Thesis which the Abbé Prade sustained before the doctors of the Sorbonne. It was levelled against Christianity, and the Sorbonne too hastily gave it their sanction. They perceived its purport, however, when it was too late. The college was brought into some contempt, and the Abbé obliged to take refuge at the court of Berlin.

The Marquis D'Argens attempts to add the character of a philosopher to the vices of a debauchee.

The catalogue might be increased with several other authors of merit, such as Marivaux, Le Franc, Saint Foix,

Destouches, and Modonville; but let it suffice to say, that by these the character of the present age is tolerably supported. Though their poets seldom rise to fine enthusiasm, they never sink into absurdity; though they fail to astonish, they are generally possessed of talents to please.

The age of Louis XIV. notwithstanding these respectable names, is still vastly superior. For, beside the general tendency of critical corruption, which shall be spoken of by and by, there are other symptoms which indicate a decline. There is, for instance, a fondness for scepticism, which runs through the works of some of their most applauded writers, and which the numerous class of their imitators have contributed to diffuse. Nothing can be a more certain sign that genius is in the wane, than its being obliged to fly to paradox for support, and attempting to be erroneously agreeable. A man, who with all the impotence of wit, and all the eager desires of infidelity, writes against the religion of his country, may raise doubts, but will never give conviction; all he can do is, to render society less happy than he found it. It was a good manner which the father of the late poet Saint Foix took to reclaim his son from this juvenile error. The young poet had shut himself up for some time in his study, and his father, willing to know what had engaged his attention so closely, upon entering, found him busied in drawing up a new system of religion, and endeavouring to show the absurdity of that already established. The old man knew, by experience, that it was useless to endeavour to convince a vain young man by right reason, so only desired his company up stairs. When come into the father's apartment, he takes

his son by the hand, and drawing back a curtain at one end of the room, discovered a crucifix exquisitely painted. "My son," says he, "you desire to change the religion of your country, behold the fate of a reformer." The truth is, vanity is more apt to misguide men than false reasoning; as some had rather be conspicuous in a mob, than unnoticed even in a privy council, so others choose rather to be foremost in the retinue of error, than follow in the train of truth. What influence the conduct of such writers may have on the morals of a people, is not my business here to determine. Certain I am, that it has a manifest tendency to subvert the literary merits of the country in view. The change of religion in every nation has hitherto produced barbarism and ignorance; and such will be probably its consequences in every future period. For when the laws and the opinions of society are made to clash, harmony is dissolved, and all the parts of peace unavoidably crushed in the encounter.

The writers of this country have also of late fallen into a method of considering every part of art and science, as arising from simple principles. The success of Montesquieu, and one or two more, has induced all the subordinate ranks of genius into vicious imitation. To this end they turn to our view that side of the subject which contributes to support their hypothesis, while the objections are generally passed over in silence. Thus an universal system rises from a partial representation of the question; a whole is concluded from a part; a book appears, entirely new; and the fancy-built fabric is styled, for a short time, very ingenious. In this manner, we have seen, of late, almost every subject in morals, natural history, politics, economy, and commerce treated; subjects,

naturally proceeding on many principles, and some even opposite to each other, are all taught to proceed along the line of systematic simplicity, and continue, like other agreeable falsehoods, extremely pleasing, till they are detected.

I must still add another fault, of a nature somewhat similar to the former. As those above-mentioned are for contracting a single science into system, so those I am going to speak of, are for drawing up a system of all the sciences united. Such undertakings as these are carried on by different writers, cemented into one body, and concurring in the same design by the mediation of a bookseller. From these inauspicious combinations proceed those monsters of learning, the Trevoux, Encyclopædies, and Bibliotheques of the age. In making these, men of every rank in literature are employed; wits and dunces contribute their share; and Diderot, as well as Desmaretz, are candidates for oblivion. The genius of the first supplies the gale of favour, and the latter adds the useful ballast of stupidity. By such means, the enormous mass heavily makes its way among the public, and, to borrow a bookseller's phrase, the whole impression moves off. These great collections of learning may serve to make us inwardly repine at our own ignorance, may serve, when gilt and lettered, to adorn the lower shelves of a regular library; but wo to the reader, who, not daunted at the immense distance between one great pasteboard and the other, opens the volume, and explores his way through a region so extensive, but barren of entertainment! No unexpected landscape there to delight the imagination; no diversity of prospect to cheat the painful journey; he sees the wide extended desert lie before him;

what is past only increases his terror of what is to come. His course is not half-finished; he looks behind him with affright, and forward with despair. Perseverance is at last overcome, and a night of oblivion lends its friendly aid to terminate the perplexity.

CHAP. IX.

OF LEARNING IN GREAT BRITAIN.

To acquire a character for learning among the English at present, it is necessary to know much more than is either important or useful. It seems the spirit of the times for men here to exhaust their natural sagacity in exploring the intricacies of another man's thought, and thus never to have leisure to think for themselves; others have carried on learning from that stage, where the good sense of our ancestors have thought it too minute or too speculative to instruct or amuse. By the industry of such, the sciences, which in themselves are easy of access, affright the learner with the severity of their appearance. He sees them surrounded with speculation and subtilty, placed there by their professors, as if with a view of deterring his approach. Hence it happens, that the generality of readers fly from the scholar to the compiler, who offers them a more safe and speedy conveyance.

From this fault also arises that mutual contempt between the scholar and the man of the world, of which every day's experience furnisheth instances.

The man of taste, however, stands neutral in this controversy; he seems placed in a middle station between the

world and the cell, between learning and common sense. He teaches the vulgar on what part of a character to lay the emphasis of praise, and the scholar where to point his application so as to deserve it. By his means, even the philosopher acquires popular applause, and all that are truly great, the admiration of posterity. By means of polite learning alone, the patriot and the hero, the man who praiseth virtue, and he who practiseth it, who fights successfully for his country, or who dies in its defence, becomes immortal. But this taste now seems cultivated with less ardour than formerly, and consequently the public must one day expect to see the advantages arising from it, and the exquisite pleasures it affords our leisure, entirely annihilated. For if, as it should seem, the rewards of genius are improperly directed; if those who are capable of supporting the honour of the times, by their writings, prefer opulence to fame; if the stage should be shut to writers of merit, and open only to interest or intrigue: if such should happen to be the vile complexion of the times, (and that it is nearly so we shall shortly see) the very virtue of the age will be forgotten by posterity, and nothing remembered, except our filling a chasm in the registers of time, or having served to continue the species.

CHAP. X.

OF REWARDING GENIUS IN ENGLAND.

There is nothing authors are more apt to lament, than want of encouragement from the age; whatever their differences in other respects, they are all ready to unite

in this complaint, and each indirectly offers himself as an instance of the truth of his assertion.

The beneficed divine, whose wants are only imaginary, expostulates as bitterly as the poorest author. Should interest or good fortune advance the divine to a bishopric, or the poor son of Parnassus into that place which the other has resigned, both are authors no longer; the one goes to prayers once a day, kneels upon cushions of velvet, and thanks gracious Heaven for having made the circumstances of all mankind so extremely happy; the other battens on all the delicacies of life, enjoys his wife and his easy chair, and sometimes, for the sake of conversation, deplores the luxury of these degenerate days.

All encouragements to merit are therefore misapplied, which make the author too rich to continue his profession. There can be nothing more just than the old observation, that authors, like running horses, should be fed, but not fattened. If we would continue them in our service, we should reward them with a little money, and a great deal of praise, still keeping their avarice subservient to their ambition. Not that I think a writer incapable of filling an employment with dignity; I would only insinuate, that when made a bishop or statesman, he will continue to please us as a writer no longer. As, to resume a former allusion, the running horse, when fattened, will still be fit for very useful purposes, though unqualified for a courser.

No nation gives greater encouragements to learning than we do; yet, at the same time, none are so injudicious in the application. We seem to confer them with the same view that statesmen have been known to grant employments at court, rather as bribes to silence, than incentives to emulation.

Upon this principle, all our magnificent endowments of colleges are erroneous, and, at best, more frequently enrich the prudent, than reward the ingenious. A lad whose passions are not strong enough in youth to mislead him from that path of science which his tutors, and not his inclinations, have chalked out, by four or five years' perseverance may probably obtain every advantage and honour his college can bestow. I forget whether the simile has been used before, but I would compare the man, whose youth has been thus passed in the tranquillity of dispassionate prudence, to liquors which never ferment, and consequently continue always muddy. Passions may raise a commotion in the youthful breast, but they disturb only to refine it. However this be, mean talents are often rewarded in colleges with an easy subsistence. The candidates for preferments of this kind often regard their admission as a patent for future indolence; so that a life begun in studious labour, is often continued in luxurious indolence.

Among the universities abroad, I have ever observed their riches and their learning in a reciprocal proportion; their stupidity and pride increasing with their opulence. Happening once, in conversation with Gaubius, of Leyden, to mention the college of Edinburgh, he began by complaining, that all the English students which formerly came to his university, now went entirely there; and the fact surprised him more, as Leyden was now as well as ever furnished with masters excellent in their respective professions. He concluded, by asking, if the professors of Edinburgh were rich? I replied, that the salary of a professor there seldom amounted to more than thirty pounds a-year. "Poor men!" says he, "I heartily

wish they were better provided for; until they become rich, we can have no expectation of English students at Leyden."

Premiums also, proposed for literary excellence, when given as encouragements to boys, may be useful; but when designed as rewards to men, are certainly misapplied. We have seldom seen a performance of any great merit in consequence of rewards proposed in this manner. Who has ever observed a writer of any eminence a candidate in so precarious a contest? The man who knows the real value of his own genius, will no more venture it upon an uncertainty, than he who knows the true use of a guinea, will stake it with a sharper.

Every encouragement given to stupidity, when known to be such, is also a negative insult upon genius. This appears in nothing more evident than the undistinguished success of those who solicit subscriptions. When first brought into fashion, subscriptions were conferred upon the ingenious alone, or those who were reputed such. But, at present, we see them made a resource of indigence, and requested, not as rewards of merit, but as a relief of distress. If tradesmen happen to want skill in conducting their own business, yet they are able to write a book; if mechanics want money, or ladies shame, they write books, and solicit subscriptions. Scarcely a morning passes, that proposals of this nature are not thrust into the half-opening doors of the rich, with perhaps a paltry petition, showing the author's wants, but not his merits. I would not willingly prevent that pity which is due to indigence; but while the streams of liberality are thus diffused, they must, in the end, become proportionably shallow.

What then are the proper encouragements of genius? I answer, subsistence and respect; for these are rewards congenial to its nature. Every animal has an aliment peculiarly suited to its constitution. The heavy ox seeks nourishment from earth; the light chameleon has been supposed to exist on air; a sparer diet even than this will satisfy the man of true genius, for he makes a luxurious banquet upon empty applause. It is this alone which has inspired all that ever was truly great and noble among us. It is, as Cicero finely calls it, the echo of virtue. Avarice is the passion of inferior natures; money the pay of the common herd. The author who draws his quill merely to take a purse, no more deserves success than he who presents a pistol.

When the link between patronage and learning was entire, then all who deserved fame were in a capacity of attaining it. When the great Somers was at the helm, patronage was fashionable among our nobility. The middle ranks of mankind, who generally imitate the great, then followed their example, and applauded from fashion, if not from feeling. I have heard an old poet[1] of that glorious age, say, that a dinner with his lordship has procured him invitations for the whole week following; that an airing in his patron's chariot, has supplied him with a citizen's coach on every future occasion. For who would not be proud to entertain a man who kept so much good company?

But this link now seems entirely broken. Since the days of a certain prime minister of inglorious memory, the learned have been kept pretty much at a distance.

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[1] Dr. Young.

A jockey, or a laced player, supplies the place of the scholar, poet, or the man of virtue. Those conversations, once the result of wisdom, wit, and innocence, are now turned to humbler topics, little more being expected from a companion, than a laced coat, a pliant bow, and an immoderate friendship for——a well-served table.

Wit, when neglected by the great, is generally despised by the vulgar. Those who are unacquainted with the world, are apt to fancy the man of wit as leading a very agreeable life. They conclude, perhaps, that he is attended to with silent admiration, and dictates to the rest of mankind with all the eloquence of conscious superiority. Very different is his present situation. He is called an author, and all know that an author is a thing only to be laughed at. His person, not his jest, becomes the mirth of the company. At his approach, the most fat, unthinking face brightens into malicious meaning. Even aldermen laugh, and revenge on him the ridicule which was lavished on their forefathers:

——*Etiam victis redit in præcordia virtus,*
Victoresque cadunt.

It is indeed a reflection somewhat mortifying to the author, who breaks his ranks, and singles out for public favour, to think that he must combat contempt before he can arrive at glory; that he must expect to have all the fools of society united against him, before he can hope for the applause of the judicious. For this, however, he must prepare beforehand; as those who have no idea of the difficulty of his employment will be apt to regard his inactivity as idleness, and not having a notion of the pangs of uncomplying thought in themselves, it is not to

be expected they should have any desire of rewarding it in others.

Voltaire has finely described the hardships a man must encounter who writes for the public. I need make no apology for the length of the quotation.

"Your fate, my dear Le Fevre, is too strongly marked to permit you retiring. The bee must toil in making honey, the silk-worm must spin, the philosopher must dissect them, and you are born to sing of their labours. You must be a poet and a scholar, even though your inclinations should resist; nature is too strong for inclination. But hope not, my friend, to find tranquillity in the employment you are going to pursue. The route of genius is not less obstructed with disappointment than that of ambition.

"If you have the misfortune not to excel in your profession as a poet, repentance must tincture all your future enjoyments. If you succeed, you make enemies. You tread a narrow path; contempt on the one side, and hatred on the other, are ready to seize you upon the slightest deviation.

"But why must I be hated? you will perhaps reply; why must I be persecuted for having written a pleasing poem, for having produced an applauded tragedy, or for otherwise instructing or amusing mankind or myself?

"My dear friend, these very successes shall render you miserable for life. Let me suppose your performance has merit; let me suppose you have surmounted the teasing employments of printing and publishing, how will you be able to lull the critics? who, like Cerberus, are posted at all the avenues of iiterature, and who settle the merits of every new performance. How, I say, will you be able to make

them open in your favour? There are always three or four literary journals in France, as many in Holland, each supporting opposite interests. The booksellers who guide these periodical compilations find their account in being severe; the authors employed by them have wretchedness to add to their natural malignity. The majority may be in your favour, but you may depend on being torn by the rest. Loaded with unmerited scurrility, perhaps you reply; they rejoin; both plead at the bar of the public, and both are condemned to ridicule.

"But if you write for the stage, your case is still more worthy compassion. Your are there to be judged by men whom the custom of the times has rendered contemptible. Irritated by their own inferiority, they exert all their little tyranny upon you, revenging upon the author the insults they receive from the public. From such men, then, you are to expect your sentence. Suppose your piece admitted, acted; one single ill-natured jest from the pit is sufficient to cancel all your labours. But allowing that it succeeds, there are a hundred squibs flying all abroad, to prove that it should not have succeeded. You shall find your brightest scenes burlesqued by the ignorant; and the learned, who know a little Greek, and nothing of their native language, affect to despise you.

"But perhaps with a panting heart you carry your piece before a woman of quality. She gives the labours of your brain to her maid, to be cut into shreds for curling her hair; while the laced footman, who carries the gaudy livery of luxury, insults your appearance, who bear the livery of indigence.

"But granting your excellence has at last forced envy to confess that your works have some merit; this, then,

is all the reward you can expect while living. How how for this tribute of applause you must expect persecu His You will be reputed the author of scandal which s of have never seen, of verses you despise, and of sentimen- directly contrary to your own. In short, you must em bark in some one party, or all parties will be against you.

"There are among us a number of learned societies, where a lady presides, whose wit begins to twinkle when the splendour of her beauty begins to decline. One or two men of learning compose her ministers of state; these must be flattered, or be made enemies by being neglected. Thus, though you had the merit of all antiquity united in your person, you grow old in misery and disgrace. Every place designed for men of letters, is filled up by men of intrigue. Some nobleman's private tutor, some court flatterer, shall bear away the prize, and leave you to anguish and to disappointment."

Yet it were well if none but the dunces of society were combined to render the profession of an author ridiculous or unhappy. Men of the first eminence are often found to indulge this illiberal vein of raillery. Two contending writers often, by the opposition of their wit, render their profession contemptible in the eyes of ignorant persons, who should have been taught to admire. And yet, whatever the reader may think of himself, it is at least two to one one but he is a greater blockhead than the most scribbling dunce he affects to despise.

The poet's poverty is a standing topic of contempt; his writing for bread is an unpardonable offence. Perhaps, of all mankind, an author in these times is used most hardly; we keep him poor, and yet revile his poverty. Like angry parents, who correct their children till

them o[illegible]ry, and then correct them for crying, we reproach literar[illegible]for living by his wit, and yet allow him no other supp[illegible]ns to live.

The[illegible]His taking refuge in garrets and cellars, has of late se[illegible]een violently objected to him, and that by men who, I [illegible]are hope, are more apt to pity than insult his distress. Is poverty the writer's fault? No doubt he knows how to prefer a bottle of champaign to the nectar of the neighbouring alehouse, or a venison pasty to a plate of potatoes. Want of delicacy is not in him, but in us, who deny him the opportunity of making an elegant choice.

Wit certainly is the property of those who have it; nor should we be displeased if it is the only property a man sometimes has. We must not under-rate him who uses it for subsistence, and flies from the ingratitude of the age, even to a bookseller, for redress. If the profession of an author is to be laughed at by the stupid, it is certainly better to be contemptibly rich than contemptibly poor. For all the wit that ever adorned the human mind will at present no more shield the author's poverty from ridicule, than his high-topped gloves conceal the unavoidable omissions of his laundress.

To be be more serious: new fashions, follies, and vices, make new monitors necessary in every age. An author may be considered as a merciful substitute to the legislature; he acts not by punishing crimes, but preventing them; however virtuous the present age, there may be still growing employment for ridicule or reproof, for persuasion or satire. If the author be therefore still so necessary among us, let us treat him with proper consideration, as a child of the public, not a rent-charge on the community. And indeed a *child* of the public he is in

all respects; for while so well able to direct others, how incapable is he frequently found of guiding himself! His simplicity exposes him to all the insidious approaches of cunning; his sensibility to the slightest invasions of contempt. Though possessed of fortitude to stand unmoved at the expected bursts of an earthquake, yet of feelings so exquisitely poignant, as to agonize under the slightest disappointment. Broken rest, tasteless meals, and causeless anxiety, shorten his life, or render it unfit for active employment; prolonged vigils, and intense application, still further contract his span, and make his time glide insensibly away. Let us not then aggravate those natural inconveniences by neglect; we have had sufficient instances of this kind already. Sale and Moore will suffice for one age at least. But they are dead, and their sorrows are over! The neglected author of the Persian Eclogues, which, however inaccurate, excel any in our language, is still alive. Happy, if *insensible* of our neglect, not *raging* at our ingratitude.[1] It is enough, that the age has already produced instances of men pressing foremost in the lists of fame, and worthy of better times, schooled by continued adversity into a hatred of their kind, flying from thought to drunkenness, yielding to the united pressure of labour, penury, and sorrow, sinking unheeded, without one friend to drop a tear on their unattended obsequies, and indebted to charity for a grave.

The author, when unpatronized by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot be perhaps imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little

[1] Our author here alludes to the insanity of Collins.—Ed.

for writing, and of the other to write as much as possible; accordingly, tedious compilations and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavours. In these circumstances the author bids adieu to fame, writes for bread, and for that only imagination is seldom called in: he sits down to address the venal muse with the most phlegmatic apathy; and, as we are told of the Russian, courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap. His reputation never spreads in a wider circle than that of the trade, who generally value him, not for the fineness of his compositions, but the quantity he works off in a given time.

A long habit of writing for bread thus turns the ambition of every author at last into avarice. He finds that he has written many years; that the public are scarcely acquainted even with his name; he despairs of applause, and turns to profit which invites him. He finds that money procures all those advantages, that respect, and that ease, which he vainly expected from fame. Thus the man who, under the protection of the great, might have done honour to humanity, when only patronized by the bookseller, becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press.

CHAP. XI.

OF THE MARKS OF LITERARY DECAY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

The faults already mentioned are such as learning is often found to flourish under; but there is one of a much more dangerous nature, which has begun to fix itself

among us, I mean criticism; which may properly be called the natural destroyer of polite learning. We have seen that critics, or those whose only business is to write books upon other books, are always more numerous as learning is more diffused; and experience has shown, that instead of promoting its interest, which they profess to do, they generally injure it. This decay which criticism produces may be deplored, but can scarcely be remedied, as the man who writes against the critics is obliged to add himself to the number. Other depravations in the republic of letters, such as affectation in some popular writer, leading others into vicious imitation; political struggles in the state; a depravity of morals among the people; ill-directed encouragement, or no encouragement from the great; these have been often found to co-operate in the decline of literature; and it has sometimes declined, as in modern Italy, without them; but an increase of criticism has always portended a decay. Of all misfortunes therefore in the commonwealth of letters, this of judging from rule, and not from feeling, is the most severe. At such a tribunal, no work of original merit can please. Sublimity, if carried to an exalted height, approaches burlesque, and humour sinks into vulgarity; the person who cannot feel, may ridicule both as such, and bring rules to corroborate his assertion. There is, in short, no excellence in writing that such judges may not place among the neighbouring defects. Rules render the reader more difficult to be pleased, and abridge the author's power of pleasing.

If we turn to either country, we shall perceive evident symptoms of this natural decay beginning to appear. Upon a moderate calculation, there seems to be as many volumes of criticism published in those countries, as of

all other kinds of polite erudition united. Paris sends forth not less than four literary journals every month; the Anné-literaire, and the Fuille, by Freron; the Journal Etrangere, by the Chevalier D'Arc; and Le Mercure, by Marmontel. We have two literary reviews in London, with critical newspapers, and magazines without number. The compilers of these resemble the commoners of Rome; they are all for levelling property, not by increasing their own, but by diminishing that of others. The man who has any good nature in his disposition must, however, be somewhat displeased to see distinguished reputations often the sport of ignorance. To see, by one false pleasantry, the future peace of a worthy man's life disturbed, and this only because he has unsuccessfully attempted to instruct or amuse us. Though ill-nature is far from being wit, yet it is generally laughed at as such; the critic enjoys the triumph, and ascribes to his parts what is only due to his effrontery. I fire with indignation when I see persons wholly destitute of education and genius, indent to the press, and thus turn book-makers, adding to the sin of criticism the sin of ignorance also; whose trade is a bad one, and who are bad workmen in the trade.

When I consider those industrious men as indebted to the works of others for a precarious subsistence; when I see them coming down, at stated intervals, to rummage the bookseller's counter for materials to work upon, it raises a smile, though mixed with pity. It reminds me of an animal called by naturalists the soldier. "This little creature," says the historian, "is passionately fond of a shell, but not being supplied with one by nature, has recourse to the deserted shell of some other. I have seen

these harmless reptiles," continues he, "come down once a-year from the mountains rank and file, cover the whole shore, and ply busily about, each in quest of a shell to please it. Nothing can be more amusing than their industry upon this occasion. One shell is too big, another too little; they enter and keep possession, sometimes for a good while, until one is, at last, found entirely to please. When all are thus properly equipped, they march up again to the mountains, and live in their new acquisition till under a necessity of changing."

There is indeed scarcely an error of which our present writers are guilty, that does not arise from their opposing systems; there is scarcely an error, that criticism cannot be brought to excuse. From this proceeds the affected security of our odes, the tuneless flow of our blank verse, the pompous epithet, laboured diction, and every other deviation from common sense, which procures the poet the applause of the month; he is praised by all, read by a few, and soon forgotten.

There never was an unbeaten path trodden by the poet, that the critic did not endeavour to reclaim him, by calling his attempt innovation. This might be instanced in Dante, who first followed nature, and was persecuted by the critics as long as he lived. Thus novelty, one of the greatest beauties in poetry, must be avoided, or the connoisseur be displeased. It is one of the chief privileges, however, of genius, to fly from the herd of imitators by some happy singularity; for, should he stand still, his heavy pursuers will, at length, certainly come up, and fairly dispute the victory.

The ingenious Mr. Hogarth used to assert, that every one, except the connoisseur, was a judge of painting.

The same may be asserted of writing; the public in general set the whole piece in the proper point of view; the critic lays his eye close to all its minuteness, and condemns or approves in detail. And this may be the reason why so many writers at present are apt to appeal from the tribunal of criticism to that of the people.

From a desire in the critic of grafting the spirit of ancient languages upon the English, have proceeded of late several disagreeable instances of pedantry. Among the number, I think we may reckon blank verse. Nothing but the greatest sublimity of subject can render such a measure pleasing; however, we now see it used upon the most trivial occasions; it has particularly found its way into our didactic poetry, and is likely to bring that species of composition into disrepute, for which the English are deservedly famous.

Those who are acquainted with writing, know that our language runs almost naturally into blank verse. The writers of our novels, romances, and all of this class, who have no notion of style, naturally hobble into this unharmonious measure. If rhymes, therefore, be more difficult, for that very reason I would have our poets write in rhyme. Such a restriction upon the thought of a good poet often lifts and increases the vehemence of every sentiment; for fancy, like a fountain, plays highest by diminishing the aperture. But rhymes, it will be said, are a remnant of monkish stupidity; an innovation upon the poetry of the ancients. They are but indifferently acquainted with antiquity, who make the assertion. Rhymes are bproably of older date than either the Greek or Latin dactyl and spondee. The Celtic, which is allowed to be the first language spoken in Europe, has ever preserved them, as we may find in the Edda of Iceland, and the

Irish carols still sung among the original inhabitants of that island. Olaus Wormius gives us some of the Teutonic poetry in this way; and Pantoppidan, Bishop of Bergen, some of the Norwegian. In short, this jingle of sounds is almost natural to mankind, at least it is so to our language, if we may judge from many unsuccessful attempts to throw it off.

I should not have employed so much time in opposing this erroneous innovation, if it were not apt to introduce another in its train—I mean a disgusting solemnity of manner into our poetry; and as the prose writer has been ever found to follow the poet, it must consequently banish in both all that agreeable trifling, which, if I may so express it, often deceives us into instruction. The finest sentiment, and the most weighty truth, may put on a pleasant face; and it is even virtuous to jest, when serious advice must be disgusting. But instead of this, the most trifling performance among us now assumes all the didactic stiffness of wisdom. The most diminutive son of fame, or of famine, has his *we* and his *us*, his *firstlies* and his *secondlies*, as methodical as if bound in cow-hide, and closed with clasps of brass. Were these monthly reviews and magazines frothy, pert, or absurd, they might find some pardon; but to be dull and dronish is an encroachment on the prerogative of a folio. These things should be considered as pills to purge melancholy; they should be made up, in our splenetic climate, to be taken as physic, and not so as to be used when we take it.

However, by the power of one single monosyllable, our critics have almost got the victory over humour amongst us. Does the poet paint the absurdities of the vulgar, then he is *low*; does he exaggerate the features of folly,

to render it more thoroughly ridiculous, he is then very *low*. In short, they have proscribed the comic or satirical muse from every walk but high life, which, though abounding in fools as well as the humblest station, is by no means so fruitful in absurdity. Among well-bred fools we may despise much, but have little to laugh at; nature seems to present us with an universal blank of silk, ribands, smiles, and whispers; absurdity is the poet's game, and good-breeding is the nice concealment of absurdities. The truth is, the critic generally mistakes humour for wit, which is a very different excellence. Wit raises human nature above its level; humour acts a contrary part, and equally depresses it. To expect exalted humour, is a contradiction in terms; and the critic, by demanding an impossibility from the comic poet, has in effect banished new comedy from the stage. But, to put the same thought in a different light: when an unexpected similitude in two objects strikes the imagination; in other words, when a thing is *wittily* expressed, all our pleasure turns into admiration of the artist who had fancy enough to draw the picture. When a thing is *humorously* described, our burst of laughter proceeds from a very different cause; we compare the absurdity of the character represented with our own, and triumph in our conscious superiority. No natural defect can be a cause of laughter, because it is a misfortune to which ourselves are liable: a defect of this kind changes the passion into pity or horror; we only laugh at those instances of moral absurdity to which we are conscious we ourselves are not liable. For instance, should I describe a man as wanting his nose, there is no humour in this, as it is an accident to which human nature is subject, and may be any man's case; but should I represent

this man without his nose, as extremely curious in the choice of his snuff-box, we here see him guilty of an absurdity, of which we imagine it impossible for ourselves to be guilty, and therefore applaud our own good sense on the comparison. Thus, then, the pleasure we receive from wit turns on the admiration of another; that which we feel from humour, centres in the admiration of ourselves. The poet, therefore, must place the object he would have the subject of humour, in a state of inferiority; in other words, the subject of humour must be low.

The solemnity worn by many of our modern writers is, I fear, often the mask of dullness; for certain it is, it seems to fit every author who pleases to put it on. By the complexion of many of our late publications, one might be apt to cry out with Cicero, *Civem mehercule non puto esse qui his temporibus ridere possit.* On my conscience, I believe we have all forgot to laugh in these days. Such writers probably make no distinction between what is praised and what is pleasing; between those commendations which the reader pays his own discernment, and those which are the genuine result of his sensations. It were to be wished, therefore, that we no longer found pleasure with the inflated style that has for some years been looked upon as fine writing, and which every young writer is now obliged to adopt, if he chooses to be read. We should now dispense with loaded epithet, and dressing up trifles with dignity. For, to use an obvious instance, it is not those who make the greatest noise with their wares in the streets, that have most to sell. Let us, instead of writing finely, try to write naturally; not hunt after lofty expressions to deliver mean ideas, nor be for ever gaping, when we only mean to deliver a whisper.

CHAP. XII.

OF THE STAGE.

Our theatre has been generally confessed to share in this general decline, though partaking of the show and decoration of the Italian opera, with the propriety and declamation of French performance. The stage also is more magnificent with us than any other in Europe, and the people in general fonder of theatrical entertainment. Yet still as our pleasures, as well as more important concerns, are generally managed by party, the stage has felt its influence. The managers, and all who espouse their side, are for decoration and ornament; the critic, and all who have studied French decorum, are for regularity and declamation. Thus, it is almost impossible to please both parties and the poet, by attempting it, finds himself often incapable of pleasing either. If he introduces stage pomp, the critic consigns his performance to the vulgar; if he indulges in recital and simplicity, it is accused of insipidity or dry affectation.

From the nature, therefore, of our theatre, and the genius of our country, it is extremely difficult for a dramatic poet to please his audience. But happy would he be, were these the only difficulties he had to encounter; there are many other more dangerous combinations against the little wit of the age. Our poet's performance must undergo a process truly chemical, before it is presented to the public. It must be tried at the manager's fire, strained through a licenser, suffer from repeated corrections, till it may be a mere *caput mortuum* when it arrives before the public.

The success, however, of pieces upon the stage would be of little moment, did it not influence the success of the same piece in the closet. Nay, I think it would be more for the interests of virtue, if stage performances were read, not acted; made rather our companions in the cabinet than on the theatre. While we are readers, every moral sentiment strikes us in all its beauty; but the love scenes are frigid, tawdry, and disgusting. When we are spectators, all the persuasives to vice receive an additional lustre. The love scene is aggravated, the obscenity heightened, the best actors figure in the most debauched characters, while the parts of morality, as they are called, are thrown to some mouthing machine, who puts even virtue out of countenance by his wretched imitation.

But, whatever be the incentives to vice which are found at the theatre, public pleasures are generally less guilty than solitary ones. To make our solitary satisfactions truly innocent, the actor is useful; as by his means the poet's work makes its way from the stage to the closet; for all must allow that the reader receives more benefit by perusing a well-written play, than by seeing it acted.

But how is this rule inverted on our theatres at present? Old pieces are revived, and scarcely any new ones admitted; the actor is ever in our eye, and the poet seldom permitted to appear; the public are again obliged to ruminate over those hashes of absurdity, which were disgusting to our ancestors even in an age of ignorance; and the stage, instead of serving the people, is made subservient to the interests of avarice.

We seem to be pretty much in the situation of travellers at a Scotch inn; vile entertainment is served up,

complained of, and sent down; up comes worse, and that also is changed; and every change makes our wretched cheer more unsavory. What must be done? only sit down contented, cry up all that comes before us, and admire even the absurdities of Shakespeare.

Let the reader suspend his censure: I admire the beauties of this great father of our stage as much as they deserve; but could wish, for the honour of our country, and for his honour too, that many of his scenes were forgotten. A man blind of one eye should always be painted in profile. Let the spectator, who assists at any of these new revived pieces, only ask himself, whether he would approve such a performance, if written by a modern poet. I fear he will find that much of his applause proceeds merely from the sound of a name, and an empty veneration for antiquity. In fact, the revival of those pieces of forced humour, far-fetched conceit, and unnatural hyperbole, which have been ascribed to Shakespeare, is rather gibbetting than raising a statue to his memory; it is rather a trick of the actor, who thinks it safest acting in exaggerated characters, and who, by outstepping nature, chooses to exhibit the ridiculous outré of a harlequin under the sanction of that venerable name.

What strange vamped comedies, farcical tragedies, or, what shall I call them? speaking pantomimes, have we not of late seen! No matter what the play may be, it is the actor who draws an audience. He throws life into all; all are in spirits and merry; in at one door, and out at another; the spectator in a fool's paradise knows not what all this means, till the last act concludes in matrimony. The piece pleases our critics, because it talks old English; and it pleases the galleries, because it has rib-

aldry. True taste, or even common sense, are out of the question.

But great art must be sometimes used before they can thus impose upon the public. To this purpose, a prologue, written with some spirit, generally precedes the piece, to inform us, that it was composed by Shakespeare, or old Ben, or somebody else, who took them for his model. A face of iron could not have the assurance to avow dislike; the theatre has its partizans, who understand the force of combinations, trained up to vociferation, clapping of hands, and clattering of sticks; and though a man might have strength sufficient to overcome a lion in single combat, he may run the risk of being devoured by an army of ants.

I am not insensible that third nights are disagreeable drawbacks upon the annual profits of the stage; I am confident it is much more to the manager's advantage to furbish up all the lumber which the good sense of our ancestors but for his care had consigned to oblivion; it is not with him, therefore, but with the public I would expostulate; they have a right to demand respect, and surely those newly-revived plays are no instances of the manager's deference.

I have been informed, that no new play can be admitted upon our theatres, unless the author chooses to wait some years, or, to use the phrase in fashion, till it comes to be played in turn. A poet thus can never expect to contract a familiarity with the stage, by which alone he can hope to succeed; nor can the most signal success relieve immediate want. Our Saxon ancestors had but one name for a wit and a witch. I will not dispute the propriety of uniting those characters then; but the man who

under the present discouragements ventures to write for the stage, whatever claim he may have to the appellation of a wit, at least he has no right to be called a conjuror.

From all that has been said upon the state of our theatre, we may easily foresee whether it is likely to improve or decline; and whether the free born muse can bear to submit to those restrictions which avarice or power would impose. For the future, it is somewhat unlikely that he whose labours are valuable, or who knows their value, will turn to the stage for either fame or subsistence, when he must at once flatter an actor and please an audience.

CHAP. XIII.

ON UNIVERSITIES.

Instead of losing myself in a subject of such extent, I shall only offer a few thoughts as they occur, and leave their connexion to the reader.

We seem divided, whether an education formed by travelling or by a sendentary life be preferable. We see more of the world by travel, but more of human nature by remaining at home. As in an infirmary, the student who only attends to the disorders of a few patients, is more likely to understand his profession, than he who indiscriminately examines them all.

A youth just landed at the Brille resembles a clown at a puppetshow; carries his amazement from one miracle to another; from the cabinet of curiousities to that collection of pictures. But wondering is not the way to grow wise.

Whatever resolutions, we set ourselves not to keep company with our countrymen abroad, we shall find them broken when once we leave home. Among strangers we consider ourselves as in a solitude, and it is but natural to desire society.

In all the great towns of Europe there are to be found Englishmen residing either from interest or choice: these generally lead a life of continued debauchery: such are the countrymen a traveller is likely to meet with.

This may be the reason why Englishmen are all thought to be mad or melancholy by the vulgar abroad. Their money is giddily and merrily spent among sharpers of their own country; and when that is gone, of all nations the English bear worst that disorder called the *malade du poche.*

Countries wear a very different appearances to travellers of different circumstances. A man who is whirled through Europe in a post-chaise, and the pilgrim who walks the grand tour on foot, will form very different conclusions.[1]

To see Europe with advantage, a man should appear in various circumstances of fortune; but the experiment would be too dangerous for young men.

There are many things relative to other countries which can be learned to more advantage at home; their laws and policies are among the number.

The greatest advantages which result to youth from travel are, an easy address, the shaking off national pre-

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[1] In the first edition our author added, *Haud inexpertus loquor;* for he travelled through France, &c. on foot. Ed.

judices, and the finding nothing ridiculous in national pecularities. The time spent in these acquisitions could have been more usefully employed at home. An education in a college seems therefore preferable.

We attribute to universities either too much or too little. Some assert that they are the only proper places to advance learning; while others deny even their utility in forming an education. Both are erroneous.

Learning is most advanced in populous cities, where chance often conspires with industry to promote it; where the members of this large university, if I may so call it, catch manners as they rise, study life, not logic, and have the world for correspondents.

The greatest number of universities have ever been founded in times of the greatest ignorance.

New improvements in learning are seldom adopted in colleges, until admitted every where else. And this is right; we should always be cautious of teaching the rising generation uncertainties for truth: thus, though the professors in universities have been too frequently found to oppose the advancement of learning, yet, when once established, they are the properest persons to diffuse it.

There is more knowledge to be acquired from one page of the volume of mankind, if the scholar only knows how to read, than in volumes of antiquity; we grow learned, not wise, by too long a continuance at college.

This points out the time in which we should leave the university; perhaps the age of twenty-one, when at our universities the first degree is generally taken, is the proper period.

The universities of Europe may be divided into three classes. Those upon the old scholastic establishment,

where the pupils are immured, talk nothing but Latin, and support every day syllogistical disputations in school philosophy. Would not one be apt to imagine this was the proper education to make a man a fool? Such are the universities of Prague, Louvain, and Padua. The second is where the pupils are under few restrictions, where all scholastic jargon is banished, where they take a degree when they think proper, and live not in the college, but the city. Such are Edinburgh, Leyden, Gottingen, Geneva. The third is a mixture of the two former, where the pupils are restrained, but not confined; where many, though not all the absurdities of scholastic philosophy, are suppressed; and where the first degree is taken after four years matriculation. Such are Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin.

As for the first class, their absurdities are too apparent to admit of a parallel. It is disputed which of the two last are more conducive to national improvement.

Skill in the professions is acquired more by practice than study; two or three years may be sufficient for learning their rudiments. The universities of Edinburgh, &c. grant a license for practising them when the student thinks proper, which our universities refuse till after a residence of several years.

The dignity of the professions may be supported by this dilatory proceeding; but many men of learning are thus too long excluded from the lucrative advantages which superior skill had a right to expect.

Those universities must certainly be most frequented, which promise to give in two years the advantages which others will not under twelve.

The man who has studied a profession for three years,

and practised it for nine more, will certainly know more of his business, than he who has only studied it for twelve.

The universities of Edinburgh, &c. must certainly be most proper for the study of those professions in which men choose to turn their learning to profit as soon as possible.

The universities of Oxford, &c. are improper for this, since they keep the student from the world, which, after a certain time, is the only true school of improvement.

When a degree in the professions can be taken only by men of independent fortunes, the number of candidates in learning is lessened, and consequently the advancement of learning retarded.

This slowness of conferring degrees is a remnant of scholastic barbarity. Paris, Louvain, and those universities which still retain their ancient institutions, confer the doctor's degree slower even than we.

The statutes of every university should be considered as adapted to the laws of its respective government. Those should alter as these happen to fluctuate.

Four years spent in the arts (as they are called in colleges,) is perhaps laying too laborious a foundation. Entering a profession without any previous acquisitions of this kind, is building too bold a superstructure.

Teaching by lecture, as at Edinburgh, may make men scholars, if they think proper; but instructing by examination, as at Oxford, will make them so often against their inclination.

Edinburgh only disposes the student to receive learning; Oxford often makes him actually learned.

In a word, were I poor, I should send my son to Leyden or Edinburgh, though the annual expense in each,

particularly in the first, is very great. Were I rich, I would send him to one of our own universities. By an education received in the first, he has the best likelihood of living; by that received in the latter, he has the best chance of becoming great.

We have of late heard much of the necessity of studying oratory. Vespasian was the first who paid professors of rhetoric for publicly instructing youth at Rome. However those pedants never made an orator.

The best orations that ever were spoken, were pronounced in the parliaments of King Charles the First. These men never studied the rules of oratory.

Mathematics are, perhaps, too much studied at our universities. This seems a science to which the meanest intellects are equal. I forget who it is that says, "All men might understand mathematics, if they would."

The most methodical manner of lecturing, whether on morals or nature, is first rationally to explain, and then produce the experiment. The most instructive method is to show the experiment first; curiosity is then excited, and attention awakened to every subsequent deduction. Hence it is evident, that in a well-formed education a course of history should ever precede a course of ethics.

The sons of our nobility are permitted to enjoy greater liberties in our universities than those of private men. I should blush to ask the men of learning and virtue, who preside in our seminaries, the reason of such a prejudicial distinction. Our youth should there be inspired with a love of philosophy; and the first maxim among philosophers is, that merit only makes distinction.

Whence has proceeded the vain magnificence of expensive architecture in our colleges? Is it that men

study to more advantage in a palace than in a cell? One single performance of taste or genius confers more real honours on its parent university, than all the labours of the chissel.

Surely pride itself has dictated to the fellows of our colleges the absurd fashion of being attended at meals, and on other public occasions, by those poor men, who, willing to be scholars, come in upon some charitable foundation. It implies a contradiction, for men to be at once learning the *liberal* arts, and at the same time treated as *slaves*; at once studying freedom, and practising servitude.

CHAP. XIV.

THE CONCLUSION.

Every subject acquires an adventitious importance to him who considers it with application. He finds it more closely connected with human happiness than the rest of mankind are apt to allow; he sees consequences resulting from it which do not strike others with equal conviction; and still pursuing speculation beyond the bounds of reason, too frequently becomes ridiculously earnest in trifles or absurdity.

It will perhaps be incurring this imputation, to deduce an universal degeneracy of manners from so slight an origin as the depravation of taste; to assert, that as a nation grows dull, it sinks into debauchery. Yet such probably may be the consequence of literary decay; or, not to stretch the thought beyond what it will bear, vice and stupidity are always mutually productive of each other.

Life, at the greatest and best, has been compared to a froward child, that must be humoured and played with till it falls asleep, and then all the care is over. Our few years are laboured away in varying its pleasures; new amusements are pursued with studious attention; the most childish vanities are dignified with titles of importance; and the proudest boast of the most aspiring philosopher is no more, than that he provides his little playfellows the greatest pastime with the greatest innocence.

Thus the mind, ever wandering after amusement, when abridged of happiness in one part, endeavours to find it in another; when intellectual pleasures are disagreeable, those of sense will take the lead. The man, who in this age is enamoured of the tranquil joys of study and retirement, may, in the next, should learning be fashionable no longer, feel an ambition of being foremost at a horse-course; or if such could be the absurdity of the times, of being himself a jockey. Reason and appetite are therefore masters of our revels in turn; and as we incline to the one or pursue the other, we rival angels or imitate the brutes. In the pursuit of intellectual pleasure lies every virtue; of sensual, every vice.

It is this difference of pursuit which marks the morals and characters of mankind; which lays the line between the enlightened philosopher and the half-taught citizen; between the civil citizen and illiterate peasant; between the law-obeying peasant and the wandering savage of Africa, an animal less mischievous indeed than the tiger, because endued with fewer powers of doing mischief. The man, the nation, must therefore be good, whose chiefest luxuries consist in the refinement of reason; and reason can never be universally cultivated, unless guided

by taste, which may be considered as the link between science and common sense, the medium through which learning should ever be seen by society.

Taste will therefore often be a proper standard, when others fail, to judge of a nation's improvement or degeneracy in morals. We have often no permanent characteristics, by which to compare the virtues or the vices of our ancestors with our own. A generation may rise and pass away without leaving any traces of what it really was; and all complaints of our deterioration may be only topics of declamation, or the cavillings of disappointment: but in taste we have standing evidence; we can with precision compare the literary performances of our fathers with our own, and from their excellence or defects determine the moral as well as the literary merits of either.

If, then, there ever comes a time when taste is so far depraved among us, that critics shall load every work of genius with unnecessary comment, and quarter their empty performances with the substantial merit of an author, both for subsistence and applause; if there comes a time when censure shall speak in storms, but praise be whispered in the breeze, while real excellence often finds shipwreck in either; if there be a time when the muse shall seldom be heard, except in plaintive elegy, as if she wept her own decline, while lazy compilations supply the place of original thinking; should there ever be such a time, may succeeding critics, both for the honour of our morals as well as our learning, say, that such a period bears no resemblance to the present age!

THE PREFACE
TO THE
ROMAN HISTORY,
BY DR. GOLDSMITH,
FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1769.

THERE are some subjects on which a writer must decline all attempts to acquire fame, satisfied with being obscurely useful. After such a number of Roman histories, in almost all languages, ancient and modern, it would be but imposture to pretend new discoveries, or to expect to offer any thing in a work of this kind, which has not been often anticipated by others. The facts which it relates have been a hundred times repeated, and every occurrence has been so variously considered, that learning can scarcely find a new anecdote, or genius give novelty to the old. I hope, therefore, for the reader's indulgence, if, in the following attempt, it shall appear, that my only aim was to supply a concise, plain, and unaffected narrative of the rise and decline of a well-known empire. I was contented to make such a book as could not fail of being serviceable, though of all others the most unlikely to promote the reputation of the writer. Instead, therefore, of pressing forward among the ambitious, I only claim the merit of knowing my own strength, and falling back among the hindmost ranks, with conscious inferiority.

I am not ignorant, however, that it would be no difficult task to pursue the same art by which many dull men, every day, acquire a reputation in history; such might easily be attained, by fixing on some obscure period to write upon, where much seeming erudition might be displayed, almost unknown, because not worth the remem-

bering; and many maxims in politics might be advanced entirely new, because altogether false. But I have pursued a contrary method, choosing the most noted period in history, and offering no remarks but such as I thought strictly true.

The reasons of my choice were, that we had no history of this splendid period in our language, but what was either too voluminous for common use, or too meanly written to please. Catrou and Rouille's history, in six volumes folio, translated into our language by Bundy, is entirely unsuited to the time and expense mankind usually choose to bestow upon this subject. Rollin, and his continuator, Crevier, making near thirty volumes, octavo, seem to labour under the same imputation; as likewise Hooke, who has spent three quartos upon the Republic alone; the rest of his undertaking remaining unfinished.[1] There only, therefore, remained the history by Echard, in five volumes octavo, whose plan and mine seemed to coincide; and had his execution been equal to his design, it had precluded the present undertaking. But the truth is, it is so poorly written, the facts so crowded, the narration so spiritless, and the characters so indistinctly marked, that the most ardent curiosity must cool in the perusal; and the noblest transactions that ever warmed the human heart as described by him, must cease to interest.

I have endeavoured, therefore, in the present work, or rather compilation, to obviate the inconveniencies arising from the exuberance of the former, as well as from the

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1 Mr. Hooke's three quartos above-mentioned reach only to the end of the Gallic war. A fourth volume, to the end of the Republic, was afterwards published in 1771. Dr. Goldsmith's preface was written in 1769. Mr. Hooke's quarto edition has been republished in eleven volomes octavo. Ed.

unpleasantness of the latter. It was supposed, that two volumes might be made to comprize all that was requisite to be known, or pleasing to be read, by such as only examine history, to prepare them for more important studies. Too much time may be given even to laudable pursuits, and there is none more apt than this to allure the student from the necessary branches of learning, and, if I may so express it, entirely to engross his industry. What is here offered, therefore, may be sufficient for all, except such who make history the peculiar business of their lives. To such, the most tedious narrative will seem but an abridgment, as they measure the merits of a work rather by the quantity than the quality of its contents. Others, however, who think more soberly, will agree, that in so extensive a field as that of the transactions of Rome, more judgment may be shown, by selecting what is important, than by adding what is obscure.

The history of this empire has been extended to six volumes folio; and I aver, that, with very little learning, it might be increased to sixteen more; but what would this be, but to load the subject with unimportant facts, and so to weaken the narration, that, like the empire described, it must necessarily sink beneath the weight of its own acquisitions.

But while I thus endeavoured to avoid prolixity, it was found no easy matter to prevent crowding the facts, and to give every narrative its proper play. In reality, no art can contrive to avoid opposite defects; he who indulges in minute particularities will be often languid, and he who studies conciseness, will as frequently be dry and unentertaining. As it was my aim to comprise as much as possible in the smallest compass, it is feared the

work will often be subject to the latter imputation; but it was impossible to furnish the public with a cheap Roman History, in two volumes octavo, and at the same time to give all that warmth to the narrative, all those colourings to the description, which works of twenty times the bulk have room to exhibit. I shall be fully satisfied, therefore, if it furnishes an interest sufficient to allure the reader to the end; and this is a claim to which few abridgments can justly make pretensions.

To these objections there are some, who may add, that I have rejected many of the modern improvements in Roman history, and that every character is left in full possession of that fame or infamy which it obtained from its contemporaries, or those who wrote immediately after. I acknowledge the charge; for it appears now too late to rejudge the virtues or the vices of those men who were but very incompletely known even to their own historians. The Romans, perhaps, upon many occasions, formed wrong ideas of virtue; but they were by no means so ignorant or abandoned, in general, as not to give to their brightest characters the greatest share of their applause; and I do not know whether it be fair to try Pagan actions by the standard of Christian morality.

But whatever may be my execution of this work, I have very little doubt about the success of the undertaking: the subject is the noblest that ever employed human attention; and, instead of requiring a writer's aid, will even support him with its splendour. The empire of the world, rising from the meanest origin, and growing great by a strict veneration for religion, and an implicit confidence in its commanders; continually changing the mode, but seldom the spirit of its government; being a constitution, in which the military power, whether under

the name of citizens or soldiers, almost always prevailed; adopting all the improvements of other nations with the most indefatigable industry, and submitting to be taught by those whom it afterwards subdued,—this is a picture that must affect us, however it be disposed; these materials must have their value under the hand of the meanest workman.

THE PREFACE
TO THE
HISTORY OF ENGLAND,
BY DR. GOLDSMITH.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1771.

From the favourable reception given to my Abridgment of Roman History, published some time since, several friends and others, whose business leads them to consult the wants of the public, have been induced to suppose that an English history, written on the same plan, would be acceptable.

It was their opinion, that we still wanted a work of this kind, where the narrative, though very concise, is not totally without interest, and the facts, though crowded, are yet distinctly seen.

The business of abridging the works of others has hitherto fallen to the lot of very dull men; and the art of blotting, which an eminent critic calls the most difficult of all others, has been usually practised by those who found themselves unable to write Hence our abridgments are generally more tedious than the works from which they pretend to relieve us; and they have effectually embarrassed that road which they laboured to shorten.

As the present compiler starts with such humble competitors, it will scarcely be thought vanity in him, if he boasts himself their superior. Of the many abridgments of our own history hitherto published, none seems possessed of any share of merit or reputation; some have been written in dialogue, or merely in the stiffness of an index, and some to answer the purposes of a party. A small share of taste, therefore, was sufficient to keep the compiler from the defects of the one, and a very small share of philosophy from the misrepresentations of the other.

It is not easy, however, to satisfy the different expectations of mankind in a work of this kind, calculated for every apprehension, and on which all are consequently capable of forming some judgment. Some may say, that it is too long to pass under the denomination of an abridgment; and others, that it is too dry to be admitted as a history; it may be objected, that reflection is almost entirely banished, to make room for facts, and yet that many facts are wholly omitted which might be necessary to be known. It must be confessed that all these objections are partly true; for it is impossible in the same work at once to attain contrary advantages. The compiler who is stinted in room, must often sacrifice interest to brevity; and, on the other hand, while he endeavours to amuse, must frequently transgress the limits to which his plan should confine him. Thus all such as desire only amusement, may be disgusted with his brevity; and such as seek for information, may object to his displacing facts for empty description.

To attain the greatest number of advantages with the fewest inconveniences, is all that can be attained in an abridgment, the name of which implies imperfection. It will be sufficient, therefore, to satisfy the writer's wishes,

if the present work be found a plain, unaffected narrative of facts, with just ornament enough to keep attention awake, and with reflection barely sufficient to set the reader upon thinking. Very moderate abilities were equal to such an undertaking, and it is hoped the performance will satisfy such as take up books to be informed or amused, without much considering who the writer is, or envying any success he may have had in a former compilation.

As the present publication is designed for the benefit of those who intend to lay a foundation for future study, or desire to refresh their memories upon the old, or who think a moderate share of history sufficient for the purposes of life, recourse has been had only to those authors which are best known, and those facts only have been selected which are allowed on all hands to be true. Were an epitome of history the field for displaying erudition, the author could show that he has read many books, which others have neglected, and that he also could advance many anecdotes which are at present very little known. But it must be remembered, that all these minute recoveries could be inserted only to the exclusion of more material facts, which it would be unpardonable to omit. He foregoes, therefore, the petty ambition of being thought a reader of forgotten books; his aim being not to add to our present stock of history, but to contract it.

The books which have been used in this abridgment are chiefly Rapin, Carte, Smollett, and Hume. They have each their peculiar admirers, in proportion as the reader is studious of historical antiquities, fond of minute anecdote, a warm partisan, or a deliberate reasoner. Of these I have particularly taken Hume for my guide, as far as he goes; and it is but justice to say, that wherever

I was obliged to abridge his work, I did it with reluctance, as I scarcely cut out a single line that did not contain a beauty.

But though I must warmly subscribe to the learning, elegance, and depth of Mr. Hume's History, yet I cannot entirely acquiesce in his principles. With regard to religion, he seems desirous of playing a double part; of appearing to some readers as if he reverenced, and to others, as if he ridiculed it. He seems sensible of the political necessity of religion in every state; but at the same time he would every where insinuate, that it owes its authority to no higher an origin. Thus he weakens its influence, while he contends for its utility, and vainly hopes, that while freethinkers shall applaud his scepticism, real believers will reverence him for his zeal.

In his opinions respecting government, perhaps also he may be sometimes reprehensible; but in a country like ours, where mutual contention contributes to the security of the constitution, it will be impossible for a historian, who attempts to have any opinion, to satisfy all parties. It is not yet decided in politics, whether the diminution of kingly power in England tends to increase the happiness or the freedom of the people. For my own part, from seeing the bad effects of the tyranny of the great in those republican states that pretend to be free, I cannot help wishing that our monarchs may still be allowed to enjoy the power of controlling the encroachments of the great at home.

A king may easily be restrained from doing wrong, as he is but one man; but if a number of the great are permitted to divide all authority, who can punish them if they abuse it? Upon this principle, therefore, and not from empty notions of divine or hereditary right, some

may think I have leaned towards monarchy. But as in the things I have hitherto written, I have neither allured the vanity of the great by flattery, nor satisfied the malignity of the vulgar by scandal, as I have endeavoured to get an honest reputation by liberal pursuits, it is hoped the reader will admit my impartiality.

THE PREFACE
TO A
HISTORY OF THE EARTH,
AND
ANIMATED NATURE,
BY DR. GOLDSMITH.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1774.

NATURAL HISTORY, considered in its utmost extent, comprehends two objects. First, that of discovering, ascertaining, and naming all the various productions of nature. Secondly, that of describing the properties, manners, and relations which they bear to us and to each other. The first, which is the most difficult part of the science, is systematical, dry, mechanical, and incomplete. The second is more amusing, exhibits new pictures to the imagination, and improves our relish for existence by widening the prospect of nature around us.

Both, however, are necessary to those who would understand this pleasing science in its utmost extent. The first care of every inquirer, no doubt, should be, to see, to visit, and examine every object, before he pretends to inspect its habitudes or its history. From seeing and observing the thing itself, he is most naturally led to speculate upon its uses, its delights, or its inconveniences.

Numberless obstructions, however, are found in this part of his pursuit, that frustrate his diligence and retard his curiosity. The objects in nature are so many, and even those of the same kind are exhibited in such a variety of forms, that the inquirer finds himself lost in the exuberance before him; and, like a man who attempts to count the stars unassisted by art, his powers are all distracted in barren superfluity.

To remedy this embarrassment, artificial systems have been devised, which, grouping into masses those parts of nature more nearly resembling each other, refer the inquirer for the name of the single object he desires to know, to some one of those general distributions, where it is to be found by further examination. If, for instance, a man should in his walks meet with an animal, the name, and consequently the history of which he desires to know, he is taught by systematic writers of natural history to examine its most obvious qualities, whether a quadruped, a bird, a fish, or an insect. Having determined it, for explanation sake, to be an insect, he examines whether it has wings; if he finds it possessed of these, he is taught to examine whether it has two or four; if possessed of four, he is taught to observe whether the two upper wings are of a shelly hardness, and serve as cases to those under them; if he finds the wings composed in this manner, he is then taught to pronounce that this insect is one of the beetle kind; of the beetle kind there are three different classes, distinguished from each other by their feelers; he examines the insect before him, and finds that the feelers are elevated or knobbed at the ends; of beetles, with feelers thus formed, there are ten kinds, and among those he is taught to look for the precise name of that which is before him. If, for instance, the knob be divided at the ends,

and the belly be streaked with white, it is no other than the dor or the maybug, an animal, the noxious qualities of which give it a very distinguished rank in the history of the insect creation. In this manner, a system of natural history may, in some measure, be compared to a dictionary of words. Both are solely intended to explain the names of things; but with this difference, that in the dictionary of words, we are led from the name of the thing to its definition, whereas, in the system of natural history, we are led from the definition to find out the name.

Such are the efforts of writers, who have composed their works with great labour and ingenuity, to direct the learner in his progress through nature, and to inform him of the name of every animal, plant, or fossil substance, that he happens to meet with; but it would be only deceiving the reader to conceal the truth, which is, that books alone can never teach him this art in perfection, and the solitary student can never succeed. Without a master, and a previous knowledge of many of the objects in nature, his book will only serve to confound and disgust him. Few of the individual plants or animals that he may happen to meet with, are in that precise state of health, or that exact period of vegetation, whence their descriptions were taken. Perhaps he meets the plant only with leaves, but the systematic writer has described it in flower. Perhaps he meets the bird before it has moulted its first feathers, while the systematic description was made in the state of full perfection. He thus ranges without an instructer, confused, and with sickening curiosity, from subject to subject, till at last he gives up the pursuit in the multiplicity of his disappointments. Some practise, therefore, much instruction, and diligent reading, are requisite to make a ready

and expert naturalist, who shall be able, even by the help of a system, to find out the name of every object he meets with. But when this tedious, though requisite part of study, is attained, nothing but delight and variety attend the rest of his journey. Wherever he travels, like a man in a country where he has many friends, he meets with nothing but acquaintances and allurements in all stages of his way. The mere uninformed spectator passes on in gloomy solitude; but the naturalist, in every plant, in every insect, and every pebble, finds something to entertain his curiosity and excite his speculation.

Hence it appears, that a system may be considered as a dictionary in the study of nature. The ancients, however, who have all written most delightfully on this subject, seem entirely to have rejected those humble and mechanical helps of science. They contented themselves with seizing upon the great outlines of history; and passing over what was common, as not worth the detail, *they* only dwelt upon what was new, great, and surprising, and sometimes even warmed the imagination at the expence of truth. Such of the moderns as revived this science in Europe, undertook the task more methodically, though not in a manner so pleasing. Aldrovandus, Gesner, and Johnson, seemed desirous of uniting the entertaining and rich descriptions of the ancients with the dry and systematic arrangement of which they were the first projectors. This attempt, however, was extremely imperfect, as the great variety of nature was, as yet, but very inadequately known. Nevertheless, by attempting to carry on both objects at once—first, of directing us to the name of the things, and then giving the detail of its history, they drew out their works into a tedious and unreasonable length; and thus mixing incompatible aims,

they have left their labours rather to be occasionally consulted, than read with delight by posterity.

The later moderns, with that good sense which they have carried into every other part of science, have taken a different method in cultivating natural history. They have been content to give not only the brevity, but also the dry and disgusting air of a dictionary to their systems. Ray, Klin, Brisson, and Linnæus, have had only one aim, that of pointing out the object in nature, of discovering its name, and where it was to be found in those authors that treated of it in a more prolix and satisfactory manner.

Thus, natural history at present is carried on in two distinct and separate channels, the one serving to lead us to the thing, the other conveying the history of the thing; as supposing it already known.

The following natural history is written with only such an attention to system as serves to remove the reader's embarrassments, and allure him to proceed. It can make no pretensions in directing him to the name of every object he meets with; that belongs to works of a very different kind, and written with very different aims. It will fully answer my design, if the reader, being already possessed of the name of any animal, shall find here a short, though satisfactory history of its habitudes, its subsistence, its manners, its friendships, and hostilities. My aim has been to carry on just as much method as was sufficient to shorten my descriptions by generalizing them, and never to follow order where the art of writing, which is but another name for good sense, informed me that it would only contribute to the reader's embarrassment.

Still, however, the reader will perceive that I have formed a kind of system in the history of every part of Animated Nature, directing myself by the great and ob-

vious distinctions that she herself seems to have made, which, though too few to point exactly to the name, are yet sufficient to illuminate the subject, and remove the reader's perplexity. Mr. Buffon, indeed, who has brought greater talents to this part of learning than any other man, has almost entirely rejected method in classing quadrupeds. This, with great deference to such a character, appears to me running into the opposite extreme; and, as some moderns have of late spent much time, great pains, and some learning, all to very little purpose, in systematic arrangement, he seems so much disgusted by their trifling, but ostentatious efforts, that he describes his animals almost in the order they happen to come before him. This want of method seems to be a fault, but he can lose little by criticism, which every dull man can make, or by an error in arrangement, from which the dullest are the most usually free.

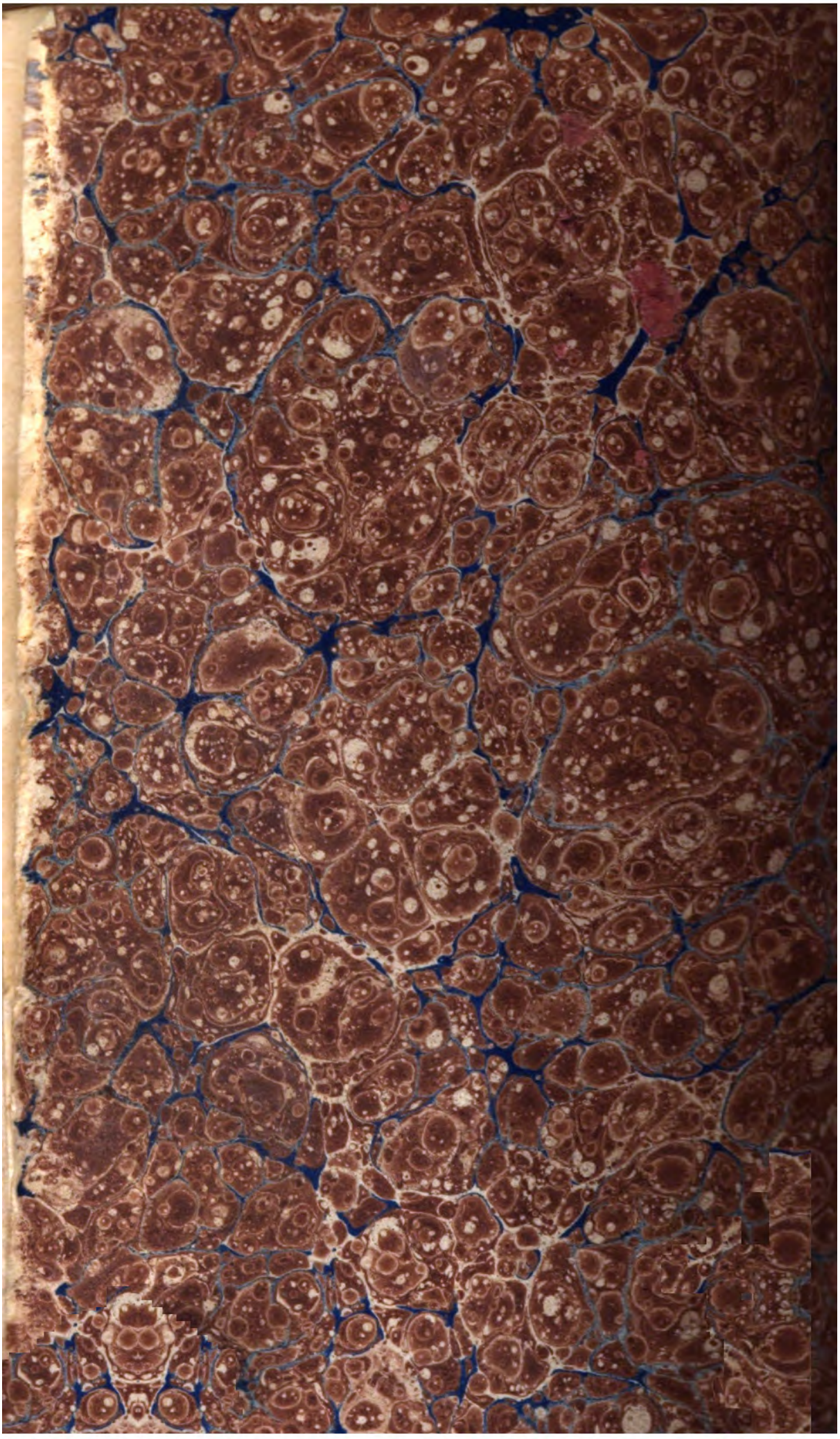
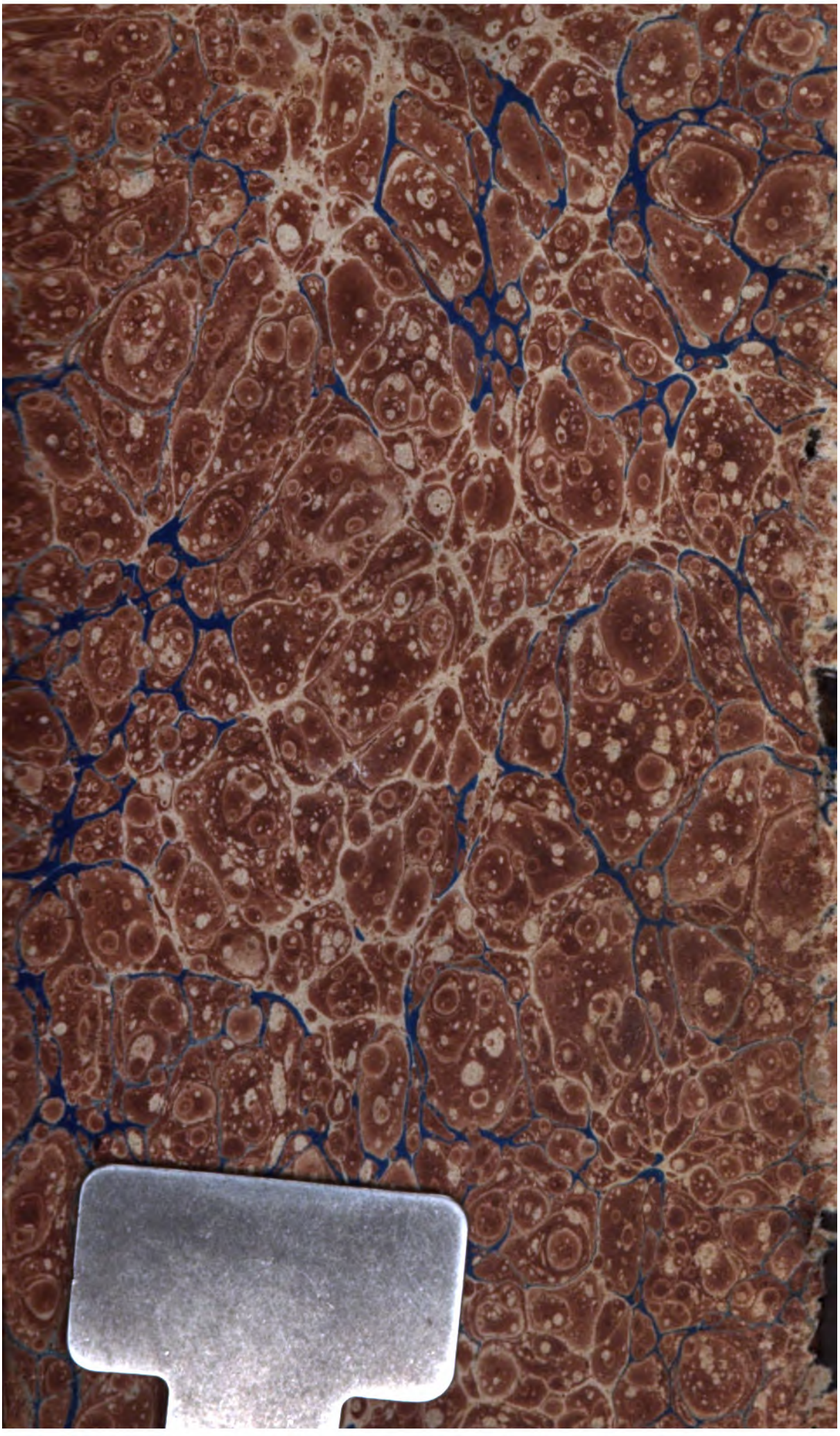
In other respects, as far as this able philosopher has gone, I have taken him for my guide. The warmth of his style, and the brilliancy of his imagination, are inimitable. Leaving him, therefore, without a rival in these, and only availing myself of his information, I have been content to describe things in my own way; and though many of the materials are taken from him, yet I have added, retrenched, and altered as I thought proper. It was my intention, at one time, whenever I differed from him, to have mentioned it at the bottom of the page; but this occurred so often, that I soon found it would look like envy, and might, perhaps, convict me of those very errors which I was wanting to lay upon him.

I have, therefore, as being every way his debtor, concealed my dissent, where my opinion was different; but wherever I borrow from him, I take care at the bottom of the page to express my obligations. But, though my

obligations to this writer are many, they extend but to the smallest part of the work, as he has hitherto only completed the History of Quadrupeds. I was, therefore, left to my reading alone to make out the History of Birds, Fishes, and Insects, of which the arrangement was so difficult, and the necessary information so widely diffused, and so obscurely related when found, that it proved by much the most laborious part of the undertaking. Thus, having made use of Mr. Buffon's lights in the first part of this work, I may, with some share of confidence, recommend it to the public. But what shall I say of that part where I have been entirely left without his assistance? As I would affect neither modesty nor confidence, it will be sufficient to say, that my reading upon this part of the subject has been very extensive; and that I have taxed my scanty circumstances in procuring books which are on this subject of all others the most expensive. In consequence of this industry, I here offer a work to the public, of a kind which has never been attempted in ours, or any other modern language, that I know of. The ancients, indeed, and Pliny in particular, have anticipated me in the present manner of treating natural history. Like those historians who described the events of a campaign, they have not condescended to give the private particulars of every individual that formed the army; they were content with characterising the generals, and describing their operations, while they left it to meaner hands to carry the muster-roll. I have followed their manner, rejecting the numerous fables which they adopted, and adding the improvements of the moderns, which are so numerous, that they actually make up the bulk of natural history.

The delight which I found in reading Pliny, first in-

spired me with the idea of a work of this nature. Having a taste rather classical than scientific, and having but little employed myself in turning over the dry labours of modern system-makers, my earliest intention was to translate this agreeable writer, and, by the help of a commentary, to make my work as amusing as I could. Let us dignify natural history never so much with the grave appellation of a useful science, yet still we must confess, that it is the occupation of the idle and the speculative, more than of the ambitious part of mankind. My intention was, to treat what I then conceived to be an idle subject in an idle manner; and not to hedge round plain and simple narratives with hard words, accumulated distinctions, ostentatious learning, and disquisitions that produced no conviction. Upon the appearance, however, of Mr. Buffon's work, I dropped my former plan, and adopted the present, being convinced by his manner, that the best imitation of the ancients was to write from our own feelings, and to imitate nature.

It will be my chief pride, therefore, if this work may be found an innocent amusement for those who have nothing else to employ them, or who require a relaxation from labour. Professed naturalists will, no doubt, find it superficial; and yet I should hope that even these will discover hints and remarks gleaned from various reading, not wholly trite or elementary; I would wish for their approbation. But my chief ambition is to drag up the obscure and gloomy learning of the cell to open inspection; to strip it from its garb of austerity, and to show the beauties of that form, which only the industrious and the inquisitive have been hitherto permitted to approach.

END OF ESSAYS, AND INQUIRY INTO POLITE LEARNING.