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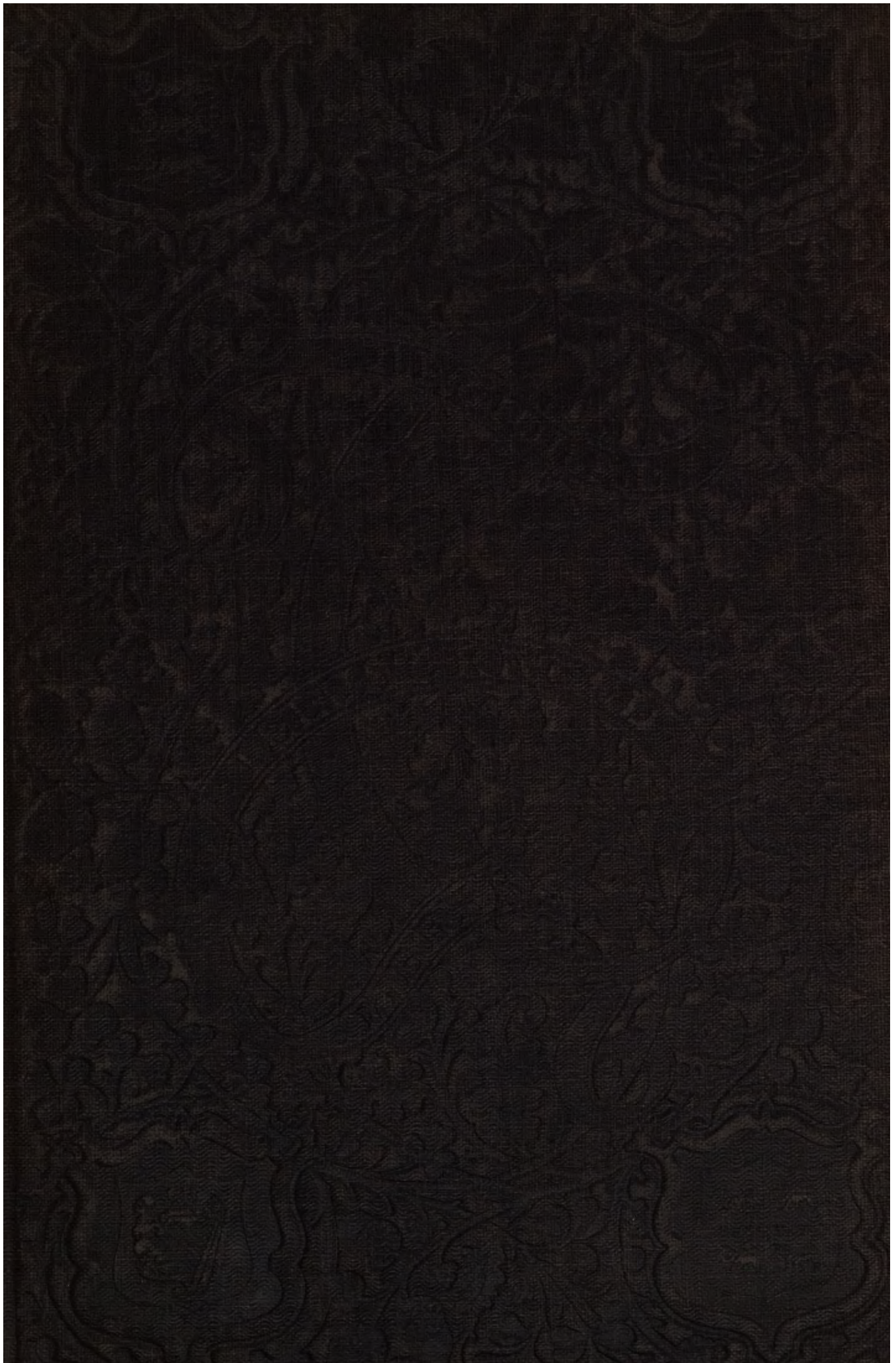
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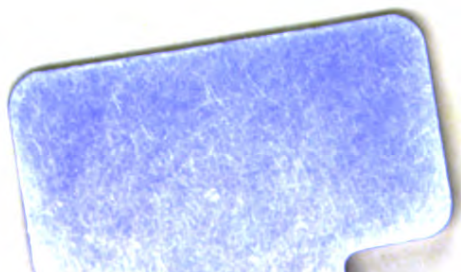


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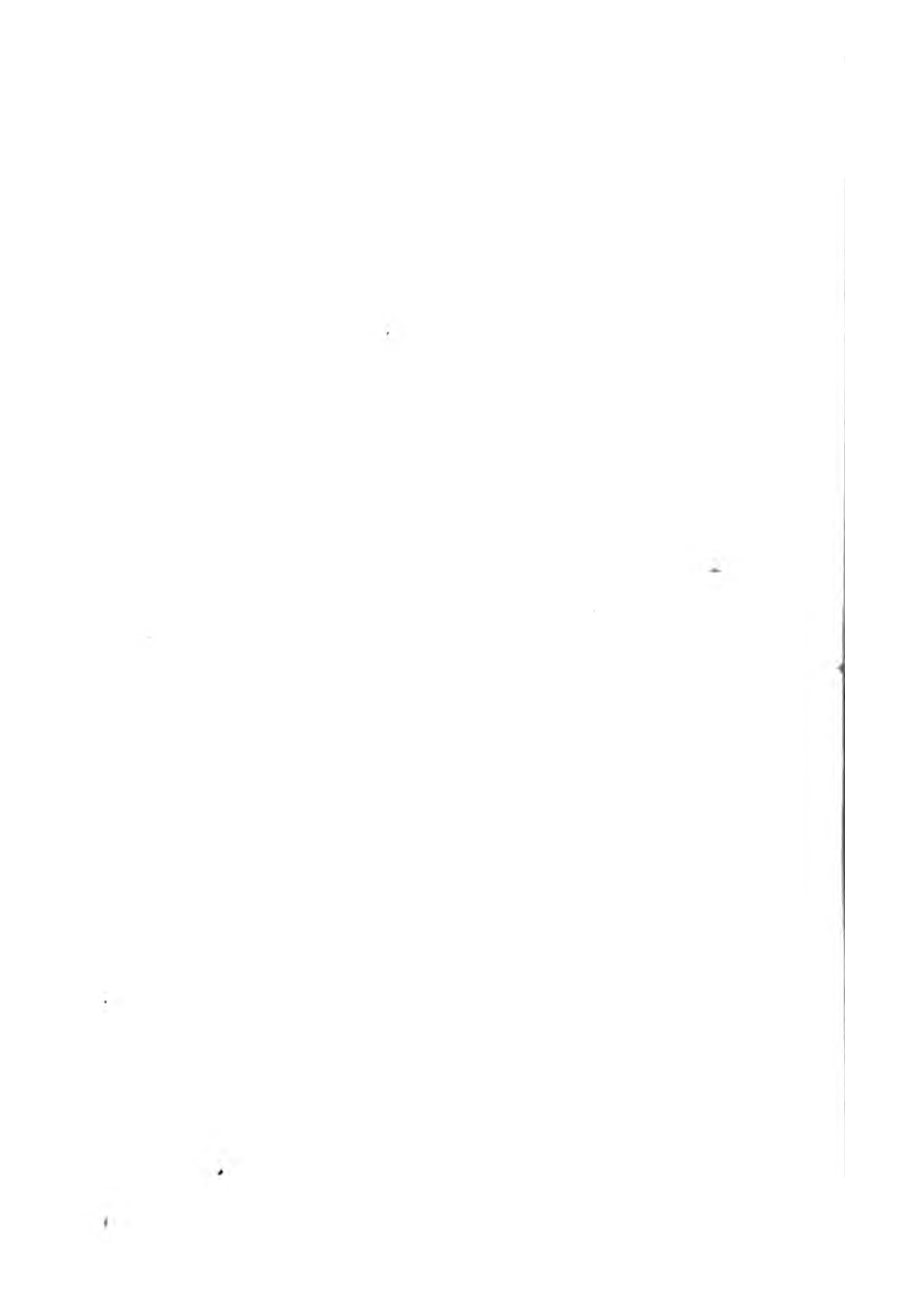
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JOHNSON'S
LIVES OF THE POETS.

VOL. II.





ELWOOD THE QUAKER READING LATIN TO MILTON.

JOHNSON'S LIVES
OF THE
BRITISH POETS

Completed by

WILLIAM HAZLITT.



IN FOUR VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LONDON:
NATHANIEL COOKE, MILFORD HOUSE, STRAND.

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THE
LIVES OF THE BRITISH POETS.



THOMAS NABBES.

(Born circa 1600.)

THOMAS NABBES, a writer in the reign of Charles I., we may reckon, says Langbaine, among poets of the third rate. Shields, however, protests that in strict justice he cannot rise above a fifth; yet he was patronised by Sir John Suckling. He seems to have been connected with Worcestershire. He has left seven plays and masques extant, besides other poems, which Langbaine says are entirely his own, having had recourse to no preceding author for assistance, and in this respect deserves pardon, if not applause, from the critic. Nabbes himself avers this in his prologue to *Covent Garden* :

“ He justifies that 'tis no borrowed strain
From the invention of another's brain.
Nor did he steal the fancy. 'Tis the same
He first intended by the proper name.
'Twas not a toil of years : few weeks brought forth ;
This rugged issue might have been more worth,
If he had lick'd it more. Nor doth he raise,
From the ambition of authentic plays,
Matter or words to height, nor bundle up
Conceits at taverns where the wits do sup ;
His muse is solitary, and alone
Doth practise her low speculation.”

The following are his plays :

1. *Covent Garden* : a pleasant comedy ; acted 1632.
2. *Tottenham Court* : a pleasant comedy ; acted 1633.
3. *Hannibal and Scipio* : an historical tragedy ; acted 1635.

Wood informs us that Nabbes compiled a continuation of Knollys' *History of the Turks* from 1628 to 1637.



MARGARET DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE.

(Died 1674.)

Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, famous for her voluminous productions, was born at St. John's, near Colchester, about the end of the reign of King James I. Her mother was very careful in the education of her, and had her instructed in all the accomplishments; and the young lady was remarkable from her infancy for her tendency to books and study. In 1643 she was made one of the maids-of-honour to Henrietta-Maria, consort of King Charles I. When the queen was forced into France by the troubles, Margaret attended her thither; and at Paris met with the Marquis of Newcastle, then a widower, who, admiring her person, disposition, and ingenuity, married her in 1645. From Paris they went to Rotterdam, where they resided six months; thence they returned to Antwerp, where they settled, and continued during the time of their exile. At the Restoration she, with her husband, returned to England, where she dedicated her time to writing poems, philosophical discourses, orations, and plays. She "kept a great many young ladies about her person, who wrote what she dictated. Some of them slept in a room contiguous to that in which her grace lay, and were ready, at the call of her bell, to rise at any hour of the night to write down her conceptions, lest they should escape her memory." She died in London in 1673, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, January 7th, 1674. The following is a list of her works:

1. *The World's Olio.* London, 1655, fol.

2. Nature's Picture drawn by Fancie's Pencil to the Life.*

In this volume (adds the title) there are several feigned stories of natural descriptions, as comical, tragical, and tragi-comical, poetical, romancical, philosophical, and historical, both in prose and verse, some all verse, some all prose, some mixed, partly prose and partly verse; also some morals and some dialogues, but they are as the advantage loaf of bread to the baker's dozen; and a true story at the latter end, wherein there is no feigning. London, 1656, folio.

3. Orations of divers sorts, accommodated to divers places. London, 1662, folio.

4. Philosophical and Physical Opinions; 1633, folio. This, the authoress tells us, was "the beloved of all her works, her masterpiece."

5. Observations upon Experimental Philosophy; to which is added, The Description of a New World. 1666, folio.

6. Philosophical Letters; or, Modest Reflections on some Opinions in Natural Philosophy, maintained by several famous and learned authors of this age, expressed by way of letters. London, 1664, folio.

7. Poems and Phancies. London, 1653, folio.

8. CCXI. Sociable Letters. 1664, folio.

9. The Life of the Duke, her husband. This is thought to be her best performance.

10. Observations of the Duke's, with Remarks of her own.

11. Grounds of Natural Philosophy. 1664, folio.

12. Apocryphal Ladies: a comedy. It is not divided into acts.

13. Bell in Campo: a tragedy, in two parts.

14. Blazing World: a comedy, unfinished.

15. Bridals: a comedy.

16. Comical Hash: a comedy.

17. Convent of Pleasure: a comedy.

18. Female Academy: a comedy.

19. Lady Contemplation: a comedy, in two parts.

20. Love's Adventure: a comedy, in two parts.

21. Matrimonial Troubles, in two parts; the second being a tragedy, or, as the authoress styles it, a tragi-comedy.

22. Nature's Three Daughters—Beauty, Love, and Wit: a comedy, in two parts.

23. Presence: a comedy. To this there are twenty-nine supernumerary scenes.

24. Public Wooing: a comedy. In this the duke wrote several of the suitors' speeches.

25. Religious: a tragi-comedy.

26. Several Wits: a comedy.

27. Sociable Companions; or, the Female Wits: a comedy.

28. Unnatural Tragedy. In act ii. scene 3 the Duchess inveighs against Camden's *Britannia*.

29. Wit's Cabal: a comedy, in two parts.

30. Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet: a tragedy, in two parts.

Walpole has these remarks—amusing enough, but, as not unusual

* To this book was prefixed a curious print of the duke and duchess sitting at a table, with the duke's children by his former wife, to whom her grace is telling stories; and at the end is a strange account of her birth, education, and life, written by herself, wherein she says very high things of the exquisite beauty of her person and the rare endowments of her mind.

with him, ill-natured—upon the literary character of the duchess and her husband: “The duke, as an author, is familiar to those who scarce know any other author, viz. from his book of horsemanship. Though amorous in poetry and music, as my Lord Clarendon says, he was fitter to break Pegasus for a menage, than to mount him on the steeps of Parnassus. Of all the riders of that steed, perhaps there have not been a more fantastic couple than his grace and his faithful duchess, who was never off her pillion. One of the noble historian’s finest portraits is of this duke. The duchess has left another, more diffuse indeed, but not less entertaining. It was equally amusing to hear her sometimes compare her lord to Julius Cæsar; and oftener to acquaint you with such anecdotes as in what sort of coach he went to Amsterdam. The touches on her own character are inimitable. She says, that it pleased God to command his servant Nature to indue her with a poetical and philosophical genius, even from her birth; for she did write some books of that kind before she was twelve years of age. But what gives one the best idea of her unbounded passion for scribbling, was her seldom revising the copies of her works, lest, as she said, it should disturb her following conceptions. What a picture of foolish nobility was this stately poetic couple, retired to their own little domain, and intoxicating one another with circumstantial flattery on what was of consequence to no mortal but themselves!” He calls the duchess, in another place, “a most fertile pedant.”

RICHARD BROME.

(Circa 1600-1652.)

“Richard Brome, a servant to Ben Jonson, a servant suitable to such a master; and who, what with his faithful service and the sympathy of his genius, was thought worthy his particular commendation in verse. Whatever instructions he might have had from his master, Jonson, he certainly, by his own natural parts, improved to a great height; and at last became not many parasangs inferior to him in fame, by diverse noted comedies.”*

Richard Brome was of mean extraction. At what time he began to write, we have no account; but his master says it was not until he had served him the term of an apprenticeship. The first play of Brome’s, which appeared in print in 1632, has the following verses from Ben Jonson:

To my faithful and (by his continued virtue) my loving Friend, the Author of this Work, Mr. Richard Brome:

I had you for a servant once, Dick Brome,
And you perform’d a servant’s faithful parts;
Now you are got into a nearer room
Of fellowship, professing my old arts.

* Phillips.

And you do do them well, with good applause,
 Which you have justly gained from the stage,
 By observation of these comic laws
 Which I your master first did teach the age.
 You learnt it well, and for it served your time
 A 'prenticeship, which few do nowadays.

Besides this testimony in his favour, several of the principal poets of the times—as Shirley, Dekker, Ford, Chamberlain, and others—addressed verses to him on several of his performances; and he appears to have been generally well respected.

He studied men and humour more than books; and his genius affecting comedy, his province was more observation than study. His plots were his own; and he forged all his various characters from the mint of his own experience and judgment.

It is conjectured that he died in the year 1652, as in the subsequent one five of his plays were made public by his namesake Alexander Brome.

Besides *The Lancashire Witches*, he was the author of fifteen plays.

The following pieces also, not now known to exist, at least under these titles, have been assigned to Richard Brome, but on very questionable authority:

Wit in Madness; Christianetta; The Jewish Gentleman; The Lovesick Maid; Life and Death of Sir Martin Skink; The Apprentice Prize.

In the two last he is said to have been assisted by Thomas Heywood.

DR. JASPER MAYNE.

(1604-1672.)

Jasper Mayne was born at Hatherleigh, Devonshire, in the year 1604. He received his education at Westminster School, and was removed to Christchurch College, Oxford, when he was about twenty years of age. He took his bachelor and master of arts degrees in the regular way; and then entering into holy orders, was presented by his college to the vicarages of Cassington near Woodstock, and of Pyrton near Watlington, Oxfordshire. He became, says Wood, "a quaint preacher and a noted poet;" and in the latter capacity distinguished himself by the production of two plays, entitled *The City Match*, a comedy; and *The Amorous War*, a tragi-comedy (1658). When the rebellion broke out, and Charles I. was obliged to keep his court at Oxford, to avoid being exposed to the resentment of the populace in London, Dr. Mayne was one of those divines who were appointed to preach before his majesty and the court. In the year 1646 he was created a doctor of divinity; and the year after he printed a sermon at Oxford against false prophets, upon Ezekiel xxii. 26, which occasioned a dispute between him and the memorable antagonist of Chillingworth, Mr. Cheynell. Mr. Cheynell had attacked his sermon from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford; upon

which there passed several letters between them, published by Dr. Mayne the same year, in a piece entitled *A late printed Sermon against False Prophets vindicated by Letter from the causeless aspersions of Mr. Francis Cheynell; by Jasper Mayne, D.D., the misunderstood Author of it.* The same year Dr. Mayne published also another piece entitled, *OXΔOMAXIA; or, the People's War examined according to the principles of Scripture and reason, in two of the most plausible pretences of it,* in answer to a letter sent by a person of quality who desired satisfaction. In this piece he examines, first, how far the power of a king, who is truly a king, not one only in name, extends itself over his subjects; secondly, whether any such power belongs to the king of England; and thirdly, if there does, how far it is to be obeyed, and not resisted.

In the year 1658 he was deprived of his studentship at Christchurch, to which he had been advanced upon taking his degrees, and soon after of both his livings. During the Commonwealth he was chaplain to the Earl of Devonshire, and became the companion of Hobbes, who then attended his lordship: but Hobbes was never very good company for divines; and therefore it is no great wonder if Mayne and he did not agree well together, as Wood informs us they did not. At the Restoration he was not only put in possession of his former places, but was made canon of Christchurch and archdeacon of Chichester, which preferments he enjoyed till his death. He was an orthodox preacher, a man of severe virtue, a ready and facetious wit.

Besides his dramatic pieces, our author wrote a poem upon the naval victory over the Dutch by the Duke of York, a subject which Dryden has likewise celebrated in his *Annus Mirabilis*. He published a translation of part of Lucian, said to be done by Mr. Francis Hicks, to which he added some dialogues of his own, though Winstanley is of opinion that the whole translation is also his. Dr. Mayne died 6th of December, 1672; and his remains were deposited on the north side of the choir in Christchurch.

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT.

(1605-1668.)

The father of this poet was John Davenant, who kept the Crown Tavern or Inn at Oxford; but owing to an obscure insinuation in Wood's account of his birth, it has been supposed that he was the natural son of Shakespeare; and to render this story probable, Mrs. Davenant is represented as a woman exceedingly beautiful, very elegant both in her conversation and dress, and a particular friend to Shakespeare, who was accustomed to lodge at the Crown on his journeys between Warwickshire and London. Davenant himself, over his bottle, would often encourage the idea, which has been regarded by Malone, Warton, and others as not destitute of foundation. Steevens, however, discredits it. Young Davenant, who was born at Oxford, Feb. 1605, very early betrayed a poetical bias; and one of his first attempts, when he was only ten years old, was an ode in remembrance of Master William Shakespeare. This is a remarkable produc-

tion for one so young, and one who lived not only to see Shakespeare set aside, but to contribute with some degree of activity to that instance of depraved taste. Davenant was educated at the grammar-school of All Saints, in his native city. In 1621, the year in which his father served the office of mayor, he entered at Lincoln College; but being encouraged to try his success at court, he appeared there as a page to Frances Duchess of Richmond, a lady of great influence and fashion. He afterwards resided in the family of the celebrated Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke.

The murder of this nobleman in 1628 depriving him of what assistance he might expect from his friendship, Davenant had recourse to the stage, on which he produced his first dramatic piece, the tragedy of *Albovine King of the Lombards*. This play had success enough to procure him the recommendation, if nothing more substantial, of many persons of distinction, and of the wits of the time. With such encouragement, he renewed his attendance at court, adding to its pleasures by his dramatic efforts, and not sparingly to the mirth of his brethren the satirists, by the unfortunate issue of some of his licentious gallantries. For several years his plays and masques were acted with the greatest applause; and his character as a poet was raised very high by all who pretended to be judges. On the death of Ben Jonson in 1638, the queen procured for him the vacant laurel, which is said to have given such offence to Thomas May, his rival, as to induce him to join the disaffected party, and to become the advocate and historian of the republican parliament. In 1639 Davenant was appointed "governor of the king and queen's company acting at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, during the lease which Mrs. Elizabeth Beeston, alias Hutcheson, hath or doth hold in the said house"

When the civil commotions had for some time subsisted, the peculiar nature of them required that public amusements should be the decided objects of popular resentment; and Davenant, who had administered so copiously to the pleasures of the court, was very soon brought under suspicions of a more serious kind. In May 1641 he was accused before the parliament of being a partner with many of the king's friends in the design of bringing the army to London for his majesty's protection. His accomplices effected their escape; but Davenant was apprehended at Feversham, and sent up to London. In July following he was bailed; but on a second attempt to withdraw to France, was taken in Kent. At last, however, he contrived to make his escape without further impediment, and remained abroad for some time.

The motive of his flight appears not to have been cowardice, but an unwillingness to sacrifice his life to popular fury, while there was any prospect of his being able to devote it to the service of his royal master. Accordingly when the queen sent over a considerable quantity of military stores for the use of the Earl of Newcastle's army, Davenant resolutely ventured to return to England, and volunteered his services under that nobleman, who had been one of his patrons. The earl made him lieutenant-general of his ordnance, a post for which he was not previously prepared, but for which he qualified himself with so much skill and success, that in September 1643 he was rewarded

with the honour of knighthood for the service he rendered to the royal cause at the siege of Gloucester. Of his military prowess, however, we have no further account; nor at what time he found it necessary, on the decline of the king's affairs, to retire again into France. Here he was received into the confidence of the queen, who in 1646 employed him in one of her unfortunate and ill-advised negotiations with the king, who was then at Newcastle.

During his residence at Paris, where he took up his habitation in the Louvre, with his old friend Lord Jermyn, Davenant wrote the first two books of his *Gondibert*, which were published in England, but without exciting much interest. Soon after he commenced projector; and hearing that vast improvements might be made in the loyal colony of Virginia by transporting good artificers, he embarked with a number of them at one of the ports of Normandy. This humane and apparently wise scheme ended almost immediately in the capture of his vessel on the French coast by one of the parliamentary ships of war, which carried him to the Isle of Wight, where he was imprisoned at Cowes Castle. After endeavouring to reconcile himself to this unfortunate and perilous situation, he resumed his pen, and proceeded with his *Gondibert*, but being in continual dread of his life, he made but slow progress.

His fears, indeed, were not without foundation. In 1650, when the parliament had triumphed over all opposition, he was ordered to be tried by the high commission court, and for this purpose was removed to the Tower of London. His biographers are not agreed as to the means by which he was saved. Some impute it to the solicitations of two aldermen of York, to whom he had been hospitable when they were his prisoners, and whom he suffered to escape; others inform us that Milton interposed. Both accounts, it is hoped, are true; and it is certain that after the Restoration he repaid Milton's interference in kind, by preserving him from the resentment of the court. He remained, however, in prison for two years, and was treated with some indulgence by the favour of lord keeper Whitlocke, whom he thanked in a letter written with peculiar elegance of style and compliment.

By degrees he obtained complete enlargement, and had nothing to regret but the wreck of his fortune. In this dilemma, he adopted a measure which, like a great part of his conduct throughout life, shows him to have been a man of an undaunted spirit, fertile in expedients, and possessed of no common resources of mind. Indeed, of all schemes, this seemed the most unlikely to succeed, and even the most dangerous to propose. Yet, in the very teeth of national prejudices or principles, and at a time when all dramatic entertainments were suspended, discouraged by the protectoral court, anathematised by the people, he conceived that if he could contrive to open a theatre, it would be sure to be well filled. Viewing his difficulties with great precaution, he proceeded by slow steps, and an apparent reluctance, to revive what was so generally obnoxious. Having, however, obtained the countenance of Whitlocke, Sir John Maynard, and other persons of rank, he opened a theatre in Rutland House, Charterhouse-yard, on the 21st of May, 1656, and performed a kind of nondescript entertainments, as they were called, which were dramatic in every thing but the names and

form; and some of them were called operas. When he found these relished and tolerated, he proceeded to more regular pieces; and with such advantages in style and manner, as, in the judgment of the historians of the stage, entitle him to the honour of being not only the reviver, but the improver, of the legitimate drama. These pieces he afterwards revised, and published in a more perfect state; and they now form the principal part of his printed works, although modern taste has long excluded them from the stage. On the Restoration, he received the patent of a playhouse, under the title of the Duke's Company, who first performed in the theatre in Portugal-row, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and afterwards in that in Dorset Gardens. Here he acted his former plays and such new ones as he wrote after this period, and enjoyed the public favour until his death, April 7, 1668, in his sixty-third year. He was interred with considerable pomp two days after, in Westminster Abbey, near the place where the remains of May, his once rival, had been buried by the parliament. On his gravestone is inscribed, in imitation of Ben Jonson's short epitaph, "O rare Sir William Davenant!"

The life of Sir William Davenant occupies an important space in the history of the stage, to which he was in many respects a judicious benefactor, by introducing changes of scenery and decorations; but he assisted in banishing Shakespeare, to make way for dramas which are now intolerable. He appears to have been, in his capacity of manager, as in every part of life, a man of sound and original sense, firm in his enterprises, and intent to gratify the taste of the public, with little advantage to himself, as he died insolvent.

His dramatic works are—

1. *Albovine King of the Lombards*: a tragedy.
2. *Cruel Brother*: a tragedy.
3. *Distresses*: a tragi-comedy. 1673.
4. *First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House*, by declamation and music, after the manner of the ancients.
5. *The Fair Favourite*: a tragi-comedy. 1673.
6. *The Just Italian*: a tragi-comedy.
7. *Law against Lovers*: a tragi-comedy, made up of *Measure for Measure* and *Much ado about Nothing*.
8. *Love and Honour*: a tragi-comedy.
9. *Man's the Master*: a tragi-comedy.
10. *Platonic Lovers*: a tragi-comedy.
11. *Playhouse to be Let*.
12. *Siege of Rhodes*, in two parts.
13. *Siege*: a tragi-comedy.
14. *News from Plymouth*: a comedy.
15. *Temple of Love*: presented by Queen Henrietta, wife to King Charles I., and her ladies at Whitehall.

SIR WILLIAM KILLEGREW.

(1605-1693.)

William, the eldest son of Sir Robert Killegrew, knt., chamberlain to the queen, was born at the manor of Hanworth, near Hamp-

ton Court, in May 1605. He became a gentleman-commoner in St. John's College in Midsummer term, 1622; after continuing there about three years, he travelled on the continent; and after his return, was made governor of Pendennis Castle and Falmouth Haven in Cornwall, and the commander of the militia in the western part of that county. After this he was called to attend King Charles I. as one of the gentlemen-ushers of his privy chamber, in which employment he continued till the breaking out of the Great Rebellion. He had the command of one of the two great troops of horse that guarded the king's person during the whole course of the civil war; was in attendance on the king when the court resided at Oxford; was created doctor of civil laws 1642; and upon the ruin of the king's affairs, suffered for his attachment to him, and compounded with the republicans for his estate.

Upon the restoration of Charles II. he was the first of his father's servants that the king took any notice of, who made him gentleman-usher of his privy chamber, the same place he had enjoyed under the deceased king. Upon Charles's marriage he was created his majesty's first vice-chamberlain, in which station he continued twenty-two years. He died 1693, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His works are—

1. Ormasdes; or, Love and Friendship: tragi-comedy.
2. Pandora; or, the Converts: comedy.
3. Siege of Urbino: tragi-comedy.
4. Selindra: tragi-comedy.

All printed together in folio, Oxon. 1666.

5. A Poem set to music by Henry Lawes.

6. The Artless Midnight Thoughts of a Gentleman at Court; who for many years built on sand, which every blast of cross fortune has defaced; but now he has laid new foundations on the rock of his salvation, &c. London, 1684. Besides 233 thoughts in it, there are some small pieces of poetry.*

7. Midnight and Daily Thoughts, in verse and prose. London, 1694.

THOMAS RANDOLPH.

(1605-1634.)

“Thomas Randolph, one of the most pregnant young wits of his time, flourishing in the University of Cambridge. The quick conceit and clear poetic fancy discovered in his extant poems seemed to promise something extraordinary from him, had not his indulgence to the too-liberal converse with the multitude of his applauders drawn him to such an immoderate way of living, as in all probability shortened his days.” The poet thus praised and thus lamented by Edward Phillips was born at Newnham, near Daventry, of a good family, 15th

* “Cibber says, that besides 233 thoughts in it, there are some small pieces of poetry. If he has really given us 233 thoughts in one volume, we may recommend Sir William as a worthy object of imitation; or rather admire the improvement introduced into the book-manufactory since, of making volumes without any thoughts at all.”—SOUTHEY.

June, 1605, and educated as one of the king's scholars at Westminster School. From thence he was chosen into Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1623, of which he became a fellow, took his degree of master of arts, and afterwards received the same honour at the University of Oxford. He very early began to exercise his poetical talents, having, it is said, at the age of nine or ten years written *The History of the Incarnation of our Saviour* in verse. As he grew up, the ingenuity of his poetical performances procured him the esteem of all who had any pretensions to wit, particularly of Ben Jonson, who adopted him for one of his sons. His lively and agreeable conversation engaged him into too much company, and sometimes among none of the best or most peaceable persons; so that once, in a jovial and drunken meeting, a quarrel arising, he had the misfortune to lose the little finger of his left hand. On this accident he wrote a copy of verses, printed in his works. The scantiness of his patrimony, or his own extravagance, soon brought him to poverty; and his irregular and too-free mode of living, among his companions and admirers, in all probability shortened his life. After living some time with his father at Little Houghton, in Northamptonshire, he went to the house of William Stafford of Blatherwick, in the same county; where he died in March 1634, aged not quite 30 years. The 17th of the same month he was buried in an aisle adjoining to Blatherwick church, among the Stafford family; and soon after Sir Christopher Hatton caused, at his own charge, a monument of white marble, wreathed about with laurel, to be erected over his grave; the inscription on which, in Latin and English verse, was made by the poet's friend Peter Hausted, of Cambridge. He appears to have been a man of the greatest good-humour, and a facetious companion: his poems abound with wit; and, though generally jocose, he is upon many occasions sententiously grave and moral. Like many of his profession, he seems to have been free, generous, and totally regardless of the world.

JOHN MILTON.*

(1608-1674.)

The life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute inquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes on Mr. Fenton's elegant abridgment, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

John Milton was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton, near Thame, in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took, I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His grandfather John was keeper of the forest of Shotover; a zealous papist, who disinherited his son because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

* Johnson.

His father John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in music, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew



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rich, and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons: John, the poet; and Christopher, who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the king's party, for which he was awhile persecuted; but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber-practice, that, soon after the accession of King James, he was knighted and made a judge; but his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

He had likewise a daughter Anne, whom he married with a considerable fortune to Edward Phillips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown Office to be secondary. By him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentic account of his domestic manners.

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread

Eagle, in Bread Street, Dec. 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education, for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburgh, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College, in Cambridge, where he entered a sizar,* Feb. 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which the learned Politian had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate; many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like *Paradise Lost*.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the public eye; but they raise no great expectations: they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark, what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verse than they provoke derision. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps Alabaster's *Roxana*.†

Of the exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded, for they were such as few can perform. Yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate, what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either University that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain, from his own verses to Diodati, that he had incurred rustication, a temporary dismissal into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term:

* In this assertion Dr. Johnson was mistaken. Milton was admitted a pensioner, and not a sizar, as will appear by the following extract from the College Register: "Johannes Milton Londinensis, filius Johannis, institutus fuit in literarum elementis sub Mag'ro Gill Gymnasii Paulini præfecto; admissus est *Pensionarius Minor* Feb. 12, 1624, sub M'ro Chappell, solvitq. pro Ingr. 10s."

† Published 1632.

" Me tenet urbs reflua quam Thamesis alluit unda,
 Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet.
 Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,
 Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.—
 Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
 Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.
 Si sit hoc *exilium* patrios adiiisse penates,
 Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,
 Non ego vel *profugi* nomen sortemve recuso,
 Lætus et *exilii* conditione fruor."

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give the term *vetiti laris*, "a habitation from which he is excluded;" or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring the threats of a rigorous master, and something else which a temper like his cannot undergo. What was more than threat was probably punishment. This poem, which mentions his exile, proves likewise that it was not perpetual, for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured, from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees, that of bachelor in 1628, and that of master in 1632; but he left the University with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to Hartlib, supersedes all academical instruction; being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts. And in his discourse *On the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingeniously proposes, that "the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers."

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the church were permitted to act plays, "writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trincalos,* buffoons, and bawds; prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles."

This is sufficiently peevish in a man who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compen-

* By the mention of this name, he evidently refers to *Albumazar*, acted at Cambridge in 1614. *Ignoramus* and other plays were performed at the same time. The practice was then very frequent. The last dramatic performance at either University was *The Grateful Fair*, written by Christopher Smart, and represented at Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1747.

sation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academics.

He went to the University with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that could not retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity and fantastic luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him, that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, "not taking thought of being late, so it gives advantage to be more fit."

When he left the University, he returned to his father, then residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years, in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed, that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the masque of *Comus*, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634, and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe*;* but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

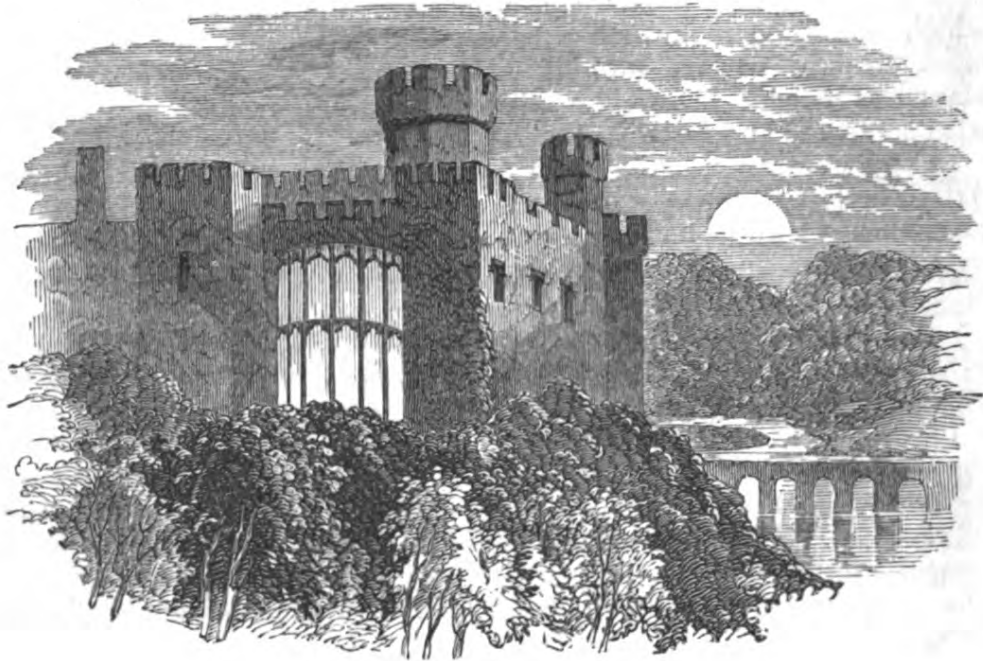
"a quo ceteri fonte perenni
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis."

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King, secretary for Ire-

* It had nevertheless its foundation in reality. The Earl of Bridgewater being president of Wales in the year 1634, had his residence at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, at which time Lord Brackly and Mr. Egerton, his sons, and Lady Alice Egerton, his daughter, passing through a place called the Haywood Forest, or Haywood, in Herefordshire, were benighted, and the lady for a short time lost. This being related to their father upon their arrival at his castle, Milton, at the request of his friend Henry Lawes, who taught music in the family, wrote this masque. Lawes set it to music, and it was acted on Michaelmas night; the two brothers, the young lady, and Lawes himself, bearing each a part in the representation.

The Lady Alice Egerton became afterwards the wife of the Earl of Carbury, who, at his seat called Golden Grove, in Caermarthenshire, harboured Dr. Jeremy Taylor in the time of the usurpation. Among the Doctor's sermons is

land in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may



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be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry; and his malignity to the church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for, while he lived at Horton, he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the Countess Dowager of Derby, where the *Arcades* made part of a dramatic entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country, and had some purpose of taking chambers in the inns of court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence, *I pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto*, "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris, where, by the favour of Lord Scudamore, he had the opportunity of visiting Gro-

one on her death, in which her character is finely portrayed. Her sister, Lady Mary, was given in marriage to Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

Notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's assertion, that the fiction is derived from Homer's Circe, it may be conjectured that it was rather taken from the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus, in which, under the fiction of a dream, the characters of *Comus* and his attendants are delineated, and the delights of sensualists exposed and reprobated. This little tract was published at Louvain in 1611, and afterwards at Oxford in 1634, the very year in which Milton's *Comus* was written. Or perhaps Milton was indebted to the *Old Wife's Tale* of George Peele for the plan of *Comus*.

tius, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hastened into Italy, of which he had, with particular diligence, studied the language and literature; and though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, stayed two months at Florence, where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature," he might "leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die."

It appears in all his writings that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal, as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastic inscription in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise, the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topics, but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the learned and the great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich,* and Salfilli in a tetrastich: neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salfilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems, though he says he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se*.

At Rome, as at Florence, he stayed only two months: a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

* "Græcia Mæonidem, jactet sibi Roma Maronem:
Anglia Miltonum jactat utrique parem."

Of which Dryden's celebrated epigram of six lines, constantly prefixed to *Paradise Lost*, is little more than a translation:

"Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in majesty of thought surpassed,
The next in gracefulness, in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third, she joined the other two."

From Rome he passed on to Naples in company of a hermit, a companion from whom little could be expected; yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso Marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion; and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised a high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid against him by the Jesuits for the liberty of his conversations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the Inquisition for philosophical heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe; and Milton stayed two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of music and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederic Spanheim, two learned professors of divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati, a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intituled *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a tailor in St. Bride's Churchyard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street,* which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys to be boarded and instructed.

* This is inaccurately expressed: Philips, and Dr. Newton after him, say a garden-house, *i.e.* a house situated in a garden, and of which there were, especially in the north suburbs of London, very many, if not few else. The term is technical, and frequently occurs in the Athenæ and Fasti Oxon. The meaning thereof may be collected from the article 'Thomas Farnaby,' the famous schoolmaster; of whom the author says, that he taught in Goldsmith's-rents, in Cripplegate parish, behind Redcross-street, where were large gardens and handsome houses. Milton's house in Jewin-street was also a garden-house, as were indeed most of his dwellings after his settlement in London.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance ; on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master ; but since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue ; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive ; his allowance was not ample, and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told that in the art of education he performed wonders ; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of the horse. Every man that has ever undertaken to instruct others can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recal vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects, such as the *Georgics*, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary college.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong ; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellences of all times and of all places ; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary ; our speculations upon matter are voluntary and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostatics or astronomy ; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools, that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation ; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantic or paradox-

ical ; for if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life ; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was how to do good and avoid evil :

ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακόντ' ἀγαθόντε τέτυκται.

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge : its only genuine product, I believe, is a small history of poetry, written in Latin, by his nephew Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.*

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation : he was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology, of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet ; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of *Reformation*, in two books, against the established church, being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, "inferior to the prelates in learning."

Hall, bishop of Norwich, had published an *Humble Remonstrance*, in defence of episcopacy ; to which, in 1641, five ministers,† of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnuus*, gave their answer. Of this answer a confutation was attempted by the learned Usher ; and to the confutation Milton published a reply, intitled *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those Testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late Treatises, one whereof goes under the Name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh.*

I have transcribed this title to show, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton*, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers ; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by de-

* We may be sure, at least, that Dr. Johnson had never seen the book he speaks of, for it is entirely composed in English, though its title begins with two Latin words, "Theatrum Poetarum ; or, a compleat Collection of the Poets," &c. ; a circumstance that probably misled the biographer of Milton.

† Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcemen, William Spurstow.

vout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more pamphlets upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was "vomited out of the University," he answers in general terms: "The fellows of the college wherein I spent some years, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many times how much better it would content them that I should stay. As for the common approbation or dislike of that place as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself the more for that, too simple is the answerer, if he think to obtain with me. Of small practice were the physician who could not judge, by what she and her sister have of long time vomited, that the worser stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy: she vomits now out of sickness; but before it will be well with her, she must vomit by strong physic. The University, in the time of her better health and my younger judgment, I never greatly admired, but now much less."

This is surely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to describe the course of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and, because he has been suspected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity, "that if I be justly charged," says he, "with this crime, it may come upon me with tenfold shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for some chaplain in hand, some squire of the body to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only, but at the court-cupboard, he will bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and sets me out half a dozen ptisical mottoes, wherever he had them, hopping short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit having escaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring poesies. And thus ends this section, or rather dissection, of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, that "hell grows darker at his frown."

His father, after Reading was taken by Essex, came to reside in his house, and his school increased. At Whitsuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophic life, after having been used at home to a great house and much company and joviality, her friends, possibly by her own desire,

made earnest suit to have her company the remaining part of the summer, which was granted, upon a promise of her return at Michaelmas."

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife; he pursued his studies, and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer: he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he therefore dispatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published, in 1644, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; which was followed by *The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*; and the next year his *Tetrachordon—Expositions upon the four chief places of Scripture which treat of Marriage*.

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; "but that house," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him "a serving-man turned solicitor." Howel, in his Letters, mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest: he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Dr. Davis (who was, however, not ready to comply), they resolved to endeavour a re-union. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand; and at one of his usual visits was surprised to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her entreaties for a while; "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house, when they were distressed, with other royalists.

He published about the same time his *Areopagitica: a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing*. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptic in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions which that society shall think pernicious. But this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestic, poetry was never long out of his thoughts.

About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster; whereas it is well known he never set up for a public school to teach all the young fry of a parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to his relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends; and that neither his writings nor his way of teaching ever savoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour. "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not about this time a design of making him an adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army; but the new modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only designed about some time, if a man be not much mistaken. Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for if Philips be

not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new modelled (1645), he removed to a smaller house in Holborn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards till the king's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and to compose the minds of the people.

He made some *Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels*. While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged,—if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction,—he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basiliké*, which the council of state, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and imputing it to the king, whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: “Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true, all-seeing Deity, as immediately before his death to pop into the hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god?”

The papers which the king gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles II. being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of polite learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having by excessive praises been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer, which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teasing his adversary as

much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of Salmacis, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. "Tu es Gallus," says Milton, "et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus." But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vicious Latin. He opens his book with telling him that he has used *persona* (which, according to Milton, signifies only a *mask*,) in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when for one of those supposed blunders he says (as Ker, and I think some one before him, has remarked), "Propino te grammaticistis tuis *vapulandum*." From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations and of kings sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton, when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read: for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he was equal to his king could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch, but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must have been to torment Salmasius, who was then at her court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose her to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen and by temper despotic.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which, however, he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarcely less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found,—that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

" Quid agas, cum dira et fœdior omni
Crimine *persona* est ?"

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened

Salmasius's life; and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, September 3, 1653; and as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself under the title of Protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended,—he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of public employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which seemed to him unlawful, should now sell his services and his flatteries to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in child-bed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but after a short time married Catharine, the daughter of one Captain Woodcock of Hackney—a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died, within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it; and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege et Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) Defensionem destructivam Regis et Populi*. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Philips, under whose name he published an answer so much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Cælum*. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his *Defensio Secunda*, and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger: but Milton's pride operated against his malignity; and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape, than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second defence he shows that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deserimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis

ipse honores sibi quærit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil æquius, nihil utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum te agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maximus et gloriosissimus,* dux publici consilii, exercituum fortissimorum imperator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bonorum omnium et animitus missa voce salutaris."

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may show its servility, but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, "we were left," says Milton, "to ourselves; the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way: except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours; who envy the distinctions of merit greater than their own; or who have yet to learn that in the coalition of human society nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power. Such, sir, are you by general confession; such are the things achieved by you, the greatest and most glorious of our countrymen, the director of our public councils, the leader of unconquered armies, the father of your country,—for by that title does every good man hail you with sincere and voluntary praise."

Next year, having defended all that wanted defence, he found leisure to defend himself. He undertook his own vindication against More, whom he declares in his title to be justly called the author of the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*. In this there is no want of vehemence or eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus es? an Momus? an uterque idem est!" He then remembers that *morus* is Latin for a mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

"Poma alba ferebat
Quæ post nigra tulit morus."

With this piece ended his controversies; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector, he is supposed to have written the *Declaration of the Reasons for a War with Spain*. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works which he had planned for his future employment; an epic poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary seems a work of all others least practicable

* It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an illustrious thing; but *vir gloriosus* is commonly a braggart, as in *miles gloriosus*. Dr. Johnson.

in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it after he had lost his eyes; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, "almost to his dying day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press." The compilers of the Latin dictionary printed at Cambridge had the use of those collections in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.*

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest—a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epic poem, after much deliberation, "long choosing, and beginning late," he fixed upon *Paradise Lost*; a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate King Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Mansus; but "Arthur was reserved," says Fenton, "to another destiny."†

It appears by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library‡ at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called mysteries; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons, such as Justice, Mercy, Faith. Of the tragedy or mystery of *Paradise Lost* there are two plans:

The Persons.

Michael.
Chorus of Angels.
Heavenly Love.
Lucifer.
Adam, } with the Serpent.
Eve, }
Conscience.
Death.

The Persons.

Moses.
Divine Justice, Wisdom, Heavenly Love.
The Evening Star, Hesperus.
Chorus of Angels.
Lucifer.
Adam.
Eve.

* The *Cambridge Dictionary*, published in 4to, 1693, is no other than a copy, with some small additions, of that of Dr. Adam Littleton in 1685, by sundry persons, of whom, though their names are concealed, there is great reason to conjecture that Milton's nephew, Edward Philips, was one; for it is expressly said by Wood (*Fasti*, vol. i. p. 266), that Milton's *Thesaurus* came to his hands; and it is asserted in the preface thereto, that the editors thereof had the use of three large folios in manuscript, collected and digested into alphabetical order by Mr. John Milton.

It has been remarked, that the additions, together with the preface above mentioned, and a large part of the title of the *Cambridge Dictionary*, have been incorporated and printed with the subsequent editions of *Littleton's Dictionary*, till that of 1735. Vide *Biog. Brit.* 2985, in not. So that, for aught that appears to the contrary, Philips was the last possessor of Milton's Ms.

† *Id est*, to be the subject of an heroic poem written by Sir Richard Blackmore.

‡ Trinity College.

The Persons.
 Labour, }
 Sickness, } Mutes.
 Discontent, }
 Ignorance, }
 with others, }
 Faith.
 Hope.
 Charity.

The Persons.
 Conscience. }
 Labour, }
 Sickness, } Mutes.
 Discontent, }
 Ignorance, }
 Fear, }
 Death, }
 Faith. }
 Hope. }
 Charity.

PARADISE LOST.

The Persons.

Moses *προλογιζει*, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the Mount; declares the like with Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice, }
 Mercy, } debating what should become of man if he fall.
 Wisdom, }

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the creation.

ACT II.

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

ACT III.

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

ACT IV.

Adam, }
 Eve, } fallen.

Conscience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

ACT V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

_____ presented by an Angel with

Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, Dis- } Mutes.
 content, Ignorance, Fear, Death }

To whom he gives their names. Likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.

Faith, }
 Hope, } comfort him and instruct him.
 Charity, }

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have produced only an allegory or mystery. The following sketch seems to have attained more maturity:

ADAM UNPARADISED.

The angel Gabriel, either descending or entering; showing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven; describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus showing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new crea-

ture, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this Lucifer appears; after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance on his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven against him and his accomplices; as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and exulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience in a shape accuses him; Justice cites him to a place whither Jehovah called for him. In the meanwhile the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another, but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise, but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes.

Compare this with the former draft.

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradise Lost*; but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct; and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted "with seemly arts and affairs;" his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilled in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing,—having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication,—he amused himself as he could with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called *The Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy by a *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church*.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Restoration he "bated no

jot of heart or hope," but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth*; which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the Commonwealth men was very remarkable. When the king was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, entitled The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet petulantly called *No Blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the king was now about to be restored, with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was, therefore, no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and, proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-close, by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.*

The king, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs, and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all except those whom the parliament should except; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the king. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence*, and Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice*, another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the king, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an Act of Oblivion than of grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any public trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderness shown to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborne to inquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

* One of these houses, still standing in York-street, Westminster, and which was for some time in the possession of the late William Hazlitt, is represented in the next page.

Forgotten he was not, for his prosecution was ordered; it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the house, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and, undoubtedly, a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson* in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as de-



MILTON'S HOUSE IN PETTY FRANCE.

livered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the king and parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die, but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But, if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain, from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for

* It was told before by A. Wood in *Ath. Oxon.* vol. ii. p. 412, 2d edit.

life ; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation ; and as exclusion from public trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion,—to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind ; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature ?*

The publication of the Act of Oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence now not known, in the custody of the sergeant in December ; and when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the sergeant were called before the house. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street ; and being blind and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestic companion and attendant, and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins ; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband : upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known ; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror ; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short ; the third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his lifetime, and cheated them at his death.†

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment ; and being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, " You, like other women, want to ride in your coach ; my wish is, to live and die an honest man." If

* A different account of the means by which Milton secured himself is given by an historian lately brought to light. " Milton, Latin secretary to Cromwell, distinguished by his writings in favour of the rights and liberties of the people, pretended to be dead, and had a public funeral procession. The king applauded his policy in escaping the punishment of death by a seasonable show of dying." *Cunningham's History of Great Britain*, vol. i. p. 14.

† " She died," says Dr. Newton, " very old, about twenty years ago, at Nantwich, in Cheshire ; and from the accounts of those who had seen her, I have learned that she confirmed several things related before, and particularly that her husband used to compose his poetry chiefly in the winter, and on his waking on a morning would make her write down sometimes twenty or thirty verses. Being asked whether he did not often read Homer and Virgil, she understood it as an imputation upon him for stealing from these authors, and answered with eagerness, that he stole from nobody but the muse that inspired him ; and being asked by a lady present who the muse was, she answered, it was God's grace and holy spirit that visited him nightly."

he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority, either with the parliament or Cromwell, might have forborne to talk very loudly of his honesty; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are amongst the most common topics of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661), *Accidence commenced Grammar*; a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing *Paradise Lost*, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About this time Elwood the Quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin to him for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that "to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a hearing as law French," required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation; which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and open the most difficult passages.

In a short time he took a house in the Artillery-walk, leading to Bunhill-fields; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now busied by *Paradise Lost*. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: "Let the rainbow be the fiddlestick of the fiddle of heaven." It has been already shown, that the first conception was a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatic work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was "long choosing, and began late."

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all public stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement, where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting "before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm, sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as in his own room, receiving the visits of the people of distinguished parts as well as quality." His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported by Wood to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, "neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands. He said that, if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable."

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composure of *Paradise Lost*, "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember: for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that, in all the years

he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his elegies, declares that with the advance of the spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that "such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on." By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependence of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes: *possunt quia posse videntur*. When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance, for who can contend with the course of Nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion, that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking by gradual diminution.* Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in an age too late for heroic poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men,—an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the climate of his country might be too cold for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his

* This opinion is, with great learning and ingenuity, refuted in a book now very little known, *An Apology or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World*, by Dr. George Hakewill, London, fol. 1635. The first who ventured to propagate it in this country was Dr. Gabriel Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, a man of a versatile temper, and the author of a book intitled *The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature proved by Natural Reason*, Lond. 1616 and 1624, 4to. He was plundered in the Usurpation, turned Roman Catholic, and died in obscurity. See *Athen. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 727.

genius had fallen upon too old a world or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying Nature or a frigid zone, for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which "they should not willingly let die." However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pigmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his inquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an impetus or œstrus, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."

These bursts of light and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanic cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when "his hand is out." By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That in his intellectual hour Milton called for his daughter "to secure what came," may be questioned: for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburdening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of this poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his "unpremeditated verse." Versification free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book

shows that he had lost his sight ; and the introduction to the seventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with discountenance, and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection : but this, which when he skulked from the approach of his king was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him ; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compassed round." This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion ; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on evil days ; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of evil tongues for Milton to complain required impudence at least equal to his other powers ; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow that he never spared any asperity of reproach, or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false ; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies or his amusements without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused : they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit were contented to forget the reviler of his king.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont, in Bucks ; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of *Paradise Lost*, and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost* ; what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found* ?"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A license was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness ; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed, in the first book, yet the license was granted ; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition ; and again five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition ; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year ; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674 : it was printed in small octavo ; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh

and twelfth ; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678 ; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds ; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August



MILTON'S COTTAGE AT CHALFONT.

17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of *Paradise Lost*, a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame ; and inquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated ? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt ?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradise Lost* received no public acclamations, is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the court : and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides ? All that he himself could think his due, from "evil tongues in evil days," was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the public. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement ;

neither traders nor often gentlemen thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature; nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakespeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase, for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years: for it forced its way without assistance; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and *Paradise Lost* broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account:

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though our author had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man's estate, who, of their own accord, greedily caught at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; and others of younger years were sent by their parents to the same end; yet excusing only the eldest daughter by reason of her bodily infirmity and difficult utterance of speech (which, to say truth, I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should, at one time or other, think fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet it was endured by both for a long time, though the irksomeness of this employment could

not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness ; so that at length they were all, even the eldest also, sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver."

In the scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradise Lost* (1667), he published his *History of England*, comprising the whole fable of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh, but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he would transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy ; and a character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines was excluded, of which the author gave a copy to the Earl of Anglesey, and which, being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former. Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton showed *Paradise Regained* to Elwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you ; for you put it in my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained*. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgment of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain ; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention ; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitled this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services

to literature. The epic poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of logic for the initiation of students in philosophy, and published (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Ramii Methodum concinnata*; that is, "A new Scheme of Logick, according to the Method of Ramus." I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the Universities: for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration; and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the Thirty-nine Articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the Sacred Books. The Papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore, in his opinion, not to be permitted the liberty of either public or private worship; for though they plead conscience, "we have no warrant," he says, to "regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture."

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term "Roman Catholic is," he says, "one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or catholic schismatic."

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures; a duty from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth, but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the 10th of November, 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields, and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles, at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster Abbey "To the author of *Paradise Lost*," by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be "soli Miltono secundus," was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then Dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of

Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of public opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man, whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the fore-top, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroic stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being short and thick. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestic habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer, and five in the winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose, he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined; then played on the organ and sang, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visitors till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described: but this even tenour appears attainable only in colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bed-side; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament: but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but sharp rebuke; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he showed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Nantwich, in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by intrusting it to a

scrivener ; and that, in the general depredation upon the church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise Office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite,—Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and critics ; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands : the margin is sometimes noted, but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets, he set most value upon Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite ; Shakespeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every other skilful reader ; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were so different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical ; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery or prelacy ; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, “*magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur.*” He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants ; we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome ; he was not of the Church of England.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and re-impressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household ; omitting public prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition

which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that "a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth." It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffic, for which money is circulated without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church: for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestic relations is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married to Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown-office. She had, by her first husband, Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine;* and a son Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife,—Anne, Mary, and De-

* Both these persons were living at Holloway about the year 1734, and at that time possessed such a degree of health and strength, as enabled them on Sundays and prayer-days to walk a mile up a steep hill to Highgate chapel. One of them was ninety-two at the time of her death. Their parentage was known to few, and their names were corrupted into Melton. By the Crown-office mentioned in the two last paragraphs we are to understand the Crown-office of the Court of Chancery.

borah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spitalfields, and lived seventy-six years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom public mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the *Metamorphoses*, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in the memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often? These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment, but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spitalfields, and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Holloway, and afterwards in Cock-lane, near Shoreditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum, one hundred pounds were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendants; and to this he who has now attempted to relate his life had the honour of contributing a prologue.

In the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable; what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the public an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was nothing satisfied with what he had done, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a

critic ; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant ; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value : the elegies excel the odes ; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of *Paradise Lost*,* have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence ; if they differ from the verses of others, they differ for the worse, for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness : the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing ; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in the early parts of his life he wrote with much care, appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such reliques show how excellence is acquired : what we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet sometimes force their own judgment into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace ; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness ; he was a lion, that had no skill in dandling the kid.

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas* ; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion, for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough satyrs and fauns with cloven heel. Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth ; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral—easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting ; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted ; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours and the partner of his discoveries ; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines ?

“ We drove a-field, and both together heard
 What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.”

* With the exception of *Comus*, in which, Dr. Johnson afterwards says, may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*.

We know that they never drove a-field, and that they had no flocks to batten ; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the heathen deities, Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping ; and how one god asks another god what has become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy ; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful ; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known the author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform ; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed ; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The cheerful man hears the lark in the morning ; the pensive man hears the nightingale in the evening. The cheerful man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood ; then walks, not unseen, to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milkmaid, and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower ; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant ; thus he pursues real gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The pensive man, at one time, walks unseen to muse at midnight ; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by glowing embers, or by a lonely lamp outwatches the north star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragic and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water,

and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some music played by ærial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of cheerfulness, having exhausted the country, tries what towered cities will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson or the wild dramas of Shakespeare are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The pensive man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the church.

Both his characters delight in music; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismissal of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His Cheerfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.*

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the masque of *Comus*, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction and mode of verse which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but so far as

* Mr. Warton intimates (and there can be little doubt of the truth of this conjecture) that Milton borrowed many of the images in these two fine poems from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a book published in 1621, and at sundry times since, abounding in learning, curious information, and pleasantry. Mr. Warton says that Milton appears to have been an attentive reader thereof; and to this assertion we may add, that it was a book that Dr. Johnson frequently resorted to, as many others have done, for amusement after the fatigue of study.

the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This, however, is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches,—they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice if it ever can delight. At last the brothers enter with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the spirit in form of a shepherd; and the brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The spirit relates that the lady is in the power of Comus; the brother moralises again; and the spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama; and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

The songs are vigorous and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The sonnets were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabric of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost*; a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of critics, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds and different shades of vice and virtue; from policy and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature and realising fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu is of opinion, that the poet's first work is to find a moral, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous: to vindicate the ways of God to man; to show the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the divine law.

To convey this moral, there must be a fable,—a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity and surprise expectation. In this part of his work Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the fall of man the events which preceded and those which were to follow it; he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epic poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all

other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude or deviation of will depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers—

“ — of which the least could wield
Those elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions ;”

powers which only the control of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superior, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epic poems, much speculation is commonly employed upon the characters. The characters in the *Paradise Lost* which admit of examination are those of angels and of man: of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires: the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit the most exalted and most depraved being. Milton has been censured by Clarke* for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth; for there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking; and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have

* Author of the *Essay on Study*.

little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask ; and innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence ; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the probable and the marvellous,—two parts of a vulgar epic poem which immerge the critic in deep consideration,—the *Paradise Lost* requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of creation and redemption ; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being : the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth ; and, as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made ; but the main fabric is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the machinery, so called from Θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topic of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven ; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of episodes, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetic account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action ; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the completeness or integrity of the design nothing can be objected ; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might doubtless be spared ; but superfluities so beautiful who would take away ? or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself ? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsic paragraphs ; and since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly one, whether the poem can be properly termed heroic, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgment rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he intituled *Paradise Lost* only a poem, yet calls it himself heroic song. Dryden

petulantly and indecently denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome: but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabric of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The sentiments, as expressive of manners or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that, as it admits no human manners till the fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind may be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant; but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantic loftiness.* He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others,—the powers of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said; on which he might tire his fancy, without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery into worlds where only imagination can travel; and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and

* Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità Miltoniana*.

action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds ; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, through the spectacles of books, and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like Argo between the Cyanean rocks ; or Ulysses between the two Sicilian whirlpools, when he shunned Charybdis on the larboard. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity ; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His similes are less numerous and more various than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison ; his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets ; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the Sacred Writings. The ancient epic poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue ; their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence ; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known ; and though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits ; and even then they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two, but those two are the parents of mankind ; venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In the first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they show how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance ; how confidence of the Divine favour is forfeited by sin,

and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive,—if, indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offended being we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors in their first state conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation the port of mean suitors; and they rise again to reverential regard when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the fall, there is in the *Paradise Lost* little opportunity for the pathetic; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality of this poem,—sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*—for faults and defects every work of man must have—it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies, which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them; and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ: a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners.* The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the redemption of mankind we hope to be included; and in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been

* But, says Dr. Warton, it has throughout a reference to human life and actions.

taught to our infancy ; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversations, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind : what we knew before, we cannot learn ; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association ; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terror are indeed the genuine sources of poetry ; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terror such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit ; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetic operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius ; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgment to digest, and fancy to combine them : Milton was able to select from nature or from story, from ancient fable or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer that it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation ; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action ; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This being necessary, was therefore defensible ; and he should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the burning marl, he has a body ;

when, in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he starts up in his own shape, he has at least a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has a spear and a shield, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being incorporeal spirits, are at large, though without number, in a limited space; yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, "crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning." This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the "sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction or remove." Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual, for contraction and remove are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sunbeam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven, fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do no more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus we see Violence and Strength, and in the *Alcestis* of Euripides we see Death brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death should have shown the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotic waste and an unoccupied vacuity; but Sin and Death worked up a mole of aggravated soil, cemented with asphaltus—a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem ; and to this there was no temptation but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objections may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels ; yet Satan mentions it as a report rife in heaven before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult ; and something of anticipation, perhaps, is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety ; it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of timorous deer before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part must be for the sake of others : a palace must have passages ; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth ; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long ?

Milton being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them ; and as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the Paradise of Fools—a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often ; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients ; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art,—it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked and generally censured, and at last bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critic.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance, *Paradise Lost*, which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice, but as dull ; as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of *Paradise Regained* the general judgment seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow ; a dialogue without action can never please like a union of the narrative and dramatic powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If *Paradise Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Samson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice and the bigotry of learning that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are, however, many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of diction, a mode and cast of expression, which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer; and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. Our language, says Addison, sunk under him. But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts: but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance; the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost* may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian, perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that he wrote no language, but has formed what Butler calls a Babylonish dialect, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made, by exalted genius and extensive learning, the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the art of English poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his versification. The measure, he says, is the English heroic verse without rhyme. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, beside our tragedies, a few

short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trissino's *Italia Liberata*; and finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

Rhyme, he says, and says truly, is no necessary adjunct of true poetry. But perhaps of poetry, as a mental operation, metre or music is no necessary adjunct: it is, however, by the music of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another; where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The music of the English heroic lines strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds, and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. Blank verse, said an ingenious critic, seems to be verse only to the eye.

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the lapidary style; has neither the easiness of prose nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantages of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise,

nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance and in blindness : but difficulties vanished at his touch ; he was born for whatever is arduous ; and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems only because it is not the first.



MILTON'S HOUSE AT FOREST HILL.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING.

(1609-1641.)

John, the son of Sir John Suckling, of Norwich, comptroller of the household to James I. and Charles I., was born at Whitton, in Middlesex, February 1609, an eleven-months child ; from which circumstance long life and health were expected for him by the gossips. During his childhood he displayed uncommon facility of acquiring every branch of education. He spoke Latin at five years of age, and could write in that language at the age of nine. It is probable that he was taught more languages than one at the same time ; and by practising frequently with men of education, who kept company with his father, soon acquired an ease and elegance of address which qualified him for the court, as well as for foreign travel. His father is represented as a man of serious turn and grave manners ; the son volatile, good-tempered, and thoughtless,—characteristics which he seems to have preserved throughout life.

After continuing for some years under his father's tutorage, he travelled over the kingdom, and then to the continent, where it is said "he made an honourable collection of the virtues of each nation, without any tincture of their defects, unless it were a little too much of the French air, which was indeed the fault of his complexion rather than his person." It was about this time, probably, in his

twentieth year, that he joined the standard of the illustrious Gustavus Adolphus, and was present at three battles and five sieges, besides lesser engagements, within the space of six months.

On his return, he employed his time and expended his fortune among the wits of his age, to whom he was recommended not only by generous and social habits, but by a solid sense in argument and conversation far beyond what might be expected from his years and apparent lightness of disposition. Among his principal associates we find Lord Falkland, Davenant, Ben Jonson, Digby, Carew, Sir Toby Matthews, and the "ever-memorable" Hales of Eton, to whom he addresses a lively invitation to come to town. His plays, *Aglaura*, *Brennoralt*, *The Goblins*, and an unfinished piece entitled *The Sad One*, added considerably to his fame, although they have not been able to perpetuate it. The first only was printed in his lifetime. All his plays, we are told, were acted with applause, and he spared no expense in costly dresses and decorations.

While thus seemingly devoted to pleasure only, the unfortunate aspect of public affairs roused him to a sense of duty, and induced him to offer his services, and devote his life and fortune, to the cause of royalty. How justly he could contemplate the unfortunate dispute between the court and nation, appears in his letter to Mr. Germain (afterwards Lord Albemarle); a composition almost unrivalled in that age for elegance of style and depth of observation. It was, however, too much the practice with those who made voluntary offers of soldiers, to equip them in an expensive and useless manner. Suckling, who was magnificent in all his expenses, was not to be outdone in an article which he had studied more than became a soldier, and which he might suppose would afford unquestionable proof of his attachment to the royal cause; and having been permitted to raise a troop of horse, consisting of a hundred, he equipped them so richly that they are said to have cost him 12,000*l*.

This exposed him to some degree of ridicule; a weapon which the republicans often wielded with great dexterity, and which in this instance was sharpened by the misconduct of his gaudy soldiers. The particulars of this affair are not recorded; but it appears that in 1639, the royal army, of which his troop formed a part, was defeated by the Scotch, and that Sir John's men behaved remarkably ill. All this is possible, without any imputation on the courage of their commander; but it afforded his enemies an opportunity of turning the expedition into telling ridicule.

This unhappy affair is said by Lloyd to have contributed to shorten his days; but Oldys attributes his death to another cause. Lord Oxford informed Oldys, on the authority of Dean Chetwood, who said he had it from Lord Roscommon, that Sir John Suckling, on his way to France, was robbed of a casket of gold and jewels by his valet, who gave him poison, and besides stuck the blade of a penknife into his boot in such a manner, that Sir John was disabled from pursuing the villain, and was wounded incurably in the heel. Dr. Warton, in a note to his essay on Pope, relates the story somewhat differently. "Sir John Suckling was robbed by his valet-de-chambre; the moment he discovered it, he clapped on his boots in a passionate hurry, and perceived not a large rusty nail that was concealed at the bottom,

which pierced his heel, and brought on mortification." He died May 7, 1641, in the thirty-second year of his age.

As a poet, he was one of those who wrote for amusement, and was not stimulated by ambition or anxious for fame. His pieces were sent loose about the world ; and not having been collected until after his death, they are probably less correct than he left them. Many of his verses are as rugged and unharmonious as those of Donne, but his songs and ballads are elegant and graceful. He was particularly happy and original in expressing the feelings of artificial love, disdain, or disappointment. *The Session of the Poets*, the *Lines to a Rival*, *The Honest Lover*, and the *Ballad upon a Wedding*, are sufficient to entitle him to the honours of poetry. His prose writings are, perhaps, calculated to raise a still higher opinion of his talents. His letters, with a dash of gallantry more free than modern times will admit, are shrewd in observation, and often elegant in style. That addressed to Mr. Germain has already been noticed ; and his *Account of Religion by Reason* is remarkable for soundness of argument and purity of expression, far exceeding the controversial writings of that age.

CLEMENT BARKSDALE.

(1609-1687.)

Clement Barksdale was born at Winchcombe, in Gloucestershire, November 1609. From the free grammar-school of Abingdon, Berks, he was entered as servitor of Merton College, Oxford, in Lent term, 1625, but soon translated himself to Gloucester Hall, where he took his degree in arts, received ordination, and in 1637 supplied the place of chaplain of Lincoln College, in the church of All Saints. Being called from thence the same year, he was made master of the free school at Hereford, and soon after vicar of All-Hallows in that city. When the garrison of Hereford was surprised by the parliamentary forces in 1646, he was rescued out of the danger and placed at Sudeley, where he resumed his ministerial functions, and afterwards sheltered at Hawling in Cotswold, where he undertook a private school with success. After the Restoration, he was settled by royal gift in the parsonage of Naunton, near Hawling, and Stone-on-the-Wold, in Gloucestershire. These he retained till his death, in 1687. His publications were very numerous, though few of them continue to be regarded, unless it be his *Memorials of Worthy Persons* and *Remembrances of excellent Men*, which are chiefly compilations. Wood says he "was a great pretender to poetry ; but this does not appear. We know him in this way chiefly as the writer of *Nympha Libethris, or the Cotswold Muse* ; presenting some extempore verses to the imitation of young scholars. In four parts." 1651. The numerous poems in this volume, all very short, are each dedicated to some different person.

RICHARD CRASHAW.

(Circa 1610-1650.)

Richard Crashaw was the son of the Rev. William Crashaw, a divine of some note in his day, and preacher at the Temple Church, London. He was born in London, but in what year is uncertain. In his infancy Sir Henry Yelverton and Sir Randolph Carew undertook the charge of his education, and afterwards procured him to be placed in the Charterhouse on the foundation, where he improved in an extraordinary degree under Brooks, a very celebrated master. He was thence admitted of Pembroke Hall, March 1632, and took his bachelor's degree in the same college in 1634. He then removed to Peter House, of which he was a fellow in 1637, and took his master's degree in 1638. In 1634 he published a volume of Latin poems, mostly of the devotional kind, dedicated to Benjamin Lang, Master of Pembroke Hall. This contained the well-known line, which has sometimes been ascribed to Dryden and others, on the miracle of turning water into wine :

“ Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et erubuit.”

“ The modest water saw its God, and blushed.”

In 1641 he took degrees at Oxford. At what time he was admitted into holy orders is uncertain ; but he soon became a popular preacher, full of energy and enthusiasm. In 1644, when the parliamentary army expelled those members of the University who refused to take the covenant, Crashaw was among the number ; and being unable to contemplate with resignation or indifference the ruins of the church-establishment, he went over to France, where his sufferings, and their peculiar influence on his mind, prepared him to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. It is certain that soon after his arrival in France, he embraced the religion of the country with a sincerity which may be respected while it is pitied, but which has rather uncharitably been imputed to motives of interest. He seems to have thought, with Dr. Johnson, that “to be of no church was dangerous,” and that the Church of England he had witnessed in ruins. If in this Crashaw did what was wrong, he did what was not uncommon in his time. In 1646 Cowley found Crashaw in France in great distress, and introduced him to the patronage of Charles the First's queen, who gave him letters of recommendation to Italy. There he became secretary to one of the cardinals at Rome, and was made canon in the church of Loretto, where he died of a fever soon after this last promotion, about the year 1650. Cowley's elegant and affectionate lines on the occasion are well known. Hayley remarks, that “fine as they are, Cowley has sometimes fallen into the principal defect of the poet whom he is praising. He now and then speaks of sacred things with a vulgar and ludicrous familiarity of language, by which (to use a happy expression of Dr. Johnson's) ‘readers far short of sanctity may be offended in the present age, when devotion, though perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.’ Let us add, that if the poetical character of Crashaw seem not to answer this glowing panegyric, yet in

his higher character of *saint* he appears to have had the purest title to this affectionate eulogy."

It appears by a passage in Selden's *Table-talk*, that Crashaw had at one time an intention of writing against the stage, and that Selden succeeded in diverting him from his purpose.

Crashaw's poems were first published in 1646, under the title of 1. *Steps to the Temple*; because, says the Oxford antiquary, "he led his life in the temple of God, in St. Mary's church, near to his college. There, as we learn from the preface to these poems, he lodged under Tertullian's roof of angels. There he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow near the house of God; where, like a primitive saint, he offered more prayers in the night than others usually offer in the day. There he penned the said poems called *Steps to the Temple*, for happy souls to climb to heaven by." 2. *The Delights of the Muses*. 3. *Sacred Poems*, presented to the Countess of Denbigh. Of these, many republications within a short period, and that period not very favourable to poetry, sufficiently mark the estimation in which this devotional enthusiast was held.

His poems are of the school which produced Herbert and Quarles, and Herbert was his model.

A portion of Pope's observations on Crashaw's poetry deserves a place here, not as being in all respects applicable to that writer, but as forming an excellent character of a class of minor poets of the seventeenth century.

"I take this poet (Crashaw) to have writ like a gentleman,—that is, at leisure hours, and more to keep out of idleness than to establish a reputation; so that nothing regular or just can be expected of him. All that regards design, form, fable (which is the soul of poetry), all that concerns exactness or consent of parts (which is the body), will probably be wanting; only pretty conceptions, fine metaphors, glittering expressions, and something of a neat cast of verse (which are properly the dress-gems or loose ornaments of poetry), may be found in these verses. This is, indeed, the case of most other poetical writers of miscellanies; nor can it well be otherwise, since no man can be a true poet who writes for diversion. These authors should be considered as versifiers and witty men, rather than as poets; and under this head only will fall the thoughts, the expression, and the numbers. These are only the pleasing part of poetry, which may be judged of at view, and comprehended all at once. And (to express myself like a painter) their colouring entertains the sight, but the lines and life of the picture are not to be inspected too narrowly."

Pope enumerates among Crashaw's best pieces, the *Paraphrase on Psalm xxiii.*, the *Verses on Lessius*, *Epitaph on Mr. Ashton*, *Wishes to his supposed Mistress*, and the *Dies Iræ*. Dr. Warton points out the obligations of Pope and Roscommon to Crashaw. Mr. Hayley, after specifying some of Pope's imitations of our author, conjectures that the *Elegies on St. Alexis* suggested to him the idea of his *Eloisa*; but, adds this biographer, "if Pope borrowed any thing from Crashaw in this article, it was only as the sun borrows from the earth, when drawing from thence a mere vapour, he makes it the delight of every eye, by giving it all the tender and gorgeous colouring of heaven."

Some of Crashaw's translations are esteemed superior to his original poetry; and that of the *Sospetto d'Herode*, from Marino, is executed with Miltonic grace and spirit. It has been regretted that he translated only the first book of a poem by which Milton condescended to profit in his immortal epic.

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT.

(1611-1643.)

William Cartwright was born at Northway, near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, Sept. 1611; the son of a man who, having dissipated a fair inheritance, was at last reduced to keep an inn at Cirencester. Our poet received part of his education under Mr. William Top, master of the free grammar-school at Cirencester; and was sent thence to Westminster School, where he completed his education under Mr. Lambert Osbaldiston. In 1628 he was chosen a student of Christ Church, Oxford, where he took his degrees of B.A. and M.A. (the latter in 1635); and afterwards entering into holy orders, became, as Wood expresses it, "the most florid and seraphical preacher in the University." In Oct. 1642, Bishop Duppa gave him the place of succentor in the church of Salisbury; and on the 12th of April, 1643, he was admitted junior proctor of the University. He died the 29th of November following, of a malignant fever, universally lamented by all who knew him, even by his sovereign, who showed him particular marks of his respect. He was buried at the upper end of the south aisle, adjoining to the choir of the cathedral of Christ Church. "He was," says Langbaine, "extremely remarkable both for his outward and inward endowments, his body being as handsome as his soul. He was an expert linguist; understanding not only Greek and Latin, but French and Italian, as perfectly as his mother tongue. He was an excellent orator as well as an admirable poet; a quality which Cicero, with all his pains, could not attain to. Nor was Aristotle less known to him than Cicero and Virgil; and those who heard his metaphysical lectures gave him the preference to all his predecessors, the present Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. Barlow) excepted. His sermons were as much admired as his other composures; and one fitly applied to our author that saying of Aristotle concerning Æschron the poet, "that he could not tell what Æschron could not do."

Ben Jonson said of him, with some passion, "My son Cartwright writes all like a man;" and Dr. Fell, Bishop of Oxford, gave him this character, "Cartwright was the utmost man could come to."

Besides a sermon, and some Greek and Latin poems, he was the author of four plays, one only of which, we believe, was published in his lifetime; viz.

1. *The Royal Slave*: a tragi-comedy. Presented to the King and Queen by the students of Christchurch, Oxford, August 30, 1637. Presented since to both their Majesties, at Hampton Court, by the King's servants. 1640.

This play, in which the celebrated Dr. Busby performed a part, gave so much satisfaction to their Majesties, that it was by their orders performed at

Hampton Court by their own servants. Langbaine says the preference was given to the representation by the collegians, as much superior to that of the players.

2. *The Lady Errant* : tragi-comedy. 1651.
3. *The Ordinary* : a comedy. 1651.
4. *The Siege ; or, Love's Convert* : tragi-comedy. 1651.

All these plays were printed with his other poems in 1651.



THOMAS KILLIGREW.

(1611-1684.)

Thomas Killigrew, one of the sons of Sir Robert Killigrew, was born at Hanworth, in Middlesex, in February 1611. Although his writings are not wanting in those requisites which confer reputation on an author, yet he has been indebted for his fame more to the jests, for which he was as much admired by his sovereign as he was feared by the courtiers, than to any of his publications. He seems to have been early intended for the court ; and to qualify him for rising there, every circumstance of his education appears to have been adapted. In 1635, while upon his travels, he chanced to be at Loudun, and an eye-witness of the celebrated imposture of exorcising the devil out of several nuns belonging to a convent in that town. Of this transaction he wrote a very minute and accurate account, printed

in three sheets folio. He was appointed page of honour to King Charles I., and faithfully adhered to his cause until the death of his master, after which he attended his son in his exile, to whom he was highly acceptable, on account of his social and convivial qualifications. He married Cecilia Crofts, one of the maids of honour to Queen Henrietta. With this lady he had a dispute arising out of jealousy, at which Thomas Carew was present, who wrote some verses on the occasion, and afterwards others on their nuptials.

In 1651 he was sent to Venice, as English resident at that state, although, says Lord Clarendon, the king was much dissuaded from it; but afterwards his majesty was prevailed upon, only to gratify him (Killigrew), that in that capacity he might borrow money of English merchants for his own subsistence, which he did, and nothing to the honour of his master; but was at last compelled to leave the republic for his vicious behaviour, of which the Venetian ambassador complained to the king, when he came afterwards to Paris. On his return from Venice, Sir John Denham wrote a copy of verses, bantering the foibles of friend Killigrew, who, according to his account, was as little sensible to the inconveniences of exile as his royal master :

“ Our resident Tom
From Venice is come,
And hath left the statesman behind him ;
Talks at the same pitch,
Is as wise, is as rich,
And just where you left him you find him.

But who says he was not
A man of much plot,
May repent that false accusation ;
Having plotted and penn'd
Six plays to attend
The farce of his negotiation.”

His attachment to the interests of Charles II. continued unabated until the Restoration, when he was appointed groom of the bed-chamber. He was a man of very great humour, and frequently diverted the king by his drollery, having access to Charles when admission was denied to the first peers in the realm. Amongst many other stories, the following is related of him. Charles II., who hated business as much as he loved pleasure, would often disappoint the council in vouchsafing his royal presence when they were met; by which their business was necessarily delayed, and many of the council much offended by the disrespect thrown on them. One day, when the council were met, and had sat some time in expectation of his majesty, the Duke of Lauderdale, who was a furious, ungovernable man, quitted the room in a passion, and accidentally met Killigrew, to whom he expressed himself disrespectfully of the king. Killigrew bade his grace be calm, for he would lay a wager of 100*l.* that he would make his majesty come to council in less than half an hour. Lauderdale, being a little heated, and under the influence of surprise, took him at his word. Killigrew went to the king, and without ceremony told him what had happened; and added, “ I know that your majesty hates Lauderdale, though the necessity of your affairs obliges you to

behave civilly to him. Now if you would get rid of a man you hate, come to the council; for Lauderdale is a man so boundlessly avaricious, that rather than pay the hundred pounds lost in this wager, he will hang himself, and never plague you more." The king, pleased with the archness of this observation, answered, "Then, Killigrew, I'll go;" which he did. It is likewise related that, upon the king's suffering his mistresses to gain so great an ascendancy over him, as to sacrifice for them the interest of the state, and neglect the most important affairs, while, like another Sardanapalus, he wasted his hours in the apartments of those enchantresses,—Killigrew went one day into his apartment dressed like a pilgrim prepared for a long journey. The king, surprised at this extraordinary frolic, asked him the meaning of it, and to what distant country he was going; to which Killigrew bluntly answered, "The country I seek, may it please your majesty, is hell." "And what to do there?" replies the king. "To bring Oliver Cromwell back," returned the wag, "to take care of the English affairs, for his successor takes none." It was usually said of him, that when he attempted to write, he was nothing near so smart as he was in conversation; which was just the reverse of Cowley, who shone but little in company, though he excelled so much with his pen. Hence Sir John Denham, who knew them both, has taken occasion thus to characterise their respective excellences and defects:

"Had Cowley ne'er spoke, Killigrew ne'er writ,
Combined in one they'd made a matchless wit."

It does not appear that Killigrew availed himself of his interest with the king, either to amass a fortune or to advance himself in the state; we do not find that he obtained any other preferment than the post of master of the revels, which he held with that of groom of the bedchamber. Oldys says he was king's jester at the same time; but although he entertained his majesty in that capacity, it can scarcely be imagined to have been in consequence of any appointment of that kind. He died at Whitehall, 19th March, 1684, having in his lifetime published the following plays:

1. *The Prisoners*: tragi-comedy. 1641.
2. *Claracilla*: tragi-comedy. Written at Rome. 1641.
3. *The Princess*; or, *Love at First Sight*: tragi-comedy. Written at Naples.
4. *The Parson's Wedding*: comedy. Written at Basle.
5. *The Pilgrim*: tragedy. Written at Paris.
6. *Cecilia and Clorinda*; or, *Love in Arms*. The first part. Tragi-comedy. Written at Turin.
7. *Cecilia and Clorinda*. The second part. Written at Florence.
- 8, 9. *Don Thomaso*; or, *the Wanderer*: comedy. In two parts. Written at Madrid.
10. *Bellamira, her Dream*; or, *the Love of Shadows*: tragi-comedy. Written at Venice.

All these plays were printed together in folio in 1664.

HENRY KILLIGREW.

(Born 1612.)

Henry Killigrew, brother of Thomas and William Killigrew, was born in February 1612; educated first under the celebrated Thomas Farnaby, and then sent to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1628. In 1638, having taken his degrees in arts, he went into orders, and became a chaplain in the king's army. In 1642 he was created doctor of divinity, and the same year made chaplain to James Duke of York, and Prebendary of Westminster. Afterwards he suffered for many years as an adherent to the king's cause; but at the Restoration was, in requital, made almoner to the Duke of York, superintendent of his chapel, rector of Wheatamsted in Hertfordshire, and master of the Savoy Hospital in Westminster. He wrote, when only seventeen years of age, a tragedy called *The Conspiracy*, which was much admired by some wits of those times, particularly by Ben Jonson, then living, "who gave a testimony of it," says Langbaine, "ever to be envied," and by Lord Falkland. An imperfect copy of this getting out in 1638, he afterwards caused it to be republished in 1652, with the new title of *Pallantus and Eudora*. He published a volume of sermons, which had been preached at court in 1685, and also two or three occasional sermons. The year of his death does not appear.

SAMUEL BUTLER.*

(1612-1680.)

Of the great author of *Hudibras* there is a life prefixed to the later editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative. More, however, than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

Samuel Butler was born in the parish of Strensham, in Worcestershire, according to his biographer, in 1612. This account Dr. Nash finds confirmed by the register. He was christened Feb. 13.

His father's condition is variously represented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar-school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright,† from whose care he

* Johnson.

† These are the words of the author of the short account of Butler prefixed to *Hudibras*, which Dr. Johnson, notwithstanding what he says above, seems to have supposed was written by Mr. Longueville, the father; but the contrary is to be inferred from a subsequent passage, wherein the author laments that he had neither such an acquaintance nor interest with Mr. Longueville as to

removed for a short time to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford, but at last makes him pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college; yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either University but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learn-



SAMUEL BUTLER.

ing with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain. Dr. Nash has discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a year, still called "Butler's tenement."

procure from him the golden remains of Butler there mentioned. He was probably led into the mistake by a note in the *Biog. Brit.* p. 1077, signifying that the son of this gentleman was living in 1736.

This friend and generous patron of Butler, Mr. William Longueville, was a conveyancing lawyer and a bencher of the Inner Temple, who had raised himself from a low beginning to very great eminence in that profession. He was eloquent and learned, of spotless integrity, supported an aged father who had ruined his fortunes by extravagance, and by his industry and application re-edified a ruined family. He supported Butler, who, but for him, must literally have starved; and received from him as a recompense the papers called his *Remains*.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours, which sent him to Oxford. The brother seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education, but durst not name a college for fear of detection.

He was for some time, according to the author of his life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys, of Earl's Coomb, in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were music and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures said to be his were shown to Dr. Nash at Earl's Coomb; but when he inquired for them some years afterwards, he found them destroyed to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the Countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. Here he observed so much of the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the king returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the Earl of Carbury, president of the Principality of Wales, who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of *Hudibras*, which, as Prior relates, was made known at court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired; the king quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the

king once gave him three hundred guineas ; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.*

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge : this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false, there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the life of Wycherley ; and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's remains.

"Mr. Wycherley," says Packe, "had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable *Hudibras* ; and that it was a reproach to the court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough, and after some time undertook to recommend his pretensions to his majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his grace to name a day when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly ; the duke joined them ; but as the devil would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open ; and his grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too was a knight) trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than in doing good offices to men of desert, though no one was better qualified than he, both in regard to his fortune and understanding, to protect them ; and from that time to the day of his death, poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise."

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite, and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design ; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently displeasing. He had now arrived at an age when he might think it proper to be in jest no longer, and perhaps his health might now begin to fail.

He died in 1680 ; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully

* It is said his majesty ordered Butler the sum of three thousand pounds ; but the order being written in figures, somebody through whose hands it passed, by cutting off a cipher, reduced it to three hundred. It passed all the offices without any fee, at the solicitation of Mr. William Longueville of the Temple, Lord Danby being at that time high treasurer. When Mr. Longueville brought this order to Mr. Butler, calling to mind that he owed more than that sum to different persons, he desired Mr. Longueville to pay away the whole gratuity, which that gentleman did accordingly, and Butler did not receive a shilling of the king's bounty. This seems to have been the only court favour he ever received.

solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him at his own cost in the churchyard of Covent Garden.* Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

Granger was informed by Dr. Pearce, who named for his authority Mr. Lowndes of the treasury, that Butler had a yearly pension of an hundred pounds. This is contradicted by all tradition, by the complaints of Oldham, and by the reproaches of Dryden ; and I am afraid will never be confirmed.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, Mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed :

M. S.
SAMUELIS BUTLERI,
Qui Strenshamiae in agro Vigorn. nat. 1612,
obiit Lond. 1680.
Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer ;
Operibus ingenii, non item praemiis, felix ;
Satyrici apud nos carminis artifex egregius ;
Quo simulatae religionis larvam detraxit,
Et perduellium scelera liberrimè exagitavit ;
Scriptorum in suo genere primus et postremus.
Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,
Deesset etiam mortuo tumulus,
Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit
JOHANNES BARBER, civis Londinensis, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works,—I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained ;* and lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses in the last collection show him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious: for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts ; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown ; the events of his life are variously related ; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

The poem of *Hudibras* is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast ; as the images which it exhibits are domestic, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride which we assume as the countrymen of Butler to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right

* In a note in the *Biographia Britannica*, p. 1075, he is said, on the authority of the younger Mr. Longueville, to have lived for some years in Rose-street, Covent Garden, and also that he died there: the latter of these particulars is rendered highly probable, by his being interred in the cemetery of that parish.

to share. The poem of *Hudibras* is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of *Don Quixote*, a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shows a man who, having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditation to trains of incredible events and scenes of impossible existence, goes out in the pride of knighthood to redress wrongs and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independent clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem; wherever he is or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor *Hudibras* his poet had no tenderness; he chooses not that any pity should be shown or respect paid him; he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of *Hudibras*, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the notions and manners of a Presbyterian magistrate; and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantic ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out a coloneling, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If *Hudibras* be considered as the representative of the Presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for whatever judgment might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an Independent enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgment can be made. It is probable that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the bear and fiddle, to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whackum, to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a succession of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not all co-operate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might, however, have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of *Hudibras*, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It is indeed much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatic sprightliness; without which, fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat, mulcet*, makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If inexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment: but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure; he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

“ Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando
Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.”

Imagination is useless without knowledge; nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expense; whatever topic employs his mind, he

shows himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessories that books can furnish ; he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the by-paths of literature ; not only to have taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most valuable parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. He that merely makes a book from books may be useful, but can scarcely be great. Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed ? *Hudibras* was not a hasty effusion ; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester, that excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could show something like *Hudibras* in prose. He has in his possession the commonplace-book in which Butler repositied not such events and precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences as occasion prompted or meditation produced,—those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of *Hudibras*, the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinions, and confirms the determinations of nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man ; but those modifications of life and peculiarities of practice which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much, therefore, of that humour which transported the seventeenth century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the sour solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient Puritans ; or, if we know them, derive our information only from books or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot, but by recollection and study, understand the lines in which they are satirised. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life ; we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, which perplexed doctrine, disordered practice, and disturbed both public and private quiet, in that age when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away ; when any unsettled innovator, who could hatch a half-formed notion, produced it to the public ; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes of the people, when in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew ?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of mince-pies and plum-porridge ; nor seen with what abhorrence those who could eat them at all other times of the year, would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feasts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that if he would treat him at an ale-house with beer brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance ; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots* may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary to prove that it was no crime to throw a die or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of the satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had at that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet ; and when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the public, whether it shamed imposture or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away ; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions ; and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can show more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes : very suitable, indeed, to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances ; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastic time, that judgment and imagination are alike offended.

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroic measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due, were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroic, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, sprightly, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor even though another Butler should arise, would another *Hudibras* obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself; and the reader learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks of which the only use is to show that they can be played.

DR. HENRY MORE.

(1614-1687.)

Dr. Henry More was the son of a respectable gentleman at Grantham, in Lincolnshire. He spent the better part of a long and intensely studious life at Cambridge, refusing even the mastership of his college and several offers of preferment in the church, for the sake of unbroken leisure and retirement. In 1640 he composed his *Psychozoia, or Life of the Soul*, which he afterwards republished with other pieces in a volume entitled *Philosophical Poems*. Before the appearance of the former work, he had studied the platonic writers and mystic divines till his frame had become emaciated, and his

faculties had been strained to such enthusiasm, that he began to talk of holding supernatural communication, and imagined that his body exhaled the perfume of violets. With the exception of these innocent reveries, his life and literary character were highly respectable. He corresponded with Des Cartes, was the friend of Cudworth, and, as a divine and moralist, was not only popular in his own time, but has been mentioned with admiration by Addison and Blair. In the heat of rebellion he was spared even by the fanatics, who, though he refused to take the covenant, left him to dream with Plato in his academic bower. As a poet, he has woven together a singular texture of Gothic fancy and Greek philosophy, and made the Christiano-Platonic system of metaphysics a groundwork for the fables of the nursery. His versification, though he tells us that he was won to the Muses in his childhood by the melody of Spenser, is but a faint echo of the Spenserian tune. In fancy he is dark and lethargic. Yet his *Psychozoia* is not a commonplace production : a certain solemnity and earnestness in his tone leaves an impression that he "believed the magic wonders which he sung." His poetry is not, indeed, like a beautiful landscape on which the eye can repose, but may be compared to some curious grottos, whose gloomy labyrinths one might be curious to explore for the strange and mystic associations they excite.



WALTER POPE.

(Circa 1614-1699.)

This gentleman, born at Fawsley, Northamptonshire, 1614, successively scholar, fellow, and dean of Wadham, and one of the first fellows of the Royal Society, wrote, among other things, 1. *The Old Man's Wish*, 1693, a ballad in twenty stanzas; one of those, writes Mr. Southey, which are never likely to lose their estimation and popularity: and 2. *Moral and Political Fables, done into measured Prose (i. e. blank verse), intermixed with Rhyme.*

SIR JOHN DENHAM.*

(1615-1668.)

Of Sir John Denham very little is known but what is related by Wood or by himself.

He was born at Dublin, in 1615; the only son of Sir John Denham, of Little Horsely in Essex, then Chief Baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of Sir Garret More, Baron of Mellefont.

Two years afterwards, his father, being made one of the Barons of the Exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to Oxford, where he was considered "as a dreaming young man, given more to dice and cards than study;" and therefore gave no prognostics of his future eminence; nor was suspected to conceal under sluggishness and laxity a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln's Inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application, yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice, but was very often plundered by gamesters.

Being severely reprov'd for this folly, he professed, and perhaps believed, himself reclaimed; and to testify the sincerity of his repentance, wrote and published *An Essay upon Gaming.*

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the *Æneid.*

Two years after, his father died; and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1642 he published *The Sophy.* This seems to have given him his first hold of the public attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion, threescore thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it;" an observation which could have had no propriety, had his poetical abilities been known before.

* Johnson.

He was after that pricked for sheriff of Surrey, and made governor of Farnham Castle for the king ; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published *Cooper's Hill*.

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence.

A report was spread, that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of *Cato*, and Pope of his *Essay on Criticism*.

In 1647, the distresses of the royal family required him to engage in more dangerous employments. He was intrusted by the queen with a message to the king ; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that by his intercession admission was procured. Of the king's condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.

He was afterwards employed in carrying on the king's correspondence, and, as he says, discharged this office with great safety to the royalists ; and being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he escaped, happily both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April 1648, he conveyed James the Duke of York from London into France, and delivered him there to the queen and Prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of *Cato Major*.

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled king ; and to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses, one of which amusements was probably his ode or song upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and Lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch that wandered over that kingdom. Poland was at that time very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessaries which it was very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland ; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negotiation gives sufficient evidence.

About this time, what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold by order of the parliament ; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the Earl of Pembroke.

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the Restoration he obtained that which many missed, the reward of his loyalty ; being made surveyor of the king's buildings, and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money ; for Wood says that he got by this place seven thousand pounds.

After the Restoration he wrote the poem on *Prudence and Justice*, and perhaps some of his other pieces ; and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical

version of the Psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed ; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded ?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master and esteem of the public would now make him happy. But human felicity is short and uncertain : a second marriage* brought upon him so much disquiet as for a time disordered his understanding ; and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know not whether the malignant lines were then made public, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His frenzy lasted not long,† and he seems to have regained his full force of mind ; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to survive ; for on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.

Denham is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. “ Denham and Waller,” says Prior, “ improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it.” He has given specimens of various composition—descriptive, ludicrous, didactic, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being upon proper occasion a merry fellow ; and in common with most of them, to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham : he does not fail for want of efforts ; he is familiar, he is gross ; but he is never merry, unless the *Speech against Peace in the Close Committee* be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shows him to be well qualified.

Of his more elevated occasional poems there is perhaps none that does not deserve commendation. In the verses to Fletcher we have an image that has since been often adopted :

“ But whither am I stray'd ? I need not raise
Trophies to thee from other men's dispraise ;
Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt
Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,
Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred slain.”

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues :

“ Poets are sultans, if they had their will ;
For every author would his brother kill.”

And Pope :

“ Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne.”

But this is not the best of his little pieces : it is excelled by his poem to Fanshaw, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshaw's version of Guarini contains a very sprightly and judicious character of a good translator :

* The second wife was Miss Brooke, who, after her marriage, became the mistress of the Duke of York, and is said to have been poisoned by Sir John in consequence.

† In Grammont's Memoirs many circumstances are related, both of his marriage and his frenzy, very little favourable to his character.

“That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
 Of tracing word by word and line by line.
 Those are the labour'd birth of slavish brains,
 Not the effect of poetry, but pains ;
 Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
 No flight for thoughts, but poorly stick at words.
 A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
 To make translations and translators too.
 They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame ;
 True to his sense, but truer to his fame.”

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not at that time generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance : the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

Cooper's Hill is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.

To trace a new scheme of poetry has in itself a very high claim to praise, and its praise is yet more when it is apparently copied by Garth and Pope ;* after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets, that have left scarcely a corner of the island not dignified either by rhyme or blank verse.

Cooper's Hill, if it be maliciously inspected, will not be found without its faults. The digressions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the sentiments sometimes such as will not bear a rigorous inquiry.

The four verses which, since Dryden has commended them, almost every writer for a century past has imitated, are generally known :

“Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
 My great example, as it is my theme !
 Though deep, yet clear ; though gentle, yet not dull ;
 Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.”

The lines are in themselves not perfect : for most of the words thus artfully opposed are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other ; and if there be any language that does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprised in so few words ; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation ; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted, and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet—that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has

* By Garth, in his *Poem on Claremont* ; and by Pope, in his *Windsor Forest*.

beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation from the drudgery of counting lines and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered by a perusal of our earlier versions: some of them are the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded at once their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on "Old Age" has neither the clearness of prose nor the sprightliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham," which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

On the Thames.

"Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,
Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold;
His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore."

On Strafford.

"His wisdom such, at once it did appear
Three kingdoms' wonder and three kingdoms' fear.
While single he stood forth, and seem'd, although
Each had an army, as an equal foe.
Such was his force of eloquence, to make
The hearers more concern'd than he that spake:
Each seem'd to act that part he came to see,
And none was more a locker-on than he.
So did he move our passions, some were known
To wish, for the defence, the crime their own.
Now private pity strove with public hate,
Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate."

On Cowley.

"To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he wrote was all his own;
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate.
And when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear."

As one of Denham's principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of judgment, naturally right, forsaking bad

copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse :

“Then all those
Who in the dark our fury did escape,
Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and shape,
And differing dialect ; then their numbers swell
And grow upon us. First Chorœbeus fell
Before Minerva's altar ; next did bleed
Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed
In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.
Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by
Their friends ; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,
Nor consecrated mitre, from the same
Ill fate could save. My country's funeral flame
And Troy's cold ashes I attest, and call
To witness for myself, that in their fall
No foes, no death, nor danger, I declin'd,
Did and deserv'd no less, my fate to find.”

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets ; which has perhaps been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not unfrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgment disapproved, since in his latter works he has totally forborne them.

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty, by following the sense ; and are for the most part as exact at least as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get :

“ Oh, how transform'd !
How much unlike that Hector who return'd
Clad in Achilles' spoils !”

And again :

“ From thence a thousand lesser poets sprung,
Like petty princes from the fall of Rome.”

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it :

“ Troy confounded falls
From all her glories : if it might have stood
By any power, by this right hand it should.”

“ And though my outward state misfortune hath
Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith.”

“ Thus by his fraud and our own faith o'ercome,
A feigned tear destroys us, against whom
Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,
Nor ten years' conflict, nor a thousand sail.”

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses ; in one passage the word “ die ” rhymes three couplets in six.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, where he was less skilful, or at least less dexterous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent, they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste and advanced our language, and whom we ought therefore to read with gratitude; though, having done much, he left much to do.



ABRAHAM COWLEY.*

(1618-1667.)

The life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life, of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shown confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyric.

Abraham Cowley was born in the year 1618. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dun-

* Johnson.



COWLEY WHEN A CHILD READING SPENSER'S FAERY QUEEN.

stan's parish gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know, at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, in which he very early took delight to read; till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet.* Such are the accidents which, sometimes remembered and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called genius. The true genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter of the present age, had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster School, where he was soon distinguished. He was wont, says Sprat, to relate, "that he had this defect in his memory at that time, that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell any thing as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that concocted the pulp of learning but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by nature for literary politeness. But in the author's own honest relation the marvel vanishes: he was, he says, such "an enemy to all constraint, that his master never could prevail on him to learn the rules without book." He does not tell that he could not learn the rules; but that being able to perform his exercises without them, and being "an enemy to constraint," he spared himself the labour.

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope might be said "to lisp in numbers;" and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to

* "I believe," says he, in his essay on himself, "I can tell the particular little chance that filled my head first with such chimes of verses as have never since left ringing there. For I remember, when I began to read and to take some pleasure in it, there was wont to lie in my mother's parlour,—I know not by what accident, for she herself never in her life read any book but of devotion,—but there was wont to lie Spenser's works. This I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted with the stories of the knights, and giants, and monsters, and brave houses, which I found every where (though my understanding had little to do with all this), and by degrees with the tinkling of the rhyme and dance of the numbers; so that I think I had read him all over before I was twelve years old, and was thus made a poet as immediately as a child is made an eunuch."

more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his fifteenth year, containing, with other poetical compositions, *The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe*, written when he was ten years old; and *Constantia and Philetus*, written two years after.

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called *Love's Riddle*, though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

In 1636 he was removed to Cambridge,* where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his *Davideis*; a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published *Love's Riddle*, with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby, of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and *Naufragium Jocularis*, a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models, for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the prince passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with a representation of the *Guardian*, a comedy which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation; though during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now M.A., he was, by the prevalence of the Parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire called *The Puritan and Papist*, which was only inserted in the last collection of his works;† and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the king, and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the Parliament, he followed the queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Alban's; and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in ciphering and deciphering the letters that passed between the king

* He was candidate this year at Westminster School for election to Trinity College, but proved unsuccessful.

† The satire was added to Cowley's works by the particular direction of Dr. Johnson.

and queen,—an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that for several years it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647 his *Mistress* was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that “poets are scarcely thought freemen of their company, without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to love.”

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley we are told by Barnes,* who had means enough of information, that whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This consideration cannot but abate in some measure the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence is natural; it is natural, likewise, for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an “airy nothing,” and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley might have learned from his master Pindar to call “the dream of a shadow.”

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burdened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or peculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw; complains of jealousy which he never felt; supposes himself sometimes invited, and sometimes forsaken; fatigues his fancy, and ransacks his memory, for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope or the gloominess of despair; and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to Lord Jermyn, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in *Miscellanea Antica*, a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men, whose minds are more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they show him to have been above the affectation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetoric.

* Barnesii Anacreontem. Dr. J.

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation, "The Scotch treaty," says he, "is the only thing now in which we are vitally concerned: I am one of the last hoppers, and yet cannot now abstain from believing that an agreement will be made; all people upon the place incline to that of union. The Scotch will moderate something of the rigour of their demands: the mutual necessity of an accord is visible: the king is persuaded of it. And to tell you the truth (which I take to be an argument above all the rest), Virgil has told the same thing to that purpose."

This expression from a secretary of the present time would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots,* and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

* Consulting the Virgilian lots, *sortes Virgilianæ*, is a method of divination by the opening of Virgil, and applying to the circumstances of the peruser the first passage in either of the two pages that he accidentally fixes his eye on. It is said that King Charles I. and Lord Falkland, being in the Bodleian Library, made this experiment of their future fortunes, and met with passages equally ominous to each. That of the king was the following:

"At bello audacis populi vexatus et armis,
Finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iuli,
Auxilium impleret, videatque indigna suorum
Funera, nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquæ
Tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur:
Sed cadat ante diem, mediaque inhumatus arena."

Æneid. iv. 615.

"Yet let a race untamed, and haughty foes,
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose,
Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
His men discouraged, and himself expell'd:
Let him for succour sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects and his son's embrace.
First let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain;
And when, at length, the cruel war shall cease,
On hard conditions may he buy his peace;
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
But fall untimely by some hostile hand,
And lie unburied on the barren sand."

DRYDEN.

Lord Falkland's:

"Non hæc, O Palla, dederas promissa parenti,
Cautius ut sævo velles te credere Marti.
Haud ignarus eram, quantum nova gloria in armis,
Et prædulce decus primo certamine posset.
Primitiæ juvenis miseræ, bellique propinqui
Dura rudimenta, et nulla exaudita Deorum,
Vota precesque meæ!"

Æneid. xi. 152.

"O Pallas, thou hast fail'd thy plighted word,
To fight with caution, not to tempt the sword.

Some years afterwards "business," says Sprat, "passed, of course, into other hands;" and Cowley, being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, "under pretence of privacy and retirement, he might take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation."

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers, who were sent out in quest of another man; and being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of 1000*l.* given by Dr. Scarborough.

This year he published his poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty. In this preface he declares, that "his desire had been for some days past, and did still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world for ever."

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him; and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled: a man harassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in ciphering and deciphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet and of safety. Yet let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of physician; still, according to Sprat, with intention "to dissemble the main design of his coming over:" and, as Mr. Wood relates, "complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created doctor of physic; which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver's death."

This is no favourable representation; yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power, is to be inquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence or any

I warn'd thee, but in vain, for well I knew
 What perils youthful ardour would pursue;
 That boiling blood would carry thee too far,
 Young as thou wert to dangers, raw to war.
 O curst essay of arms, disastrous doom,
 Prelude of bloody fields and fights to come!
 Hard elements of unauspicious war,
 Vain vows to Heaven, and unavailing care!"

DRYDEN.

Hoffman, in his Lexicon, gives a very satisfactory account of this practice of seeking fates in books; and says that it was used by the Pagans, the Jewish Rabbins, and even the early Christians, the latter taking the New Testament for their oracle.

other act. If he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy, may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty or preserve his life by a promise of neutrality: for the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before; the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience. He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled: nor that it made him think himself secure; for at that dissolution of government which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into France, where he resumed his former station, and stayed till the Restoration.

“He continued,” says his biographer, “under these bonds till the general deliverance:” it is, therefore, to be supposed that he did not go to France, and act again for the king, without the consent of his bondsman; that he did not show his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend’s permission.

Of the verses on Oliver’s death, in which Wood’s narrative seems to imply something encomiastic, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physic, however, he was made at Oxford in December 1657; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been given by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers, with the title of Dr. Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice; but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants; and as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, botany in the mind of Cowley turned into poetry. He composed in Latin several books on plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth the beauties of flowers, in various measures; and the fifth and sixth the uses of trees, in heroic numbers.

At the same time were produced, from the same University, the two great poets Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles, but concurring in the cultivation of Latin poetry; in which the English, till their works and May’s poem appeared,* seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared (for

* By May’s poem we are here to understand a continuation of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* to the death of Julius Cæsar, by Thomas May.

May I hold to be superior to both), the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a song of triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed; and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised, by both Charles the First and Second, the mastership of the Savoy; "but he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the court was not his only mortification. Having, by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old comedy of *The Guardian* for the stage, he produced it (1663) under the title of *The Cutter of Coleman-street*.* It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the king's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, "that when they told Cowley how little favour had been shown him, he received the news of his ill success not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man."

What firmness they expected, or what weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be known. He that misses his end will never be as much pleased as he that attains it, even when he can impute no part of his failure to himself; and when the end is to please the multitude, no man perhaps has a right, in things admitting of gradation and comparison, to throw the whole blame upon his judges, and totally to exclude diffidence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play it is difficult now to find the reason. It certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, "he should choose the time of their restoration to begin a quarrel with them." It appears, however, from the *Theatrical Register* of Downes the prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the royalists.

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent in an ode called *The Complaint*, in which he styles himself the melancholy Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, to-

* There is an error in the designation of this comedy, which our author copied from the title-page of the later editions of Cowley's works: the title of the play itself is without the article, "Cutter of Coleman-street;" and that because a merry sharking fellow about the town, named Cutter, is the principal character in it.

gether in some stanzas, written about that time, on the choice of a laureate ; a mode of satire by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased :

“ Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,
 Making apologies for his bad play ;
 Every one gave him so good a report,
 That Apollo gave heed to all he could say.
 Nor would he have had, 'tis thought, a rebuke,
 Unless he had done some notable folly :
 Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,
 Or printed his pitiful melancholy.”

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. “ Not finding,” says the morose Wood, “ that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey.”

“ He was now,” says the courtly Sprat, “ weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of a court ; which sort of life, though his virtue made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. Those were the reasons that made him to follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune.”



BARN-ELMS.

So differently are things seen, and so differently are they shown ; but actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired, first to Barn-Elms, and afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey.

He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the "hum of men."* He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow



PORCH HOUSE AT CHERTSEY.

tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the Earl of St. Alban's and the Duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.†

By the lovers of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked, if he was now happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck, which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

“ To Dr. Thomas Sprat.

“ Chertsey, May 21, 1665.

“ The first night that I came hither, I caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten days; and two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with a fall, that I am

* L'Allegro of Milton.

† About 300*l.* a year.

yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal fortune here, to begin with. And besides, I can get no money from my tenants, and have my meadows eaten up every night by cattle put in by my neighbours. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broke your word with me, and failed to come, even though you told Mr. Bois that you would. This is what they call *monstri simile*. I do hope to recover my late hurt so far within five or six days (though it be uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it) as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I and the Dean might be very merry upon St. Ann's Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton Town, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more: *Verbum sapienti.*"

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or suffer the uneasiness of solitude; for he died at the Porch House, in Chertsey, 28th July, 1667, in the 49th year of his age.

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser; and King Charles pronounced, "that Mr. Cowley had not left behind him a better man in England." He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind; and this posthumous praise may safely be credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.*

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat; who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party were easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general expressions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell cannot, however, now be known; I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.

Cowley,—like other poets who have written with narrow views, and, instead of tracing intellectual pleasures in the minds of men, paid their court to temporary prejudices,—has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the singer better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

* In private life he was easy of access, gentle, polite, and modest; none but his intimate friends ever discovered by his discourse that he was a great poet. He was generous in his disposition, temperate in his life, devout and pious in his religion, a warm friend, and a social companion.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry *τέχνη μιμητική*, an imitative art, these writers will without great wrong lose their right to the name of poets; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing: they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those, however, who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit; but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

If wit be well described by Pope, as being "that which has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed," they certainly never attained nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous; he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If, by a more noble and more adequate conception, that be considered as wit which is at once natural and new; that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that which he that never found it wonders how he missed,—to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions, it will be readily inferred that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds; they never inquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done, but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as beings looking upon good and evil impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before.

Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetic; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity

is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness, for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted, however, of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole: their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

Yet great labour directed by great abilities is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth; if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authors, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry; either something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found buried, perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysic style only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment and more music. Suckling neither im-

proved versification nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style remained chiefly with Cowley; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

Critical remarks are not easily understood without examples; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets (for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers) was eminently distinguished.

As the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Thus Cowley on knowledge :

“ The sacred tree ’midst the fair orchard grew ;
 The phœnix Truth did on it rest,
 And built his perfum’d nest,
 That right Porphyrian tree which did true logic show.
 Each leaf did learned notions give,
 And th’ apples were demonstrative :
 So clear their colour and divine,
 The very shade they cast did other lights outshine.”

On Anacreon continuing a lover in his old age :

“ Love was with thy life entwin’d,
 Close as heat with fire is join’d ;
 A powerful brand prescrib’d the date
 Of thine, like Meleager’s fate :
 Th’ antiperistasis of age
 More inflam’d thy amorous rage.”

In the following verses we have an allusion to a rabbinical opinion concerning manna :

“ Variety I ask not : give me one
 To live perpetually upon.
 The person love does to us fit,
 Like manna, has the taste of all in it.”

Thus Donne shows his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastic verses :

“ In every thing there naturally grows
 A balsamum to keep it fresh and new,
 If ’twere not injur’d by extrinsic blows :
 Your youth and beauty are this balm in you.
 But you, of learning and religion,
 And virtue and such ingredients, have made
 A mithridate, whose operation
 Keeps off or cures what can be done or said.”

Though the following lines of Donne, on the last night of the year, have something in them too scholastic, they are not inelegant :

“ This twilight of two years, not past nor next,
 Some emblem is of me, or I of this,
 Who, meteor-like, of stuff and form perplexed,
 Whose what and where in disputation is,
 If I should call me any thing, should miss.
 I sum the years and me, and find me not
 Debtor to th’ old nor creditor to th’ new.

That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,
 Nor trust I this with hopes ; and yet scarce true
 This bravery is, since these times show'd me you."

DONNE.

Yet more abstruse and profound is Donne's reflection upon man as a microcosm :

" If men be worlds, there is in every one
 Something to answer in some proportion ;
 All the world's riches : and in good men, this
 Virtue our form's form and our soul's soul is."

Of thoughts so far-fetched as to be not only unexpected but unnatural, all their books are full :

To a Lady who wrote Poesies for Rings.

" They who above do various circles find,
 Say, like a ring, th' equator heaven does bind.
 When heaven shall be adorn'd by thee
 (Which then more heaven than 'tis will be),
 'Tis thou must write the poesy there,
 For it wanteth one as yet ;
 Then the sun pass through't twice a year,
 The sun, which is esteem'd the god of wit."

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been raised about identity in philosophy are by Cowley, with still more perplexity, applied to love :

" Five years ago (says story) I lov'd you,
 For which you call me most inconstant now.
 Pardon me, madam, you mistake the man ;
 For I am not the same that I was then ;
 No flesh is now the same 'twas then in me,
 And that my mind is chang'd yourself may see.
 The same thoughts to retain still, and intents,
 Were more inconstant far : for accidents
 Must of all things most strangely inconstant prove,
 If from one subject they t' another move ;
 My members then the father members were,
 From whence these take their birth which now are here.
 If, then, this body love what th' other did,
 'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid."

The love of different women is, in geographical poetry, compared to travels through different countries :

" Hast thou not found each woman's breast
 (The land where thou hast travell'd)
 Either by savages possest,
 Or wild and uninhabited ?
 What joy couldst take, or what repose,
 In countries so uncivilised as those ?
 Lust, the scorching dog-star, here
 Rages with immoderate heat ;
 Whilst Pride, the rugged northern bear,
 In others makes the cold too great ;
 And where these are temperate known,
 The soil's all barren sand or rocky stone."

COWLEY.

A lover burnt up by his affection is compared to Egypt :

“ The fate of Egypt I sustain,
And never feel the dew of rain
From clouds which in the head appear ;
But all my too much moisture owe
To overflowings of the heart below.”

COWLEY.

The lover supposes his lady acquainted with the ancient laws of augury and rites of sacrifice :

“ And yet this death of mine, I fear,
Will ominous to her appear :
When found in every other part,
Her sacrifice is found without an heart ;
For the last tempest of my death
Shall sigh out that too with my breath.”

That the chaos was harmonised has been recited of old ; but whence the different sounds arose remained for a modern to discover :

“ Th’ ungovern’d parts no correspondence knew,
An artless war from thwarting motions grew,
Till they to number and fixt rules were brought :
Water and air he for the Tenor chose ;
Earth made the Bass ; the Treble, flame arose.”

COWLEY.

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account ; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again :

“ On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that which was nothing all.
So doth each tear
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world, by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow
This world by waters sent from thee my heaven dissolved so.”

On reading the following lines, the reader may perhaps cry out,
“ Confusion worse confounded :”

“ Here lies a she-sun, and a he-moon here,
She gives the best light to his sphere ;
Or each is both, and all, and so
They unto one another nothing owe.”

DONNE.

Who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope ?

“ Though God be our true glass through which we see
All, since the Being of all things is he ;
Yet are the trunks which do to us derive
Things in proportion fit, by perspective

Deeds of good men ; for by their living here,
Virtues indeed remote seem to be near."

Who would imagine it possible that in a very few lines so many remote ideas could be brought together ?

" Since 'tis my doom, Love's undershrieve,
Why this reprieve ?
Why doth my she advowson fly
Incumbency ?
To sell thyself dost thou intend
By candle's end,
And hold the contrast thus in doubt,
Life's taper out ?
Think but how soon the market fails,
Your sex lives faster than the males ;
And if to measure age's span,
The sober Julian were th' account of man,
Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian."

CLEVELAND.

Of enormous and disgusting hyperboles these may be examples :

" By every wind that comes this way
Send me at least a sigh or two ;
Such and so many I'll repay
As shall themselves make wings to get to you."

COWLEY.

" In tears I'll waste these eyes,
By love so vainly fed ;
So lust of old the deluge punished."

COWLEY.

" All arm'd in brass, the richest dress of war,
(A dismal glorious sight !) he shone afar.
The sun himself started with sudden fright,
To see his beams return so dismal bright."

COWLEY.

An universal consternation :

" His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws
Tear up the ground ; then runs he wild about,
Lashing his angry tail, and roaring out.
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there ;
Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake with fear ;
Silence and horror fill the place around ;
Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound."

COWLEY.

Their fictions were often violent and unnatural :

Of his Mistress bathing.

" The fish around her crowded, as they do
To the false light that treacherous fishers show ;
And all with as much ease might taken be,
As she at first took me :
For ne'er did light so clear
Among the waves appear,
Though every night the sun himself set there."

COWLEY.

The poetical effect of a lover's name upon glass :

“ My name engrav'd herein
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass,
Which, ever since that charm, hath been
As hard as that which grav'd it was.”

DONNE.

Their conceits were sentiments slight and trifling :

On an Inconstant Woman.

“ He enjoys the calmy sunshine now,
And no breath stirring hears,
In the clear heaven of thy brow
No smallest cloud appears.
He sees thee gentle, fair, and gay,
And trusts the faithless April of thy May.”

COWLEY.

Upon a paper written with the juice of lemon, and read by the fire :

“ Nothing yet in thee is seen ;
But when a genial heat warms thee within,
A new-born wood of various lines there grows :
Here buds an L, and there a B,
Here spouts a V, and there a T ;
And all the flourishing letters stand in rows.”

COWLEY.

As they sought only for novelty, they did not much inquire whether their allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross ; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little :

Physic and Chirurgery for a Lover.

“ Gently, ah, gently, madam, touch
The wound which you yourself have made :
That pain must needs be very much
Which makes me of your hand afraid.
Cordials of pity give me now,
For I too weak of purgings grow.”

COWLEY.

The World and a Clock.

“ Mahol th' inferior world's fantastic face
Through all the turns of matter's maze did trace ;
Great nature's well-set clock in pieces took ;
On all the springs and smallest wheels did look
Of life and motion, and with equal art
Made up the whole again of every part.”

COWLEY.

A coal-pit has not often found its poet ; but, that it may not want its due honour, Cleveland has paralleled it to the sun :

“ The moderate value of our guiltless ore
Makes no man atheist, and no woman whore ;

Yet why should hallow'd vestal's sacred shrine
 Deserve more honour than a flaming mine ?
 These pregnant wombs of heat would fitter be
 Than a few embers for a deity.
 Had he our pits, the Persian would admire
 No sun, but warm 's devotion at our fire :
 He'd leave the trotting whipster, and prefer
 Our profound Vulcan 'bove that waggoner.
 For wants he heat or light ? or would have store,
 Or both ? 'tis here : and what can suns give more ?
 Nay, what's the sun but, in a different name,
 A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame ?
 Then let this truth reciprocally run,—
 The sun's heaven's coalery, and coals our sun."

Death a Voyage.

" No family
 E'er rigg'd a soul for heaven's discovery,
 With whom more venturers might boldly dare
 Venture their stakes, with him in joy to share."
 DONNE.

Their thoughts and expressions were sometimes grossly absurd,
 and such as no figures or license can reconcile to the understanding :

A Lover neither dead nor alive.

" Then down I laid my head,
 Down on cold earth ; and for awhile was dead,
 And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled.
 Ah, sottish soul, said I,
 When back to its cage again I saw it fly ;
 Fool, to resume her broken chain,
 And row her galley here again !
 Fool, to that body to return
 Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to burn ?
 Once dead, how can it be
 Death should a thing so pleasant seem to thee,
 That thou shouldst come to live it o'er again in me ?"

A Lover's Heart a Hand-grenado.

" Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine come
 Into the selfsame room ;
 'Twill tear and blow up all within,
 Like a grenado shot into a magazin.
 Then shall love keep the ashes and torn parts
 Of both our broken hearts ;
 Shall out of both one new one make :
 From her's th' alloy, from mine the metal take."
 COWLEY.

The poetical Propagation of Light.

" The prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all
 From which all fortunes, names, and natures fall :
 Then from those wombs of stars, the bride's bright eyes,
 At every glance a constellation flies,

And sows the court with stars, and doth prevent,
 In light and power, the all-eyed firmament :
 First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,
 Then from their beams their jewels' lustres rise ;
 And from their jewels torches do take fire ;
 And all is warmth, and light, and good desire."

DONNE.

They were in very little care to clothe their notions with elegance of dress, and therefore miss the notice and the praise which are often gained by those who think less, but are more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a mistress beloved is fairer in idea than in reality is by Cowley thus expressed :

" Thou in my fancy dost much higher stand,
 Than woman can be plac'd by Nature's hand ;
 And I must needs, I'm sure, a loser be,
 To change thee as thou'rt there for very thee."

That prayer and labour should co-operate are thus taught by Donne :

" In none but us are such mix'd engines found,
 As hands of double office ; for the ground
 We till with them, and them to heaven we raise :
 Who prayerless labours, or without this prays,
 Doth but one half, that's none."

By the same author, a common topic, the danger of procrastination, is thus illustrated :

" That which I should have begun
 In my youth's morning, now late must be done ;
 And I, as giddy travellers must do,
 Which stray or sleep all day, and having lost
 Light and strength, dark and tir'd, must then ride post."

All that man has to do is, to live and die : the sum of humanity is comprehended by Donne in the following lines :

" Think in how poor a prison thou didst lie ;
 After enabled but to suck and cry.
 Think, when 'twas grown to most, 'twas a poor inn,
 A province pack'd up in two yards of skin ;
 And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a rage
 Of sicknesses, or their true mother, age.
 But think that death hath now enfranchis'd thee ;
 Thou hast thy expansion now, and liberty ;
 Think that a rusty piece discharg'd is flown
 In pieces, and the bullet is his own,
 And freely flies : this to thy soul allow,
 Think thy shell broke, think thy soul hatch'd but now."

They were sometimes indelicate and disgusting. Cowley thus apostrophises beauty :

" Thou tyrant, which leav'st no man free !
 Thou subtle thief, from whom nought safe can be !
 Thou murderer, which hast kill'd ; and devil, which
 wouldst damn me !"

Thus he addresses his mistress :

“ Thou who, in many a propriety,
So truly art the sun to me,
Add one more likeness, which I'm sure you can,
And let me and my sun beget a man.”

Thus he represents the meditations of a lover :

“ Though in thy thoughts scarce any tracts have been
So much as of original sin,
Such charms thy beauty wears as might
Desires in dying confest saints excite.
Thou with strange adultery
Dost in each breast a brothel keep ;
Awake, all men do lust for thee,
And some enjoy thee when they sleep.”

The true Taste of Tears.

“ Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,
And take my tears, which are love's wine,
And try your mistress' tears at home ;
For all are false that taste not just like mine.”
DONNE.

This is yet more indelicate :

“ As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,
As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's pores doth trill,
As the almighty balm of th' early East,
Such are the sweet drops of my mistress' breast.
And on her neck her skin such lustre sets,
They seem no sweat-drops, but pearl coronets :
Rank, sweaty froth thy mistress' brow defiles.”
DONNE.

Their expressions sometimes raise horror, when they intend perhaps to be pathetic :

“ As men in hell are from diseases free,
So from all other ills am I,
Free from their known formality :
But all pains eminently lie in thee.”
COWLEY.

They were not always strictly curious whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true ; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

“ It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke :
In vain it something would have spoke ;
The love within too strong for 't was,
Like poison put into a Venice-glass.”
COWLEY.

In forming descriptions, they looked out, not for images, but for conceits. Night has been a common subject which poets have con-

tended to adorn. Dryden's Night is well known ; Donne's is as follows :

“ Thou seest me here at midnight, now all rest :
 Time's dead low-water ; when all minds divest
 To-morrow's business ; when the labourers have
 Such rest in bed, that their last churchyard grave,
 Subject to change, will scarce be a type of this ;
 Now when the client, whose last hearing is
 To-morrow, sleeps ; when the condemned man,
 Who, when he opes his eyes, must shut them then
 Again by death, although sad watch he keep,
 Doth practise dying by a little sleep ;—
 Thou at this midnight seest me.”

It must be, however, confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle, yet where scholastic speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired. What Cowley has written upon Hope shows an unequalled fertility of invention :

“ Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,
 Alike if it succeed and if it miss ;
 Whom good or ill does equally confound,
 And both the horns of Fate's dilemma wound ;
 Vain shadow ! which dost vanish quite,
 Both at full noon and perfect night !
 The stars have not a possibility
 Of blessing thee ;
 If things, then, from their end we happy call,
 'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of all.
 Hope, thou bold taster of delight,
 Who, whilst thou shouldst but taste, devour'st it quite !
 Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st us poor,
 By clogging it with legacies before.
 The joys which we entire should wed
 Come deflower'd virgins to our bed ;
 Good fortunes without gain imported be,
 Such mighty custom's paid to thee :
 For joy, like wine, kept close does better taste ;
 If it take air before, its spirits waste.”

To the following comparison of a man that travels, and his wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has better claim :

“ Our two souls, therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.
 If they be two, they are two so
 As stiff twin compasses are two :
 Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth if th' other do ;
 And though it in the centre sit,
 Yet, when the other far doth roam,
 It leans and hearkens after it,
 And grows erect as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
 Like th' other foot obliquely run.
 Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And makes me end where I begun."

DONNE.

In all these examples, it is apparent that whatever is improper or vicious is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight by their desire of exciting admiration.

Having thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the style and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His *Miscellanies* contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best among many good is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favourite odes, which he estimates, in his raptures, at the value of a kingdom. I will, however, venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which ought to be inscribed *To my Muse*, for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added, there will still remain a defect; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names, which are therefore epitaphs to be let,—occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on *Wit* is almost without a rival. It was about the time of Cowley that wit, which had been till then used for *intellection* in contradistinction to *will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears.

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of wit:

" Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,
 That shows more cost than art.
 Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear:
 Rather than all things wit, let none be there.
 Several lights will not be seen,
 If there be nothing else between:
 Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' th' sky,
 If those be stars which paint the galaxy."

In his verses to Lord Falkland, whom every man of his time was proud to praise, there are, as there must be in all Cowley's compositions, some striking thoughts; but they are not well wrought. His elegy on Sir Henry Wotton is vigorous and happy; the series of thoughts is easy and natural; and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked that in this elegy, and in most of his encomiastic poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Hervey there is much praise, but little passion; a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He knew how to distinguish and how to commend the qualities of his companion; but when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself; and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would crackle in the fire. It is the odd fate of this thought to be the worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns; as, therefore, this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections as to exercise the understanding.

The *Chronicle* is a composition unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastic mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critic, mingle their influence even in this airy frolic of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed; the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the *Davidis* supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and show such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions for and against Reason are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties, reason has its proper task assigned it,—that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* reason is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator:

“ The Holy Book like the eighth sphere doth shine
 With thousand lights of truth divine;
 So numberless the stars, that to our eye
 It makes all-but one galaxy.
 Yet reason must assist too; for, in seas
 So vast and dangerous as these,
 Our course by stars above we cannot know
 Without the compass too below.”

After this, says Bentley:*

“ Who travels in religious jars,
 Truth mix'd with errors, shade with rays,

* Dodsley's Collection of Poems, vol. v.

Like Whiston, wanting pyx or stars,
In ocean wide or sinks or strays."

Cowley seems to have had, what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to rate his own performances by their just value; and has therefore closed his *Miscellanies* with the verses upon Crashaw, which apparently excel all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the *Miscellanies* succeed the *Anacreontiques*, or paraphractical translations of some little poems which pass, however justly, under the name of Anacreon. Of these songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their sprightliness, but lost their simplicity. The *Anacreon* of Cowley, like the *Homer* of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly more amiable to common readers, and perhaps if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shows nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must always be natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way.

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same: the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life, is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifices of inversion, by which the established order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or meanings of words are introduced, are practised not by those who talk to be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The *Anacreontiques*, therefore, of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The next class of his poems is called *The Mistress*, of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written with exuberance of wit and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surprised into some improvement. But considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them. They are neither courtly nor pathetic, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far sought, and too hyperbolic, either to express love or to excite it; every stanza is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls and with broken hearts.

The principal artifice by which *The Mistress* is filled with conceits

is very copiously displayed by Addison. Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of real fire is said of love, or figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining both significations. Thus, "observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, he considers them as burning-glasses made of ice. Finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, he concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. Upon the dying of a tree on which he had cut his loves, he observes that his flames had burnt up and withered the tree."

These conceits Addison calls mixed wit; that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent: that confusion of images may entertain for a moment; but being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it; but not to mention the ancients, he might have found it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro:

"Aspice quam variis dstringar Lesbia curis!
Uror et heu! nostro manat ab igne liquor:
Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul; restringite flammæ
O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma meas."

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published a book of profane and lascivious verses. From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenour of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his work will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's *Mistress* has no power of seduction; she "plays round the head, but reaches not the heart." Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants and colours of flowers is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymist, who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for his task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling; always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.*

* Of the *Mistress*, published 1647, he himself says: "It was composed when I was very young. Poets are scarce thought freemen of their company, without paying some duties and obliging themselves to be true to love. Sooner or later they must all pass through that trial; like some Mahometan monks, who are bound by their order once at least in their life to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. But we must not always make a judgment of their manners from their writings of this kind, as the Romanists uncharitably do of Beza for a few lascivious sonnets composed by him in his youth. It is not in this sense that poetry is said to be a kind of painting; it is not the picture of the poet, but of things and persons imagined by him. He may be in his practice and disposition a philosopher, and yet sometimes speak with the softness of an amorous Sappho. I would not be misunderstood as if I affected so much gravity as to be ashamed to be thought really in love. On the contrary, I cannot have a good opinion of any man who is not, at least, capable of being so."

The *Pindaric Odes* are now to be considered ; a species of composition which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted in "his list of the lost inventions of antiquity," and which he has made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an *Olympic and Nemæan Ode* is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was not to show "precisely what Pindar spoke, but his manner of speaking." He was, therefore, not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments ; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the *Olympic Ode*, the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The connexion is supplied with great perspicuity ; and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruptness. Though the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not everywhere equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his "deep mouth" was used to pour :

" Great Rhea's son,
If in Olympus' top, where thou
Sitt'st to behold thy sacred show,
If in Alpheus' silver flight,
If in my verse thou take delight,
My verse, great Rhea's son, which is
Lofty as that and smooth as this."

In the *Nemæan Ode* the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe, that whatever is said of "the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns," is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original ; as,

" The table, free for ev'ry guest,
No doubt will thee admit,
And feast more upon thee than thou on it."

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the *Olympionic* an oath is mentioned in a single word ; and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the Castalian stream. We are told of Theron's bounty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose :

" But in this thankless world the giver
Is envied even by the receiver ;
'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion
Rather to hide than own the obligation :
Nay, 'tis much worse than so ;
It now an artifice does grow
Wrongs and injuries to do,
Lest men should think we owe."

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he

sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindaric ; and if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban bard were to his contemporaries :

“ Begin the song, and strike the living lyre !
Lo, how the years to come, a numerous and well-fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measure dance ;
While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
My music's voice shall bear it company,
'Till all gentle notes be drown'd
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.”

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these ?

“ But stop, my Muse ;
Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin :
'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse ;
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.”

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to the last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality : for of the greatest things the parts are little ; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration ; and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind, by the mention of particulars, is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense ; more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than to that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode entitled *The Muse*, who goes to “take the air” in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgment, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention. How he distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to motion, he has not explained ; we are, however, content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the Muse begin her career ; but there is yet more to be done :

“ Let the *postilion* Nature mount, and let
The *coachman* Art be set ;
And let the airy *footmen*, running all beside,
Make a long row of goodly pride ;
Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,
In a well-worded dress,
And innocent loves, and pleasant truths, and useful lies,
In all their gaudy *liveries*.”

Every mind is now disgusted with this cumber of magnificence ; yet I cannot refuse myself the next four lines :

“ Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling throne,
And bid it to put on ;
For long though cheerful is the way,
And life, alas, allows but one ill winter's day.”

In the same ode, celebrating the power of the Muse, he gives her prescience, or in poetical language, the foresight of events hatching in futurity; but having once an egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to show us that he knows what an egg contains:

“Thou into the close nests of Time dost peep,
And there with piercing eye,
Through the firm shell and the thick white, dost spy
Years to come a-forming lie,
Close in their sacred fecundine asleep.”

The same thought is more generally, and therefore more poetically expressed by Casimir, a writer who has many of the beauties and faults of Cowley:

“Omnibus Mundi Dominator horis
Aptat urgendas per inane pennas,
Pars adhuc nido latet, et futuros
Crescit in annos.”

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried by a kind of destiny to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea “new dyes the water’s name;” and England during the civil war was “Albion no more, nor to be named from white.” It is surely by some fascination not easily surmounted, that a writer, professing to revive “the noblest and highest writing in verse,” makes this address to the new year:

“Nay, if thou lov’st me, gentle year,
Let not so much as love be there,
Vain, fruitless love I mean; for, gentle year,
Although I fear
There’s of this caution little need,
Yet, gentle year, take heed
How thou dost make
Such a mistake;
Such love I mean alone
As by thy cruel predecessors has been shown;
For though I have too much cause to doubt it,
I fain would try, for once, if life can live without it.”

The reader of this will be inclined to cry out with Prior—

“Ye critics, say,
How poor to this was Pindar’s style!”

Even those who cannot perhaps find in the Isthmian or Nemæan songs what antiquity has disposed them to expect, will at least see that they are ill represented by such puny poetry; and all will determine that if this be the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of revival.

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley’s sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear; yet, by examining the syllables, we perceive them to be regular, and have reason enough for supposing

that the ancient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought, therefore, to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting; to have preserved a constant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the "irregularity of numbers is the very thing which makes that kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects." But he should have remembered, that what is fit for every thing can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated and the memory relieved.

If the Pindaric style be what Cowley thinks it, the highest and noblest kind of writing in verse, it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critic, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse, which, according to Sprat, "is chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose."

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin. A poem* on the Sheldonian theatre, in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is unhappily inserted in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. Pindarism prevailed about half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The *Pindaric Odes* have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation,† that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely, though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabric august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise, of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The *Davideis* now remains to be considered; a poem which the

* *Carmen Pindaricum in Theatrum Sheldonianum in solennibus magnifici Operis Encæniis. Recitatum Julii die 9, anno 1669, a Corbetto Owen, A.B. Æd. Chr. Alumno Authore. 1669.*

† Mr. Dryden having told us that our author brought Pindaric verse as near perfection as possible in so short a time, adds: "But if I may be allowed to speak my mind modestly, and without injury to his sacred ashes, somewhat of the purity of English, somewhat of more sweetness in the numbers,—in a word, somewhat of a finer turn and more lyrical verse, is yet wanting." And Mr. Congreve having excepted against the irregularity of the measure of the English Pindaric odes, yet observes, "that the beauty of Mr. Cowley's verses is an atonement for the irregularity of his stanzas; and though he did not imitate Pindar in the strictness of his numbers, he has very often happily copied him in the force of his figures, and sublimity of his style and sentiments."

author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes no scruple of declaring, because the *Aeneid* had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part. Epic poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That we have not the whole *Davidéis* is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read and generally praised, that have crept through a century with so little regard. Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the *Davidéis* no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the *Spectator* it has been once quoted; by Rymer it has once been praised; and by Dryden, in *Mack Flecknoe*, it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this silence and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred history has been always read with submissive reverence, and imagination overawed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentic narrative, and to repose on its veracity with such humble confidence as suppresses curiosity. We go with the historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine power are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of creation, however it may teem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language: "He spake the word, and they were made."

We are told that Saul "was troubled with an evil spirit;" from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says,

"Once general of a gilded host of sprites,
Like Hesper leading forth the spangled nights;
But down like lightning, which him struck, he came,
And roar'd at his first plunge into the flame."

Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of heathenism, and therefore of impropriety; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by lashing "his breast with his long tail." Envy, after a pause, steps out, and, among other declarations of her zeal, utters these lines:

"Do thou but threat, loud storms shall make reply,
And thunder echo to the trembling sky;
Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an height,
As shall the fire's proud element affright.
Th' old drudging sun, from his long-beaten way,
Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.
The jocund orbs shall break their measur'd pace,
And stubborn poles change their allotted place.
Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and there,
Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere."

Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical being.

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous that fancy and fiction lose their effect: the whole system of life, while the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action, that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as the peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related; and by consequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted, nor can the attention be often interested in any thing that befalls them.

To the subject thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits; and conceits are all that the *Davideis* supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description,* or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images; and shows not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against Æneas, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight:

“Saxum circumspicit ingens,
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo quod forte jacebat
Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis.”

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother,

“I saw him sling the stone, as if he meant
At once his murder and his monument.”

Of the sword taken from Goliath he says,

“A sword so great, that it was only fit
To cut off his great head that came with it.”

Other poets describe Death by some of its common appearances. Cowley says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral lamps, real or fabulous,

“’Twiſt his right ribs deep pierc’d the furious blade,
And open’d wide thoſe ſecret veſſels where
Life’s light goes out when firſt they let in air.”

But he has allusions vulgar as well as learned. In a visionary ſucceſſion of kings,

“Joas at firſt does bright and glorious ſhow;
In life’s freſh morn his fame does early crow.”

Deſcribing an undiſciplin’d army, after having ſaid with elegance,

* Dr. Warton diſcovers ſome contrariety of opinion between this and what is pre-
viously ſaid of deſcription.

“ His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly, and loud ;”

he gives them a fit of the ague.

The allusions, however, are not always to vulgar things; he offends by exaggeration as much as by diminution :

“ The king was plac'd alone, and o'er his head
A well-wrought heaven of silk and gold was spread.”

Whatever he writes is always polluted with some conceit :

“ Where the sun's fruitful beams give metals birth,
Where he the growth of fatal gold does see,
Gold, which alone more influence has than he.”

In one passage he starts a sudden question, to the confusion of philosophy :

“ Ye learned heads, whom ivy-garlands grace,
Why does that twining plant the oak embrace ;
The oak for courtship most of all unfit,
And rough as are the winds that fight with it ?”

His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation :

“ Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you're in,
The story of your gallant friend begin.”

In a simile descriptive of the morning :

“ As glimmering stars just at th' approach of day,
Cashier'd by troops, at last all drop away.”

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention :

“ He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,
That e'er the mid-day sun pierc'd through with light ;
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Wash'd from the morning beauties' deepest red ;
An harmless flatt'ring meteor shone for hair,
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care ;
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes ;
This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall ;
Of a new rainbow ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece cut out, a scarf is made.”

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery ; what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and been dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception ; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarf, and related it in the terms of the mercer and tailor.

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious :

“I th’ library a few choice authors stood ;
 Yet ’twas well stor’d, for that small store was good :
 Writing, man’s spiritual physic, was not then
 Itself, as now, grown a disease of men.
 Learning (young virgin) but few suitors knew ;
 The common prostitute she lately grew,
 And with the spurious brood loads now the press,
 Laborious effects of idleness.”

As the *Dauidis* affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve, there is no opportunity for such criticism as epic poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shown by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action cannot be known. Of characters either not yet introduced, or shown but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad* ; and many artifices of diversification are employed with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision ; but he has been so lavish of his poetical art, that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter ; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined him to stop. By this abruption, posterity lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation of the *Dauidis* can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.

Had not his characters been depraved, like every other part, by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero :

“ His way once chose, he forward thrust outright,
 Nor turn’d aside for danger or delight.”

And the different beauties of the lofty Merah and the gentle Michol are very justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the *Dauidis* superior to the *Jerusalem* of Tasso, “ which,” says he, “ the poet, with all his care, has not totally purged from pedantry.” If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs, by introducing pedantry, far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared ; for the resemblance of Cowley’s work to Tasso’s is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which, however, they differ widely : for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion ; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of heaven, in which the different manner of the

two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely description, unless it be possible to describe by negatives; for he tells us what there is not in heaven. Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours and pleasures of the regions of happiness. Tasso affords images, and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rymer's censure. He says of the Supreme Being,

"Hà sotto i piedi e fato e la natura
Ministri humili, e 'l moto, e ch' il misura."

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the *Davideis* , as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surprised, but never delighted, and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still, however, it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature, and replenished by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetic, and rarely sublime; but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham, in his elegy,

"To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he writ was all his own."

This wide position requires less limitation, when it is affirmed of Cowley, than perhaps of any other poet. He read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own; he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise; and not sufficiently inquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows. He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him; and Milton is said to have declared, that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself; and such was his copiousness of knowledge, that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind: yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it; his known wealth was so great, that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius on the death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his *Mistress* is so apparently borrowed from Donne, that he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another :

“ Although I think thou never found wilt be,
 Yet I'm resolv'd to search for thee ;
 The search itself rewards the pains.
 So, though the chymic his great secret miss
 (For neither it in art or nature is),
 Yet things well worth his toil he gains ;
 And does his charge and labour pay
 With good unsought experiments by the way.”

COWLEY.

“ Some that have deeper digg'd Love's mine than I,
 Say where his centric happiness doth lie :
 I have lov'd, and got, and told ;
 But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
 I should not find that hidden mystery.
 Oh, 'tis imposture all !
 And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,
 But glorifies his pregnant pot,
 If by the way to him befall
 Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal ;
 So lovers dream a rich and long delight,
 But get a winter-seeming summer's night.”

D Donne.

Jonson and Donne, as Dr. Hurd remarks, were then in the highest esteem.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledges his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson ; but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works : to emulate Donne appears to have been his purpose ; and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers far short of sanctity are frequently offended ; and which would not be borne in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems to have borrowed from him. He says of Goliath :

“ His spear the trunk was of a lofty tree,
 Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast should be.”

Milton says of Satan :

“ His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
 Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
 Of some great admiral, were but a wand,
 He walked with.”

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words, being arbitrary, must owe their power to association, and have the influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought ; and as the noblest mien or most graceful action would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross em-

ployments of rustics or mechanics, so the most heroic sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth, indeed, is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so concealed in baser matter, that only a chemist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words, that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities, as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye; and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us by consciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this, Cowley appears to have been without knowledge or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase; he has no elegances, either lucky or elaborate. As his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety or nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject, rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroic poem is less familiar than that of his slightest writings. He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction, to the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill read, the art of reading them is at present lost, for they are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has, indeed, many noble lines, such as the feeble care of Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh:

“ One flings a mountain, and its rivers too
Torn up with 't.”

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns, or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear, and destroy the energy of the line.

His combination of different measures is sometimes dissonant and unpleasing; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little

censured or avoided. How often he used them, and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage, in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language :

“ Where honour or where conscience *does* not bind,
 No other law shall shackle me ;
 Slave to myself I ne'er will be ;
 Nor shall my future actions be confin'd
 By my own present mind.
 Who by resolves and vows engag'd *does* stand
 For days that yet belong to fate,
Does, like an unthrift, mortgage his estate
 Before it falls into his hand :
 The bondman of the cloister so,
 All that he *does* receive *does* always owe.
 And still as Time comes in, it goes away,
 Not to enjoy, but debts to pay.
 Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell,
 Which his hour's work as well as hours *does* tell :
 Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell.”

His heroic lines are often formed of monosyllables ; but yet they are sometimes sweet and sonorous. He says of the Messiah,

“ Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall sound,
 And reach to worlds that must not yet be found.”

In another place, of David,

“ Yet bid him go securely, when he sends ;
 'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.
 The man who has his God no aid can lack ;
 And we who bid him go will bring him back.”

Yet amidst his negligence he sometimes attempted an improved and scientific versification, of which it will be best to give his own account subjoined to this line :

“ Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless space.”

“ I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of readers, that it is not by negligence that this verse is so loose, long, and, as it were, vast ; it is to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem, that else will pass for very careless verses ; as before,

‘ And overruns the neighb'ring fields with violent course.’

In the second book,

‘ Down a precipice deep, down he casts them all.’

And,

‘ And fell adown his shoulders with loose care.’

In the third,

‘ Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o’er
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.’

In the fourth,

‘ Like some fair pine o’erlooking all th’ ignobler wood.’

And,

‘ Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong.’

And many more: but it is enough to instance in a few. The thing is, that the disposition of words and numbers should be such, as that, out of the order and sound of them, the things themselves may be represented. This the Greeks were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our English poets observed it, for aught I can find. The Latins (*qui Musas colunt severiores*) sometimes did it; and their prince, Virgil, always, in whom the examples are innumerable, and taken notice of by all judicious men, so that it is superfluous to collect them.”

I know not whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A boundless verse, a headlong verse, and a verse of brass or of strong brass, seem to comprise very incongruous and unsociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing loose care, I cannot discover; nor why the pine is taller in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables.

But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of representative versification, which, perhaps, no other English line can equal:

“ Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise :
He who defers this work from day to day,
Does on a river’s bank expecting stay
Till the whole stream that stopp’d him shall be gone,
Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall run on.”

Cowley was, I believe, the first poet that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure with the common heroic of ten syllables; and from him Dryden borrowed the practice, whether ornamental or licentious. He considered the verse of twelve syllables as elevated and majestic, and has, therefore, deviated into that measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being.

The author of the *Davideis* is commended by Dryden for having written it in couplets, because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroic poem; but this seems to have been known before by May and Sandys, the translators of the *Pharsalia* and the *Metamorphoses* .

In the *Davideis* are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of Virgil, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them. That this opinion is erroneous, may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because Virgil himself filled up one broken line

in the heat of recitation ; because in one the sense is now unfinished ; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a cæsura and a full-stop will equally effect.

Of triplets in his *Davideis* he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable ; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of Cromwell he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

After so much criticism on his poems, the essays which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural ; and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought or hard-laboured, but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his *Essay on the Classics* , that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted ; and that he has rivalled the ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastic fervour, that he brought to his poetic labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply ; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less ; that he was equally qualified for sprightly sallies and for lofty flights ; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and, instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side ; and that, if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise, from time to time, such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.*

* Cowley had designed also *A Discourse concerning Style* and *A Review of the Principles of the Primitive Christian Church* , but was prevented by death. A spurious piece, entitled *The Iron Age* , was published under his name, during his absence abroad, of which he speaks, in the preface to his poems, with some asperity and concern. "I wondered very much," says he, "how one who could be so foolish to write so ill verses should yet be so wise to set them forth as another man's rather than his own ; though perhaps he might have made a better choice, and not fathered the bastard upon such a person whose stock of reputation is, I fear, little enough for the maintenance of his own numerous legitimate offspring of that kind. It would have been much less injurious if it had pleased the author to put forth some of my writings under his own name, rather than his own under mine. He had been in that a more pardonable plagiarist, and had done less wrong by robbery than he does by such a bounty : for nobody can be justified by the imputation even of another's merit ; and our own coarse clothes are like to become us better than those of another man's, though never so rich. But these, to say the truth, were so beggarly that I myself was ashamed to wear them." This extract shows Mr. Cowley to be as great a wit in prose as he is in verse ; and Mr. Addison has observed, that of all the authors that ever wrote, none ever abounded so much in wit, according to Mr. Locke's true definition of it, as Mr. Cowley.

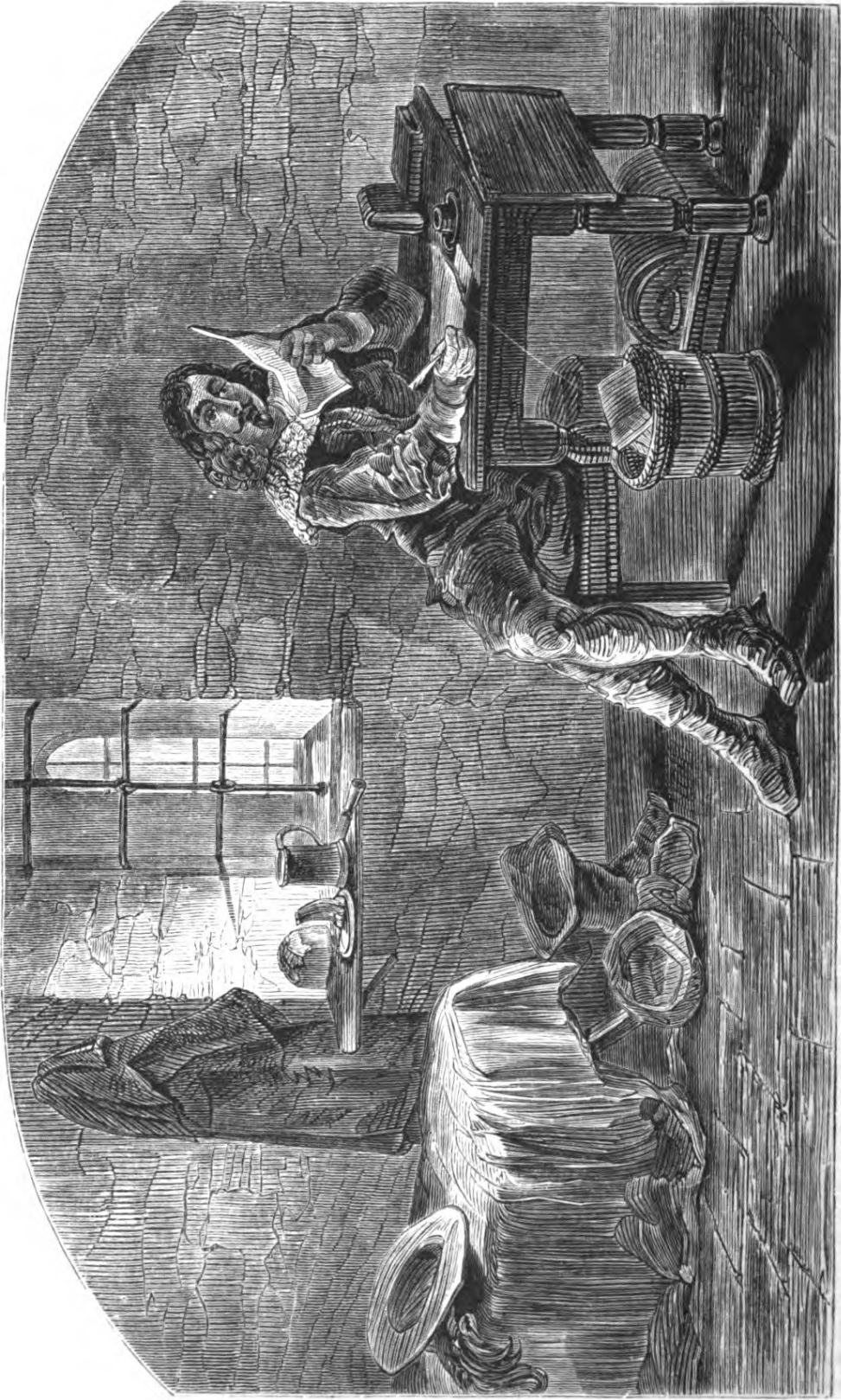


RICHARD LOVELACE.

(1618-1658.)

Richard Lovelace, the eldest son of Sir William Lovelace, of Woolwich, in Kent, was born in 1618, and entered on his studies at the Charterhouse, from whence he went to Oxford, and became a gentleman commoner of Gloucester Hall in 1634, being then sixteen years old. He was accounted the most amiable and beautiful person that ever eye beheld; of innate modesty, virtue, and courtly deportment, which made him then, but especially after, when he retired to the great city, much admired and adored by the female sex. In 1636, on the king and queen's visit to Oxford, he was, at the request of a great lady belonging to the queen, created master of arts. Although about two years' standing, his conversation and conduct on this occasion displayed his ingenuity and generous soul; and he became as much the idol of the male as he was before of the female sex.

On leaving the University, he attended the court in great splendour; and being patronised by Lord Goring (afterwards Earl of Norwich), was by him sent with the Scotch expedition in 1639, serving as an ensign. In the second expedition he obtained a captain's commission; and wrote a tragedy called *The Soldier*, which has never been printed, and the stage being soon after suppressed, was never acted. After the pacification at Berwick, he retired to Lovelace Place, in the parish of Bethersden, at Canterbury. His estate there and at Chart



LOVELACE COMPLETING HIS POEMS IN PRISON.

Halden, &c. is said by Wood to have been worth at least 500*l.* per annum, a handsome gentlemanly provision at that time. Such was the public estimation in which he was held, that he was made choice of by the country to deliver the Kentish petition for the restoration of the king, &c. to the House of Commons. He was for this obnoxious measure committed to the prison of the Gatehouse at Westminster: it was here that he wrote that most exquisite little song *To Althea from prison*, beginning, "When love with unconfined wings," which alone would have entitled him to an honourable niche in the temple of poetic fame. After an imprisonment of three or four months, he was released upon the enormous bail of 40,000*l.*, on condition that he was not to stir out of the lines of communication without a pass from the Speaker. His liberal spirit, in furnishing men with horses and arms for the credit of the king's cause; in relieving the necessities of ingenious men—scholars, musicians, and soldiers; in supporting and assisting his brothers Francis and William, who were engaged in the king's service; and the education of his younger brother Dudley,—had already impaired his fortune.

After the surrender of Oxford, in 1646, he formed a regiment for the service of the French king, commanded it himself, and was wounded at Dunkirk. Previous to this he had paid his addresses to a lady of great beauty and fortune, whose name was Lucy Sacheverell, whom he usually called *Lux Casta*: to his misfortune, the report of his death, of wounds received at Dunkirk, reaching her, and being believed, she was soon after married to another. It was principally to her, and in her praise, that his poems were written.

In 1648 he returned to England with his brother Dudley, then a captain in his regiment; and upon their arrival in London, they were both committed prisoners to Peterhouse, in that city, where he amused himself with arranging and committing his poems to the press. They were published in 1649; but many of them had previously been printed in musical publications, having been composed by Lawes, Gamble, and other eminent composers.

His liberality and loyalty had entirely consumed his estate; so that when, upon the death of the king, he was set at liberty, he found himself in the world without means of support, and reduced to such a hopeless condition, that, in the words of his biographer, "he grew very melancholy (which brought him into a consumption), became very poor in body and purse, was the object of charity, went in ragged clothes (whereas, when he was in his glory, he wore cloth of gold and silver), and mostly lodged in obscure and dirty places, more befitting the worst of beggars and poorest of servants," &c. In this sad reverse of fortune did this gallant and spirited being linger out his wretched existence until 1658, when death terminated his sufferings. He expired at very mean lodgings in Gunpowder-alley, near Shoe-lane, and was buried at the west end of St. Bride's church.

He appears to have been a finished gentleman in all respects; was well versed in the Greek and Latin poets; understood both the theory and practice of music, of which he seems to have been a fond and liberal patron. His common discourse was not only significant and witty, but incomparably graceful; and he is said to have commanded the love and respect of all who knew him.

Beside his poems, he was author of *The Soldier*, a play mentioned; *The Scholar*, a comedy composed at the age of 16, and afterwards acted with applause at the theatre in Salisbury-court, but never published. After his death, his brother Dudley collected his remaining poems, and published them under the general title of *Lucasta, or Posthume Poems*, in 1659; to which are affixed many poems on his death by eminent persons of the time.

WILLIAM CHAMBERLAYNE.

(1619-1689.)

William Chamberlayne, born, it is not known where, in 1619, after killing as many of the king's enemies as he could at the battle of Newbury, medicined first the lieges of the Commonwealth, and then the lieges of his most sacred majesty Charles II., at Shaftesbury, in Dorset; where, however, he does not appear to have been so successful in practice as he considered his merits to deserve; for he complains grievously of his poverty, and of his enforced isolation from the society of the wits of the day. He wrote one tragi-comedy, *Love's Comedy*, which was reproduced after the Restoration under the new title of *Wits led by the Nose, or the Poet's Revenge*; and *Pharonnida*, an heroic poem, which Langbaine says has nothing to recommend it; but which a critic of a different stamp—Mr. Campbell—considers “one of the most interesting stories that was ever told in verse. What Dr. Johnson said, unjustly, of Milton's *Comus*, that it was like gold hidden under a tub, may unfortunately be applied with too much propriety to *Pharonnida*. Never, perhaps, was so much beautiful design in poetry marred by infelicity of execution: his ruggedness of versification, abrupt transitions, and a style that is at once slovenly and quaint, perpetually interrupt us in enjoying the splendid figures and spirited passion of this romantic tablet, and make us catch them only by glimpses.” William Chamberlayne died January 11, 1689.

ALEXANDER BROME.

(1620.)

The turbulent reign of Charles I. was less unfavourable to poetry than might have been expected. In his happier days the monarch was a friend to learning and the arts; and it is seldom that the natural bias of wits is interrupted by the calamities of their country. Amidst civil convulsions and sanguinary contests, the Muses lent their aid to the hostile parties; and poetical ridicule, though the most harmless, was not the least commonly employed of those means by which they sought to exasperate each other. In this species of warfare, if the loyalists did not exhibit the highest abilities, they were enabled to take the wider range: they were men of gaiety approaching to licentiousness, and opposed psalms and hymns by ana-

creontics and sallies. Noted among them, Alexander Brome, born 1620, practised as an attorney in the Lord Mayor's court, and preserved his loyalty untainted through the whole of the civil wars and the Protectorship. He was the author of far the greatest part of



ALEXANDER BROME.

those songs and epigrams which were published in favour of the royalists and against the Rump ; and is supposed, indeed, to have materially contributed by his writings to the restoration of Charles II. These so effective sallies of his pen were collected together and published in 1660, under the title of *Songs and other Poems*. A second edition appeared in 1664, and a third in 1668. He had previously published, in 1651, a comedy entitled *The Cunning Lovers*. In 1666 he sent forth a translation of Horace by himself and others. He was also the editor of the dramatic works of his brother, Richard Brome.

ANDREW MARVELL.

(1620-1678.)

Andrew Marvell, the son of Andrew Marvell, minister and schoolmaster of Kingston-upon-Hull, was born there in the year 1620. His abilities being very great, he made early marked progress in learning ; so that he was admitted of Trinity College, Cambridge, December 14, 1633, where he had not been long before his studies were interrupted by the following accident :

Some Jesuits with whom he conversed, observing in him a genius beyond his years, used their utmost endeavours to proselytise him to

their faith, which they imagined they could more easily accomplish while he was yet young. They so far succeeded as to seduce him from the college and carry him to London, where, after some months' absence, his father found him in a bookseller's shop, and prevailed upon him to return to the college.

He afterwards pursued his studies with the most indefatigable application; and in the year 1638 took the degree of bachelor of arts, and the same year was admitted on the foundation of Trinity College.

About this time he lost his father, who was drowned in crossing the Humber, as he was accompanying the daughter of an intimate friend and her betrothed, on his way to marry them at Barrow, in Lincolnshire. The weather was quite calm when they entered the boat; but the old gentleman, it is said, having some presentiment of danger, yet courageously not yielding to it, threw his cane back on shore, and exclaimed with cheerful firmness, "Ho hoy, for Heaven!" A gale came suddenly on, and the whole party were drowned. The mother of the bride, thus rendered childless, sent for our author, and, by way of making all the return in her power, added considerably to his fortune. Upon this the plan of his education was enlarged, and he travelled through most of Europe. It is clear he had been at Rome from his poem entitled *Flecknoe*, in which he has described with great humour the poetaster Richard Flecknoe, from whom Dryden gave the name of *Mac-Flecknoe* to his satire against Shadwell. During his travels happened also another occasion of exercising his wit. In France he heard much of one Lancelot Joseph de Maniban, an abbot, who pretended to enter into the qualities of those he had never seen, and to prognosticate their good or bad fortune, from an inspection of their handwriting. This artist was lashed by our author in a poem written upon the spot, and addressed to him. We know no more of Mr. Marvell for several years, only that he spent some time at Constantinople, where he resided as secretary to the English embassy at that court.

In the year 1653 we find him returned to England, and employed by Oliver Cromwell in the business of tutor to one Mr. Dutton, as appears from an original letter of Marvell to the Protector. His first appearance in any public capacity at home was his being made assistant to Milton, as Latin secretary to the Protector, which, according to his own account, happened in the year 1657. "I never had," says he, "any, not the remotest relation to public matters, nor correspondence with the persons then predominant, until the year 1657; when, indeed, I entered into an employment for which I was not altogether improper, and which I considered to be the most innocent and inoffensive towards his majesty's affairs of any in that usurped and irregular government, to which all men were then exposed. And this I accordingly discharged without disobliging any one person, there having been opportunity and endeavours since his majesty's happy return to have discovered, had it been otherwise."

A little before the Restoration, he was chosen by his native town, Kingston-upon-Hull, to sit in that parliament which began at Westminster April the 25th, 1660, and afterwards for that which began May the 8th, 1661. In this station he acquitted himself so much to

the satisfaction of his constituents, that they allowed him a liberal salary all the time he continued to represent them, and that was to the time of his death. He regularly sent the particulars of every proceeding in the house to the heads of the town for which he was elected, and to these accounts added always his own opinion on each question. He seldom spoke in parliament, but had great influence without doors upon the members of both houses. Prince Rupert particularly paid the greatest regard to his counsels ; so great, that whenever he voted according to the sentiments of Marvell, which he often did, it was a saying with the opposite party, that " he had



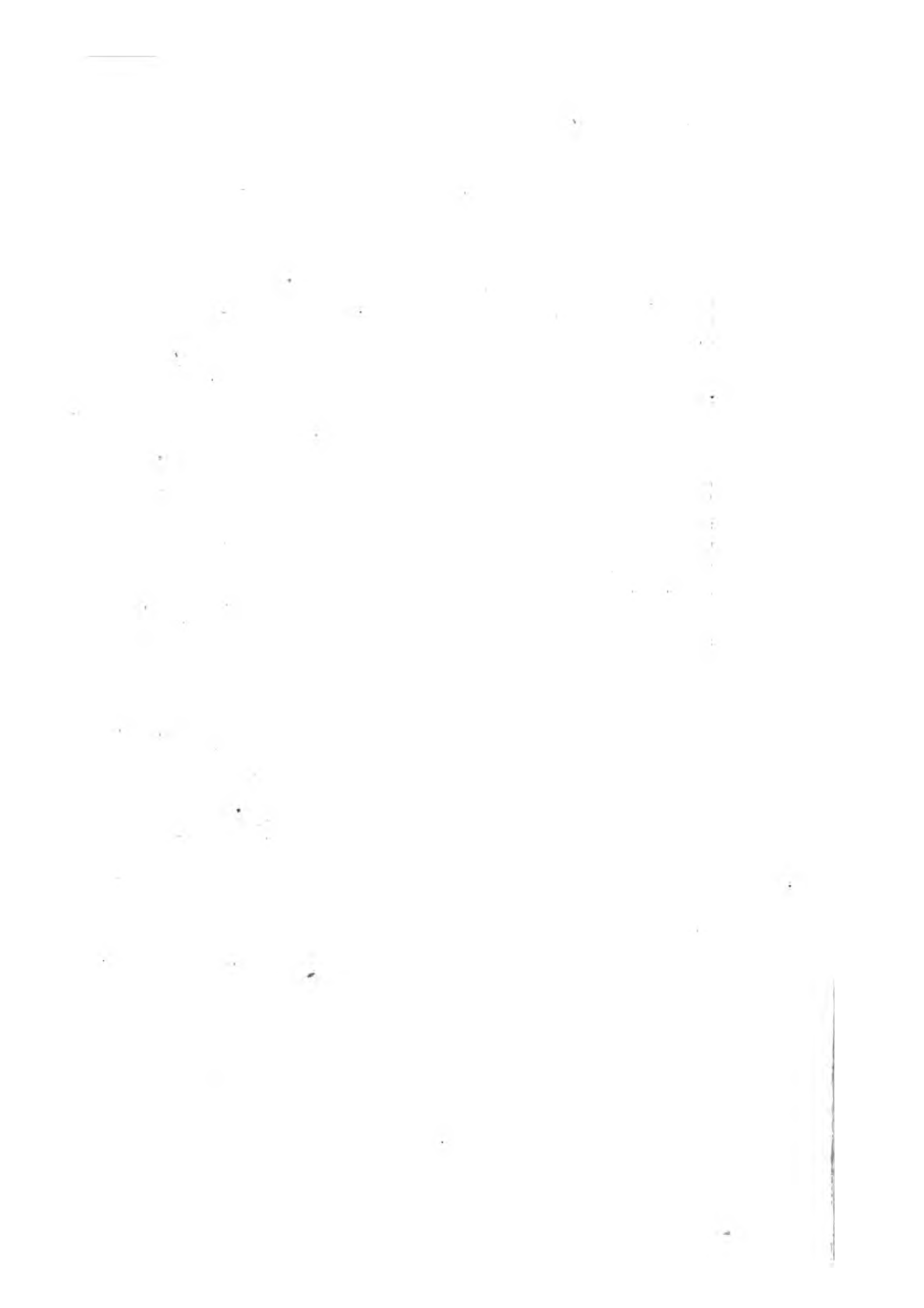
ANDREW MARVELL.

been with his tutor ;" and such was the intimacy between the prince and Marvell, that when the latter was obliged to abscond, to avoid falling a sacrifice to the indignation and malice of those enemies whom the honest sharpness of his pen had excited, the former frequently went to see him, disguised as a private person. For Marvell made himself so obnoxious to the governing party, by the opposition he gave them in his writings as well as in his actions, that his life was often threatened, and he was compelled to conceal himself.

The first attack he made with his pen was upon the following occasion : In the year 1672, Dr. Samuel Parker, a man of abilities and learning, but a furious partisan and virulent writer on the side of arbitrary government, published " Bishop Bramhall's Vindication of Himself and the rest of the Episcopal Clergy from the Presbyterian charge of Popery," &c., to which he added a preface of his own. This preface our author attacked in a piece called " The Rehearsal transposed ; or, Animadversions on a late Book entitled ' A Preface showing what Grounds there are of Fears and Jealousies of Popery :'

the second impression, with additions and amendments. London, printed by J. D. for the assigns of John Calvin and Theodore Beza, at the sign of the King's Indulgence, on the south side of the Lake Leman; and sold by N. Ponder, in Chancery-lane, 1672, in 8vo." The title of this piece is taken in part from the Duke of Buckingham's comedy called *The Rehearsal*; and as Dryden is ridiculed in the play under the name of Bayes, so Marvell has borrowed the same name for Dr. Parker, whom he has exposed with much strength of argument, and still more wit and humour. Parker answered Marvell in a letter entitled "A Reproof to the Rehearsal transposed;" to which Marvell replied in "The Rehearsal transposed: the second part. Occasioned by two letters: the first printed by a nameless author, entitled 'A Reproof,' &c.; the second letter left for me at a friend's house, dated November 3, 1673, subscribed J. G., and concluding with these words: 'If thou darest to print any lie or libel against Dr. Parker, by the eternal God I will cut thy throat.' Answered by Andrew Marvell, London, 1673." Marvell did not confine himself in these pieces to Parker's principles as they appear in the Preface and the Reproof; but he exposed and confuted likewise several things which the doctor had advanced in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, published in 1670, and in his *Defence of it* in 1671. Dr. Parker made no reply to Mr. Marvell's last piece. "He judged it more prudent," says Wood, an avowed enemy to Marvell, "to lay down the cudgels, than to enter the lists again with an untowardly combatant, so hugely well versed and experienced in the then but newly-refined art, though much in mode and fashion almost ever since, of sporting and jeering buffoonery. It was generally thought, however, by many of those who were otherwise favourers of Parker's cause, that the victory lay on Marvell's side; and it wrought this good effect on Parker, that for ever after it took down his high spirit." Several other writers fell with great fury and virulence upon Marvell; but Parker being considered as the principal, Marvell levelled his artillery chiefly at him, touching the others here and there occasionally only.

A few years after another divine fell under the strokes of Marvell's pen. In 1675 Dr. Herbert Croft, Bishop of Hereford, published, without his name, a discourse entitled "The Naked Truth; or, the True State of the Primitive Church. By an Humble Moderator." This was immediately answered by several persons, and among the rest by Dr. Francis Turner, Master of St. John's College in Cambridge, in a book called "Animadversions upon a late Pamphlet entitled The Naked Truth," &c. This animadverter being against moderation, which the author of "Naked Truth" had written his book to inculcate, provoked Marvell, who was a lover of it, to take him to task; and he did so in "Mr. Smirke, or the Divine in Mode; being certain Annotations upon the Animadversions on the Naked Truth, together with a short Historical Essay concerning General Councils, Creeds, and Impositions in matters of Religion. By Andreas Rivetus, junior: anagrammatised, Res nuda veritas. 1676, 4to." The "Historical Essay" was afterwards printed by itself in folio. The last work of our author's, which was published in his lifetime, was "An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in





ANDREW MARVELL REFUSING THE BRIBE OFFERED BY LORD DANBY.

England; more particularly from the long prorogation of November 1675, ending the 15th of February, 1676, till the last meeting of parliament the 16th of July, 1677 : 1678, folio ;" and reprinted in State Tracts in 1689. In this piece our author, having imputed the Dutch war to the corruption of the court, asserts, that the papists, and particularly the French, were the true springs of all the councils at this time; and these, and several other aspersions upon the king and ministry, occasioned the following advertisement to be published in the Gazette: "Whereas there have been lately printed and published several seditious and scandalous libels against the proceedings of both houses of parliament, and other his majesty's courts of justice, to the dishonour of his majesty's government and the hazard of public peace; these are to give notice, that what person soever shall discover unto one of the secretaries of state the printer, publisher, author, or hander to the press of any of the said libels, so that full evidence may be made thereof to a jury, without mentioning the informer (especially one libel entitled 'An Account of the Growth of Popery,' &c., and another called 'A Seasonable Argument to all the Grand Juries'), the discoverer shall be rewarded as follows: he shall have fifty pounds for such discovery as aforesaid of the printer or publisher of it from the press, and for the hander of it to the press one hundred pounds," &c.

Mr. Marvell, by thus opposing the ministry and their measures, created for himself many enemies, as we have already observed, and made himself very obnoxious to the government; notwithstanding which, King Charles II. took great delight in his conversation, and tried all means to win him over to his side, but in vain, nothing being ever sufficient to shake his resolution. There were many instances of his firmness in resisting the offers of the court; but he was proof against all temptations. The king having one night entertained him, sent the Lord Treasurer Danby the next morning to find out his lodgings, which were then up two pair of stairs in one of the little courts in the Strand. He was busy writing when the treasurer opened the door abruptly upon him; upon which, surprised at so unexpected a visitor, Marvell told his lordship, "he believed he had mistaken his way." Lord Danby replied, "Not now I have found Marvell;" telling him, that he came with a message from his majesty, which was to know what his majesty could do to serve him; to which Marvell replied, that "it was not in his majesty's power to serve him." Coming to a serious explanation, our author told the treasurer, "that he knew full well the nature of courts, having been in many, and that whoever is distinguished by the favour of the prince is always expected to vote in his interest." Lord Danby told him, "that his majesty, from the just sense he had of his merit alone, desired to know whether there was any place at court he could be pleased with." To which Mr. Marvell replied, "that he could not with honour accept the offer; since if he did, he must either be ungrateful to the king in voting against him, or false to his country in giving in to the measures of the court. The only favour therefore which he begged of his majesty was, that he would esteem him as faithful a subject as any he had, and more truly in his interest by refusing his offers, than he could have been by embracing them."

He humorously illustrated his independence by calling his servant to bear witness that he had dined three days successively on a shoulder of mutton. The Lord Danby finding no arguments would make the least impression, told him, "that the king had ordered him one thousand pounds, which he hoped he would receive, till he could think of something farther to ask his majesty." This last offer he rejected with the same steadiness of mind as the first; though, as soon as the treasurer was gone, he was forced to borrow a guinea of a friend.

As the most powerful allurements of riches and honour could never seduce him to relinquish the interest of his country, so not even the greatest dangers could deter him from pursuing it. In a private letter to a friend from Highgate, in which he mentions the insuperable hatred of his foes to him, and their design of murdering him, he has these words: "*Præterea magis occidere metuo quam occidi, non quod vitam tanti æstimem, sed ne imparatus moriar.*" (Besides, I am more apprehensive of killing than of being killed; not that I value life so much, but that I may not die unprepared.)

Mr. Marvell died in the fifty-eighth year of his age, on the 16th of August, 1678, not without the strongest suspicions of being poisoned; for he was always very temperate, and of an healthful and strong constitution to the last. He was interred in the church of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields; and ten years after, the town of Kingston-upon-Hull, to testify its grateful remembrance of his honest services, collected a sum of money to erect a monument over him, and had an epitaph drawn up to be engraved on it; but the clergyman of the parish forbad both the inscription and monument to be placed in that church. Mr. Wood tells us, that in his conversation Marvell was very modest, and of few words; and Mr. Cooke, his biographer, observes, that he was very reserved among those whom he did not well know, but a most delightful and improving companion among his friends.

The completest edition we have of Marvell's works is that edited by Captain Thompson (1776), in three quarto volumes; but (says Campbell) "a better edition of his writings is due to his literary and patriotic character. He was the champion of Milton's living reputation, and the victorious supporter of free principles against Bishop Parker, when that venal apostate to bigotry promulgated in his Ecclesiastical Polity, that 'it is more necessary to set a severe government over men's consciences or religious persuasions, than over their vices and immoralities.' The humour and eloquence of Marvell's prose tracts were admired, and probably imitated, by Swift. In playful exuberance of figure he sometimes resembles Burke. For consistency of principles it is not easy to find his parallel."

GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

(1627-1687.)

George Villiers was the son of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and little more than an infant when his father was murdered.

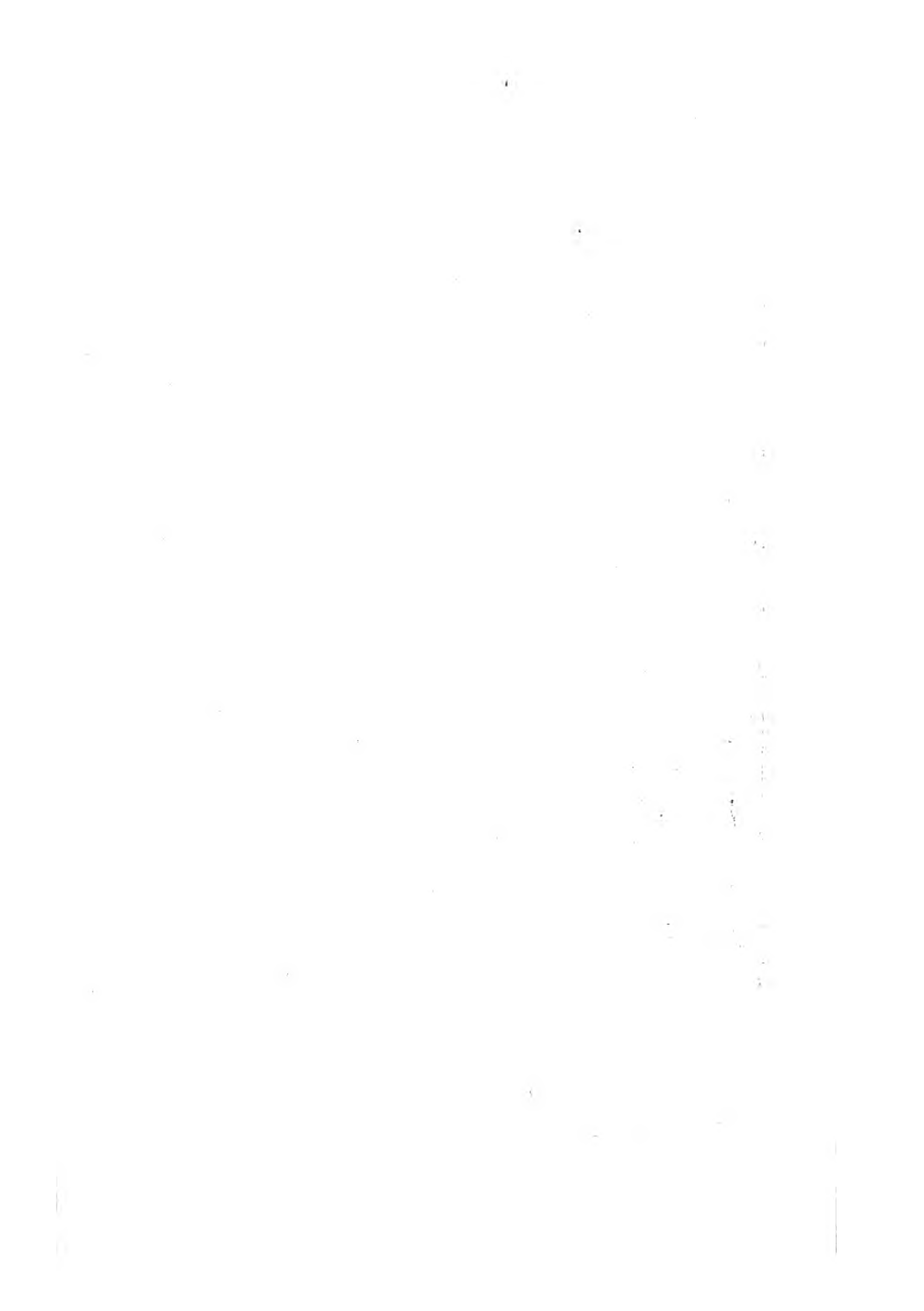
He was born at Wallingford House, in Westminster, 30th of January, 1627; and christened 14th of February, by Dr. Laud, then Bishop of Bath and Wells. After he had been carefully trained under several tutors, he was sent to Cambridge for a time, and then travelled into foreign countries. Upon his return, which was after the breaking out of the civil wars, he went to Oxford to the king, and entered of Christ Church. When the king's cause declined, he attended Prince Charles, with whom he went afterwards to Scotland, and was present at the battle of Worcester in 1651; whence he escaped and got beyond sea, and was made knight of the garter. Afterwards he stole over to England, made his court to Lady Mary, the daughter and heiress of Lord Fairfax, and married her the 19th of November, 1657; by which policy he obtained all or most of his estate, which before was lost to him. After the Restoration, he was computed to be possessed of 20,000*l.* per annum, and, by the royal favour, placed in reach of the first posts and offices of the kingdom. He became one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, one of the privy council, lord

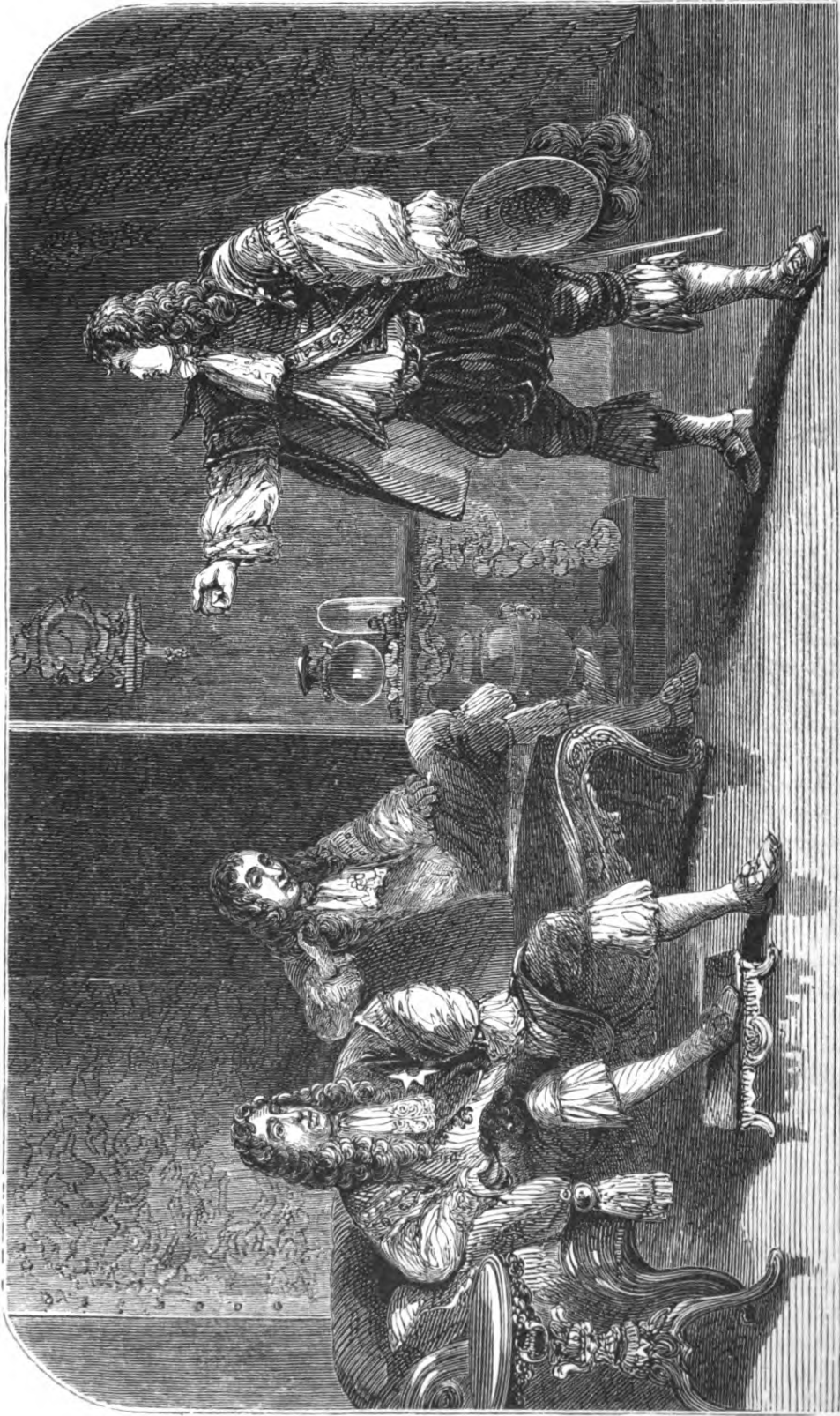


GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

lieutenant of Yorkshire, and at length master of the horse. Yet he had no wisdom, no prudence, no steadiness, and could, in short, have been of use in no court but such a one as Charles the Second's, where wit, and humour, and buffoonery, and immorality, and irreligion, made up the great business of the king and ministry. Thus the main employment of Buckingham was to ridicule and mimic, at which he had an excellent talent; and it is well known that he used equally to ridicule the witty Charles and his grave chancellor Clarendon,

whose solemnity doubtless must have been a fine subject for him. At length, however, he grew mischievous as well as witty ; and much as he had obtained the king's favour, by promoting every thing to gratify that monarch's passions, he afterwards lost it, and fell into disgrace. "The duke's being denied the post of president of the north, was (says Carte) probably the reason of his disaffection to the king. Just before the recess of the parliament, one Dr. John Heydon was taken up for treasonable practices, in sowing a sedition in the navy, and engaging persons in a conspiracy to seize the Tower. The man was a pretender to great skill in astrology, but had lost much of his reputation by prognosticating the hanging of Oliver to his son Richard Cromwell and Thurloe, who came to him in disguise for the calculation of nativities, being dressed like distressed cavaliers. He was for that put into prison, and continued in confinement sixteen months, whilst Cromwell outlived the prediction four years. This insignificant fellow was mighty great with the Duke of Buckingham, who, notwithstanding the vanity of the art, and the notorious ignorance of the professor of it, made him cast not only his own, but the king's nativity ; a matter of dangerous curiosity, and condemned by a statute which could only be said to be antiquated, because it had not for a long time been put in execution. This fellow he had likewise employed, among others, to excite the seamen to mutiny, as he had given money to other rogues to put on jackets to personate seamen, and to go about the country begging in that garb, and exclaiming for want of pay, while the people, oppressed with taxes, were cheated of their money by the great officers of the crown. Heydon pretended to have been in all the duke's secrets for near four years past, and that he had been all that time designing against the king and his government ; that his grace thought the present season favourable for the execution of his design, and had his agents at work in the navy and in the kingdom, to ripen the general discontents of the people, and dispose them to action ; that he had been importuned by him to head the first party he could get together, and engage in an insurrection, the duke declaring his readiness to appear and join in the undertaking as soon as the affair was begun. Some to whom Heydon unbosomed himself, and had been employed by him to carry letters to the Duke of Buckingham, discovered the design. Heydon was taken up, and a serjeant-at-arms sent with a warrant by his majesty's express order to take up the duke, who, having defended his house by force, for some time at least, found means to escape. The king knew Buckingham to be capable of the blackest designs, and was highly incensed at him for his conduct last sessions, and insinuating that spirit into the Commons which had been so much to the detriment of the public service. He could not forbear expressing himself with more bitterness against the duke than was ever dropped from him upon any other occasion. When he was solicited in his behalf, he frankly said, that he had been the cause of continuing the war ; for the Dutch would have made a very low submission, had the parliament continued their first vigorous vote of supplying him ; but the duke's cabals had lessened his interest both abroad and at home, with regard to the support of the war. In consequence of this resentment, the king put him out of the privy council, bed-chamber,





BUCKINGHAM THREATENED BY THE EARL OF OSSERY IN THE PRESENCE OF KING CHARLES.

and lieutenancy of York, ordering him likewise to be struck out of all commissions. His grace absconding, a proclamation was issued out requiring his appearance and surrender of himself by a certain day."

Notwithstanding this appearance of resentment against him, yet Charles, who was far from being of an implacable temper, took Buckingham again into favour, after he had made an humble submission. He was restored to his place in the council and in the bed-chamber in 1667, and seemed perfectly confirmed in the good graces of the king, who was perhaps too much charmed with his wit to consider him an enemy.

In the year 1670, the duke was supposed to be concerned in Blood's attempt on the life of the Duke of Ormond. This scheme was to have conveyed that nobleman to Tyburn, and there to have hanged him; for which purpose he was taken out of his coach in St. James's-street, and carried away by Blood and his son beyond Devonshire House, Piccadilly, but then rescued. Blood afterwards endeavoured to steal the crown out of the Tower, but was seized; however, he was not only pardoned, but had an estate of five hundred pounds a-year given him in Ireland, and admitted into an intimacy with the king. Carte supposes that no man was more likely to encourage Blood in this attempt than the Duke of Buckingham, who, he says, was the most profligate man of his time, and had so little honour in him that he would engage in any scheme to gratify an irregular passion. The Duke of Ormond had acted with some severity against him, when he was detected in the attempt of unhinging the government, which had excited so much resentment as to vent itself in this manner. Carte likewise charges the Duchess of Cleveland with conspiring against Ormond, but has given no reasons why he thinks she instigated the attempt. The duchess was cousin to the Duke of Buckingham; but it appears, in the annals of gallantry of those times, that she never loved him, nor is it probable she engaged with him in so dangerous a scheme.

"That Buckingham was a conspirator against Ormond (says Carte) cannot well be questioned after the following relation, which I had from a gentleman (Robert Lesly, of Glaslough, in the county of Monaghan, esquire) whose veracity and memory none that knew him will ever doubt, who received it from the mouth of Dr. Turner, Bishop of Ely. The Earl of Ossory came in one day, not long after the affair, and seeing the Duke of Buckingham standing by the king, his colour rose, and he spoke to this effect: 'My lord, I know well that you are at the bottom of this late attempt of Blood's upon my father; and therefore I give you fair warning, if my father comes to a violent end by sword or pistol, or the more secret way of poison, I shall not be at a loss to know the first author of it: I shall consider you as the assassin; I shall treat you as such; and wherever I meet you, I shall pistol you, though you stood behind the king's chair; and I tell it you in his majesty's presence, that you may be sure I shall keep my word.'"

In June 1671 he was installed chancellor of Cambridge; and the same year was sent ambassador to the king of France, who, being much pleased with his person, and more with his errand, entertained

him very nobly for several days together, and in conclusion gave him a sword and belt, set with pearls and diamonds, to the value of forty thousand pistoles. He was afterwards sent to that king at Utrecht in June 1672, with Lord Arlington and Lord Halifax. He was one of the "Cabal" at Whitehall; and in the beginning of the session of Parliament in 1673, endeavoured to cast the odium of the Dutch war from himself upon Lord Arlington, another of the "Cabal." In 1674 he resigned the chancellorship of the University of Cambridge, and about this time became a great favourer of the nonconformists. In 1676, he, with Lords Salisbury, Shaftesbury, and Wharton, were committed to the Tower, for contempt in refusing to retract what they had said the day before; namely, when the duke, immediately after the king had ended his speech to both houses, endeavoured to show, from law and reason, that the long prorogation was null, and that parliament was consequently dissolved. Upon the breaking out of the popish plot, he was very zealous for the prosecution of the persons accused, and showed great opposition to the measures of the court. He died the 16th of April, 1687, after having spent almost his whole estate. Wood tells us that he died at his house in Yorkshire; but Mr. Pope represents him as having died at an inn, in very wretched circumstances. He was interred in Henry the Seventh's Chapel, at Westminster, near his father.

Of his dramatic works, the most memorable by far is *The Rehearsal*. This comedy was written in the years 1663 and 1664, and was ready for production on the stage, when the plague breaking out in 1665, put a stop to every thing; and it was laid by for several years, and did not appear till 1671. During this interval many plays came forth, written in heroic rhyme; and on the death of Sir William Davenant in 1669, Dryden, a new laureate, appeared on the stage, much admired and highly applauded. This moved the duke to make considerable alterations in his play, and to change the name of his hero from Bilboa, by whom was meant Sir Robert Howard, to Bayes, in whom Dryden was designed. The play was received with vast applause, and obtained a prodigious character, which it has supported ever since. A consummate judge (Shaftesbury, in his *Characteristics*) makes it a standard in ridicule. "We may observe," says he, "that in our own nation, the most successful criticism or method of refutation is that which borders most on the manner of the earliest Greek comedy. The highly-rated burlesque poem, written on the subject of our religious controversies in the last age, is a sufficient token of this kind. And that justly-admired piece of comic wit (*The Rehearsal*) given us some time after by an author of the highest quality, has furnished our best wits in all their controversies, even in religion and politics, as well as in the affairs of wit and learning, with the most effectual and entertaining method of exposing folly, pedantry, false reason, and ill writing." Dryden, in revenge for this ridicule and "unmerciful exposing," as Bishop Burnet calls it, satirised the duke, under the name of Zimri, in his poem called *Absalom and Achitophel*; and the portrait is admirable, being allowed, says Wood, by all who knew or ever heard of the duke, to have been drawn exactly from the life. This is it:

" Some of their chiefs were princes of the land ;
 In the first rank of these did Zimri stand.
 A man so various, that he seem'd to be
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome :
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
 Was every thing by starts, and nothing long ;
 But in the course of one revolving moon
 Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon ;
 Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
 Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
 Blest madman, who could every hour employ
 With something new to wish or to enjoy.
 Railing and praising were his usual themes ;
 And both (to show his judgment) in extremes :
 So over violent or over civil,
 That every man with him was God or Devil.
 In squandering wealth was his peculiar art :
 Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
 Beggard by fools, whom still he found too late ;
 He had his jest, but they had his estate.
 He laugh'd himself from court ; then sought relief
 By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief ;
 For, spite of him, the weight of business fell
 On Absalom and wise Achitophel.
 Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft,
 He left not faction, but of that was left."

Besides *The Rehearsal*, the duke was the author of some other dramatic pieces : as, *The Chances*, a comedy altered from Fletcher ; *The Battle of Sedgmoor*, a farce ; *The Militant Couple, or the Husband may thank Himself*, a fragment. He was the author of some prose works, among which were *An Essay upon Reason and Religion*, in a letter to Nevile Pain, Esq. ; *On Human Reason*, addressed to Martin Clifford, Esq. ; *An Account of a Conference between the Duke and Father Fitzgerald, whom King James sent to convert his Grace in his Sickness* ; and *A Short Discourse upon the Reasonableness of Men's having a Religion or Worship of God*. This last was printed in 1685, and passed through three editions. The duke wrote also several small poems, complimentary and satirical. One is entitled *The Lost Mistress, a Complaint against the Countess of* — Shrewsbury, as is supposed, whose lord he killed in a duel on her account, and who is said to have held the duke's horse, disguised like a page, during the combat.

 RICHARD FLECKNOE.

(Born circa 1630.)

Richard Flecknoe, more remarkable for having given a name to a satire of Dryden's than for all his own works, is said to have been originally a Jesuit, and to have had connexions in consequence with some persons of high distinction in London who were of the Roman Catholic persuasion. When the Revolution was completed, Dryden, having some time before turned Papist, became disqualified for holding his place of poet-laureate. It was accordingly taken from him and conferred on Flecknoe, a man to whom, it seems, he had already a

confirmed aversion; and this occasioned him to write a satire against him named *Mac Flecknoe*, which is as severe and as well written a satire as any in our language. Flecknoe wrote some plays, but could never get more than one of them acted. His comedy called *Damoiselles à la mode*, printed in 1667, and addressed to the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, the author designed for the theatre; and he was not a little chagrined at the players for refusing it.

His other dramatic pieces are, *Ermina, or the Chaste Lady; Love's Dominion*; and *The Marriage of Oceanus and Britannia*. The second of these performances was printed in 1654, and dedicated to the Lady Elizabeth Claypole, to whom the author insinuates the use of plays, and begs her mediation to gain a license for acting them. He says this play is full of excellent morality, and is written as a pattern of the reformed stage. This *Love's Dominion* was afterwards republished in 1664, under the title of *Love's Kingdom*, and dedicated to the Marquis of Newcastle. The author, with great pains, got it then to be acted; but it had the misfortune to be damned by the audience, whom Flecknoe styles judges without judgment. He owns that his play wants much of the ornaments of the stage; but that, he says, may be easily supplied by a lively imagination. Our author's other works consist of epigrams and enigmas. There is a book of his writing called *The Diarium, or Journal, divided into twelve jornadas, in burlesque verse*. Dryden thus characterises Flecknoe's works:—

“In prose and verse was own'd without dispute
Through all the realms of nonsense absolute.”

We know not when Flecknoe died.

CHARLES COTTON.

(1630-1687.)

This poet was the son of Charles Cotton, esq., of Beresford, Staffordshire, a man of considerable fortune and high accomplishments. He was born 28th of April, 1630, and educated at Cambridge. At the University he is said to have studied the Greek and Roman classics with distinguished success, and to have become a perfect master of the French and Italian languages. It does not appear, however, that he took any degree, or studied with a view to any learned profession; but after his residence at Cambridge, travelled into France and other parts of the continent. On his return, he resided during the greater part of his life at the family seat at Beresford.

In 1656, when he was in his twenty-sixth year, he married Isabella, daughter of Sir Thomas Hutchinson, of Owthorp, Nottinghamshire, a distant relation; and took her home to his father's house, as he had no other establishment. On his father's death in 1658, he succeeded to the family estate, encumbered by many imprudences, from which it does not appear that he was ever able to relieve it.

From this time, almost all we have of his life is comprised in a list of his various publications, which were chiefly translations from the French, or imitations from the writers of that nation. In 1663

he published De Vaix's *Moral Philosophy of the Stoics*. In 1665 he translated the *Horace* of Corneille. In 1670 he published a translation of the *Life of the Duke d'Espernon*; and about the same time, his affairs being much embarrassed, he obtained a captain's commission in the army, and went over to Ireland. Some adventures he met with



CHARLES COTTON.

on this occasion gave rise to his first burlesque poem, entitled *A Voyage to Ireland*. Of his more serious progress in the army, or when or why he left it, we have no account.

In 1674 he published the translation of the *Fair One of Tunis*, a French novel; and of the Commentaries of Blaise de Montluc, marshal of France; and in 1675, *The Planter's Manual*, being instructions for cultivating all sorts of fruit-trees. In 1678 appeared his most celebrated burlesque performance, entitled *Scarronides, or Virgil Travestie*; a translation of the first and fourth books of Virgil's *Æneis*, in English burlesque. To this was afterwards added "*Burlesque upon Burlesque, or the Scoffer scoffed*;" being some of Lucan's Dialogues newly put into English fustian."

In 1681 he published *The Wonders of the Peak*, an original poem; which, however, proved that he had not much talent for the descriptive branch of poetry. His next employment was a translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, which, with many inaccuracies, admirably conveys the spirit and sense of the original.

The only remaining production of our author is connected with his private history. One of his favourite recreations was angling, which led to an intimacy between him and honest Izaak Walton, whom he

called his father. His house was situated on the banks of the Dove, a fine trout-stream, which divides the counties of Derby and Stafford. Here he built a little fishing-house dedicated to anglers, *piscatoribus sacrum*; over the door of which the initials of Cotton and Walton were united in a cipher. His partnership with Walton induced him to write *Instructions how to angle for a Trout or Grayling in a clear Stream*, which have since been published as a second part or supplement to Walton's *Complete Angler*.



COTTON'S FISHING-HOUSE.

At what time his first wife died is not recorded. His second was Mary, Countess-dowager of Ardglass, widow of Wingfield, Lord Cromwell, second Earl of Ardglass, who died in 1649. She must, therefore, have been considerably older than our poet; but she had a jointure of 1500*l.* a-year, which, although it afforded him many comforts, was secured from his imprudent management. He died in the parish of St. James's, Westminster, in 1687; and, it would appear, in a state of insolvency, as Elizabeth Bludworth, his principal creditor, administered to his effects, his widow and children having previously renounced the administration.

The leading features of Cotton's character may be gathered from the few circumstances we have of his life, and from the general tendency of his works. Like his father, he was regardless of pecuniary concerns, a lively and agreeable companion, a man of wit and pleasure, and frequently involved in difficulties, from which he did not always escape without some loss of character. It has been reported that on one occasion he offended an aunt or grandmother by introducing in his *Virgil Travestie* the mention of a singular ruff which she wore; and that this provoked the lady to revoke a clause in her will, by which she had bequeathed an estate to him. But the story is probably not authentic. In his poems we find a most affectionate epitaph on his aunt, Mrs. Ann Stanhope.

His fate as a poet has been very singular. The *Virgil Travestie*, and his other burlesque performances, have been perpetuated by at least fifteen editions; while his poems, published in 1689, in which he displays taste and elegance, were never reprinted until 1810.

SIR WILLIAM DENNY.

(Born circa 1630.)

This gentleman wrote, in 1653, a poem entitled *Pelecanicidium, or the Christian Adviser against Self-murder; together with a Guide, and the Pilgrim's Pass to the Land of the Living*. The author, in his preface, says:—"Mine ears do tingle to hear so many sad relations, as ever since March last, concerning several persons of divers rank and quality, inhabiting within and about so eminent a city as late-famed London, that have made away and murdered themselves. I chose rather the quickness of verse than more prolix prose (with God's blessing first implored), to disenchant the possessed; following divinely-inspired David's example to quiet Saul with the melody of his harp."

JOHN DRYDEN.*

(1632-1701.)

Of the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they revered his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

John Dryden was born August 9, 1632, at Aldwinkle near Oundle; the son of Erasmus Dryden of Titchmersh, who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Cumberland.

He is reported by Derrick to have inherited from his father an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given. Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was indeed sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true and partly erroneous.

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the

* Johnson.

king's scholars by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge.*



DRYDEN.

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings, composed with great ambition of such conceits, as notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the small-pox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems, at last exalts them into stars, and says,

“No comet need foretell his change drew on,
Whose corpse might seem a constellation.”

At the University he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects or public occasions. He probably considered that he who proposed to be an author ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship in the college. Why he was excluded cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess; had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the life of Plutarch

* He went off to Trinity College, and was admitted to a bachelor's degree in January 1654, and in 1657 was made master of arts.

he mentions his education in the college with gratitude ; but in a prologue at Oxford he has these lines :

“ Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own mother-university :
Thebes did his rude, unknowing youth engage ;
He chooses Athens in his riper age.”

It was not till the death of Cromwell, in 1658, that he became a public candidate for fame, by publishing *Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Protector*; which, compared with the verses of Sprat and Waller on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

When the king was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion or his profession, and published “*Astrea Redux*, a poem on the happy restoration and return of his most sacred majesty King Charles the Second.”

The reproach of inconstancy was on this occasion shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace : if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The same year he praised the new king in a second poem on his restoration. In the *Astrea* was the line,

“ An horrid stillness first invades the ear,
And in that silence we a tempest fear ;”

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. Silence is indeed mere privation, and so considered cannot invade : but privation likewise certainly is darkness, and probably cold ; yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that darkness hinders him from his work, or that cold has killed the plants. Death is also privation ; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to death a dart and the power of striking ?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty ; for even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication ; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same ; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was, some years afterwards, altered and revived ; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates of some, those of others may be inferred ; and thus it may be collected, that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage : compelled undoubtedly by necessity ; for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years : not, indeed, without the competition of rivals, who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of critics, which was often poignant

and often just ; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the public.

His first piece was a comedy called *The Wild Gallant*. He began with no happy auguries ; for his performance was so much disapproved that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the critics.

I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatic performances ; it will be fit, however, to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity, intrinsic or concomitant ; for the composition and fate of eight-and-twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he published *The Rival Ladies*, which he dedicated to the Earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and as a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatic rhyme, which he defends in his dedication, with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing, for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in *The Indian Queen*, a tragedy in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The Indian Emperor was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to Howard's *Indian Queen*. Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills distributed at the door ; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in *The Rehearsal*, where Bayes tells how many reams he has printed, to instil into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of night, which Rymer has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the Restoration, as it seems, by the Earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre ; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatic rhyme, in confutation of the preface to *The Duke of Lerma*, in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667 he published *Annus Mirabilis, the Year of Wonders*, which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a declaration ; and writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance : " I am satisfied that, as the prince and

general (Rupert and Monk) are incomparably the best subjects I ever had, so what I have written on them is much better than what I have performed on any other. As I have endeavoured to adorn my poem with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution."

It is written in quatrains, or heroic stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the *Gondibert* of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestic that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the incumbrances, increased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without appearing to have sufficiently considered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be, in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained. Dryden, in his dedication to the Earl of Orrery, had defended dramatic rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself in his *Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry*; Howard, in his preface to *The Duke of Lerma*, animadverted on the vindication; and Dryden, in a preface to *The Indian Emperor*, replied to the animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play, but was added when it was afterwards reprinted; and as *The Duke of Lerma* did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that, in 1668,* he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureate. The salary of the laureate had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the First, from an hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniences of life.

The same year he published his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, an elegant and instructive dialogue, in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the Duke of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his *Dialogues upon Medals*.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen (1668), is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines, very justly, that of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

* He did not obtain the laurel till August 18, 1670; but Mr. Malone inform us the patent had a retrospect, and the salary commenced from the midsummer after Davenant's death.

Sir Martin Marr-all (1668) is a comedy, published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes, that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing, however, that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

The Tempest (1670) is an alteration of Shakespeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant; "whom," says he, "I found of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him in which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy; and as his fancy was quick, so likewise were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other; and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakespeare's monster Caliban is added a sister monster, Sycorax; and a woman who, in the original play, had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of *The Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by Elkanah Settle; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, with engravings and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and, for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court ladies.

Dryden could not now repress those emotions which he called indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character: "He's an animal of a most deplored understanding, without reading and conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn, his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. The little talent which he has is fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought; but, with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world, 'tis commonly still-born; so that, for want of learning and elocution, he will never be able to express any thing either naturally or justly."

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticism prevails over brutal fury. He proceeds: "He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing nonsense for them. Fools they will be in spite of him. His king, his two empresses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay his hero, have all a certain natural cast of the father; their folly was born and bred in them, and something of the Elkanah will be visible."

This is Dryden's general declamation. I will not withhold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone through the first act, he says, "To conclude this act with the most rumbling piece of nonsense spoken yet:

'To flattering lightning our feign'd smiles conform,
Which, back'd with thunder, do but gild a storm.'

“Conform a smile to lightning, make a smile imitate lightning, and ‘flattering lightning:’ lightning sure is a threatening thing. And this lightning must ‘gild a storm.’ Now if I must conform my smiles to lightning, then my smiles must ‘gild a storm’ too. To gild with smiles is a new invention of gilding. And ‘gild a storm’ by being ‘backed with thunder!’ Thunder is part of the storm; so one part of the storm must help to gild another part, and help by backing; as if a man would gild a thing the better for being backed, or having a load upon his back. So that here is gilding by conforming, smiling, lightning, backing, and thundering. The whole is as if I should say thus: ‘I will make my counterfeit smiles look like a flattering stone-horse, which, being backed with a trooper, does but gild the battle.’ I am mistaken if nonsense is not here pretty thick sown. Sure the poet writ these two lines a-board some smack in a storm, and, being sea-sick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once.”

Here is, perhaps, a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden’s, has never been thought worthy of republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely:

“ ‘Whene’er she bleeds,
He no severer a damnation needs,
That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,
Than the infection that attends that breath.’

“ ‘That attends that breath.’ The poet is at breath again; breath can never ‘scape him; and here he brings in a breath that must be infectious with pronouncing a sentence. And this sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party bleeds; that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after; and the pronouncing of this sentence will be infectious,—that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man’s self. The whole is thus: When she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her. What hodge-podge does he make here! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff. But this is but a taste to stay the stomach; we shall have a more plentiful mess presently.

“Now to dish up the poet’s broth that I promised:

‘For when we’re dead, and our freed souls enlarg’d,
Of nature’s grosser burden we’re discharg’d;
Then, gentle as a happy lover’s sigh,
Like wand’ring meteors through the air we’ll fly;
And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,
We’ll steal into our cruel fathers’ breasts,
There read their soul and track each passion’s sphere,
See how Revenge moves there, Ambition here;
And in their orbs view the dark characters
Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars.
We’ll blot out all those hideous draughts, and write
Pure and white forms; then with a radiant light
Their breasts encircle, till their passions be
Gentle as Nature in its infancy;

Till, soften'd by our charms, their furies cease,
 And their revenge resolves into a peace.
 Thus by our death their quarrel ends ;
 Whom living we made foes, dead we'll make friends.'

“If this be not a very liberal mess, I will refer myself to the stomach of any moderate guest ; and a rare mess it is, far excelling any Westminster white-broth. It is a kind of giblet-porridge, made of the giblets of a couple of young geese, stodged full of meteors, orbs, spheres, track, hideous draughts, dark characters, white forms, and radiant lights : designed not only to please appetite and indulge luxury, but it is also physical, being an approved medicine to purge cholera ; for it is propounded by Morena as a receipt to cure their fathers of their choleric humours, and were it written in characters as barbarous as the words, might very well pass for a doctor's bill. To conclude : it is porridge ; 'tis a receipt ; 'tis a pig with a pudding in the belly ; 'tis I know not what ; for certainly never any one that pretended to write sense had the impudence before to put such stuff as this into the mouths of those that were to speak it before an audience whom he did not take to be all fools, and after that to print it too, and expose it to the examination of the world. But let us see what we can make of this stuff :

‘For when we're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd.’

Here he tells us what it is to be dead : it is to have ‘our freed souls’ set free. Now if to have a soul set free is to be dead, then to have a ‘freed soul’ set free is to have a dead man die.

‘Then, gentle as a happy lover's sigh.’

They two like one sigh, and that one sigh like two wandering meteors,

‘— Shall fly through the air.’

That is, they shall mount above like falling stars, or else they shall skip like two Jacks with lanterns, or Will with a whisp, and Madge with a candle. ‘And in their airy walk steal into their cruel fathers' breasts like subtle guests.’ So that ‘their fathers' breasts’ must be in an ‘airy walk,’—an airy walk of a flier ! ‘And there they will read their souls, and track the spheres of their passions.’ That is, these walking fliers : Jack with a lantern, &c. will put on his spectacles and fall a-reading souls, and put on his pumps and fall a-tracking of spheres ; so that he will read and run, walk and fly at the same time ! Oh, nimble Jack ! ‘Then he will see how revenge here, how ambition there,’—(the birds will hop about),—‘and then view the dark characters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars in their orbs.’ Track the characters to their forms ! Oh, rare sport for Jack ! Never was place so full of game as these breasts ! You cannot stir but flush a sphere, start a character, or unkennel an orb !”

Settle's is said to have been the first play embellished with sculptures. Those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries, however, to ease his pain by venting his malice in a parody.

“The poet has not only been so imprudent to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to defend it with an epistle ; like a saucy booth-keeper, that, when he had put a cheat upon the people, would wrangle and

fight with any that would not like it, or would offer to discover it : for which arrogance our poet receives this correction ; and to jerk him a little the sharper, I will not transpose his verse, but by the help of his own words transnonsense sense, that by my stuff people may judge the better what his is :

‘ Great boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done,
From press and plates, in fleets do homeward run ;
And, in ridiculous and humble pride,
Their course in ballad-singers’ baskets guide,
Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,
From the gay shows thy dainty sculptures make.
Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield, —
A senseless tale, with flatt’ring fustian fill’d.
No grain of sense does in one line appear,
Thy words big bulks of boisterous bombast bear.
With noise they move, and from players’ mouths rebound,
When their tongues dance to thy words’ empty sound ;
By thee inspir’d, the rumbling verses roll,
As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul :
And with that soul they seem taught duty too ;
To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,
As if it would thy worthless worth enhance,
To th’ lowest rank of fops thy praise advance,
To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear :
Their loud claps echo to the theatre.
From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,
Fame sings thy praise with mouths of logger-heads.
With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,
’Tis clapt by choirs of empty-headed cits,
Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,
As men in whispers send loud noise to Heaven.’

“ Thus I have daubed him with his own puddle : and now we are come from aboard his dancing, masking, rebounding, breathing fleet ; and, as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense.”

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced between rage and terror ; rage with little provocation, and terror with little danger. To see the highest mind thus levelled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered that minds are not levelled in their powers, but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

An Evening’s Love, or the Mock Astrologer, a comedy, 1671, is dedicated to the illustrious Duke of Newcastle ; whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover, but a partner of his studies. It is displeasing to think how many names once celebrated are since forgotten. Of Newcastle’s works nothing is now known but his *Treatise on Horsemanship*.

The preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the fathers of the English drama. Shakespeare’s plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of Cinthio ; those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish stories ; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of

some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism, he alleges a favourable expression of the king: "He only desired that they who accuse me of thefts, would steal him plays like mine:" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannic Love, or the Virgin Martyr, 1672, was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were at length, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he has taken care to let the reader know that it was contrived and written in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse; or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before *The Conquest of Granada*, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of poesy; and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that the precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted; for to leave that employment altogether to the clergy, were to forget that religion was first taught in verse, which the laziness or dulness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose." Thus foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not show his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of *The Conquest of Granada*, 1672, are written with a seeming determination to glut the public with dramatic wonders; to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantic heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause; and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity and majestic madness, such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often revered, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the epilogue to the second part of *The Conquest of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets who have written in the dramatic, epic, or lyric way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatic writers, he has given us in his preface and in this postscript something equivalent: but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shows faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the critics that

attacked it was Martin Clifford, to whom Sprat addressed *The Life of Cowley*, with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instructions from his remarks. But let honest credulity beware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. Percy, were at last obtained; and that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first letter his observation is only general: "You do live," says he, "in as much ignorance and darkness as you did in the womb; your writings are like a Jack-of-all-trades' shop,—they have a variety, but nothing of value; and if thou art not the dullest plant-animal that ever the earth produced, all that I have conversed with are strangely mistaken in thee."

In the second he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles than from Ancient Pistol. "But I am," says he, "strangely mistaken if I have not seen this very Almanzor of yours in some disguise about this town, and passing under another name. Prythee tell me true, was not this Huffcap once the Indian Emperor? and at another time did he not call himself Maximin? Was not Lyndaraxa once called Almeria? I mean, under Montezuma the Indian Emperor. I protest and vow they are either the same, or so alike that I cannot, for my heart, distinguish one from the other. You are therefore a strange unconscionable thief: thou art not content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

Now was Settle's time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes his reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the same description of the ships in *The Indian Emperor*: of which, however, he does not deny the excellence; but intends to show, that by studied misconstruction, every thing may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

" 'Fate after him below with pain did move,
And victory could scarce keep pace above.'

"These two lines, if he can show me any sense or thought in, or any thing but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe every word in his observations on Morocco sense.

"In *The Empress of Morocco* were these lines:

'I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,
Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there;'

on which Dryden made this remark: 'I believe our learned author takes a sphere for a country. The sphere of Morocco! as if Morocco were the globe of earth and water. But a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave,' &c. So sphere must not be sense, unless it relates to a circular motion about a globe, in which sense the astronomers use it. I would desire him to expound those lines in *Granada*:

'I'll to the turrets of the palace go,
 And add new fire to those that fight below.
 Thence, Hero-like, with torches by my side
 (Far be the omen though), my love I'll guide.
 No, like his better fortune I'll appear,
 With open arms, loose veil, and flowing hair,
 Just flying forward from my rolling sphere.'

I wonder, if he be so strict, how he dares make so bold with sphere himself, and be so critical in other men's writings. Fortune is fancied standing on a globe, not on a sphere, as he told us in the first act.

"Because 'Elkanah's similes are the most unlike things to what they are compared in the world,' I'll venture to start a simile in his *Annus Mirabilis*. He gives this poetical description of the ship called the 'London':

"'The goodly London in her gallant trim,
 The Phœnix-daughter of the vanquish'd old,
 Like a rich bride does on the ocean swim,
 And on her shadow rides in floating gold.
 Her flag aloft spread ruffling in the wind,
 And sanguine streamers seem'd the flood to fire:
 The weaver, charm'd with what his loom design'd,
 Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.
 With roomy decks her guns of mighty strength,
 Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow laves,
 Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,
 She seems a sea-wasp flying in the waves.'

"What a wonderful pother is here, to make all these poetical beautifications of a ship; that is, a phoenix in the first stanza, and but a wasp in the last: nay, to make his humble comparison of a wasp more ridiculous, he does not say it flies upon the waves as nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it seem'd a wasp. But our author at the writing of this was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to floating palaces: a comparison to the purpose was a perfection he did not arrive to till the *Indian Emperor's* days. But perhaps his similitude has more in it than we imagine: this ship had a great many guns in her, and they, put all together, made the sting in the wasp's tail; for this is all the reason I can guess why it seem'd a wasp. But because we will allow him all we can to help out, let it be a phoenix sea-wasp; and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy.

"It had been much more to his purpose, if he had designed to render the senseless play little, to have searched for some such pedantry as this:

'Two ifs scarce make one possibility.
 If justice will take all, and nothing give,
 Justice, methinks, is not distributive.
 To die or kill you is the alternative.
 Rather than take your life, I will not live.'

"Observe how prettily our author chops logic in heroic verse. Three such fustian canting words as distributive, alternative, and two ifs, no man but himself would have come within the noise of. But he's a man of general learning, and all comes into his play.

“ ’Twould have done well too if he could have met with the rant or two worth the observation : such as,

‘ Move swiftly, sun, and fly a lover’s pace ;
Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.’

But surely the sun, whether he flies a lover’s or not a lover’s pace, leaves weeks and months, nay years too, behind him in his race.

“ Poor Robin, or any other of the philo-mathematics, would have given him satisfaction in the point.

‘ If I could kill thee now, thy fate’s so low,
That I must stoop, ere I can give the blow.
But mine is fixed so far above thy crown,
That all thy men,
Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.’

“ Now where that is Almanzor’s fate is fixed, I cannot guess ; but wherever it is, I believe Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla’s subjects piled upon one another might not pull down his fate so well as without piling : besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that if Almanzor had told him piling his men upon his back might do the feat, he would scarcely bear such a weight for the pleasure of the exploit. But it is a huff, and let Abdalla do it if he dare.

‘ The people like a headlong torrent go,
And every dam they break or overflow.
But, unoppos’d, they either lose their force,
Or wind in volumes to their former course.’

“ A very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, I take it, let them wind never so much, can never return to their former course, unless he can suppose that fountains can go upwards, which is impossible ; nay more, in the foregoing page he tells us so too—a trick of a very unfaithful memory :

‘ But can no more than fountains upward flow ;’

which of a torrent, which signifies a rapid stream, is much more impossible. Besides, if he goes to quibble, and say that it is possible by art water may be made return, and the same water run twice in one and the same channel, then he quite confutes what he says : for it is by being opposed that it runs into its former course ; for all engines that make water so return, do it by compulsion and opposition. Or if he means a headlong torrent for a tide, which would be ridiculous, yet they do not wind in volumes, but come foreright back (if their upright lies straight to their former course), and that by opposition of the sea-water that drives them back again.

“ And for fancy, when he lights of any thing like it, ’tis a wonder if it be not borrowed. As here, for example of, I find this fanciful thought in his *Ann. Mirab.* :

‘ Old father Thames rais’d up his reverend head,
But fear’d the fate of Simoeis would return ;
Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed,
And shrunk his waters back into his urn.’

“ This is stolen from Cowley’s *Davideis*, p. 9 :

‘ Swift Jordan started, and straight backward fled,
Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.’

And when the Spaniards their assault begin,
At once beat those without and those within.'

"This Almanzor speaks of himself; and sure for one man to conquer an army within the city and another without the city at once, is something difficult: but this flight is pardonable to some we meet with in *Granada*. Osmin, speaking of Almanzor,

'Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,
Made a just battle ere the bodies join'd.'

"Pray what does this honourable person mean by a tempest that outrides the wind; a tempest that outrides itself? To suppose a tempest without wind, is as bad as supposing a man to walk without feet; for if he supposes the tempest to be something distinct from the wind, yet, as being the effect of wind only, to come before the cause is a little preposterous; so that, if he takes it one way or if he takes it the other, those two ifs will scarcely make one possibility." Enough of Settle.

Marriage à la Mode (1673) is a comedy dedicated to the Earl of Rochester, whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The Earl of Rochester, therefore, was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to *Juvenal*.

The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy (1673), was driven off the stage, against the opinion, as the author says, of the best judges. It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

Amboyna (1673) is a tissue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than *The Virgin Martyr*; though the author thought not fit either ostentatiously or mournfully to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war, in 1673.

Troilus and Cressida (1679) is a play altered from Shakespeare; but so altered, that, even in Langbaine's opinion, "the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on "the grounds of criticism in tragedy," to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The Spanish Friar (1681) is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the public.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comic and tragic scenes; and that it is necessary to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and

the fatigue of toilsome passions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, is but half a writer for the stage."

The Duke of Guise, a tragedy (1683) written in conjunction with Lee, as *Ædipus* had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he happened," says Dryden, "to claim the promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite. Two-thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half, or somewhat more, of the fifth."

This was a play written professedly for the party of the Duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controversy.

Albion and Albanus (1685) is a musical drama or opera, written, like *The Duke of Guise*, against the republicans. With what success it was performed I have not found.*

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man (1675) is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroic rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvell, who writes thus to Milton:

"Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
Jealous I was less some less skilful hand
(Such as disquiet always what is well,
And by ill-imitating would excel),
Might hence presume the whole creation's day
To change in scenes, and show it in a play."

It is another of his hasty productions, for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the Princess of Modena, then Duchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroic verse and poetic license; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted cannot be overpassed: "I was induced to it in my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad without my knowledge or consent; and every one gathering new faults, it became at length

* Downes says it was performed on a very unlucky day, viz. that on which the Duke of Monmouth landed in the West; and he intimates, that the consternation into which the kingdom was thrown by this event was a reason why it was performed but six times, and was in general ill received.

a libel against me." These copies, as they gathered faults, were apparently manuscript ; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and need not seek an apology in falsehood ; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no pain in writing the preface.

Aureng Zebe (1676) is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince than reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their critics upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and disliked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned ; for the remoteness of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford the same conveniences to a poet as length of time.

This play is written in rhyme, and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial ; but the dialogue is often domestic, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated ; and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses and a critic. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epic poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to *Juvenal*. "The design," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too near the present times nor too distant from them."

All for Love, or the World well lost (1678), a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself ;" the rest were given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character ; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantic omnipotence of love, he has recommended as laudable and worthy of imitation that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play, the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topics of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and sprightliness.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper (1680), is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence was, in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to ; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town."

Edipus (1679) is a tragedy formed, by Dryden and Lee in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

Don Sebastian (1690) is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatic performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantic dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet, as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comic; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged: the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatic poetry.

Amphytrion is a comedy derived from Plautus and Molière. The dedication is dated October 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance; and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes (1692) is a tragedy only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in the *Guardian*, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you that you are no hero."

King Arthur (1691) is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited.* In the dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the Duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and *Arthur* was exhibited no more.

His last drama was *Love Triumphant*, a tragi-comedy. In his dedication to the Earl of Salisbury he mentions "the lowness of fortune to which he has voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatic labours with ill success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces, it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the

* It was set to music by Purcell, and well received, and was long a favourite entertainment.

theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had, for a long time, but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southern; and the first that had three was Rowe. There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play, therefore, seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English language, and which he, who had considered with great accuracy the principles of writing, was able to distribute copiously as occasions arose. By these dissertations the public judgment must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till, being asked to write one for Mr. Southern, he demanded three: "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you; but the players have had my goods too cheap."

Though he declares that in his own opinion his genius was not dramatic, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year, 1678,* he published *All for Love*, *Assignment*, two parts of the *Conquest of Granada*, *Sir Martin Marr-all*, and the *State of Innocence*; six complete plays, with a celebrity of performance which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shows such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as, since the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has ever possessed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had critics to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

Buckingham characterised him, in 1671, by the name of Bayes in *The Rehearsal*: a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler, the author of *Hudibras*; Martin Clifford, of the Charterhouse; and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time and the number of hands employed upon this performance; in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not

* Dr. Johnson in this assertion was misled by Langbaine. Only one of these plays appeared in 1678. Nor were there more than three in any one year.

possible now to find any thing that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history, is tedious and troublesome; it requires, indeed, no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The Rehearsal was played in 1671,* and yet is represented as ridiculing passages in *The Conquest of Granada*† and *Assignation*, which were not published till 1678; in *Marriage à la Mode*, published in 1673; and in *Tyrannic Love*, in 1677. These contradictions show how rashly satire is applied.‡

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who, in the first draught, was characterised by the name of Bilboa. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in *The Rehearsal*, still remaining, which seems to have related originally to Davenant. Bayes hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise: how this affected Dryden does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. Bayes probably imitated the dress and mimicked the manner of Dryden; the cant words, which are so often in his mouth, may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases or customary exclamations. Bayes, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in *The Rehearsal* by which malice was gratified: the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps Prince Volscius in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the Duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The Earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the public that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation; his *Empress of Morocco*, having first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest: the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgment contrary to that of the town:" perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

* It was published in 1672.

† *The Conquest of Granada* was published in 1672; *The Assignation* in 1673; *Marriage à la Mode* in the same year; and *Tyrannic Love* in 1672.

‡ There is no contradiction but what arises from Dr. Johnson's having copied the erroneous dates assigned to these plays by Langbaine.

Neither critics nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past, or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamant confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence: for though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left in that perplexity which it generally produces a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer from about thirty-five to sixty-three may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight-and-twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for in 1679 a paper of verses, called *An Essay on Satire*, was shown about in manuscript; by which the Earl of Rochester, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked, that, as was supposed (for the actors were never discovered), they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be waylaid and beaten. This incident is mentioned by the Duke of Buckinghamshire (the true writer) in his *Art of Poetry*, where he says of Dryden:

“ Though prais’d and beaten for another’s rhymes,
His own deserve as great applause sometimes.”

His reputation in time was such, that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance; and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the *Life of Polybius* to the translation of Sir Henry Sheers; and those of Lucian and Plutarch to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English *Tacitus* he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred, that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the public, and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the Epistles of Ovid being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which

must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holiday had fixed the judgment of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw, Denham, Waller, and Cowley had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politics with poetry, in the memorable satire called *Absalom and Achitophel*, written against the faction which, by Lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the Duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of public principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me he had not known it equalled but by *Sacheverell's Trial*.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decipher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed, in their turns, to the shafts of satire; which, though neither so well pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called *Dryden's Satire on his Muse*; ascribed—though, as Pope says, falsely—to Somers, who was afterwards chancellor. The poem, whosoever it was, has much virulence and some sprightliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* had two answers, now both forgotten; one called *Azaria and Hushai*, the other *Absalom senior*. Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes *Absalom senior* to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. *Azaria and Hushai* was, as Wood says, imputed to him; though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions.*

The same year he published *The Medal*, of which the subject is a medal struck on Lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered *Absalom*, appeared with equal courage in opposition to *The Medal*, and published an answer called *The Medal reversed*; with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man, whose works

* *Azaria and Hushai* was written by Samuel Pordage, a dramatic writer of that time.

have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium (of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same) to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone :

“ Here lies the rival and antagonist of Dryden.”

Settle was, for his rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden, under the name of Doeg, in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*; and was, perhaps, for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyric on the virtues of Judge Jefferies; and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles or settle the dates would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that, as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topic.

Soon after the accession of King James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to Popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir Kenelm Digby embraced Popery; the two Reynolds's reciprocally converted one another;* and Chillingworth himself was awhile so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties or such motives as may either unite them to the church of Rome or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man who perhaps never inquired why he was a Protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a Papist, overborne by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shows only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and, as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was the then state of Popery: every artifice was used to show it in its fairest form;

* Dr. John Reynolds, who lived temp. James I., was at first a zealous Papist, and his brother William as earnest a Protestant; but, by mutual disputation, each converted the other.

and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right than virtue to maintain it. But inquiries into the heart are not for man: we must now leave him to his Judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles II.; and, what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting Popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's *History of the League*, which he published with a large introduction. His name is likewise prefixed to the English life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud; which, however, seems not to have had much effect, for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate Varillas's *History of Heresies*; and when Burnet published remarks upon it, to have written an *Answer*;* upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

“ I have been informed from England, that a gentleman, who is famous both for poetry and several other things, had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's history; but that, as soon as my Reflections appeared, he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his *Answer*, he will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the hinds and panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as an author; and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to choose one of the worst. It is true he had somewhat to sink from in matter of wit; but as for his morals, it is scarcely possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months' labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he

* This is a mistake.

would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varrillas's favour or in mine. It is true Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagances; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment."

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtlety and harmony united are still feeble when opposed to truth.

Actuated, therefore, by zeal for Rome or hope of fame, he published *The Hind and Panther*; a poem in which the church of Rome, figured by the milk-white hind, defends her tenets against the church of England, represented by the panther, a beast beautiful but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking theology appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *City Mouse and Country Mouse*, a parody written by Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man at such a time was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the first two were called *Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his Religion*; and the third, *The Reasons of Mr. Hains the Player's Conversion and Re-conversion*. The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the public attention.

In the first two dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatic poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Hains.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a merry fellow, and therefore laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery; so that his performances have little intrinsic value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden "little Bayes." Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that wore as many cow-hides upon his shield as would have furnished half the king's army with shoe-leather." Being asked whether he had seen the *Hind and Panther*, Crites answers: "Seen it, Mr. Bayes! Why, I can stir nowhere but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunkmaker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too,

Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise *The Worth of a Penny* to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in stewed apples and penny custards."

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. "To secure one's chastity," says Bayes, "little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which to a wise man is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatic person to forbid seeing *The Cheats* and *The Committee*, or for my lord mayor and aldermen to be interdicted the sight of *The London Cuckolds*." This is the general strain; and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: "You began," says Crites to Bayes, "a very different religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpation of the hind."

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity; predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of Popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A Papist now could be no longer laureate. The revenue which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of Og. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed, but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Flecknoe*;* of which the *Dunciad*, as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorset, when, as chamberlain, he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary. This is no romantic or incredible act of generosity; a hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a public infliction, and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of King James he had written nothing for the stage,† being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might, perhaps, have been less lavish

* Published 4th of October, 1682.

† *Albion and Albionus* must, however, be excepted.

without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry; he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the public, or perhaps expecting a second Revolution, he produced *Don Sebastian* in 1690, and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the public, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface, in the form of a dedication to Lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epic poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epic as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms; of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprises and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of Pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes (and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken), with this incurable defect, that, in a contest between heaven and hell, we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war, justice can be but on one side; and to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers and enlarged our language; and might perhaps have contributed, by pleasing instructions, to rectify our opinions and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a public stipend, was not likely in these times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; "only," says he, "the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

In 1694 he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's *Art of Painting* into English prose. The

preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697 he published his version of the works of Virgil; and that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the Lord Clifford, the Georgics to the Earl of Chesterfield, and the *Æneid* to the Earl of Mulgrave. This economy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, styled by Pope "the fairest of critics," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his *Fables*, published in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract, now in the hands of Mr. Tonson, by which he obliged himself, in consideration of 300*l.*, to finish for the press 10,000 verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose *Equivoque*, a poem of only 346 lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it?

Part of his book of fables is the first *Iliad* in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the 1st of May, 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died, in Gerard-street, of a mortification in his leg.

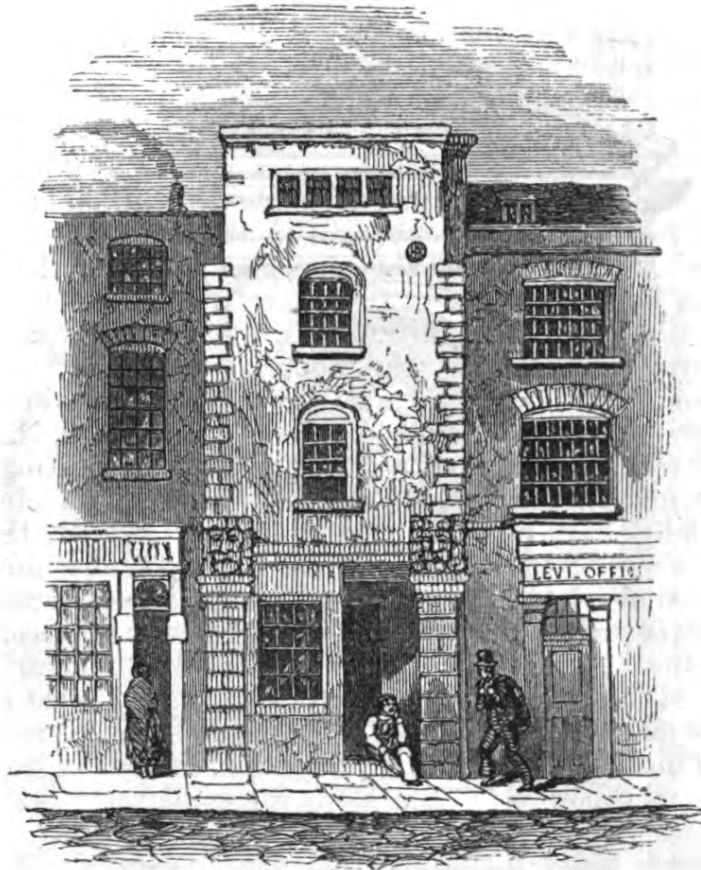
There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary:

"Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the Lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was 40*l.*, with all the other abbey-fees. The Lord Halifax likewise sent to the Lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow 500*l.* on a monument in the abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the Saturday following, the company came; the corpse was put into a velvet hearse, and eighteen mourning-coaches filled with company attended. When they were just ready to move, the Lord Jefferies, son of the Lord Chancellor Jefferies, with some of his rakish companions, coming by, asked whose funeral it was; and being told Mr. Dryden's, he said: 'What, shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner! No, gentlemen! let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my lady's consent to let me have

the honour of his interment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will bestow 1000*l.* on a monument in the abbey for him.' The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the Bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the Lord Halifax's generous design (they both having, out of respect to the family, enjoined the Lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for their own expense), readily came out of their coaches, and attended Lord Jefferies up to the lady's bedside, who was then sick. He repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company, by his desire, kneeled also; and the lady, being under a sudden surprise, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech, she cried, 'No, no.' 'Enough, gentlemen,' replied he; 'my lady is very good; she says, 'Go, go.' She repeated her former words with all her strength, but in vain, for her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and the Lord Jefferies ordered the hearsemen to carry the corpse to Mr. Russel's, an undertaker in Cheapside, and leave it there till he should send orders for the embalmment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and Lady Elizabeth and her son remained inconsolable. The next day Mr. Charles Dryden waited on the Lord Halifax and the Bishop, to excuse his mother and himself by relating the real truth. But neither his lordship nor the bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the abbey lighted, the ground opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting for some time without any corpse to bury. The undertaker, after three days' expectance of orders for embalming, without receiving any, waited on the Lord Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, that those who observed the orders of a drunken frolic deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. Upon this, the undertaker waited upon the Lady Elizabeth and her son, and threatened to bring the corpse home, and set it before the door. They desired a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden wrote a handsome letter to the Lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer: 'That he knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the Lord Halifax and the Bishop of Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any thing in it. In this distress Dr. Garth sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example. At last a day, about three weeks after Mr. Dryden's decease, was appointed for the interment. Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration, at the college, over the corpse, which was attended to the abbey by a numerous train of coaches. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a challenge to the Lord Jefferies, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself; but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him; which so incensed him, that he resolved, since his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet and fight off-hand, though with all the rules

of honour; which his lordship hearing, left the town; and Mr. Charles Dryden could never have the satisfaction of meeting him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar, and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused.*



DRYDEN'S HOUSE, FETTER-LANE.

Supposing the story true, we may remark, that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this

* An earlier account of Dryden's funeral than that above cited, though without the circumstances that preceded it, is given by Edward Ward, who, in his *London Spy*, published in 1706, relates, that on the occasion there was a performance of solemn music at the College; and that at the procession, which himself saw, standing at the end of Chancery-lane, Fleet-street, there was a concert of hautboys and trumpets. The day of Dryden's interment, he says, was Monday the 13th of May; which, according to Johnson, was twelve days after his decease, and shows how long his funeral was in suspense. Ward knew not that the expense of it was defrayed by subscription, but compliments Lord Jefferies for so pious an undertaking. He also says, that the cause of Dryden's death was an inflammation in his toe, occasioned by the flesh growing over the nail, which being neglected produced a mortification in his leg.

time a young drunken lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be jostled out of the way and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into an house, he would be sent roughly away. And what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not for such an accident have withdrawn their contributions.*



DRYDEN'S MONUMENT.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the Duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed

* In the register of the College of Physicians is the following entry: "May 3, 1700. Comitii Censorii ordinariis. At the request of several persons of quality, that Mr. Dryden might be carried from the College of Physicians to be interred at Westminster, it was unanimously granted by the president and censors."

This entry is not calculated to afford any credit to the narrative concerning Lord Jefferies.

by Congreve to his dramatic works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the Duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.*

He married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter to the Earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to Lord Somers, not very honourable to either party. By her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to Pope Clement XI.; and visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor. John was author of a comedy called *The Husband his own Cuckold*. He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order.

It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "Mr. Dryden," says Congreve, "had personal qualities to challenge love and esteem from all who were truly acquainted with him. He was of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those who had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and as it were diffident, in his advances to others: he had that in nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was therefore less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrepresentations. He was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals or superiors. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of every thing that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his communication was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him; and full as ready and patient to admit the reprehensions of others in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shown in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship, indeed, were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be

* "J. Dryden, natus Aug. 9, 1631; mortuus Maii 1, 1701. Johannes Sheffield, Dux Buckinghamiensis, fecit."

collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known in its whole extent the dignity of his own character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception not submissive but indignant, with such deference of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness; he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers: but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural: the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame: but he who excels has a right to teach; and he whose judgment is incontestable may without usurpation examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose sprightly sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers made him say,

“Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
To writing bred, I knew not what to say.”

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. “His thoughts,” when he wrote, “flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to choose and which to reject.” Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk; yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in

familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the Duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was, indeed, reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great: and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiors is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation: but if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness and abject adulation: but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity. Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatic immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and servility of hyperbolic adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Aphra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expenses, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him whom he wished to court on the morrow new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastic homage; and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment. It is, indeed, not certain that on these occasions his judgment much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission; that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment,

or a querulous murmur of distress. His works are under-valued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen." To his critics he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by showing that he was affected by their censures; and gives lasting importance to names which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart: his complaints are for the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his pages with an adverse name. He condescended, indeed, to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to critics, no poetical attacks or altercations are to be included; they are like other poems,—effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface of his *Fables*. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horse-play of his raillery;" and asserts that "in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures: but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says, with great calmness and candour, "I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality, or profaneness, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance." Yet, as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and, indeed, of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which, "he thinks a little hard upon his fanatic patrons;" and charges him with borrowing the plan of his *Arthur* from the preface to Juvenal, "though he had," says he, "the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel."

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a *Satire upon Wit*; in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be re-coined before it is current, and appoints masters of assay, who shall reject all that is light or debased.

" 'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss:
Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be.
Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay
And wicked mixture shall be purg'd away!"

Thus stands the passage in the last edition ; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus :

“ But what remains will be so pure, ’twill bear
Th’ examination of the most severe.”

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue ; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not : a short extract will be sufficient. “ He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood. If I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary : I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.

“ As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy.”

Dryden indeed discovered, in many of his writings, an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the *Georgics* “ the holy butcher.” The translation is not indeed ridiculous ; but Trapp’s anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest ; as if any reproach of the follies of paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden’s dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination ; but he denies, in the preface to his *Fables*, that he ever designed to enter into the church ; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion ; and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of critics was not the worst of his vexations ; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of

merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigencies. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expenses no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the laureate, to which King James added the office of historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of reveling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great; and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:

"I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esq., or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses which the said John Dryden, Esq. is to deliver to me, Jacob Tonson, when finished; whereof seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby further promise, and engage myself, to make up the said sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, Esq., his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

"In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 20th day of March, 1698-9.

"JACOB TONSON.

"Sealed and delivered, being first duly stamped, pursuant to the acts of parliament for that purpose, in the presence of

"BEN. PORTLOCK,
"WILL. CONGREVE."

"March 24, 1698.

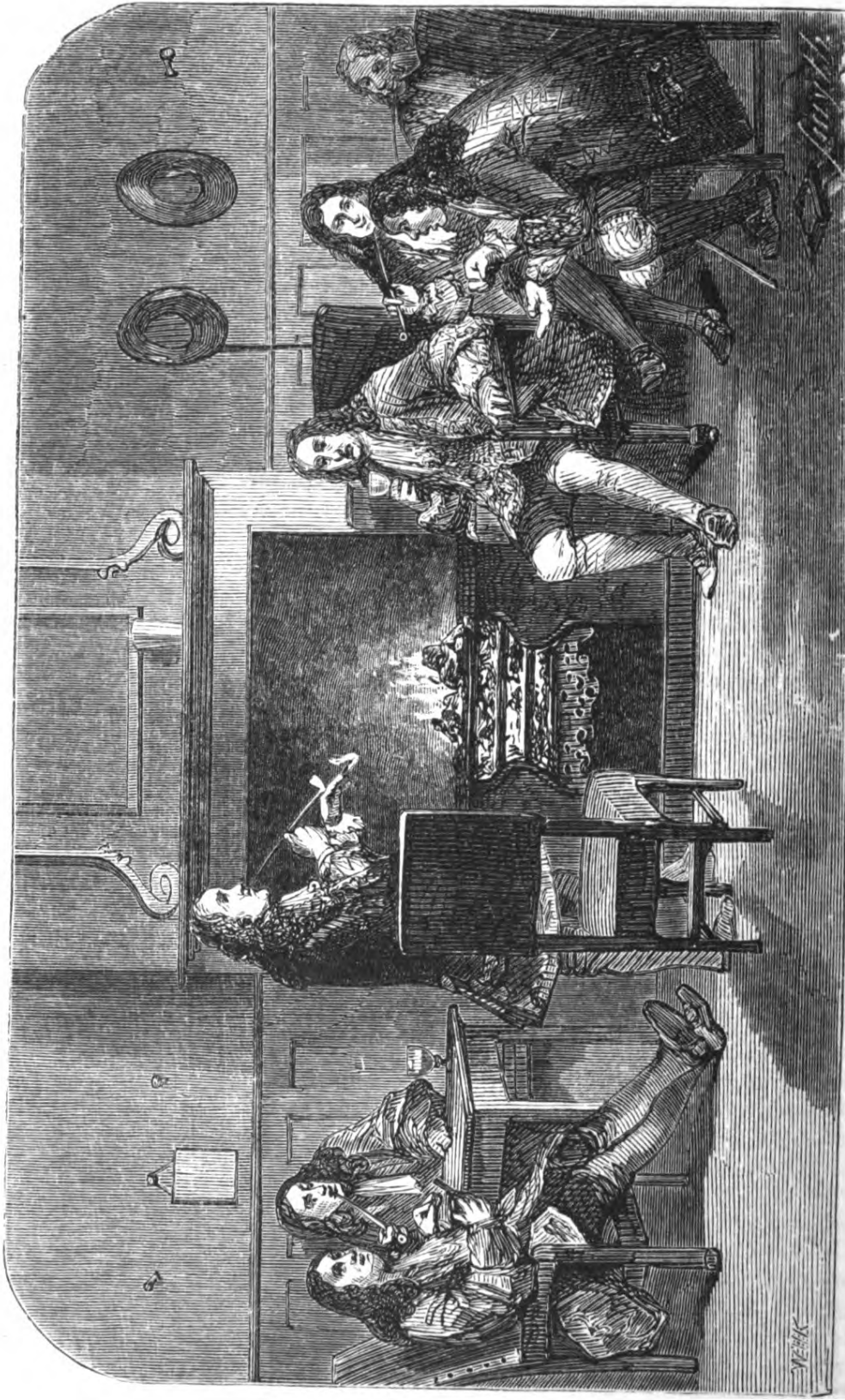
"Received, then, of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance of an agreement for ten thousand verses to be delivered by me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have already delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he, the said Jacob Tonson, being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses.

"I say, received by me,
"JOHN DRYDEN.

"Witness, Charles Dryden."

Two hundred and fifty guineas at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifest from the dates of this contract that it relates to the



DRYDEN AT WILL'S COFFEE-HOUSE.

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volume of *Fables*, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigencies but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own: their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known. Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations, was informed that his *Fables* obtained five hundred pounds from the Duchess of Ormond—a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyle as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of *Alexander's Feast*.

In those days the economy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain. Of this disorder there is reason to believe that the laureate sometimes felt the effects; for, in one of his prefaces, he complains of those who, being intrusted with the distribution of the prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the appendix to the *Life of Congreve* is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint:

“ The utmost malice of the stars is past.—
 Now frequent trines the happier lights among ;
 And high-rais'd Jove, from his dark prison freed,
 Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
 Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed.”

He has elsewhere shown his attention to the planetary powers ; and in the preface to his *Fables* has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition, by attributing the same to some of the ancients. The latter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestic manners of a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critic and a poet.

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism ; as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two *Arts of English Poetry* were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley ; but Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not, perhaps, find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction ; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the ancients and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatic poems was then not generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct, and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtained his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning ; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time is difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before ; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The *Dialogue on the Drama* was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our

language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastic criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon by Demosthenes fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character so extensive in its comprehension and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed. Nor can the editors and admirers of Shakespeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence; of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet: not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgment by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, *malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio rectè sapere*; that it was more eligible to go wrong with one, than right with the other. A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth, whom we find, if we find her at all, dressed in the graces of elegance; and if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself,—we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations. He poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and re-touches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on *Palamon and Arcite*, says: "Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et

admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo iudice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur."

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatic rhyme is generally known. Spence, in his remarks on Pope's *Odyssey*, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the *Æneid* in favour of translating an epic poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the *Iliad* some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any license to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries; but when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay. When he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comic poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by Sewel.* His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad if he had heard him thundering out,

"Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso."

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggeration somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was impressed into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard. He cited *Gorbuduc*, which he had never seen; gives a false account of Chapman's versification; and discovers, in the preface to his *Fables*, that he translated the first book of the *Iliad* without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge. It is not to be supposed that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastic acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study, from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his *Dialogue on the Drama*, he pronounces with great confidence

* Preface to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.—Dr. J.

that the Latin tragedy of *Medea* is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetic. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca, and the only line which remains in Ovid's play (for one line is left us) is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial—which, by what he gives, shows what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge and a powerful digestion,—by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's—always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard by an ambitious display of himself—had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructors, and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles:

“ His conversation, wit, and parts,
 His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
 Were such dead authors could not give,
 But habitudes of those that live :
 Who lighting him, did greater lights receive ;
 He drain'd from all, and all they knew ;
 His apprehensions quick, his judgment true ;
 That the most learn'd with shame confess
 His knowledge more, his reading only less.”

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it. The atoms of probability of which my opinion has been formed lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactic or defensive, occupies almost all his prose,

except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons ; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled ; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid ; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous. What is little is gay ; what is great is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently ; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the sprightliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble ; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh ; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always "another and the same." He does not exhibit a second time the same elegances in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously ; for being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose, however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise. The veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham. They had shown that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets ; and that verse consisted not only in the number, but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do ? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastic and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross ; and from a nice distinction of these different parts arises a great part of the beauty of style. But, if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors ; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was, therefore, before the time of Dryden no poetical diction ; no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar or too remote defeat the purpose

of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions we do not easily receive strong impressions or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted: we had few elegances or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have overborne the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden, from whose time it is apparent English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of ancient writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of the English *Metamorphoses* in the same number of verses with the original. Holiday had nothing in view but to show that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses: they cannot be read without reluctance; nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copiers were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation, therefore," says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles,—the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy,

that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry, and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect; will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased: and I know not how it will be proved that if he had written less, he would have written better; or that, indeed, he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian,

“What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.”

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support. His plays were therefore often borrowed, and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication till he has satisfied his friends and himself, till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination, and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the public has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inaugural congratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature or by fortune who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphant chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors'.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be dispatched while conversation is yet busy and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may, however, secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first public event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroic stanzas have beauties and defects: the thoughts are vigorous, and though not always proper, show a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was perhaps at this time his favourite author, though *Gondibert* never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification. There are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the king's exile,

“ He, toss'd by fate,
Could taste no sweets of youth's desir'd age,
But found his life too true a pilgrimage.”

And afterwards, to show how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark:

“ Well might the ancient poets then confer
On night the honour'd name of ‘counsellor;’
Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
We light alone in dark afflictions find.”

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found:

“ 'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose
Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene
Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
Not in their bulk, but in their order strong:
Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With ease such fond chimæras we pursue
As fancy frames, for fancy to subdue;
But when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chemists make.
How hard was then his task at once to be
What in the body natural we see!
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,

Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
 The springs of motion from the seat of sense :
 'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
 But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
 He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
 Would let them play a while upon the hook.
 Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
 At first embracing what it straight doth crush.
 Wise leeches will not vain receipts obtrude
 While growing pains pronounce the humours crude ;
 Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill
 Till some safe crisis authorise their skill."

He had not yet learned—indeed, he never learned well—to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care,

" With alga who the sacred altar strows ?
 To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes ;
 A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain ;
 A ram to you, ye tempests of the main ;"—

he tells us, in the language of religion,

" Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence,
 As heaven itself is took by violence ;"

and afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of sacred history.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted ; as,

" For by example most we sinn'd before,
 And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore."

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles :

" The winds, that never moderation knew,
 Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew ;
 Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
 Their straiten'd lungs.
 It is no longer motion cheats your view :
 As you meet it, the land approacheth you ;
 The land returns, and in the white it wears
 The marks of penitence and sorrow bears."

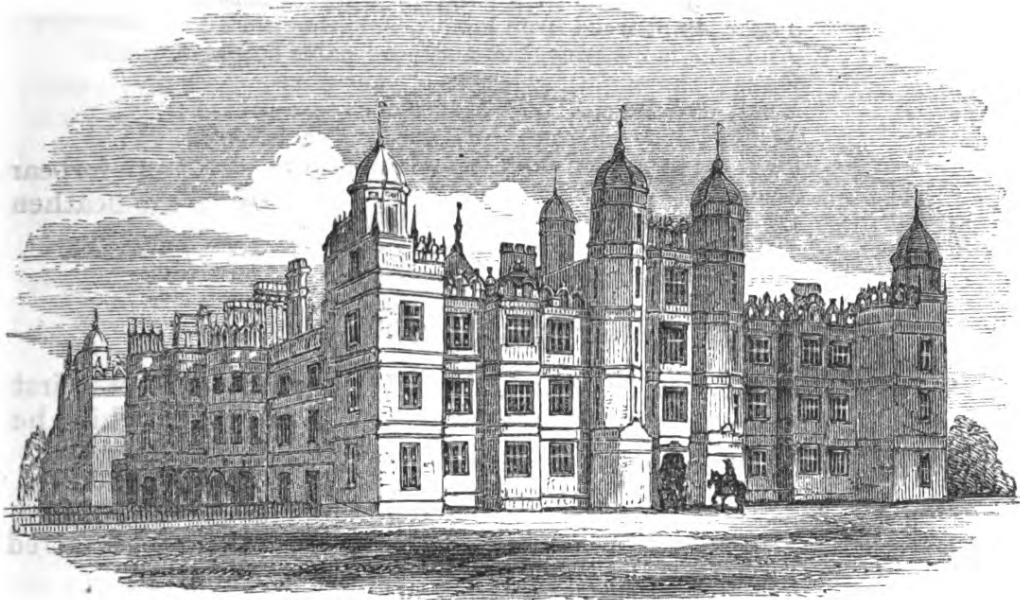
I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king. " Though this," said Malherbe, " was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on the *Coronation* has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted :

" You have already quench'd sedition's brand ;
 And zeal, that burnt it, only warms the land :
 The jealous sects, that durst not trust their cause
 So far from their own will as to the laws,
 Him for their umpire and their synod take,
 And their appeal alone to Cæsar make."

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works there is not another :

“ Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
Creates that joy, but full fruition.”



BURLEIGH HOUSE.

In the verses to the Lord Chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive :

“ In open prospect nothing bounds our eye
Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky ;
So in this hemisphere our utmost view
Is only bounded by our king and you :
Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther heaven can find.
So well your virtues do with his agree,
That though your orbs of different greatness be,
Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd—
His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have been,
Except an emptiness had come between.”

The comparison of the chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it :

“ And as the Indies were not found before
Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd ;
So by your counsels we are brought to view
A new and undiscover'd world in you.”

There is another comparison—for there is little else in the poem,—of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaic meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity for its magnificence :

“ How strangely active are the arts of peace,
Whose restless motions less than wars do cease !
Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise ;
And war more force, but not more pains employs.
Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
That, like the earth’s, it leaves our sense behind ;
While you so smoothly turn and roll our sphere,
That rapid motion does but rest appear :
For as in nature’s swiftness, with the throng
Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
Mov’d by the soul of the same harmony ;
So, carried on by your unwearied care,
We rest in peace, and yet in motion share.”

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden’s first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed :

“ Let envy, then, those crimes within you see,
From which the happy never must be free ;
Envy, that does with misery reside,
The joy and the revenge of ruin’d pride.”

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers ; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts ; but, as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning.

“ Yet unimpair’d with labours or with time,
Your age but seems to a new youth to climb :
Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,
And measure change, but share no part of it.
And still it shall without a weight increase,
Like this new year, whose motions never cease ;
For since the glorious course you have begun
Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
It must both weightless and immortal prove,
Because the centre of it is above.”

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities,—a great naval war and the Fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroic poetry ; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them ; for they borrow every thing from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images. Waller had described a

sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description; and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain: perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome, *Orbem jam totum*, &c.

Of the king collecting his navy, he says :

“ It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,
His awful summons they so soon obey:
So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
And so to pasture follow through the sea.”

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed, perhaps, indecently hyperbolic, but certainly in a mode totally different ?

“ To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
And heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
For tapers made two glaring comets rise.”

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very complete specimen of the descriptions in this poem :

“ And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
With all the riches of the rising sun,
And precious sand from southern climates brought,
The fatal regions where the war begun.

Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,
Their waylaid wealth to Norway's coast they bring :
Then first the North's cold bosom spices bore,
And winter brooded on the Eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,
Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie ;
And round about their murdering cannon lay,
At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
The English undertake th' unequal war ;
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
Besiege the Indies and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those ;
These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy ;
And to such height their frantic passion grows,
That what both love both hazard to destroy.

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
 And now their odours arm'd against them fly;
 Some precious by shatter'd porcelain fall,
 And some by aromatic splinters die.

And though by tempests of the prize bereft,
 In heaven's inclemency some ease we find:
 Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
 And only yielded to the seas and wind."

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet; this surely needed no illustration: yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but "like hunted castors:" and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their perfumes betrayed them. The husband and the lover, though of more dignity than the castor, are images too domestic to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry:

"The night comes on: we eager to pursue
 The combat still, and they asham'd to leave;
 Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
 And doubtful moonlight did our rage deceive.

In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
 And loud applause of their great leader's fame;
 In fiery dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
 And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
 Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
 Faint sweats all down their mighty members run
 (Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply).

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
 Or shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore;
 Or in dark churches walk among the dead:
 They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more."

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak a universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind certainly is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion, that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those who in a logical disputation keep to general terms, would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock;

“ So here some pick out bullets from the side,
 Some drive old oakum through each seam and rift ;
 Their left hand does the caulking-iron guide,
 The rattling mallet with the right they lift.

With boiling pitch another near at hand
 (From friendly Sweden brought) the seams in-stops ;
 Which, well laid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,
 And shake them from the rising beak in drops.

Some the gall'd ropes with dauby marling bind,
 Or sear-cloth masts with strong tarpauling coats ;
 To try new shrouds one mounts into the wind,
 And one below their ease or stiffness notes.”

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away.

His digression to the origin and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says that, by the help of the philosophers,

“ Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
 By which remotest regions are allied :”

which he is constrained to explain in a note by “ a more exact measure of longitude.” It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry; and have shown, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet: he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention, as in the beginning :

“ The diligence of trades and noiseful gain,
 And luxury, more late, asleep were laid.
 All was the Night's, and in her silent reign
 No sound the rest of Nature did invade
 In this deep quiet——”

The expression “ all was the night's” is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

“ Omnia noctis erant, placida composita quiete,”

that he might have concluded better,

“ Omnia noctis erant.”

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated :

“ The ghosts of traitors from the bridge descend,
 With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice ;
 About the fire into a dance they bend,
 And sing their sabbath-notes with feeble voice.”

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical; and, with an event which poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of Harte, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zebe*; and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote *Tyrannic Love* and *The State of Innocence*, he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effects upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of night in *The Indian Emperor*, and the rise and fall of empire in *The Conquest of Granada*, are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love* or *Don Sebastian*.

To search his plays for vigorous sallies and sententious elegances, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts, but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the English *Epistles of Ovid*; one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

Absalom and Achitophel is a work so well known, that a particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible,—acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height, as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective: allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject has likewise another inconvenience,—it admitted little imagery or description; and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious: though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that soothes the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to the historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We

are alarmed by a faction formed of many sects, various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief; formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports; while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a speech, and

“Henceforth a series of new times began.”

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by Tate, there is a long insertion, which, for its poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The Medal, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas as a series of events or multiplicity of agents. This poem, therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured:

“Power was his aim; but thrown from that pretence,
The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
And malice reconcil'd him to his prince.
Him in the anguish of his soul he serv'd,
Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd.
Behold him now exalted into trust;
His counsels oft convenient, seldom just;
Even in the most sincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging still to be a knave.
The frauds he learnt in his fanatic years
Made him uneasy in his lawful gears,
At least as little honest as he could,
And, like white witches, mischievously good.
To this first bias longingly he leans,
And rather would be great by wicked means.”

The *Threnodia*, which, by a term I am afraid neither authorised nor analogical, he calls *Augustalis*, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity; it is neither magnificent nor pathetic. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find; and what he has, he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. “He is,” he says, “petrified with grief;” but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke:

“The sons of art all med'cines tried,
And every noble remedy applied;

With emulation each essay'd
 His utmost skill ; nay more, they pray'd :
 Was never losing game with better conduct play'd."

He had been a little inclined to merriment before, upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign ; nor was he serious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion :

" With him the innumerable crowd of armed prayers
 Knock'd at the gates of heaven, and knock'd aloud ;
 The first well-meaning rude petitioners
 All for his life assail'd the throne,
 All would have brib'd the skies by offering up their own.

So great a throng not heaven itself could bar ;
 'Twas almost borne by force, as in the giants' war.
 The prayers, at least, for his reprieve were heard :
 His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd."

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendour without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyric or elegiac poetry. His poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm: *fervet immensusque ruit*. All the stanzas, indeed, are not equal : an imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond ; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, which is lost in the splendour of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word "diapason" is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another :

" From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began :
 When Nature underneath a heap of jarring atoms lay,
 And could not heave her head,
 The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 Arise, ye more than dead !
 Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
 In order to their stations leap,
 And music's power obey.
 From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began :
 From harmony to harmony
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
 The diapason closing full in man."

The conclusion is likewise striking ; but it includes an image so awful in itself, that it can owe little to poetry ; and I could wish the antithesis of "music untuning" had found some other place :

" As from the power of sacred lays
 The spheres began to move,
 And sung the great Creator's praise
 To all the bless'd above :

So, when the last and dreadful hour
 This crumbling pageant shall devour,
 The trumpet shall be heard on high,
 The dead shall live, the living die,
 And music shall untune the sky."

Of his skill in elegy he has given a specimen in his *Eleonora*, of which the following lines discover their author :

" Though all these rare endowments of the mind
 Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,
 The figure was with full perfection crown'd,
 Though not so large an orb as truly round.
 As when in glory, through the public place,
 The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
 And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
 The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd ;
 And so the swift procession hurried on,
 That all, though not distinctly, might be shown :
 So, in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
 She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind ;
 And multitudes of virtues pass'd along,
 Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
 Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
 For greater multitudes that were to come.
 Yet unemploy'd no minute slipp'd away ;
 Moments were precious in so short a stay :
 The haste of heaven to have her was so great,
 That some were single acts, though each complete ;
 And every act stood ready to repeat."

This piece, however, is not without its faults : there is so much likeness in the initial comparison, that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented :

" As, when some great and gracious monarch dies,
 Soft whispers first, and mournful murmurs, rise
 Among the sad attendants ; then the sound
 Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
 Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
 Is blown to distant colonies at last,
 Who then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain
 For his long life and for his happy reign :
 So slowly, by degrees, unwilling fame
 Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
 Till public as the loss the news became."

This is little better than to say in praise of a shrub, that it is as green as a tree ; or of a brook, that it waters a garden, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates : the praise being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect.

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion ; in this, therefore, it might be hoped that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily

the subject is rather argumentative than poetical ; he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation :

“ And this unpolish'd rugged voice I chose,
As fittest for discourse and nearest prose.”

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous ; in which metre has neither weakened the force nor clouded the perspicuity of argument ; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaic in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is *The Hind and Panther*, the longest of all Dryden's original poems ; an allegory intended to comprise and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious ; for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council ? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topics of argument, endeavours to show the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity ; but is weak enough to ask, why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where ?

The hind at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried ; but walking home with the panther, talks by the way of the Nicene fathers, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in *The City Mouse and Country Mouse* of Montague and Prior ; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgment was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may therefore reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph :

“ A milk-white hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd :
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
Yet had she oft been chas'd with horns and hounds,
And Scythian shafts and many wingèd wounds
Aim'd at her heart ; was often forc'd to fly,
And doomed to death, though fated not to die.”

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestic turn of heroic poesy;" and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the wolf, is not very heroically majestic:

"More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race
Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face;
Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.
His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
And pricks up his predestinating ears."

His general character of the other sorts of beasts that never go to church, though spritely and keen, has, however, not much of heroic poesy:

"These are the chief; to number o'er the rest,
And stand like Adam naming every beast,
Were weary work. Nor will the Muse describe
A slimy-born and sun-begotten tribe,
Who, far from steeples and their sacred sound,
In fields their sullen conventicles found:
These gross, half-animated lumps I leave.
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive;
But, if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher
Than matter put in motion may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay,
So drossy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for allay;
Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things
As only buz to heaven with evening wings;
Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know no being, and but hate a name;
To them the hind and panther are the same."

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroic dignity:

"For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
To ferny heaths and to their forest lair,
She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
Proffering the hind to wait her half the way;
That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat awhile on their adventures past:
Nor had the grateful hind so soon forgot
Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.
Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
She thought this hour the occasion would present
To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,
Considering her a well-bred civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began."

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction

more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation : the difference is not, however, very easily perceived ; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole : the king is now Cæsar, and now the lion ; and the name Pan is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images ; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention ; and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, have sunk it into neglect ; but it may be usefully studied as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on *The Birth of the Prince of Wales*, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a playwright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday ; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected ; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore perhaps possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated ; some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though, like all other productions of Dryden, it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says that he once translated it at school, but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook perhaps the most arduous work of its kind—a translation of Virgil; for which he had shown how well he was qualified by his version of the “Pollio,” and two episodes—one of Nisus and Euryalus, the other of Mezentius and Lausus.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendour of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity; but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn; the translator must at all hazards follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the *Georgics* and the *Æneid* should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the public were not disappointed. “He produced,” says Pope, “the most noble and spirited translation that I know in any language.” It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and for the most part to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the preface, Pastorals, and *Georgics*; and as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals and the first *Georgic*. The world has forgotten his book; but since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first *Georgic*, and of his poetry by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1.

‘What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn
The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn.’

“It’s unlucky, they say, to stumble at the threshold; but what has a ‘plenteous harvest’ to do here? Virgil would not pretend to prescribe rules for that which depends not on the husbandman’s care, but the disposition of Heaven altogether. Indeed the plenteous crop depends somewhat on the good method of tillage; and where the land’s ill manured, the corn, without a miracle, can be but indifferent: but the harvest may be good (which is its properest epithet), though the husbandman’s skill were never so indifferent. The next sentence is too literal, and ‘when to plough’ had been Virgil’s meaning, and

intelligible to every body; and 'when to sow the corn' is a needless addition.

Ver. 3.

'The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine;
And when to geld the lambs, and shear the swine,'

would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D.'s deduction of particulars.

Ver. 5.

'The birth and genius of the frugal bee
I sing, Mæcenas, and I sing to thee.'

But where did *experientia* ever signify 'birth and genius?' or what ground was there for such a figure in this place? How much more manly is Mr. Ogylby's version!

'What makes rich grounds; in what celestial signs
'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines;
What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
And several arts improving frugal bees,—
I sing, Mæcenas.'

Which four lines, though faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D.'s six.

Ver. 22.

'From fields and mountains to my song repair.'

For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycæi*. Very well explained!

Ver. 23, 24.

'Inventor Pallas, of the fattening oil,
Thou founder of the plough, and ploughman's toil!'

Written as if these had been Pallas's invention. The 'ploughman's toil' 's impertinent.

Ver. 25.

'The shroud-like cypress.'

Why 'shroud-like?' Is a cypress pulled up by the roots (which the sculpture in the last eclogue fills Silvanus's hand with) so very like a shroud? Or did not Mr. D. think of that kind of cypress used often for scarves and hatbands at funerals formerly, or for widows' veils, &c.? If so, 'twas a 'deep, good thought.'

Ver. 26.

'That wear
The royal honours, and increase the year.'

What's meant by 'increasing the year?' Did the gods or goddesses add more months or days or hours to it? Or how can *arva tueri* signify to 'wear rural honours?' Is this to translate or abuse an author? The next couplet is borrowed from Ogylby, I suppose, because less to the purpose than ordinary.

Ver. 33.

'The patron of the world, and Rome's peculiar guard.'

Idle, and none of Virgil's, no more than the sense of the precedent couplet. So, again, he interpolates Virgil with that and 'the round circle of the year to guide powerful of blessings, which thou strew'st around : ' a ridiculous Latinism, and an impertinent addition. Indeed, the whole period is but one piece of absurdity and nonsense, as those who lay it with the original must find.

Ver. 42, 43.

' And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea.'

Was he consul or dictator there ?

' And watery virgins for thy bed shall strive.'

Both absurd interpolations.

Ver. 47, 48.

' Where in the void of heaven a place is free.
Ah, happy D——n, were that place for thee !'

But where is that ' void ? ' or what does our translator mean by it ? He knows what Ovid says God did to prevent such a ' void ' in heaven. Perhaps this was then forgotten ; but Virgil talks more sensibly.

Ver. 49.

' The scorpion ready to receive thy laws.'

No, he would not then have gotten out of his way so fast.

Ver. 56.

' Though Proserpine affects her silent seat.'

What made her then so angry with Ascalaphus for preventing her return ? She was now mused to patience under the determinations of Fate, rather than fond of her residence.

Ver. 61, 62, 63.

' Pity the poet's and the ploughman's cares,
Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,
And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers.'

Which is such a wretched perversion of Virgil's noble thought as Vicars would have blushed at. But Mr. Ogylby makes us some amends by his better lines :

' O wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,
And grant assistance to my bold design !
Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,
And now, as if translated, hear our prayers.'

This is sense, and to the purpose ; the other, poor mistaken stuff."

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors, and of whom it may be reasonably imagined that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults thought they could

avoid them ; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the *Aeneid*, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it ; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With not much better success, Trapp, when his tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank version of the *Aeneid* ; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgics. His book may continue in existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of schoolboys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the melliflence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil ; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison by opposing one passage to another ; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place ; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version : but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole ; and the reader may be weary, though the critic may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight,—by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity ; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again ; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predominance I will consent that Dryden should be tried ; of this which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy ; of this which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *rifacimento*—a renovation of ancient writers by modernising their language. Thus the old poem of Boiardo has been new dressed by Domenichi and Berni. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival ; and the story of *Palamon and Arcite*, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolic commendation which Dryden has given it in the general preface and in a poetical dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, *Sigismunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the story ; *Theodore and Honoria*, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description ; and *Cymon* was formerly a tale of such reputation, that at the revival of letters it was translated into Latin by one of the Beroalds.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must, however, be distinguished. The *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If, indeed, there is any excellence beyond it in some other of Dryden's works, that excellence must be found. Compared with the *Ode on Killigrew*, it may be pronounced, perhaps, superior in the whole, but without any single part equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences. Some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vicious: the music of Timotheus, which "raised a mortal to the skies," had only a metaphorical power; that of Cecilia, which "drew an angel down," had a real effect: the crown, therefore, could not reasonably be divided.

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented he studied rather than felt; and produced sentiments not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

"Love various minds does variously inspire:
It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,
Like that of incense on the altar laid;
But raging flames tempestuous souls invade:
A fire which every windy passion blows;
With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows."

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms*: love as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such love as shuts out all other interest, the love of the Golden Age,—was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties; when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is, therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and for the first part of his life he looked on Otway with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play "there was nature, which is the chief beauty."

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection or by curiosity, by reviving natural sentiments or impressing new appearances of things. Sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity, destiny and contingency: these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command; *verbaque provisam rem* gave him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprises,—from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiarist, at least as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and eccentric violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

"Move swiftly, sun, and fly a lover's pace,
Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race."

"Amamel flies
To guard thee from the demons of the air;
My flaming sword above them to display,
All keen, and ground upon the edge of day."

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of which perhaps he was not conscious:

"Then we upon our orb's last verge shall go,
And see the ocean leaning on the sky;
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,
And on the lunar world securely pry."

These lines have no meaning ; but may we not say, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

“ 'Tis so like sense, 'twill serve the turn as well ?”

This endeavour after the grand and the new produced many sentiments either great or bulky, and many images either just or splendid :

“ I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.”

“ 'Tis but because the living death ne'er knew,
They fear to prove it as a thing that's new :
Let me th' experiment before you try ;
I'll show you first how easy 'tis to die.”

“ There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like Capaneus defying Jove,
With his broad sword the boldest beating down ;
While Fate grew pale lest he should win the town,
And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook.”

“ I beg no pity for this mouldering clay ;
For if you give it burial, there it takes
Possession of your earth.
If burnt and scatter'd in the air, the winds
That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
And spread me o'er your clime ; for where one atom
Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns.”

Of these quotations, the two first may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will add only a few more passages, of which the first, though it may perhaps be quite clear in prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble :

“ No, there is a necessity in Fate,
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate.
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and right.
True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,
But right before there is no precipice :
Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss.”

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent ; whether either be just, let the reader judge :

“ What precious drops are these,
Which silently each other's track pursue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew ?”

“ Resign your castle.—
Enter, brave sir ; for when you speak the word,
The gates shall open of their own accord :
The genius of the place its lord shall meet,
And bow its towery forehead at your feet.”

These bursts of extravagance Dryden calls the “ Dalilahs” of the theatre ; and owns that many noisy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him : “ but I knew,” says he, “ that they

were bad enough to please, even when I wrote them." There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantic ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says, "tack to the larboard," and "veer starboard;" and talks in another work of "virtue spooning before the wind." His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

" They Nature's king through Nature's optics viewed;
Revers'd, they view'd him lessen'd to their eyes."

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

" A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipp'd above;
Of this a broad extinguisher he makes,
And hoods the flames, that to their quarry strove."

When he describes the last day and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

" When rattling bones together fly
From the four quarters of the sky."

It was, indeed, never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his elegy on Cromwell:

" No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,
Than the light Monsieur the grave Don outweigh'd;
His fortune turn'd the scale——"

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to show, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for coolness, *fougue* for turbulence, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

These are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection, nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more music than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no dan-

ger. Standing, therefore, in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself; but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient, he did not stop to make better; and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts; and I believe there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his productions might be the effect of necessity; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have any other cause than impatience of study.

What can be said of his versification will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope:

“ Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine.”

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers, but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to choose the flowing and the sonorous words; to vary the pauses and adjust the accents; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary, and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the *Æneid* was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers, of which Chapman's *Iliad* was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of Phaer's third *Æneid* will exemplify this measure:

“ When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's kingdom stout,
All guiltless, by the power of gods above was rooted out.”

As these lines had their break or cæsura always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them; and quatrains of lines, alternately consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyric measures: as,

“ Relentless Time, destroying power,
Which stone and brass obey,
Who giv'st to ev'ry flying hour
To work some new decay.”

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as Drayton's *Polyolbion*, were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with

one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the Alexandrine at pleasure among the heroic lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it.

The triplet and Alexandrine are not universally approved. Swift always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule; a rule, however, lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroic admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the triplet is the same: the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet, but is on a sudden surprised with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that triplets and Alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes convenient to the poet. Fenton was of opinion that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable:

“ Together o’er the Alps methinks we fly,
Fill’d with ideas of fair Italy.”

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first:

“ Laugh, all the powers that favour tyranny,
And all the standing army of the sky.”

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet; which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected:

“ And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.”

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that "he could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such a variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught *sapere et fari*, to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be perhaps maintained that he was the first who joined argument with poetry. He showed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, *lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit*—he found it brick, and he left it marble.

The invocation before the Georgics is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses may be compared with those which he censures :

“ What makes the richest tilth ; beneath what signs
 To plough, and when to match your elms and vines ;
 What care with flocks, and what with herds agrees,
 And all the management of frugal bees,—
 I sing, Mæcenas ! Ye immensely clear,
 Vast orbs of light, which guide the rolling year !
 Bacchus and mother Ceres, if by you
 We fatt'ning corn for hungry mast pursue ;
 If, taught by you, we first the cluster press'd,
 And thin cold streams with sprightly juice refresh'd !
 Ye fawns, the present numens of the field,
 Wood nymphs and fawns, your kind assistance yield ;
 Your gifts I sing. And thou at whose fear'd stroke
 From rending earth the fiery courser broke,
 Great Neptune, O assist my artful song !
 And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
 Whose snowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
 In mighty herds the Cæan isle maintains,
 Pan, happy shepherd ! if thy cares divine
 E'er to improve thy Mænalus incline,
 Leave thy Lycæan wood and native grove,
 And with thy lucky smiles our work approve.
 Be Pallas, too, sweet oil's inventor, kind ;
 And he who first the crooked plough design'd,
 Sylvanus, god of all the woods, appear,
 Whose hands a new-drawn, tender cypress bear !
 Ye gods and goddesses, who e'er with love
 Would guard our pastures, and our fields improve,—
 Ye who new plants from unknown lands supply,
 And with condensing clouds obscure the sky,
 And drop them softly thence in fruitful showers,
 Assist my enterprise, ye gentle powers !
 And thou, great Cæsar ! though we know not yet
 Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty seat :
 Whether thou'lt be the kind tutelar god
 Of thy own Rome, or with thy awful nod
 Guide the vast world, while thy great hand shall bear
 The fruits and seasons of the turning year,
 And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles wear ;
 Whether thou'lt all the boundless ocean sway,

And seamen only to thyself shall pray ;
 Thule, the fairest island, kneel to thee,
 And, that thou mayst her son by marriage be,
 Tethys will for the happy purchase yield
 To make a dowry of her wat'ry field :
 Whether thou'lt add to heaven a brighter sign,
 And o'er the summer months serenely shine ;
 Where between Cancer and Erigone
 There yet remains a spacious room for thee ;
 Where the hot Scorpion too his arm declines,
 And more to thee than half his arch resigns ;—
 Whate'er thou'lt be ; for sure the realms below
 No just pretence to thy command can show :
 No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
 Though Greece her own Elysian fields admires.
 And now, at last, contented Proserpine
 Can all her mother's earnest prayers decline.
 Whate'er thou'lt be, oh, guide our gentle course,
 And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce ;
 With me th' unknowing rustic's wants relieve,
 And, though on earth, our sacred vows receive !”



CHESTERTON.

Mr. Dryden having received from Rymer his *Remarks on the Tragedies of the last Age*, wrote observations on the blank leaves ; which having been in the possession of Mr. Garrick, are by his

favour communicated to the public, that no particle of Dryden may be lost.

“That we may less wonder why pity and terror are not now the only springs on which our tragedies move, and that Shakespeare may be more excused, Rapin confesses that the French tragedies now all run on the *tendre*; and gives the reason, because love is the passion which most predominates in our souls, and that therefore the passions represented become insipid unless they are conformable to the thoughts of the audience. But it is to be concluded, that this passion works not now amongst the French so strongly as the other two did amongst the ancients. Amongst us, who have a stronger genius for writing, the operations from the writing are much stronger: for the raising of Shakespeare’s passions is more from the excellency of the words and thoughts than the justness of the occasion; and if he has been able to pick single occasions, he has never founded the whole reasonably; yet, by the genius of poetry in writing, he has succeeded.

“Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*, that is to the words and discourse of a tragedy, than Aristotle has done, who places them in the last rank of beauties; perhaps only last in order because they are the last product of the design, of the disposition or connexion of its parts; of the characters, of the manners of those characters, and of the thoughts proceeding from those manners. Rapin’s words are remarkable: ‘’Tis not the admirable intrigue, the surprising events, and extraordinary incidents, that make the beauty of a tragedy; ’tis the discourses, when they are natural and passionate: so are Shakespeare’s.’

“The parts of a poem, tragic or heroic, are:

“1. The fable itself.

“2. The order or manner of its contrivance, in relation of the parts to the whole.

“3. The manners or decency of the characters, in speaking or acting what is proper for them, and proper to be shown by the poet.

“4. The thoughts which express the manners.

“5. The words which express those thoughts.

“In the last of these Homer exceeds Virgil; Virgil all the other ancient poets; and Shakespeare all modern poets.

“For the second of these, the order, the meaning is, that a fable ought to have a beginning, middle, and an end, all just and natural; so that that part, *e. g.*, which is the middle could not naturally be the beginning or end, and so of the rest: all depend on one another, like the links of a curious chain. If terror and pity are only to be raised, certainly this author follows Aristotle’s rules, and Sophocles’ and Euripides’ example. But joy may be raised too, and that doubly, either by seeing a wicked man punished, or a good man at last fortunate; or perhaps indignation, to see wickedness prosperous, and goodness depressed: both these may be profitable to the end of a tragedy,—reformation of manners; but the last improperly, only as it begets pity in the audience; though Aristotle, I confess, places tragedies of this kind in the second form.

“He who undertakes to answer this excellent critique of Mr. Rymer, in behalf of our English poets against the Greek, ought to

do it in this manner : either by yielding to him the greatest part of what he contends for, which consists in this, that the *μῦθος*, *i. e.* the design and conduct of it, is more conducing in the Greeks to those ends of tragedy which Aristotle and he propose, namely to cause terror and pity; yet the granting this does not set the Greeks above the English poets.

“ But the answerer ought to prove two things : first, that the fable is not the greatest masterpiece of a tragedy, though it be the foundation of it.

“ Secondly, that other ends as suitable to the nature of tragedy may be found in the English, which were not in the Greek.

“ Aristotle places the fable first, not *quoad dignitatem*, *sed quoad fundamentum* : for a fable never so movingly contrived to those ends of his, pity and terror, will operate nothing on our affections, except the characters, manners, thoughts, and words are suitable.

“ So that it remains for Mr. Rymer to prove, that in all those, or the greatest parts of them, we are inferior to Sophocles and Euripides; and this he has offered at in some measure, but I think a little partially to the ancients.

“ For the fable itself, 'tis in the English more adorned with episodes and larger than in the Greek poets, consequently more diverting. For if the action be but one, and that plain, without any counterturn of design or episode, *i. e.* underplot, how can it be so pleasing as the English, which have both underplot and a turned design, which keeps the audience in expectation of the catastrophe? whereas in the Greek poets we see through the whole design at first.

“ For the characters, they are neither so many nor so various in Sophocles and Euripides as in Shakespeare and Fletcher; only they are more adapted to those ends of tragedy which Aristotle commends to us—pity and terror.

“ The manners flow from the characters, and consequently must partake of their advantages and disadvantages.

“ The thoughts and words, which are the fourth and fifth beauties of tragedy, are certainly more noble and more poetical in the English than in the Greek, which must be proved by comparing them somewhat more equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

“ After all, we need not yield that the English way is less conducing to move pity and terror, because they often show virtue oppressed and vice punished; where they do not both or either, they are not to be defended.

“ And if we should grant that the Greeks performed this better, perhaps it may admit of dispute, whether pity and terror are either the prime, or at least the only ends of tragedy.

“ 'Tis not enough that Aristotle had said so; for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind. And chiefly we have to say (what I hinted on pity and terror, in the last paragraph save one), that the punishment of vice and reward of virtue are the most adequate ends of tragedy, because most conducing to good example of life. Now, pity is not so easily raised for a criminal (and the ancient tragedy always represents his chief person such) as it is for an innocent man; and the suffering of innocence and punishment of the

offender is of the nature of English tragedy: contrarily, in the Greek, innocence is unhappy often, and the offender escapes. Then we are not touched with the sufferings of any sort of men so much as of lovers; and this was almost unknown to the ancients: so that they neither administered poetical justice, of which Mr. Rymer boasts, so well as we; neither knew they the best commonplace of pity, which is love.

“He therefore unjustly blames us for not building on what the ancients left us; for it seems, upon consideration of the premisses, that we have wholly finished what they began.

“My judgment on this piece is this: that it is extremely learned, but that the author of it is better read in the Greek than in the English poets; that all writers ought to study this critique, as the best account I have ever seen of the ancients; that the model of tragedy he has here given is excellent, and extremely correct; but that it is not the only model of all tragedy, because it is too much circumscribed in plot, characters, &c.; and lastly, that we may be taught here justly to admire and imitate the ancients, without giving them the preference with this author, in prejudice to our own country.

“Want of method in this excellent treatise makes the thoughts of the author sometimes obscure.

“His meaning, that pity and terror are to be moved, is, that they are to be moved as the means conducing to the ends of tragedy, which are pleasure and instruction.

“And these two ends may be thus distinguished. The chief end of the poet is to please; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

“The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction; for poesy is an art, and all arts are made to profit.*

“The pity which the poet is to labour for is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal; who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied; if altogether innocent, his punishment will be unjust.

“Another obscurity is where he says Sophocles perfected tragedy by introducing the third actor; that is, he meant three kinds of action: one company singing or speaking; another playing on the music; a third dancing.

“To make a true judgment in this competition between the Greek poets and the English, in tragedy:

“Consider, first, how Aristotle has defined a tragedy. Secondly, what he assigns the end of it to be. Thirdly, what he thinks the beauties of it. Fourthly, the means to attain the end proposed.

“Compare the Greek and English tragic poets justly, and without partiality, according to those rules.

“Then, secondly, consider whether Aristotle has made a just definition of tragedy,—of its parts, of its ends, and of its beauties; and whether he, having not seen any others but those of Sophocles, Euripides, &c., had or truly could determine what all the excellences of tragedy are, and wherein they consist.

“Next, show in what ancient tragedy was deficient,—for example,

* Rapin.

in the narrowness of its plots and fewness of persons; and try whether that be not a fault in the Greek poets; and whether their excellency was so great, when the variety was visibly so little; or whether what they did was not very easy to do.

“Then make a judgment on what the English have added to their beauties: as, for example, not only more plot, but also new passions; as, namely, that of love, scarcely touched on by the ancients, except in this one example of Phædra, cited by Mr. Rymer; and in that how short they were of Fletcher!

“Prove also that love, being an heroic passion, is fit for tragedy, —which cannot be denied, because of the example alleged of Phædra; and how far Shakespeare has outdone them in friendship, &c.

“To return to the beginning of this inquiry. Consider if pity and terror be enough for tragedy to move: and I believe, upon a true definition of tragedy, it will be found that its work extends further; and that it is to reform manners, by a delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue. If this be true, then not only pity and terror are to be moved, as the only means to bring us to virtue, but generally love to virtue and hatred to vice; by showing the rewards of one, and punishments of the other: at least, by rendering virtue always amiable, though it be shown unfortunate; and vice detestable, though it be shown triumphant.

“If, then, the encouragement of virtue and discouragement of vice be the proper ends of poetry in tragedy, pity and terror, though good means, are not the only. For all the passions, in their turns, are to be set in a ferment; as joy, anger, love, fear, are to be used as the poet’s commonplaces: and a general concernment for the principal actors is to be raised, by making them appear such in their characters, their words, and actions, as will interest the audience in their fortunes.

“And if, after all, in a larger sense, pity comprehends this concernment for good, and terror includes detestation for the bad, then let us consider whether the English have not answered this end of tragedy as well as the ancients, or perhaps better.

“And here Mr. Rymer’s objections against these plays are to be impartially weighed, that we may see whether they are of weight enough to turn the balance against our countrymen.

“’Tis evident those plays which he arraigns have moved both those passions in a high degree upon the stage.

“To give the glory of this away from the poet, and to place it upon the actors, seems unjust.

“One reason is, because whatever actors they have found, the event has been the same,—that is, the same passions have been always moved; which shows that there is something of force and merit in the plays themselves, conducing to the design of raising these two passions: and suppose them ever to have been excellently acted, yet action only adds grace, vigour, and more life upon the stage; but cannot give it wholly where it is not first. But, secondly, I dare appeal to those who have never seen them acted, if they have not found these two passions moved within them: and if the general voice will carry it, Mr. Rymer’s prejudice will take off his single testimony.

“ This, being matter of fact, is reasonably to be established by this appeal; as, if one man says it is night, when the rest of the world conclude it to be day, there needs no further argument against him that it is so.

“ If he urge that the general taste is depraved, his arguments to prove this can at best but evince that our poets took not the best way to raise those passions; but experience proves against him, that those means which they have used have been successful, and have produced them.

“ And one reason of that success is, in my opinion, this,—that Shakespeare and Fletcher have written to the genius of the age and nation in which they lived: for though nature, as he objects, is the same in all places, and reason too the same; yet the climate, the age, the disposition of the people to whom a poet writes, may be so different, that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience.

“ And if they proceed upon a foundation of truer reason to please the Athenians, than Shakespeare and Fletcher to please the English, it only shows that the Athenians were a more judicious people; but the poet's business is certainly to please the audience.

“ Whether our English audience have been pleased hitherto with acorns, as he calls it, or with bread, is the next question; that is, whether the means which Shakespeare and Fletcher have used in their plays to raise those passions before named, be better applied to the ends by the Greek poets than by them. And perhaps we shall not grant him this wholly: let it be yielded that a writer is not to run down with the stream, or to please the people by their usual methods, but rather to reform their judgments, it still remains to prove that our theatre needs this total reformation.

“ The faults which he has found in their design are rather wittily aggravated in many places than reasonably urged; and as much may be returned on the Greeks by one who were as witty as himself.

“ They destroy not, if they are granted, the foundation of the fabric; only take away from the beauty of the symmetry. For example, the faults in the character of the king in *King and no King* are not, as he calls them, such as render him detestable, but only imperfections which accompany human nature, and are for the most part excused by the violence of his love; so that they destroy not our pity or concernment for him: this answer may be applied to most of his objections of that kind.

“ And Rollo committing many murders, when he is answerable but for one, is too severely arraigned by him; for it adds to our horror and detestation of the criminal: and poetic justice is not neglected neither; for we stab him in our minds for every offence which he commits; and the point which the poet is to gain on the audience, is not so much in the death of an offender as the raising a horror of his crimes.

“ That the criminal should neither be wholly guilty nor wholly innocent, but so participating of both as to move both pity and terror, is certainly a good rule, but not perpetually to be observed; for that were to make all tragedies too much alike; which objection he foresaw, but has not fully answered.

“To conclude, therefore: if the plays of the ancients are more correctly plotted, ours are more beautifully written. And if we can raise passions as high on worse foundations, it shows our genius in tragedy is greater; for in all other parts of it the English have manifestly excelled them.”

The original of the following letter is preserved in the library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the public by the Reverend Dr. Vyse.

Copy of an original Letter from John Dryden, Esq. to his sons in Italy, from a Ms. in the Lambeth Library, marked No. 933, p. 56.

(Superscribed)—“Al illustrissimo Sig^{re} Carlo Dryden Camariere* d’Honore A.S.S. In Roma.

“Franca per Mantoua.

“September 3d, our style.

“DEAR SONS,—Being now at Sir William Bowyer’s, in the country, I cannot write at large, because I find myself somewhat indisposed with a cold, and am thick of hearing, rather worse than I was in town. I am glad to find, by your letter of July 26th, your style, that you are both in health; but wonder you should think me so negligent as to forget to give you an account of the ship in which your parcel is to come. I have written to you two or three letters concerning it, which I have sent by safe hands, as I told you; and doubt not but you have them before this can arrive to you. Being out of town, I have forgotten the ship’s name, which your mother will inquire, and put it into her letter, which is joined with mine. But the master’s name I remember; he is called Mr. Ralph Thorp: the ship is bound to Leghorn, consigned to Mr. Peter and Mr. Thomas Ball, merchants. I am of your opinion, that by Tonson’s means almost all our letters have miscarried for this last year. But, however, he has missed of his design in the dedication, though he had prepared the book for it; for in every figure of Æneas he has caused him to be drawn like King William, with a hooked nose. After my return to town, I intend to alter a play of Sir Robert Howard’s, written long since, and lately put into my hands; ’tis called *The Conquest of China by the Tartars*. It will cost me six weeks’ study, with the probable benefit of an hundred pounds. In the meantime I am writing a song for St. Cecilia’s feast, who, you know, is the patroness of music. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the stewards of the feast, who came in a body to me to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr. Bridgeman, whose parents are your mother’s friends. I hope to send you thirty guineas between Michaelmas and Christmas, of which I will give you an account when I come to town. I remember the counsel you give me in your letter; but dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature, and keep in my just resentments against that degenerate order. In the meantime, I flatter not myself with any manner of

* This son, Charles, was drowned in the Thames, near Windsor.

hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake ; being assured, beforehand, never to be rewarded, though the times should alter. Towards the latter end of this month, September, Charles will begin to recover his perfect health, according to his nativity ; which, casting it myself, I am sure is true, and all things hitherto have happened accordingly to the very time that I predicted them : I hope at the same time to recover more health, according to my age. Remember me to poor Harry, whose prayers I earnestly desire. My *Virgil* succeeds in the world beyond its desert or my expectation. You know the profits might have been more ; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them : but I never can repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer. It has pleased God to raise up many friends to me amongst my enemies, though they who ought to have been my friends are negligent of me. I am called to dinner, and cannot go on with this letter, which I desire you to excuse ; and am

“ Your most affectionate father,

“ JOHN DRYDEN.”

ROSCOMMON.*

(1633-1684.)

Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, was the son of James Dillon and Elizabeth Wentworth, sister to the Earl of Strafford. He was born in Ireland, in 1633, during the lieutenancy of Wentworth Earl of Strafford, who, being both his uncle and his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father, the third Earl of Roscommon, had been converted by Usher to the Protestant religion ; and when the popish rebellion broke out, Strafford thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin ; which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such is the account given by Mr. Fenton, from whose notes on Waller most of this account must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructor whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. Hall, by whom he cannot mean the famous Hall, then an old man and a bishop.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer ; and Dillon, by the advice of Archbishop Usher, was sent to Caen, where the Protestants had then a university, and continued his studies under Bochart.

Young Dillon, when he was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That

* Johnson.

he was sent to Caen is certain ; that he was a great scholar may be doubted.

At Caen he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

“ The Lord Roscommon, being a boy of ten years of age, at Caen in Normandy, one day was, as it were, madly extravagant in playing, leaping, getting over the tables, boards, &c. He was wont to be sober enough : they said, God grant this bodes no ill-luck to him ! In the heat of this extravagant fit he cries out, ‘ My father is dead ! ’ A fortnight after, news came from Ireland that his father was dead. This account I had from Mr. Knolles, who was his governor, and then with him, since secretary to the Earl of Strafford ; and I have heard his lordship's relations confirm the same.”*



WENTWORTH DILLON, EARL OF ROSCOMMON.

The present age is very little inclined to favour any accounts of this kind, nor will the name of Aubrey much recommend it to credit ; it ought not, however, to be omitted, because better evidence of a fact cannot easily be found than is here offered ; and it must be by preserving such relations that we may at last judge how much they are to be regarded. If we stay to examine this account, we shall see difficulties on both sides. Here is the relation of a fact given by a man who had no interest to deceive, and who could not be deceived himself ; and here is, on the other hand, a miracle which produces no effect : the order of nature is interrupted, to discover not a future but only a distant event, the knowledge of which is of no use to him

* Aubrey's Miscellany.

to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected? I believe what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: "Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true; but do not wholly trust them, because they may be false."

The state both of England and Ireland was at this time such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return; and therefore Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and particularly with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At the Restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court, that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which undoubtedly brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After some time, a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made by the Duke of Ormond captain of the guards, and met with an adventure thus related by Fenton:

"He was at Dublin as much as ever distempered with the same fatal affection for play, which engaged him in one adventure that well deserves to be related. As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table, he was attacked in the dark by three ruffians, who were employed to assassinate him. The earl defended himself with so much resolution, that he despatched one of the aggressors; whilst a gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interposed, and disarmed another; the third secured himself by flight. This generous assistant was a disbanded officer, of a good family and fair reputation; who, by what we call the partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain suit of clothes to make a decent appearance at the castle. But his lordship, on this occasion, presenting him to the Duke of Ormond, with great importunity prevailed with his grace that he might resign his post of captain of the guards to his friend, which for about three years the gentleman enjoyed; and upon his death, the duke returned the commission to his generous benefactor."

When he had finished his business, he returned to London; was made master of the horse to the Duchess of York; and married the Lady Frances, daughter of the Earl of Burlington, and widow of Colonel Courteney.

He now busied his mind with literary projects, and formed the plan of a society for refining our language and fixing its standard; "in imitation," says Fenton, "of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad." In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publicly mentioned, though at that time great expectations were formed by some of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty be collected; but that it would produce what is expected from it may be doubted.

The Italian academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French academy thought that they refined their language, and doubtless thought rightly; but the event has not shown that they fixed it, for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academicians place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments there is sometimes a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power and the countenance of greatness. How little this is the state of our country needs not be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of public sport to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption, cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority; and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of King James's reign; and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the state was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging that "it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoked,"—a sentence of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hindrance or of pain, that he submitted himself to a French empiric, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies iræ*:

" My God, my Father, and my Friend,
Do not forsake me in my end."

He died on 17th January, 1684, and was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.

"In his writings," says Fenton, "we view the image of a mind which was naturally serious and solid, richly furnished and adorned with all the ornaments of learning, unaffectedly disposed in the most regular and elegant order. His imagination might have probably been more fruitful and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe. But that severity (delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style) contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man with justice can affirm he was ever equalled by any of our nation, without confessing at the same time that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing, his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection; but who can attain it?"

From this account of the riches of his mind, who would not imagine that they had been displayed in large volumes and numerous performances? Who would not, after the perusal of this character, be surprised to find that all the proofs of this genius and knowledge and judgment are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size? But thus it is that characters are written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would probably have been more fruitful and sprightly if his judgment had been less severe, may be answered, by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgment would probably have been less severe if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous to oppose judgment to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is perhaps the only correct writer in verse before Addison; and that if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries, there are at least fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise; for Mr. Pope has celebrated him as the only moral writer of King Charles's reign:

“Unhappy Dryden! in all Charles's days
Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays.”†

“— Roscommon, not more learn'd than good,
With manners generous as his noble blood;
To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,
And ev'ry author's merit but his own.”

His great work is his *Essay on Translated Verse*, of which Dryden writes thus in his preface to his *Miscellanies*:

“It was my Lord Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse*,” says Dryden, “which made me uneasy, till I tried whether or no I was capable of following his rules, and of reducing the speculation into practice. For many a fair precept in poetry is like a seeming demonstration in mathematics, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanic operation. I think I have generally observed his instructions: I am sure my reason is sufficiently convinced both of their truth and usefulness; which, in other words, is to confess no less a vanity than to pretend that I have, at least in some places, made examples to his rules.”

* They were published, together with those of Duke, in an 8vo volume, in 1717. The editor, whoever he was, professes to have taken great care to procure and insert all of his lordship's poems that are truly genuine. The truth of this assertion is flatly denied by the author of an account of Mr. John Pomfret, prefixed to his *Remains*, who asserts that the *Prospect of Death* was written by that person many years after Lord Roscommon's decease; as also, that the paraphrase of the *Prayer of Jeremy* was written by a gentleman of the name of Southcourt, living in the year 1724.

† Hurdis has the following compliment in his *Village Curate*:

“Roscommon fills with elegant remark
His verse as elegant: unspotted lines
Flow from a mind unspotted as themselves.”

This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities which one author pays to another; for when the sum of Lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should be copied in its elevation and depression. These are the rules that are celebrated as so definite and important, and for the delivery of which to mankind so much honour has been paid. Roscommon has indeed deserved his praises, had they been given with discernment; and bestowed not on the rules themselves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The essay, though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The story of the quack, borrowed from Boileau, was not worth the importation. He has confounded the British and Saxon mythology:

" I grant that from some mossy idol oak,
In double rhymes, our Thor and Woden spoke."

The oak, as I think Gildon has observed, belonged to the British Druids, and Thor and Woden were Saxon deities. Of the double rhymes, which he so liberally supposes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interposition of a long paragraph of blank verses is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a series of iambics among their heroics.

His next work is the translation of the *Art of Poetry*; which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind: it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem frigidly didactic, without rhyme, is so near to prose, that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse.

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress no subtlety of sentiment for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the Eclogue of Virgil and the *Dies iræ* are well translated; though the best line in the *Dies iræ* is borrowed from Dryden. In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

At the desire of the Duke of Ormond, he translated into French Dr. Sherlock's discourse on passive obedience, entitled *The Case of Resistance of the Supreme Powers*.

In the verses on the *Lap-Dog*, the pronouns 'thou' and 'you' are offensively confounded, and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are sprightly, and when they were written must have been very popular.

Of the scene of Guarini, and the prologue of *Pompey*, Mrs. Philips, in her letters to Sir Charles Cotterel, has given the history.

"Lord Roscommon," says she, "is certainly one of the most promising young noblemen in Ireland. He has paraphrased a psalm admirably; and a scene of *Pastor Fido* very finely, in some places much better than Sir Richard Fanshaw. This was undertaken merely in compliment to me, who happened to say that it was the best scene in Italian, and the worst in English. He was only two hours about it. It begins thus :

' Dear happy groves, and you the dark retreat
Of silent horror, Rest's eternal seat.' "

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism without revisal.*

When Mrs. Philips was in Ireland, some ladies that had seen her translation of *Pompey* resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin; and, to promote their design, Lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and Sir Edward Dering an epilogue; "which," says she, "are the best performances of those kinds I ever saw." If this is not criticism, it is at least gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky.

Of Roscommon's works the judgment of the public seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great; he never labours after exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous; and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature.†

* " First Mulgrave rose, Roscommon next, like light
To clear our darkness, and to guide our flight;
With steady judgment, and in lofty sounds,
They gave us patterns, and they set us bounds.
The Stagyrite and Horace laid aside,
Inform'd by them, we need no foreign guide."

Lord Lansdowne's Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry.

† A portion of his lordship's *Ode upon Solitude* may afford a fair specimen of the few original poems which he left behind him :

" Hail, sacred Solitude ! From this calm bay
I view the world's tempestuous sea,
And with wise pride despise
All those senseless vanities.
With pity mov'd for others, cast away
On rocks of hopes and fears I see 'em toss'd,
On rocks of folly and of vice I see 'em lost.
Some the prevailing malice of the great,

THOMAS SPRAT.*

(1636-1713.)

Thomas Spratt† was born in 1636, at Tallaton in Devonshire, the son of a clergyman; and having been educated, as he tells of himself, not at Westminster or Eton, but at a little school by the churchyard-side, became a commoner of Wadham College in Oxford; and, being chosen scholar next year, proceeded through the usual academical course, and in 1657 became master of arts. He obtained a fellowship, and commenced poet.

In 1659 his poem on the death of Oliver was published, with those of Dryden and Waller. In his dedication to Dr. Wilkins, he appears a very willing and liberal encomiast both of the living and the dead. He implores his patron's excuse of his verses, both as falling "so infinitely below the full and sublime genius of that excellent poet who made this way of writing free of our nation," and being "so little equal and proportioned to the renown of a prince on whom they were written: such great actions and lives deserving to be the subject of the noblest pens and most divine fancies." He proceeds: "Having so long experienced your care and indulgence, and been formed, as it were, by your own hands, not to entitle you to any thing which my meanness produces would be not only injustice, but sacrilege."‡

He published the same year a poem on the *Plague of Athens*; a subject of which it is not easy to say what could recommend it. To these he added afterwards a poem on Mr. Cowley's death.

After the Restoration he took orders, and by Cowley's recom-

Unhappy men, or adverse fate,
Sunk deep into the gulfs of an afflicted state;
But more, far more, a numberless prodigious train,
Whilst virtue courts 'em (but, alas! in vain),
Fly from her kind embracing arms,
Deaf to her fondest call, blind to her greatest charms;
And, sunk in pleasures and in brutish ease,
'They in their shipwreck'd state themselves obdurate please.'

* Johnson.

† "Aptly named *Sprat*, as being one of the least among the poets."—*Southey*.

‡ He acquired the name of the Pindaric Sprat by this poem, as Mr. Wood relates, but had reason to be ashamed of the title; and no doubt was heartily sick, after the Restoration, of all the reputation this poem had gained him, since it then exposed him to great contempt and insult, and to the severities of every writer who either disliked his person or his principles. "I shall not," says the famous Henry Stubbe, in a piece written against Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, "I shall not have any Pindaric ode in the press, 'dedicated to the happy memory of the most renowned Prince Oliver, Lord Protector;' nothing to recommend the 'sacred urn' of that blessed spirit to the veneration of posterity, as if

'His fame, like man, the elder it doth grow,
Will of itself turn whiter too,
Without what needless art can do.'

I never compared that regicide to Moses, or his son to Joshua, when other men's flatteries did exorbitate," &c.

mentation was made chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham, whom he is said to have helped in writing *The Rehearsal*. He was likewise chaplain to the king.

As he was the favourite of Wilkins, at whose house began those philosophical conferences and inquiries which in time produced the Royal Society, he was consequently engaged in the same studies, and became one of the fellows: and when, after their incorporation, something seemed necessary to reconcile the public to the new institution, he undertook to write its history, which he published in 1667. This is one of the few books which selection of sentiment and elegance of diction have been able to preserve, though written upon a subject flux and transitory. The *History of the Royal Society* is now read, not with the wish to know what they were then doing, but how their transactions are exhibited by Sprat.

In the next year he published *Observations on Sorbière's Voyage into England, in a Letter to Mr. Wren*. This is a work not ill performed, but perhaps rewarded with at least its full proportion of praise.

In 1668 he published Cowley's Latin poems, and prefixed in Latin the life of the author, which he afterwards amplified and placed before Cowley's English works, which were by will committed to his care.

Ecclesiastical benefices now fell fast upon him. In 1668 he became a prebendary of Westminster, and had afterwards the church of St. Margaret, adjoining to the abbey. He was in 1680 made canon of Windsor; in 1683, dean of Westminster; and in 1684, Bishop of Rochester.

The court having thus a claim to his diligence and gratitude, he was required to write the history of the Rye-house Plot; and in 1685 published *A true Account and Declaration of the horrid Conspiracy against the late King, his present Majesty, and the present Government*; a performance which he thought convenient, after the Revolution, to extenuate and excuse.

The same year, being clerk of the closet to the king, he was made dean of the chapel royal; and the year afterwards received the last proof of his master's confidence, by being appointed one of the commissioners for ecclesiastical affairs. On the critical day when the Declaration distinguished the true sons of the Church of England, he stood neuter, and permitted it to be read at Westminster, but pressed none to violate his conscience; and when the Bishop of London was brought before them, gave his voice in his favour.

Thus far he suffered interest or obedience to carry him; but further he refused to go. When he found that the powers of the ecclesiastical commission were to be exercised against those who had refused the Declaration, he wrote to the lords and other commissioners a formal profession of his unwillingness to exercise that authority any longer, and withdrew himself from them. After they had read his letter, they adjourned for six months, and scarcely ever met afterwards.

When King James was frightened away, and a new government was to be settled, Sprat was one of those who considered in a conference the great question, Whether the crown was vacant? and manfully spoke in favour of his old master.

He complied, however, with the new establishment, and was left unmolested; but in 1692 a strange attack was made upon him by one Robert Young and Stephen Blackhead, both men convicted of infamous crimes, and both, when the scheme was laid, prisoners in Newgate. These men drew up an association, in which they whose names were subscribed declared their resolution to restore King James, to seize the Princess of Orange dead or alive, and to be ready with 30,000 men to meet King James when he should land. To this they put the names of Sancroft, Sprat, Marlborough, Salisbury, and others. The copy of Dr. Sprat's name was obtained by a fictitious request, to which an answer in his own hand was desired. His hand was copied so well, that he confessed it might have deceived himself. Blackhead, who had carried the letter, being sent again with a plausible message, was very curious to see the house, and particularly importunate to be let into the study, where, as is supposed, he designed to leave the association. This, however, was denied him, and he dropped it in a flower-pot in the parlour.

Young now laid an information before the Privy Council; and May 7, 1692, the bishop was arrested, and kept at a messenger's under a strict guard eleven days. His house was searched, and directions were given that the flower-pots should be inspected. The messengers, however, missed the room in which the paper was left. Blackhead went, therefore, a third time, and finding his paper where he had left it, brought it away.

The bishop, having been enlarged, was, on June the 10th and 13th, examined again before the Privy Council, and confronted with his accusers. Young persisted with the most obdurate impudence, against the strongest evidence; but the resolution of Blackhead by degrees gave way. There remained at last no doubt of the bishop's innocence, who, with great prudence and diligence, traced the progress and detected the characters of the two informers, and published an account of his own examination and deliverance; which made such an impression upon him, that he commemorated it through life by a yearly day of thanksgiving.

With what hope or what interest the villains had contrived an accusation which they must know themselves utterly unable to prove, was never discovered.

After this he passed his days in the quiet exercise of his function. When the cause of Sacheverell put the public in commotion, he honestly appeared among the friends of the Church. He lived to his seventy-ninth year, and died May 20, 1713.

Burnet is not very favourable to his memory; but he and Burnet were old rivals.* On some public occasion they both preached before the House of Commons. There prevailed in those days an indecent custom: when the preacher touched any favourite topic in a manner that delighted his audience, their approbation was expressed by a loud "hum," continued in proportion to their zeal or pleasure.

* Bishop Burnet says of him, that "his parts were very bright in his youth, and gave great hopes, but were blasted by a lazy libertine course of life, to which his temper and good-nature carried him, without considering the duties, or even the decencies, of his profession. He was justly esteemed," adds he, "a great master of our language, and one of our correctest writers."

When Burnet preached, part of his congregation "hummed" so loudly and so long, that he sat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat preached, he likewise was honoured with the like animating "hum;" but he stretched out his hand to the congregation, and cried, "Peace, peace; I pray you peace!"

This I was told in my youth by my father, an old man, who had been no careless observer of the passages of those times.

Burnet's sermon, says Salmon, was remarkable for sedition, and Sprat's for loyalty. Burnet had the thanks of the house; Sprat had no thanks, but a good living from the king, which, he said, was of as much value as the thanks of the Commons.

The works of Sprat, besides his few poems, are, *The History of the Royal Society*, *The Life of Cowley*, *The Answer to Sorbière*, *The History of the Rye-house Plot*, *The Relation of his own Examination*, and a volume of sermons. I have heard it observed, with great justice, that every book is of a different kind, and that each has its distinct and characteristical excellence.

My business is only with his poems. He considered Cowley as a model; and supposed that, as he was imitated, perfection was approached. Nothing, therefore, but Pindaric liberty was to be expected. There is in his few productions no want of such conceits as he thought excellent; and of those our judgment may be settled by the first that appears in his praise of Cromwell, where he says that Cromwell's "fame, like man, will grow white as it grows old."

SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE.

(1636-1694.)

Sir George Etherege, descended from an ancient family of Oxfordshire, was born about the year 1636. After receiving some education at the University of Cambridge, he travelled in France. On his return, he for some time read the law at one of the inns of court, in which he made but little progress, and soon abandoned severer studies for pleasure and accomplishments.

In the year 1664 appeared his first dramatic performance, *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub*, which brought him acquainted, as he himself informs us, with the Earl of Dorset, to whom it is dedicated. The fame of this play, and the author's easy, unreserved conversation and happy address, rendered him a favourite with the leading wits of the day, such as the Duke of Buckingham, Sir Charles Sedley, the Earl of Rochester, Sir Car Scroop. Animated by their encouragement, in the year 1668 he produced another comedy, called *She would if she could*, which gained him no less applause than the former among the judges; though, as we learn from a contemporary writer, it suffered so much from an imperfect representation, that if it had not been for the favour of the court, it could never have preserved its credit. Mr. Phillips says of these two comedies, that "for pleasant wit, and no bad economy, they are judged not unworthy the

approbation they have met with." Gildon agrees with Langbaine, that the latter is a comedy of the first rank ; and Langbaine wishes, " for the public satisfaction, that this great master would oblige the world with more of his performances ; which would put a stop to the crude and indigested plays that, for want of better, cumber the stage." Whatever satisfaction, however, the wit of Etherege might give to the gayer part of mankind, the graver were highly offended at the tendency of his plays to encourage immorality ; and a critic of a later date, speaking of sensual descriptions and expressions, observes, that " this expedient to supply the deficiency of wit has been used more or less by most of the authors who have succeeded on the stage : though," says he, " I know but one who has professedly written a play upon the basis of the desire of multiplying our species ; and that is the polite Sir George Etherege,—if I understand what the lady would be at in the play called *She would if she could*. Other poets have here and there given an intimation that there is this design under all the disguises and affectations which a lady may put on ; but no author except this has made sure work of it, and put the imaginations of the audience upon this one purpose, from the beginning to the end of the comedy. It has always fared accordingly ; for whether it be that all who go to this piece would if they could, or that the innocent goes to it to guess only what she would if she could, the play has always been well received."*

In the year 1676 he published his third and last comedy, *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* ; which exalted his reputation even above what the former had done. What rendered this play very popular was, that he was supposed to have drawn some of the chief characters from the life, and to have shadowed out, under feigned names, some of his contemporaries and acquaintance. Thus, Beau Hewit, the most notorious fop of his time, was supposed to be designed under his first character ; Dorimant, to be drawn for his friend Lord Rochester ; the poet was himself suspected to be sketched out in Medley ; the very shoemaker in the first act is believed to have been a real person, and is said, indeed, to have been so distinguished by this bringing him forward, as from very poor circumstances to have made a fortune, by the custom it attracted for him. Be this as it may, the notion then prevailed so far, that Dryden, in the epilogue he wrote to this play, found it proper to check the public a little, by assuring them that no personal satire was intended ; or, as he expresses it in the last line, that " no one fool was hunted from the herd." Applauded, however, as this play was for wit, yet, like the former, it was condemned for immorality. The critic above quoted says : " It is received as the pattern of genteel comedy ; but the whole is a perfect contradiction to good manners, good sense, and common honesty : there is nothing in it but what is built on the ruin of virtue and innocence ; and the being lost to a sense of these is the only thing that can make one see this comedy without having more frequent occasion of sorrow and indignation, than of mirth and laughter." This writer allows, notwithstanding the severity of his censure, that " the negligence of every thing which engages the attention of the sober and valuable part of mankind appears very

* Spectator, vol. i. No. 51.

well drawn in this piece ; and though it is nature in her ugliest form, in its utmost corruption and degeneracy, yet it is nature."* These three comedies were collected and printed in 8vo in the year 1704, and reprinted in 12mo in 1715. At the end of this last edition are subjoined five poems by our author.

We have seen that between the publication of our author's last play and his last but one there was an interval of above seven years ; which delay, owing to his indolence and love of pleasure, was the occasion of his missing the place of poet laureate. This we learn from *The Trial of the Poets for the Bays, &c.* ; a poem written after the example of Sir John Suckling's upon the same subject, and printed among the miscellaneous works of Villiers Duke of Buckingham, though it is said to have had the Earl of Rochester for its author. In this poem Apollo finds some plea of exception to the claim of every poetical candidate for the laurel ; and having first of all discarded Dryden, he proceeds thus :

“ This rev'rend author was no sooner set by,
But Apollo had got gentle George in his eye,
And frankly confess'd, of all men that writ,
There's none had more fancy, sense, judgment, or wit ;
But i' th' crying sin idleness he was so harden'd,
That his long seven years' silence was not to be pardon'd.”

Idleness, however, was not Etherege's only fault : he was addicted to some great extravagances—to gaming, to intrigue, to wine—which hurt his fortune, his health, and his character. Gildon says, that for marrying a fortune he was knighted : the history of this is, that to repair his circumstances, he courted a rich old widow, whose ambition was such, that she would not marry him unless he could make her a lady ; which, by the purchase of knighthood, he was forced to do. He was in his person a fair, slender, genteel man ; and in his deportment very affable and courteous, of a sprightly and generous temper ; which, with his lively and natural vein of writing, acquired him the appellation of “ gentle George,” and “ easy Etherege.” His courtly address and other accomplishments procured him the favour of James the Second's queen, to whom he had dedicated his last play when she was only daughter of the Duke of Modena ; and by her interest and recommendation he was sent as English minister at Ratisbon,—or, as the wits called it, in reference to our poet, “ Rot-his-bones.”

The manner of Etherege's death was characteristic of the life which he had led. According to Oldys, whose account is confirmed by the writers of the *Biographica Britannica*, he had been entertaining some friends, and having drunk to intoxication, was proceeding with lights in his hands to show his guests from his apartments, when he lost his balance, and tumbling headlong downstairs, broke his neck in the fall. He died at Ratisbon, according to Dennis, in 1693 or 1694 ; the year 1688, however, seems to be the last in which he was heard of in England.

By his wife, Etherege is believed to have left no children. By the beautiful Mrs. Barry, to whom poor Otway addressed his six well-

* Spectator, vol. i. No. 65.

known pathetic letters, he left one daughter, on whom he contrived to settle six or seven thousand pounds: the child, however, did not live to benefit by the provision. In the words of Oldys, Sir George Etherege was "a man of much courtesy and delicate address." Profligacy, sprightliness, and good-humour seem to have been his principal characteristics.



CHARLES SACKVILLE, EARL OF DORSET.*

(1637-1706.)

Of the Earl of Dorset the character has been drawn so largely and so elegantly by Prior, to whom he was familiarly known, that nothing can be added by a casual hand; and as its author is so generally read, it would be useless officiousness to transcribe it.

Charles Sackville was born Jan. 24, 1637. Having been educated under a private tutor, he travelled into Italy, and returned a little before the Restoration. He was chosen into the first parliament that was called, for East Grinstead in Sussex, and soon became a favourite of Charles II.; but undertook no public employment, being too eager

* Johnson.

of the riotous and licentious pleasures which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought wits, at that time imagined themselves entitled to indulge.

One of these frolics has, by the industry of Wood, come down to posterity. Sackville, who was then Lord Buckhurst, with Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow-street, by Covent Garden, and going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked, and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the public indignation was awakened; the crowd attempted to force the door, and being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house.

For this misdemeanour they were indicted, and Sedley was fined 500*l.*: what was the sentence of the others is not known. Sedley employed Killigrew and another to procure a remission from the king; but (mark the friendship of the dissolute!) they begged the fine for themselves, and exacted it to the last groat.

In 1665, Lord Buckhurst attended the Duke of York as a volunteer in the Dutch war; and was in the battle of June 3, when eighteen great Dutch ships were taken, fourteen others were destroyed, and Opdam the admiral, who engaged the duke, was blown up beside him with all his crew.

On the night before the battle he is said to have composed the celebrated song, "To all you ladies now at land," with equal tranquillity of mind and promptitude of wit. Seldom any splendid story is wholly true. I have heard, from the late Earl of Orrery, who was likely to have good hereditary intelligence, that Lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only retouched or finished it on the memorable evening. But even this, whatever it may subtract from his facility, leaves him his courage.

He was soon after made a gentleman of the bed-chamber, and sent on short embassies to France.

In 1674, the estate of his uncle James Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, came to him by its owner's death, and the title was conferred on him the year after. In 1677 he became, by the death of his father, Earl of Dorset, and inherited the estate of his family.

In 1684, having buried his first wife, of the family of Bagot, who left him no child, he married a daughter of the Earl of Northampton, celebrated both for beauty and understanding.

He received some favourable notice from King James; but soon found it necessary to oppose the violence of his innovations, and with some other lords appeared in Westminster Hall to countenance the bishops at their trial.

As enormities grew every day less supportable, he found it necessary to concur in the Revolution. He was one of those lords who sat every day in council to preserve the public peace after the king's departure; and, what is not the most illustrious action of his life, was employed to conduct the Princess Anne to Nottingham with a guard, such as might alarm the populace, as they passed, with false apprehensions of her danger. Whatever end may be designed, there is always something despicable in a trick.

He became, as may be easily supposed, a favourite of King Wil-

liam, who, the day after his accession, made him lord chamberlain of the household, and gave him afterwards the garter (1691). He happened to be among those that were tossed with the king in an open boat sixteen hours, in very rough and cold weather, on the coast of Holland. His health afterwards declined; and on Jan. 19, 1705-6, he died at Bath.

He was a man whose elegance and judgment were universally confessed, and whose bounty to the learned and witty was generally known. To the indulgent affection of the public, Lord Rochester bore ample testimony in this remark: "I know not how it is; but Lord Buckhurst may do what he will, yet is never in the wrong."

If such a man attempted poetry, we cannot wonder that his works were praised. Dryden, whom, if Prior tells truth, he distinguished by his beneficence, and who lavished his blandishments on those who are not known to have so well deserved them, undertaking to produce authors of our own country superior to those of antiquity, says, "I would instance your lordship in satire, and Shakespeare in tragedy." Would it be imagined that, of this rival to antiquity, all the satires were little personal invectives, and that his longest composition was a song of eleven stanzas?*

The blame, however, of this exaggerated praise falls on the encomiast, not upon the author, whose performances are, what they pretend to be, the effusions of a man of wit—gay, vigorous, and airy. His verses to Howard show great fertility of mind; and his *Dorinda* has been imitated by Pope.

SAMUEL COLVIL.

(Born circa 1640.)

Samuel Colvil is the author of a poem which has been designated the Scottish Hudibras, but with very little claim to the title. *The Mock Poem, or Whiggs' Supplication* (London, 1681), is certainly an imitation of Butler; but it displays no portion of the English poet's wit or learning. Its popularity exceeded its merits; for it has been frequently reprinted. Colvil, who is celebrated by Cunningham, in his *History of Great Britain*, as a strenuous defender of the Protestant religion, is also the author of a theological work, entitled *The Grand Impostor Detected; or, an Historical Dispute of the Papacy and Popish Religion*. Part I. Edinburgh, 1673.

* Most of Lord Dorset's works have been collected in the late editions of our minor poets; and with the Duke of Buckingham's works are printed two of Lord Dorset's poems, and in Prior's posthumous works is one called "The Antiquated Coquet." His lordship and Waller are said to have assisted Mrs. Catherine Philips in her translation of Corneille's *Pompey*.



SIR CHARLES SEDLEY.

(Circa 1639-1728.)

Sir Charles was the son of Sir John Sedley, of Aylesford in Kent, by a daughter of Sir Henry Savile, and was born about the year 1639. At seventeen years of age he became a fellow-commoner of Wadham College in Oxford; but taking no degree, retired to his own county, without either travelling or going to the inns of court. As soon as the Restoration was effected, he came to London in order to join the general jubilee; and then commenced wit, courtier, poet, and gallant. He was so much admired and applauded, that he began to be a kind of oracle among the poets; and no performance was approved or condemned till Sir Charles Sedley had given judgment. This made King Charles jestingly say to him, that nature had given him a patent to be Apollo's viceroy; and Lord Rochester bears testimony to the same, when he puts him foremost among the judges of poetry :

“ I loath the rabble ; 'tis enough for me,
 If Sedley, Shadwell, Shepherd, Wycherley,
 Godolphin, Butler, Buckhurst, Buckingham,
 And some few more, whom I omit to name,
 Approve my sense, I count their censure fame.”

It happened by Sir Charles, in respect of the king, as is said of the famous Cardinal Richelieu, viz. that they who recommended him to the royal favour thereby supplanted themselves, and afterwards envied him; but with this difference between the cardinal and Sir Charles, that the latter was never ungrateful. When he had a taste of the court, as the king never would part with him, so he never would part from the king; and yet two things proved particularly

detrimental to him in it: first, his estate, so far from being improved, was diminished; and secondly, his morals were debauched. The king delighted in his conversation; and he was the dearer to his majesty on this account, that he never asked a favour: whereas some other courtiers, by their bold importunity, exhausted that prince's treasures, who could not deny a man who craved, though he hated his forwardness; nor could remember the silent indigence of his friend, though he applauded the modesty of it. He was deeply immersed in the public distractions of the times, and is said to have committed many debaucheries.

Sir Charles was chosen to serve for Romney in Kent, in that long parliament which began the 8th of May, 1661; and continued to sit for several parliaments after. He was extremely active for the Revolution; which was thought the more extraordinary, as he had received favours from King James II. That prince had an amour with a daughter of Sir Charles,—who was not very handsome, James being remarkable for not fixing upon beauties,—and had created her Countess of Dorchester. This honour, far from pleasing, shocked Sir Charles; for great a libertine as he had been himself, he could not bear his daughter's dishonour, which he considered as made more conspicuous by this exaltation. He therefore conceived a hatred to James; and being asked one day why he appeared so warm for the Revolution, he answered, "From a principle of gratitude: for since his majesty has made my daughter a countess, it is fit I should do all I can to make his daughter a queen." He died towards 1728.

His works were printed in two volumes 8vo, 1719; and consist of plays, translations, songs, prologues, epilogues, and little occasional pieces. However amorously tender and delicate his poems, yet they have not much strength, nor do they afford great marks of genius. The softness of his verses is characterised by the Duke of Buckingham, who calls them *Sedley's Witchcraft*; and the art of insinuating loose principles in decent language is thus ascribed to him by the Earl of Rochester:

"Sedley has that prevailing, gentle art,
That can with a resistless charm impart
The loosest wishes to the chastest heart;
Raise such a conflict, kindle such a fire,
Betwixt declining virtue and desire,
'Till the poor vanquish'd maid dissolves away,
In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day."

Sedley's plays are:

1. *The Mulberry Garden*. Comedy. 1668.
2. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Tragedy. 1667.
3. *Bellamira; or, the Mistress*. Comedy. 1687. While this play was acting, the roof of the play-house fell down, but very few were hurt, except the author; whose merry friend, Sir Fleetwood Shepherd, told him, that there was so much fire in the play, that it blew up the poet, house and all. Sir Charles answered, "No, the play was so heavy it brought down the house, and buried the poet in his own rubbish."
4. *Beauty the Conqueror; or, the Death of Mark Antony*. Tragedy.
5. *The Grumbler*. Comedy.
6. *The Tyrant King of Crete*. Tragedy.

THOMAS SHADWELL.

(1640-1692.)

Thomas Shadwell was descended of a good family in the county of Stafford, but born at Stanton Hall in Norfolk, a seat of his father's, about the year 1640. He was educated at Caius College, Cambridge; and afterwards placed in the Middle Temple, where he studied the law some time, and then went abroad. Upon his return from his travels, he applied himself to dramatic writing; and was so successful therein, that he became known to several persons of great wit and great quality, and was highly esteemed and valued by them. At the Revolution, he was, by his interest with the Earl of Dorset, made his majesty's historiographer and poet laureate: and when some persons urged that there were authors who had better pretensions to the laurel, his lordship is said to have replied, that "he did not pretend to determine how great a poet Shadwell might be, but was sure that he was an honest man." This reply reflects great honour on Shadwell, but was not at all to the purpose. He succeeded Dryden as poet laureate, who had so warmly espoused the opposite interest, that at the Revolution he was dispossessed of his place. This, however, was a great mortification to Dryden, who resented the indignity very warmly, and immediately conceived an antipathy to Shadwell; of which he has given proof in his *Mac-Flecknoe*, where he says,

"Others to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense."

But all we learn hence is, that a satirist does not pay regard to truth when it interferes with the gratification of his spleen; for nothing can be more unjust than the idea these lines are intended to convey. Shadwell was not, indeed, so great a poet as Dryden; but Shadwell did not write nonsense. Many of his comedies have fine strokes of humour in them, and abound in original characters strongly marked and well sustained. Langbaine says, "There is nobody will deny this play (*The Virtuoso*) its due applause: at least, I know that the University of Oxford, who may be allowed competent judges of comedy, especially of such characters as Sir Nicholas Gimcrack and Sir Formal Trifle, applauded it. And as no man ever undertook to discover the frailties of such pretenders to this kind of knowledge before Mr. Shadwell, so none since Mr. Jonson's time ever drew so many different characters of humours, and with such success." Shadwell had great facility in writing, for in the preface to his *Psyche* he tells us that tragedy was written by him in five weeks. Thus the Earl of Rochester says,

"None seem to touch upon true comedy,
But hasty Shadwell and slow Wycherley;"

where, by the way, he not only allows him to be excellent in comedy, but seems even to give him the preference to Wycherley. And yet there is a saying of Lord Rochester which shows, that whatever opinion he had of his writings, he had a still better of his conversation; for he said, that "if he had burnt all he wrote, and printed all

he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet." Shadwell, as appears from Rochester's *Session of the Poets*, was a great favourite with Otway, and lived in intimacy with him; which might, perhaps, be the occasion of Dryden's expressing so much contempt for Otway, which was still more ungrounded than his contempt for Shadwell. Shadwell died the 9th of December, 1692; and his death was occasioned, as some say, by too large a dose of opium, given him by mistake. A white marble monument, with his bust, was erected in Westminster Abbey by his son Sir John Shadwell; and his funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Nicholas Brady, the translator of the Psalms, who tells us, among other things, that "he was a man of great honesty and integrity, and had a real love of truth and sincerity, an inviolable fidelity and strictness to his word, an unalterable friendship wheresoever he professed it, and (however the world may be mistaken in him) a much deeper sense of religion than many others have who pretend to it more openly."

Besides his dramatic works, he wrote several other pieces of poetry; the chief of which are his congratulatory poem on the Prince of Orange's coming to England; another on Queen Mary; a translation of the tenth satire of Juvenal, &c. Shadwell, in his comedies, imitated Ben Jonson, and proposed him as his model of excellence. His plays are:

1. The Sullen Lovers; or, the Impertinent. Comedy.
 2. The Humorist. Comedy.
 3. The Royal Shepherdess. Tragi-Comedy. 1669.
 4. The Virtuoso. Comedy. 1676.
 5. Pysche. Tragedy. 1675.
 6. The Libertine. Tragedy. 1676.
 7. Epsom Wells. Comedy. 1676.
 8. The History of Timon of Athens the Man-hater. 1678. In the dedication to George Duke of Buckingham, Shadwell modestly says, "This play was originally Shakespeare's, who never made more masterly strokes than in this; yet I can truly say I have made it into a play."
 9. The Miser. Comedy (from Molière's *Avare*).
 10. A true Widow. Comedy. 1679.
 11. The Lancashire Witches, and Teague O'Divelly, the Irish Priest. Comedy. 1682.
 12. The Woman Captain. Comedy.
 13. The Squire of Alsatia. Comedy. 1688.
 14. Bury Fair. Comedy. 1689. In the dedication he observes, "that this play was written during eight months' painful sickness, wherein all the several days in which he was able to write any part of a scene amounted not to one month, except some few, which were employed in indispensable business."
 15. Amorous Bigot; with the second part of Teague O'Divelly. Comedy. 1690.
 16. The Scowerers. Comedy. 1690.
 17. The Volunteers; or, the Stock-Jobbers. Comedy.
- In the epilogue, the character of Mr. Shadwell, who was then dead, was given.

ELKANAH SETTLE.

(1648-1724.)

Elkanah Settle was born at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, in 1648, and in the 18th year of his age was entered commoner of Trinity

College, Oxon; but he quitted the University without taking any degree, and came to London, where he applied himself to the study of poetry, in which he lived to make a figure of some sort. Finding the nation divided between the opinions of Whig and Tory, and sensible that a man could not make any considerable figure unless he attached himself to one of these parties, Settle thought proper, on his first setting out in life, to join the Whigs, who were then, though the minor, yet a powerful party, and to support whose interest he employed his talents.

About the year 1680, when the debates ran high concerning the exclusion of the Duke of York from the succession, on account of his religious principles, our author wrote *The Character of a Popish Successor, and what may be expected from such a one: humbly offered to the consideration of both the Houses of Parliament appointed to meet at Oxon on March 21st, 1681*. This essay, it seems, was thought of consequence enough to merit answers, as at that time the Exclusion Bill employed the general conversation. The author of one of these, *The Character of a Rebellion, and what England may expect from one*, printed 1682, is very severe on the character of Settle, whom he represents as an arrant knave, a despicable coward, a profane atheist, and of mean birth. "Most of his relations (says he) are barbers; and of the baseness, falseness, and mutability of his nature, too many evidences may be brought. He closed with the Whigs, contrary to the principles he formerly professed, at a time when they took occasion to push their cause, upon the breaking out of Oates's plot; and was ready to fall off from, and return to them, for his own advantage."

Another answer was published by Sir Roger L'Estrange; and to his performance, entitled *The Character of a Papist in Masquerade supported by Authority and Experience*, Settle made a reply, entitled *The Character of a Popish Successor compleat*, which, in the opinion of the critics, is the smartest piece ever written upon the subject of the Exclusion Bill.

On the coronation of James II. the two parts of *The Character of a Popish Successor* were, with the Exclusion Bill, on the 23d of April, 1685, burnt by the sub-wardens and fellows of Merton College, Oxon, in a public bonfire made in the middle of their great quadrangle. During these contentions Mr. Settle also published a piece called *The Medal reversed*" (1681); an answer to a poem of Dryden's called *The Medal*, occasioned by the bill against the Earl of Shaftesbury being ignored.

Mr. Settle's zeal created for him a no less formidable antagonist than Dryden, who was obliged by his place of laureate to speak and write for the court. Dryden had formerly joined Settle, in order to reduce the growing reputation of Shadwell; but their interest being now so opposite, they became poetical enemies, in which Settle was, no doubt, over-matched. He wrote a poem, however, called *Azaria and Hushai*, designed as an answer to Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*.

Soon after this, if we may credit Wood, Settle changed sides and turned Tory, with as much violence as he had formerly espoused the interest of the Whigs. He published in 1683 a narrative, the first part of which is concerning himself, as being of the Tory side; the second to show the inconsistency and contradiction of Titus Oates's narrative of the plot of the Popish party against the life of King

Charles II. at the time when that monarch intended to alter his ministry, to consent to the exclusion of his brother, and to take measures to support the Protestant interest.

Settle is also said by Wood to have been the author of *Animadversions on the Last Speech and Confession of William Lord Russel*, and of *Remarks on Algernon Sidney's Paper delivered to the Sheriffs at his Execution*, London, 1683.

He also wrote a poem on the *Coronation of the high and mighty Monarch James II.*, London, 1685; and then commenced journalist for the court, published weekly an essay in behalf of the administration, and became poet laureate.

His dramatic works are :

1. The Empress of Morocco. Tragedy.
2. Love and Revenge. Tragedy. 1675.
3. Cambyzes, King of Persia. Tragedy.
4. The Conquest of China by the Tartars. Tragedy. 1676.
5. Ibrahim, the illustrious Bassa. Tragedy in heroic verse. 1677.
6. Pastor Fido; or the Faithful Shepherd.
7. Fatal Love; or the Forced Inconstancy. Tragedy. 1680.
8. The Female Prelate; being a history of the Life and Death of Pope Joan. Tragedy. 1680.
9. The Heir of Morocco; with the Death of Gyland. Tragedy. 1682.
10. Distressed Innocence; or the Princess of Persia. Tragedy.
11. The Ambitious Slave; or a generous Revenge. Tragedy. 1694.
12. The World in the Moon. Dramatic Comic Opera. 1698.
13. City Rambler; or the Playhouse Wedding. Comedy.
14. The Virgin Prophetess; or the Fate of Troy. Opera. 1701.
15. The Ladies' Triumph. Comic Opera. 1710.

Settle had a pension from the corporation of London for an annual panegyric to celebrate the festival of the lord mayor, and in consequence wrote various poems which he calls *Triumphs for the Inauguration of the Lord Mayors*, which are preserved in his works, and which it would be needless to enumerate. Besides his dramatic pieces, he published many occasional poems addressed to his patrons, and some funeral elegies on the deaths of his friends. Whatever the merits of his poetry, Settle was the best contriver of machinery in England; and for many years of the latter part of his life received a salary from Mrs. Minns and her daughter Mrs. Leigh, for writing drolls for Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs.

He died in the Charterhouse, 1724. Some months before his decease he offered a play to the managers of Drury Lane, but lived not to introduce it on the stage: it was called *The Expulsion of the Danes from Britain*.

“If poor Elkanah,” observes Mr. Southey, “had been baptised by any name in the common *propria quæ maribus* of England, his ignominy might have slept with him in the grave; but his godfathers enabled his enemies to hand him down to everlasting remembrance.

“It was Elkanah's misfortune, that he should have been instigated to rival Dryden: and it is a true specimen of the effect faction will produce upon taste; for there were many who believed and asserted that he excelled his antagonist. There remains a heavier charge against him than his natural dulness and his pardonable vanity:—he was a scoundrel. The principles which he honestly espoused in the

outset, he abandoned for interest; and he was employed to animadvert upon the dying declarations of Russel and Sidney. After this, despised as well as despicable, we find him subsisting by writing drolls for Bartholomew Fair, playing the dragon in St. George for England, in a green leather case of his own invention, and dying in an almshouse."



ROCHESTER.*

(1648-1680.)

John Wilmot, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's History,† was (observes Cibber) born April 10th, 1648, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by Lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy, and at his return devoted himself to the court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich,

* Johnson.

† He was greatly instrumental in the preservation of Charles II. after the battle of Worcester.

and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board a vessel commanded by Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who in an open boat went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with slinking away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield Duke of Buckingham has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he totally subdued in his travels; but when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vicious company, by which his principles were corrupted and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine excites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolics, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and having made physic part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study; he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country and amused himself with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard of every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless; and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness, till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.

At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open with great freedom the tenour of his opinions and the course of his life; and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty and the truth of Christianity,



ROCHESTER DISGUISED AS A GERMAN QUACK DOCTOR.

as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary conferences is given by Burnet in a book entitled *Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester*; which the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgment.

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings. The compositions of a man whose name was heard so often were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment, professing in the title-page to be printed at Antwerp.

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt. The imitation of Horace's satire, the verses to Lord Mulgrave, the *Satire against Man*, the verses upon *Nothing*, and perhaps some others, are, I believe, genuine, and perhaps most of those which the collection exhibits.

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His songs have no particular character; they tell, like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismissal and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the commonplaces of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy, but have little nature and little sentiment.

His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles II. began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times; and perhaps few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is, indeed, sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his muse is his poem upon *Nothing*. He is not the first who has chosen this barren topic for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called *Nihil* in Latin by Passerat, a poet and critic of the sixteenth century in France; who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

" Molliter ossa quiescent,
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis."

In examining this performance, nothing must be considered as having not only a negative, but a kind of positive signification: as, I need not fear thieves; I have nothing, and nothing is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively,

LIVES OF THE BRITISH POETS.

in the second it is taken positively as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question whether he should use *à rien faire* or *à ne rien faire*; and the first was preferred, because it gave *rien* a sense in some sort positive. Nothing can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line :

“ Nothing, thou elder brother ev'n to shade.”

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book *De Umbra*, by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of shade, concludes with a poem in which are these lines :

“ Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris
Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi
Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes
Aeris et vasti laqueata palatia cœli —
Omnibus umbra prior.”

The positive sense is generally preserved with great skill through the whole poem; though sometimes, in a subordinate sense, the negative nothing is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his lampoon on Sir Car Scrope, who, in a poem called *The Praise of Satire*, had some lines like these :

“ He who can push into a midnight fray
His brave companion, and then run away,
Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
Then put it off with some buffoon conceit,—
Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,
And court him as top fiddler of the town.”

This was meant of Rochester, whose buffoon conceit was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that every man would be a coward if he durst; and drew from him those furious verses, to which Scrope made in reply an epigram ending with these lines :

“ Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word :
Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.”

Of the *Satire against Mankind*, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed ?

JOHN SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.*

(1649-1721.)

John Sheffield, descended from a long series of illustrious ancestors, was born in 1649, the son of Edmund Earl of Mulgrave, who

* Johnson.

died in 1658. The young lord was put into the hands of a tutor with whom he was so little satisfied, that he got rid of him in a short time, and at an age not exceeding twelve years resolved to educate himself. Such a purpose, formed at such an age, and successfully prosecuted, delights as it is strange, and instructs as it is real.

His literary acquisitions are more wonderful, as those years in which they are commonly made were spent by him in the tumult of a military life or the gaiety of a court. When war was declared against the Dutch, he went at seventeen on board the ship in which Prince Rupert and the Duke of Albemarle sailed, with the command of the fleet ; but by contrariety of winds they were restrained from action. His zeal for the king's service was recompensed by the command of one of the independent troops of horse then raised to protect the coast.



JOHN SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Next year he received a summons to parliament, which, as he was then but eighteen years old, the Earl of Northumberland censured as at least indecent ; and his objection was allowed. He had a quarrel with the Earl of Rochester, which he has, perhaps, too ostentatiously narrated ; as Rochester's surviving sister, the Lady Sandwich, is said to have told him with very sharp reproaches.

When another Dutch war (1672) broke out, he went again a volunteer in the ship which the celebrated Lord Ossory commanded ; and there made, as he relates, two curious remarks :

“ I have observed two things, which I dare affirm, though not

generally believed. One was, that the wind of a cannon-ball, though flying never so near, is incapable of doing the least harm; and indeed, were it otherwise, no man above deck would escape. The other was, that a great shot may be sometimes avoided, even as it flies, by changing one's ground a little; for when the wind sometimes blew away the smoke, it was so clear a sunshiny day, that we could easily perceive the bullets (that were half-spent) fall into the water, and from thence bound up again among us, which gives sufficient time for making a step or two on any side: though, in so swift a motion, 'tis hard to judge well in what line the bullet comes; which if mistaken, may by removing cost a man his life, instead of saving it."

His behaviour was so favourably represented by Lord Ossory, that he was advanced to the command of the *Catharine*, the best second-rate ship in the navy.

He afterwards raised a regiment of foot, and commanded it as colonel. The land forces were sent ashore by Prince Rupert; and he lived in the camp very familiarly with Schomberg. He was then appointed colonel of the old Holland regiment, together with his own; and had the promise of a garter, which he obtained in his twenty-fifth year. He was likewise made gentleman of the bed-chamber. He afterwards went into the French service, to learn the art of war under Turenne, but stayed only a short time. Being by the Duke of Monmouth opposed in his pretensions to the first troop of horse-guards, he, in return, made Monmouth suspected by the Duke of York. He was not long after, when the unlucky Monmouth fell into disgrace, recompensed with the lieutenancy of Yorkshire and the government of Hull.

Thus rapidly did he make his way both to military and civil honours and employments. Yet, busy as he was, he did not neglect his studies, but at least cultivated poetry; in which he must have been early considered as uncommonly skilful, if it be true which is reported, that, when he was not yet twenty years old, his recommendation advanced Dryden to the laurel.

The Moors having besieged Tangier, he was sent (1680) with two thousand men to its relief. A strange story is told of the danger to which he was intentionally exposed in a leaky ship, to gratify some resentful jealousy of the king, whose health he therefore would never permit at his table, till he saw himself in a safer place.* His voyage was prosperously performed in three weeks; and the Moors, without a contest, retired before him.

In this voyage he composed *The Vision*; a licentious poem, such as was fashionable in those times, with little power of invention or propriety of sentiment.

At his return he found the king kind, who perhaps had never been angry; and he continued a wit and a courtier as before.

At the succession of King James, to whom he was intimately known, and by whom he thought himself beloved, he naturally expected still brighter sunshine; but all know how soon that reign began

* Because, as it was said, he had made overtures of marriage to the Princess Anne. Charles II., as Southey observes, was certainly unprincipled enough to connive at any wickedness; but in this case there would have been some difficulty in getting a captain to assist in the plot.

to gather clouds. His expectations were not disappointed ; he was immediately admitted into the privy-council, and made lord-chamberlain. He accepted a place in the high commission, without knowledge, as he declared after the Revolution, of its illegality. Having few religious scruples, he attended the king to mass, and kneeled with the rest ; but had no disposition to receive the Romish faith, or to force it upon others : for when the priests, encouraged by his appearances of compliance, attempted to convert him, he told them, as Burnet has recorded, that he was willing to receive instruction, and that he had taken much pains to believe in God, who had made the world and all men in it ; but that he should not be easily persuaded "that man was quits, and made God again."

A pointed sentence is bestowed by successive transmission to the last whom it will fit. This censure of transubstantiation, whatever be its value, was uttered long ago by Anne Askew, one of the first sufferers for the Protestant religion, who, in the time of Henry VIII., was tortured in the Tower ; concerning which there is reason to wonder that it was not known to the historian of the Reformation.

In the Revolution he acquiesced, though he did not promote it. There was once a design of associating him in the invitation of the Prince of Orange ; but the Earl of Shrewsbury discouraged the attempt, by declaring that Mulgrave would never concur. This King William afterwards told him, and asked what he would have done if the proposal had been made : "Sir," said he, "I would have discovered it to the king whom I then served." To which King William replied, "I cannot blame you."

Finding King James irremediably excluded, he voted for the conjunctive sovereignty upon this principle, that he thought the title of the prince and his consort equal, and it would please the prince their protector to have a share in the sovereignty. This vote gratified King William ; yet, either by the king's distrust or his own discontent, he lived some years without employment. He looked on the king with malevolence, and, if his verses or his prose may be credited, with contempt. He was, notwithstanding this aversion or indifference, made Marquis of Normanby (1694), but still opposed the court on some important questions ; yet at last he was received into the cabinet council, with a pension of three thousand pounds.

At the accession of Queen Anne, whom he is said to have courted when they were both young, he was highly favoured.* Before her coronation (1702), she made him lord privy seal, and soon after lord lieutenant of the North Riding of Yorkshire. He was then named commissioner for treating with the Scots about the Union ; and was made next year, first Duke of Normanby, and then of Buckinghamshire, there being suspected to be somewhere a latent claim to the title of Buckingham.

Soon after, becoming jealous of the Duke of Marlborough, he resigned the privy seal, and joined the discontented Tories in a

* "Queen Anne," says Walpole, "who undoubtedly had no turn to gallantry, yet so far resembled her predecessor Elizabeth as not to dislike a little homage to her person. This duke was immediately rewarded, on her accession, for having made love to her before her marriage."

motion, extremely offensive to the queen, for inviting the Princess Sophia to England. The queen courted him back with an offer no less than that of the chancellorship, which he refused. He now retired from business, and built that house in the park which is now the queen's, upon ground granted by the Crown.

When the ministry was changed (1710), he was made lord chamberlain of the household, and concurred in all transactions of that time, except that he endeavoured to protect the Catalans. After the queen's death, he became a constant opponent of the court; and, having no public business, is supposed to have amused himself by writing two tragedies. He died February 24, 1720-21.

He was thrice married: by his two first wives he had no children; by his third, who was the daughter of King James by the Countess of Dorchester, and the widow of the Earl of Anglesey, he had, besides other children that died early, a son born in 1716, who died in 1735, and put an end to the line of Sheffield. It is observable that the duke's three wives were all widows. The duchess died in 1742.

His character is not to be proposed as worthy of imitation. His religion he may be supposed to have learned from Hobbes; and his morality was such as naturally proceeds from loose opinions. His sentiments with respect to women he picked up in the court of Charles; and his principles concerning property were such as a gaming-table supplies. He was censured as covetous, and has been defended by an instance of inattention to his affairs; as if a man might not at once be corrupted by avarice and idleness. He is said, however, to have had much tenderness, and to have been very ready to apologise for his violences of passion.

He is introduced into this collection only as a poet; and if we credit the testimony of his contemporaries, he was a poet of no vulgar rank. But favour and flattery are now at an end; criticism is no longer softened by his bounties or awed by his splendour, and, being able to take a more steady view, discovers him to be a writer that sometimes glimmers, but rarely shines, feebly laborious, and at best but pretty. His songs are upon common topics; he hopes, and grieves, and repents, and despairs, and rejoices, like any other maker of little stanzas; to be great, he hardly tries; to be gay, is hardly in his power.*

In his *Essay on Satire* he was always supposed to have had the help of Dryden. His *Essay on Poetry* is the great work for which he was praised by Roscommon, Dryden, and Pope, and doubtless by many more whose eulogies have perished.

Upon this piece he appears to have set a high value; for he was all his lifetime improving it by successive revisals, so that there is

* The most remarkable of his compositions, observes Mr. Southey, is his own epitaph:

“ Pro rege sæpe, pro republica semper.
 Dubius, sed non improbus vixi;
 Incertus morior, non perturbatus;
 Humanum est et errare.
 ——— Deo confido
 Omnipotenti benevolentissimo;
 Ens entium miserere mei.”

scarcely any poem to be found of which the last edition differs more from the first. Amongst other changes, mention is made of some compositions of Dryden which were written after the first appearance of the essay.

At the time when this work first appeared, Milton's fame was not yet fully established, and therefore Tasso and Spenser were set before him. The last two lines were these. The epic poet, says he :

“ Must above Milton's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where great Torquato and where greater Spenser fail.”

The last line, in succeeding editions, was shortened, and the order of names continued ; but now Milton is at last advanced to the highest place, and the passage thus adjusted :

“ Must above Tasso's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where Spenser and ev'n Milton fail.”

Amendments are seldom made without some token of a rent : ‘lofty’ does not suit Tasso so well as Milton.

One celebrated line seems to be borrowed. The essay calls a perfect character

“ A faultless monster which the world ne'er saw.”

Scaliger, in his poems, terms Virgil *sine labe monstrum*. Sheffield can scarcely be supposed to have read Scaliger's poetry ; perhaps he found the words in a quotation.

Of this essay, which Dryden has exalted so highly, it may be justly said that the precepts are judicious, sometimes new, and often happily expressed ; but there are, after all the emendations, many weak lines, and some strange appearances of negligence ; as, when he gives the laws of elegy, he insists upon connexion and coherence, without which, says he,

“ 'Tis epigram, 'tis point, 'tis what you will,
But not an elegy, nor writ with skill,
No *Panegyric* nor a *Cooper's Hill*.”

Who would not suppose that Waller's *Panegyric* and Denham's *Cooper's Hill* were elegies ?

His verses are often insipid, but his memoirs are lively and agreeable ; he had the perspicuity and elegance of an historian, but not the fire and fancy of a poet.

NATHANIEL LEE.

(1650-1690.)

Nathaniel Lee was the son of a clergyman of the church of England, and was educated at Westminster School under Dr. Busby. After he left this school, he was some time at Trinity College, Cam-

bridge; but not succeeding to a fellowship, he quitted the University and went to court, where meeting with the like disappointment, he had recourse to his pen for a support, and, having a genius for the drama, composed a tragedy called *Nero Emperor of Rome*, in 1675; which being well received, he pushed on the same way, producing a new play almost every year, one with another, till 1681. He read his pieces to the actors with an elocution which was so much admired by them, that he was tempted to try his talents for acting; but the trial soon convinced him that he should never be able to make any figure in that character. Lee was not only careless in his economy, but extravagant to that degree, as to be frequently plunged into the lowest depths of misery.

If we may credit the Earl of Rochester, Lee was addicted to drinking; for in a satire of his, in imitation of Suckling's *Session of the Poets*, he says:

“ Nat. Lee stepp'd in next, in hopes of a prize,
 Apollo rememb'ring he had hit once in thrice.
 By the rubies in's face, he could not deny
 But he had as much wit as wine could supply;
 Confess'd that indeed he had a musical note,
 But sometimes strain'd so hard that it rattled in the throat;
 Yet own'd he had sense, and t' encourage him for't
 He made him his Ovid in Augustus's court.”

Lee's genius was of the same unlucky turn—turgid, unbridled, and apt to break the bounds of sense. Gifted by nature, he left the reins loose to his imagination, till at length indigence and poetical enthusiasm transported him into madness; so that, in November 1684, he was taken to Bedlam, where he continued four years. He was discharged in April 1688, so much recovered as to be able to return to his occupation of writing for the stage. He produced two plays afterwards, *The Princess of Cleves* in 1689, and *The Massacre of Paris* the following year. Notwithstanding the profits arising from these performances, however, he was this year reduced so low, that a weekly stipend of ten shillings from the Theatre Royal was his chief dependence. Nor was he so freed of his frenzy as not to suffer some temporary relapses; and perhaps his untimely end might be occasioned by one. He died 1690, it is said in a drunken frolic by night in the street, and was interred in the parish of St. Clement Danes. He is the author of eleven plays, all acted with applause, and printed as soon as finished, with dedications of most of them to the Earls of Dorset, Mulgrave, Pembroke, the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Richmond, as his patrons. Mr. Addison declares, “Among our modern English poets, there was none better turned for tragedy than our author, if, instead of favouring the impetuosity of his genius, he had restrained it and kept it within proper bounds. His thoughts are wonderfully suited to tragedy, but frequently lost in such a cloud of words, that it is hard to see the beauty of them. There is an infinite fire in his works, but so involved in smoke, that it does not appear in half its lustre. He frequently succeeds in the passionate parts of the tragedy, but more particularly where he slackens his efforts, and eases the style of those epithets and metaphors in which he so much abounds.” Lee's *Rival Queens*, and *Theodosius, or The Force of Love*, still keep

possession of the stage. These plays excel in moving the passions, especially that of love. He is said to be particularly a master in that art; and for that reason has been compared to Ovid among the ancients, and to Otway among the moderns. Dryden prefixed a copy of commendatory verses to the *Rival Queens*; and our author joined with that poet in writing *The Duke of Guise* and *Œdipus*.

“Lee,” observes Southey, “though called the mad poet, had the good sense to relinquish the chase after church preferment, and the vain pursuit of court favour. He has left little besides his plays. He was confined during four years of his short life in Bedlam, where, when some idiot of a scribbler mocked his calamity, and observed that it was easy to write like a madman, Lee answered, ‘No, sir, it is not easy to write like a madman, but very easy to write like a fool.’ If all the patients could make such answers, one might well suspect that the hospital were the temple of reason.”

RICHARD DUKE.*

(Circa 1650-1711.)

Of Mr. Richard Duke I can find few memorials. He was bred at Westminster† and Cambridge; and Jacob relates, that he was some time tutor to the Duke of Richmond.

He appears, from his writings, to have been not ill qualified for poetical compositions; and being conscious of his powers, when he left the University, he enlisted himself among the wits. He was the familiar friend of Otway; and was engaged, among other popular names, in the translations of Ovid and Juvenal. In his *Review*, though unfinished, are some vigorous lines. His poems are not below mediocrity; nor have I found much in them to be praised.‡

With the wit he seems to have shared the dissoluteness of the times; for some of his compositions are such as he must have reviewed with detestation in his later days, when he published those sermons which Felton has commended.

Perhaps, like some other foolish young men, he rather talked than lived viciously, in an age when he that would be thought a wit was afraid to say his prayers; and whatever might have been bad in the first part of his life, was surely condemned and reformed by his better judgment.

In 1683, being then master of arts, and fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge, he wrote a poem on the marriage of the Lady Anne with George Prince of Denmark.

* Johnson.

† He was admitted there in 1670; was elected to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1675, and took his master's degree in 1682.

‡ They make a part of a volume published by Tonson, in 8vo, 1717, containing the poems of the Earl of Roscommon and the Duke of Buckingham's *Essay on Poetry*, but were first published in Dryden's *Miscellany*, as were most, if not all, of the poems in that collection.

He then took orders;* and, being made prebendary of Gloucester, became a proctor in convocation for that church, and chaplain to Queen Anne.

In 1710 he was presented by the Bishop of Winchester to the wealthy living of Witney in Oxfordshire, which he enjoyed but a few months. On February 10th, 1711, having returned from an entertainment, he was found dead the next morning. His death is mentioned in Swift's journal.†



SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE.‡

(Circa 1650-1729.)

Sir Richard Blackmore is one of those men whose writings have attracted much notice, but of whose life and manners very little has been communicated, and whose lot it has been to be much oftener mentioned by enemies than by friends.

He was the son of Robert Blackmore, of Corsham in Wiltshire, styled by Wood "gentleman," and supposed to have been an attorney.

* He was presented to the rectory of Blaby, in Leicestershire, in 1687-8, and obtained a prebend at Gloucester in 1688.

† "It is to be hoped that no collection of the English poets will ever again be disgraced by the verses of this rhymester, who, notwithstanding Dr. Anderson's vindication of his morals against the censure of Dr. Johnson, did not write decently in any sense of the phrase."—*Southey*.

‡ Johnson.

Having been for some time educated in a country school, he was sent at thirteen to Westminster; and in 1668 was entered at Edmund Hall, Oxford, where he took the degree of M.A. June 3, 1676, and resided thirteen years: a much longer time than it is usual to spend at the University, and which he seems to have passed with very little attention to the business of the place; for in his poems, the ancient names of nations or places, which he often produces, are pronounced by chance. He afterwards travelled: at Padua he was made doctor of physic; and after having wandered about a year and a half on the continent, returned home.

In some part of his life, it is not known when, his indigence compelled him to teach a school; an humiliation with which, though it certainly lasted but a little while, his enemies did not forget to reproach him, when he became conspicuous enough to excite malevolence: and let it be remembered for his honour, that to have been once a schoolmaster is the only reproach which all the perspicacity of malice, animated by wit, has ever fixed upon his private life.

When he first engaged in the study of physic, he inquired, as he says, of Dr. Sydenham, what authors he should read, and was directed by Sydenham to *Don Quixote*; "which," said he, "is a very good book; I read it still." The perverseness of mankind makes it often mischievous in men of eminence to give way to merriment: the idle and the illiterate will long shelter themselves under this foolish apophthegm.

Whether he rested satisfied with this direction or sought for better, he commenced physician, and obtained high eminence and extensive practice. He became fellow of the College of Physicians, April 12th, 1687; being one of the thirty which, by the new charter of King James, were added to the former fellows. His residence was in Cheapside,* and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time, a citizen was a term of reproach; and his place of abode was another topic to which his adversaries had recourse, in the penury of scandal.

Blackmore, therefore, was made a poet not by necessity, but inclination; and wrote not for a livelihood, but for fame; or, if he may tell his own motives, for a nobler purpose, to engage poetry in the cause of virtue.

I believe it is peculiar to him, that his first public work was an heroic poem. He was not known as a maker of verses till he published (in 1695) *Prince Arthur*, in ten books; written, as he relates, "by such catches and starts, and in such occasional uncertain hours as his profession afforded, and for the greatest part in coffee-houses, or in passing up and down the streets." For the latter part of this apology he was accused of writing "to the rumbling of his chariot-wheels." He had read, he says, "but little poetry throughout his whole life; and for fifteen years before had not written an hundred verses, except one copy of Latin verses in praise of a friend's book."

He thinks, and with some reason, that from such a performance perfection cannot be expected; but he finds another reason for the severity of his censurers, which he expresses in language such as Cheapside easily furnished. "I am not free of the poets' company,

* At Saddlers' Hall.

having never kissed the governor's hands: mine is, therefore, not so much as a permission poem, but a downright interloper. Those gentlemen who carry on their poetical trade in a joint-stock, would certainly do what they could to sink and ruin an unlicensed adventurer, notwithstanding I disturbed none of their factories, nor imported any goods they have ever dealt in." He had lived in the city till he had learnt its note.

That *Prince Arthur* found many readers is certain, for in two years it had three editions; a very uncommon instance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particular classes of the nation. Such success naturally raised animosity; and Dennis attacked it by a formal criticism, more tedious and disgusting than the work which he condemns. To this censure may be opposed the approbation of Locke* and the admiration of Molineux, which are found in their printed letters. Molineux is particularly delighted with the song of Mopas, which is therefore subjoined to this narrative.

It is remarked by Pope, that what "raises the hero often sinks the man." Of Blackmore it may be said, that as the poet sinks, the man rises. The animadversions of Dennis, insolent and contemptuous as they were, raised in him no implacable resentment: he and his critic were afterwards friends; and in one of his latter works he praises Dennis as "equal to Boileau in poetry, and superior to him in critical abilities."

He seems to have been more delighted with praise than pained by censure, and, instead of slackening, quickened his career. Having in two years produced ten books of *Prince Arthur*, in two years more (1697) he sent into the world *King Arthur* in twelve. The provocation was now doubled, and the resentment of wits and critics may be supposed to have increased in proportion. He found, however, advantages more than equivalent to all their outrages; he was this year made one of the physicians in ordinary to King William, and advanced by him to the honour of knighthood, with the present of a gold chain and a medal.

The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but King William was not very studious of poetry: and Blackmore perhaps had other merit; for he says in his dedication to *Alfred*, that "he had a greater part in the succession of the house of Hanover than ever he had boasted."

What Blackmore could contribute to the succession, or what he imagined himself to have contributed, cannot now be known. That he had been of considerable use, I doubt not but he believed, for I hold him to have been very honest; but he might easily make a false estimate of his own importance: those whom their virtue restrains from deceiving others, are often disposed by their vanity to deceive themselves. Whether he promoted the succession or not, he at least approved it, and adhered invariably to his principles and party through his whole life.

His ardour of poetry still continued; and not long after (1700)

* "As every verbal critic should have Bentley's *Milton* upon his table as a perpetual memento, so should Locke's opinion of *Prince Arthur* be held in remembrance by all dabblers in metaphysics when they presume to dabble in criticism."—*Southey*.

he published *A Paraphrase on the Book of Job*, and other parts of the Scripture. This performance Dryden, who pursued him with great malignity, lived long enough to ridicule in a prologue.

The wits easily confederated against him, as Dryden, whose favour they almost all courted, was his professed adversary. He had, besides, given them reason for resentment; as, in his preface to *Prince Arthur*, he had said of the dramatic writers almost all that was alleged afterwards by Collier: but Blackmore's censure was cold and general, Collier's was personal and ardent; Blackmore taught his reader to dislike what Collier incited him to abhor.

In his preface to *King Arthur* he endeavoured to gain at least one friend, and propitiated Congreve by higher praise of his *Mourning Bride* than it has obtained from any other critic.

The same year he published *A Satire on Wit*; a proclamation of defiance which united the poets almost all against him, and which brought upon him lampoons and ridicule from every side. This he doubtless foresaw, and evidently despised: nor should his dignity of mind be without its praise, had he not paid the homage to greatness which he denied to genius, and degraded himself by conferring that authority over the national taste, which he takes from the poets, upon men of high rank and wide influence, but of less wit and not greater virtue.

Here is again discovered the inhabitant of Cheapside, whose head cannot keep his poetry unmingled with trade. To hinder that intellectual bankruptcy which he affects to fear, he will erect a *bank for wit*.

In this poem he justly censured Dryden's impurities, but praised his powers; though in a subsequent edition he retained the satire and omitted the praise. What was his reason I know not; Dryden was then no longer in his way.

His head still teemed with heroic poetry, and (1705) he published *Eliza*, in ten books. I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, serious or comical, I have found *Eliza* either praised or blamed. She "dropped," as it seems, "dead-born from the press." It is never mentioned, and was never seen by me till I borrowed it for the present occasion. Jacob says, "it is corrected and revised for another impression;" but the labour of revision was thrown away.

From this time he turned some of his thoughts to the celebration of living characters, and wrote a poem on the *Kit-cat Club*, and *Advice to the Poets how to celebrate the Duke of Marlborough*; but on occasion of another year of success, thinking himself qualified to give more instruction, he again wrote a poem of *Advice to a Weaver of Tapestry*. Steele was then publishing the *Tatler*; and looking around him for something at which he might laugh, unluckily lighted on Sir Richard's work, and treated it with such contempt, that, as Fenton observes, he put an end to the species of writers that gave advice to painters.

Not long after (1712) he published *Creation, a philosophical Poem*, which has been by my recommendation inserted in the late collection. Whoever judges of this by any other of Blackmore's performances, will do it injury. The praise given it by Addison (*Spec.* 339)

is too well known to be transcribed;* but some notice is due to the testimony of Dennis, who calls it a "philosophical poem, which has equalled that of *Lucretius* in the beauty of its versification, and infinitely surpassed it in the solidity and strength of its reasoning."

Why an author surpasses himself, it is natural to inquire. I have heard from Mr. Draper, an eminent bookseller, an account received by him from Ambrose Philips, "that Blackmore, as he proceeded in his poem, laid his manuscript from time to time before a club of wits with whom he associated, and that every man contributed as he could, either improvement or correction; so that," said Philips, "there are perhaps nowhere in the book thirty lines together that now stand as they were originally written."

The relation of Philips, I suppose, was true; but when all reasonable, all credible allowance is made for this friendly revision, the author will still retain an ample dividend of praise; for to him must always be assigned the plan of the work, the distribution of its parts, the choice of topics, the train of argument, and, what is yet more, the general predominance of philosophical judgment and poetical spirit. Correction seldom effects more than the suppression of faults: a happy line, or a single elegance, may perhaps be added; but of a large work the general character must always remain: the original constitution can be very little helped by local remedies; inherent and radical dulness will never be much invigorated by extrinsic animation.

This poem, if he had written nothing else, would have transmitted him to posterity among the first favourites of the English muse; but to make verses was his transcendent pleasure; and, as he was not deterred by censure, he was not satiated with praise.

He deviated, however, sometimes into other tracks of literature, and condescended to entertain his readers with plain prose. When the *Spectator* stopped, he considered the polite world as destitute of entertainment; and, in concert with Mr. Hughes, who wrote every third paper, published three times a week the *Lay Monastery*, founded on the supposition that some literary men, whose characters are described, had retired to a house in the country to enjoy philosophical leisure, and resolved to instruct the public by communicating their disquisitions and amusements. Whether any real persons were concealed under fictitious names is not known. The hero of the club is one Mr. Johnson; such a constellation of excellence that his character shall not be suppressed, though there is no great genius in the design, nor skill in the delineation.

"The first I shall name is Mr. Johnson, a gentleman that owes to nature excellent faculties and an elevated genius, and to industry and application many acquired accomplishments. His taste is dis-

* Addison, after having criticised that book of Milton which gives an account of the works of the creation, proceeds: "I cannot conclude this book upon the creation without mentioning a poem which has lately appeared under that title. The work was undertaken with so good an intention, and executed with so great a mastery, that it deserves to be looked upon as one of the most useful and noble productions in our English verse. The reader cannot but be pleased to find the depths of philosophy enlivened with all the charms of poetry, and to see so great a strength of reason amidst so beautiful a redundancy of the imagination."

tinguishing, just, and delicate ; his judgment clear, and his reason strong, accompanied with an imagination full of spirit, of great compass, and stored with refined ideas. He is a critic of the first rank ; and, what is his peculiar ornament, he is delivered from the ostentation, malevolence, and supercilious temper that so often blemish men of that character. His remarks result from the nature and reason of things, and are formed by a judgment free and unbiassed by the authority of those who have lazily followed each other in the same beaten track of thinking, and are arrived only at the reputation of acute grammarians and commentators ; men who have been copying one another many hundred years without any improvement ; or, if they have ventured farther, have only applied in a mechanical manner the rules of ancient critics to modern writings, and with great labour discovered nothing but their own want of judgment and capacity. As Mr. Johnson penetrates to the bottom of his subject, by which means his observations are solid and natural as well as delicate, so his design is always to bring to light something useful and ornamental ; whence his character is the reverse to theirs who have eminent abilities in insignificant knowledge, and a great felicity in finding out trifles. He is no less industrious to search out the merit of an author than sagacious in discerning his errors and defects, and takes more pleasure in commending the beauties than exposing the blemishes of a laudable writing : like Horace, in a long work he can bear some deformities, and justly lay them on the imperfection of human nature, which is incapable of faultless productions. When an excellent drama appears in public, and by its intrinsic worth attracts a general applause, he is not stung with envy and spleen ; nor does he express a savage nature in fastening upon the celebrated author, dwelling upon his imaginary defects, and passing over his conspicuous excellences. He treats all writers upon the same impartial footing ; and is not, like the little critics, taken up entirely in finding out only the beauties of the ancient, and nothing but the errors of the modern writers. Never did any one express more kindness and good-nature to young and unfinished authors ; he promotes their interests, protects their reputation, extenuates their faults, and sets off their virtues, and by his candour guards them from the severity of his judgment. He is not like those dry critics who are morose because they cannot write themselves, but is himself master of a good vein in poetry ; and though he does not often employ it, yet he has sometimes entertained his friends with his unpublished performances."

The rest of the "lay monks" seem to be but feeble mortals in comparison with the gigantic Johnson ; who yet, with all his abilities and the help of the fraternity, could drive the publication but to forty papers, which were afterwards collected into a volume, and called in the title *A Sequel to the Spectators*.

Some years afterwards (1716 and 1717) he published two volumes of essays in prose, which can be commended only as they are written for the highest and noblest purpose, the promotion of religion. Blackmore's prose is not the prose of a poet, for it is languid, sluggish, and lifeless ; his diction is neither daring nor exact, his flow neither rapid nor easy, and his periods neither smooth nor strong.

His account of wit will show with how little clearness he is content to think, and how little his thoughts are recommended by his language :

“As to its efficient cause, wit owes its production to an extraordinary and peculiar temperament in the constitution of the possessor of it, in which is found a concurrence of regular and exalted ferments and an affluence of animal spirits, refined and rectified to a great degree of purity ; whence, being endowed with vivacity, brightness, and celerity, as well in their reflections as direct motions, they become proper instruments for the sprightly operations of the mind ; by which means the imagination can, with great facility, range the wide field of nature, contemplate an infinite variety of objects, and, by observing the similitude and disagreement of their several qualities, single out and abstract, and then suit and unite, those ideas which will best serve its purpose. Hence beautiful allusions, surprising metaphors, and admirable sentiments are always ready at hand ; and while the fancy is full of images, collected from innumerable objects and their different qualities, relations, and habitudes, it can at pleasure dress a common notion in a strange but becoming garb ; by which, as before observed, the same thought will appear a new one, to the great delight and wonder of the hearer. What we call genius results from this particular happy complexion in the first formation of the person that enjoys it, and is nature’s gift, but diversified by various specific characters and limitations ; as its active fire is blended and allayed by different proportions of phlegm, or reduced and regulated by the contrast of opposite ferments. Therefore, as there happens in the composition of a facetious genius a greater or less though still an inferior degree of judgment and prudence, one man of wit will be varied and distinguished from another.”

In these essays he took little care to propitiate the wits, for he scorns to avert their malice at the expense of virtue or of truth.

“Several, in their books, have many sarcastical and spiteful strokes at religion in general ; while others make themselves pleasant with the principles of the Christian. Of the last kind, this age has seen a most audacious example in the book entitled *A Tale of a Tub*. Had this writing been published in a pagan or popish nation, who are justly impatient of all indignity offered to the established religion of their country, no doubt but the author would have received the punishment he deserved. But the fate of this impious buffoon is very different ; for in a Protestant kingdom, zealous of their civil and religious immunities, he has not only escaped affronts and the effects of public resentment, but has been caressed and patronised by persons of great figure and of all denominations. Violent party-men, who differed in all things besides, agreed in their turn to show particular respect and friendship to this insolent derider of the worship of his country, till at last the reputed writer is not only gone off with impunity, but triumphs in his dignity and preferment. I do not know that any inquiry or search was ever made after this writing, or that any reward was ever offered for the discovery of the author, or that the infamous book was ever condemned to be burnt in public : whether this proceeds from the excessive esteem and love that men in power during the late reign had for wit, or

their defect of zeal and concern for the Christian religion, will be determined best by those who are best acquainted with their character."

In another place he speaks with becoming abhorrence of a "godless author" who has burlesqued a psalm. This author was supposed to be Pope, who published a reward for any one that would produce the coiner of the accusation, but never denied it; and was afterwards the perpetual and incessant enemy of Blackmore.

One of his essays is upon the spleen, which is treated by him so much to his own satisfaction, that he has published thrice the same thoughts in the same words; first in the *Lay Monastery*, then in the essay, and then in the preface to a medical treatise on the spleen. One passage, which I have found already twice, I will here exhibit, because I think it better imagined and better expressed than could be expected from the common tenour of his prose:

"As the several combinations of splenetic madness and folly produce an infinite variety of irregular understanding, so the amicable accommodation and alliance between several virtues and vices produce an equal diversity in the dispositions and manners of mankind; whence it comes to pass, that as many monstrous and absurd productions are found in the moral as in the intellectual world. How surprising is it to observe, among the least culpable men, some whose minds are attracted by heaven and earth with a seeming equal force; some who are proud of humility; others who are censorious and uncharitable, yet self-denying and devout; some who join contempt of the world with sordid avarice; and others who preserve a great degree of piety, with ill-nature and ungoverned passions! Nor are instances of this inconsistent mixture less frequent among bad men, where we often, with admiration, see persons at once generous and unjust, impious lovers of their country, and flagitious heroes, good-natured sharpers, immoral men of honour, and libertines who will sooner die than change their religion; and though it is true that repugnant coalitions of so high a degree are found but in a part of mankind, yet none of the whole mass, either good or bad, are entirely exempted from some absurd mixture."

He about this time (August 22, 1716) became one of the elects of the College of Physicians; and was soon after (Oct. 1) chosen censor. He seems to have arrived late, whatever was the reason, at his medical honours.

Having succeeded so well in his book on *Creation*, by which he established the great principle of all religion, he thought his undertaking imperfect, unless he likewise enforced the truth of revelation; and for that purpose added another poem on *Redemption*. He had likewise written before his *Creation* three books on the *Nature of Man*.

The lovers of musical devotion have always wished for a more happy metrical version than they have yet obtained of the book of Psalms: this wish the piety of Blackmore led him to gratify; and he produced (1721) *A New Version of the Psalms of David, fitted to the Tunes used in Churches*: which, being recommended by the archbishops and many bishops, obtained a license for its admission into public worship; but no admission has it yet obtained, nor has it any

right to come where Brady and Tate have got possession. Blackmore's name must be added to those of many others, who by the same attempt have obtained only the praise of meaning well.

He was not yet deterred from heroic poetry. There was another monarch of this island (for he did not fetch his heroes from foreign countries) whom he considered as worthy of the epic muse; and he dignified Alfred (1723) with twelve books. But the opinion of the nation was now settled: a hero introduced by Blackmore was not likely to find either respect or kindness; *Alfred* took his place by *Eliza*, in silence and darkness. Benevolence was ashamed to favour, and malice was weary of insulting. Of his four epic poems, the first had such reputation and popularity as enraged the critics; the second was at least known enough to be ridiculed; the last two had neither friends nor enemies.

Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which, if it seizes one part of a character, corrupts all the rest by degrees. Blackmore, being despised as a poet, was in time neglected as a physician; his practice, which was once invidiously great, forsook him in the latter part of his life; but being by nature or by principle averse from idleness, he employed his unwelcome leisure in writing books on physic, and teaching others to cure those whom he could himself cure no longer. I know not whether I can enumerate all the treatises by which he has endeavoured to diffuse the art of healing, for there is scarcely any distemper of dreadful name which he has not taught the reader how to oppose. He has written on the small-pox, with a vehement invective against inoculation; on consumptions, the spleen, the gout, the rheumatism, the king's-evil, the dropsy, the jaundice, the stone, the diabetes, and the plague.

Of those books, if I had read them, it could not be expected that I should be able to give a critical account. I have been told that there is something in them of vexation and discontent, discovered by a perpetual attempt to degrade physic from its sublimity, and to represent it as attainable without much previous or concomitant learning. By the transient glances which I have thrown upon them, I have observed an affected contempt of the ancients, and a supercilious derision of transmitted knowledge. Of this indecent arrogance, the following quotation from his preface to the *Treatise on the Small-Pox* will afford a specimen; in which, when the reader finds, what I fear is true, that when he was censuring Hippocrates he did not know the difference between aphorism and apophthegm, he will not pay much regard to his determinations concerning ancient learning:

“As for his book of aphorisms, it is like my Lord Bacon's of the same title,—a book of jests, or a grave collection of trite and trifling observations; of which though many are true and certain, yet they signify nothing, and may afford diversion, but no instruction; most of them being much inferior to the sayings of the wise men of Greece, which yet are so low and mean, that we are entertained every day with more valuable sentiments at the table-conversation of ingenious and learned men.”

I am unwilling, however, to leave him in total disgrace, and will therefore quote from another preface a passage less reprehensible.

“Some gentlemen have been disingenuous and unjust to me, by

wresting and forcing my meaning in the preface to another book, as if I condemned and exposed all learning, though they knew I declared that I greatly honoured and esteemed all men of superior literature and erudition, and that I only undervalued false or superficial learning that signifies nothing for the service of mankind; and that as to physic, I expressly affirmed that learning must be joined with native genius to make a physician of the first rank; but if those talents are separated, I asserted, and do still insist, that a man of native sagacity and diligence will prove a more able and useful practitioner than a heavy notional scholar, encumbered with a heap of confused ideas."

He was not only a poet and a physician, but produced likewise a work of a different kind, *A true and impartial History of the Conspiracy against King William, of glorious memory, in the year 1695*. This I have never seen, but suppose it at least compiled with integrity. He engaged likewise in theological controversy, and wrote two books against the Arians: *Just Prejudices against the Arian Hypothesis*; and *Modern Arians unmasked*. Another of his works is *Natural Theology, or Moral Duties considered apart from Positive; with some Observations on the Desirableness and Necessity of a supernatural Revelation*. This was the last book that he published. He left behind him *The accomplished Preacher, or an Essay upon Divine Eloquence*; which was printed after his death by Mr. White, of Nayland in Essex, the minister who attended his death-bed, and testified the fervent piety of his last hours. He died on the 8th of October, 1729.

Blackmore, by the unremitted enmity of the wits, whom he provoked more by his virtue than his dulness, has been exposed to worse treatment than he deserved. His name was so long used to point every epigram upon dull writers, that it became at last a by-word of contempt: but it deserves observation, that malignity takes hold only of his writings, and that his life passed without reproach, even when his boldness of reprehension naturally turned upon him many eyes desirous to espy faults, which many tongues would have made haste to publish. But those who could not blame could at least forbear to praise, and therefore of his private life and domestic character there are no memorials.

As an author he may justly claim the honours of magnanimity. The incessant attacks of his enemies, whether serious or merry, are never discovered to have disturbed his quiet, or to have lessened his confidence in himself: they neither awed him to silence nor to caution; they neither provoked him to petulance nor depressed him to complaint. While the distributors of literary fame were endeavouring to depreciate and degrade him, he either despised or defied them, wrote on as he had written before, and never turned aside to quiet them by civility or repress them by confutation.

He depended with great security on his own powers, and perhaps was for that reason less diligent in perusing books. His literature was, I think, but small. What he knew of antiquity I suspect him to have gathered from modern compilers; but though he could not boast of much critical knowledge, his mind was stored with general principles, and he left minute researches to those whom he considered as little minds.

With this disposition he wrote most of his poems. Having formed a magnificent design, he was careless of particular and subordinate elegances; he studied no niceties of versification; he waited for no felicities of fancy, but caught his first thoughts in the first words in which they were presented: nor does it appear that he saw beyond his own performances, or had ever elevated his views to that ideal perfection which every genius born to excel is condemned always to pursue, and never overtake. In the first suggestions of his imagination he acquiesced; he thought them good, and did not seek for better. His works may be read a long time without the occurrence of a single line that stands prominent from the rest.

The poem on *Creation* has, however, the appearance of more circumspection; it wants neither harmony of numbers, accuracy of thought, nor elegance of diction; it has either been written with great care, or, what cannot be imagined of so long a work, with such felicity as made care less necessary.

Its two constituent parts are ratiocination and description. To reason in verse is allowed to be difficult; but Blackmore not only reasons in verse, but very often reasons poetically; and finds the art of uniting ornament with strength, and ease with closeness. This is a skill which Pope might have condescended to learn from him, when he needed it so much in his *Moral Essays*.

In his descriptions both of life and nature, the poet and the philosopher happily co-operate; truth is recommended by elegance, and elegance sustained by truth.

In the structure and order of the poem, not only the greater parts are properly consecutive, but the didactic and illustrative paragraphs are so happily mingled, that labour is relieved by pleasure, and the attention is led on through a long succession of varied excellence to the original position, the fundamental principle of wisdom and of virtue.

As the heroic poems of Blackmore are now little read, it is thought proper to insert, as a specimen from *Prince Arthur*, the song of Mopas, mentioned by Molineux:

“ But that which Arthur with most pleasure heard
 Were noble strains by Mopas sung the bard,
 Who to his harp in lofty verse began,
 And through the secret maze of Nature ran.
 He the Great Spirit sung, that all things fill'd,
 That the tumultuous waves of chaos still'd;
 Whose nod dispos'd the jarring seeds to peace,
 And made the wars of hostile atoms cease.
 All beings we in fruitful Nature find,
 Proceeded from the Great Eternal Mind —
 Streams of his unexhausted spring of power,
 And, cherish'd with his influence, endure.
 He spread the pure cerulean fields on high,
 And arch'd the chambers of the vaulted sky,
 Which he, to suit their glory with their height,
 Adorn'd with globes that reel as drunk with light.
 His hand directed all the tuneful spheres;
 He turn'd their orbs, and polish'd all the stars;
 He fill'd the sun's vast lamp with golden light,
 And bid the silver moon adorn the night;
 He spread the airy ocean without shores,
 Where birds are wafted with their feather'd oars.

Then sung the bard how the light vapours rise
 From the warm earth, and cloud the smiling skies :
 He sung how some, chill'd in their airy flight,
 Fall scatter'd down in pearly dew by night ;
 How some, rais'd higher, sit in secret steams
 On the reflected points of bounding beams,
 Till, chill'd with cold, they shade th' ethereal plain,
 Then on the thirsty earth descend in rain ;
 How some, whose parts a slight contexture show,
 Sink hovering through the air in fleecy snow ;
 How part is spun in silken threads, and clings
 Entangled in the grass in gluey strings ;
 How others stamp to stones, with rushing sound
 Fall from their crystal quarries to the ground ;
 How some are laid in trains, that kindled fly,
 In harmless fires by night, about the sky ;
 How some in winds blow with impetuous force,
 And carry ruin where they bend their course,
 While some conspire to form a gentle breeze,
 To fan the air, and play among the trees ;
 How some, enraged, grow turbulent and loud,
 Pent in the bowels of a frowning cloud,
 That cracks as if the axis of the world
 Was broke, and heaven's bright towers were downwards hurl'd.
 He sung how earth's wide ball, at Jove's command,
 Did in the midst on airy columns stand ;
 And how the soul of plants, in prison held,
 And bound with sluggish fetters, lies conceal'd,
 Till with the spring's warm beams, almost releas'd
 From the dull weight with which it lay oppress'd,
 Its vigour spreads, and makes the teeming earth
 Heave up and labour with the sprouting birth :
 The active spirit freedom seeks in vain,
 It only works and twists a stronger chain ;
 Urging its prison's sides to break away,
 It makes that wider where 'tis forc'd to stay,
 Till, having form'd its living house, it rears
 Its head, and in a tender plant appears.
 Hence springs the oak, the beauty of the grove,
 Whose stately trunk fierce storms can scarcely move ;
 Hence grows the cedar ; hence the swelling vine
 Does round the elm its purple clusters twine ;
 Hence painted flowers the smiling gardens bless
 Both with their fragrant scent and gaudy dress ;
 Hence the white lily in full beauty grows ;
 Hence the blue violet and blushing rose.
 He sung how sunbeams brood upon the earth,
 And in the glebe hatch such a numerous birth ;
 Which way the genial warmth in summer storms
 Turns putrid vapours to a bed of worms ;
 How rain, transform'd by this prolific power,
 Falls from the clouds an animated shower.
 He sung the embryo's growth within the womb,
 And how the parts their various shapes assume ;
 With what rare art the wondrous structure's wrought,
 From one crude mass to such perfection brought ;
 That no part useless, none misplac'd we see,
 None are forgot, and more would monstrous be."

THOMAS D'URFEY.

(Circa 1650-1723.)

Thomas D'Urfey was born in Devonshire, but when or where we know not, and bred to the law; which profession he soon forsook, that he might be more at liberty for plays and songs. He wrote a great number of plays with various success; but composing songs seemed to be his chief talent, which he would do to the most difficult tunes: for his words were not, as other poets' were, set to music, but he made words to the music. Poor D'Urfey died before his time; for had he lived till the ballad-operas came into vogue, what a figure must he have made! He was likewise much admired for singing his own songs, and received many favours from persons of great quality upon that account. The Duke of Albemarle, son of General Monk, had him frequently at his table to divert his company in that way; of which Tom was not a little vain, as we may gather from part of a song made upon him at that time:

" He prates like a parrot,
He sups with the duke,
And he lies in a garret."

Nay even crowned heads condescended to admit him to their presence, and seemed not a little diverted by him. It is no wonder to hear this of so merry a monarch as Charles II.; but even King William, who was of so reserved a temper, and so little fond of music or any amusements of that kind, would needs have D'Urfey one night to sing to him. The king, it is said, laughed very heartily, and ordered him a present; but not quite so much as Queen Anne is said to have afterwards given him for singing a song to her, written on purpose to ridicule the Princess Sophia, Electoress Dowager of Hanover: which began:

" The crown is too weighty
For shoulders of eighty ;"

and for which her majesty is said to have ordered him fifty guineas. D'Urfey was buried in the parish of St. James's, Westminster, with this inscription on a stone erected to his memory:

" Tom D'Urfey: died February 26, 1723."

There are few or no particulars relating to the life of Mr. D'Urfey preserved. That he was a man of some abilities, and enjoyed the esteem and friendship of men of the greatest parts in his time, may easily be collected from what the *Guardian* says of him. In No. 29, vol. i., speaking of the advantages of laughing, Addison thus mentions D'Urfey: "A judicious author some years since published a collection of sonnets, which he very successfully called *Laugh and be Fat; or Pills to purge Melancholy*. I cannot sufficiently admire the facetious title of these volumes, and must censure the world of ingratitude while they are so negligent in rewarding the jocose labours of my friend Mr. D'Urfey, who was so large a contributor to this treatise, and to whose humorous productions so many rural squires in the remotest parts of this island are obliged for the dignity

and state which corpulency gives them. It is my opinion, that the above pills would be extremely proper to be taken with asses' milk, and might contribute towards the renewing and restoring decayed lungs."

In No. 67, the *Tatler* thus speaks of his old friend: "It has been remarked by curious observers, that poets are generally long-lived, and run beyond the usual age of man, if not cut off by some accident or excess, as Anacreon, in the midst of a very merry old age, was choked with a grape-stone. The same redundancy of spirits that produces the poetical flame keeps up the vital warmth, and administers uncommon fuel to life. I question not but several instances will occur to my reader's memory, from Homer down to Mr. Dryden: I shall only take notice of two who have excelled in lyrics, the one an ancient, the other a modern. The first gained an immortal reputation by celebrating several jockeys in the Olympic games; the last has signalised himself on the same occasion, by the ode that begins with 'To horse, brave boys, to Newmarket, to horse!' The reader will by this time know that the two poets I have mentioned are Pindar and Mr. D'Urfey. The former of these is long since laid in his urn, after having many years together endeared himself to all Greece by his tuneful compositions. Our countryman is still living, and in a blooming old age, that still promises many musical productions; for if I am not mistaken, our British swan will sing to the last. The best judges, who have perused his last song on *The Moderate Man*, do not discover any decay in his parts; but think it deserves a place amongst the finest of those works with which he obliged the world in his more early years.

"I am led into this subject by a visit which I lately received from my good old friend and contemporary. As we both flourished together in King Charles II.'s reign, we diverted ourselves with the remembrance of several particulars that passed in the world before the greatest part of my readers were born, and could not but smile to think how insensibly we were grown into a couple of venerable old gentlemen. Tom observed to me, that after having written more odes than Horace, and about four times as many comedies as Terence, he was reduced to great difficulties by the importunities of a set of men who of late years had furnished him with the accommodations of life, and would not, as we say, be paid with a song. In order to extricate my old friend, I immediately sent for the three directors of the play-house, and desired they would in their turn do a good office for a man who, in Shakespeare's phrase, often filled their mouths,—I mean with pleasantries and popular conceits. They very generously listened to my proposal, and agreed to act the *Plotting Sisters* (a very taking play of my old friend's composing) on the 15th of next month, for the benefit of the author.

"My kindness to the agreeable Mr. D'Urfey will be imperfect, if, after having engaged the players in his favour, I do not get the town to come into it. I must, therefore, heartily recommend to all the young ladies my disciples the case of my old friend, who has often made their grandmothers merry, and whose sonnets have perhaps lulled asleep many a present toast when she lay in her cradle. The gentleman I am speaking of has laid obligations on so many of

his countrymen, that I hope they will think this but a just return to the good service of a veteran poet.

“I myself remember King Charles II. leaning on Tom D’Urfey’s shoulder more than once, and humming over a song with him. It is certain that monarch was not a little supported by *Joy to great Cæsar*, which gave the Whigs such a blow as they were not able to recover that whole reign. My friend afterwards attacked popery with the same success, having exposed Bellarmine and Portocarero more than once, in short satirical compositions which have been in every body’s mouth. He made use of Italian tunes and sonatas for promoting the Protestant interest, and turned a considerable part of the pope’s music against himself. In short, he has obliged the court with political sonnets, the country with dialogues and pastorals, the city with descriptions of a lord-mayor’s feast; not to mention his little *Ode upon Stool-Ball*, with many others of the like nature.

“Should the very individuals he has celebrated make their appearance together, they would be sufficient to fill the play-house. Pretty Peg of Windsor, Gilian of Croydon, with Dolly and Molly, and Tommy and Johnny, with many others to be met with in the musical miscellanies, would make a great benefit.

“As my friend, after the manner of the old lyrics, accompanies his works with his own voice, he has been the delight of the most polite companies and conversations, from the beginning of King Charles II.’s reign to our own times. Many an honest gentleman has got a reputation in his country by pretending to have been in company with Tom D’Urfey.

“I might here mention several other merits in my friend; as his enriching our language with a multitude of rhymes, and bringing words together that, without his good offices, would never have been acquainted with one another so long as it had been a tongue: but I must not omit that my old friend angled for a trout the best of any man in England.

“After what I have said, and much more that I might say, on this subject, I question not but the world will think that my old friend ought not to pass the remainder of his life in a cage, like a singing bird, but enjoy all that Pindaric liberty which is suitable to a man of his genius. He has made the world merry, and I hope they will make him easy, as long as he stays amongst us. This I will take upon me to say, they cannot do a kindness to a more diverting companion, or a more cheerful, honest, good-natured man.”

The same author, Number 82, puts his readers in mind, when D’Urfey’s benefit came on, of some other circumstances favourable to him. “*The Plotting Sisters*,” says he, “is this day to be acted for the benefit of the author, my old friend Mr. D’Urfey. This comedy was honoured with the presence of King Charles II. three of the first five nights. My friend has in this work shown himself a master; and made not only the characters of the play, but also the furniture of the house contribute to the main design. He has made excellent use of a table with a carpet, and the key of a closet; with these two implements, which would perhaps have been overlooked by an ordinary writer, he contrives the most natural perplexities (allowing only the use of these household goods in poetry) that ever were repre-

sented on a stage. He also made good advantage of the knowledge of the stage itself; for, in the nick of being surprised, the lovers are let down, and escape at a trap-door. In a word, any who have the curiosity to observe what pleased in the last generation, and does not go to a comedy with a resolution to be grave, will find this evening ample food for mirth. Johnson, who understands what he does as well as any man, exposes the impertinence of an old fellow who has lost his senses still pursuing pleasures with great mastery. The ingenious Mr. Pinkethman is a bashful rake, and is sheepish without having modesty, with great success. Mr. Bullock succeeds Nokes in the part of Bubble, and, in my opinion, is not much below him; for he does excellently that kind of folly we call absurdity, which is the very contrary of wit, but next to that is of all things properest to excite mirth. What is foolish is the object of pity; but absurdity often proceeds from an opinion of sufficiency, and consequently is an honest occasion for laughter. These characters in this play cannot but make it a very pleasant entertainment; and the decorations of singing and dancing will more than repay the good-nature of those who make an honest man a visit of two merry hours, to make his following year unpainful."

These are the testimonies of friendship and esteem which this great author has given in favour of D'Urfey; and however his genius may have been turned for the sing-song or ballad, which is certainly the lowest species of poetry, yet that man cannot be termed contemptible, who was thus loved, and, though in jocular terms, praised by Mr. Addison.

D'Urfey's dramatic works are:

1. The Siege of Memphis; or the Ambitious Queen. Tragedy. 1676.
2. Madam Fickle; or the Witty False One. 1677. (This play is compiled from several other comedies.)
3. Trick for Trick; or the Debauched Hypocrite. Comedy. 1678. (This is Fletcher's "Monsieur Thomas" revived.)
4. The Fool turned Critic. 1678.
5. Fond Husband; or the Plotting Sisters. Comedy.
6. Squire Old Sap; or the Night Adventures. Comedy. 1679.
7. The Virtuous Wife; or Good Luck at Last. Comedy. 1680.
8. Sir Barnaby Whig; or No Wit like a Woman's. Comedy. 1681.
9. The Royalist. Comedy. 1682.
10. The Injured Princess; or the Fatal Wager. Tragi-comedy. 1682. (The foundation of this play is Cymbeline.)
11. A Commonwealth of Women. Tragi-comedy. 1686. (This play is chiefly borrowed from Fletcher's "Sea-Voyage.")
12. The Banditti; or a Lady's Distress. Comedy. 1688.
13. A Fool's Preferment; or the Three Dukes of Dunstable. Comedy. 1688. (The play is little more than a transcript of Fletcher's Noble "Gentlemen," except one scene, which is taken from a novel called the Humours of Basset. The songs in this play were all composed by Purcell.)
14. Bussy d'Amboise; or the Husband's Revenge. Tragedy. 1691.
15. Love for Money; or the Boarding-School. Comedy. 1691.
16. The Richmond Heiress; or a Woman once in the Right. Comedy. 1693.
17. The Marriage-Hater Matched. Comedy. 1693. (Gildon, in an epistle prefixed to the play, tells us that this is much the best of our author's performances. Dogget was first taken notice of as an excellent actor from the admirable performance of his part in this play.)
18. The Comical History of Don Quixote; Part the First. 1694.

19. The Comical History of Don Quixote : Part the Second. 1694.
20. Don Quixote : Part the Third. With the Marriage of Mary the Buxom. 1696.
21. The Intrigues at Versailles ; or a Jilt in all Humours. Comedy. 1697.
22. Cynthia and Endymion ; or the Lover of the Deities. Dramatic Opera. 1697.
23. The Campaigners ; or the Pleasant Adventures at Brussels. Comedy. With a familiar Preface upon a late Reformer of the Stage ; ending with a satirical Fable of the Dog and the Otter. 1698.
24. Massaniello ; or a Fisherman Prince. In two parts. 1700.
25. The Modern Prophets ; or New Wit for a Husband. Comedy.
26. The Old Mode and the New ; or Country Miss with her Furbelo. Comedy.
27. Wonders in the Sun ; or the Kingdom of Birds. Comic Opera.
28. Bath ; or the Western Lass. Comedy.
29. The Two Queens of Brentford ; or Bays no Poetaster. Musical Farce, or Comical Opera. Being the Sequel of the Rehearsal, written by the Duke of Buckingham.
30. The Grecian Heroine ; or the Fate of Tyranny. Tragedy. 1718.
31. Ariadne ; or the Triumph of Bacchus. 1721.

D'Urfey also wrote :

- Gloriana : a Funeral Pindaric Poem to the memory of Queen Mary. 1695.
 The Trophies ; or Augusta's Glory. A triumphant Ode made in honour of the City, and upon the Trophies taken from the French at the Battle of Ramillies, May 25, 1706, by the Duke of Marlborough, and fixed in Guildhall.
 Honour and Opes ; or the British Merchant's Glory. A Poem congratulatory on the happy decision and conclusion of all difficulties between the Old and New Company in the trade to the East Indies.

THOMAS OTWAY.*

(1651-1685.)

Of Thomas Otway, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known ; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trotton, near Midhurst in Sussex, March 3d, 1651 ; the son of Mr. Humphrey Otway, rector of Wolbeding. From Winchester School, where he was educated, he was entered, in 1669, a Commoner of Christ Church ; but left the University without a degree, whether from want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous ; for he went to London and commenced player (in the Duke of York's company), but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage. †

* Johnson.

† In *Roscius Anglicanus*, by Downes the prompter, p. 34, we learn that it was the character of the King in Mrs. Behn's *Forced Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom*, which Mr. Otway attempted to perform, and failed in. This event appears to have happened in the year 1672.

This kind of inability he shared with Shakespeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellences. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramatic poet should without difficulty become a great actor; that he who can feel could express; that he who can excite passion should exhibit with great readiness its external modes: but since experience has fully proved, that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other, it must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player have been differently employed: the one has been considering thought, and the other action; one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.



THOMAS OTWAY.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramatic author; and in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced *Alcibiades*, a tragedy; whether from the *Alcibiade* of Palaprat, I have not means to inquire.* Langbaine, the great detector of plagiarism, is silent.

In 1677 he published *Titus and Berenice*, translated from Rapin,

* Palaprat wrote no play on the subject; and the *Alcibiade* of Campestron was not produced on the French stage until 1685.

with the *Cheats of Scapin* from Molière; and in 1678 *Friendship in Fashion*, a comedy, which, whatever might be its first reception, was, upon its revival at Drury Lane in 1749, hissed off the stage for immorality and obscenity.

Want of morals or of decency did not in those days exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment; and Otway is said to have been at this time a favourite companion of the dissolute wits. But as he who desires no virtue in his companion has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They desired only to drink and laugh: their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. Men of wit, says one of Otway's biographers, received at that time no favour from the great but to share their riots, "from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty, without the support of eminence."

Some exception, however, must be made. The Earl of Plymouth, one of King Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character: for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason,* and came back to London in extreme indigence; which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence in the *Session of the Poets*:

" Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,
And swears for heroics he writes best of any;
Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,
That his mange was quite cur'd, and his lice were all kill'd:
But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,
And prudently did not think fit to engage
The scum of a playhouse for the prop of an age."†

Don Carlos, from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1675. It appears, by the lampoon, to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together. This, however, it is reasonable to doubt, as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time; when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting of nearly the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

* The reason was, that the troops with which he was commissioned were disbanded in July and August 1678; the sums appropriated by the state for their pay having been diverted to other purposes.—*Thornton*.

" Fortune made me a soldier, a rogue in red (the grievance of the nation); Fortune made the peace—just as we were on the brink of war; then Fortune disbanded us, and lost us two months' pay. Fortune gave us debentures instead of ready money; and by very good fortune I sold mine, and lost heartily by it, in hopes the grinding, ill-natur'd dog that bought it will never get a shilling for't."—*Soldier's Fortune*.

† The cause of Lord Rochester's enmity was the rivalry which Otway set up, though unsuccessfully, against him in the favour of Mrs. Barry; a woman who, however feelingly she represented the pathos of Monimia and Belvidera, was by no means likely to prefer the poor poet to the peer.

The *Orphan* was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatic fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestic tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year produced *The History and Fall of Caius Marius*, much of which is borrowed from the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare.

In 1683 was published the first, and in 1684 the second part of *The Soldier's Fortune*,* two comedies now forgotten; and in 1685 his last and greatest dramatic work, *Venice Preserved*, a tragedy which still continues to be one of the favourites of the public, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragic action. By comparing this with his *Orphan*, it will appear that his images were by this time become stronger, and his language more energetic. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the public seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellences of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency nor zealous for virtue, but of one who conceived forcibly and drew originally by consulting nature in his own breast.

Together with those plays he wrote the poems which are in the present collection, and translated from the French the *History of the Triumvirate*.

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the terriers of the law, he retired to a public-house on Tower-hill, where he is said to have died of want; or, as is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choked with the first mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope, who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's *Memorials*, that he died of a fever caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends.† But that indigence, and its concomitants sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never

* The latter under the title of *The Atheist; or the Second Part of the Soldier's Fortune*.

† The real circumstances of our poet's death were these. He had an immediate friend (Blakeston) who was murdered in the street. To revenge the deed, he pursued the assassin, who fled to France. Otway followed him on foot as far as Dover, where he was seized with a fever (occasioned by the fatigues he had undergone, and by imprudently drinking a quantity of cold water while in a heat), which soon carried him to his grave.

been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.*

Of his poems, the longest is the *Poet's Complaint of his Muse* (1680), part of which I do not understand; and in that which is less obscure I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions, to which Dryden, in his latter years, left an illustrious testimony. He appears, by some of his verses, to have been a zealous loyalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty—he lived and died neglected.†

JOHN OLDHAM.

(1653-1683.)

John Oldham was the son of the Rev. John Oldham, a non-conformist minister. He was born at Shipton, in Gloucestershire (where his father had a congregation), on the 9th of August, 1653. He was educated under the care of his father till he was almost fitted for the University; and then, to be completely qualified for that purpose, he was sent to Tedbridge school, where he spent about two years under the tuition of Mr. Henry Heaven. Mr. Oldham was sent to Edmund Hall, Oxford, of which he became a bachelor in the beginning of June 1670. He was soon observed to be a good Latin scholar, and chiefly addicted himself to the study of poetry. In the year 1674 he took the degree of bachelor of arts, but left the University before he completed his degree, being, much against his inclination, compelled to go home. He continued some time with his father, still cultivating his muse; one of the first fruits of which was a Pindaric ode, the next year, upon the death of his dear friend and constant companion, Mr. Charles Morvent.

* “Otway, even with economy, may well have been poor. In his time, an author had no more than *one* benefit from a new play, which was on the third night. Southern managed, some years afterwards, to secure the sixth night also; but it was not until 1720 that the profits of three representations became the right of the author. Dryden estimates the gain of a play at 100*l.*; and Gildon states that the *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* produced Otway the same sum each, the items being thus: the third night yielded commonly about 70*l.*, the dedication from five to ten guineas (according to the liberality of the patron), and the copyright usually 20*l.*, though poor Otway only received from old Jacob Tonson 15*l.* for the copyright of *Venice Preserved*.”—*Thornton*.

† Besides this poem, Otway wrote Windsor Castle; or a Monument to King Charles the Second. Miscellany Poems, containing a new translation of Virgil's Eclogues, Ovid's Elegies, Odes of Horace; London, 1684. He translated likewise the Epistle of Phædra to Hippolitus; printed in the translation of Ovid's Epistles, by several hands. He wrote the prologue to Mrs. Behn's City Heiress. Prefixed to Creech's Lucretius there is a copy of verses written by Mr. Otway in praise of that translation.

Shortly after this, he became usher to the free school at Croydon in Surrey; and notwithstanding the attendance upon that laborious employment, found leisure to compose several verses;* some of which being seen in manuscript by the Earls of Rochester and Dorset, Sir Charles Sedley, and other persons of distinction, were so much admired, that they surprised him with an unexpected visit at Croydon. The master of the school thought to have taken the honour of this visit to himself; but they soon convinced him that he had neither wit nor learning enough to make a part in such company. The adventure is said to have brought Oldham acquainted with some persons of note, besides those already mentioned; so that in 1678 he was taken from the drudgery of a school, and appointed tutor to the two grandsons of Sir Edward Thurland, a judge near Reigate in Surrey, to whom he had been recommended by Harman Atwood.

He continued in this family till 1681, when, being out of employment, he repaired to London among the wits, and was afterwards engaged in the quality of tutor to a son of Sir William Hickes. This gentleman living near London, was intimately acquainted with Dr. Richard Lower, an eminent physician there, who encouraged Mr. Oldham to that study. Accordingly he applied his leisure hours this way for about a year, and made some progress in it; but the irresistible bent of his genius made him quit all lucrative business for the sake of his beloved mistress, poetry. In this humour, as soon as he had discharged his trust in qualifying young Mr. Hickes for foreign travel, not caring, though earnestly pressed, to go abroad with him, he took leave of the family; and with a small sum of money which he had saved, hastened to London, and became a votary to the bottle, being a most agreeable companion, without sinking into the profaneness and debauchery of the wits of those times. However, he had not been long in the metropolis before he was found out by the noblemen who had visited him at Croydon, and who now brought him acquainted with Dryden, by whom he was particularly esteemed.

But what turned to his greater advantage was his being made known to the Earl of Kingston, who became his patron, and entertained him with great respect at his seat at Holme Pierrepont, apparently in the view of making him his chaplain, if he would qualify himself for it by entering into the priesthood. But he had the utmost aversion for that honourable servitude, for such he deemed it, as is manifest from the satire addressed to a friend about to leave the University and come abroad into the world; in which he lets him know that he was deterred from the thought of such an office by the scandalous treatment which often accompanies it. He lived with the earl till his death, which was occasioned by the small-pox, on the 9th of December, 1683, in the thirtieth year of his age. He was buried in the church of Holme Pierrepont, the earl attending as chief mourner, who soon after erected a monument to his memory, with an inscription in Latin to this effect: no poet was fuller in-

* As, some verses on presenting a book to Cosmolia; the Parting; Complaining of Absence; and Promising a Visit in 1676, a Dithyrambic; The Drunkard's Speech at a Mask in 1677.

spired with the sacred furor, none more sublime in his sentiments, nor more happily bold in his expression than he. Oldham was tall of stature, very thin, long visaged, with a high prominent nose; his aspect unpromising; satire was in his eye; his constitution delicate and tending to consumption, and not a little injured by study and application to learned authors. His genius lay chiefly in satire, wherein, however, he did not always keep within bounds, having some licentious strokes in his writings. His works consist of four satires upon the Jesuits, a Pindaric ode, with an apology for it, &c. These, with eighteen more pieces, were published in 1683, in three thin volumes, and some remains in 1684.



JOHN DENNIS.

(1657-1733.)

John Dennis was born in London in 1657, his father being a saddler. He received his early education at Harrow; he removed thence to Caius College, Cambridge, where he was admitted January 13, 1675, in the 18th year of his age. In due time Mr. Dennis took the degree of bachelor of arts; and after quitting the University, travelled in France and Italy. In his early years he had become acquainted with some of the geniuses who then illumined the regions of wit—Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, Southern; and their society diverting his mind from the exercise of a profession, he held every attainment in contempt, except what related to poetry and taste.

Dennis, by his zeal for the Protestant succession, obtained the patronage of the Duke of Marlborough, who procured for him the place of waiter in the Custom-house, at 120*l.* per annum, which Dennis held for six years. During this time he lived so profusely, and managed his affairs with so little economy, that in order to discharge some pressing demands, he was obliged to dispose of his place. When the Earl of Halifax, with whom he was acquainted, heard of his design, he sent for him, and expostulated with him upon the folly and rashness of his proceeding, by which he would soon become a beggar. Dennis represented his exigencies, and the pressing demands that were made upon him; but his lordship insisted if he did sell it, it should be with some reversion to himself in forty years, a term which the earl had no notion Dennis could exceed. But he was mistaken in his calculation, for he out-lived the forty years stipulated, and fulfilled in a very advanced age what his lordship had prophesied would befall him. This circumstance our author hints at in the dedication of his poem *On the Battle of Ramillies*; a cold, spiritless performance, the true poetic sister of another poem of his *On the Battle of Blenheim*, addressed to Queen Anne, and for which the Duke of Marlborough rewarded him, says Mr. Coxeter, with a hundred guineas. In these poems he has introduced a kind of machinery; good and bad angels interest themselves in the action; and his hero, the Duke of Marlborough, enjoys a large share of the celestial protection.

Dennis had once contracted a friendship with Sir Richard Steele, whom he afterwards severely attacked. The occasion of the quarrel was this: in one of the *Spectators* Sir Richard, complimenting Dennis, quotes the following couplet, which he is pleased to call humorous, but which is a mere translation from Boileau:

“ One fool lolls his tongue out at another,
And shakes his empty noddle at his brother.”

The citation of this couplet Dennis imagined was rather meant to affront him than pay a compliment to his genius, as he could discover nothing excellent in the lines; and if there was, their being only a translation in some measure abated their merit. Fired with resentment, he immediately wrote a letter to the *Spectator*, in which he treated Sir Richard with very little ceremony, and informed him that if he had been sincere in paying a compliment to him, he should have chosen a quotation from his poem *On the Battle of Ramillies*.

Dennis, in his zeal for the Hanoverian succession, wrote many letters and pamphlets for the administration of the Earl of Godolphin and the Duke of Marlborough, and never failed to lash the French with all the severity natural to him.

When the peace was about to be ratified, Dennis, who infinitely overrated his importance, took it into his head that in the terms of peace it would be stipulated that those persons who had been most active against the French would be demanded by that nation as hostages; and imagining himself of that importance, and dreading the being given up to the French, he waited on the Duke of Marl-

borough, and begged his grace's interposition, that he might not be sacrificed to the French,—for, says he, “I have always been their enemy.” To this request his grace very gravely replied, “Do not fear, Mr. Dennis; you shall not be given up to the French. I have been a greater enemy to them than you; and you see I am not afraid of being sacrificed, nor am in the least disturbed.” Dennis upon this retired, satisfied with his grace's answer, though there still remained upon his spirits a dread of becoming a prey to some of the enemies of Great Britain.

He soon after this retired into the country, to spend some time at a friend's house. While he was walking one day by the sea-side, he saw a ship in full sail approaching the shore, which his distracted imagination dictated was a French ship sent to carry him off. He hurried to his friend's house with the utmost precipitation; upbraided him with treachery, as being privy to the attempts of the French against his life; and without ceremony quitted the house, and posted to London as fast as he could.

Dennis, who never cared to be an unconcerned spectator when any business of a public or important nature was in agitation, entered the lists with Sacheverell, in a letter to a member of parliament, wherein, with much zeal and force of argument, he showed the danger of priestcraft both to religion and government.

In 1703 he published proposals for putting a speedy end to the war, by ruining the commerce of the French and Spaniards, and securing our own, without any additional expense to the nation.

In 1706 he published *An Essay on the Italian Opera*, to show the danger that a nation is exposed to by too much indulging in effeminate music.

In 1711 Dennis published *An Essay upon Public Spirit*, a satire in prose on the manners and luxury of the times, the chief sources of our present parties and divisions—one of his most finished performances.

In pretty advanced age, Dennis, who then laboured under severe necessities, published two volumes of Letters, by subscription, which are by far the most entertaining part of his writings. Another prose essay of his, which does him much credit, is his *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*.

Some time after the death of Dryden, when Pope's reputation began to rise, his friends were imprudent enough to assert that Pope was the greatest poet of the two: Dennis, who had made court to Dryden, and was respected by him, heard this with indignation, and immediately exerted all the criticism of which he was master to reduce the character of Pope. The result was, that our author found himself in the *Dunciad*:

“She saw slow Philips creep like Tate's poor page,
And all the mighty mad in Dennis rage.”

“Ah, Dennis! Gildon, ah! what ill-starr'd rage
Divides a friendship long confirm'd by age?
Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barb'rous civil war.
Embrace, embrace, my sons! be foes no more;
Nor glad vile poets with true critics' gore.”

Dennis's dramatic performances are : 1. *A Plot and No Plot*, a comedy (1697) ; the scope of which is, to ridicule the Jacobites. 2. *Rinaldo and Armida*, a tragedy (1699). 3. *Iphigenia, daughter to Agamemnon King of Argos*, a tragedy (1704). 4. *Liberty Asserted*, a tragedy (1704). 5. *Appius and Virginia*, a tragedy. 6. *The Comical Gallant*, altered from the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Prefixed is an essay *On Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of its Degeneracy*. 7. *Coriolanus, the Invader of his Country; or the Fatal Resentment*, a tragedy (altered from Shakespeare). This piece met with opposition the first night, and on the fourth was discontinued. To this play Colley Cibber wrote an epilogue, which Mrs. Oldfield spoke with universal applause, and for which poor, peevish, jealous Dennis abused them both.

Dennis happened once to go to the play when a tragedy was acted, in which the machinery of thunder was introduced, a new artificial method of producing which he had formerly communicated to the managers. Incensed by this circumstance, he cried out in a transport of resentment, "That is my thunder, by G—d ! The villains will play my thunder, but not my plays."

Besides the works already mentioned, Dennis is author of the following pieces, mostly in the Pindaric class : "Upon our Victory at Sea, and burning the French Fleet at La Hogue in 1692 ;" "Part of the Te Deum paraphrased, in Pindaric verse," &c. &c.

Mr. Southey considers that his critical works should be collected. In verse he is extremely unequal ; his numbers being sometimes spirited and harmonious, and his subjects elevated and judicious ; and at others, flat, harsh, and puerile. As a dramatic author, he certainly deserves not to be held in any consideration. His plots, excepting that of his *Plot and No Plot*, which is a political play, are all borrowed, yet in general not ill-chosen. But his characters are weakly-designed and unfinished ; his language prosaic, flat, and undramatic ; and the conduct of his principal scenes heavy, dull, and unimpassioned.

After a life exposed to vicissitudes, habituated to many disappointments, and embroiled in unsuccessful quarrels, Dennis died on the 6th of January, 1733, in the 77th year of his age. We have observed that he outlived the reversion of his place, after which he fell into great distress ; and as he had all his life been making enemies by the ungovernable fury of his temper, he found few persons disposed to relieve him. When he was near the close of his days, a play was acted for his benefit. This favour was procured him by the joint interest of Mr. Thomson, Mr. Martin, Mr. Mallet, and Mr. Pope. The play was performed at the Haymarket, under the direction of Mr. Mills.



SAMUEL GARTH,*

(Circa 1660-1719.)

Samuel Garth was of a good family in Yorkshire; and from some school in his own country became a student at Peter-house in Cambridge, where he resided till he became doctor of physic on July 7th, 1691. He was examined before the college at London on March the 12th, 1692, and admitted fellow June 26th, 1693. He was soon so much distinguished by his conversation and accomplishments as to obtain very extensive practice; and, if a pamphlet of those times may be credited, had the favour and confidence of one party, as Radcliffe had of the other.

He is always mentioned as a man of benevolence; and it is just to suppose that his desire of helping the helpless disposed him to so much zeal for the *Dispensary*,—an undertaking of which some account, however short, is proper to be given.

Whether what Temple says be true, that physicians have had more learning than the other faculties, I will not stay to inquire; but I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusion of beneficence; and willingness to exert a lucrative art where there is no hope of lucre. Agreeably to this character, the College of Physicians, in July 1687, published an edict requiring all the fellows, candidates, and licentiates to give gratuitous advice to the neighbouring poor.

This edict was sent to the court of aldermen; and a question being made to whom the appellation of the poor should be extended,

* Johnson.

the college answered, that it should be sufficient to bring a testimonial from the clergyman officiating in the parish where the patient resided.

After a year's experience the physicians found their charity frustrated by some malignant opposition, and made to a great degree vain by the high price of physic; they therefore voted, in Aug. 1688, that the laboratory of the college should be accommodated to the preparation of medicines, and another room prepared for their reception; and that the contributors to the expense should manage the charity.

It was now expected that the apothecaries would have undertaken the care of providing medicines; but they took another course. Thinking the whole design pernicious to their interest, they endeavoured to raise a faction against it in the college; and found some physicians mean enough to solicit their patronage, by betraying to them the counsels of the college. The greater part, however, enforced by a new edict in 1694 the former order of 1687, and sent it to the mayor and aldermen, who appointed a committee to treat with the college, and settle the mode of administering the charity.

It was desired by the aldermen, that the testimonials of churchwardens and overseers should be admitted; and that all hired servants, and all apprentices to handicraftsmen, should be considered as poor. This likewise was granted by the college.

It was then considered who should distribute the medicines, and who should settle their prices. The physicians procured some apothecaries to undertake the dispensation, and offered that the warden and company of the apothecaries should adjust the price. This offer was rejected; and the apothecaries who had engaged to assist the charity were considered as traitors to the company, threatened with the imposition of troublesome offices, and deterred from the performance of their engagements. The apothecaries ventured upon public opposition, and presented a kind of remonstrance against the design to the committee of the city, which the physicians condescended to confute: and at least the traders seem to have prevailed among the sons of trade; for the proposal of the college having been considered, a paper of approbation was drawn up, but postponed and forgotten.

The physicians still persisted; and in 1696 a subscription was raised by themselves, according to an agreement prefixed to the *Dispensary*. The poor were for a time supplied with medicines; for how long a time I know not. The medicinal charity, like others, began with ardour, but soon remitted, and at last died gradually away.

About the time of the subscription begins the action of *The Dispensary*. The poem, as its subject was present and popular, cooperated with passions and prejudices then prevalent; and, with such auxiliaries to its intrinsic merit, was universally and liberally applauded.* It was on the side of charity against the intrigues of interest, and of regular learning against licentious usurpation of medical authority, and was therefore naturally favoured by those who read and can judge of poetry.

* First published in 1694, and dedicated to Anthony Henley, Esq. It had commendatory verses before it by Charles Boyle (afterwards Earl of Orrery), Col. Christ. Codrington, Thomas Cheek, Esq., and Col. Henry Blount.

In 1697 Garth spoke that which is now called the Harveian Oration; which the authors of the *Biographia* mention with more praise than the passage quoted in their notes will fully justify. Garth, speaking of the mischief done by quacks, has these expressions: "Non tamen telis vulnerat ista agyrtarum colluvies, sed theriacâ quâdam magis perniciosâ, non pyrio, sed pulvere nescio quo exotico certat, non globulis plumbeis, sed pilulis æque lethalibus interficit." This was certainly thought fine by the author, and is still admired by his biographer. In October 1702 he became one of the censors of the college.

Garth, being an active and zealous Whig, was a member of the Kit-kat club,* and, by consequence, familiarly known to all the great men of that denomination. In 1710, when the government fell into other hands, he writ to Lord Godolphin, on his dismissal, a short poem, which was criticised in the *Examiner*, and so successfully either defended or excused by Mr. Addison, that, for the sake of the vindication, it ought to be preserved.

At the accession of the present family his merits were acknowledged and rewarded. He was knighted with the sword of his hero, Marlborough; and was made physician-in-ordinary to the king, and physician-general to the army.

He then undertook an edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by several hands, which he recommended by a preface written with more ostentation than ability; his notions are half-formed, and his materials immethodically confused. This was his last work. He died Jan. 18, 1718, and was buried at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

His personal character seems to have been social and liberal. He communicated himself through a very wide extent of acquaintance; and though firm in a party at a time when firmness included virulence, yet he imparted his kindness to those who were not supposed to favour his principles. He was an early encourager of Pope, and was at once the friend of Addison and of Granville. He is accused of voluptuousness and irreligion; and Pope, who says, "that if ever there was a good Christian without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth," seems not able to deny what he is angry to hear and loth to confess.†

* The Kit-kat Club consisted of above thirty noblemen and gentlemen, distinguished by their excellent parts; and was erected, in 1703, purely in the design of manifesting a warm zeal for the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover. The design of these gentlemen to recommend and encourage loyalty by the powerful influence of pleasantry, wit, and humour, furnished our author with an opportunity of distinguishing himself amongst the most distinguished in those qualities, by the extempore epigrams he made upon the toasts of the club, which were inscribed on their drinking-glasses. In reality, this part of the constitution of that celebrated society must have been best suited both to our author's taste and temper; for his party-zeal was such as warmed his breast with a sincere, steady, and equal flame, without bursting out to any rage and fire against those who differed from him. The name of "Kit-kat" was taken from one Christopher Kat, a pastrycook, near the tavern in King-street, Westminster, where they met, and who often served them with tarts, &c. in his way. Jacob Tonson was their bookseller; and that family is in possession of the pictures of all the original members of the club.

† Pope's words are these: "The best-natured of men, Sir Samuel Garth, has left me in the truest concern for his loss. His death was very heroical, and

Pope afterwards declared himself convinced that Garth died in the communion of the church of Rome, having been privately reconciled. It is observed by Lowth, that there is less distance than is thought between scepticism and popery; and that a mind wearied with perpetual doubt, willingly seeks repose in the bosom of an infallible church.

His poetry has been praised at least equally to its merit. In *The Dispensary* there is a strain of smooth and free versification; but few lines are eminently elegant. No passages fall below mediocrity, and few rise much above it. The plan seems formed without just proportion to the subject; the means and end have no necessary connexion. Resnel, in his preface to Pope's essay, remarks, that Garth exhibits no discrimination of characters; and that what any one says might, with equal propriety, have been said by another. The general design is, perhaps, open to criticism; but the composition can seldom be charged with inaccuracy or negligence. The author never slumbers in self-indulgence: his full vigour is always exerted; scarcely a line is left unfinished; nor is it easy to find an expression used by constraint, or a thought imperfectly expressed. It was remarked by Pope, that *The Dispensary* had been corrected in every edition, and that every change was an improvement. It appears, however, to want something of poetical ardour, and something of general delectation; and therefore, since it has been no longer supported by accidental and intrinsic popularity, it has been scarcely able to support itself.*

CHARLES JOHNSON.

(Circa 1660-1744.)

Charles Johnson, the place and date of whose birth are unknown, was designed for the law, and as such entered the Middle Temple; but finding or supposing in himself a talent for dramatic writing, he quitted the scarce-begun study of the law, proceeded writer for the stage, and having formed an intimate acquaintance with Mr. Wilks, found means, by his assistance, to have his plays acted. Some of these met with fair success; and by being a constant frequenter of the grand rendezvous of the wits of that time, Will's and Button's coffee-houses, he, by a courteous and amiable behaviour, formed so extensive an acquaintance, as always ensured him a full attendance

yet unaffected enough to have made a saint or a philosopher famous; but ill tongues and worse hearts have branded even his last moments, as wrongfully as they did his life, with irreligion. You must have heard many tales on the subject; but if ever there was a good Christian without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth."

* When the Duchess of Marlborough said (pressing the duke to take some medicine) that "she would be hanged if it did not prove serviceable;" Garth observed, "Do take it then, my lord, for it must be of service in one way or other."

on his benefit night ; by which means, being a man of good management, he was enabled to live very respectably. He at length married a young widow with a tolerable fortune, on which he set up a tavern in Bow-street, Covent Garden ; but quitted business at his wife's death, and lived privately on the competence he had realised. He died in 1744. As a dramatic writer, he is far from deserving to be placed in the lowest rank ; for though his plots are seldom original, yet he has given them so many additions of his own, and has clothed the designs of others in so pleasing a dress, that a great share of the merit they possess ought to be attributed to him. The language of his comedies—which are greatly superior to his tragedies—is easy, and the dialogue natural and sprightly. One of them, *The Country Lasses*, continued for a long time on the list of acting plays. Notwithstanding his inoffensive and conciliatory character, he could not escape the malignity of Pope, who has, on some trivial pique, placed him in the *Dunciad*, appending to his poetical scurrility this note from *The Characters of the Times*: “ Charles Johnson, famous for writing a play every year, and for being at Button's every day. He had probably thriven better in his vocation, had he been a small matter leaner : he may be justly called a martyr to obesity, and be said to have fallen a victim to the rotundity of his parts.” It is honourable to Johnson, as Reed observes, that his enemies could fix no greater imputation upon him than his being physically fat.

Charles Johnson's works are these :

1. *The Gentleman Cully*. Comedy. 1702.
2. *Fortune in her Wits*. Comedy. 1705. A very indifferent translation of Mr. Cowley's *Naufragium Jocularis*.
3. *The force of Friendship*. Tragedy. 1710.
4. *Love in a Chest*. Farce. 1710.
5. *The Wife's Relief ; or, the Husband's Cure*. Comedy. Chiefly borrowed from Shirley's *Gamester*. 1711.
6. *The Successful Pirate*. Tragi-comedy. 1712.
7. *The Generous Husband ; or, the Coffee-house Politician*. Comedy. 1713.
8. *The Country Lasses ; or, the Custom of the Manor*. Comedy. 1714.
9. *Love and Liberty*. Tragedy. 1715.
10. *The Victim*. Tragedy. 1715.
11. *The Sultanness*. Tragedy. 1717.
12. *The Cobler of Preston*. Farce. 1717.
13. *Love in a Forest*. Comedy. 1721. From Shakespeare's “ *As you like it*.”
14. *The Masquerade*. Comedy. 1723.
15. *The Village Opera*. 1728.
16. *The Ephesian Matron*. Farce. 1730.
17. *Celia ; or, the Perjured Lovers*. Tragedy. 1732.



CHARLES MONTAGUE, EARL OF HALIFAX.*

(1661-1715.)

The life of the Earl of Halifax was properly that of an artful and active statesman, employed in balancing parties, contriving expedients, and combating opposition, and exposed to the vicissitudes of advancement and degradation: but, in this collection, poetical merit is the claim to attention; and the account which is here to be expected may properly be proportioned not to his influence in the state, but to his rank among the writers of verse.

Charles Montague was born April 16, 1661, at Hoxton, in Northamptonshire; the son of Mr. George Montague, a younger son of the Earl of Manchester. He was educated first in the country, and then removed to Westminster, where, in 1677, he was chosen a king's scholar, and recommended himself to Busby by his felicity in extemporary epigrams. He contracted a very intimate friendship with Mr. Stepney; and in 1682, when Stepney was elected at Cambridge, the election of Montague being not to proceed till the year following, he was afraid lest by being placed at Oxford he might be separated from his companion, and therefore solicited to be removed to Cambridge, without waiting for the advantages of another year.

It seems indeed time to wish for a removal; for he was already a school-boy of one-and-twenty.

* Johnson.

His relation, Dr. Montague, was then master of the college in which he was placed a fellow-commoner, and took him under his particular care. Here he commenced an acquaintance with the great Newton, which continued through his life, and was at last attested by a legacy.

In 1685 his verses on the death of King Charles made such an impression on the Earl of Dorset, that he was invited to town, and introduced by that universal patron to the other wits. In 1687 he joined with Prior in *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse*, a burlesque of Dryden's *Hind and Panther*. He signed the invitation to the Prince of Orange, and sat in the convention. He about the same time married the Countess Dowager of Manchester, and intended to have taken orders; but afterwards altering his purpose, he purchased for 1500*l.* the place of one of the clerks of the council.

After he had written his epistle on the victory of the Boyne, his patron Dorset introduced him to King William, with this expression: "Sir, I have brought a mouse to wait on your majesty." To which the king is said to have replied, "You do well to put me in the way of making a man of him;" and ordered him a pension of five hundred pounds. This story, however current, seems to have been made after the event. The king's answer implies a greater acquaintance with our proverbial and familiar diction than King William could possibly have attained.

In 1691, being member of the House of Commons, he argued warmly in favour of a law to grant the assistance of counsel in trials for high treason; and, in the midst of his speech falling into some confusion, was for a while silent; but, recovering himself, observed, "how reasonable it was to allow counsel to men called as criminals before a court of justice, when it appeared how much the presence of that assembly could disconcert one of their own body."*

After this he rose fast into honours and employments, being made one of the commissioners of the treasury, and called to the privy council. In 1694 he became chancellor of the exchequer; and the next year engaged in the great attempt of the recoinage, which was in two years happily completed. In 1696 he projected the general fund, and raised the credit of the exchequer; and, after inquiry concerning a grant of Irish crown lands, it was determined by a vote of the Commons, that Charles Montague, Esq. "had deserved his majesty's favour." In 1698, being advanced to the first commission of the treasury, he was appointed one of the regency in the king's absence: the next year he was made auditor of the exchequer, and the year after created Baron Halifax. He was, however, impeached by the Commons;† but the articles were dismissed by the Lords.

* Mr. Reed observes that this anecdote is related by Walpole, in his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*, of the Earl of Shaftesbury, author of the *Characteristics*; but this appears to be a mistake, if we are to understand that the words were spoken by Shaftesbury at this time, when he had no seat in the House of Commons; nor did the bill pass at this time, being thrown out by the House of Lords. It became a law in the 7th William, when Halifax and Shaftesbury both had seats. The editors of the *Biographia Britannica* adopt Walpole's story, but they are not speaking of this period. The story first appeared in the *Life of Lord Halifax*, published in 1715.

† For advising his Majesty to sign the partition-treaty.

At the accession of Queen Anne he was dismissed from the council; and in the first parliament of her reign was again attacked by the Commons, and again escaped by the protection of the Lords. In 1704 he wrote an answer to Bromley's speech against occasional conformity. He headed the inquiry into the danger of the church. In 1706 he proposed and negotiated the union with Scotland; and when the elector of Hanover had received the garter, after the act had passed for securing the Protestant succession, he was appointed to carry the ensigns of the order to the electoral court. He sat as one of the judges of Sacheverell, but voted for a mild sentence. Being now no longer in favour, he contrived to obtain a writ for summoning the electoral prince to parliament as Duke of Cambridge.

At the queen's death he was appointed one of the regents; and at the accession of George I. was made Earl of Halifax, knight of the garter, and first commissioner of the treasury, with a grant to his nephew of the reversion of the auditorship of the exchequer. More was not to be had, and this he kept but a little while; for, on the 19th of May, 1715, he died of an inflammation of his lungs.

Of him who from a poet became a patron of poets, it will be readily believed that the works would not miss of celebration. Addison began to praise him early,* and was followed or accompanied by other poets; perhaps by almost all, except Swift and Pope, who forebore to flatter him in his life, and after his death spoke of him, Swift with slight censure, and Pope, in the character of Bufo, with acrimonious contempt.

He was, as Pope says, "fed with dedications;" for Tickell affirms that no dedication was unrewarded. To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, and to suppose that the encomiast always knows and feels the falsehood of his assertions, is surely to discover great ignorance of human nature and human life. In determinations depending not on rules, but on experience and comparison, judgment is always in some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire in a friend that understanding which selected us for confidence; we admire more in a patron that judgment which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affection will easily dispose us to exalt.

To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise wears gradually away; and perhaps the pride of patronage may be in time so increased, that modest praise will no longer please.

* "The noble Montague,
For wit, for honour, and for judgment fam'd;
While Nassau's godlike acts adorn his lines,
And all the hero in full glory shines.
We see his army set in full array,
And Boyne's dy'd waves run purple to the sea."

Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known, had he no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verse, to be told that, in strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Montague.

THOMAS SOUTHERN.

(1660-1746.)

Thomas Southern was born in Dublin, 1660, and received his early education at the University there. In the eighteenth year of his age he quitted Ireland, and entered himself of the Middle Temple, which, however, he soon quitted for the more agreeable service of the Muses.

His first dramatic performance, *The Persian Prince or Loyal Brother*, was acted in 1682. This play was introduced at a time when the Tory interest was triumphant in England, and the character of

* Besides the admirable travesty written in conjunction with Prior, Halifax is the author of—

An Answer to Mr. Bromley's Speech in relation to the Occasional Conformity Bill. 1704.

Seasonable Inquiries on Questions concerning a New Parliament. 1711.

A Poem on the Death of Charles II. 1684.

The Man of Honour: a Poem.

Ode on the Marriage of H.R.H. the Princess Anne and Prince George of Denmark. In Latin verse.

Epistle to Charles Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, occasioned by King William's Victory in Ireland.

(All these, except the Inquiries, with several of his speeches, were published together in an 8vo volume, with memoirs of his lordship's life, 1716.)

Verses written at Althorp, on a blank leaf of a Waller, on seeing Vandyke's picture of Lord Sunderland.

Verses written for the Toasting-glasses of the Kit-Kat Club.

Dunton says of Lord Halifax, that he was "affable, easy, and obliging, candid and ingenuous; and all these qualities were well tempered." Steele, in a dedicatory epistle, flatters him with saying: "Your lordship's patience has produced those arts which before shunned the commerce of the world, into the service of life; and it is to you we owe that the man of wit has turned himself to be the man of business. Your own studies have been diverted from being the highest ornament to the highest use to mankind; and the capacities that would have rendered you the greatest poet of your age, have, to the advantage of Great Britain, been employed in pursuits which have made you the most able patriot."

The biographer of Lord Halifax in Cibber's *Lives* writes: "Considered as a poet, his lordship makes a less considerable figure than the Earl of Dorset: there is a languor in his verses which seems to indicate that he was not born with a poetical genius. That he was a lover of the Muses there is not the least doubt, as we find him patronising the poets so warmly; but there is some difference between a propensity to poetry and the power of excelling in it."

the *Loyal Brother* was no doubt intended to compliment James Duke of York, who afterwards rewarded the poet for his service. To this tragedy Dryden wrote the prologue and epilogue, which furnished Southern with an opportunity of saying in his dedication, "That the laureate's own pen secured me maintaining the outworks, while I lay safe entrenched within his lines; and malice, ill-nature, and censure, were forced to grin at a distance."

His next play was a comedy, called *The Disappointment, or the Mother in Fashion*, performed in 1684.

After the accession of James II. to the throne, when the Duke of Monmouth made his attempt on the crown, Southern went into the army, and received three commissions immediately under King James.

In the year before the Revolution he wrote a tragedy called *The Spartan Dame*, which, however, was not acted till 1721. The subject is taken from the life of Agis, in Plutarch; and the character of Chelonis was thought to have a near resemblance to that of King William's queen, Mary.

In his preface to his tragedy, he acknowledges that he received from the booksellers as its price 150*l.*, which was thought at that time a very large sum. He was the first who introduced the author's advantage of a second and third night; which Pope mentions in the following manner:

"Southern, born to raise
The price of prologues and of plays."

The reputation which Dryden gained by the many prologues he wrote, made the players always solicitous to have one of his, as being sure to be well received by the public. Dryden's price for a prologue had usually been five guineas, with which sum Mr. Southern once presented him; when Dryden, returning the money, said, "Young man, this is too little; I must have ten guineas." Southern answered upon this, that five had been his usual price: "Yes," says Dryden, "it has been so, but the players have hitherto had my labours too cheap; for the future I must have ten guineas." Southern also was industrious to draw all imaginable profits from his poetical labours. Dryden once took occasion to ask him how much he got by one of his plays; to whom Southern replied, after owning himself ashamed to tell him, 700*l.*; which astonished Dryden, as it was more by 600*l.* than he himself had ever got for his most successful plays. But the secret, we are told, is, that Southern was not beneath the drudgery of solicitation, and often sold his tickets at a very high price, by making application to persons of distinction.

Dryden entertained a very high opinion of our author's abilities. He prefixed a copy of verses to a comedy of his called *The Wife's Excuse*, acted in the year 1692 with very indifferent success, and bequeathed to him the care of writing half the last act of *Cleomenes*, "which," says Mr. Southern, "when it comes into the world, will appear to be so considerable a trust, that all the town will pardon me for defending this play, that preferred me to it."

The night that Southern's *Fatal Marriage* was first acted, a gentleman took occasion to ask Dryden what was his opinion of Southern's genius? He replied, "that he thought him such another poet as Otway." The most finished of all his plays is *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave*; a drama built on a true story, related by Mrs. Behn in a novel. The *Fatal Marriage* still continues an ornament to the stage, the folly in the comic scenes being excluded; and one cannot but regret that Southern should have sacrificed to the vicious taste of his times by mixing with the pathetic dignity of *Oroonoko* the ribald buffoonery of the *Widow Lackett* and the *Weldons*.

Southern died the 26th of May, 1746. He lived the last ten years of his life in Westminster, and attended the abbey service very constantly, being, as is said, particularly fond of church music. His plays are in two volumes, 12mo.

GEORGE STEPNEY.*

(1663-1707.)

George Stepney, descended from the Stepneys of Pendigrast in Pembrokeshire, was born at Westminster in 1663. Of his father's condition or fortune I have no account.† Having received the first part of his education at Westminster, where he passed six years in the college, he went at nineteen to Cambridge,‡ where he continued a friendship begun at school with Mr. Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax. They came to London together, and are said to have been invited into public life by the Duke of Dorset.

His qualifications recommended him to many foreign employments, so that his time seems to have been spent in negotiations. In 1692 he was sent envoy to the Elector of Brandenburg; in 1693, to the imperial court; in 1694, to the Elector of Saxony; in 1696, to the Electors of Mentz and Cologne, and the Congress at Frankfort; in 1698, a second time to Brandenburg; in 1699, to the King of Poland; in 1701, again to the emperor; and in 1706 to the States-General. In 1697 he was made one of the commissioners of trade. His life was busy and not long. He died at Chelsea in 1707; and is buried in Westminster Abbey, with this epitaph, which Jacob transcribed:

* Johnson.

† It has been conjectured that our poet was either son or grandson of Charles, third son of Sir John Stepney, the first baronet of that family. Mr. Cole says the poet's father was a grocer.

‡ He was entered of Trinity College, and took his Master's degree in 1689.



GEORGE STEPNEY.

H. S. E.

GEORGIUS STEPNEIUS, Armiger,
Vir

Ob Ingenii acumen,
Literarum Scientiam,
Morum Suavitatem,
Rerum Usum,

Virorum Amplissimorum Consuetudinem,
Linguae, Styli, ac Vitae Elegantiam,
Præclara Officia cum Britanniae tum Europae præstita,
Suâ ætate multum celebratus,
Apud posteros semper celebrandus ;

Plurimas Legationes obiit
Eâ Fide, Diligentia, ac Felicitate,
Ut Augustissimorum Principum
Gulielmi et Annæ

Spem in illo repositam
Nunquam fefellerit,
Haud rarè superaverit.

Post longum Honorum Cursum
Brevi Temporis Spatio confectum,
Cum Naturæ parum, Famæ satis vixerat,
Animam ad altiora aspirantem placidè efflavit.

On the left hand :

G. S.

Ex Equestri Familiâ Stepneiorum,

De Pendegrast, in Comitatu
 Pembrochiensi oriundus,
 Westmonasterii natus est, A.D. 1663.
 Electus in Collegium
 Sancti Petri Westmonast. A. 1676.
 Sancti Trinitatis Cantab. 1682.
 Consiliariorum quibus Commercii
 Cura commissa est 1697.
 Chelseiæ mortuus, et, comitante
 Magnâ Procerum
 Frequentiâ, huc elatus, 1707.

It is reported that the juvenile compositions of Stepney "made grey authors blush." I know not whether his poems will appear such wonders to the present age. One cannot always easily find the reason for which the world has sometimes conspired to squander praise. It is not very unlikely that he wrote very early as well as he ever wrote; and the performances of youth have many favourers, because the authors yet lay no claim to public honours, and are therefore not considered as rivals by the distributors of fame.

He apparently professed himself a poet, and added his name to those of the other wits in the version of Juvenal; but he is a very licentious translator, and does not recompense his neglect of the author by beauties of his own. In his original poems, now and then, a happy line may perhaps be found; and now and then a short composition may give pleasure. But there is, in the whole, little either of the grace of wit or the vigour of nature.

WILLIAM KING.*

(1663-1712.)

William King was born in London in 1663; the son of Ezekiel King, a gentleman. He was allied to the family of Clarendon.

From Westminster School, where he was a scholar on the foundation, under the care of Dr. Busby, he was at eighteen elected to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1681, where he is said to have prosecuted his studies with so much intenseness and activity, that before he was eight years standing he had read over and made remarks upon twenty-two thousand odd hundred books and manuscripts.† The books were certainly not very long, the manuscripts not very difficult, nor the remarks very large; for the calculator will find that he dispatched seven a day for every day of his eight years, with a remnant that more than satisfies most other students. He took his degree in the most expensive manner, as a grand compounder; whence it is inferred that he inherited a considerable fortune.

* Johnson.

† This appears by his *Adversaria*, printed in his works, edit. 1776, three volumes.

In 1688, the same year in which he was made master of arts, he published a confutation of Varilla's account of Wickliffe; and, engaging in the study of the civil law, became doctor in 1692, and was admitted advocate at Doctors Commons.

He had already made some translations from the French, and written some humorous and satirical pieces; when, in 1694, Molesworth published his *Account of Denmark*, in which he treats the Danes and their monarch with great contempt, and takes the opportunity of insinuating those wild principles by which he supposes liberty to be established, and by which his adversaries suspect that all subordination and government is endangered.

This book offended Prince George; and the Danish minister presented a memorial against it. The principles of its author did not please Dr. King, and therefore he undertook to confute part and laugh at the rest. The controversy is now forgotten; and books of this kind seldom live long when interest and resentment have ceased.

In 1697 he mingled in the controversy between Boyle and Bentley; and was one of those who tried what wit could perform in opposition to learning on a question which learning only could decide.

In 1699 was published by him *A Journey to London*, after the method of Dr. Martin Lister, who had published *A Journey to Paris*. And in 1700 he satirised the Royal Society, at least Sir Hans Sloane their president, in two dialogues, entitled *The Transactioner*.

Though he was a regular advocate in the courts of civil and canon law, he did not love his profession, nor indeed any kind of business which interrupted his voluptuary dreams, or forced him to rouse from that indulgence in which only he could find delight. His reputation as a civilian was yet maintained by his judgments in the courts of delegates, and raised very high by the address and knowledge which he discovered in 1700, when he defended the Earl of Anglesea against his lady, afterwards Duchess of Buckinghamshire, who sued for a divorce, and obtained it.

The expense of his pleasures and neglect of business had now lessened his revenues, and he was willing to accept of a settlement in Ireland, where, about 1702, he was made judge of the admiralty, commissioner of the prizes, keeper of the records in Birmingham's Tower, and vicar-general to Dr. Marsh, the primate.

But it is vain to put wealth within the reach of him who will not stretch out his hand to take it. King soon found a friend as idle and thoughtless as himself, in Upton, one of the judges, who had a pleasant house called Mountown, near Dublin, to which King frequently retired,—delighting to neglect his interest, forget his cares, and desert his duty.

Here he wrote *Mully of Mountown*, a poem; by which, though fanciful readers in the pride of sagacity have given it a poetical interpretation, was meant originally no more than it expressed, as it was dictated only by the author's delight in the quiet of Mountown.*

In 1708, when Lord Wharton was sent to govern Ireland, King returned to London, with his poverty, his idleness, and his wit, and

* Mully was a red cow of his at Mountown.

published some essays called *Useful Transactions*.* His *Voyage to the Island of Cajamai* is particularly commended. He then wrote *The Art of Love*, a poem remarkable, notwithstanding its title, for purity of sentiment; and in 1709 imitated Horace in an *Art of Cookery*, which he published with some letters to Dr. Lister.

In 1710 he appeared as a lover of the Church, on the side of Sacheverell; and was supposed to have concurred at least in the projection of *The Examiner*. His eyes were open to all the operations of Whiggism; and he bestowed some strictures upon Dr. Kennett's adulatory sermon at the funeral of the Duke of Devonshire.

The History of the Heathen Gods, a book composed for schools, was written by him in 1710. The work is useful, but might have been produced without the powers of King. The next year he published *Rufinus*, an historical essay; and a poem, intended to dispose the nation to think as he thought of the Duke of Marlborough and his adherents.

In 1711, competence, if not plenty, was again put into his power. He was, without the trouble of attendance or the mortification of a request, made editor of *The Gazette*. Swift, Freind, Prior, and other men of the same party, brought him the key of the gazetteer's office. He was now again placed in a profitable employment, and again threw the benefit away. An act of insolvency made his business at that time particularly troublesome; and he would not wait till hurry should be at an end, but impatiently resigned it, and returned to his wonted indigence and amusements.

One of his amusements at Lambeth, where he resided, was to mortify Dr. Tenison, the archbishop, by a public festivity on the surrender of Dunkirk to Hill; an event with which Tenison's political bigotry did not suffer him to be delighted. King was resolved to counteract his sullenness, and at the expense of a few barrels of ale, filled the neighbourhood with honest merriment.

In the autumn of 1712 his health declined; he grew weaker by degrees, and died on Christmas-day. Though his life had not been without irregularity, his principles were pure and orthodox, and his death was pious.

After this relation, it will be naturally supposed that his poems were rather the amusements of idleness than the efforts of study; that he endeavoured rather to divert than astonish; that his thoughts seldom aspired to sublimity; and that if his verse was easy and his images familiar, he attained what he desired. His purpose is to be merry; but perhaps, to enjoy his mirth, it may be sometimes necessary to think well of his opinions.

* The design of this work was to ridicule Sir Hans Sloane's writings in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society, of which Sloane was secretary. This work of Dr. King's, which is now very scarce, is one of the severest, and, at the same time, merriest satires that was ever written in prose.



WILLIAM WALSH.*

(1663-1708.)

William Walsh, the son of Joseph Walsh, Esq. of Abberley in Worcestershire, was born in 1663, as appears from the account of Wood, who relates that, at the age of 15, he became, in 1678, a gentleman commoner of Wadham College.

He left the University without a degree, and pursued his studies in London and at home; that he studied, in whatever place, is apparent from the effect, for he became, in Mr. Dryden's opinion, the *best critic* in the nation.

He was not, however, merely a critic or a scholar, but a man of fashion, and, as Dennis remarks, ostentatiously splendid in his dress. He was likewise a member of Parliament and a courtier, knight of the shire for his native county in several Parliaments; in another, the representative of Richmond in Yorkshire, and gentleman of the horse to Queen Anne, under the Duke of Somerset.

Some of his verses show him to have been a zealous friend to the Revolution; but his political ardour did not abate his reverence or kindness for Dryden, to whom he gave a Dissertation on Virgil's Pastorals, in which, however studied, he discovers some ignorance of the laws of French versification.

In 1705, he began to correspond with Mr. Pope, in whom he discovered very early the power of poetry. Their letters are written

* Johnson.

upon the pastoral comedy of the Italians, and those pastorals which Pope was then preparing to publish.

The kindnesses which are first experienced are seldom forgotten. Pope always retained a grateful memory of Walsh's notice, and mentioned him in one of his latter pieces among those that had encouraged his juvenile studies :

" Granville the polite,
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write."

In his essay on criticism he had given him more splendid praise ; and, in the opinion of his learned commentator, sacrificed a little of his judgment to his gratitude.

The time of his death I have not learned. It must have happened between 1707, when he wrote to Pope, and 1711, when Pope praised him in his essay. The epitaph makes him forty-six years old : if Wood's account be right, he died in 1709.

He is known more by his familiarity with greater men, than by any thing done or written by himself.

His works are not numerous. In prose he wrote *Eugenia, a Defence of Women*, which Dryden honoured with a Preface.

Esculapius, or the Hospital of Fools, published after his death.

A Collection of Letters and Poems, amorous and gallant, was published in the volumes called Dryden's *Miscellany*, and some other occasional pieces.

To his poems and letters is prefixed a very judicious preface upon epistolary composition and amorous poetry.

In his *Golden Age restored* there was something of humour while the facts were recent ; but it now strikes no longer. In his imitation of Horace, the first stanzas are happily turned ; and in all his writings there are pleasing passages. He has, however, more elegance than vigour, and seldom rises higher than to be pretty.

MATTHEW PRIOR.*

(1664-1721.)

Matthew Prior is one of those that have burst out from an obscure original to great eminence. He was born July 21st, 1664, according to some, at Winburn in Dorsetshire, of I know not what parents; others say that he was the son of a joiner, of London : he was perhaps willing enough to leave his birth unsettled,† in hope, like Don

* Johnson.

† The difficulty of settling Prior's birth-place is great. In the register of his college he is called, at his admission by the president, "Matthew Prior, of Winburn, in Middlesex;" by himself next day, "Matthew Prior, of Dorsetshire," in which county, not in Middlesex, Winborn, or Wimborne (as it stands in the *Villare*), is found. When he stood candidate for his fellowship, five years afterwards, he was registered again by himself as of Middlesex. The last record ought to be preferred, because it was made upon oath. It is observable that, as a native of Wimborne, he is styled "Filius Georgii Prior, generosi,"—not consistently with the common account of the meanness of his birth.—Dr. J.

Quixote, that the historian of his actions might find him some illustrious alliance.

He is supposed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle, a vintner* near Charing-cross, who sent him for some time to Dr. Busby, at Westminster; but not intending to give him any education beyond that of the school, took him, when he was well advanced in literature, to his own house, where the Earl of Dorset, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was so well pleased with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and cost of his academical education.



MATTHEW PRIOR.

He entered his name in St. John's College, at Cambridge, in 1682, in his eighteenth year; and it may be reasonably supposed that he was distinguished among his contemporaries. He became a Bachelor, as is usual, in four years;† and two years afterwards wrote the poem on the *Deity*, which stands first in his volume.

It is the established practice of that college, to send every year to the Earl of Exeter some poems upon sacred subjects, in acknowledgment of a benefaction enjoyed by them from the bounty of his ancestor. On this occasion were those verses written, which, though nothing is said of their success, seem to have recommended him to some notice; for his praise of the countess's music, and his lines on

* Samuel Prior kept the Rummer Tavern, near Charing Cross, in 1685. The annual feast of the nobility and gentry living in the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields was held at his house, October 14th, that year.

† He was admitted to his Bachelor's degree in 1686; and to his Master's, by mandate, in 1700.

the famous picture of Seneca, afford reason for imagining that he was more or less conversant with that family.

The same year he published the *City Mouse and Country Mouse*, to ridicule Dryden's *Hind and Panther*, in conjunction with Mr. Montague. There is a story of great pain suffered, and of tears shed on this occasion, by Dryden, who thought it hard that "an old man should be so treated by those to whom he had always been civil." By tales like these is the envy raised by superior abilities every day gratified; when they are attacked, every one hopes to see them humbled: what is hoped is readily believed, and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accustomed to hostilities, than that such enemies should break his quiet; and if we can suppose him vexed, it would be hard to deny him sense enough to conceal his uneasiness.

The City Mouse and Country Mouse procured its authors more solid advantages than the pleasure of fretting Dryden; for they were both speedily preferred. Montague, indeed, obtained the first notice, with some degree of discontent, as it seems, in Prior, who probably knew that his own part of the performance was the best. He had not, however, much reason to complain; for he came to London, and obtained such notice, that (in 1691) he was sent to the Congress at the Hague as secretary to the embassy. In this assembly of princes and nobles, to which Europe has perhaps scarcely seen any thing equal, was formed the grand alliance against Louis, which at last did not produce effects proportionate to the magnificence of the transaction.

The conduct of Prior, in this splendid initiation into public business, was so pleasing to King William, that he made him one of the gentlemen of his bedchamber; and he is supposed to have passed some of the next years in the quiet cultivation of literature and poetry.

The death of Queen Mary (in 1695) produced a subject for all the writers: perhaps no funeral was ever so poetically attended. Dryden, indeed, as a man discountenanced and deprived, was silent; but scarcely any other maker of verses omitted to bring his tribute of tuneful sorrow. An emulation of elegy was universal. Maria's praise was not confined to the English language, but fills a great part of the *Musæ Anglicanæ*.

Prior, who was both a poet and a courtier, was too diligent to miss this opportunity of respect. He wrote a long ode, which was presented to the king, by whom it was not likely to be ever read.

In two years he was secretary to another embassy at the treaty of Ryswick (in 1697);* and next year had the same office at the court of France, where he is said to have been considered with great distinction.

As he was one day surveying the apartments at Versailles, being shown the Victories of Louis, painted by Le Brun, and asked whether the King of England's palace had any such decorations; "The monuments of my master's actions," said he, "are to be seen every where but in his own house."

The pictures of Le Brun are not only in themselves sufficiently ostentatious, but were explained by inscriptions so arrogant, that

* He received, in September 1697, a present of 200 guineas from the lords justices, for his trouble in bringing over the treaty of peace.

Boileau and Racine thought it necessary to make them more simple.

He was in the following year at Loo with the king ; from whom, after a long audience, he carried orders to England, and upon his arrival became under-secretary of state in the Earl of Jersey's office ; a post which he did not retain long, because Jersey was removed ; but he was soon made commissioner of trade.

This year (1700) produced one of his longest and most splendid compositions, the *Carmen Seculare*, in which he exhausts all his powers of celebration. I mean not to accuse him of flattery ; he probably thought all that he writ, and retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a poet professedly encomiastic. King William supplied copious materials for either verse or prose. His whole life had been action, and none ever denied him the resplendent qualities of steady resolution and personal courage. He was really in Prior's mind what he represents him in his verses ; he considered him as a hero, and was accustomed to say, that he praised others in compliance with the fashion, but that in celebrating King William he followed his inclination. To Prior gratitude would dictate praise, which reason would not refuse.

Among the advantages to arise from the future years of William's reign, he mentions a Society for useful Arts, and among them

“ Some that with care true eloquence shall teach,
And to just idioms fix our doubtful speech ;
That from our writers distant realms may know
The thanks we to our monarchs owe.
And schools possess our tongue through every land,
That has invok'd his aid, or bless'd his hand.”

Tickell, in his *Prospect of Peace*, has the same hope of a new academy :

“ In happy chains our daring language bound,
Shall sport no more in arbitrary sound.”

Whether the similitude of those passages which exhibit the same thought on the same occasion proceeded from accident or imitation, is not easy to determine. Tickell might have been impressed with this expectation by Swift's *Proposal for ascertaining the English Language*, then lately published.

In the parliament that met in 1701, he was chosen representative of East Grinstead. Perhaps it was about this time that he changed his party ; for he voted for the impeachment of those lords who had persuaded the king to the partition treaty ; a treaty in which he had himself been ministerially employed.

A great part of Queen Anne's reign was a time of war, in which there was little employment for negotiators, and Prior had therefore leisure to make or to polish verses. When the battle of Blenheim called forth all the versemen, Prior, among the rest, took care to show his delight in the increasing honour of his country by an epistle to Boileau.

He published, soon afterwards, a volume of poems, with the encomiastic character of his deceased patron, the Duke of Dorset : it began with the *College Exercise*, and ended with the *Nut-brown Maid*.

The battle of Ramilies soon afterwards (in 1706) excited him to another effort of poetry. On this occasion he had fewer or less formidable rivals; and it would be not easy to name any other composition produced by that event which is now remembered.

Every thing has its day. Through the reigns of William and Anne no prosperous event passed undignified by poetry. In the last war, when France was disgraced and overpowered in every quarter of the globe, when Spain, coming to her assistance, only shared her calamities, and the name of an Englishman was revered through Europe, no poet was heard amidst the general acclamation; the fame of our counsellors and heroes was intrusted to the gazetteer.

The nation in time grew weary of the war, and the queen grew weary of her ministers. The war was burdensome, and the ministers were insolent. Harley and his friends began to hope that they might, by driving the Whigs from court and from power, gratify at once the queen and the people. There was now a call for writers, who might convey intelligence of past abuses, and show the waste of public money, the unreasonable conduct of the allies, the avarice of generals, the tyranny of minions, and the general danger of approaching ruin.

For this purpose a paper called *The Examiner* was periodically published, written, as it happened, by any wit of the party, and sometimes, as is said, by Mrs. Manley. Some are owned by Swift; and one, in ridicule of Garth's verses to Godolphin upon the loss of his place, was written by Prior, and answered by Addison, who appears to have known the author either by conjecture or intelligence.

The Tories, who were now in power, were in haste to end the war; and Prior, being recalled (1710) to his former employment of making treaties, was sent (July 1711) privately to Paris with propositions of peace. He was remembered at the French court; and, returning in about a month, brought with him the Abbé Gaultier, and Mr. Mesnager, a minister from France, invested with full powers.

This transaction not being avowed, Mackay, the master of the Dover packet-boat, either zealously or officiously, seized Prior and his associates at Canterbury. It is easily supposed that they were soon released.

The negociation was begun at Prior's house, where the queen's ministers met Mesnager (September 20, 1711), and entered privately upon the great business. The importance of Prior appears from the mention made of him by St. John in his letter to the queen.

"My Lord Treasurer moved, and all my lords were of the same opinion, that Mr. Prior should be added to those who are empowered to sign; the reason for which is, because he, having personally treated with Monsieur de Torcy, is the best witness we can produce of the sense in which the general preliminary engagements are entered into; besides which, as he is the best versed in matters of trade of all your Majesty's servants who have been trusted in this secret, if you should think fit to employ him in the future treaty of commerce, it will be of consequence that he has been a party concerned in concluding that convention, which must be the rule of this treaty."

The assembly of this important night was in some degree clandes-

tine, the design of treating not being yet openly declared, and, when the Whigs returned to power, was aggravated to a charge of high treason; though, as Prior remarks in his imperfect answer to the *Report of the Committee of Secresy*, no treaty ever was made without private interviews and preliminary discussions.

My business is not the history of the peace, but the life of Prior. The conferences began at Utrecht on the 1st of January (1711-12), and the English plenipotentiaries arrived on the 15th. The ministers of the different potentates conferred and conferred; but the peace advanced so slowly, that speedier methods were found necessary; and Bolingbroke was sent to Paris to adjust differences with less formality. Prior either accompanied him or followed him, and, after his departure, had the appointments and authority of an ambassador, though no public character.

By some mistake of the Queen's orders, the court of France had been disgusted; and Bolingbroke says in his letter, "Dear Mat, hide the nakedness of thy country, and give the best turn thy fertile brain will furnish thee with to the blunders of thy countrymen, who are not much better politicians than the French are poets."

Soon after, the Duke of Shrewsbury went on a formal embassy to Paris. It is related by Boyer that the intention was to have joined Prior in the commission, but that Shrewsbury refused to be associated with a man so meanly born. Prior therefore continued to act without a title till the duke returned next year to England, and then he assumed the style and dignity of ambassador.

But while he continued in appearance a private man, he was treated with confidence by Louis, who sent him with a letter to the queen, written in favour of the Elector of Bavaria. "I shall expect," says he, "with impatience the return of Mr. Prior, whose conduct is very agreeable to me." And while the Duke of Shrewsbury was still at Paris, Bolingbroke wrote to Prior thus: "Monsieur de Torcy has a confidence in you; make use of it, once for all, upon this occasion, and convince him thoroughly that we must give a different turn to our parliament and our people according to their resolution at this crisis."

Prior's public dignity and splendour commenced in August 1713, and continued till the August following; but I am afraid that, according to the usual fate of greatness, it was attended with some perplexities and mortifications. He had not all that is customarily given to ambassadors: he hints to the queen, in an imperfect poem, that he had no service of plate; and it appeared, by the debts which he contracted, that his remittances were not punctually made.

On the 1st of August, 1714, ensued the downfall of the Tories, and the degradation of Prior. He was recalled; but was not able to return, being detained by the debts which he had found it necessary to contract, and which were not discharged before March, though his old friend Montague was now at the head of the treasury.

He returned then as soon as he could, and was welcomed on the 25th of March, 1715, by a warrant; but was, however, suffered to live in his own house, under the custody of the messenger, till he was examined before a committee of the Privy Council, of which Mr. Walpole was chairman, and Lord Coningsby, Mr. Stanhope, and

Mr. Lechmere, were the principal interrogators ; who, in this examination, of which there is printed an account not unentertaining, behaved with the boisterousness of men elated by recent authority. They are represented as asking questions sometimes vague, sometimes insidious, and writing answers different from those which they received. Prior, however, seems to have been overpowered by their turbulence ; for he confesses that he signed what, if he had ever come before a legal judicature, he should have contradicted or explained away. The oath was administered by Boscawen, a Middlesex justice, who at last was going to write his attestation on the wrong side of the paper.

They were very industrious to find some charge against Oxford ; and asked Prior, with great earnestness, who was present when the preliminary articles were talked of or signed at his house ? He told them, that either the Earl of Oxford or the Duke of Shrewsbury was absent, but he could not remember which ; an answer which perplexed them, because it supplied no accusation against either. "Could any thing be more absurd," says he, "or more inhuman, than to propose to me a question, by the answering of which I might, according to them, prove myself a traitor ? And notwithstanding their solemn promise that nothing which I could say should hurt myself, I had no reason to trust them ; for they violated that promise about five hours after. However, I owned I was there present. Whether this was wisely done or no, I leave to my friends to determine."

When he had signed the paper, he was told by Walpole that the committee were not satisfied with his behaviour, nor could give such an account of it to the Commons as might merit favour ; and that they now thought a stricter confinement necessary than to his own house. "Here," says he, "Boscawen played the moralist, and Coningsby the Christian, but both very awkwardly." The messenger in whose custody he was to be placed was then called, and very decently asked by Coningsby, "if his house was secured by bars and bolts ?" The messenger answered, "No," with astonishment. At which Coningsby very angrily said, "Sir, you must secure this prisoner ; it is for the safety of the nation : if he escape, you shall answer for it."

They had already printed their report ; and in this examination were endeavouring to find proofs.

He continued thus confined for some time ; and Mr. Walpole (June 10, 1715) moved for an impeachment against him. What made him so acrimonious does not appear ; he was by nature no thirster for blood. Prior was a week after committed to close custody, with orders that "no person should be admitted to see him without leave from the Speaker."

When, two years after, an Act of Grace was passed, he was excepted, and continued still in custody, which he had made less tedious by writing his *Alma*. He was, however, soon after discharged.

He had now his liberty, but he had nothing else. Whatever the profits of his employments might have been, he had always spent it ; and at the age of fifty-three was, with all his abilities, in danger of

penury, having yet no solid revenue but from the fellowship of his college, which, when in his exaltation he was censured for retaining it, he said he could live upon at last.

Being, however, generally known and esteemed, he was encouraged to add other poems to those which he had printed, and to publish them by subscription. The expedient succeeded by the industry of many friends, who circulated the proposals,* and the care of some, who, it is said, withheld the money from him lest he should squander it. The price of the volume was two guineas; the whole collection was four thousand, to which Lord Harley, the son of the Earl of Oxford, to whom he had invariably adhered, added an equal sum for the purchase of Down Hall, which Prior was to enjoy during life, and Harley after his decease.

He had now, what wits and philosophers have often wished, the power of passing the day in contemplative tranquillity. But it seems that busy men seldom live long in a state of quiet. It is not unlikely that his health declined. He complains of deafness: "for," says he, "I took little care of my ears while I was not sure if my head was my own."

Of any occurrences in his remaining life I have found no account. In a letter to Swift, "I have," says he, "treated Lady Harriot at Cambridge (a fellow of a college treat!), and spoke verses to her in a gown and cap! What, the plenipotentiary, so far concerned in the damned peace at Utrecht; the man that makes up half the volume of terse prose, that makes up the report of the committee, speaking verses! *Sic est, homo sum.*"

He died at Wimpole, a seat of the Earl of Oxford, on the 18th of September, 1721, and was buried in Westminster; where on a monument, for which, as the "last piece of human vanity," he left 500*l.*, is engraven this epitaph:

Sui Temporis Historiam meditantī,
 Paulatim obrepens Febris
 Operi simul et Vitæ filum abruptit,
 Sept. 18, An. Dom. 1721. Ætat. 57.
 H. S. E.
 Vir Eximius,
 Serenissimis
 Regi Gulielmo Reginæque Mariæ
 In Congressione Fœderatorum
 Hagæ anno 1690 celebrata,
 Deinde Magnæ Britanniæ Legatis,
 Tum iis
 Qui anno 1697 Pacem Ryswicki confecerunt,
 Tum iis
 Qui apud Gallos annis proximis Legationem obierunt;
 Eodem etiam anno 1697 in Hibernia
 Secretarius;
 Necnon in utroque Honorabili consessu
 Eorum,
 Qui anno 1700 ordinandis Commercii negotiis,
 Quique anno 1711 dirigendis Portorii rebus,
 Præfidebant,
 Commissionarius;

* Swift obtained many subscriptions for him in Ireland.

Postremo
 Ab Anna
 Felicissimæ memoriæ Reginâ
 Ad Ludovicum XIV. Galliæ Regem
 Missus anno 1711
 De Pace stabilienda,
 (Pace etiamnum durante
 Dique ut boni jam omnes sperant duratura)
 Cum summa potestate Legatus ;
 MATTHÆUS PRIOR, Armiger :
 Qui
 Hos omnes, quibus cumulatus est, Titulos
 Humanitatis, Ingenii, Eruditionis laude
 Superavit ;
 Cui enim nascenti faciles arriserant Musæ.
 Hunc Puerum Schola hic Regia perpolivit ;
 Juvenem in Collegio S'ti Johannis
 Cantabrigia optimis Scientiis instruxit ;
 Virum denique auxit ; et perfecit
 Multa cum viris Principibus consuetudo ;
 Ita natus, ita institutus,
 A Vatum Choro avelli nunquam potuit,
 Sed solebat sæpe rerum Civilium gravitatem
 Amœniorum Literarum Studiis condire :
 Et cum omne adeo Poetices genus
 Haud infeliciter tentaret,
 Tum in Fabellis concinne lepideque texendis
 Mirus Artifex
 Neminem habuit parem.
 Hæc liberalis animi oblectamenta,
 Quàm nullo Illi labore constiterint,
 Facile ii perspexere quibus usus est Amici ;
 Apud quos Urbanitatum et Leporum plenus
 Cum ad rem, quæcunque forte inciderat,
 Aptè, variè, copiosèque alluderet,
 Interea nihil quæsitum, nihil vi expressum
 Videbatur,
 Sed omnia ultro effluere,
 Et quasi jugi è fonte assatim exuberâre,
 Ita suos tandem dubios reliquit,
 Essetne in Scriptis Poeta Elegantior,
 An in Convictu Comes Jucundior.

Of Prior, eminent as he was, both by his abilities and station, very few memorials have been left by his contemporaries; the account, therefore, must now be destitute of his private character and familiar practices. He lived at a time when the rage of party detected all which it was any man's interest to hide; and as little ill is heard of Prior, it is certain that not much was known. He was not afraid of provoking censure; for, when he forsook the Whigs, under whose patronage he first entered the world, he became a Tory so ardent and determinate, that he did not willingly consort with men of different opinions. He was one of the sixteen Tories who met weekly, and agreed to address each other by the title of brother; and seems to have adhered, not only by concurrence of political designs, but by peculiar affection, to the Earl of Oxford and his family. With how much confidence he was trusted has been already told.

He was, however, in Pope's opinion, fit only to make verses, and less qualified for business than Addison himself. This was surely

said without consideration. Addison, exalted to a high place, was forced into degradation by a sense of his own incapacity. Prior, who was employed by men very capable of estimating his value, having been secretary to one embassy, had, when great abilities were again wanted, the same office another time; and was, after so much experience of his knowledge and dexterity, at last sent to transact a negotiation in the highest degree arduous and important, for which he was qualified, among other requisites, in the opinion of Bolingbroke, by his influence upon the French minister, and by skill in questions of commerce above other men.

Of his behaviour in the lighter parts of life, it is too late to get much intelligence. One of his answers to a boastful Frenchman has been related; and to an impertinent one he made another equally proper. During his embassy, he sat at the opera by a man who, in his rapture, accompanied with his own voice the principal singer. Prior fell to railing at the performer with all the terms of reproach that he could collect, till the Frenchman, ceasing from his song, began to expostulate with him for his harsh censure of a man who was confessedly the ornament of the stage. "I know all that," says the ambassador; "mais il chante si haut, que je ne saurais vous entendre."

In a gay French company, where every one sang a little song or stanza, of which the burden was "Bannissons la mélancolie," when it came to his turn to sing, after the performance of a young lady that sat next him, he produced these extemporary lines:

" Mais cette voix, et ces beaux yeux,
Font Cupidon trop dangereux ;
Et je suis triste quand je crie,
Bannissons la mélancolie."

Tradition represents him as willing to descend from the dignity of the poet and statesman to the low delights of mean company. His Chloe probably was sometimes ideal; but the woman with whom he cohabited was a despicable drab of the lowest species. One of his wenches, perhaps Chloe, while he was absent from his house, stole his plate and ran away, as was related by a woman who had been his servant. Of this propensity to sordid converse I have seen an account so seriously ridiculous, that it seems to deserve insertion:

"I have been assured that Prior, after having spent the evening with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift, would go and smoke a pipe and drink a bottle of ale with a common soldier and his wife, in Long Acre, before he went to bed; not from any remains of the lowness of his original, as one said, but, I suppose, that his faculties,

‘ Strain’d to the height,
In that celestial colloquy sublime,
Dazzled and spent, sunk down and sought repair.’ ”

Poor Prior! why was he so strained and in such want of repair, after a conversation with men not, in the opinion of the world, much wiser than himself? But such are the conceits of speculatists, who strain their faculties to find in a mine what lies upon the surface,

His opinions, so far as the means of judging are left us, seem to have been right; but his life was, it seems, irregular, negligent, and sensual.

Prior has written with great variety; and his variety has made him popular. He has tried all styles, from the grotesque to the solemn; and has not so failed in any as to incur derision or disgrace.

His works may be distinctly considered, as comprising tales, love-verses, occasional poems, *Alma*, and *Solomon*.

His tales have obtained general approbation, being written with great familiarity and great sprightliness: the language is easy, but seldom gross; and the numbers smooth, without appearance of care. Of these tales there are only four: *The Ladle*, which is introduced by a preface neither necessary nor pleasing, neither grave nor merry; *Paulo Purganti*, which has likewise a preface, but of more value than the tale; *Hans Carvel*, not over-decent; and *Protogenes and Apelles*, an old story mingled, by an affectation not disagreeable, with modern images. *The Young Gentleman in Love* has hardly a just claim to the title of a tale. I know not whether he be the original author of any tale which he has given us. The adventure of Hans Carvel has passed through many successions of merry wits; for it is to be found in Ariosto's satires, and is perhaps yet older. But the merit of such stories is the art of telling them.

In his amorous effusions he is less happy; for they are not dictated by nature or by passion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderness. They have the coldness of Cowley without his wit; the dull exercises of a skilful versifier resolved at all adventures to write something about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of study. His fictions, therefore, are mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek epigram, asks when she was seen naked and bathing. Then Cupid is mistaken; then Cupid is disarmed; then he loses his darts to Ganymede; then Jupiter sends him a summons by Mercury. Then Chloe goes a-hunting with an "ivory quiver graceful at her side;" Diana mistakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is surely despicable. And even when he tries to act the lover, without the help of gods or goddesses, his thoughts are unaffecting or remote. He talks not "like a man of this world."

The greatest of all his amorous essays is *Henry and Emma*, a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither esteem for the man nor tenderness for the woman. The example of Emma, who resolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt shall drive him, deserves no imitation; and the experiment by which Henry tries the lady's constancy is such as must end either in infamy to her or in disappointment to himself.

His occasional poems necessarily lost part of their value, as their occasions, being less remembered, raised less emotion. Some of them, however, are preserved by their inherent excellence. The burlesque of Boileau's *Ode on Namur* has, in some parts, such airiness and levity as will always procure it readers, even among those who cannot compare it with the original. The *Epistle to Boileau* is not so happy. The *Poems to the King* are now perused only by young students, who read merely that they may learn to write. And of the *Carmen Seculare*, I cannot but suspect that I might praise or censure

it by caprice, without danger of detection ; for who can be supposed to have laboured through it? Yet the time has been when this neglected work was so popular, that it was translated into Latin by no common master.

His poem on the battle of Ramillies is necessarily tedious by the form of the stanza: an uniform mass of ten lines thirty-five times repeated, inconsequential and slightly connected, must weary both the ear and the understanding. His imitation of Spenser, which consists principally in 'I ween' and 'I weet,' without exclusion of later modes of speech, makes his poem neither ancient nor modern. His mention of Mars and Bellona, and his comparison of Marlborough to the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter, are all puerile and un-affecting; and yet more despicable is the long tale told by Lewis, in his despair, of Brute and Troynovante and the teeth of Cadmus, with his similes of the raven and eagle, and wolf and lion. By the help of such easy fictions and vulgar topics, without acquaintance with life, and without knowledge of art or nature, a poem of any length, cold and lifeless like this, may be easily written on any subject.

In his epilogues to Phædra and to Lucius he is very happily facetious; but in the prologue before the queen, the pedant has found his way, with Minerva, Perseus, and Andromeda.

His epigrams and lighter pieces are, like those of others, sometimes elegant, sometimes trifling, and sometimes dull: amongst the best are the *Camelion* and the *Epitaph on John and Joan*.

Scarcely any one of our poets has written so much and translated so little: the version of Callimachus is sufficiently licentious; the paraphrase on St. Paul's exhortation to charity is eminently beautiful.

Alma is written in professed imitation of *Hudibras*, and has at least one accidental resemblance: *Hudibras* wants a plan, because it is left imperfect; *Alma* is imperfect, because it seems never to have had a plan. Prior appears not to have proposed to himself any drift or design, but to have written the casual dictates of the present moment.

What Horace said, when he imitated Lucilius, might be said of Butler by Prior: his numbers were not smooth or neat. Prior excelled him in versification; but he was, like Horace, *inventore minor*; he had not Butler's exuberance of matter and variety of illustration. The spangles of wit which he could afford, he knew how to polish; but he wanted the bullion of his master. Butler pours out a negligent profusion, certain of the weight, but careless of the stamp. Prior has comparatively little, but with that little he makes a fine show. *Alma* has many admirers, and was the only piece among Prior's works of which Pope said that he should wish to be the author.

Solomon is the work to which he intrusted the protection of his name, and which he expected succeeding ages to regard with veneration. His affection was natural: it had undoubtedly been written with great labour; and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought; had often polished it to elegance, often dignified it with splendour, and sometimes heightened it to sublimity. He perceived in it many excellences; and did not discover that it wanted

that without which all others are of small avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curiosity.

Tediousness is the most fatal of all faults: negligences or errors are single and local; but tediousness pervades the whole: other faults are censured and forgotten; but the power of tediousness propagates itself. He that is weary the first hour, is more weary the second; as bodies forced into motion contrary to their tendency pass more and more slowly through every successive interval of space.

Unhappily this pernicious failure is that which an author is least able to discover. We are seldom tiresome to ourselves; and the act of composition fills and delights the mind with change of language and succession of images; every couplet when produced is new, and novelty is the great source of pleasure. Perhaps no man ever thought a line superfluous when he first wrote it, or contracted his work till his ebullitions of invention had subsided. And even if he should control his desire of immediate renown, and keep his work nine years unpublished, he will be still the author, and still in danger of deceiving himself; and if he consults his friends, he will probably find men who have more kindness than judgment, or more fear to offend than desire to instruct.

The tediousness of this poem proceeds not from the uniformity of the subject, for it is sufficiently diversified; but from the continued tenour of the narration, in which Solomon relates the successive vicissitudes of his own mind, without the intervention of any other speaker, or the mention of any other agent, unless it be Abra: the reader is only to learn what he thought, and to be told that he thought wrong. The event of every experiment is foreseen, and therefore the process is not much regarded.

Yet the work is far from deserving to be neglected. He that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages to which he may recur for instruction or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason.

If Prior's poetry be generally considered, his praise will be that of correctness and industry, rather than of compass of comprehension or activity of fancy. He never made any effort of invention: his greater pieces are only tissues of common thoughts; and his smaller, which consist of light images or single conceits, are not always his own. I have traced him among the French epigrammatists, and have been informed that he poached for prey among obscure authors. *The Thief and Cordelier* is, I suppose, generally considered as an original production; with how much justice this epigram may tell, which was written by Georgius Sabinus, a poet now little known or read, though once the friend of Luther and Melancthon:

De Sacerdote Furem consolante.

“ Quidam sacrificus furem comitatus euntem
 Huc ubi dat sontes carnificina neci,
 Ne sis mœstus, ait; summi conviva Tonantis
 Jam cum cœlitibus (si modo credis) eris.
 Ille gemens, si vera mihi solatia præbes,
 Hospes apud superos sis meus oro, refert.
 Sacrificus contra; Mihi non convivia fas est
 Ducere, jejunans hac edo luce nihil.”

What he has valuable, he owes to his diligence and his judgment. His diligence has justly placed him amongst the most correct of the English poets; and he was one of the first that resolutely endeavoured at correctness. He never sacrifices accuracy to haste, nor indulges himself in contemptuous negligence or impatient idleness: he has no careless lines or entangled sentiments; his words are nicely selected, and his thoughts fully expanded. If this part of his character suffers an abatement, it must be from the disproportion of his rhymes, which have not always sufficient consonance, and from the admission of broken lines into his *Solomon*; but perhaps he thought, like Cowley, that hemistichs ought to be admitted into heroic poetry.

He had apparently such rectitude of judgment as secured him from every thing that approached to the ridiculous or absurd: but as laws operate, in civil agency, not to the excitement of virtue, but the repression of wickedness; so judgment, in the operations of intellect, can hinder faults, but not produce excellence. Prior is never low, nor very often sublime. It is said by Longinus of Euripides, that he forces himself sometimes into grandeur by violence of effort, as the lion kindles his fury by the lashes of his own tail. Whatever Prior obtains above mediocrity seems the effort of struggle and of toil. He has many vigorous but few happy lines; he has every thing by purchase and nothing by gift; he had no nightly visitations of the Muse, no infusions of sentiment or felicities of fancy.

His diction, however, is more his own than of any among the successors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns, or commodious modes of language, from his predecessors. His phrases are original, but they are sometimes harsh; as he inherited no elegances, none has he bequeathed. His expression has every mark of laborious study; the line seldom seems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by constraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it sullenly. In his greater compositions there may be found more rigid stateliness than graceful dignity.

Of versification he was not negligent: what he received from Dryden he did not lose; neither did he increase the difficulty of writing by unnecessary severity, but uses triplets and alexandrines without scruple. In his preface to *Solomon* he proposes some improvements, by extending the sense from one couplet to another, with variety of pauses. This he has attempted, but without success: his interrupted lines are displeasing; and his sense, as less distinct, is less striking.

He has altered the stanza of Spenser, as a house is altered by building another in its place of a different form. With how little resemblance he has formed his new stanza to that of his master, these specimens will show:

SPENSER.

“ She flying fast from Heaven’s hated face,
And from the world that her discover’d wide,
Fled to the wasteful wilderness apace,
From living eyes her open shame to hide,
And lurk’d in rocks and caves long unespied.”

But that fair crew of knights, and Una fair,
 Did in that castle afterwards abide,
 To rest themselves, and weary powers repair,
 Where store they found of all that dainty was and rare."

PRIOR.

"To the close rock the frighted raven flies,
 Soon as the rising eagle cuts the air :
 The shaggy wolf unseen and trembling lies,
 When the hoarse roar proclaims the lion near.
 Ill-starr'd did we our forts and lines forsake,
 To dare our British foes to open fight :
 Our conquest we by stratagem should make ;
 Our triumph had been founded in our flight.
 'Tis ours by craft and by surprise to gain :
 'Tis theirs to meet in arms, and battle in the plain."

By this new structure of his lines he has avoided difficulties, nor am I sure that he has lost any of the power of pleasing ; but he no longer imitates Spenser.

Some of his poems are written without regularity of measure : for when he commenced poet, he had not recovered from our Pindaric infatuation ; but he probably lived to be convinced, that the essence of verse is order and consonance.

His numbers are such as mere diligence may attain ; they seldom offend the ear, and seldom soothe it ; they commonly want airiness, lightness, and facility : what is smooth is not soft. His verses always roll, but they seldom flow.

A survey of the life and writings of Prior may exemplify a sentence which he doubtless understood well when he read Horace at his uncle's : "the vessel long retains the scent which it first receives." In his private relaxation he revived the tavern, and in his amorous pedantry he exhibited the college. But on higher occasions and nobler subjects, when habit was overpowered by the necessity of reflection, he wanted not wisdom as a statesman, or elegance as a poet.

 GEORGE GRANVILLE, LORD LANSDOWNE.*

(1667-1735.)

Of George Granville, or, as others write, Greenville or Grenville, afterwards Lord Lansdowne of Bideford in the county of Devon, less is known than his name and high rank might give reason to expect. He was born about 1667, the son of Bernard Greenville, who was intrusted by Monk with the most private transactions of the Restoration ; and the grandson of Sir Bevil Greenville, who died in the king's cause at the battle of Lansdowne.

His early education was superintended by Sir William Ellis ; and his progress was such, that before the age of twelve he was sent to

* Johnson.

Cambridge,* where he pronounced a copy of his own verses to the Princess Mary d'Esté of Modena, then Duchess of York, when she visited the University.

At the accession of King James, being now at eighteen, he again exerted his poetical powers, and addressed the new monarch in three short pieces, of which the first is profane, and the two others such as a boy might be expected to produce; but he was commended by old Waller, who perhaps was pleased to find himself imitated in six lines, which, though they begin with nonsense and end with dulness, excited in the young author a rapture of acknowledgment,

“ In numbers such as Waller's self might use.”

It was probably about this time that he wrote the poem to the Earl of Peterborough, upon his accomplishment of the Duke of York's marriage with the Princess of Modena, whose charms appear to have gained a strong prevalence over his imagination, and upon whom nothing ever has been charged but imprudent piety, an intemperate and misguided zeal for the propagation of popery.

However faithful Granville might have been to the king, or however enamoured of the queen, he has left no reason for supposing that he approved either the artifices or the violence with which the king's religion was insinuated or obtruded. He endeavoured to be true at once to the king and to the church.

Of this regulated loyalty he has transmitted to posterity a sufficient proof, in the letter which he wrote to his father about a month before the Prince of Orange landed.

“ Mar, near Doncaster, Oct. 6, 1688.

“ To the honourable Mr. Barnard Granville, at the Earl of Bathe's,
St. James's.

“ SIR,—Your having no prospect of obtaining a commission for me can no way alter or cool my desire at this important juncture to venture my life, in some manner or other, for my king and my country.

“ I cannot bear living under the reproach of lying obscure and idle in a country retirement, when every man who has the least sense of honour should be preparing for the field.

“ You may remember, sir, with what reluctance I submitted to your commands upon Monmouth's rebellion, when no importunity could prevail with you to permit me to leave the academy: I was too young to be hazarded. But, give me leave to say, it is glorious at any age to die for one's country; and the sooner, the nobler the sacrifice.

“ I am now older by three years. My uncle Bathe was not so old when he was left among the slain at the battle of Newbury; nor you yourself, sir, when you made your escape from your tutor's, to join your brother at the defence of Scilly.

“ The same cause has now come round about again. The king has been misled; let those who have misled him be answerable for it. Nobody can deny but he is sacred in his own person; and it is every honest man's duty to defend it.

* To Trinity College. By the University register it appears that he was admitted to his master's degree in 1679.

“ You are pleased to say, it is yet doubtful if the Hollanders are rash enough to make such an attempt ; but, be that as it will, I beg leave to insist upon it, that I may be presented to his majesty, as one whose utmost ambition it is to devote his life to his service and my country’s, after the example of all my ancestors.

“ The gentry assembled at York, to agree upon the choice of representatives for the county, have prepared an address to assure his majesty they are ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes for him upon this and all other occasions ; but at the same time they humbly beseech him to give them such magistrates as may be agreeable to the laws of the land, for at present there is no authority to which they can legally submit.

“ They have been beating up for volunteers at York and the towns adjacent, to supply the regiments at Hull ; but nobody will list.

“ By what I can hear, every body wishes well to the king ; but they would be glad his ministers were hanged.

“ The winds continue so contrary, that no landing can be so soon as was apprehended ; therefore I may hope, with your leave and assistance, to be in readiness before any action can begin. I beseech you, sir, most humbly and most earnestly, to add this one act of indulgence more to so many other testimonies which I have constantly received of your goodness ; and be pleased to believe me always, with the utmost duty and submission, sir,

“ Your most dutiful son,

“ and most obedient servant,

“ GEO. GRANVILLE.”

Through the whole reign of King William he is supposed to have lived in literary retirement ; and, indeed, had for some time few other pleasures but those of study in his power. He was, as the biographers observe, the younger son of a younger brother ; a denomination by which our ancestors proverbially expressed the lowest state of penury and dependence. He is said, however, to have preserved himself at this time from disgrace and difficulties by economy, which he forgot or neglected in life more advanced, and in better fortune.

About this time he became enamoured of the Countess of Newburgh, whom he has celebrated with so much ardour by the name of Mira. He wrote verses to her before he was three-and-twenty, and may be forgiven if he regarded the face more than the mind. Poets are sometimes in too much haste to praise.

In the time of his retirement it is probable that he composed his dramatic pieces : *The She-Gallants* (acted 1696), which he revised, and called *Once a Lover and always a Lover* ; *The Jew of Venice*, altered from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* (1698) ; *Heroic Love*, a tragedy (1701) ; *The British Enchanters* (1706), a dramatic poem ; and *Peleus and Thetis*, a masque, written to accompany *The Jew of Venice*.

The comedies, which he has not printed in his own edition of his works, I never saw : *Once a Lover and always a Lover* is said to be in a great degree indecent and gross. Granville could not admire without bigotry : he copied the wrong as well as the right from his

masters; and may be supposed to have learned obscenity from Wycherley, as he learned mythology from Waller.

In his *Jew of Venice*, as Rowe remarks, the character of Shylock is made comic, and we are prompted to laughter instead of detestation.

It is evident that *Heroic Love* was written and presented on the stage before the death of Dryden. It is a mythological tragedy, upon the love of Agamemnon and Chryseis; and therefore easily sunk into neglect, though praised in verse by Dryden, and in prose by Pope. It is concluded by the wise Ulysses with this speech:

“ Fate holds the strings, and men like children move
But as they're led; success is from above.”

At the accession of Queen Anne, having his fortune improved by bequests from his father and his uncle, the Earl of Bath, he was chosen into parliament for Fowey. He soon after engaged in a joint translation of *The Invectives against Philip*, with a design, surely weak and puerile, of turning the thunder of Demosthenes upon the head of Lewis.

He afterwards (in 1706) had his estate again augmented by an inheritance from his elder brother, Sir Bevil Grenville, who, as he returned from the government of Barbadoes, died at sea. He continued to serve in parliament, and in the ninth year of Queen Anne was chosen knight of the shire for Cornwall.

At the memorable change of the ministry (1710), he was made secretary at war, in the place of Mr. Robert Walpole.

Next year, when the violence of party made twelve peers in a day, Mr. Granville became Lord Lansdowne Baron Bideford, by a promotion justly remarked to be not invidious, because he was the heir of a family in which two peerages, that of the Earl of Bath and Lord Granville of Potheridge, had lately become extinct. Being now high in the queen's favour, he (1712) was appointed comptroller of the household and a privy councillor; and to his other honours was added the dedication of Pope's *Windsor Forest*. He was advanced next year to be treasurer of the household.

Of these favours he soon lost all but his title; for at the accession of King George his place was given to the Earl of Cholmondeley, and he was persecuted with the rest of his party. Having protested against the bill for attainting Ormond and Bolingbroke, he was, after the insurrection in Scotland, seized Sept. 26, 1715, as a suspected man, and confined in the Tower till Feb. 8, 1717, when he was at last released, and restored to his seat in parliament; where (1719) he made a very ardent and animated speech against the repeal of the bill to prevent occasional conformity, which, however, though it was then printed, he has not inserted into his works.

Some time afterwards (about 1722), being perhaps embarrassed by his profusion, he went into foreign countries, with the usual pretence of recovering his health. In this state of leisure and retirement he received the first volume of Burnet's History, of which he cannot be supposed to have approved the general tendency, and where he thought himself able to detect some particular falsehoods. He therefore undertook the vindication of General Monk from some calumnies of Dr. Burnet, and some misrepresentations of Mr. Echard. This was an-

swered civilly by Mr. Thomas Burnet and Oldmixon, and more roughly by Dr. Colbatch.

His other historical performance is a defence of his relation Sir Richard Greenville, whom Lord Clarendon has shown in a form very unamiable. So much is urged in this apology to justify many actions that have been represented as culpable, and to palliate the rest, that the reader is reconciled for the greater part; and it is made very probable that Clarendon was by personal enmity disposed to think the worst of Greenville, as Greenville was also very willing to think the worst of Clarendon. These pieces were published at his return to England.

Being now desirous to conclude his labours and enjoy his reputation, he published (1732) a very beautiful and splendid edition of his works, in which he omitted what he disapproved, and enlarged what seemed deficient.

He now went to court, and was kindly received by Queen Caroline; to whom, and to the Princess Anne, he presented his works, with verses on the blank leaves, with which he concluded his poetical labours.

He died in Hanover-square, Jan. 30, 1735; having a few days before buried his wife, the Lady Anne Villiers, widow to Mr. Thynne, by whom he had four daughters, but no son.

Writers commonly derive their reputation from their works; but there are works which owe their reputation to the character of the writer. The public sometimes has its favourites, whom it rewards for one species of excellence with the honours due to another. From him whom we reverence for his beneficence, we do not willingly withhold the praise of genius: a man of exalted merit becomes at once an accomplished writer, as a beauty finds no great difficulty in passing for a wit.

Granville was a man illustrious by his birth, and therefore attracted notice; since he is by Pope styled "the polite," he must be supposed elegant in his manners, and generally loved; he was in times of contest and turbulence steady to his party, and obtained that esteem which is always conferred upon firmness and consistency. With those advantages, having learned the art of versifying, he declared himself a poet; and his claim to the laurel was allowed.

But by a critic of a later generation, who takes up his book without any favourable prejudices, the praise already received will be thought sufficient; for his works do not show him to have had much comprehension from nature, or illumination from learning. He seems to have had no ambition above the imitation of Waller, of whom he has copied the faults, and very little more. He is for ever amusing himself with the puerilities of mythology: his king is Jupiter, who, if the queen brings no children, has a barren Juno. The queen is compounded of Juno, Venus, and Minerva. His poem *On the Duchess of Grafton's Law-suit*, after having rattled awhile with Juno and Pallas, Mars and Alcides, Cassiope, Niobe, and the Propetides, Hercules, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, at last concludes its folly with profaneness.

His verses to Mira, which are most frequently mentioned, have little in them of either art or nature, of the sentiments of a lover or

the language of a poet : there may be found, now and then, a happier effort ; but they are commonly feeble and unaffecting, or forced and extravagant.

His little pieces are seldom either sprightly or elegant, either keen or weighty : they are trifles written by idleness, and published by vanity. But his prologues and epilogues have a just claim to praise.

The Progress of Beauty seems one of his most elaborate pieces, and is not deficient in splendour and gaiety ; but the merit of original thought is wanting. Its highest praise is the spirit with which he celebrates King James's consort, when she was a queen no longer.

The *Essay on unnatural Flights in Poetry* is not inelegant nor injudicious, and has something of vigour beyond most of his other performances ; his precepts are just, and his cautions proper : they are indeed not new ; but in a didactic poem novelty is to be expected only in the ornaments and illustrations. His poetical precepts are accompanied with agreeable and instructive notes.

The masque of *Peleus and Thetis* has here and there a pretty line ; but it is not always melodious, and the conclusion is wretched.

In his *British Enchanters* he has bidden defiance to all chronology, by confounding the inconsistent manners of different ages ; but the dialogue has often the air of Dryden's rhyming plays ; and his songs are lively, though not very correct.* This is, I think, far the best of his works ; for if it has many faults, it has likewise passages which are at least pretty, though they do not rise to any high degree of excellence.

JOHN POMFRET.†

(1667-1703.)

Of Mr. John Pomfret nothing is known but from a slight and confused account prefixed to his poems by a nameless friend ; who relates, that he was the son of the Rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton in Bedfordshire ; that he was bred at Cambridge,‡ entered into orders, and was rector of Malden in Bedfordshire ; and might have risen in the church, but that when he applied to Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, for institution to a living of considerable value, to which he had been presented, he found a troublesome obstruction raised by a malicious interpretation of some passages in his *Choice* ; from which it was inferred, that he considered happiness as more likely to be found in the company of a mistress than of a wife.

This reproach was easily obliterated ; for it had happened to Pomfret as to almost all other men who plan schemes of life : he had departed from his purpose, and was then married.

* The epilogue was written by Addison.

† Johnson.

‡ He was of Queen's College there ; and, by the University register, appears to have taken his bachelor's degree in 1684, and his master's 1698. His father was of Trinity.

The malice of his enemies had, however, a very fatal consequence : the delay constrained his attendance in London, where he caught the small-pox, and died in 1703, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

He published his poems in 1699, and has been always the favourite of that class of readers who, without vanity or criticism, seek only their own amusement.

His *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations ; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility ; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear ; and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous, or entangled with intricate sentiment. He pleases many ; and he who pleases many must have some species of merit.

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