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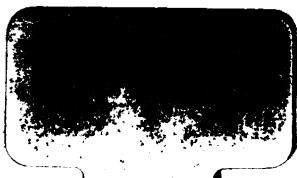
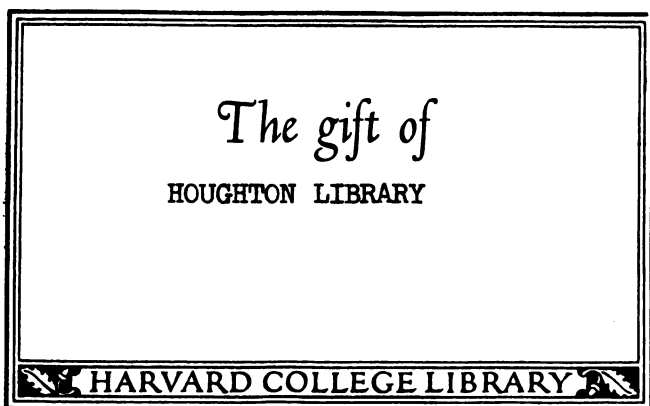
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GALLERIES
OF
LITERARY PORTRAITS.

By GEORGE GILFILLAN.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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LITERARY PORTRAITS.

Part First.—Poets.

ÆSCHYLUS; PROMETHEUS BOUND AND UNBOUND.*

ÆSCHYLUS' "Prometheus Vincitus" has been lately translated into English verse by Professor Blackie. Without much ease, or grace, or melody, his translation is very spirited, and gives a more vivid idea of this great old poet's rugged energy and rapturous enthusiasm, than any other verse rendering we have read. But we are mistaken if the mere English reader does not derive a better notion of Æschylus still from the old prose versions. Best of all were such a translation as Dr John Carlyle has executed of Dante, distinguished at once by correctness and energy.

The sympathy which this poet felt for the ancient mythology of his country, for gods to whom Jove was but a beardless boy, was strictly a fellow-feeling. He was a Titan among men; and we fancy him, sick of the present, and reverting to the past, tired of the elegant mannikins around, and stretching forth his arms to grasp the bulky shades of a by-gone era. He had been a soldier, too, and this had probably infused into his mind a certain contempt for mankind as they were. He that mingles and takes

a part in a battle-field, would require to be more than mortal to escape this feeling, seeing there, as he must, man writhen into all varieties of painful, shameful, despicable, and horrible attitudes. It was, indeed, at Marathon, Salamis, and perhaps Plataea, that he mingled in warfare; but the details of even these world-famous fights of freedom must have been as mean and disgusting as those of Borodino or Austerlitz. From man, Æschylus turned pensively and proudly to the gods; first to the lower circle of Jove and Apollo, but at last, with deeper reverence and fonder love, to that elder family whom they had supplanted. Of that fallen house he became and continued the laureate, till the boy Keats, with hectic heat and unearthly beauty, sang "Hyperion."

More strictly speaking, Æschylus was the poet of Destiny, Duty, and other great abstractions. He saw these towering over Olympus, reposing in his sleeping Furies, and shining like stars through the shadows of his gods. To him, whether consciously or unconsciously, the Deities were embodied thoughts, as those of all men must in some measure be; and his thoughts, being of a lofty, transcendental

* "Prometheus Bound" and "Unbound," Blackie's "Æschylus;" Shelley's "Prometheus."

order, found fitter forms in the traditional members of the Saturnian house, than in the more recent and more sharply-defined children of Jove.

His genius was lofty and bold, but rather bare and stern. Luxuriance and wealth of imagination were hardly his; they are seldom found so high as the Promethean crags, although sometimes, under tropical light, they appear in yet loftier regions, such as Job, Isaiah, and the "Paradise Lost." His language is the only faculty he ever pushes to excess. It is sometimes overloaded into obscurity, and sometimes blown out into extravagance. But it is the thunder, and no lower voice, which bellows among those lonely and difficult rocks, and it must be permitted to follow its own old and awful rhythm.

At Gela, in Sicily, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, died this Titan—banished, as some think, at all events alienated, from his native country. It was fitting that he should have found a grave in the land of Etna and the Cyclopes. There, into the hands of his Maker, he returned the "blast of the breath of his nostrils;" and a prouder and a more powerful spirit never came from, and never returned to his Maker.

"Prometheus Bound" is not the most artistic or finished of Æschylus' plays; but it is the most characteristic and sublime. There are more passion and subtlety in the "Agamemnon;" but less intensity and imagination. The "Agamemnon" is his "Lear;" and the "Prometheus" his "Macbeth." It was natural that a mind so lofty and peculiar as this poet's should be attracted towards the strange and magnificent myth of Prometheus. It seemed a fable *waiting* for his treatment. Thus patiently, from age to age, have certain subjects, like the spirits on the wrong side of Styx, or souls in their antenatal state, seemed to *wait* till men arose able to incarnate them in history or song. And it matters not how many prematurely try to give them embodiment! Their time is not yet, and they must tarry on. Twenty plays on Lear might have been written, and yet

the subject had remained virgin for Shakspeare. The subject of Faust had been treated, well or ill, before Goethe; but his is now *the* "Faust." So of Prometheus the Titan there had been many drawings or busts before, in antique Greek poetry; but it was reserved for Æschylus to cast him in colossal statuary, with head, limbs, and all *complete*.

Many were the attractions of the subject for him. First of all, Prometheus was a Titan—one of the old race who reigned ere evil was; secondly, he was a benevolent and powerful being, suffering—a subject to meet and embrace which, all the noble sympathies of the poet's nature leaped up; thirdly, the story was full of striking points, peculiarly adapted both for the lyric and the drama; and, fourthly, there was here a gigantic mask ready, from behind which the poet could utter unrebuked his esoteric creed, and express at once his protest against things as they are, his notion of what they ought to be, and his anticipation of what they are yet to become. For these and other reasons, while the vulture fastens upon the liver of Prometheus, Æschylus leaps into, and possesses his soul.

The fable is as follows:—Prometheus, son of Japetus and Themis, or Clymene, instead of opposing Jove, as his brother Titans had, by force, employs cunning and counsel. He rears up and arms man as his auxiliary against Heaven. He bestows on him, especially, the gift of fire, and enables him therewith to cultivate the arts, and to rise from his degradation. For this crime, Jove dooms him to be chained to a rock, with a vulture to feed upon his liver. But Prometheus, knowing that from Io's race would spring a demigod (Hercules), who would deliver him from his chains, suffered with heroic firmness; he was even acquainted with the future fate of Jove, which was unknown to the god himself. When this irresistible enemy of Jupiter should appear, Prometheus was to be delivered from his sufferings. The reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim was to be the price of the disclosure of the danger to his empire, from the consummation of his

marriage with Thetis. Thetis was, in consequence of his disclosure, given in marriage to Peleus; and Prometheus, with the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Such is the story which Æschylus extended through three lyrical dramas, the first and last of which are irrecoverably lost.

A difficulty here arises, which has puzzled and disunited the critics and commentators. Does, or does not, Æschylus mean to represent Jupiter as a tyrant? If not, why do neither Mercury nor Ocean, who are introduced as his ministers, seek to defend his character against the attacks of the Titan? And yet, if he does, why should he afterwards, as Shelley remarks, intend a "catastrophe so feeble as the reconciliation of the champion with the oppressor of mankind?" To evade this difficulty, Shelley, in his play, overthrows Jupiter before Prometheus and Hercules combined. The champion triumphs over the oppressor. Professor Blackie, on the other hand, denies that it was the purpose of the poet to represent Jove as a tyrant; but that he meant ultimately, in the closing drama, to unite the jarring claims of both — of Prometheus as the umpire between gods and men, and of Jove as possessing the supreme right to rule and to punish. But, first, he does not explain the *silence* of Jove's ministers as to the character of their calumniated lord; secondly, as a writer in the "Eclectic" shows, he wrests the words and misrepresents the character of Ocean, whom Æschylus means manifestly for a timeserver; thirdly, he does not answer the complaints of Prometheus himself, which seem to us on his theory quite overwhelming; and, lastly, he does not throw out the faintest glimpse of what could be the medium of reconciliation which the last play was to develop.

Two theories occur to us as to this knotty point. One is, that Æschylus, in his "Prometheus Unbound," meant to represent Jove as *repentant*; and, by timely penitence, saving his throne, and regaining his original character. Prometheus, according to this view, would as-

sume the sublime attitude of the forger, instead of the forgiven. The second and more probable theory is, that, in the last play, Æschylus meant to make it appear that Jove had been "playing a part," though for the wisest and noblest reasons "hiding himself," as we might say, and that he meant to surprise Prometheus, as well as his own servants and the universe, by producing suddenly the reasons which had made him assume the aspect of the oppressor, and convince even his victim that his sufferings had been disguised benefits. These, however, are only conjectures. The poet's solution of his own problem is hid in impenetrable darkness.

Were, however, the second of those conjectures allowed, it would, we think, give a clear, consistent, and almost a Christian meaning to the whole fable of the "Prometheus." Man and God are at variance: the one is abject and degraded — the other seems cold, distant, and cruel. Mediators, numerous, wise, and benevolent, rise up to heal, but seem rather to widen, the breach. They become victims before High Heaven. The Divine Vengeance, like a vulture, covers them with its vast wing. All their inventions add little, whether to their own happiness or to that of the species. They bear, however, on the whole, bravely; they suffer, on the whole, well. Their melodious groanings become the poetry and the philosophy of the world. Their tragedies are sublime and hopeful. A golden thread of promise passes, from bleeding hand to bleeding hand, down the ages. The reconciliation is at last effected, by the interposition of a divine power. A Hercules is at last born, and glorified, who effects this surpassing labour. He shows that God has all along hid intolerable love and light under the deep shadows of this present time. He has punished Prometheus; he has allowed himself to be misrepresented; he has suffered man to fall; he has made the wisest of the race tenfold partakers of the common misery, that he might at last surprise them by dropping the veil of ages, and showing a face of ineffable love, the more glorious for the length of the obscurity and the sudden-

ness of the discovery. The result is— heaven on earth—man, his Titan instructors, his Herculean deliverer, and his Heavenly Father, united in one family of changeless peace, and progressive felicity and glory.

Our readers will perceive in this a rude sketch of the great Christian scheme, rescued from the myths and shadows of Paganism. We by no means offer it with dogmatic confidence, as the one true explanation. There are, we admit, subordinate parts in the fable which it leaves unexplained; and it assumes a termination to the last play of the "Trilogy" which is necessarily gratuitous. But it seems as probable as any other we have met. It affords a striking and curious coincidence with some of our Christian verities. And, were it admitted, its effect would be to cast a more pleasing light upon the old world-moving story. The storm-beaten rock in the Scythian desert—the far lands below—the everlasting snows around—the bare head of the solitary, unsleeping, unweeping Titan—the blistering sun of noon—the cold Orion, and the Great Bear of Night, which seem carrying tidings of *his* fate to distant firmaments—the faithful vulture, "that winged hound" of hell, tapping at his side with her slow red beak—the sympathies of visitors—the stern succession of duty-doing ministers of wrath—and, lastly, the avatar of the long-expected Deliverer, shaking the Caucasus at his coming; and the meeting in mid-air of the two reconciled parties, amid the jubilant shouts of earth and heaven—all this would then shine upon us in a gleam, however remote and faint, from the Christian Sun.

From "Prometheus Bound" the Mystery, let us turn to look at it a moment more, as "Prometheus Bound" the Poem. It is the only play in which you do not regret the rigid preservation of unity of place; for the place is so elevated, commands such a prospect, and is so strictly in keeping with the character and the subject, that you neither wish nor could bear it shifted. The play is founded on a rock; and there it must stand. The action and the dialogue are severely

simple and characteristic. Might and Force are strongly drawn. They are alike, but different. Might talks confidently, like a favoured minion. Force is like a giant Nubian slave "made dumb by poison." He speaks none, but his silent frown unites with Might's loquacity in compelling Hephaestus to do his reluctant part in chaining the Titan to the rock. The Oceanides utter glorious *asides*. Has not every noble sufferer since the world began had his chorus, visible or invisible, to sympathise and to soothe him? Is not this a benevolent arrangement of the great Hidden Being who permits or presides over the tragedy? Socrates had friends wise and immortal as himself around him when he drank the hemlock. When Lord Russell was riding up Tower Hill, the multitude thought they saw "Liberty and Justice seated at his side." And, if we may dare the reference, did not, near a greater sufferer than them all, in the Garden, "an angel appear from heaven strengthening him?" Even when men supply the other elements of the tragedy, God provides the music, which is to soften, to sublimate, and to harmonise the whole. In consonance with this, the Grecian chorus may be called the divine commentary, or the running consolation made in music upon the dark main business of the play.

Ocean is a plausible sycophant. Io, although necessary, has the effect of an excrescence, albeit a beautiful one. The prophetic tale of her wanderings is one of those delicious passages, rarely to be found except in the Greeks, or in Milton, in which mere names of places become poetical by the artful use of associations connected with them. In this, which we may call *ideal geography*, Homer, Æschylus, and Milton are the three unequalled masters. Hear Æschylus:—

"First, Io, what remains
Of thy far sweeping wanderings hear, and
grave
My words on the sure tablets of thy mind.
When thou hast pass'd the narrow stream
that parts
The continents to the far flame-faced East,
Thou shalt proceed the highway of the sun;
Then cross the sounding ocean, till thou reach

Cisthene and the Gorgon plains, where dwell
Phorceys' three daughters. Them Phœbus,
beamy-bright,
Beholds not, nor the nightly moon. Near
them

Their winged sisters dwell, the Gorgons dire.

One more sight remains,
That fills the eye with horror: mark me well;
The sharp-beak'd griffins, hounds of Jove,
avoid,

Fell dogs that bark not, and the one-eyed host
Of Arimaspan horsemens with swift hoofs,
Beating the banks of golden-rolling Pluto.

A distant land, a swarthy people next
Receives thee: near the fountains of the sun
They dwell, by Æthiop's wave. This river
trace,

Until thy weary feet shall reach the pass
Whence from the Bybline heights the sacred
Nile

Pours his salubrious flood. The winding wave
Thence to triangled Egypt guides thee, where
A distant home awaits thee, fated mother
Of no unstoried race."

Compare this with Milton's list of the
fallen angels, or his description of the
prospect from the Mount of the Temp-
tation.

But Prometheus himself absorbs almost
all the interest, and utters almost all the
poetry in the play. He has been com-
pared to Satan, and certainly, in grandeur
of utterance, dignity of defiance, and
proud patience of suffering, is comparable
to no other. But there are important
differences which, in our notion, elevate
Prometheus as a moral being above, and
sink him, as a brave and intellectual
being, far below, that tremendous shadow
of Milton's soul. Prometheus deems him-
self, and is, in the right; Satan is, and
knows he is, in the wrong. Prometheus
anticipates ultimate restoration; Satan
expects nothing, and hardly wishes aught
but revenge. Prometheus is waited on
by the multitudinous sympathies of inno-
cent immortals; Satan leans on his own
soul alone, for the feeling of his fallen
brethren toward him is rather the reve-
rence of fear than the submission of love.
Prometheus carries consciously the fate
of the Thunderer in his hands; Satan
knows the Thunderer has only to be pro-
voked sufficiently to annihilate him. Pro-
metheus on Caucasus is not unvisited or
uncheered; Satan on Niphates Mount is
utterly alone, and, though miserable, is

undaunted, and almost darkens the sun
by his stern soliloquy. In one word, Pro-
metheus is a great, good being, myste-
riously punished; Satan is a great, bad
being, reaping with quick and furious
hand what he had sown; nay, warring
with the whirlwind which from that sad
sowing of the wind had sprung.

It was comparatively easy for Æschy-
lus to enlist our sympathies for Prome-
theus, if once he were represented as good
and injured. But, first, to represent
Satan as guilty; again, to wring a confes-
sion of this from his own lips; and yet,
thirdly, to teach us to admire, respect,
pity, and almost love him all the while,
was a problem which only a Milton was
able either to state or to solve.

The words of Prometheus are conso-
nant with his character. The groans of
a god should be melodious; and not more
so were those of Ariel from the centre of
his cloven pine, where he "howled away
twelve winters," than those of Prome-
theus from his blasted rock. As Pro-
fessor Blackie remarks, he remained si-
lent so "long as the ministers of justice
are doing their duty." It were beneath
him to quarrel with the mere ministers
of another's pleasure. Nor does he deem
those myrmidons worthy of hearing the
plaints of his sublime woe. But no sooner
have they left him alone, than he finds a
fitter audience assembled around him in
the old elements of nature; and, like the
voice of one of their own tameless tor-
rents, does he break out into his famous
(miscalled) soliloquy. Soliloquy it is
none, for he was never less alone than
when now alone.

"Oh! divine ether, and swift-wing'd winds,
And river-fountains, and of ocean waves
The multitudinous laughter, and thou earth,
Boon mother of us all, and thou bright round
Of the all-seeing sun, you I invoke!
Behold what ignominy of causeless wrong
I suffer from the gods, myself a god."

We are glad to find that the Professor
uses the word "laughter," instead of "dim-
ple," of the ocean waves. It is stronger,
and more suited to the lofty mood of the
supposed speaker. But in what "part
of the Old Testament" is the "broad

strong word laugh retained in descriptions of nature?" The floods, indeed, are said, by a still bolder image, to "clap hands," but nowhere to laugh. It is the Lord in the heavens who laughs; or it is the war-horse who laughs at the shaking of a spear. Inanimate-objects are never said to laugh, although it were but in unison with the spirit of Hebrew poetry. The word "multitudinous" does not exactly please us, nor give the full sense of *απαριθμω*. We are almost tempted to coin a word, and to translate it the "*unarithmetical* laughter of an ocean's billows."

Lines are scattered throughout which, in their strong condensation, remind you of Satan's terrible laconicisms. The chorus, for instance, says—

"Dost thou not blench to cast such words about thee?"

Prometheus replies—

"How should I fear, who am a god, and deathless!"

Satan says—

"What matter *where*, if I be still the same?"

In the interview with Hermes, he retains the dignity of his bearing, and the fearlessness of his language. And how he mingles poetry the loftiest, and protest the most determined, in the description of the new horrors which he sees approaching his rock; the "pangs unfelt before;" the hell charged upon hell, that are at hand! The earth begins to quake below him. The sky gets dark over his head. The thunder bellows in his ears. Hermes leaves him, and the lightning succeeds, and "wreaths its fiery curls around him." The dust of a whirlwind covers him. Winds from all regions meet, fight, and fluctuate around his naked body. In the distance, the ocean, laughing no more, appears, mingling its angry billows with the stars. And as this many-folded garment of wrath wraps round, and conceals Prometheus from view, his voice is heard screaming out above all the roar of the warring elements the closing words—

"Mighty mother, worshipp'd Themis,
Circling Ether that diffuseth

Light, a common joy to all,
Thou beholdest these my wrongs!"

Shelley was, and had a right to be, a daring genius. He had the threefold right of power; despair, and approaching death. He felt himself strong; he had been driven desperate; and he knew that his time was short. Hence, as a poet, he aimed at the boldest and greatest things. He must leap into death's arms from the loftiest pinnacle possible. But all his genius, determination, and feeling of having no time to lose, were counteracted in their efforts by a certain morbid weakness, which was partly the result of bodily suffering, and partly of the insulated position into which his melancholy creed had thrown him. He was a hero in a deep decline. Tall, swift, and subtle, he wanted body, sinews, and blood. His genius resembled a fine voice cracked. The only thoroughly manly and powerful things he has written, are some parts of the "Revolt of Islam," the "Cenci" as a whole, and the commencement and one or two passages throughout the "Prometheus." The rest of his writings—even when beautiful, as they generally are, and sincere, as they are always—are more or less fantastical and diseased. The "Cenci" itself, the most calm and artistic of his works, could never have been selected as a subject by a healthy or perfectly sane mind.

"Prometheus Unbound" is the most ambitious of his poems. But it was written too fast. It was written, too, in a state of over-excitement, produced by the intoxication of an Italian spring, operating upon a morbid system, and causing it to flush over with hectic and half-delirious joy. Above all, it was written twenty years too soon, ere his views had consolidated, and ere his thought and language were cast in their final mould. Its language is loose and luxuriant as a "Moenad's hair;" its imagery is wilder and less felicitous than in some of his other poems. The thought is frequently drowned in a wild flux of words; its dialogue is heavy and prolix; and its lyrics have more flow of sound, than beauty of image or depth of senti-

ment;—it is a convulsive gallop, rather than a great kindling race. Compared with the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, Shelley's poem is wordy and diffuse; lacks unity and simplicity; above all, lacks whatever human interest is in the Grecian work. Nor has it the massive strength, the piled-up gold and gems, the barbaric but kingly magnificence of Keats' "Hyperion."

Beauties, of course, of a rare order it possesses. The opening speech of Prometheus—his conversation with the Earth—the picture of the Hours—one or two of the choruses—and, above all, the description of the effects of the "many-folded shell" in regenerating the world, are worthy of any poet or pen; and the whole, in its wasted strength, mixed with beautiful weakness, resembling a forest struck with premature autumn, fills us with deep regrets that his life had not been spared. Had he, twenty years later, a healthier, happier, and better man, "clothed, and in his right mind," approached the sublime subject of the "Prometheus," no poet, save Milton and Keats, was ever likely to have so fully completed the Æschylean design.

The last act of this drama is to us a mere dance of darkness. It has all the sound and semblance of eloquent, musical, and glorying nonsense. But, apart from the mystic meanings deposited in its lyrics, Shelley's great object in this play, as in his "Queen Mab" and "Revolt of Islam," is to predict the total extinction of evil, through the progress and perfectionment of the human race. Man is to grow into the God of the world. We are of this opinion, too, provided the necessity of *divine* sunshine and showers to consummate this growth be conceded. But Shelley's theory seems very hopeless. We may leave it to the scorching sarcasm, invective, and argument of Foster, in his "Essay on the Term Romantic." The Ethiop is to wash himself white; the leper is to bathe away his leprosy in Abana and Pharpar, not in Jordan! We will believe it, as soon as we are convinced that human philosophy has of itself made any human being happy, and that there is not

something in man requiring both a fiercer cautery and a nobler balm to cure. "The nature of man still casts 'ominous conjecture on the whole success.' Till that be changed, extended plans of human improvement, laws, new institutions, and systems of education, are only what may be called the sublime mechanics of depravity." And what, we may add, *can* change that, short of an Omnipotent fiat as distinct as that which at first spake darkness into light—chaos into a world? Of lyrics, and dramas, and poetic dreams, and philosophic theories, we have had enough; what we want is, the new master-word of Him who "spake with authority, and not as the scribes."

The great Promethean rock shall be visited by poet for poetic treatment no more again for ever. It is henceforth a "rock in the wilderness," smitten not into water, but into eternal sterility. But, although no poet shall ever seek in it the materials of another lofty song, yet its memory shall continue dear to all lovers of genius and man. Many a traveller, looking northward from the banks of the Kur, or southward from the sandy plains of Russia, to the snowy peaks of the Caucasus, shall think of Prometheus, and try to shape out his writhing figure upon the storm-beaten cliffs. Every admirer of Grecian or of British genius shall turn aside, and see the spectacle of tortured worth, crushed dignity, and vicarious valour, exhibited with such wonderful force and verisimilitude by Æschylus and his follower.

And those who see, or think they see, in the story of this sublime, forsaken, and tormented Titan—the virtuous, the benevolent, the friend of man—a faint shadow of the real tragedy of the cross, where the God-Man was "nailed," as Prometheus is said to have been, was exposed to public ignominy, had his heart torn by the vulture of a world's substitutionary anguish, and at last, at the crisis of his agony, and while earth, and hell, and heaven were all darkening around him, cried out, "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*" (a fearful question, where you dare not lay the emphasis on any

one, but must on *all* the words), cannot but feel more tender and awful emotions as they contemplate this outlying and un-

acknowledged *type* of the Crucified, suspended among the crags of the Caucasian wilderness.

GEORGE BUCHANAN.*

A SCOTCHMAN has a right to be proud of, and delighted to write upon, the glories of Scottish genius. These, when we consider the comparatively recent growth of civilisation among the Scotch, and the size of Scotland, as a country, have been truly marvellous. In what department, not merely of literature but of science, philosophy, invention, and manly enterprise, have not the children of the North excelled? In poetry, we have our Buchanan, Thomson, Scott, Burns, Blair, Beattie, Campbell, Hogg, Smith, Wilson, and a host of others. In philosophy, we have our Hume, our Reid, our Stewart, our Brown, our Mackintosh, and our Hamilton. In science, we have our Napier, our Playfair, our Leslie, our Watt. In the art of instruction, one of the most valuable of all arts, have appeared our Jardines, Pillanses, and Sandfords. In the drama, we have our Lindsay, our Ramsay, and our Home. In scholarship, we have Buchanan, Johnstone, Ruddiman, Hunter, and Halley. In fiction, we have Smollett, Scott, Wilson, Galt, Lockhart, Ferrier, Hogg, and others past all reckoning. In history, we have Buchanan, Hume, Robertson, Fergusson, Gillies, Mackintosh, M'Crie, Laing, and Alison. In political science, we have Adam Smith, Miller, and MacCulloch. In biography, we have, besides fifty others, Boswell, whom Macaulay truly calls the best biographer that ever lived. In brilliant imitation of the old, or shall we rather call it splendid forgery, if England has a Chatterton, "Scotland has a thief as good"—she has a M'Pherson. In criticism, we have a Jeffrey, a Wilson, a Lockhart, an Allan Cunningham, and a Carlyle. In lecturing—the exposition of

* Irving's Life of George Buchanan. Edinburgh: Blackwood.

scientific truth—we have a Nichol and a Samuel Brown. In preaching, we have a Knox, a Blair, a M'Laurin, an Andrew Thomson, a Wardlaw, a Chalmers, and an Irving. In painting, we have a Ramsay, a Wilkie, a Raeburn, a Thomson, a David Scott, and more innumerable. In travelling, what names brighter than those of Bruce and Mungo Park? In general literature, we have a Mackintosh, a Robert Chambers, a Hugh Miller, and very narrowly lost the opportunity of having a Macaulay. In philological lore, we have a Pinkerton, a Sibbald, a Chalmers, and a Jameson. In the mechanical arts, time would fail us to speak of the Watts and Bells, and the thousand others to whose names all our mills, and factories, and steam-ships are offering up continually their hoarse hymn of praise. And in religious literature, we have our Knox, Melville, Rutherford, Erskines, Blair, Campbell, Hill, M'Crie, Dick, Chalmers, Wardlaw, Irving, and a hundred besides.

Such is a most imperfect catalogue of our "Scots Worthies," and indeed many compartments we have altogether omitted. But we have enumerated enough to prove the fact, that no country in proportion to its size has contributed so much as Scotland to the great solid stock of intellectual wealth which is constantly accumulating in the world. Another thing must have struck the reader in glancing over these names. It is the versatility of the Scottish genius; a fact proved by this—that the same names frequently re-appear in different compartments. Thus, Hume was at once a historian and a metaphysician, besides being a writer on general literary topics. Thus the names of Lockhart, Wilson, and Scott appear both as fictionists and as poets. It is the same with Smollett,

Hogg, Cunningham, and others. Thus Mackintosh was at once a historian, a metaphysician, and a man of general literary attainments. Thus Blair, Chalmers, Irving, and Wardlaw, are found in the list both of preachers and of religious authors. And thus George Buchanan is at once a poet, a scholar, a historian, and, we might add, a dramatist, a controversialist, a schoolmaster, and a political writer. The common notion is, that the genius of Scotland has been hard and unbending; confined to a few broad topics, and hemmed in by a few narrow principles, that, even when ardent, its ardour has been rather that of a fenced-in furnace, than of a free star; but the "plain tale" we have told above should—and forever—put this misconception down. The *perferidum ingenium Scotorum* has not unfrequently been as broad in its range, as it has been burning in its radiance.

We come to the examination of the life and genius of, perhaps next to Scott, the greatest literary character our country has ever produced—the glorious gruff old pedant, the Dr Johnson of Scotland—George Buchanan. Buchanan is one of the greatest *favourites* of his country. In every town and every land, there are certain characters who, independent even of their works, and often even of their moral character, cast grappling-irons into the affections, the interest, and the admiration of their fellow-citizens or fellow-countrymen. Such men are always representatives of the strength and the weakness, of the merits and the faults of the classes to which they belong, and are, moreover, distinguished by something peculiar, compounded generally of eccentricity and *bonhommie*. It is not mere talent, learning, or genius that uplifts them to distinction, with their neighbours at least, unless they be *bizarre* or *outré* besides. Hence, in England, the great popularity of Charles James Fox; and in Ireland, the unbounded power of Dean Swift. Hence, to come to cities, Edinburgh had its Wilson, and Aberdeen had its Dr Kidd; and Glasgow has its William Anderson. And hence Scotland, as a country, has admired to en-

thusiasm its Knox, its Buchanan, its Burns, its Chalmers, and its Christopher North. These favourites are treated in a very singular way. They are at once loved and laughed at—worshipped and made topics of endless wonder and merriment; and it is hard to say whether their good qualities or their foibles furnish matter of more delectable conversation and anecdote to their admirers. Stories which would damage other characters are told of them in mere glee, and held to be exceedingly characteristic, like "pretty Fanny's way." They are almost always called either by nicknames, or by diminutives of their own Christian names. One is amazed to find in history, that the soldiers of such awful personages, whom we look on as Angels of Destruction, as Cæsar, Suwarrow, and Napoleon, were wont to sing ridiculous and ribald songs about commanders they adored, and to give them such sobriquets as, in reference to Napoleon, the "little corporal," till one remembers that similar practices occur every day around us. How often have we heard peasant lads and lasses, with fond familiarity, sitting by the ingle bleeze talking of *Rab* or *Rabbie* Burns, recounting the while strange anecdotes of him, or singing some of his songs! The common name by which Chalmers is known and spoken of through all Fifeshire to this hour is "Tam Chalmers." William Anderson and Thomas Guthrie are generally talked of in the same style. And what child has not heard of the great scholar, poet, and historian of Killearn, the terror of popes and councils, the tutor of kings, and the joint-Reformer with Knox of a kingdom, as *Geordie Buehinan*, and has not laughed itself almost dead at the curious anecdotes, partly false and partly true, of his jests and tricks, which still float through all the Lowlands of Scotland? We have one other word to add here. Almost all those who have thus become national favourites—whether in England, Ireland, or Scotland—have taken the *popular side in politics* and religion; and, perhaps, this is the true way of accounting

for the mighty problem, propounded by Mrs Stowe, in her late travels, why Scott's name awakened so little enthusiasm at her meetings, while that of Burns always threatened to bring down the house. And yet, in spite of her statement, and of his politics, Scott is deeply and warmly loved by the people of Scotland; but he, and still more Professor Wilson, are exceptions to the above undeniable rule.

George Buchanan was born in the parish of Killearn, Stirlingshire, in February, 1606, of a family, as he says himself, more ancient than wealthy. His father was farmer at a place called the Moss. The house where he was born has been frequently rebuilt, but there remained, not long ago, an inner wall and an oak beam, which had belonged to the original edifice; and an enthusiastic student travelled once from Glasgow, and slept a night under the beam, hoping that he might derive inspiration from it! It is hardly necessary to add that the student was an Irishman. Buchanan's father died prematurely, and his grandfather became a bankrupt. This reduced the family to a state of great poverty; and his brave, admirable mother, left with five sons and three daughters, had to struggle hard ere she could bring them up to the age of maturity. She and two of her sons continued to cultivate the hereditary farm. George was the third son of the family. He received the rudiments of his education at the parish school of Killearn, then, and long after, famous. The school was two miles from the Moss; and thither, day after day, with his little can of milk in his hand, and his satchel on his back, the schoolboy, destined to be so illustrious, might be seen—not "creeping like snail"—but wending his willing way along the banks of the Blane. Some trees planted, it is said, by his hand used to be shown—particularly a fine mountain-ash, the red berries of which were regarded with enthusiasm, and seemed to rustle out the name of Buchanan to the autumn winds. It is said, but without any good authority, that he was afterwards removed to

the school of Dumbarton. His maternal uncle—James Heriot by name—struck by the uncommon promise of his nephew, sent him at the age of fifteen to prosecute his studies at the University of Paris, where he perfected his knowledge of the Latin tongue, acquired Greek without a master, and began to cultivate his poetical powers. His waggery, too, was there discovered in this curious way:—Having met a woman who professed to be a demoniac, and to speak all languages, Buchanan accosted her in Gaelic, which was probably his own native speech, but she returning no answer, he came to the conclusion that the devil *had* not learned Erse!

Two years after he came to Paris, his uncle died, and Buchanan was cast upon his own resources, which were absolutely none. To poverty, disease added its sting, and the future pride of Scotland was nearly perishing on the streets of Paris. He managed, however, to crawl home, a beggar. By his friends he was received kindly, and spent a year at the Moss, recovering his health. We find him next a private soldier! What induced him to *list* is not quite certain. Whether, as in the case of Coleridge, it was a love disappointment; or whether he was simply tired of inaction, and ashamed of living on his relatives; or whether, as he intimates himself, he was anxious to learn the art of war, and like Goethe, to know something of the "cannon-fever," certain it is, in 1523, he joined the Duke of Albany's troops, and served in one campaign against the English. He was at the unsuccessful siege of Werk, and partook of the disgrace of Albany's retreat across the Border. He left the army immediately after in disgust, and was confined to bed all winter. Yet this little dip into warfare was of service to him ultimately; and his descriptions of battles in the "History of Scotland" are done with the force, distinctness, and enthusiasm of one who had himself fought bravely; just as Scott's connection even with the sham fights and mimic marches of the yeomanry was of use to him in his "Marmion" and

"Old Mortality." Next spring, Buchanan went to the University of St Andrews, to attend the lectures of John Mair, or Major, a celebrated doctor of the Sorbonne, then teaching in St Salvator's College, whom he seems at first to have admired, but afterwards learned to hold in little esteem, calling him *solo cognomine* Major. On the 3d of October, 1525, being then an exhibitor, or, as it was called, a pauper, he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts; and the next summer he followed Mair to France, where he became a student in the Scottish college, and in March, 1528, took the degree of A.M. The students there were divided, much as they are now in Glasgow, into different nations—according to their respective countries—and on the 3d of June, 1529, Buchanan was elected Procurator (answering, we presume, to the Glasgow Censor) to the German nation, which included the Scotch. The tenets of the lion-hearted Luther were then beginning to pervade Paris, and were eagerly imbibed by our manly and courageous youth. He no sooner "believed" than he "spoke," and for this offence he was treated as a speckled bird, and for two years had to contend both with obloquy, and with the proverbial poverty of the Scotch scholar. He was next appointed regent or professor in the College of St Barbe, where he taught grammar, on a very slender salary, for three years. The miseries of this wretched position he consoled himself by bewailing in one of his finest and most forcible elegies, where he contrasts the profound repose and healthy cheek of the ploughman, the day-labourer, and even the sailor, with the pallid face, the emaciated frame, and the premature death of the poor student and teacher.

During his residence at St Barbe, he became acquainted with Gilbert Kennedy, earl of Cassilis, a young nobleman of some accomplishments and amiable dispositions, who in 1532 appointed him his regular tutor. This gentleman admired Buchanan to the brink of idolatry, and the tutor so loved and respected his pupil, as to dedicate to him his first

work—a translation of Linacre's Latin Grammar—which was published by R. Stephanus in 1533. He continued for five years with the earl in France, and at the end of that period returned with him to Scotland. While residing at his seat (a seat commemorated in Burns's "Vision" and "Hallowe'en") in Ayrshire, Buchanan was moved by the demon of comic power which was within him, to write a satire on the friars, entitled "Sonanum," a production distinguished by wit, by biting sarcasm, and by elegant Latinity, and which formed the first volley of his protracted fire against

"Eremites and friars,
White, black, and grey, with all their
trumpery."

This poem, which was a happy imitation of one on a similar subject by Dunbar, irritated the clergy to fury, the more that it was generally admired; and they at once loudly exclaimed, and silently swore vengeance, against the author. We next hear of Buchanan being appointed as preceptor to a natural son of King James V., one James Stewart, son of one Elizabeth Shaw; an appointment which seems to have saved his life at the time. While acting in this capacity, he became intimate with Gavin Dunbar, archbishop of Glasgow, and with Sir Adam Otterburn, a poet and statesman, whose works, however, have perished, and whose name, as David Irving for once happily remarks, "has *glided* into the history of Scottish literature, because he was the friend of Buchanan." What tie, unless it was common love of fun and common hatred of the monks, united Buchanan, whose morals seem to have been on the whole pure, and the "Red Tod of St Andrews," the gay licentious "Gudeman o' Ballengeich," James V., we cannot tell, but they became great cronies. It was fortunate for our poet that it was so, for the Franciscans were using every means to degrade and ruin him, representing him to the king as a man of bad morals, and worse belief. James, who, Gallo-like, cared for none of these things, and who admired Buchanan's genius, and enjoyed his humours, instead of surrendering, stimulated

him on to become yet "more vile" in the sight of these cowed quacks and sanctimonious impostors. The results were, first, the "Palinodia," a pretended recantation, concealing bitterer and more galling satire; and then the "Franciscanus," an open and most powerful attack, full of pungent wit, strong invective, searching exposure, and bursts of real poetry. Never was a chastisement more richly merited. Religion, not to speak of learning, had sunk to such a pitch among the ecclesiastics in Scotland, that some of them actually thought that Martin Luther was the author of a dangerous book called the New Testament! But in proportion to the truth, and the telling power of Buchanan's books, became now his personal danger. Stung to madness, the priests, with Beaton at their head, raised a fierce persecution against those suspected of being Lutherans. Five were burned, nine recanted, and many were driven into exile. James stooped before the storm, and could not, or would not, any longer shield his favourite, and Buchanan was arrested, and would probably have fed the flames, had he not made his escape, like another Halbert Glendinning, through the window of his dungeon. He fled southward, but found new troubles in England, where that huge blood-red weathercock, Henry VIII., was then the presiding power. After some vain attempts to conciliate him and his minions by poetical effusions, at which they probably laughed, he crossed the sea to Paris, where, however, to his dismay, he found Cardinal Beaton living as an ambassador. Fortunately he received an invitation at this time from Andrew Govea, a native of Portugal, to become professor of Latin in a college newly founded at Bourdeaux, called the College of Guienne, which he accepted. He resided at Bourdeaux for three years, during which his genius was exceedingly prolific. Besides various miscellaneous poems, he wrote or translated, and had acted by his students, according to the academic custom of the age, four plays, namely, "Baptistes," a drama founded on the death of John the Baptist; "Alcestis" and "Medea," from

Euripides; and "Jephthes," an original play on the romantic Hebrew story of the immolation of Jephtha's daughter. As a dramatist, Buchanan modelled his style on the Grecian school, particularly on that of Euripides. He is accused by Grotius of having lowered the dignity of the ancient buskin. This, however, is compensated by the superior *variety* of his manner. He excels rather in manly sense and sentiment, than in tenderness. It is a curious fact, that Milton had projected and laid down the plan of a drama on John the Baptist, and if any one could have coped fully with the austere and rugged grandeur of him who, with one foot in the desert, and the other on the polluted soil of Palestine, uttered his cries of urgent haste and awful warning, it had been the author of "Samson Agonistes." Buchanan, too, rises in parts to the majesty of the character. Thus, when John is warned of the wrath of Herod, he replies in the following lofty comparison of the two kings, the one of whom he feared, and the other whose vengeance he defied:—

"Reges utrinque facere pugnantis jubent :
 Coelestis alter, misericors clemens, bonus :
 Terrenus alter, impotens, ferox malus
 Mortem minatur alter: alter me vetat
 Mortem timere, pollicetur præmium
 Vim non timent: corpus alter perdere
 Potest: at alter corpus una et spiritum
 Torquere flamma poteret inevitabili,
 Hi quum repugnant consule utri paream."

It will be seen, from this extract, that Buchanan, like Milton, draws copiously on Bible language. His scrip, indeed, is never empty of those smooth stones from the river of life, and nobly does he wield them. We think, in one point, he has detracted from the grandeur of the Baptist's character. He makes him a married man, and speaks of his children being left orphans by his death. Scripture says nothing of this, nor would Milton. The Baptist is lonely as the desert, even when he walks on the soil of Palestine. He never gets much farther, indeed, than the edge of the wilderness. The "lion is alone, and so is he." It was no domestic character of whom they said, "He comes neither eating nor drinking, and hath a

demon." He had disciples, but they must have trembled when he talked to them by the way, as well as when they were by night huddling that awful and headless dust of his into the grave.

Scripture has few finer subjects for poetic treatment than the story of Jephtha's daughter, especially if we take what we think is unquestionably the correct interpretation—that she was sacrificed. Otherwise, how explain his terrible grief, when she comes forth to meet him; and what a lame and impotent conclusion to the story, had her taking the veil simply been! On the other supposition, how intensely interesting to realise the varied circumstances of the story—to watch the chariot of the conqueror returning—to see the look of eager anxiety, blended with that of triumph in his face, as it is bent forward toward the door of his dwelling—to see the white raiment, elastic step, and smiling welcome of his daughter, breaking at once on the view—to watch the ghastly look of the father at the sight, during the *one moment* which elapses, ere his hands dropped hastily over his face, supply to sorrow its natural veil—a moment unspeakably strange and tremendous, as bringing into contrast, on two faces so like each other, the extremes of the highest and most innocent joy, and of the highest, most overwhelming, and most innocent anguish—to observe the damp, the breathless anxiety, the speechless suspicion, which fall on the daughter's lovely and beaming countenance, as if from some supernatural region, when she sees her father's clasped hands, covered face, and hears his speech, "Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low!"—to thrill in sympathy with that voice of a father's sorrow, shuddering up into the sky in its loose, dissonant anguish, to come down again, stiffened into calm and marble magnanimity, as he adds, "I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot turn back"—to see the momentary cloud of uncertain horror passing away from his daughter's face, and the sweet, sad sunlight of a great resolve settling on it, as she says, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord,

do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, the children of Ammon"—to follow her steps, alas! no longer light as those of the gazelle, as when she came forth with timbrels and dances to meet her father, but slow, composed, majestic, moving to the unheard music of lofty purpose as she goes away to the mountains with her companions to bewail that she was never to bear the Messiah, but only to typify his early and cruel death; and to stand, in fine, beside the funeral pile—to see the torch applied by an untrembling hand—to see, again, Nature's curtain falling over the face of the father, and becoming the painting of unutterable wo—and to see the "maiden veil, her own black hair," of the devoted daughter, exchanged, by a rude and fiery hand, for a mantle of surging smoke, amidst which, without a groan or murmur, the spirit of Jephtha's only child ascends to glory;—in all this, we see a subject which, in its conception and its details, its lights and shadows, its central figure and its accompaniments and asides, challenges for itself the illustration of the loftiest artistic genius, for even in this our humble version it contains the essence of the highest poetry.

That the "Jephthes" of Buchanan answers our ideal, or clothes adequately the great skeleton of the scriptural story, we cannot affirm. The poet has erred, we think, artistically, in making Iphis' mother still alive. Far more impressive were the thought of Jephtha's daughter, like Campbell's Gertrude, being the only stoop and stay of her father's house, the sole light of his dwelling, the last of his race. This, obviously, would have deepened the pathos. There are also some minor objections. The names of the females are both Greek, not Hebrew. Who could dream of a Jewish maiden as *Iphis*? Of course, Buchanan was thinking of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, and her parallel fate. But Rebecca, or Rachel, or Hannah, had better preserved verisimilitude. He gives the devoted maiden *golden tresses*. A Jewish

female should have been represented, as Rebecca in "Ivanhoe" is, and as we have ventured to do in our little sketch above, with hair dark as the raven's wing. We mention this as a little trait, typifying the general confusion the poet makes of the Grecian and Hebrew elements. Otherwise, and after subtracting also a good deal of diffusion and sounding verbiage, Buchanan's drama is a pleasing performance; and the description, in the last chorus, of the damsel's sacrifice, is at once picturesque and pathetic. But we are still waiting for a first-rate tragedy on a subject which might have challenged the powers of a Shakspeare.

Buchanan, while composing these pieces, continued in imminent danger from the machinations of the priests and Cardinal Beaton. But all the eminent scholars of the place and neighbourhood, including the elder Scaliger, were his friends. The celebrated Montague was his pupil, and acted in his dramas. After residing three years in Bourdeaux, he removed to Paris, and, in 1544, became a regent in the college of Cardinal Le Moire, where he continued till 1547. In that year he went with his friend A. Govea to Portugal, where he taught in the University of Coimbra. Govea died soon after, and Buchanan, deprived of his protection, fell into the hands of the Inquisition. He was confined to a monastery, and there he continued several months, employing the time he could rescue from the society of the monks, and their impotent attempts to convert him, in planning, and in part executing, his far-famed translation of the Psalms.

To translate a book like that of the Psalms, which, apart from its divine inspiration, contains specimens of the best kind of almost every variety of poetry, of the storm-winged ode, of the plaintive elegy, dying away in broken sobs of sorrow—of the epithalamium, rich in imagery and ornament as the dress of an oriental bride—of the short, simple sigh in verse of an humble and contrite spirit—of the descriptive hymn, glowing with all the colours of a Syrian sky—of the didactic strain, descending into the very depths of

the Hebrew faith—of the wail of penitential anguish arising from depths of a different kind, those of tortured memory and accusing conscience—of the long and linked narrative, like the episode in an epic, and of those little drops of historic pathos or sublimity, such as the 114th and 187th psalms, reminding you of the "drops which at Sinai from heaven fell," each drop reflecting the fires and thunders of the burning mount—to render all these into a tongue so different from the Hebrew in construction and spirit as the Latin, was a daring task, and was competent only to the genius, learning, taste, and piety of a Buchanan. We enter not grammatically into the merits of his version. Ruddiman has long ago employed his masterly knowledge of Latin to defend it from cavils, and to proclaim its accuracy and purity of style. But looking at it simply as a book of poetry, it has confessedly very high merit. The style is glowing and majestic; the diction select, yet abundant; and the spirit of the original, especially in all the more ornate and lofty parts, is admirably preserved. His version of the 104th Psalm is the best poem in the volume. The subject was one of great grandeur, and one on which the Latin poets themselves had often expatiated—namely, the glories of the natural world. Buchanan was thus furnished with a stock of classical terms, and, having unified them by the idea of the one Jehovah, which pervades the original Hebrew poem, and fired them still farther by the breath of his own genius, he has far outdone himself, and Virgil and Lucretius too. We close the rolling strain with the wish that the author had addressed himself to the task of versifying the speech from the whirlwind in Job. And yet he seems to us to sink under the sublimity of the "Thunder Psalm," the 29th; and to dissipate in long and feeble echoes those short, deep words, which sound like successive and redoubled peals from a darkened heaven. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of ma-

jesty." How poor to this the words of Buchanan's paraphrase!—

"Vox dignitatis plena; nec irrita
Unquam ad patrandum jussa potentia,
Nudare cedris seu Libanum juvat
Celsasque ventis sternere fraxinos."

Some of the Psalms seem, indeed, to defy paraphrase: they are self-involved; the ideas and the words are inextricably intertwined. Others seem waiting and eager to be expanded. The former are rarely well translated; the others are sometimes even improved in the rendering. The 29th Psalm and the 18th, like the simple, rugged style of Daute, are best when rendered in plain prose; the 104th and the 139th, like the majestic measures of Homer and Milton, demand a free and flowing translation.

Soon after, Buchanan was restored to his liberty, and repaired to Paris, where he was appointed to a regency in the college of Boncourt. Here he remained till 1555, when he was engaged by Comte de Bressac to be tutor to his son, Timoleon de Cosse. During the five years which elapsed till the death of this promising young nobleman, Buchanan spent his life alternately in France and Italy, and had time to commence a philosophical poem he never finished, entitled "De Sphæra." He spent, too, much of his leisure in studying the controversy between the two churches; came at last to a decided resolution to join the Reformed Church, to which he had long inclined, and did so as soon as he reached Scotland, which was about 1560.

On his return to his own country, he became Latin teacher to Mary, Queen of Scots, then in the pride and glory of her youth and innocence. The connection between them was, for awhile, pleasant and profitable. She bestowed on him the temporalities of the Abbey of Crossraguel, amounting to 500 pounds Scots (£25), which he seems to have retained to the close of his life, and he wrote various verses in her praise. At this time he published his "Psalms," his "Fratres Fraterrimi," a collection of his satires against the clergy, and put the finishing touch to his "Franciscanus"

which he dedicated to his patron, the Earl of Murray, who, in requital, promoted him in 1566 to be Principal of St Leonard's, St Andrews.

Great events now shot across the horizon of Scottish history, which we need not detail. When Elizabeth was forced to inquire into Mary's conduct; Buchanan was charged with the main burden of the proof against the unfortunate queen. And thus suddenly he became an actor in that strange and complicated drama. He accompanied Murray to England, carrying with him his "Detection" of Mary's conduct. After the regent's death, he issued an "Admonition to the true Lords of Scotland," assailing the Hamiltons, and bespeaking protection for the young king, and the children of the regent; and the same year attacked Secretary Lethington in a Scottish satirical piece, entitled "The Chamelion." This, and the former, are the only pieces in Scotch from Buchanan's pen, and both are excellent, and have been often reprinted. In 1570, he was elected the principal tutor of James VI., and plied his task with more dignity, energy, and zeal, than *politesse* or discretion. James trembled in his presence; and while he continued in after life to respect Buchanan's talents, he bore a deep grudge to his memory. Buchanan had but a slender perception of what is called royal dignity; and he not unfrequently disturbed the "divinity which hedges in a king," by a blow on the face, or a stroke on yet tenderer parts of the anointed frame. Every one remembers a story on this subject, rather racy to be recounted, as well as the well-known saying of the tutor, who, when reproached with having made James a pedant, thanked God that he had made so much of him. Buchanan was at the same time appointed director of the chancery and keeper of the privy seal. On the Earl of Morton's return to power he was displaced, and never afterwards undertook any political office. In 1576 he published his "Baptistes," with a dedication to his royal pupil, distinguished rather by freedom and force, than by respect or delicacy.

He was about this time placed on two commissions, the first for reforming the grammars used in parish schools, and the second for remodelling the system of education in the universities, in both of which he proved of essential service. In 1579 he published his tractate, entitled "De Jure Regni apud Scotos," a treatise which Brutus would have worshipped for its noble freedom of political doctrine, and Quintilian admired for the exquisite Latinity of its style.

Buchanan had long projected and even begun writing a History of Sootland, but was retarded in his progress by his wandering and unsettled life at one period, and afterwards by the overwhelming pressure of public business. At last, however, notwithstanding the load of years and the attack of various diseases, he pushed it forward to a conclusion. It appeared almost at the very moment of his death. Its dedication to the king is dated August 29th, 1582, and he died on Friday the 28th of September following. As the end drew near, Andrew Melvin, James Melvin, and his cousin Thomas Buchanan, visited the old Titan, and found him teaching a young man the hornbook. "I perceive, sir," said A. Melvin, "that you are not idle."—"Better this," replied he, "than stealing sheep, or sitting idle, which is as bad." He showed them his dedication to the king, and said he could make it no better, having a higher business to attend to. They asked what that was. "To die," was the solemn answer. They went thence to the printing-office, to glance over the sheets of his History. Finding an unguarded passage in reference to Rizzio's funeral, they hurried back to remonstrate with the author, whom they found now in bed. They told him the expressions he used would anger the king, and perhaps lead him to suppress the whole work. "Tell me, man," said Buchanan, "if I have told the truth."—"Undoubtedly, sir," replied his cousin.—"Then," rejoined he, "I will abide his feud and all his kin's." There spoke the spirit of an ancient Gael, and of one who, like John Knox, never feared the face of man! By the time the printing was

finished, the author was dead. While the "History of Scotland" was entering on the platform of the public to be hailed with loud applause, the soul of the historian was stepping into a grander theatre to receive, let us trust, a Crown of Life, which shall never fade away. At five in the morning on the 28th of September, he expired. One of his last questions to his servant was, if there were money enough in his coffers to bury him. On hearing there was not enough, he told him to give what there was to the poor, and that, as for his body he cared not, they might suffer him to lie where he was, or throw out his corpse where they pleased. He was buried, however, in the Greyfriars, at the expense of the city of Edinburgh. No tombstone was erected over his dust, but long afterwards an obelisk, 103 feet in height, was erected to his memory in his native parish of Killearn.

Our space in this article has been limited, and our general remarks at the close must be few. We have called Buchanan the Johnson of Scotland; and so he was, in his combination of strong imagination and acute intellect; in his preference for, and proficiency in, the Latin tongue; in his lively, although coarse, humour; in his conversational powers; in his decision of character and daring of speech; in his rough manners, disguising a warm and generous heart. All Dr Johnson wanted to constitute him a Buchanan, were activity of character and liberality of view; and Buchanan unfortunately, on the other hand, had no Boswell! Both were "good haters," vehement political partisans, powerful prose-writers, elegant, if not very original, poets; both had been excellent *dominies* in their day, and were truehearted, honest Christian men, if not always consistent in their conduct, or guarded in their language. Buchanan's versatility, as we hinted above, was extraordinary, and yet has, perhaps, detracted from the general impression of the depth of his powers. It is not willingly believed by an envious world—a world, too, which has some excuse for its envy, from the frequency with which it

has been deceived—that a man playing many parts can be perfect in all. And yet in what field has Buchanan not excelled? We have seen him already as a good dramatist, a first-rate satirist, a worthy translator of the highest and holiest poetry, and an eloquent expounder of the principles of civil and religious liberty. But he was, besides, a lyric and elegiac poet of no ordinary merit. His ode on the First of May is of that high order of the beautiful, which, as if by natural process, buds into the sublime. His elegies, with less tenderness than their name would import, are singularly finished and felicitous. Even his juvenile productions, highly coloured as they are, and too redolent of joy and youth, are full of poetry. And his history—although not probably what it might have been had he written it at his leisure amidst academic bowers, or possessed a profounder insight into the principles of historical composition—besides being throughout beauti-

fully written, displays in the beginning much of the descriptive power and the rich flowing garb of style which distinguished Livy; and toward the close, is animated with all that spirit of sublimated partisanship, and all that force and fervour of moral indignation, which mark the pages of Tacitus, and, in a subordinate degree, of Sallust.

Altogether, when we consider Buchanan's almost universal genius and colossal claims, we are forced keenly to regret that we have not had time to do greater justice to his merits; that we cannot, in supply of our necessary lack of service, refer our readers to any better life of him than that of Irving, which, though full of facts, has little true insight, and less eloquence or enthusiasm; and that the language in which he has written his best works is likely long to form a "false medium" between the Scottish public and one of the very greatest of their men of genius.

SHAKSPERE.—A LECTURE.*

IF a clergyman, thirty years ago, had announced a lecture on Shakspeare, he might, as a postscript, have announced the resignation of his charge, if not the abandonment of his office. Times are now changed, and men are changed along with them. The late Dr Hamilton of Leeds, one of the most pious and learned clergymen in England, has left, in his "Nugæ Literariæ," a genial paper on Shakspeare, and was never, so far as I know, challenged thereon. And if you ask me one reason of this curious change, I answer, it is the long-continued presence of the spirit of Shakspeare, in all its ge-

* This having been originally delivered as a lecture, we have decided that it should retain the shape. "Shakspeare: a Sketch," would look, and be, a ludicrous idea. As well a mountain in a flower-pot, as Shakspeare in a single sketch. A sketch seeks to draw, at least, an outline of a whole. From a lecture, so much is not necessarily expected.

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niality, breadth, and power, in the midst of our society and literature. He is among us like an unseen ghost, colouring our language, controlling our impressions, if not our thoughts, swaying our imaginations, sweetening our tempers, refining our tastes, purifying our manners, and effecting all this by the simple magic of his genius, and through a medium—that of dramatic writing and representation—originally the humblest, and not yet the highest, form in which poetry and passion have chosen to exhibit themselves. Waiving, at present, the consideration of Shakspeare in his form—the dramatist, let us look at him now in his *essence*—the poet. But, first, does any one ask, What is a poet? What is the ideal of the somewhat indefinite, but large and swelling term—poet? I answer, the greatest poet is the man who most roundly, clearly, easily, and strikingly reflects, represents, and reproduces, in an

imaginative form, his own sight or observation, his own heart or feeling, his own history or experience, his own memory or knowledge, his own imagination or dream—sight, heart, history, memory, and imagination, which, so far as they are faithfully represented from his consciousness, do also reflect the consciousness of general humanity. The poet is more a mirror than a maker; he may, indeed, unite with his reflective power others, such as that of forming, infusing into his song, and thereby glorifying a particular creed or scheme of speculation; but, just as surely as a rainbow, rising between two opposing countries or armies, is no bulwark, so the real power of poetry is not in conserving, nor in resisting, nor in supporting, nor in destroying, but in meekly and fully reflecting, and yet re-creating and beautifying all things. Poetry, said Aristotle, is *imitation*; this celebrated aphorism is only true in one acceptation. If it mean that poetry is in the first instance prompted by a *conscious* imitation of the beautiful, which gradually blossoms into the higher shape of unconscious resemblance, we demur. But if by imitation is meant the process by which love for the beautiful in art or nature, at first silent and despairing as the child's affection for the star, strengthens, and strengthens still, till the admired quality is transfused into the very being of the admirer, who then pours it back in eloquence or in song, so sweetly and melodiously, that it seems to be flowing from an original fountain in his own breast; if this be the meaning of the sage when he says that poetry is imitation, he is surely right. Poetry is just the saying Amen, with a full heart and a clear voice, to the varied symphonies of nature, as they echo through the vaulted and solemn aisles of the poet's own soul.

It follows, from this notion of poetry, that in it there is no such thing as *absolute* origination or creation; its Be-Light simply evolves the element which already has existed amidst the darkness—it does not call it into existence. It follows, again, that the grand distinction between philosophy and poetry is, that while the

former tries to trace things to their causes, and to see them as a great naked abstract scheme, poetry catches them as they are, in the concrete, and with all their verdure and flush about them; for even philosophical truths, ere poetry will reflect them, must be personified into life, and thus fitted to stand before her mirror. The ocean does not act as a prism to the sun—does not divide and analyse his light—but simply shows him as he appears to her in the full crown-royal of his beams. It follows still farther, that the attitude of the true poet is exceedingly simple and sublime. He is not an inquirer, asking curious questions at the universe—not a tyrant speculator, applying to it the splendid torture of investigation; his attitude is that of admiration, reception, and praise. He loves, looks, is enlightened, and shines—even as a planet receives and renders back the light of his parent sun.

If, then, the greatest poet be the widest, simplest, and clearest reflector of nature and man, surely we may claim this high honour for Shakspeare—the eighth wonder of the world. "Of all men," says Dryden, "he had the largest and most comprehensive soul!" You find everything included in him, just as you find that the blue sky folds around all things, and after every new discovery made in her boundless domains, seems to retire quietly back into her own greatness, like a queen, and to say, "I am richer than all my possessions." Shakspeare never suggests the thought of being exhausted, any more than the sigh of an *Æolian* lyre, as the breeze is spent, intimates that the mighty billows of the air shall surge no more. Responsive as such a lyre to all the sweet or strong influences of nature, she must cease to speak, ere he can cease to respond. I can never think of that great brow of his, but as a clear lake-looking-glass, on which, when you gaze, you see all passions, persons, and hearts: here, suicides striking their own breasts, there, sailors staggering upon drunken shores; here, kings sitting in purple, and there, clowns making mouths behind their backs; here, demons in the shape of men, and there, angels in the

form of women; here, heroes bending their mighty bows, and there, hangmen adjusting their greasy ropes; here, witches picking poisons, and culling infernal simples for their caldron, and there, joiners and weavers enacting their piece of very tragical mirth, amid the moonlight of the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" here, statesmen uttering their "ancient saws," and there, watchmen, finding "modern instances" amid the belated revellers of the streets; here, misanthropes cursing their day, and there, pedlars making merry with the lasses and lads of the village fair; here, Mooncalfs, like Caliban, throwing forth eloquent curses and blasphemy, and there, maidens like Miranda, "sole-sitting" by summer seas, beautiful as foam-bells of the deep; here, fairies dancing like notes of glory across the stage, and there, hush! it is the grave that has yawned, and, lo! the buried majesty of Denmark has joined the motley throng, which pauses for a moment to tremble at his presence. Such the spectacle presented on that great mirror! How busy it is, and yet how still! How melancholy, and yet how mirthful! Magical as a dream, and yet sharp and distinct as a picture! How fluctuating, yet how fixed! "It trembles, but it cannot pass away." It is the world—the world of every age—the miniature of the universe!

The Times of Shakspeare require a minute's notice in our hour's analysis of his genius. They were times of a vast upheaving in the public mind. Protestantism, that strong man-child, had newly been born on the Continent, and was making wild work in his cradle. Popery, the ten-horned monster, was dying, but dying hard; while over England there lay what might be called a "dim religious light"—being neither the gross darkness of mediæval Catholicism, nor the naked glare of Nonconformity—a light highly favourable to the exercise of imagination—in which dreams seemed realised, and in which realities were softened with the haze of dreams. The Book of God had been brought forth, like Joseph from his dungeon, freed from prison attire, al-

though it had not yet, like him, mounted its chariot of general circulation, and been carried in triumphal progress through the land. The copies of the Scriptures, for the most part, were confined to the libraries of the learned, or else chained in churches. Conceive the impetus given to the poetical genius of the country, by the sudden discovery of this spring of loftiest poetry—conceive it by supposing that Shakspeare's works had been buried for ages, and been dug up now. Literature in general had revived; and the soul of man, like an eagle newly fledged, and looking from the verge of her nest, was smelling from afar many a land of promise, and many a field of victory. Add to this, that a New World had recently been discovered; and if California and Australia have come over us like a summer's (golden) cloud, and made not only the dim eye of the old miser gleam with joy, and his hand, perhaps, relax its hold of present, in the view of prospective gold, but made many a young bosom, too, leap at the thought of adventure upon those marvellous shores, and woven, as it were, a girdle of virgin gold round the solid globe—what must have been the impulse and the thrill, when first the bars of ocean were broken up, when all customary landmarks fled away, like the islands of the Apocalyptic vision, and when in their room a thousand lovely dreams seemed retiring, and beckoning as they retired, toward isles of palms, and valleys of enchantment, and mountains ribbed with gold, and seas of perfect peace and sparkling silver, and in the distance immeasurable savannahs and forests hid by the glowing west; and when, month after month, travellers and sailors were returning to testify by their tales of wonder that such dreams were true, must not such an ocean of imaginative influence have deposited a rich residuum of genius? And that verily it did, the names of four men belonging to this period are enough to prove: these are, need I say? Edmund Spenser, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, and William Shakspeare.

The Life of Shakspeare I do not seek to write, and do not profess to understand,

after all that has been written regarding it. Still he seems to me but a shade, without shape, limit, or local habitation; having nothing but power, beauty, and grandeur. I cannot reconcile him to life, present or past. Like a brownie, he has done the work of his favourite household, unheard and unseen. His external history is, in his own language, a blank; his internal, a puzzle, save as we may dubiously gather it from the escapes of his Sonnets, and the masquerade of his Plays.

"O Cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?"

Say, rather, a munificent and modest benefactor, he has knocked at the door of the human family at night; thrown in inestimable wealth as if he had done a guilty thing; and the sound of his feet dying away in the distance is all the tidings he has given of himself.

Indeed, so deep still are the uncertainties surrounding the history of Shakspeare, that I sometimes wonder that the process applied by Strauss to the Life of our Saviour has not been extended to his. A Life of Shakspeare, on this worthy model, would be a capital exercise for some aspiring sprig of Straussism!

I pass to speak of the qualities of his genius. First of these, I name a quality to which I have already alluded—his universality. He belongs to all ages, all lands, all ranks, all professions, all characters, and all intellects. And why? because his eye pierced through all that was conventional, and fastened on all that was eternal in man. He knew that in humanity there was one heart, one nature, and that "God had made of one blood all nations who dwell on the face of the earth." He saw the same heart palpitating through a myriad faces—the same nature shining amid all varieties of customs, manners, languages, and laws—the same blood rolling red and warm below innumerable bodies, dresses, and forms. It was not, mark you, the universality of indifference—it was not that he loved all beings alike—it was not that he liked Iago as well as Imogen, Bottom or Bardolph as well as Hamlet or Othello;

but that he saw, and showed, and loved, in proportion to its degree, *so much* of humanity as all possessed. Nature, too, he had watched with a wide yet keen eye. Alike the spur of the rooted pine-tree and the "grey" gleam of the willow leaf drooping over the death-stream of Ophelia,—(he was the first in poetry, says Hazlitt, to notice that the leaf is grey only on the side which bends down)—the nest of the temple-haunting martlet with his "loved mansionry," and the eagle eyrie which "buildeth on the cedar's top, and dallies with the wind and scorns the sun"—the forest of Arden, and the "blasted heath of Forres"—the "still vexed Bermoothes, and the woods of Crete"—"the paved fountains," "rushing brooks," "pelting rivers," "the beached margents of the sea," "sweet summer buds," "hoary-headed frosts," "childing autumn," "angry winter," the "sun robbing the vast sea," and the "moon her pale fire snatching from the sun:"—

"Flowers of all hues—
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram,
The marigold that goes to bed with the sun,
And with him rises weeping; daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets
dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath—pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength—
————— bold oxlips and
The Crown Imperial—lilies of all kinds"—

such are a few of the natural objects which the genius of Shakspeare has transplanted into his own garden, and covered with the dew of immortality. He sometimes lingers beside such lovely things, but more frequently he touches them as he is hurrying on to an object. He paints as does the lightning, which, while rushing to its aim, shows in fiery relief all intermediate objects. Like an arrowy river, his mark is the sea, but every cloud, tree, and tower is reflected on the way, and serves to beautify and to dignify the waters. Frank, all-embracing, and unselecting is the motion of his genius. Like the sun-rays, which, secure in their

own purity and directness, pass fearlessly through all deep, dark, intricate, or unholy places—equally illustrate the crest of a serpent and the wing of a bird, pause on the summit of an ant-hillock as well as on the brow of Mont Blanc—take up as a little thing alike the crater of the volcano and the shed cone of the pine, and after they have, in one wide charity, embraced all shaped and sentient things, expend their waste strength and beauty upon the inane space beyond—thus does the imagination of Shakspeare count no subject or object too low, and none too high, for its comprehensive and uncontrollable sweep.

I have named *impersonality*, as his next quality. The term seems strange and rare—the thing is scarcer still: I mean by it that Shakspeare, when writing, thought of nothing but his subject, never of himself. Snatching from an Italian novel, or an ill-translated Plutarch's Lives, the facts of his play, his only question was, Can these dry bones live? How shall I impregnate them with force, and make them fully express the meaning and beauty which they contain? Many writers set to work in a very different style. One in all his writings wishes to magnify his own powers, and his solitary bravo is heard resounding at the close of every paragraph. Another wishes to imitate another writer—a base ambition, pardonable only in children. A third, scorning lavish imitation, wishes to emulate some one school or class of authors. A fourth writes deliberately and professedly *ad captandum vulgus*. A fifth, worn to dregs, is perpetually wishing to imitate his former doings, like a child crying to get yesterday back again. Shakspeare, when writing, thought no more of himself, or other authors, than the Sun when shining thinks of Sirius, or of his own proud array of beams.

This unconsciousness, or impersonality, I have always held to be the highest style of genius. I am aware, indeed, of a subtle objection. It has been said by John Sterling, that men of genius are conscious, not of what is peculiar in the in-

dividual, but of what is universal in the race; of what characterises, not a man, but man; not of their own individual genius, but of the Great Spirit moving within their minds. Yet what in reality is this but the unconsciousness for which the author, to whom Sterling is replying, contends? When we say that men of genius, in their highest moods, are unconscious, we mean, not that these men become the mere tubes through which a foreign influence descends, but that certain emotions or ideas so fill and possess them, as to produce temporary forgetfulness of themselves, save as the passive though intelligent instruments of the feeling or the thought. It is true that afterwards self may suggest the reflection—the fact that we have been selected to receive and convey such melodies proves our breadth and fitness—it is from the oak, not the reed, that the wind elicits its deepest music; but, in the first place, this thought never takes place at the same time with the true afflatus, and is almost inconsistent with its presence—it is a mere after inference;—an inference, secondly, which is not always made; nay, thirdly, an inference which is often rejected, when the prophet, off the stool, feels tempted to regard with suspicion or shuddering disgust the result of his raptured hour of inspiration. Milton seems to have shrunk back at the retrospect of the height he had reached in the "Paradise Lost," and preferred his "Paradise Regained." Shakspeare, having written his tragic miracles under a more entire self-abandonment, became in his Sonnets, owing to a reflex act of sagacity, aware of what feats he had done. Bunyan is carried on, through all the stages of his immortal pilgrimage, like a child in the leading-strings of her nurse, but, after looking back upon its contemplated course, begins, with all the harmless vanity of a child (see the prefatory poem to the second part), to crow over the achievement. Burns, while composing "Tam o' Shanter," felt little else than the animal rapture of the excitement; it dawned on him afterwards that he had produced his finest poem. Thus all gifted spirits do best when they know

not what they do. The boy Tell was great,

"Nor knew how great he was."

I mention next his humanity. It was said of Burns, that if you had touched his hand it would have burned yours. And although Shakspeare, being a far broader and greater, was, consequently, a calmer man, yet I would not have advised any very timid person to have made the same experiment with him. Poor Hartley Coleridge wrote a clever paper, in "Blackwood," entitled "Shakspeare a Tory and a Gentleman;" I wish some one had answered it, under the title "Shakspeare a Radical and a Man." A man's heart beats in his every line. He loves, pities, feels for, as well as with, the meanest of his fellow "human mortals." He addresses men as brothers, and as brothers have they responded to his voice.

I need scarcely speak of his simplicity. He was a child as well as a man. His poetry, in the language of Pitt, comes "sweetly from nature." It is a "gum" oozing out without effort or consciousness: occasionally, indeed (for I do not, like the Germans, believe in the infallibility of Shakspeare), he condescends to indite a certain swelling, rumbling bombast, especially when he is speaking through the mouth of kings; but even his bombast comes rolling out with an ease and a gusto, a pomp and a prodigality, which are quite delightful! Shakspeare's nonsense is like no other body's nonsense. It is always the nonsense of a great genius. A dignitary of the Church of England went once to hear Robert Hall. After listening with delight to that celebrated preacher, he called at his house. He found him lying on the floor, with his children performing somersets over him. He lifted up his hands in wonder, and exclaimed, "Is that the great Robert Hall?"—"Oh," replied Hall, "I have all my nonsense out of the pulpit, you have all yours in it." So Shakspeare, after having done a giant's work, could take a giant's recreation; and were he returning to earth, would nearly laugh himself dead again, at the portentous attempts of some of his critics to prove his non-

sense sense, his blemishes beauties, and his worst puns fine wit!

The subtlety of Shakspeare is one of his most wonderful qualities. Coleridge used to say, that he was more of a philosopher than a poet. His penetration into motives, his discernment of the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart, his discrimination of the delicate shades of character, the manner in which he makes little traits tell large tales, the complete grasp he has of all his characters, whom he lifts up and down like counters, the innumerable paths by which he reaches similar results, the broad, comprehensive maxims on life, manners, and morals, which he has scattered in such profusion over his writings, the fact, that he never repeats a thought, figure, or allusion, the wonderful art he has of identifying himself with all varieties of humanity—all proclaim the inexhaustible and infinite subtlety of his genius, and, when taken in connection with its power and loftiness, render him the prodigy of poets and of men. I once, when a student, projected a series of essays, entitled "Sermons on Shakspeare," taking for my text some of those profound and far-reaching sentences which abound in him, where you have the fine gold, which is the staple of his works, collected in thick little knots or nuggets. It was this quality in him which made a French author say, that, were she condemned to select three volumes for her whole library, the three would be, Bacon's Essays, the Bible, and Shakspeare. You can never open a page of his dramas without being startled at the multitude of sentences which have been, and are perpetually being, quoted. The proverbs of Shakspeare, were they selected, would be only inferior to the proverbs of Solomon.

When I name purity as another quality of this poet, I may be thought paradoxical. And yet, when I remember his period, his circumstances, the polluted atmosphere which he breathed; when I compare his writings with those of contemporary dramatists; when I weigh him in the scales with many of our modern authors; and when I remember that his

writings never seek to corrupt the imagination, to shake the principles, or to influence the passions of men, I marvel how thoroughly his genius has saved him harmless, amid formidable difficulties, and say, that Marina, in his own "Pericles," did not come forth more triumphantly scaithless, than does her poet. Let those who prate of Shakspeare's impurity first of all read him candidly; secondly, read, *if they can*, Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher; and, thirdly, if they have Bowdler's contemptible "Family Shakspeare," fling it into the fire, and take back the un mutilated copy to their book-shelves and their bosoms. The moonlight is not contaminated by shining on a dunghill, and neither is the genius of Shakspeare by touching transiently, on its way to higher regions, upon low, loathsome, or uncertain themes. His language is sometimes coarse, being that of his age; his spirit, belonging to no age (would I could say the same of Burns, Byron, Moore, and Eugene Sue), is always clean, healthy, and beautiful.

His imagination and fancy are nearly equal, and, like two currents of air, are constantly interpenetrating. They seem twins—the one male, the other female. Not only do both stand ever ready to minister to the subtlest and deepest motions of his intellect, and all the exigencies of his plots (like spray, which decorates the river, when running in the shade; as well as when shining in the sunlight), but he has, besides, committed himself to several distinct trials of the strength of both. The caldron in "Macbeth" stands up an unparalleled collection of dark and powerful images, all shining as if shown in hell-fire, and accompanied by a dancing, mirthful measure, which adds unspeakably to their horror. It is as though a sentence of death were given forth in doggerel. And, for light and fanciful figures, we may take either Titania's speech to the Fairies, or the far-famed description of Queen Mab by Mercutio. In these passages, artistic aim is for a season abandoned. A single faculty, like a horse from a chariot stud, breaks loose, and revels and riots in the fury of its power.

Shakspeare's wit and humour are bound together in general by the amiable band of good-nature. What a contrast to Swift! He loathes; Shakspeare, at the worst, hates. His is the slaving and ferocious ire of a maniac; Shakspeare's, that of a man. Swift broods like their shadow over the festering sores and the moral ulcers of humanity; Shakspeare touches them with a ray of poetry, which beautifies, if it cannot heal. "Gulliver" is the journal of a fiend; "Timon" is the magnificent outbreak of an injured angel. His wit, how fertile, quick, forgetive! Congreve and Sheridan are poor and forced in the comparison. How long they used to sit hatching some clever conceit; and what a cackling they made when it had chipped the shell! Shakspeare threw forth a Mercutio or a Falstaff at once, each embodying in himself a world of laughter, and there an end. His humour, how broad, rich, subtle, powerful, and full of genius and geniality, it is! Why, Bardolph's red nose eclipses all the humorous characters that have succeeded on the stage. Ancient Pistol himself shoots down the whole of the Farquhars, Wycherleys, Sheridans, Goldsmiths, and Colmans, put together. Dogberry is the prince of Donkeys, past, present, and to come. When shall we ever have such another tinker as Christopher Sly! Sir Andrew Aguecheek! the very name makes you TREMBLE with laughter. And like a vast sirloin of English roast beef, rich and dripping, lies along the mighty Falstaff, with humour oozing out of every corner and cranny of his vast corporation.

Byron describes man as a pendulum, between a smile and tear. Shakspeare, the representative of humanity, must weep as well as laugh, and his tears, characteristically, must be large and copious. What variety, as well as force, in his pathetic figures! Here pines in the centre of the forest the melancholy Jacques, musing tenderly upon the sad pageant of human life, finding sermons in stones, although not "good in everything," now weeping beside a weeping deer, and now bursting out into elfish

laughter at the "fool" he found in the forest. Here walks and talks, in her guilty and desperate sleep, the Fiend Queen of Scotland, lighted on her way by the fire that never shall be quenched, which is already kindled around her, seeking in vain to sweeten her "little" hand, on which there is a spot with which eternity must deal, and yet moving you to weep for her as you tremble. Here turns away from men for ever the haughty Timon, seeking his low grave beside, and his only mourner in, the everlasting brine of the sea. Here the noble Othello, mad with imaginary wrongs, bends over the bed of Desdemona, and kisses ere he kills the purest and best of women. Here Juliet awakes too late from her fatal sleep, and finds a dead lover where she had hoped to find a living husband. Here poor Ophelia, garlanded with flowers, sinks into her pool of death—a pool which might again and again have been replenished from the tears which her story has started. And here, once King of England, but now king of the miserable in every clime—once wise in everything but love, now sublime in madness—once wearing a royal coronet, now crowned with the howling blackness of heaven above his grey dishevelled locks—once clad in purple, now wreathing around him fantastic wreaths of flowers—it is Lear who cries aloud—

"Ye heavens!
If ye do love old men, if your sweet sway
Hallow obedience, if *yourselves are old*,
Make it your cause—avenge me of my daughters."

That Shakspeare is the greatest genius the world ever saw, is acknowledged now by all sane men; for even France has, at last, after many a reluctant struggle, fallen into the procession of his admirers. But that Shakspeare also is out of all sight and measure the finest artist that ever constructed a poem or drama, is a less general, and yet a growing belief. By no mechanical rules, indeed, can his works be squared. But tried, as all great works should be, by principles of their own—principles which afterwards control and

create their true criticism (for it is the office of the critic to find out and expound the elements which mingled in the original inspiration—not to test them by a preconceived and arbitrary standard), and when, especially, you remember the object contemplated by the poet, that of mirroring the motley life of man, his works appear as wonderful in execution as in conception. Their very faults are needed to prove them human, otherwise their excellences would have classed them with the divine.

It is amusing to read the criticism which the eighteenth century passed upon Shakspeare. They did not, in fact, know very well what to make of him. They walked and talked "about him, and about him." I am reminded of the astonishment felt by the inhabitants of Lilliput at the discovery of Gulliver, the "Man Mountain." One critic mounted on a ladder to get a nearer view of the phenomenon. Another peered at him through a telescope. A third insisted on strapping him down by the ligatures of art. A fourth measured his size geometrically. But all agreed, that, although much larger, he was much coarser and uglier than themselves; and expressed keen regret that so much strength was not united with more symmetry. He seemed to them a monster, not a man. Voltaire, with the dauntless effrontery of a monkey, called him an enormous dunghill, with a few pearls scattered upon it—unconsciously thereby re-enacting the part of Dogberry, and degrading from the monkey into the ass.

In our day all this is changed. Shakspeare no more seems a large lucky barbarian, with wondrous powers growing wild and straggling, but a wise man, wisely managing the most magnificent gifts. His art—whether you regard it as moulding his individual periods, or as regulating his plays—seems quite as wonderful as his genius. Men criticise now even the successful battles of Napoleon, and seek very learnedly to show that he ought not to have gained them, and that by all the rules of war it was very ridiculous in him to gain them! But Shakspeare's great

victories can stand every test, and are seen not only to be triumphs of overwhelming genius, but of consummate skill.

Ere glancing at his plays individually, I would, first of all, try to divide them under various classes. The division which occurs to me as the best, is that of his metaphysical, his imaginative, his meditative, his passionate, his historical, and his comic dramas. His metaphysical plays are, properly speaking, only two—"Macbeth" and "King Lear." I call them metaphysical, not in the common sense, but in Shakspere's own sense of the word. Lady Macbeth says—

"Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear:
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and *metaphysical* aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal."

Metaphysics means here an agency beyond nature, and at the same time evil. Now, in "Macbeth," it is this metaphysical power which, through the witches, controls like destiny the whole progress of the play. In "Lear," not only does destiny brood over the whole, but the hell-dog of madness—which in Shakspere is metaphysical power—is let loose. In some other plays, it is true, he introduces superhuman agents, but in these two alone all the springs seem moved by a dark unearthly power. By his imaginative plays, I mean those where his principal object is to indulge that one stupendous faculty of his. Such are the "Tempest" and the "Midsummer Night's Dream." These are selections from his dream-book. By his meditative plays, I mean those in which incident, passion, and poetry are made subservient to the workings of subtle and restless reflection. Such are "Hamlet," "Timon," and "Measure for Measure." His passionate plays—for example, "Othello" and "Romeo and Juliet"—are designed to paint, whether in simple or compound form, whether stationary, progressive, or interchanging, the passions of humanity. His historical and comic plays explain themselves. All his plays, indeed, have more or less of all those qualities, "floating,

mingling, interweaving." But I have thus arranged them according to the master element and purpose of each.

Let me select one of the different classes for rapid analysis. And I feel myself, first of all, attracted toward the wierd and haggard tragedy of "Macbeth." And, first, in this play we must notice again its *metaphysical* character. A nightmare from hell presses down all the story and all the characters. From the commencement of the race to its close, there is a fiend—the fiend sitting behind the rider, and at every turn of the dark descending way you hear his suppressed or his resounding laughter. All is out of nature. The ground reels below you. The play is a caldron, mixed of such ingredients as the Wierd Sisters, a blasted heath, an air-drawn dagger, the blood-boltered ghost of a murdered man rising to sup with his murderer, lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death, horses running wild and eating each other, a desperate king asking counsel at the pit of Acheron, an armed head, a bloody child, a child crowned and with a tree in his hand, and eight kings rising from the abyss to answer his questions, a moving forest, a sleep-walking and suicide queen—such are some of the ingredients which a cloudy hand seems to shed into the broth, till it bubbles over with terror and blood. It is not a tragedy, but a collection of tragedies—the death of Duncan being one, that of Banquo another, that of Macduff's family another, that of Lady Macbeth another, and that of Macbeth himself a fifth. And yet the master has so managed them, by varying their character and circumstances, and relieving them by touches of imagination, that there is no repletion—we "sup," but not "full," of horrors. By his so potent art, he brings it about, that his supernatural and human persons never jostle. You never wonder at finding them on the stage together; they meet without a start, they part without a shiver; they obey one power, and you feel, that not only does one touch of nature make the "whole world

kin," but that it can link the universe in one brotherhood. It is the humanity which bursts out of every corner and crevice of this drama, like grass and wild flowers from a ruin, that reconciles you to its otherwise intolerable desolation.

This crowding in and heaping up distinguish the style, sentiment, imagery, and characters, as well as the incidents of "Macbeth." It is a short play, but the style is uniformly massive—the sentiment and imagery are rich to exuberance—the characters stand out, mild or terrible wholes, distinct from each other as statues, even when dancing their wild dance together, to the music of Shakspeare's magical genius. Banquo, Duncan, Macduff, and Malcolm, have all this distinct colossal character. But the most interesting persons in the drama are the Witches, Macbeth, and his dark Lady! What unique creations the Witches are! Borderers between earth and hell, they have most of the latter. Their faces are faded, and their raiment withered, in its fires. Their age seems supernatural; their ugliness, too, is not of the earth. A wild mirth mingles with their malice; they have a certain strange sympathy with their victims; they *fancy* them, and toy with Macbeth while destroying him, as a cat with a mouse. They do not ride on broomsticks, nor even on winds; their motions have a dreamlike rapidity and ease. They are connected, too, with a mythology of Shakspeare's own making, perfectly new and complete. They come and go, and you are left in total uncertainty as to their nature, origin, and history, and must merely say, "the air hath bubbles as the water hath: and these are of them." Altogether, they are the most singular daughters of Shakspeare; and you wonder what Desdemona, Cordelia, and Imogen would have thought of their Wierd Sisters.

Next comes the gloomy tyrant of Scotland. I figure him as a tall, strong, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-browed mountaineer, possessing originally a strong, if not a noble nature. Ambition is dropped like hag-seed by the fiends into

his bosom, and in the progress of its growth makes him first a murderer, and ultimately a desperate madman. Not natively cruel, he at last, from the necessities of his career, must dine, breakfast, and sup on blood. Yet there is something to me exceedingly pensive as well as sublime in all the actions and utterances of Macbeth's despair. It is a powerful nature at bay, and his language, in its fierce sweep, its lurid magnificence, its lofty yet melancholy tone, its wild moralising, reminds us of that which Milton puts into the mouth of the Prince of Darkness. Hear the celebrated lines:—

"Wherefore was that cry?

Sey. The queen, my lord, is dead.

Mac. She should have died hereafter;
There would have been time for such a word.—
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief
candle!

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

How terribly has despair concentrated and sharpened the intellect which can, in the crisis of its fate, thus moralise! I have sometimes compared Macbeth to Saul the unhappy King of Israel. Like him, he has risen from a lower station; like him, he has cemented his tottering throne by blood; like him, he is possessed by an evil spirit; like him, at last he becomes desperate. Macbeth hies to consult the Wierd Sisters; Saul—the Philistines being upon him—David at a distance—Samuel dead—God refusing to answer him by Urim, or prophets, or dreams—goes in his extremity and knocks at the door of Hell.

About Lady Macbeth there has been much needless critical discussion. Some have painted her in colours supernaturally dark and deformed, another and more hideous Hecate. Others have, in defending, gone so far as to make her almost amiable; who, I suppose, kissed

as she killed the sleeping grooms. I can coincide with neither of those notions—if, indeed, the latter have formed itself into a proper and solid notion. I look upon Lady Macbeth as a female shape of her husband—his shadow in the other sex—a specimen of the different effects which the same passion produces upon different sexes. The better the sex, the worse are the evil consequences, *corruptio optima pessima*. Even as a female infidel, or a female debauchee, is incomparably worse than a male in similar predicaments; so with a female murderer—one drained of all the feelings of humanity by the prevalence of a bad ambition. Foster speaks of Lady Macbeth's pure demoniac firmness—meaning to intimate that she was originally worse than her husband, but, in reality, well describing the more total and terrible induration which vice or cruelty produces in a female bosom. It makes man a butcher, and woman a fiend. These very terms, indeed, are applied through Malcolm to the pair:—

"This dead butcher, and his fiend-like queen"

—words which, though uttered through the voice of an enemy, seem intended to convey Shakspeare's own notion of their ultimate characters: only Macbeth must be admitted to have become an *inspired* butcher ere the close!

And how thoroughly in keeping their different dooms! Macbeth, having sinned as a man, dies like a man, in broad battle, with harness on his back, yielding rather to destiny than to the foe. His lady, having offended against the nobler code, and the higher nature of woman, has a different fate. After long internal anguish, expressed not to the full, even by her awful sleep, she perishes by her own hand. Woman, inferior it may be to man in intellect, is so far superior in moral qualities, that when these are violated, the pillars of humanity shake, and destruction, in one or other of its forms, must avenge the outrage committed against the very highest feelings of human nature.

From his imaginative plays I select

"The Tempest." I said before, that in poetry there was no absolute origination. If anything could induce me to recall this opinion, it were the recollection of this marvellous play. It rises before us as the New World to the eye of Columbus, fresh, peopled with strange forms, glittering with dew, and radiant in sunshine. As in "Macbeth," all is strange, but, unlike it, all is glad and genial. Its magic is mild and harmless. The lightnings of this tempest affright, but they do not burn. The "Isle" is full of noises, but they are most of them soothing and musical:—

"Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight
and hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments

Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes

voices,
That, if I waked after long sleep,

Will make me sleep again."

Here all the stern laws both of nature and of the world are repealed. The very villains of the play are treated with lenity—exposed—countermined—but not punished. And what beauty shines in this lonely place from the face of Miranda, the fairest, simplest, noblest female ever made by genius. And what aerial life is given to the scene, by the presence of Ariel, that gay creature of the elements, light as the down of the thistle, yet powerful as the thunderbolt, so "*delicate*" in the discharge of his mighty tasks, possessed at once of omnipotence and of *tact*, and whose songs have in them a snatch of the sphere music. Hear him, in the prospect of liberty, singing—

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I;

In a cowslip's bell I lie:

There I couch where owls do cry,

On the bat's back I do fly,

After summer, merrily:

Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,

Under the blossom that hangs from the bough."

And what a savage seal-skin ornament to the whole is the redoubted Caliban—the misshapen Mooncalf—rude, revengeful, ignorant, lustful, and who yet caught in this enchanted circle, and surrounded by the influences of this magic isle, when

sober speaks, and when drunk belches out the finest imagination and poetry.

Surely Shakspeare, when he wrote "The Tempest," must have been in the gladdest of all his moods. I fancy him writing it on the first week of a beautiful spring, when nature leaps at once out of the icy grasp of winter into summer's full flush and glory, and when every heart leaps in unison, and finds a new joy and life, like heaven suddenly infused into it, and life, love, beauty, and joy, seem for a season to compose all the categories of being.

"Hamlet" is Shakspeare's grand poetical puzzle, confessedly the most intellectual of all his dramas, and expresses most fully, although by no means most clearly, the results of his deep, subtle, and long-continued musings upon man, and all the strange phenomena by which, in this little life of his, he is surrounded.

Coleridge once remarked, that Shakspeare never seems to have come to his full height, else he had not been a man, but a monster. Had he written, we may add, ten plays equal to "Hamlet," this monstrous growth had been complete. Its wisdom, so deep and varied—its calm mastery—its profusion of incidents and characters—the skill with which the most contradictory elements, from a king to a gravedigger, are harmonised—the philosophic self-possession, united to the burning passion and the imaginative interest—the combination of breadth and length, of height and depth—the mere size of the canvas chosen—the mystic uncertainty of the whole co-existing with singular clearness and finish in most of the parts—the rapidity of the transitions—the unflagging spirit of the dialogue, and the energy of the soliloquies—all go to constitute it a unique amid a world of uniques, the most wonderful of wonders, the most Shaksperian of Shakspeare's works. Shakspeare, in "Hamlet," seems *growing* into that somewhat greater than himself, for which at present we want a name, and was arrested, we might almost think, while becoming the intermediate something between man and a superior order of intelligences.

It is the point of view maintained in

"Hamlet" which gives it its peculiar power as a meditative play. Hamlet is a man loosened in a great measure from earth, although not utterly exasperated against it. He sees it not at the point of the misanthrope, nor altogether at that of the maniac, but at that of one who is half-way toward *both* these characters. His sadness casts a moonlight of contemplation around all things, which, as it shines, now twists them into odd and mirthful attitudes, invests them now with shadowy horror, and now with pleasing gloom. Man and woman have both ceased to delight him, but have not ceased to be objects of eager interest, curiosity, and speculation. Driven by circumstances and temperament toward an insulated position, he pauses, in his full retreat from mankind, to record his impressions of them. Madame Roland, on her way to the scaffold, wished she had been able to record the strange thoughts which were rising in her mind. So Hamlet—a wounded deer seeking the forest of death, separated from men for ever—*has*, in immortal soliloquies, in pungent lines, in wild and whirling words, or in wilder laughter, uttered the strange ideas which he felt flocking around his mind. Profound as wisdom itself are many of those thoughts, and expressed in sentences of the most compact significance.

But this characteristic extends to the whole play. Hamlet has infected all the subordinate characters with his own wisdom. Old Polonius talks at times like another Dr Johnson; Ophelia is far too wise for one so young; the king himself hiccups aphorisms; and the ghost, while he says, "brief must I be, I smell the hour of dawn," makes up for the brevity by the pith of his speeches. Indeed, had "Hamlet" appeared in this century, we should have said, that it was constructed on the principle of bringing in all the fine thoughts which had been accumulating for years on the pages of its author's note-book. But such a practice was, in Shakspeare's day, unknown; and, in a writer of his rich and spontaneous power, is unlikely, if not impossible.

In "Hamlet," strong distemperature

of mind ministers the principal part of the interest. It is so, too, with his "Winter's Tale," his "Othello," his "Timon of Athens," his "King Lear," and his "Macbeth." These are dreams of Shakspeare's darker moods, for the smile of the "gentle Willy" disguised often wild tumults of thought and feeling, and resembled that red morning sunshine which introduces long days of tempest. There was a vein in Shakspeare's heart running in a deep and secret channel seldom disclosed, but which found now and then a fearful vent in his impersonations of the jealous lover, the maniac, the misanthrope, the murderous king, or the wild, changeful, witty, exasperated, and more than half-maddened prince. In these he is thoroughly in earnest; the large iron which has pierced a large soul is fully recognised; and, under a thin mask, you see the biggest of human hearts agitated to agony, and the most sweet-blooded of men doing well to be angry even unto death. It is terribly sublime to stand by the shore of an angry Shakspeare, and to see him, like the troubled sea, casting out a furious, yet rainbow-tinted spray, against the hollowness and the abuses of human society, and making sport, for a season, of man himself! Thus Timon seems to fling his platters of hot water *past* his flatterers upon humanity at large; thus Lear shrieks up questions to the heavens, which make the gloomy curtains of night to shiver; thus Macbeth, when not hewing at his enemies, is cutting, with a like desperate hand, at the problems of human life and destiny; and thus Hamlet, while dancing on his wild erratic way to his uncle's death, tramples on many an ancient saw, and makes many a popular error to tremble below his uncontrollable feet.

This did not, as some might imagine, arise from the necessity of fully impersonating certain eccentric characters; for, first, why did he create or select such characters at all? and, secondly, could he have presented them with such effect without profound sympathy for them? Shakspeare was not a mere mimic or mocking-bird: he spoke out of the abundance of a universal heart, he reproduced him-

self in many of his characters, and his frequent choice and sympathetic treatment of dark and morbid subjects, seem conclusively to show that there was a fever somewhere in his own system, although it has often been identified, and that, on the whole, justly, with all that is genial and gentle. It was, indeed, *a priori* impossible that a being who formed the microcosm and mirror of humanity should not reflect its shadows as well as its lights; and that, as the representative of man, he should not pass through man's hour of darkness.

There is no play in all Shakspeare's works, if we, perhaps, except "Timon" and "Lear," where the interest and power are so inextricably interwoven with the main character as in "Hamlet." *He* is the play. Compared to him, the other characters seem shadows as unsubstantial as his father's ghost. That ghost himself is hardly so interesting as his son. Like shadows swaying to the motions of their substances, do the various characters obey Hamlet's changeful whims, yield to his tempestuous rage, and echo his wild wisdom. Never was the overbearing influence of one driven on the wind of destiny, over idle and commonplace personages, more powerfully displayed. Truly, the slightest whisper of real despair is thunder, its merest touch is iron, its breath an irresistible tempest! It will bespeak a visitor from the other world, "although all hell should yawn;" it will make "a ghost" of any one who dares to stand in its fierce way.

Many critics, while seeking to unravel the mystery of Hamlet's character, have omitted to notice what is the main moral and purpose of the play—that is, unquestionably, to show the ramified wretchedness springing from crime. This it is which is the root of all the mischief and calamity in the play. This disturbs the grave, embroils the state, infuriates and half deranges the great soul of Hamlet, and is avenged by the successive deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Hamlet, the king, the queen, and Laertes. *This* object of the poet is thoroughly gained. Nemesis is left sitting upon heaps of carcases,

and surveying with an iron smile the manifold and mingling streams of blood, which are all traceable to the one murder in the garden. And the moral is—crime never speaks without being answered by echo upon echo, and stone after stone, from the rocks of eternal justice; and, in the ruin which takes place, the innocent are often as deeply involved as the guilty.

Shakspeare, no doubt, puts into the mouths of his characters words which might seem to accuse Providence. Hamlet, in one of his last speeches, calls it a "harsh world." And Horatio's language, when, in summing up the whole eventful history, he speaks of

"Cruel, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Purposes mistook,"

is hardly that of profound faith. But both are speaking from partial and one-sided points of view; whereas the spirit of the whole play, and many of the words, go to teach us that in everything there is a purpose, that Providence "commends the poisoned chalice" to the lips of those who have mingled it, and that the inequalities and gaps which do exist in the administration of human affairs are but the open mouths of a general cry for a scene of more perfect retribution in another world.

But two deductions from the catastrophe of Hamlet seem possible: the one, that this world is a mere atheistic hubbub, the scene of innumerable wrongs—wrong, too, mixing and intertwining for evermore, and which are never to be redressed; or that there must be a future state. We advise any one who is doubtful as to which of these conclusions Shakspeare wished us to draw, first to ponder the impression left on his own mind as he rises from the perusal of the play—for that, let him depend on it, is the impression the poet meant to leave; and then to read carefully Hamlet's several soliloquies, and the soliloquy of the miserable king. In these, and throughout the play, the power of conscience, the supremacy of the "canons of the Eternal," the existence of a future world, and the influence of

prayer with God, are recognised in language so decided, and in a manner so sincere, that we are led, and many may be driven, to the conviction, that this most profound of dramas—this broadest of all panoramic views of human nature, and life, and destiny—a view caught on the shuddering brink and from the fearful angle of all but madness—is not a libel upon the Divine Author like the "Cenci," nor an uncertain and half-shuddering pæan like the "Faust," but that, in spirit, tone, and language, it doth

"Assert Eternal Providence,
And vindicate the ways of God to man."

And if "Hamlet" explains not, and if it even deepens in some measure, the mystery of human guilt, it at the same time proclaims, trumpet-tongued, the clear certainty of present punishment, and the strong probability of future retribution.

What Shakspeare's theological creed was, we do not profess to know. An author recently maintains that he was an ideal pantheist, and quotes in proof of it the words of Prospero:—

"Be cheerful, sir;
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a wreck behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

But these words of Prospero are merely a paraphrase of the solemn declaration of Scripture—"Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation?" And he who speaks of "sleep" with Prospero, speaks also of "dreams" with Hamlet:—

"In that sleep of death what dreams may rise
Puzzles the will."

Whatever Shakspeare's notion of religious matters, however, might be, it is interesting to know that his theory of morals, as it may be gathered from his

greater and more serious plays, is essentially sound. This may not appear to some a matter of much consequence; but, as it is pleasing now and then to turn from commonplace clocks, and to learn the hour from a sun-dial, so we like sometimes to look away from systems of moral philosophy, to the living and sunlit tables of this great master of human nature. To others, again, his deliverances on such subjects may possibly seem oracular, as from a new Dodona seated among the oaks of the Avon.

The intellectual and poetical qualities of Shakspeare find in "Hamlet" ample scope for display. It is the longest of his dramas, and, at the same time, the richest. The sun of semi-madness, vertical above, has produced a wild and tropical luxuriance of imagery. Every sentence is a star. No play of his contains at once so much sense and so much nonsense, so much bombastic verse and so much dense and pointed prose, so much extravagant license of fancy and so much profound insight. And so broad is the canvas, that there is ample room in it for all those extremes: they never interfere or jostle; the profoundest practical philosophy and the wildest raving here meet together: "vice and a radiant angel" embrace each other; and Billingsgate like that of a drab, and eloquence and apprehension like that of a god, are united, if not reconciled. It is this exceeding comprehension of view which has rendered "Hamlet" the true "Psalm of Life," exhibiting it, not partially, or by selection, or in colours, but calotyping it calmly and sternly as a mystic, fantastical, but real *whole*.

Across this broad picture, Shakspeare has caused shoot one ray from the unseen world. We refer, of course, to the ghost. There is nothing which shows more the delicate and masterly handling of a creator (who loves, understands, and treats tenderly his own children, not, like a plagiarist and stepfather, ignorantly and spitefully uses them) than the management of this awful visiter. The words "horribly beautiful" are applicable to him, and to him alone. There is not one vulgar element about him. He is—shall we

say?—a perfect gentleman, and has a "courteous action." One desire, that of revenge, burns in his bosom, but it burns rather against the crime than the criminal. He leaves his wife "to Heaven, and to the thorns" in her own breast. In his last appearance, while the queen is affrighted at Hamlet's ecstasy, he tells him, in compassion, to "step between her and her fighting soul." And how admirably has Shakspeare caught the true shape, form, and figure of a spiritual being, such as we at present conceive of it! He is not a vague vapour: he is "clad in complete steel;" his beard is visible, "a sable silvered;" his "beaver is up;" his countenance is "very pale," but "more in sorrow than in anger;" he has come from literal "fire," and his thoughts, feelings, and language, resemble those of one still in the flesh. And yet, around the steel, the beaver, and the beard, there hangs a haze of spiritual mystery and terror, which lends and receives effect from the materialism of the apparition. He "vanishes at the crowing of the cock." He passes, like heat, through the solid ground. Shakspeare has thus avoided the extremes of representing a ghost in too shadowy or too gross a light—of spinning this grisly thread too thickly or too thin—to homespun or to gossamer. His shadow is something of a substance, and his substance is something of a shade.

And such a nondescript form, too, appears at first Hamlet himself—a ghost among men, the phantom son of a phantom sire, neither a hero nor a coward, neither right flesh and blood nor a mere abstraction, armed, like Satan, "with what *seemed* both sword and shield," and yet, like him, shrinking away, at times, from the contest. He stands between the living and the dead, and seems to disdain all critical classification. He may be compared to one of those shifting shapes, met with in water, mist, or cloud, which appears, at one angle and from one distance, a palace; at another, a temple; at a third, a mishapen monster; and at a fourth, a man. Thus, Hamlet, at one time, and to one observer, seems the bravest and strongest of men, anon, the

weakest and most cowardly: at one time, devout and rational, at another, a fierce and profane babbler: now an ardent lover, and now a heartless insulter of the woman he had professed to love: now prompt in action to rashness, and now slow to indolence and fatuity: now a counterfeit of madness, and now really insane: now the most cunning, and now the most careless of men: now a rogue, now a fool, now a wise man, and now a heterogeneous compound of all three. Twenty theories have been propounded of him; all have been plausibly based on particular points in his character; and yet no theory hitherto is entirely, or even approximately, complete: each is serviceable chiefly in blowing out the one immediately before itself: and still Hamlet seems, as he stands, shrouded and shifting to every breath, to say to his critics, as he said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would *pluck* out the *heart* of my mystery; you would *sound* me from the lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is *much music*, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet *cannot you make it speak*."

We happen at present to have beside us only two of those twenty "soundings," and beg leave to say something of them, ere propounding our own view. The first is that of Dr Johnson. It comes, as Hamlet would say, "trippingly off the tongue," and is written with more than his usual careless rotundity and lazy elaboration of style. It commences by praising, very properly, the "variety" of the play. But what does the doctor mean by the "merriment" it excites? Surely it is "very tragical mirth." Even in the laughter of this drama its heart is sad. Hamlet and a gravedigger are the two jesters! And while the wit of the one is wild, reckless, turbulent, like the glee of the damned, that of the other has a death-rattle in its throat, and, returned to us on the echoes of the grave, produces an unspeakably dreary effect. Dr Johnson adds, "the pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth." This we question. At least us it has always

impressed with a feeling of melancholy. Indeed, the lighter parts of the play, consisting more of wit than of humour, excite rather wonder at the sharp turns, lively sallies, and fierce retorts of a stung spirit, than any broad and genial laughter. He says, that "some scenes neither forward nor retard the action." This we may grant; but are not these in fine keeping with the "slow, reluctant" delay of the hero? Shakspeare must linger, in sympathy with Hamlet. Nay, this was sometimes, as we have seen, the manner of the poet. An inspired loiterer, he now and then leans over some beautiful stream, or pauses at some fine point of prospect, or strikes into some brief by-way of humour, or character, or pathos, even when his day's journey, and the day itself, are both drawing to a close. For why? He was a man, not a railway machine; and, besides, as his soul had its habitual dwelling in summer, *his* days were all long.

He says, that "Hamlet was an instrument rather than an agent," but suggests no reason why Shakspeare has made him so. He charges, finally, the play with "a lack of poetical justice and poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose. The revenge which he demands is not obtained but by the death of him who is required to take it; and the gratification which would arise from the destruction of a usurper and a murderer is abated by the death of Ophelia, the young and beautiful, the harmless and the pious." But, first, the apparition's object *was* gained—the ghost did not leave the grave in vain—the murderer was detected, and died; and, secondly, Shakspeare probably consulted something higher than our "gratification." He sought, probably, the broad moral purpose we have already expressed; and, if questioned as to poetical justice, might have replied in words similar to those of Scott—perhaps the noblest passage, in a moral point of view, in all that writer's works—"A character of a lofty stamp is degraded, rather than exalted, by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity. Such is not

the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit, and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our passions, or attainment of our wishes. In a word, if a virtuous and self-denied character is dismissed with temporal wealth, greatness, or rank, the reader will be apt to say, 'Verily, virtue has had its reward.' But a glance at the great picture of life will show that duty is seldom thus remunerated." And what is true of the apportionment of the gifts of Providence is true also of its evils. It were degrading to a lofty character, not only to enrich it with uniform good fortune, but to give it an unnatural insulation from the great and wide ruin which is produced by guilt.

We pass to Goethe's far more celebrated account of "Hamlet," of which the "Edinburgh Review" declares, that there is "nothing so good in all our own commentators—nothing at once so poetical, so feeling, and so just." After a beautiful picture of Hamlet's original character, and a paraphrase of his story, Goethe says, "to me it is clear that Shakspeare meant to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul *unfit* for the performance of it." And then follows the well-known and exquisitely-beautiful figure:—"An oak-tree is planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom: the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear, and must not cast away." This is very fine, but is it true? Does it open the lock of Hamlet's character? Does it account for all, or for the most, of the mysteries connected with it?

Now, we do not find any proofs that Hamlet was peculiarly weak of nerve; nay, we find many proofs to the contrary. Did he not front his father's spirit in arms? Did he not rebuke his mother, and pink old Polonius, mistaking him for his uncle? Did he not bravely confront Læertes, and at last stab the king? These

actions and others seem to prove him endowed with the "Nemean lion's nerve;" and, although he more than once charges himself with cowardice, yet this occurs always in passages where he seems to be beating about in search of causes for his conduct, and to be lashing himself, by imaginary arguments, into rage. Nor does Shakspeare wish to represent him as peculiarly delicate and tender. He seems rather an oak than a flower-jar, though it be an oak shaken by the wind. No namby-pamby sentimentalist had he ever been, but a brave, strong man, whose melancholy and exasperation bring forth, in tumultuous profusion, the excessive riches of a prematurely thoughtful and very powerful soul. His is manifestly no weakly elegant and graceful nature unhinged; but a strong, rarely-gifted, and bold spirit, in anguish, uncertainty, aberration, and despair. Though there were no other evidence, the vigour and tact discovered in the trick passed upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in sending them to be executed instead of himself, prove that he was an energetic and not a feeble character. So that, although Goethe has extracted "music" from this strange instrument, he has not "plucked out" the *heart* of its mystery.

Let us now come to state our own impressions, which we do not propound as dogmatically certain, but simply as highly probable.

First, then, we do not think that Shakspeare ever intended Hamlet for a thoroughly consistent and regular character, swayed always by intelligible motives, and adjusted, in his actions, either according to fixed principles or to steady currents of passion. He meant to show us a mind of great general powers and warm passions, liable to every species of whim and caprice, and at last, through the force of melancholy and mingling circumstances, partially unhinged—aware, however, of this, and with astuteness enough to turn the *real* aberration into a means for supplying evidence for the existence of the *assumed*. Such a nondescript being, hovering between the worlds of reality and insane dream, Shakspeare chose, that he might survey mankind from a new and

strange angle, and through a medium which should bring out more forcibly the mysterious contrasts of human life. Hamlet is a being all but loosened from humanity, whom we see bursting tie after tie which had bound him to his kind, and surveying them at last almost from an ideal altitude. He is a "chartered libertine," with method in his madness, and with madness in his method, and who, whether he rushes or pauses on his uncertain path—now with the rush of the cataract above, and now with the pause of the deep pool below—is sure to dash a strong and lawless light upon the subjects or the persons he encounters. He becomes thus a quaint and mighty mask, from behind which Shakspeare speaks out sentiments which he could not else have so freely disclosed; and—shall we say?—the great dramatist has used Hamlet as Turpin did Black Bess—he has drenched him with the wine of demi-derangement, and then accomplished his perilous ride.

Secondly, Hamlet's conduct is entirely what might have been expected from the construction of his mind, and the effect sad circumstances have produced upon him. He is "everything by turns, and nothing long." No deep passion of any kind can root itself in his mind, although a hundred passions pass and repass, and rage and subside within his soul. He well speaks of himself as consisting of divers "parts." His very convictions are not profound. He at first implicitly believes the word of the ghost as to his uncle's guilt, but afterwards his belief falters, and he has to be reassured by the matter of the play. The mask of total madness he snatches up, wears *con amore* for awhile, and then wearies of it, and drops it, and then resumes it again. This, too, explains his conduct to Ophelia. He loves her; but his love, or its expression, yields for a time to the paroxysm of the passions excited by the ghost; it returns, like a demon who had been dismissed, in sevenfold force, and he rushes into her apartment, and goes through antics, partly to sustain his assumed character of madness, but principally as the wild outcome of real love; his passion is again overlaid

by the whirling current of events, but breaks out at last, like a furnace, at her grave. So, too, with his desire for vengeance on his father's murderer. It has lighted, not as Goethe has it, on a feeble, but on a flighty nature; the oak is not in a tiny jar, it is planted in a broad field, but a field where there is not much "depth of earth," and where many other trees growing beside draw a portion of that depth away. It is not the want of nerve: he could kill the king, in a momentary impulse, as he killed Polonius, but he cannot form or pursue any strong and steady plan for his destruction; if that plan, at least, required time for its development. Other feelings, too, interfere with its accomplishment. There is at times in his mind a reluctance to the task, as a work of butchery—the butchery of an uncle and a stepfather. Regard for his mother's feelings, and the consequences to result on her, is no stranger to his soul, and serves to cool his ardour and to excuse his delay. The desire of vengeance never, in short, becomes the main and master passion of his mind, and this simply, because that powerful but morbid and jangled mind is incapable of a master passion, and of the execution of a fixed purpose. One consistency only is there in Hamlet's character, that of subtle and poetic intellect. This penetrates with its searching light every nook and corner of the play, follows him through all the windings of his course, unites in some measure the contradictory passions which roll and fluctuate around him, inspirits his language into eloquence, wit, and wisdom, and makes him the *facile princeps* of Shakspeare's fools—those illustrious personages who "never say a foolish thing, and never do a wise one." Such a "foremost fool of all this world," with brilliant powers, uncertain will, and "scattery" purposes and passions, is Hamlet the Dane, as, at least, he appears to us after much and careful pondering of his character. Throw into the crucible strong intellect, vivid fancy, irregular will, fluctuating courage, impulsive and inconstant feelings, an excitable heart, a melancholy temperament, and add to these the da-

maging, weakening, yet infuriating influences of a father's murder, a mother's marriage, the visit of a ghost, an unsettled passion for Ophelia, the meddling interference of a weak father-in-law, the spectacle of a disturbed and degraded country, the feeling of his own incapacity for fixed resolve or permanent energy of passion, and from this wierd mixture there will come out a Hamlet, in all his strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, energetic commencements, and lame and impotent conclusions, insane and aimless fury, and strong, sudden gleams of resolution and valour, vain and sounding bombast, and clear, terse, and inspired eloquence. What weakness he has does not lie so much in any one part of his mind, as in the want of proper management and grasp of his powers as a whole. Partially insane he is, but his insanity is the reverse of a monomania; it arises from the confusion and too rapid succession of moods and feelings, which he cannot consolidate into a whole, or press into one strong, narrow current, running on to his purpose

"As the Pontick sea
To the Propontick and the Hellespont."

Is it too much to call him a sublime and sententious, an earnest and eloquent fool?

Yet it is clear that Shakspeare had a peculiar and profound sympathy with Hamlet. He lingers beside him long. He lavishes all his wealth upon him. He seems to love to look out at mankind through the strange window of those wild eyes. Was this because Hamlet was (as is generally supposed) the child of his mature age, or was it from a certain fellow-feeling? Hamlet is what Shakspeare would have been, had he ever been thoroughly soured, and had that magnificent head of his ever begun to reel and totter. Had Shakspeare, like Swift, Johnson, Byron, and Scott, a fear of "dying a-top," and has he shot out that awful fear into his impersonation of the Prince of Denmark, and thus relieved and carried it off?

The general moral of the play has been stated above; but there are besides numberless minor morals, as well as separate beauties, scattered in golden sentences

throughout, which must be familiar to all. There is the picture of man, in his strange contrarieties of wormhood and godhood—his head of gold, and his feet of miry clay—compacted out of all contradictions, and who—even as the Andes include in their sweep, from the ocean below to the hoary head of Chimborazo above, all climates, seasons, and productions of earth—touches, as *he* ascends, all conditions of being, and runs parallel to all the gradations of the universe. Pascal, Herbert, Young, and Pope, have written in emulous and eloquent antithesis on the same theme; but they all pale before this one expression of Hamlet's (after a matchless enumeration of man's noble qualities)—"this *quintessence of dust*." Where in literature such an anti-climax; such a jerking down of proud pretensions; such two worlds of description and satire condensed into two words? This, and many other expressions here, and in other of Shakspeare's works, prove what an accusing spirit, what a myriad-armed and tongued misanthrope, he might have been! But a soured Shakspeare is a thought difficult to be entertained.

The two famous soliloquies, again, seem "God's canon against self-slaughter" versified. They have, we doubt not, deterred many a rash spirit from suicide. If they do not oppose it upon the highest ground, they do it on one generally intelligible and powerful. The prayer of the guilty king is worth a thousand dull homilies on the subject. It points to the everlasting distinction between a *sinful* and a *sinner's* prayer. The advice of Polonius to his son is full of practical wisdom; but, owing to the contrast with the frozen stupidity of the man from whom it comes, reminds us of a half-melted and streaming mass of ice. The irony and quaint moral which gild and glare on the skull in the graveyard, till it seems to glare and chatter in return, are in keeping with the wild story and wilder characters, but are not devoid of edifying instruction to those who can surpass the first shudder of disgust. And the character and fate of Ophelia convey, in the most plaintive manner, a still tenderer and more delicate lesson.

Surely Shakspeare was the greatest and most humane of all mere moralists. Seeing more clearly than mere man ever saw into the evils of human nature and the corruptions of society, into the natural weakness and the acquired vice of man, he can yet love, pity, forget his anger, and clothe him in the mellow light of his genius, like the sun, who, in certain days of peculiar balm and beauty, seems to shed his beams, like an amnesty, upon all beings. But we must not forget that Shakspeare is no pattern for us—that this very generosity of heart seems, we fear, to have blinded him to the *special* character and adaptations of the Christian scheme—and that we, as Christians, and not mere philanthropists, are bound, while pitying the guilty, to do indignant and incessant battle against that giant Something, or Someone rather, which slew our Saviour, and which has all but ruined our race.

I have dwelt so long on "Hamlet," that I must now hurry to a close.

With regard to Shakspeare's critics and commentators, I will not say, with Hazlitt, that "if you would see the greatness of human genius, read Shakspeare; if you would see the smallness of human learning, read his commentators." But I will say, that I have learned more of Shakspeare from Hazlitt, than from any other quarter, except from Shakspeare himself.

In preparing these cursory remarks upon Shakspeare, I have studiously avoided re-reading any works upon the subject. I may, however, recommend to those who wish to sail out farther upon this great

ocean, Johnson's "Preface to Shakspeare" (excellent so far as it goes), Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays," Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Literature," Mrs Jameson on Shakspeare's Female Characters, and an admirable series which appeared in "Blackwood," entitled "Shakspeare in Germany."

I close by claiming a high place for this poet among the benefactors of his kind. With august philanthropists, Howard or Wilberforce, we may not class him. Into that seventh heaven of invention, where Milton and Dante dwell, he came only sometimes, not for want of power, but because his sphere was a wider and larger one—he had business to do in the veins of the earth as well as in the azure depth of air. But if force of genius—sympathy with every form and every feeling of humanity—the heart of a man united to the imagination of a poet, and wielding the Briarean hands of a demigod—if the writing of thirty-two plays which are colouring to this hour the literature of the world—if the diffusion of harmless happiness in immeasurable quantity—if the stimulation of innumerable minds—if the promotion of the spirit of charity and of universal brotherhood—if these constitute for mortal man titles to the name of benefactor, and to that praise which ceases not with the sun, but expands into immortality, the name and the praise must support the throne which Shakspeare has established over the minds of the inhabitants of an earth which may be known in other parts of the universe as "Shakspeare's world."

JOHN MILTON.

PERHAPS some who were astonished at our venturing to write on Shakspeare, may be still more so at the subject now selected—John Milton. Can anything new, that is true—or true, that is new, be said on such a theme? Have not the ages been gazing upon this "mighty orb of song" as at the sun? and have

not almost all its gifted admirers uttered each his glowing panegyric, till now they seem to be ranged like planetary bodies round his central blaze? What more can be said or sung? Is it not impossible to add to, however easy to diminish, our sense of his greatness? Is not the ambition rash and presumptuous which

seeks to approach the subject anew? Surely the language of apology, at least, is the fit preface to such a deed of daring.

No apology, however, do we intend to make. We hold that every one who has been delighted, benefited, or elevated by a great author, may claim the privilege of gratitude, to tell the world that, and how, he has. We hold, too, that the proof of the true greatness of a man lies in this, that every new-comer, if in any measure qualified for the task, is sure to find in him some new proof that the praises of all time have not been wasted or exaggerated. Who that reads or thinks at all, has not frequent occasions to pass by the cairn which a thankful world has reared to Milton's memory? And who can, at one time or other, resist the impulse to cast on it another stone, however rough and small that stone may be? Such is all we at present propose.

Every man is in some degree the mirror of his times. A man's times stand over him, as the heavens above the earth, compelling an image from the dew-drop, as well as from the great deep. The difference is, that while the small man is a small, the great man is a broad and full, reflection of his day. But the effect of the times may be seen in the baby's bauble and cart, as well as in the style of the painter's pencil and the poet's song. The converse is equally true. A man's times are reflective of the man, as well as a man of the times. Every man acts on, as well as is acted on by, every other man. The cry of the child who falls in yonder gutter as really affects the progress of society as the roar of the French Revolution. There is a perpetual process going on of action and reaction, between each on the one side, and all on the other. The characteristic of the great man is, that his reaction on his age is more than equal to its action upon him. No man is wholly a creator, nor wholly a creature, of his age. The Milton or the Shakspeare is more the creator than he is the creature.

Some men pass through the atmosphere of their time as meteors through the air, or comets through the heavens—leaving as little impression, and hav-

ing with it a connection equally slight; while others interpenetrate it so entirely, that the age becomes almost identified with them. Milton was intensely the man of his time; and, although he shot far before it, it was simply because he more fully felt and understood what its tendencies really were; he spread his sails in its breath, as in a favourable gale, which propelled him far beyond the point where the impulse was at first given.

A glance at the times of Milton would require to be a profound and comprehensive one: for the times that bore such a product must have been extraordinary. One feature, perhaps the chief, in them was this: Milton's age was an age attempting, with sincere, strong, though baffled endeavour, to be earnest, holy, and heroic. The Church had, in the previous age, been partially and nominally reformed; but it had failed in accomplishing its own full deliverance, or the full deliverance of the world. It had shaken off the nightmare of Popery, but had settled itself down into a sleep, more composed, less disturbed, but as deadly. Is the Reformation, thought the high hearts which then gave forth their thunder throbs in England, to turn out a mere nullity? Has all that bloody seed of martyrdom been sown in vain? Whether is worse, after all, the incubus of superstition, or the sleep of death? We have got rid of the Pope, indeed, but not of the world, or the devil, or the flesh; we must, therefore, repair our repairs—amend our amendments—reform our Reformation—and try, in this way, to get religion to come down, as a practical living power, into the hearts and lives of Englishmen. We must see the dead blood of the martyrs turned into living trees of righteousness—we must have character as well as controversies—life, life at all hazards, we must have, even though it be through the destruction of ceremonies, the damage of surplices, the dismissal of bishops—ay, or the death of kings. Such was the spirit of that age. We speak of its real onward tendency—the direction of the main stream. We stay not to count

the numerous little obstinate opposing eddies that were taking chips and straws backwards; thus ran the master current of the brain, the heart, and the hand of that magnificent era.

Are we not standing near the brink of another period, in some points very similar to that of English Puritanism? Is not our age getting tired of names, words, pretensions; and anxious for things, deeds, realities? It cares nothing now for such terms as Christendom—Reformed Churches—Glorious Constitution of 1688. It wants a Christendom where the character of Christ—like that of Hamlet—is not omitted by special desire: it wants reformed churches, and a glorious constitution, that will do a little more to feed, clothe, and educate those who sit under its shadow, and have long talked of, without tasting, its blessed fruits. It wants, in short, those big, beautiful words—Liberty, Religion, Free Government, Church and State, taken down from our flags, transparencies, and triumphal arches, and introduced into our homes, hearths, and hearts. And, although we have now no Cromwell and no Milton, yet, thank God, we have thousands of gallant hearts, and gifted spirits, and eloquent tongues, who have vowed loud and deep, in all the languages of Europe, that falsehoods and deceptions, of all sorts and sizes, of all ages, statures, and complexions, shall come to a close.

To Milton's time we may apply the words of inspiration—"The children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth." The great purpose of the age was formed, begun, but left unfinished—nay, drowned in slavery and blood. How mortifying to a spirit such as his! It was as if Moses had been taken up to Pisgah, but had been struck dead before he saw the land of milk and honey. So Milton had laboured, and climbed to the steep summit, whence he expected a new world of liberty and truth to expand before him, but found instead a wilder chaos and a fouler hell than before. But dare we pity him, and need we pity ourselves? But for Milton's disappointment, and disgust with

the evil days and evil tongues on which he latterly fell, he would not have retired into the solitude of his own soul; and had he not so retired, the world would have wanted its greatest poem—the "Paradise Lost." That was the real fruit of the Puritanic contest—of all its tears, and all its blood; and let those who are still enjoying a result so rich, in gratitude declare "how that red rain did make the harvest grow." No life of Milton, worthy of the name, has hitherto been written. Fenton's sketch is an elegant trifle. Johnson's is, in parts, a heavy invective—in parts, a noble panegyric; but in nowise a satisfactory life. Sir Egerton Brydges has written rather an ardent apology for his memory, than a life. We propose to refresh ourselves and others, by simply jotting down a few particulars of the poet's career, without professing to give, on this head, anything new.

John Milton was born in Bread Street, London—a street lying in what is called, technically, the City, under the shadow of St Paul's—on the 9th of December, 1608. His father was a scrivener, and was distinguished for his classical attainments. John received his early education under a clergyman of the name of Young; was afterwards placed at St Paul's School, whence he was removed, in his seventeenth year, to Christ Church, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself for the facility and beauty of his Latin versification. We are not aware, although placed at such a mathematical university, that he ever excelled in geometry; it is uncertain whether he ever crossed the *Pons asinorum*, although it is certain that he was whipped for a juvenile contumacy, and that he never expresses any gratitude to his *Alma Mater*. Universities, in fact, have often proved rather stepmothers, than mothers, to men of genius, as the cases of Gibbon, Shelley, Coleridge, Pollok, and many others, demonstrate. And why? Because their own souls are to them universities; and they cannot fully attend to both, any more than they can be in two places at the same time. He origi-

mally intended to have entered the Church, but early formed a dislike to subscriptions and oaths, as requiring, what he terms, an "accommodating conscience"—a dislike which he retained to the last. He could not stoop his giant stature beneath the low lintel of a test. He was too religious to be the mere partisan of any sect. From college he carried nothing with him but a whole conscience and the ordinary degree of A.M., for he never afterwards received another.

His father, meanwhile, had retired from business to Horton, Buckinghamshire, where the young Milton spent five years in solitary study. Of these years little comparatively is known; but, to us, they seem among the most interesting of his life. Then the "dark foundations of his mind were laid;" then were stored up those profound stores of learning, which were commensurate with his genius, and on which that genius fed, free and unbounded, as a fire feeds on a mighty forest. There, probably, much time was spent in the contemplation of natural scenery, and in the exercises of devotion; and there he composed those exquisite minor poems, which alone would have made his name immortal—"L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," and "Lycidas." At the age of thirty, having obtained leave from his father to travel, he visited Paris, Florence, Rome, and Naples. His name had gone before him, and his progress was a triumph. Public dinners and pieces of plate did not abound in those days; but the nobility of the country entertained him at their mansions, and the literati wrote poems in his praise.

We may conceive with what delight he found his dreams of the Continent realised—with what kindling rapture his eye met the Alps, gazed on the golden plains of Italy, or perused the masterpieces of Italian art in the halls of Florence or the palaces of Rome. Milton in the Coliseum, or standing at midnight upon Mount Palatine, with the ruins of Rome dim-discovered around him—it were a subject for a painting or a poem. At this time a little incident

of romance is said to have occurred. In his youth he was extremely handsome, so much so, that he was called the lady of his college. When in Italy, he had lain down to repose during the heat of the day in the fields. A young lady of high rank was passing with her servant; she was greatly struck with the appearance of the slumberer, who seemed to her eye as one of the angels whom he afterwards described reposing in the vales of heaven. She wrote a few extempore lines in his praise with a pencil, laid them down at his side, and went on her way. When Milton awoke, he found the lines lying, but the fair writer gone. One account says that he spent some time in searching for her, but in vain. Another (on which Bulwer has founded a poem) relates that she, still stung by the recollection of his beauty, followed him to England, and was so mortified at finding him by this time married, that she died of a broken heart. Milton had intended to extend his tour to Sicily and Greece, but the state of affairs in England drew him home. "I deemed it dishonourable," he said, "to be lingering abroad, even for the improvement of my mind, while my fellow-citizens were contending for their liberty at home." There spoke the veritable man and hero, John Milton—one who measured everything by its relation, not to delight, but to duty; and felt himself "ever in his great Taskmaster's eye." The civil war had by this time broken out in flames which were not to be slaked for twenty years, and into which even a king's blood was to fall like oil. Milton, though an admirable fencer, and as brave as his own Michael, thought he might serve the popular cause better by the pen than by the sword. He calmly sat down, therefore, to write down royalty, prelacy, and every species of arbitrary power. At the same time, he opened a school for the education of the young. This has actually formed a count of indictment against him. Milton has been thought by some to have demeaned himself by teaching children the first elements of knowledge, although it be, in truth, one of the

noblest avocations—although the fact of the contempt in which it is held ought to be a count of indictment against an age foolish enough to entertain it—although it be an avocation rendered illustrious by other names besides that of Milton, the names of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Buchanan, Parr, Johnson, and Arnold—and although the day is coming when the titles of captain, or colonel, or knight-at-arms, yea, and those of king, kaiser, and emperor, will look mean and contemptible compared to that of a village schoolmaster who is worthy of his trade.

Schoolmaster as he was, and afterwards Latin secretary to Cromwell, Milton found time to do and to write much in the course of the eighteen or twenty years which elapsed between his return to England and the Restoration. He found time for writing several treatises on divorce, for publishing his celebrated tractate on education, and his still more celebrated discourse on the liberty of unlicensed printing, for collecting his minor poems in Latin and English, and for defending, in various treatises, the execution of Charles I. and the government of Cromwell, besides commencing an English History, an English Grammar, and a Latin Dictionary. Meanwhile, his first wife, who had born him three daughters, died in child-bed. Meanwhile, too, a disease of the eyes, contracted by intense study, began gradually to eclipse the most intellectual orbs then glowing upon earth. Milton has uttered more than one noble complaint over his completed blindness. We could conceive him to have penned an expostulation to the advancing shadow, equally sublime and equally vain, for it was God's pleasure that this great spirit should, like himself, dwell for a season in the thick darkness. And scarcely had the last glimmer of light been extinguished, than, as if the coming calamities had been stayed and spellbound hitherto by the calm look of the magician, in one torrent they came upon his head; but, although it was a Niagara that fell, it fell, like Niagara, upon, as well as from, a rock. In an evil hour, as it seemed at the time, at

least, for Britain, for Milton, for the progress of the human race, the restored Charles arrived. The consequences were disastrous to Milton. His name was proscribed, his books burned, himself obliged to abscond, and it was what some would call a miracle that this blinded Samson was not led forth to give his enemies sport, at the place of common execution, and that the most godlike head in the world did not roll off from the bloody block. But "man is immortal till his work be done." We speak of accidents and possibilities; but, in reality, and looking at the matter upon the true side of it, Milton could no more have perished then than he could a century before. His future works were as certain, and inevitable, and due at their day, as "summer and winter, as seed-time and harvest."

Even after the heat of persecution had abated, and his life was, by sufferance, secure—it was never more—the prospects of Milton were aught but cheering. He was poor, he was blind, he was solitary—his second wife dead; his daughters, it would appear, were not the most congenial of companions; his country was enslaved; the hopes of the Church and of the world seemed blasted;—one might have expected that disappointment, regret, and vexation would have completed their work. Probably his enemies expected so too. Probably they said, "We'll neglect him, and see if that does not break his heart—we'll bring down on his head the silence of a world, which was wont to ring with his name." They did not know their man. They knew not that here was one of the immortal coursers, who fed on no vulgar or earthly food. He "had meat to eat that the world knew not of."

It was the greatest crisis in the history of the individual man. Napoleon survived the loss of his empire; and men call him great, because he survived it. Sir Walter Scott not only survived the loss of his fortune, but he struggled manfully amid the sympathy of the civilised species to repair it. But Milton, amidst the loss of friends, fortune, fame, sight,

safety, domestic comfort, long-cherished hopes, not only survived, but stood firm as a god above the ruins of a world; and not only stood firm, but built, alone and unaided, to himself out of these ruins an everlasting monument. Whole centuries of every-day life seemed condensed in those few years in which he was constructing his work; and is it too daring a conception—that of the Great Spirit watching from on high its progress, and saying of it, as he did of his own creation, when finished, "It is very good?"

But, indeed, *his own* work it was. For, strong as this hero felt himself in his matured learning—in his genius, so highly cultured, yet still so fresh and young—in his old experience, he did not venture to put his hand to the task till, with strong crying and tears, he had asked the inspiration and guidance of a higher power. Nor were these denied him. As Noah into the ark of old, the Lord "shut" Milton in within the darkened tabernacle of his own spirit, and that tabernacle being filled with light from heaven, "Paradise Lost" arose, the joint work of human genius and of divine illumination.

We have seen the first edition of this marvellous poem—a small, humble quarto, in ten books, which was the original number; but to us it seemed rich all over, as a summer's sunset, with glory. Every one has heard, probably, of the price, the goodly price, at which it was prized and bought—five pounds, with a contingency of fifteen more in case of sale. For two years before, it seems to have slumbered in manuscript, and very likely was the while carried round the trade, seeking for one hardy enough to publish it. It appeared in 1667, but was a long time of rising to its just place in public estimation. The public preferred Waller's insipid commonplaces, and Dryden's filthy ranting plays, to the divine blank verse of Milton. Waller himself spoke of it as a long, dull poem in blank verse; if its length could not be considered a merit, it had no other. The case is not singular. Two of the greatest poems in English of this century are

Wordsworth's "Excursion" and Bailey's "Festus." Both were for years treated with neglect, although we are certain that both will survive the "Course of Time" and the "Pickwick Papers." Between his masterpiece and his death, little occurred except the publication of some minor, but noble, productions, including "Paradise Regained," "Samson Agonistes," "A System of Logic," "A Treatise of True Religion," and a collection of his familiar epistles in Latin. At last, in November, 1674, at the age of sixty-six, under an exhaustion of the vital powers, Milton expired, and that spirit, which was "only a little lower than the angels," went away to mingle with his starry kindred. It is with a certain severe satisfaction that we contemplate the death of a man like Milton. We feel that tears and lamentations are here unbecoming, and would mar the solemn sweetness of the scene. With serenity, nay joy, we witness this majestic man-child caught up to God and his throne, soaring away from the many shadows which surrounded him on earth, into that bright element of eternity, in which he seemed already naturalised.

Who seeks to weep, as he sees the river, rich with the spoils of its long wandering, and become a broad mirror for the heavens, at length sinking in the bosom of the deep? Were we permitted to behold a star re-absorbed into its source, melted down in the Infinite, would it not generate a delight, graver, indeed, but as real, as had we stood by its creation? and although there were no shouting, as on its natal morn, might there not be silence—the silence of joyous wonder among the sons of God? Milton, the prince of modern men, died accepting death as gently and silently as the sky receives into its arms the waning moon. We are reminded of a description in "Hyperion" of the death of an infinitely inferior man—Goethe:—"His majestic eyes looked for the last time on the light of a pleasant spring morning. Calm like a god the old man sat, and with a smile seemed to bid farewell to the light of day, on which he had gazed for more

than eighty years. Books were near him, and the pen which had just dropped from his dying fingers. 'Open the shutters, and let in more light,' were his last words. Slowly stretching forth his hand, he seemed to write in the air, and, as it sank down again and was motionless, the spirit of the old man was gone."

The next portion of our task is, to speak of the constituents of Milton's mind. Many critics have spoken of him as one who possessed only two or three faculties in a supreme and almost supernatural degree. They speak of his imagination and intellect as if they were his all. Now, Milton, as well as Shakspeare, seems to us a many-sided man. He was complete in all powers and accomplishments, almost as his own Adam. He had every faculty, both of body and of mind, well developed and finely harmonised. He had philosophic sagacity, and could, upon occasion, reason as acutely as Thomas Aquinas. He had broad grasp as well as subtle discrimination, and some of his treatises nearly exhaust the topics of which they treat. He had, in great measure, understanding, the power which comprehends; memory, the power which retains; imagination, the power which combines and reproduces; will, the power which moves; and eloquence, the power which communicates. He had, besides, the subordinate talents of wit, sarcasm, invective, rhetoric, and logic; even the characters of the sophist and the buffoon he could adopt at pleasure. In what species of literature did he not shine? In the epic, in the drama, in the pastoral, in the ode, in the elegy, in the masque, in the sonnet, in the epistle, in the song, in the satire, in the argument, in the essay, in the religious discussion, in the history, and in the etymological treatise, he was equally a master. He added more than the versatility of Voltaire to more than the sublimity of Homer. Milton has versatility too, but his versatility reminds you of the great scripture image—"the mountains leaping like rams, and the hills like lambs." And if it be asked, what was it that gave him that august air of unity, which has made many over-

look his multiform nature? we answer, it was the subordination of all his varied powers to a religious purpose, such as we find in no other uninspired man; and it was, again, that glare of awful grandeur which shone around him in all his motions, and made even his least efforts, even his failures, and almost his blunders, great. As St Peter's in Rome seems one, because it unites, condenses, and rounds in all the minutiae and details of its fabric into a dome, so lofty and proud that it seems a copy of the sky to which it points—to imitate as well as to adore—so Milton gathers in all the spoils of time, and all the faculties of man, and offers them as in one sacrifice and on one vast altar to Heaven.

In attempting a climactic arrangement of his poetical works, we may trace his whole life over again, as in a calm undercurrent; not that, in point of chronological order, his works form a complete scale of the man; inasmuch as "Paradise Lost," in which his genius culminated, preceded "Samson Agonistes"—still some of the epochs of his life are distinctly marked by the advancing stages of his writings. Lowest in the scale, then, are usually ranked his Latin poems, which, with many beauties, are rather imitations and echoes of the classical poets than the native utterances of his mind; it is in them, as in many modern Latin and Greek poems, where the strange dress, the graceful veil, the coy, half-perceived meaning, as with the beauty of some females, give a factitious interest to very ordinary and commonplace thoughts. Half the merit of the classics themselves springs from the difficulty we have in understanding them, and, if we wish effectually to disguise nonsense, let us roll it up in Greek or Latin verse, and it may lie there unsuspected for centuries together. Milton could not write nonsense, to be sure, even in Latin, but his usual power and majesty here well-nigh forsake him; and in hexameters and pentameters he walks like a Titan in irons, and in irons which are too narrow for his limbs. We may rank next, as next lowest in popular estimation, his sonnets. We are not sure, however, but that

popular estimation has under-rated those productions. Dr Johnson certainly did. When asked once his opinion of Milton's sonnets, he said, "Milton could hew out a Colossus from a rock, but he could not carve heads upon cherry-stones." Literally, of course, he could do neither the one nor the other; but had he been a sculptor, we believe that the slightest stroke of his chisel would, as well as his most elaborate work, have evinced the master. Hogarth's genius appeared as really in those sketches which he used to draw on his thumb-nail, as in his "Rake's Progress," or "Marriage à la Mode." So Milton's sonnets are sonnets which Milton, and none but Milton, could have written. We see, in very small compass, his most peculiar qualities: his gravity, his severe and simple grandeur, his chaste and chary expression, his holy purpose, and the lofty and solitary character of his soul. His mind might be compared to a mountain river, which, having first torn its way through high rocks, then polishes the pebbles over which it rolls at their base:—

"'Tis the same wind unbinds the Alpine snow,
And comforts violets on their lowly beds."

We confess, however, that we are not much in love with the structure of the sonnet. Its principle, which is to include into fourteen lines one thought or sentiment, seems too artificial, and savours too much of the style of taste from which have sprung anagrams and acrostics, and the like ingenious follies. When a large thought is successfully squeezed into it, it seems to have worked and wriggled its way; and when a small thought is infused into it, it becomes almost invisible.

We come next to that delightful class of Milton's poems which we call pastorals—namely, "Arcades," "L'Allegro," and "Il Penseroso." They breathe the sweetest spirit of English landscape. They are composed of every-day life, but of every-day life shown under a certain soft ideal strangeness, like a picture or a prospect, through which you look by inverting your head. Your wonder is, how he can thus elevate the tame beauties

of English scenery which seem, to Norlanders at least, so tiny that they might be fitly tenanted by Lilliputians, and through which men stalk like monstrous giants. "L'Allegro" is an enumeration of agreeable images and objects, pictured each by a single touch, and set to a light easy measure, which might accompany the blithe song of the milkmaid and the sharp whetting of the mower's scythe. "Il Penseroso" is essentially the same scenery, shown as if in soft and pensive moonlight. Both, need we say, are exquisitely beautiful; but we think the object would have been better gained, could two poets, of different temperaments, have, in the manner of Virgil's shepherds, exchanged their strains of joy and pensiveness in alternate verses, or if Milton had personated both in this way. As the poems are, it is too obviously one mind describing its own peculiar sources of gratification in different moods. A modern poet might now, if he had genius enough, effect what we mean, by describing a contest between Horace and Dante, or Moore and Byron—the one singing the pleasures of pleasure, the other the darker delights which mingle even with misery, like strange, scattered, bewildered flowers growing on the rugged rocks of hell.

An acute critic in an Edinburgh periodical has undertaken the defence of "The Town" *versus* "The Country," as the source of poetry—has called us, among others, to account for preferring the latter to the former—and has ventured to assert that, *cæteris paribus*, a poet residing in the town will describe rural scenery better than one living constantly in the country, and adduces Milton in proof. We admit, indeed, that there will be more freshness in the feeling of the Cockney, let loose upon the country in spring, be he poet or porter, just as there will be more freshness in the feeling of the countryman entering London for the first time, and gaping with unbounded wonder at every sign, and shop, and shopkeeper he sees. But we maintain, that those always write best on any subject who are best acquainted with it, who know it in all its shades and phases; and that such minute

and personal knowledge can only be obtained by long residence in, or by frequent visits to, the country. We cannot conceive, with this writer, that the country is best seen in the town, any more than that the town is best seen in the country. Ben Nevis is not visible from Edinburgh, any more than Edinburgh from Ben Nevis. We can never compare the bit of blue sky seen from a corner of Goosedubs, Glasgow, with the "dread magnificence of heaven" broadly bending over Ben Lomond; nor the puddles running down the Wellgate of Dundee, after a night of rain, with the red torrents from the hills, which meet at the sweet village of Comrie. And even the rainbow, when you see it at the end of a dirty street, loses caste, though not colour, and can hardly pass for a relation to that arch of God, which seems erected by the hands of angels, for the passage of the Divine footsteps between the ridges which confine the valley of Glencoe. And, among our greatest descriptive poets, how many have resided in the country, either all their lives, or at least in their youth! Think of Virgil and Mantua, of Thomson and Ednam, of Burns and Mossgiel, of Shelley and Marlowe, of Byron and Lochnagar, of Coleridge and Nether Stowey, of Wilson and Elleray, of Scott and Abbotsford, of Wordsworth and Rydal Mount, and of Milton and Horton, where, assuredly, his finest rural pieces were composed; and say with Cowper, the Cowper of Olney, as we have said with him often—"God made the country, and man made the town."

We pass to two pieces, which, though belonging to different styles of poetry, class themselves together by two circumstances—their similar length, and their surpassing excellence—the one being an elegy, and the other a hymn. The elegy is "Lycidas"—the hymn is on the "Nativity of Christ." As to "Lycidas," what can we say? Conceive the finest and purest graces of the Pagan mythology culled and mingled, with modest yet daring hand, among the roses of Sharon and the lilies of the valley—conceive the waters of Castalia sprinkled on the flowers which grow in the garden of

God—and you have a faint conception of what "Lycidas" means to do. Stern but short-sighted critics have objected to this as an unhallowed junction. Milton knew better than Dr Johnson. He felt that, in the millennial field of poetry, the wolf and the lamb might lie down together; that everything at least that was beautiful might enter here. The Pagan mythology possessed this pass-word, and was admitted; and here truth and beauty accordingly met, and embraced each other. A *museum*, he felt, had not the severe laws of a *temple*. There, whatever was curious, interesting, or rare, might be admitted. Pan's pipe might lean upon the foot of the true Cross—Apollo's flute and David's lyre stand side by side—and the thunderbolts of Jove rest peacefully near the fiery chariot of Elijah.

Out of the Hebrew Scriptures, his "Hymn" is (besides his own "Hymn of our First Parents," and Coleridge's "Hymn to Mont Blanc") the only one we remember worthy of the name. When you compare the ordinary swarm of church hymns to this, you begin to doubt whether the piety which prompted the one, and that which prompted the other, were of the same quality—whether they agreed in anything but the name. We have here no trash, as profane as it is fulsome, about "sweet Jesus! dear Jesus!"—no effusions of pious sentimentalism, like certain herbs, too sweet to be wholesome; but a strain which might have been sung by the angelic host on the plains of Bethlehem, and rehearsed by the shepherds in the ears of the Infant God. Like a belated member of that deputation of sages who came from the East to the manger at Bethlehem, does he spread out his treasures, and they are richer than frankincense, sweeter than myrrh, and more precious than gold. With awful reverence and joy, he turns aside to behold this great sight—the Eternal God dwelling in an infant! Here the fault (if fault it be) with which "Lycidas" has been charged is sternly avoided. From the *stable* he repulses the heathen deities, feeling that the ground is too holy. And yet, methinks, Apollo

would have desired to stay—would have lingered to the last moment—to hear execrations so sublime:—

“The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arch’d roof in words deceiv-
ing.
Apollo from his shrine,
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leav-
ing.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the proph-
etic cell.
He feels from Judah’s land
The dreadful Infant’s hand:
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne.
Nor all the gods beside
Dare longer now abide.
Nor Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the
damm’d crew.”

“Samson Agonistes” is, perhaps, the least poetical, but certainly by no means the least characteristic of his works. In style and imagery, it is bare as a skeleton, but you see it to be the skeleton of a Samson. It is the purest piece of *literary sculpture* in any language. It stands before you, like a statue, bloodless and blind. There can be no doubt that Milton chose Samson as a subject from the resemblance in their destinies. Samson, like himself, was made blind in the cause of his country; and through him, as through a new channel, does Milton pour out his old complaint, but more here in anger than in sorrow. It had required—as the Nile has seven mouths—so many vents to a grief so great and absolute as his. Consolation Samson has little, save in the prospect of vengeance, for the prospect of the resurrection-body had not fully dawned on his soul. He is, in short, a hard and Hebrew shape of Milton. Indeed, the poem might have been written by one who had been born blind, from its sparing natural imagery. He seems to spurn that bright and flowery world which has been shut against him, and to create, within his darkened tabernacle, a scenery and a companionship of his own, distinct as the scenery and the companionship of dreams. It is, consequently,

a naked and gloomy poem; and as its hero triumphs in death, so it seems to fall upon and crush its reader into prostrate wonder, rather than to create warm and willing admiration. You believe it to be a powerful poem, and you tremble as you believe.

What a contrast in “Comus,” the growth and bloom rather than the work of his youth! It bears the relation to the other works of Milton, that “Romeo and Juliet” does to the other works of Shakspeare. We can conceive it the effluence of his first love. He here lets his genius run riot with him—“in the colours of the rainbow live, and play i’ the plighted clouds.” It is rather a dream than a drama—such a dream as might have been passing across the fine features of the young Milton, as he lay asleep in Italy. It is an exercise of fancy, more than of imagination. And if our readers wish us, ere going farther, to distinguish fancy from imagination, we would do so briefly, as follows:—They are not, we maintain, essentially different, but the same power under different aspects, attitudes, and circumstances. Have they ever contemplated the fire at eventide? Then must they have noticed how the flame, after warming and completely impregnating the fuel, breaks out above it into various fantastic freaks, motions, and figures, as if, having performed its work, it were disposed to play and luxuriate a little, if not for its own delectation, for the amusement of the spectator. Behold in the evening experiences of the fire the entire history of the mind of genius. There is first the germ, or spark, or living principle, called thought, or intuition, or inspiration. That fiery particle, coming into contact with a theme, a story, with the facts of history, or the abstractions of intellect, begins to assimilate them to itself, to influence them with its own heat, or to brighten them into its own light. That is the imaginative, or shall we call it the transfiguring process, by which dead matter is changed into quick flame—by which an old fabulous Scottish chronicle becomes the tragedy of “Mac-

beth"—or by which some lascivious tale in an Italian novel is changed into the world-famous and terribly-true story of "Othello, the Moor of Venice." But, after this is done, does the imaginative power always stop here? No; in the mere exuberance of its strength—in the wantonness of its triumph—it will often, like the fire on the hearth, throw out gushes of superfluous but beautiful flame; in other words, images, "quips, cranks, and wreathed smiles"—and thus and here we find that glorious excrescence or luxury which we call fancy. Fancy is that crown of rays round the sun which is seen in the valley of Chamouni, but not on the summit of Mont Blanc, where a stern and stripped stillness proclaims collected and severe power. It is the dancing spray of the waterfall, not the calm, uncrested, voluminous might of the river; or it may be compared to those blossoms on the apple-tree, which that tree pours forth in the exuberance of its spring vigour, but which never produce fruit. Or imagination is the war-horse pawing for the battle—fancy, the war-horse curvetting and neighing on the mead. From such notions of imagination and fancy, there follow, we think, the following conclusions:—First, that true fancy is rather an excess of a power than a power itself. Secondly, that it is generally youthful, and ready to vanish away with the energy and excitement of youth. Thirdly, that it is incident to, though not inseparable from, the highest genius—abounding in Milton, Shakspeare, and Shelley—not to be found, however, in Homer, Dante, or Wordsworth. Fourthly, that the want of it generally arises from severity of purpose, comparative coldness of temperament, or the acquired prevalence of self-control. And, fifthly, that a counterfeit of it exists, chiefly to be known by this, that its images are not representative of great or true thoughts; that they are not original; and that, therefore, their profusion rather augurs a mechanical power of memory than a native excess of imagination. In "Comus" we find imagination, and imagination with a high purpose; but more

than in any of Milton's works do we find this imagination at play, reminding us of a man whose day's work is done, and who spends his remaining strength in some light and lawful game. Our highest praise of "Comus" is, that, when remembering and repeating its lines, we have sometimes paused to consider whether they were or were not Shakspeare's. They have all his mingled sweetness and strength, his careless grace or grandeur, his beauty as unconscious of itself as we could conceive a fair woman in some world where there was not even a river, or lake, or drop of water, to mirror her charms. In this poem, to apply his own language, we have the "stripling cherub," all bloom, and grace, and liveness; in the "Paradise Lost," we have the "giant angel," the emblem of power and valour, and whose very beauty is grave and terrible like his strength.

"Paradise Regained" stands next in the catalogue. No poem has suffered more from comparison than this. Milton's preference of it to "Paradise Lost" has generally been quoted as an instance of the adage, that authors are the worst judges of their own works; that, like some mothers, they prefer their deformed and sickly offspring. We should think, however, that, even were the work much worse than it is, Milton's liking for it might have been accounted for on the principle that authors are often fondest of their last production: like the immortal Archbishop of Granada, whom Gil Blas so mortally offended by hinting that his sermons were beginning to smell of his apoplectic fit, instead of, as a wise flatterer would have done, stretching out his praises till they threatened to touch the horizon. But, in truth, Milton was not so much mistaken as people suppose. There are men who at all times, and there are moods in which all men, prefer the 23d Psalm to the 18th, the first Epistle of John to the Apocalypse; so there are moods in which we like the "Paradise Regained," with its profound quiet—with its scriptural simplicity—with its insulated passages of unsurpassed power and grandeur—

with its total want of effort—and with its modest avoidance of the mysterious agonies of the crucifixion, which Milton felt was a subject too sublime even for his lyre—to the more laboured and crowded splendours of the "Paradise Lost." The one is a giant tossing mountains to heaven in trial of strength, and with manifest toil; the other is a giant gently putting his foot on a rock, and leaving a mark inimitable, indelible, visible to all after time. If the one remind you of the tumultuous glories and organ-tempests in the Revelation, the other reminds you of that "silence which was in heaven for the space of half an hour."

The principal defect of this poem is the new and contemptible light in which it discovers the Devil. The Satan of the "Paradise Lost" had many of the elements of the heroic, and, even when starting from his toad-shape, he recovers his grandeur instantly by his stature reaching the sky. But the Satan of the "Paradise Regained" is a mean, low, crawling worm—a little and limping fiend. He never looks the Saviour full in the face, but keeps nibbling at his heels. And although in this Milton has expressed the actual history of intellect and courage, when separated from virtue, happiness, and hope, and degraded into the servile vassals of an infernal will, yet it is not so pleasing for us to contemplate the completed as it is the begun ruin. Around the former some rays of beauty continue to linger; the latter is desolation turned into despicable use. The Satan of the "Paradise Lost"—the high, the haughty, the consciously second only to the Most High—becomes, in the "Paradise Regained," at best, a clever conjurer, whose tricks are constantly baffled, and might, as they are here described, we think, be baffled by an inferior wisdom to that of incarnate Omnipotence.

We pass to the greatest work of Milton's genius; and here we feel as if, in using the word art or genius, we were guilty of profanation; for so long have we been accustomed to think and speak of the "Paradise Lost," that it seems to

us to rank with the great works of nature themselves. We think of it as of Enoch or Elijah, when just rising out of the sphere of earth's attraction, and catching a brighter radiance than any that earth owns upon their ascending forms. And there are works of genius which seem standing and stretching up towards the measure and the stature of the works of God, and to which *these* seem to nod in responsive sympathy. For, as the poet says—

"Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
As the best gem upon her zone;
And morning opes with haste her lids
To gaze upon the Pyramids;
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky
As on its friends with kindred eye;
For out of thought's interior sphere
These wonders rose to upper air,
And nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat."

Such a work is that of "Paradise Lost," where earth and heaven appear contending for the mastery (where, as over the morning star, the night and the dawning seem engaged in contest as to the possession of a thing so magnificent), because in it, and in fine proportions, gloom and glory—the gloom of hell and the glory of heaven—have met and embraced each other.

"Paradise Lost" has sometimes been called the most perfect of human productions—it ought to be called the most ambitious. It is the Tower of Babel, the top of which did not, indeed, reach unto heaven, but did certainly surpass all the other structures then upon earth. It stands alone, unequalled—*Man's Mountain*. Even to higher intelligences it may appear wonderful, and strange as to us those likenesses of the stars and of man which are to be found in flowers and animals. In the language of Pope, they may

"Admire such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And show a *Milton* as men show an ape."

But in proportion, perhaps, as this work rises above the works of man, and hangs aloft like a half-born celestial product, it

loses a portion of its interest with "human mortals." It is not, on the one hand, a book like the Bible, commanding belief as well as admiration; it is not, on the other hand, a popular and poetical manual, like the "Pilgrim's Progress," commending itself to the hearts of all who have hearts to feel its meaning; nor is it a work valuable to a party, as having enshrined and transfigured some party notion, which, like a gipsy in the wild, had been wandering undistinguished, till a sudden slip of sunshine had bathed him in transient glory. It is the written-out, illuminated creed of a solitary, independent, daring, yet devout man, which all ages have agreed to admire in Milton's poem. And hence the admiration awarded has been rather general than particular—rather that of the whole than of the parts—rather that of stupified and silent amazement than of keen, warm, and anxious enthusiasm—rather the feeling of those who look hopelessly upon a cloud, or a star, or a glowing west, than of those who look on some great, yet imitable perfection, in the arts of painting, statuary, or poesy.

We must be permitted a word about the hero of this poem, about its picture of hell, about its pictures of paradise and heaven, about the representation of Adam and Eve, about its subordinate machinery of angels and devils, and about its place and comparative merits when put beside the other masterpieces of the human mind. Its hero is undoubtedly, as Dryden long ago asserted, Satan, if the most interesting character in the book deserves the name of hero; if, for example, Fergus MacIvor, and not Waverley, is the hero of that tale; if of "Ivanhoe," not that insipid personage himself, but Richard the lion-hearted be the real hero. Wherever Satan appears, he becomes the centre of the scene. Round him, as he lies on the fiery gulf, floating many a rood, the flames seem to do obeisance, even as their red billows break upon his sides. When he rises up into his proper stature, the surrounding hosts of hell cling to him, like leaves to a tree. When he dis-

turbs the old deep of Chaos, its Anarchs Orcus, Hades, Demogorgon, own a superior. When he stands on Niphates, and bespeaks that sun which was once his footstool, Creation becomes silent to listen to the dread soliloquy. When he enters Eden, a shiver of horror shakes all its roses, and makes the waters of the four rivers to tremble. Even in heaven, the Mountain of the Congregation on the sides of the north, where he sits, almost mates with the throne of the Eternal. Mounted on the night as on a black charger, carrying all hell in his breast, and the trail of heaven's glory on his brow—his eyes eclipsed suns—his cheeks furrowed not by the traces of tears but of thunder—his wings two black forests—his heart a mound of millstone—armed to the teeth—doubly armed by pride, fury, and despair—lonely as death—hungry as the grave—intrenched in immortality—defiant against every difficulty and danger, does he pass before us, the most tremendous being Poetry ever conceived—the sublimest creation of the mind of man. There is but one other which approaches it at a distance—that of Lucifer, in Dante, who appears with three faces:—

"Under each shot forth
Two mighty wings, enormous, as became
A bird so vast. Sails never such I saw
Outstretch'd on the wide sea. No plumes
had they,
But were in texture like a bat, and these
He flapp'd 't the air, that from them issued
still
Three winds, wherewith Cocytus to its depth
Was frozen. At six eyes he wept; the tears
A down three chins distill'd with bloody foam!
At every mouth his teeth a sinner champ'd,
Bruised as with ponderous engine.
Judas is he that hath his head within,
And plies the feet without; of the other two,
The one is Brutus: lo! how he doth writhe,
And speaks not. The other Cassius, that
appears
So large of limb."

Nothing can be more frightfully picturesque than this description, but it is perhaps too grotesque to be sublime; and the thought of the Devil being a vast windmill, and creating ice by the action of his wings, is ludicrous.

Burns, in one of his letters, expresses a resolve to buy a pocket-copy of Milton, and study that noble character, Satan. We cannot join in this opinion entirely, although very characteristic of the author of the "Address to the De'il;" but we would advise our readers, if they wish to see the loftiest genius passing into the highest art—if they wish to see combined in one stupendous figure every species of beauty, deformity, terror, darkness, light, calm, convulsion—the essence of man, devil, and angel, collected into a something distinct from each, and absolutely unique—all the elements in nature ransacked, and all the characters in history analysed, in order to deck that brow with terror—to fill that eye with fire—to clothe that neck with thunder—to harden that heart into stone—to give to that port its pride, and to that wing its swiftness—and that glory so terrible to those nostrils, smorting with hatred to God, and scorn to man—to buy, beg, or borrow a copy of Milton, and study the character of Satan, not, like Burns, for its worth, but for the very grandeur of its worthlessness. An Italian painter drew a representation of Lucifer so vivid and glowing, that it left the canvas, and came into the painter's soul: in other words, haunted his mind by night and day—became palpable to his eye, even when he was absent from the picture—produced at last a frenzy, which ended in death. We might wonder that a similar effect was not produced upon Milton's mind, from the long presence of his own terrific creation (to be thinking of the Devil for six or ten years together, looks like a Satanic possession), were it not that we remember that his mind was more than equal to confront its own workmanship. Satan was not a spasm, but a calm, deliberate production of Milton's mind; he was greater, therefore, than Satan, and was enabled, besides, through his habitual religion, to subdue and master his tone of feeling in reference to him.

Milton's Hell is the most fantastic piece of fancy, based on the broadest superstructure of imagination. It pre-

sents such a scene as though Switzerland were set on fire—such an uneven colossal region, full of bogs, caves, hollow valleys, broad lakes, and towering Alps, has Milton's genius cut out from chaos, and wrapped in devouring flames, leaving, indeed, here and there a snowy mountain or a frozen lake for a variety in the horror. This wilderness of death is the platform which imagination raises and peoples with the fallen thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, and powers. On it, the same power, in its playful, fanciful mood, piles up the pandemonian palace, suggests the trick by which the giant fiends reduce their stature, shrinking into imps, and seats at the gates of Hell the monstrous forms of sin and death. These have often been objected to, as if they were unsuccessful and abortive efforts of imagination; whereas they are the curvettings and magnificent nonsense of that power after its proper work—the creation of Hell—has been performed. The great merit of Milton's Hell, especially as compared to Dante's, is the union of a general sublime indistinctness, with a clear, statuesque marking-out from, or painting on the gloom of, individual forms. From a sublime idea of Hell, he descends to severely-selected particular forms and features. Dante, on the contrary (although *literally* descending), in reality ascends, on endless lost spirits, as on steps, to that dreadful whole which he calls the Inferno; and in the strange, inverted climax lies much of the power of the poem. Milton is the synthetist, Dante the analyst of Hell—the one here practises the transcendental, the other the ascendant method. The one describes Hell like an angel, passing through it in haste, and with time only to behold its leading outlines and figures; the other, like a pilgrim, compelled with slow and painful steps to thread all its highways and byways of pain and punishment. Milton has pictured to us the young flames and unpeopled wastes of Hell as well as of Earth. By Dante's time, it is overflowing with inhabitants, and teeming with sad incidents. The Hell of each has its

root as much in the heart as in the imagination—it is to each a reservoir, into which he pours his ire and disappointment; but as Milton's sadness was of a milder type than Dante's, so his Hell is less savage and more sublime. He gazes reverently, and from a distance, on the awful scene; whereas the fierce Florentine enters into its heart, goes down on his knees to watch more narrowly the degradations of the downtrodden damned—nay, applies a microscope to their quivering flesh and fire-shrivelled skin; nor did Ugolino, over the skull, go to his task with a more terrible and tingling gusto.

In Milton's Paradise, no less than in his Pandemonium, we find the giant character of his genius. It is no snug garden-plot—it is no tame, though wide landscape; no English hall, with garden and park—it is a large undulating country, as bold as beautiful; and as in Hell he made Switzerland run fire, in Paradise he makes Britain flow with milk and honey. As the one was a wilderness of death, this is a wilderness of sweets. There are roses in it, but there are also forests. There are soft vales, but there are also mountains. There are rippling, dancing streams; but there is also a large, grave river running south. There are birds singing on the branches; but there is also Behemoth reposing below. There is the lamb; but there is the lion too, even in his innocence awful. There is a bower in the midst; but there is a wall vast and high around. There are our happy parents within; but there are hosts of angels without. There is perfect happiness; but there is also, walking in the garden, and running amid the trees, a low whisper, prophesying of change, and casting a nameless gloom over all the region.

Such is the Paradise of Milton. It is not that of Macaulay, whose description of it in "Byron," vivid as it is, gives us the idea rather of a beautiful, holy, and guarded *spot*, than of a great *space*, forming a broad nuptial crown to the young world.

In his Heaven, Milton finds still fuller

field for the serious as well as sportive exercise of his unbounded imagination. He gives us the conception of a region immeasurably large. Many earths are massed together to form one continent surrounding the throne of God—a continent not of cloud or airy light, but of fixed, solid land, with steadfast towering mountains, and soft slumbrous vales; to which Pollok, in his copy of it, has added, finely, wastes and wildernesses—retreats, even there, for solitary meditation; and it is a beautiful thought; that of there being hermits even in heaven. Afar, like a cloud, rises the centre and pinnacle of the region, the throne of Jehovah, now bathed in intolerable light, and now shaded by profound darkness. Thus far imagination, sternly and soberly, accomplishes her work. But when she describes the cave, whence, by turns, light and darkness issue—the artillery employed by the rebel angels—their punning speeches to each other—their tearing up mountains—the opening and closing of their wounds—she runs wild; nor is her wildness beautiful; it is the play rather of false than of true fancy—rather a recollection of the "Arabian Nights," than the carol and spring of a great original faculty. The councils of the Godhead are proverbial for feebleness and prolixity. Milton's hand trembles as it takes down the syllables from the Divine lips; and he returns with eager haste to the consult on the midnight Mount of the Congregation. But the coming forth of the Messiah to destroy his foes is the most sublime passage in the poem. It is a "torrent rapture" of fire. Its words do not run, but rush, as if hurrying from the chariot of the Son. They seem driven, even as the fiends are driven, before him. Suggested partly by Hesiod's "War of the Giants," and partly by Achilles coming forth upon the Trojans, it is superior to both—indeed, to anything in the compass of poetry. As the Messiah, in his progress, snatched up his fallen foes, and drove them before him like leaves on the blast, Milton, in the whirlwind of his inspiration, snatches up words, allusions, images, from Homer, Hesiod, and the Book of God, and bears

them, in terror and in triumph, on. As soon call a tornado the plagiarist of the boughs, rafters, houses, and woods which it tears up, and carries forward in the fury of its power, as Milton, in a mood like this. To quote any part of it, were as wise as to preserve a little of the air of a hurricane. We must read it at a sitting; nay, we cannot; for, though sitting as we commence it, we will be standing up—feet, hair, and soul—ere we are done. And would, we cry aloud, that the same pen of living fire had described for us that second and sublimer rising of the Son of Man, when he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels; which must now remain undescribed, till every eye shall see it, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of it. Even so. Amen.

The difficulty which met Milton in his portrait of our first parents was, obviously, to make them perfect, without being unnatural—to make them sinless, and yet distinguish them from angels—to show them human, yet unfallen—to make, in short, a new thing in poetry, a man and a woman, beautiful beyond desire, simple beyond disguise, graceful without consciousness, naked without shame, innocent but not insipid, lofty but not proud: uniting in themselves the qualities of childhood, manhood, and womanhood, as if, in one season, spring, summer, and autumn could be imagined. This was the task Milton had to accomplish; and, at his bidding, there arose the loveliest creatures of the human imagination, such as poet's eye never, before or since, imaged in the rainbow or the moonshine, or saw in the light of dreams; than fairies more graceful, than the cherubim and the seraphim themselves more beautiful. It is the very image of God set in clay; and, in proportion to the baseness of the material, are the costliness and the masterdom of the work. "Oh, man! over all," we exclaim, "be thou blessed for ever. And thou, his sister and spouse, his softer self, man's moon and miniature, may every flower be thy lover, every bird thy morning and evening songstress; may

the day be but thy sunny mantle, and the stars of night seem but gems in thy flowing hair!"

Milton's Adam is himself, as he was in his young manhood, ere yet the cares of life had ploughed his forehead or quenched his serene eyes. Eve, again, is Milton's lifelong dream of what woman was, and yet may be—a dream from which he again and again awoke, weeping, because the bright vision had passed away, and a cold reality alone remained. You see, in her every lineament, that he was one who, from the loftiness of his ideal, had been disappointed in woman. In the words, frequently repeated as a specimen of a *bull*—

"Adam, the goodliest man of men, since born His sons—the fairest of her daughters Eve"—he has unwittingly described the process by which his mind created them. Adam is the goodliest of his sons, because he is formed from them, by combining their better qualities; and thus are the children the parents of their father. Eve is the fairest of her daughters; for it would require the collected essence of all their excellences to form such another Eve. How beautiful the following words of Thomas Aird!—"Lo! now the general father and mother! What a broad, ripe, serene, and gracious composure of love about them! O! could but that mother of us all be permitted to make a pilgrimage over the earth, to see her many sons and daughters! How kindly would the kings and queens of the world entreat her in their palaces! How affectionately would her outcast children of the wilderness give her honey and milk, and wash her feet! No thought of the many woes she brought upon us! No reproaches! Nothing but love! So generous is the great soul of this world!"

Milton's management of his angels and devils proves as much as anything in the poem the versatility of his genius, the delicacy of his discrimination of character, that Shaksperian quality in him which has been so much overlooked. To break up the general angel or devil element into so many finely-individualised forms—to fit the language to the

character of each—to do this, in spite of the dignified and somewhat unwieldy character of his style—to avoid insipidity of excellence in his seraphs, and insipidity of horror in his fiends—to keep them erect and undwindled, whether in the presence of Satan on the one side, or of Messiah on the other—was a problem requiring skill as well as daring, dramatic as well as epic powers. No mere mannerist could have succeeded in it. Yet, what vivid portraits has he drawn of Michael, Raphael (how like, in their difference from each other, as well as in their names, to the two great Italian painters!), Abdiel, Uriel, Beelzebub, Moloch, Belial, Mammon—all perfectly distinct—all speaking a leviathan language, which in all, however, is modified by the character of each, and in none sinks into mannerism. If Milton had not been the greatest of epic poets, he might have been the second of dramatists. Macaulay has admirably shown *how*, or rather, *that* Shakspeare has preserved the distinction between similar characters, such as Hotspur and Falconbridge; and conceded even to Madame d'Arblay a portion of the same power, in depicting several individuals, all young, all clever, all clergymen, all in love, and yet all unlike each other. But Milton has performed a much more difficult achievement. He has represented five devils, all fallen, all eloquent, all in torment, hate, and hell, and yet all so distinct that you could with difficulty interchange a line of the utterances of each. None but Satan, the incarnation of egotism, could have said—

"What matter where, if I be still the same!"

None but Moloch—the rash and desperate—could thus abruptly have broken silence—

"My sentence is for open war."

None but Belial—the subtle, far-revolving fiend—could have spoken of

"Those thoughts that wander through eternity."

None but Mammon, the down-looking demon, would ever, alluding to the sub-

terranean riches of hell, have asked the question—

"What can heaven show more?"

Or who but Beelzebub, the Metternich of Pandemonium, would have commenced his oration with such grave, terrific irony as—

"Thrones, and imperial powers, offspring of heaven,
Ethereal virtues, or these titles now
Must we renounce, and, changing style, be
call'd
Princes of hell?"

Shakspeare could have done a similar feat, by creating five men, all husbands, all black, and all jealous of their white wives; or else, five human fiends, all white, all Italian, and all eager to throw salt and gunpowder on the rising flame of jealousy, and yet each distinct from our present Othello and Iago; and this Shakspeare might have done, and done with ease, though he did it not.

Perhaps, to settle the place and comparative merit of the "Paradise Lost," is an attempt which appears more difficult than it really is. Milton himself may have, and has, a considerable number of competitors, and, in our judgment, two superiors—Shakspeare and Dante. His work can be compared properly to but two others—the "Iliad" and the "Divina Comedia." These are the first three among the productions of imaginative genius. Like Ben Nevis, Ben Macdhui, and Cairntoul, still contesting, it is said, the sovereignty of Scotland's hills (now rising above, and now sinking below, each other, like three waves of the sea), seem those surpassing masterpieces. We cannot, in our limits, even enter into a field so wide as the discussion of all the grounds on which we prefer the English poem. It is not because it is of later date than both, and yet as original as either. Time should never be taken into account when we speak of an immortal work; what matters it whether it was written in the morning, in the evening, or at noon? It is not that it was written amid danger and darkness—who knows how Homer fared as he rhapsodised the "Iliad?" or who knows not that Dante

found in his poem the escape of immeasurable sorrow? It is not (Warton notwithstanding) that it has borrowed so much from Scripture: such glorious spangles we are ready to shear off, and deduct, in our estimate of the poem's greatness. It is not that it bears unequivocal traces of a higher path of genius, or that it is more highly or equally finished. But it is that, begun with a nobler purpose, and all but equal powers, it has called down, therefore, a mightier inspiration. Homer's spur to write or rhapsodise was that which sends the war-horse upon the spears; and the glory of the "Iliad" is that of a garment rolled in blood. In Dante, the sting is that of personal anguish, and the acmé of his poem is in the depth of hell—a hell which he has replenished with his focs. Milton, in fact, as well as in figure, wrote his work to vindicate the "ways of God to men;" and this purpose never relinquished—penetrating the whole poem straight as a ray passing through an unrefracting medium, gathering around it every severe magnificence and beauty, attracting from on high, from the very altar of celestial incense, burning coals of inspiration—becomes at last the poem's inaccessible and immortal crown.

Let us glance for a moment, ere we close, at what was even finer than Milton's transcendent genius—his character. His life was a great epic itself; Byron's life was a tragi-comedy; Sheridan's was a brilliant farce; Shelley's was a wild, mad, stormy tragedy, like one of Nat Lee's; Keats' life was a sad, brief, beautiful lyric; Moore's has been a love-song; Coleridge's was a "Midsummer Night's Dream;" Schiller's was a harsh, difficult, wailing, but ultimately victorious war-ode, like one of Pindar's; Goethe's was a brilliant, somewhat melodramatic, but finished novel; Tasso's was an elegy; but Milton, and Milton alone, acted as well as wrote an epic complete in all parts—high, grave, sustained, majestic. His life was a self-denied life. "Susceptible," says one, "as Burke, to the attractions of historical prescription, of royalty, of chivalry, of an ancient church,

installed in cathedrals and illustrated by old martyrdoms—he threw himself, the flower of elegance, on the side of the reeking conventicle—the side of humanity, unlearned and unadorned." It was a life of labour and toil; labour and toil unrewarded, save by the secret sunshine of his own breast, filled with the consciousness of divine approbation, and hearing from afar the voice of universal future fame. It was a life of purity. Even in his youth, and in the countries of the South, he seems to have remained entirely unsoftened. Although no anchorite, he was temperate to a degree, saying, with John Elliot, "Wine is a noble, generous liquor, and we should be thankful for it, but water was made before it." Rapid in his meals, he was never weary of the refreshment of music; his favourite instrument, as might have been expected, being the organ. It was a life not perfect: there were spots on his fame, acerbities of temper, harshness of language, which proved him human, and grappled him with difficulty to earth, like a vast balloon recalled ere it takes its bound upwards. It was in some measure a complete life, not a tantalising fragment, nor separated segment; but it evolved as gradually and certainly as a piece of solemn music. It was the life of a patriot, faithful found among the faithless, faithful only he; and Abdiel, that dreadless angel, is just Milton transferred to the skies. It was, above all, the life of a Christian—yes, the life of a Christian, although the Evangelical Alliance would now shut its door in his face. It was a life of prayer, of faith, of meek dependence, of perpetual communing with Heaven. Milton's piety was not a hollow form, not a traditional cant, not a bigotry, not the relict merely of youthful impression, as of a fall received in childhood: it was founded on personal inquiry; it was at once sincere and enlightened, strict and liberal; it was practical, and pressed on his every action and word, like the shadow of an unseen presence. Hence was his soul cheered in sorrow and blindness, the more as he lived in daily, hourly ex-

pectation of Him whom he called "the shortly-expected King," who, rending the heavens, was to, and shall yet, give him a house from heaven, where they that look out at the windows are not darkened.

Thus faintly have we pictured John Milton. Forgive us, mighty shade! wherever thou art, mingling in whatever choir of adoring spirits, or engaged in whatever exalted ministerial service above, or whether present now among those "millions of spiritual creatures which walk the earth," forgive us the feebleness, for the sake of the sincerity, of the offering; and reject it not from that cloud of incense which, with enlarging volume and deepening fragrance, is ascending to thy name from every country and in every language!

We say, with enlarging volume, for the fame of Milton must not only continue, but extend. And perhaps the day may come, when, after the sun of British empire is set, and Great Britain has become as Babylon and as Tyre, and even after its language has ceased to be a living tongue, the works of Milton and of Shakspeare shall alone preserve it; for these belong to no country and to no age, but to all countries and all ages—to all ages of time, to all cycles of eternity. Some books may survive the last burning, and

be preserved in celestial archives, as specimens and memorials of extinguished worlds; and, if such there be, surely one of them must be the "Paradise Lost."

In fine, we tell not our readers to imitate Milton's genius—that may be too high a thing for them; but to imitate his life—the patriotism, the sincerity, the manliness, the purity, and the piety of his character. When considering him and the other men of his day, we are tempted to say, "There were giants in those days," while we have fallen on the days of little men; nay, to cry out with her of old, "I saw gods ascending from the earth, and one of them is like to an *old man whose face is covered with a mantle*." In these days of rapid and universal change, what need for a spirit so pure, so wise, so sincere, and so gifted, as his! and who will not join in the language of Wordsworth:—

"Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour.

England bath need of thee. She is a fen
Of stagnant waters. We are selfish men.

Thy soul was like a star; and dwelt apart;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay."

BURNS.*

THIS is, if not by any means the ablest, yet perhaps, on the whole, the most complete, satisfactory, and impartial life of Burns. We say *life*; for while admitting the general faithfulness of its details, we do not, by any means, subscribe to it as a final estimate of his genius or character. As long as Mr Chambers details facts, and sifts evidence, we listen to him—reputed author of the "Vestiges" though he be—with respect and confidence; but when he analyses poetry, or tries to form a comprehensive verdict on genius or *morale*, we are often compelled to

* Complete Works and Life of Robert Burns, edited by Robert Chambers.

demur, and to say, "*Coram haud iudice*," or in plainer Latin, "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*."

Burns' biographers, like those of Napoleon, might form quite a gallery by themselves. There was first the amiable, sensible, and accomplished Currie—a man with considerable mind, and a still larger heart—who loved Burns, if he did not thoroughly know him; and whose veracity, as the recording angel of his errors, has been at length, in the main, confirmed. There was next the unfortunate Heron, a cleverish scamp; the Richard Savage, or Edgar Poe of Scotland—without equal power—whom Burns had ad-

mitted to some of his guilty confidences, and who felt a very natural desire to pull the Scottish poet down entirely to his own level—an attempt not successful; for although Burns was often a great fool and a great sinner, his genius and his pride combined to preserve him from becoming the monstrous mixture of habitual folly, vice, improvidence, and vanity, which drowned the little gift which was in Heron. Then came our old friend Josiah Walker, one of the most amiable and kindly of men, as all who knew him, as their Humanity professor in Glasgow College, can testify; accomplished, too, and learned, but who committed two great blunders in his life—first of all, he published a bad poem, and secondly, he wrote a middling life of a good poet. The "Defence of Order" was mercilessly and somewhat heartlessly mangled by Brougham, then the hangman of the "Edinburgh Review," and his life of Burns has more recently quivered under the knout of Christopher North. Both were in different measures too severe. Walker was in every way a most respectable man, wrote elegantly, and was animated by a most kindly feeling toward the memory of the Scottish bard. Hogg, too, if we are not greatly mistaken, and we think also Galt, who wrote on everything, both perpetrated lives of Burns, which we never read, and which are totally forgotten by the world. Lockhart's life came forth in "Constable's Miscellany," and excited great expectation. He was limited, however, in space, and perhaps in time. He does not seem to have taken the trouble of much personal investigation; and the work thus became rather a thick and vigorous inscription than a full or conclusive life, and is chiefly now remembered for some striking passages, and because it formed a text to Carlyle's celebrated critique in the "Edinburgh." Allan Cunningham contributed next an interesting, rambling, hairum-scaurum sort of biography, containing a number of new facts in Burns' history, and written in an easy style, as if the author had been recounting the incidents of a comedy, and not of a deep and painful tragedy. Previous to

this, Gilbert Burns had edited an edition of his poems, and had called in James Gray and Findlater to defend the poet's character. In 1843 the prurient taste of the public was gratified by the publication of the letters of Burns and Clarinda; a collection which reflected little credit upon either party. And now Robert Chambers seems to have gathered up in these four baskets the remainder of all that can be published of the poetry, prose, or incidents in the life of Robert Burns.

More interesting than even the professed biographies, have been the criticisms which men of genius, in more countries than one, have written on Burns. Scarce one of his biographers can be compared for a moment in genius to such critics as Jeffrey, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Wilson, Carlyle, and Thomas Aird, all of whom have, in their different dialects, and from their different points of view, written ably on the Scottish poet. Jeffrey's criticism is rather cold and captious, and not what it would have been had he met with the bright-eyed bard, instead of simply seeing him once on the Edinburgh streets.

He is right in finding not only coarseness, but vulgarity, in Burns' letters and conduct; but wrong in not admitting the powerful plea which his circumstances and education present in his behalf. He had never learned to hold the pen so gracefully as he held the sickle. On the riggs of corn, or "following his plough upon the mountain-side," he was one of God's gentlemen—it was otherwise in the factitious and heated saloons of fashionable society. Jeffrey was too much of an artificial, and an Edinburgh man, to appreciate the genius of Burns; and his critique might be called "Edinburgh's last kick at the lion whom she first spoiled, and then spurned." Hazlitt has some beautiful remarks on the poet in his lectures. Wordsworth wrote a long and ingenious apology for his conduct in a letter to James Gray. Wilson's tribute, hovering between a life, a criticism, and an apology, is one of the most splendid pieces of panegyric in the world. It gushes on like a great river, now gliding at its own sweet will, now sporting in shal-

lows, and now rushing, red with poetic fury, till Corra Linn is deafened, and Foyers cries for quarter in the fell uproar. It is by no means, however, a just and impartial estimate of the character of the man. Carlyle has gone to his task in a graver and more plaintive spirit; and his paper is the true monody for poor Burns. Aird has often, in his "Old Bachelor" and elsewhere, touched with the most tender truthfulness on points in Burns' history and poems; and his defence of the Burns Festival, transferred from his paper to "Blackwood," was worth all the speeches at that entertainment together. Even after all this splendid deluge of criticism, we could have wished that Campbell had enlarged his estimate, or at least finished more highly the miniature he has drawn; and that Charles Lamb and Coleridge had given us in full *their* mind of the Ayrshire ploughman.

Coming after such reapers, it were vain to expect more than a few stray gleanings in the field. We would in our future remarks speak, first, of Burns as a man; secondly, of his general powers, and his place as a writer; thirdly, of his poems and prose writings individually; and, fourthly, of the influence he has exerted, and is exerting, on Scotland and the world. In all this our great aim is perfect impartiality.

Burns' great want, as a man, was that of fixed principle. He had a warm heart, a generous disposition, pity and compassion "soft as sinews of the new-born babe," wide and trembling sympathies, and impulses of higher mood, which gave the early promise, not only of wisdom, but of piety. He was also a sincerely honest and truehearted man; and as brave as he was sincere. But he possessed, besides all this, passions and imaginative tendencies more than commensurate with his good qualities of heart and his powerful faculties of mind; and in which deep dangers lurked, like lions "slumbering near a fount." To counteract these, or rather to subdue them into peaceful harmony with his better and higher nature, Principle was the one thing needful. Had it been present, it

would have led to fixed purpose; and had Purpose come, a high and noble life had succeeded. Principle may be called the root, Purpose the trunk, and a true Life the flower of the tree of man. Wanting firm moral or religious principle, it became Burns' great object to gratify the two main desires of his nature, which were—first, to be distinguished; and, second, to indulge his pleasure-seeking passions. "God gave him what he sought," for a season; but "sent leanness to his soul." Even when a mere youth, his wit and genius made him the "crack of the country-side;" the oracle of smithies, rous, churchyards between sermons, not to speak of balls, mason-lodges, and dancing-assemblies. Early, too, the grim Hypochondria, destined afterwards to blacken so many of his hours, began, attended probably, too, by the hell-dogs of Remorse, to assail him. Through this incipient darkness, and above those selfish objects, there shone, indeed, ever and anon, noble gleams of enthusiasm. He warmly loved nature then as ever; and it is singular to think of a feeling so pure surviving in the company of black and polluting passions in his bosom to the last. How he hung over the yellow broom; how he joyed as at eve he listed the linnet, or the cushat, or the corncraik; and how his soul rose beside the groaning trees of a wind-swept plantation to Him that "walketh on the wings of the wind!" His patriotic enthusiasm also was intense; and it, as he had prophesied, continued to "boil on in his bosom till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest." In poetry, and all the books within his reach, he revelled with sincere and exquisite delight; and never was there one who loved literature more warmly, or more for its own sake. Pure, too, in general, was the love that beat in his manly breast; and many of his meetings at the trysting-tree were as blameless as the assignations of spirits. Nevertheless, all this was only the bright foam; the current below ran deeply toward the point of self-seeking—the seeking of aggrandisement for his pride, and of pleasure for his senses.

In the rear of great half-maddening misery, of poverty, disgrace, and the prospect of exile, came Fame, like a sudden burst of sunshine, upon his solitary head. Sure that his hour of triumph was now come, he snatched up his staff; and relying on his genius, his independence, and his conscious pride, but not, alas! on principle or on God, he made for Edinburgh. He walked the whole way, muttering at times to himself the old ditty—

"As I came up by Glenap,
I met an aged woman,
Wha bade me keep up my heart,
For the best of my days were coming."

This old woman, like her of Endor, was telling him half a truth and half a lie. "The morning was coming, but also the night." His brightest and his blackest days were alike before him.

His conduct and language in Edinburgh at first seem to have been admirable. Instead of having his own head turned, he turned the heads of all others, lords, literati, and duchesses included—and remained himself untouched. He assumed soon, modestly but decidedly, the conversational place in Edinburgh which he had occupied in the West. A dux among the peasantry, he became, without any effort, a dux among the dukes. On his way to the "coals in the morning," he had been in the habit of keeping his fellow-carters in a roar of laughter; and standing in the drawing-rooms of Prince's Street, his humour produced similar, and his pathos and eloquence far greater, effects. Success, in fact, failed to spoil him, and withdrew from the attempt; but his second goddess, Pleasure, meanwhile quietly said to herself, "No matter, I WILL."

And her word proved true. What the loud tempest of applause could not do, the warm sun of luxury did. We can fancy well what his feelings were, as, staff in hand, and hat pulled over his swarthy brow, he saw for the first time the dusky towers of Edina, perhaps swathed in smoke, and with the Castle *glowering* grimly, like a sentinel of the night, on the streets below, rising before him. Per-

haps he felt, "I am bringing a brighter genius here than any its walls enclose. I shall move that proud city by my song." Alas! he heard not a voice replying, "Ay, and fall afterwards by her and thy *sins!*"

Burns, till his visit to Edinburgh, was apparently a man of simple tastes. He loved the "halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food," her "souple scones;" and his greatest luxury was a haggis. Although occasionally led into the convivial customs of the society of that day, he was on the whole a temperate man. He was contented, too, with the society and beauty—coarse enough then, doubtless—of the maid-servants and masons' daughters of the West. But when he came to Edinburgh, all this was changed. He sat at "rich men's feasts;" he tasted venison, turtle, champagne, and the other luxuries of a luxurious capital; he saw accomplished and high-bred beauties—ay, and made them blush at his compliments, weep at his recitation of old ballads, and tremble at his fiery eloquence. His strong sense, however, told him that in this atmosphere he could not long continue. He was but a stranger admitted for an hour into this "Arabian heaven," and he suspected he must return to his cold clodpatented earth again; but return, having lost his relish for its simple enjoyments. This stung his mind to fierce discontent. He never, we think, seriously contemplated the possibility of becoming a permanent, instead of a permitted guest in the higher sphere to which he had found his way. He would have laughed, as Wilson has done, at the idea of Burns marrying an Edinburgh belle. But that he had a hankering after a higher style of woman for his wife than Jean, is proved by his strong *penchant* for Charlotte Hamilton and Mrs M'Lehose. And that he did expect to be raised to some better situation than that of a hybrid between a gauger and a farmer, is also certain.

These hopes, however, were disappointed. As his patrons became better acquainted with him, they found him a man not easy nor safe to patronise; that

he had strong pride and passions; an ugly habit of speaking his mind; small regard for constituted authorities; and, we suspect, a growing taste for low company and convivial enjoyments. The nine days' wonder, too, had come to its period; and these people, not seeing the possibilities of his rich undeveloped genius, began to tire of "Hallowe'en" and "The Twa Dogs," to find their protégé overrated, and to sigh for some other novelty. John Home came out honestly with what many of them, in the disgust of their reaction, felt and concealed, and in one of his letters calls the Ayrshire ploughman little else than a humbug, and the public which had admired him little better than a commonwealth of blockheads! Thus ever do mocking-birds treat the true son of song.

Meanwhile, Burns, feeling the precariousness of his position, the stings of criticism and neglect, and not a few twinges of conscience, had retired growling to his native den, and had, greatly to Clarinda's disappointment and anger, married Jean Armour. He had now a family to support, and feeling that poetry was a poor prop, sought for a farm, found it, became a gauger, and said, "Go to; I will be wise." But, alas! the miseries of remorse and disappointment pursued him to Ellisland. There, too, came his hypochondria; and there, too, alas! came his passions. He was beset, besides, by company, and his Muse, for a season, served principally to fan and gild the social excesses of the farmers and lairds of that neighbourhood. To this course of life there were, it is true, many exceptions. He attended, although fitfully, to the labours of his farm, and was kind to his servants. Jean and he had no quarrel; indeed, he was her affectionate companion to the end. He was a laborious gauger; and how edifying the sight of this potent spirit as he appeared rinsing out barrels, and testing tallow-candles! Glorious, however, were the occasional sparks of poetic fire which leaped from him, 'mid such ungenial toil, as from the axles of a mud-cart in a dark night. On that red scour above the Nith, especially when

the waters were turbid and foaming, how often did he stray, and, with "a stern delight and strange," mated with it his proud spirit, and though unrecognised as a king of men, became the troubled sovereign of troubled waters! In a calmer but darker mood he was found by Egerton Brydges, sitting on a bench near his own house, with a face in which "men might read strange matters." At Ellisland, he was visited by some of the finest breezes of inspiration which ever crossed his soul. Here he wrote his lines on the "Friar's Carse Hermitage." Here he penned, or rather bled out, his address to "Mary in Heaven," the saddest and sweetest of all his strains. And here, as he wandered at eventide along the broomy banks of the Nith, and thought upon Alloway Kirk—the stories and the scenery of his boyhood—there came on him, like a wild, half-shuddering, half-laughing wind, the inspired tale of Tam o' Shanter—a poem

"Conceived in rapture, and in fire begot,"

and which stamps him potentially the "Scottish Shakspeare."

By and by, he began to relax in his attention to his farming duties—to sicken of the country, and to long for the society and the license of a town. His farm, like honest Rip Van Winkle's, was getting gradually worse and worse—"the most pestilent piece of ground in the whole country"—and he threw it up in disgust.

Then came that dark sojourn in Dumfries, during which he continued, we fear, to sink deeper and deeper, till death mercifully closed his eyes. Beautiful indeed were the lights which shone, magnificent the rainbows which flashed, above the giant stream, as it was going down the precipice, to become a "hell of waters" at the foot. It was in Dumfries that he wrote some of his finest letters, and perspired the "celestial ichor" of his best songs. To sing seemed a necessity of his nature. Never was there such an intensely lyrical spirit. He had but to uplift his "diamond pen," or to swing back and forward in his chair, and the

spirit of Scottish song moved him now to quaintest humour, now to pathos as delicate as profound, and now to high poetical description. It is a most painful, yet somehow beautiful spectacle, that of this disappointed, crushed, irregular, and neglected man, distilling in secret the most pure, natural, sweet, and perfect songs in the literature of earth. It argues original nobility of nature—an almost incredible power of mental abstraction and concentration; and it deepens the mystery connected with the aberrations and the degradation of such a spirit.

There were other pleasing traits in his Dumfries career. He continued to the end diligent in his calling—he avoided debt—he was a kind husband—a fond, yet faithful father, superintending the education of his children with great care—he dared to think for himself on political subjects, and this, long counted an offence, and more or less humbly apologised for by all his biographers, seems to us a redeeming point in his character—a very star in a diadem which was fast becoming pale. It is refreshing to find a democratic gauger, turning his "rod" against his employers, and sending a present of captured cannon to the French Convention. No wonder though alike the "Collector Snails" and the "Frank Kennedies" of that time refused to march through Coventry with Burns in this. They could join him in his occasional excesses—they laughed at his coarsest wit—and chuckled when he sometimes used improper language; but as soon as he showed the spirit of a man and the independence of a Briton, they reviled and forsook him. Would he had, at this crisis, thrown up the badge, and returned to the plough, crying out, "On eighteenpence a-week I've lived before;" or become a barn-inhabiting, or even a "jolly beggar!" But

"He, poor fellow, had a wife and children; Two things to *sinking* people quite bewildering:"

and cowed by their recollection, he, after one or two fierce recalitrations, ate up his words, wrote some loyal songs, and

made up his peace as handsomely as he could.

But he *was* now manifestly going down, and that in the sight of a Scotland which had received him as it never received a poet before or since. His works were read in every hamlet, and his songs sung in every cottage, and the poet was poor, neglected, and miserable. Partly, indeed, we grant that the fault was his own. Nor was his case so well known as it would now become in the course of a single week. We fear, however, that it was better known than is now generally suspected. But most men passed by him. The cold-blooded clergy of the time never sought him out, to try to reform him—he was none of *their* charge; and they, with one consent, shunned him as if he were infected with the plague. No nobleman was there now to come to his dwelling, and to "bid him be happy." Mrs Dunlop herself at last became cold. And a few plain individuals in Dumfries were the only good Samaritans that came near him in his closing days.

That his conduct in Dumfries has been painted in colours too dark, is highly probable. This is the case with all remarkable men. Their virtues are often over-estimated; but, on the other hand, their venial errors are puffed out into enormous transgressions; and if great sinners they be, report must darken them into miscreants and monsters. Robert Chambers seems satisfactorily to prove that Burns was never a habitual drunkard. This, however, was never the real gravamen of the charges brought against the Scottish poet. The worse sins with which he was chargeable were, as Ebenezer Elliot remarks, incompatible with *habitual* drunkenness, although fanned and stimulated by occasional excess. Delicacy has forbid his last biographer from lifting up fully the veil from this painful subject.

Without seeking to uplift that veil, stern truth compels us to say, that there remain monuments of his perverted genius, in the shape of unpublished poems, songs, and letters, at which humanity

must blush, and at which devils themselves might weep.

Alas! for poor human nature! Alas! for the indiscriminate admirers of the errors of genius! But alas! for us, too, if we could regard Burns and his fate, without the profoundest compassion, and if we could close this brief outline of his history, without reminding our readers that he died a penitent; that the Bible was often latterly in his hands; and that although, according to Mr Chambers, his last word was a muttered curse, *that* was an expression of his dying delirium, and must not be taken as a fair index of the final state of his mind.

We pass to make some remarks on his general powers and place as a writer. His powers consisted of great perspicacity of thought, strength of rude, natural logic, vivid imagination and fancy, a fertile though coarse wit, humour of the richest and truest grain, lyrical impulse and music, a racy, varied, and powerful diction, all inspirited by a constant play of passionate enthusiasm, and pulsing to the motions of a hot and half-maddened blood. Like all great poets, he combined something of the animal, of the man, and of the woman, with rather much, however, of the first, and with a strong dash of the "Deil" besides. His genius did not lie in him separate from his general idiosyncrasy, as the bag of honey in the bee; it was the result of all his powers and passions, even as the sun's crown of rays is the result of all the light and radiance of his orb. And yet his addiction to poetry did not, as some pretend, arise entirely from the warmth of his temperament. He might, indeed, in certain conceivable circumstances, have not been a rhymers, but in no conceivable circumstances could he have failed to be a poet. Had he become a statesman, he would have been a poetical statesman, like Burke; or a warrior, he had written in fire another Napoleon; or if a divine, he had been a divine like Jeremy Taylor; or if a philosopher, he had wreathed richer flowers than ever did Brown or Jeffrey, around his metaphysical speculations. But a poet—*i. e.*, a man of lofty genius, insight,

heart, and passion—he of necessity and by nature was.

Robert Chambers contests with Carlyle the notion of the latter—that Burns might have been the first statesman of his age, and asks how a man unable to control his own passions could sway great democracies? Surely this is a very shallow question. Who were the leading statesmen of Burns' age? The eminently continent C. J. Fox; the extremely sober William Pitt; the calm, unexcitable, mild-tempered Edmund Burke; *Sheridan*; and in France, those two pattern sons of Anak, Mirabeau and Danton! Who have succeeded since? Such miracles of self-control as Canning, Lyndhurst, and Lord Brougham. Could any one of these control his own passions; and yet, have not all been eminent statesmen?

We venture to conjecture that if by any chance Robert Burns could have got into the Parliament of 1790, and lighted on a seat in the cabinet, he would have drank less than Pitt, gamed less than Fox, commanded his temper better than Burke; that, moreover, he would have equalled Fox in power of speech, Harry Dundas in *cauld-farrand* humour, Sheridan in wit and fancy; and if inferior to Burke in deep sagacity and culture, would have equalled him in genius, and overmatched him in plain, direct, manly common sense. But the very supposition is so preposterous, that we almost laugh as we think of two clever men like Carlyle and Chambers gravely discussing it. Burns, indeed, perhaps when wishing to hoax his auditors, used to talk of what he might do were he in Parliament. But the idea of a gauger—although about the most gifted man alive, and of whose poetry Pitt himself said, that since Shakspeare's, of all poetry it came most sweetly from nature—in *that age*, getting into the Commons or the Cabinet! Had it occurred, lords manifold would have given up the ghost, and their ladies, in multitudes, gone into hysterics.

Burns' place as a poet has been fixed by the consent of the whole world, and the voice that would reverse this verdict

must be strong as that of another globe. That verdict is, that he stands only a little below in faculty, although greatly below in actual development and result, the highest poets on earth—the Homers, Dantes, Shakspere, Miltons, and Scotts. Both he and Byron possessed native power qualifying them to have approached very near those demigods of fame. But various causes combined to prevent either from reaching the eminence to which their native genius might have raised them. Burns especially has left only the splinters of a broken colossus.

This leads us, thirdly, to speak of his poems and prose writings individually; premising, however, that we have little that is absolutely new to say of them, so much has been said, and well said, already. Unquestionably the most creative of all his poems are "Tam o' Shanter" and the "Jolly Beggars." Such genius, wit, humour, dramatic skill, invention, lavished upon such subjects! Morland painting asses and swine was nothing to Burns sitting, in the second of these, on a whisky-barrel, and immortalising the motley crew of male and female blackguards revolving round it as round a sun! And with what gusto and sympathy does he get up behind "Tam" in that weird and tipsy gallop! Carlyle has some criticism on "Tam o' Shanter," which we do not profess to understand. He speaks as if the supernatural and the human elements in the poem were somehow not properly reconciled, or attuned to each other. Now, we think the power of the poem lies in the quick and startling contrast between the revelry of the inn and that of the infernal, or semi-infernal, crew in the kirk. The two pictures, both exquisite in their way, hang over against each other, and serve to bring out, as painters would say, the *tone* of each. From a snug fireside, we come out first into the bleakness of a roaring tempest, and next into the ruddy glare of hell! The effect is almost entirely produced by the subtle opposition of the different scenes, which very properly the author has not even attempted to reconcile, or, as Carlyle has it, to "bridge

across." Some have objected to the close as a "lame and impotent conclusion." But it, in fact, does not belong to the poem. *That*, as a piece of art, is finished in the words—

"In a moment all was dark."

Here the poem might have stopped; for, sooth to say, we care very little whether the sapient Tam be overtaken by "Cutty-Sark," or get home to the curtain-lectures of Kata.

It is needless to remark of both these marvellous poems, what Campbell says of one of them, that they seem to come out as "from a mould," entire, full-cast, hissing hot. You dare not alter a word, cut out an oath, or prune a coarse witicism, in the "Jolly Beggars"—the bad and the good, the clever and the profane, are inextricably intertwined. You must either reject both, or make a great gulp and swallow both. The best way of bringing out its tone is to read it immediately before, or after, the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and to marvel how the same mind has succeeded in daguerreotyping with equal force and accuracy scenes so prodigiously diverse.

As next in original merit, we would class, not his "Cottar's Saturday Night," nor even his songs, but his poetical epistles and satirical pieces. Less pleasing, pathetic, and musical than his songs, they discover more, we think, of that virgin richness of thought, that penetrating observation, that racy humour, and that powerful "mother wit," which distinguished his conversation. In his songs he is often imitating ancient models—which are not always imitable; in his poetical epistles and satires, he is throwing out in wild profusion the accumulated wealth of a great native genius. Such are his epistles to Lapraik, to Smith, to a "Young Friend," his "Twa Dogs," his "Address to the Deil," his "Death and Dr Hornbook," and the hundred other satirical *morceaux* which dropped from his pen. His moralising and his satirising vein are both alike original and inexhaustible. Horace is not more elegantly sententious than he sometimes is; nor is

Juvenal ever more terse and tremendous than in his darker mood does Burns become.

In two or three of his poems, he essays a style of which we wish that he had given us larger specimens—we refer to the visionary or purely bardic manner. The best specimens of this are of course his two "Visions," the one at his own "chimney-neuk," and the other at Lincluden Abbey. The second is more elaborate and artistic, although very striking; but the first is pure inspiration. In writing it, he seems, like Coleridge, when copying the lines of Kubla Khan, which he had made in his dream, to be in haste lest the magic syllables, which had come upon him like shadows, should "so depart." His words rush—hurry—almost trample upon each other—in their eagerness to record the glorious vision, ere, like a flush on the evening sky, or a momentary halo around the moon, it has passed irrecoverably away. And this poem came upon the ploughman as he sat by a peat-fire, with a deal table before him, and nothing but a bowl of milk as the Helicon of his nose. Verily the spirit of poetry, like the wind, "bloweth where it listeth."

His epitaphs and epigrams, with some exceptions, are mere trash, with a little cleverness barely serving to spice profanity and the coarsest commonplace. It is humiliating to think of the author of the "Vision" reduced to a maker of extempore graces before meat, which were in general mere *niaiserie*s.

Very different is our estimate of his songs. As it should be with all true songs, they are richer in feeling than in thought. They catch and crystallise some one simple emotion; some single swelling in a true torn heart; some little incident in personal or domestic life; a feeling that has passed like a breeze over a solitary wanderer at eventide; a mood which has swept over his pillow at midnight, like a meteor:

"Some natural sorrow, love, or pain,
Which has been, and may be again!"

Such is the plain yet profound mate-

rial of songs. A song is just an unmeasured sonnet, and aspires to the same simple unity. It is essentially a *drop*—whether a tear of joy or grief from a poet's eye, or of blood from his very vitals, or of a thunder-shower from the laden sky of his imagination. Such glorious or gloomy drops are Burns' songs; it is a perfect shower of them he pours forth—some luxurious as lovers' tears, others rich as a patriot's gore—some simple as the dew, and two or three magnificent as a cloud on which swims the rainbow. But all are true, all clear, all more or less beautiful. Of Moorean affectation, or of the undue point of Beranger, or of the mystic involution of the songs of Shelley, there is nothing. Yet it is curious, that while no Scottish poet since Burns has approached him by a thousand miles, in the other departments of poetry, some, such as Tannahill, Robert Gilfillan, and others, have uttered melodies not much inferior to his. He is, in fact, the greatest of Scottish song-writers, chiefly because he was before the rest in the field, and because his songs are more numerous and more varied. This seems to prove that good song-writing is more an affair of warm heart, considerable ingenuity, and good ear, than of transcendent genius. Even poor Sandy Rogers has written songs not unworthy of Burns; nor did he ever excel the "Wee Willy Winkie" of William Miller.

Burns' prose seemed to Dr Robertson to be, considering his circumstances, even more remarkable than his poetry. It has in it, in proportion, a great deal more trash; but it has also some passages which no prose-writer has since surpassed. If you regard it as a series of compositions, it fails: the true light to look at it is as a succession of fierce fragments torn from a ruin—some distinguished by symmetry and strength, and others only by their rude and jagged angles. Yet from what a noble ruin have his letters to Cunningham, to Dr Moore, and to Mrs Dunlop proceeded! Cowper's letters, as a whole, are more pleasing, easy, and better sustained, but have few passages

to compare with the finer flights of the gauger.

What a pity that Burns had no Boswell to track his steps, and catch the fire-syllables which fell in such rapid profusion and bickering brilliance from his touched lips! His talk seems to have been as strong, natural, and rich an essence as ever flowed from the lips of man. It was strong as a native power, and it was of all his powers the most carefully cultivated. Like Dr Johnson, he generally set himself to "talk his best." In society, and particularly in that of ladies, he seemed to "forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." His soul expanded, his heart opened, his eye kindled, his rough voice softened into music, and the pent-up waters of wisdom, wit, tenderness, humour, and knowledge of human nature which were in him, "flowed amain." Hearts burned within them, eyes moistened, bosoms heaved, as he talked; laughter looked out through eyes that wept, or tears came and drowned laughter; many were agitated and shaken, and others, obeying the calmer and mightier spell of his genius, felt, as John Scott so finely says, "their minds touched with a strange joy, which they may *recognise in more exalted stages* of their being." And all this effect was produced, not by an elaborate artist playing bravuras, not through any assumption of oracular depth or dignity, not through any determination to be the chief speaker, but through the mere outpouring of a mighty soul, which had besides made conversation a study, found in it a fit element, and learned to spring up under the genial call of society into his fullest power, like the war-horse to the sound of the trumpet. How one wishes that Burke, the greatest talker then alive in England, had met and measured lances with Burns, the greatest talker in Scotland; and that Bozzy, who was still alive, had been subpoenaed to be present! They had been wonderfully well met; for in native genius and wealth of mind they were equal; and Burke's subtle reflection and profound learning would have found a counterpoise in the brilliant wit and robust manhood of the intellect of Burns.

We have left ourselves little room for the last, and, as it may seem to some, the most important part of the subject, namely, the influence which Burns and his writings have exerted upon his native country. And yet, perhaps, the whole truth on this subject may be comprised in a very few sentences. His influence has been in part beneficial, and in part pernicious. Burns HAS added an imperishable nimbus of glory to his country; and Scotland, notwithstanding all his errors, is proud of having produced such a son, and produced him, too, from the yeoman class—the same class amid which Shakspeare in England lifted up his refulgent and many-sided head. He has stirred the patriotic flame; he has animated often the "glow o' weel-placed love;" he has once or twice even stirred the altar fires to a brighter and holier blaze. Need we name the "Cottar's Saturday Night?" He has even, too, in more than one powerful strain, shown the deformity of vice. Need we name his "Epistle to a Young Friend?" He has excited, besides, in the peasantry a thirst for knowledge, an ambition for intellectual distinction, a proud and salutary consciousness of themselves and of the dignity of independent toil. What a contrast between the spirit of his song, "A man's a man for a' that," and the *funkeyism* of many even in our day, who are so glad to get a little vulgar eclat reflected on public meetings from the presence of lords and literary baronets, although the life thus given is generally galvanic, the light discoloured, and the glory meretricious and evanescent!

But there is another side to the picture. Burns has sometimes fanned the polluted fires of licentiousness and debauchery—he has taught many to identify genius with vice—he has at times shed a rainbow lustre around mere animalism—he has not unfrequently insulted religion through its forms and its professors—and has here and there treated sacred things with undue levity. God forbid that we should say he has done this *intentionally*! We believe, on the contrary, that had he foreseen all the evil effects

some of his writings were to produce in that "dear auld Scotland" which he loved so warmly, he would have burned them and his pen too. On the whole, his influence has been, we think, *rather* greater for good than for evil. The offences of some of his minor poems may be considered counterbalanced by his better and

larger ones. "The Cottar's Saturday Night" has probably done more good than his worse productions have done ill; and, as we are loth to part from such a man in anger, we may say, even in reviewing his personal career,

"The glory dies not, and the grief is past:
Peace, peace to his glorious dust!"

LORD BYRON.

An objection may meet us on the threshold of this, as well as on that of some previous papers. It may seem that to attempt a new estimate of a character so thoroughly scrutinised and so widely appreciated as Byron's, is an attempt alike hopeless and presumptuous. And if we did approach it with the desire of finding or saying anything absolutely new, we should feel the full force of the objection. But this is far from being our ambition. We have decided to sketch Lord Byron's genius for the following reasons:—First, a very minute is never a very wide, a very particular is seldom a very just, scrutiny or estimate. Second, the criticism of single works pouring from the press, however acute and admirable, is not equivalent to a review of those works taken as a whole. A judgment pronounced upon the first, second, or third storeys of a building, as they successively arise, does not forestall the opinion of one who can overlook the completed structure. Of Byron's several writings we have every variety of separate critiques—good, bad, and indifferent; of his genius, as animating his whole works, we have little criticism, either indifferent, bad, or good. Third, the tumult which all Byron's productions instantly excited—the space they cleared and burned out for themselves, falling like bombshells among the crowd—the strong passions they awakened in their readers, through that intense personality which marked them all—rendered cool appreciation at the time impossible. They came upon the public like powerful sermons on an

excited audience, sweeping criticism away before them, blotting out principles of art from the memory of the severest judges, whose hearts they stormed, whose passions they inflamed—at the same time that they sometimes revolted their tastes, and sometimes insulted their understandings. At night there was intoxication—in the morning calm reflection came. But, in the meantime, the poet was away; his song had become immortal, and the threatened arrows were quietly returned to the quiver again. Then, Byron's life and story formed a running commentary upon his works, which tended at once to excite and to bewilder his readers. His works have now illustrated editions: they did not require this while he lived. Besides, his romantic history, partially disclosed, and, therefore, more effective in its interest—his early, hapless love—his first unfortunate publication—his Grecian travels—his resistless rush into fame—his miserable marriage—his amours—the glorious backgrounds which he chose for his tragic attitudes, Switzerland and Italy—his personal beauty—his very lameness—the odd and yet unludicrous compound which he formed of Vulcan and Venus, of Apollo and Satyr, of favourite and football of destiny—the mysterious spectacle he presented of a most miserable man, composed of all the materials which make others happy—the quaint mixture of all opposites in his character, irreconcilable till in the ruin of death—the cloak of mystery which he now carefully threw over, and now pettishly withdrew from,

his own character—the impossibility of either thoroughly hating, or loving, or laughing at him,—the unique and many-sided puzzle which he thus made, had the effect of maddening the public and of mystifying his critics. Hal is charged by Falstaff with giving him medicines to make him love him. Byron gave men medicines to educe toward himself a mixture of all possible feelings—anger, envy, admiration, love, pity, blame, horror, and, above all, wonder as to what could be the conceivable issue of a life so high and so low—so earthly and so unearthly—so spiritual and so sensual—so melancholy and so mirthful, as he was notoriously leading. This was the perpetual stimulus to the readers of his works—this the face and figure filling the margins of all his pages. This now is over. That strange life is lived—that knot too hard and twisted for man is away elsewhere to be solved—that heart, so differently reported of by different operators, has undergone the stern analysis of death. His works have now emerged from that fluctuating shadow of himself which seemed to haunt and guard them all; and we can now judge of them, though not apart from his personal history, yet undistracted by its perpetual protrusion. Next, Byron was the victim of two opposite currents in the public feeling—one unduly exalting, and the other unduly depressing, his name, both of which have now so far subsided, that we can judge of him out of the immediate or overbearing influence of either. And, in fine, as intimated already, no attempt has been made, since his death, either to collect the scattered flowers of former fugitive criticism, to be bound in one chaplet round his pale and noble brow, or to wreath for it fresh and independent laurels. Moore's life is a long apology for his memory, such as a partial friend might be expected to make to a public then partial, and unwilling to be convicted of misplaced idolatry. Macaulay's critique is an elegant *fasciculus* of all the fine things which it had occurred to him might be said on such a theme—exhibits, besides, the coarse current of Byron's life

caught in crystal and tinged with *couleur de rose*, like a foul winter stream shining in ice and evening sunshine—and has many beautiful remarks about his poems; but neither abounds in original views, nor gives, what its author could so admirably have given, a collection of common opinions on his entire genius and works, forming a full-length portrait, ideally like, vigorously distinct, and set, in his own brilliant imagery and language, as in a frame of gold.

Our endeavour at present is to make some small contribution towards a future likeness of Byron. And whatever may be the effect of our remarks upon the public, and however they may or may not fail in starting from slumber the "coming man" who shall criticise Byron as Thomas Carlyle has criticised Jean Paul, and Wilson, Burns: this, at least, shall be ours—we shall have expressed our honest convictions—uttered an idea that has long lain upon our minds—and repaid, in part, a debt of gratitude which we owe to Byron, as men owe to some terrible teacher, who has at once roused and tortured their minds; as men owe to the thunder-peak which has awakened them, sweltering, at the hour when it behoved them to start on some journey of life and death.

We propose to methodise our paper under the following outlines:—We would, first, inquire into Byron's purpose; secondly, into the relation in which he has stood to his age, and the influence he has exerted over it; thirdly, into the leading features of his artistic execution; fourthly, speak of the materials on which his genius fed; fifthly, glance at the more characteristic of his works; and, sixthly, try to settle his rank as a poet. We would first ask at Byron the simple question, "What do you mean?" A simple question truly, but significant as well, and not always very easy to answer. It is always, however, our duty to ask it, and we have, in general, a right surely to expect a reply. If a man come and make us a speech, we are entitled to understand his language as well as to see his object. If a man administer to us a reproof, or

salute us with a sudden blow, we have a double right to turn round and ask, "Why?" Nay, if a man come professing to utter an oracular deliverance, even in this case we expect some glimmer of definite meaning and object; and, if glimmer there be none, we are justified in concluding, that neither has there been any oracle. "Oracles speak:" oracles should also shine. Now, in Byron's case, we have a man coming forward to utter speeches, to administer reproofs, to smite the public on both cheeks—in the attitude of an accuser, impeaching man—of a blasphemer, attacking God—of a prophet—expressing himself, moreover, with the clearness and the certainty of profound and dogmatic conviction; and we have thus more than a threefold right to inquire, What is your drift? what would you have us to believe, or what to do? Now here, precisely, we think, is Byron's fatal defect. He has no such clear, distinct, and overpowering object, as were worthy of securing, or as has secured, the complete concentration of his splendid powers. His object! what is it? Not to preach the duty of universal despair, or to inculcate the propriety of an "act of universal, simultaneous suicide;" else, why did he not, first, set the example himself, and from "Leucadia's rock," which "still o'erlooks the wave," or Etna's crater, precipitate himself, as a signal for the species to follow? and why, second, did he profess such trust in schemes of political amelioration, and die in the act of leading on a revolutionary war? Not to teach, nor yet to impugn any system of religion: for, if one thing be more certain about him than another, it is, that he had no settled convictions on such subjects at all, and was only beginning to entertain a desire toward forming them when the "great teacher," Death, arrived. Nor was his purpose merely to display his own powers and passions in imposing aspects. Much of this desire, indeed, mingled with his ambition, but he was not altogether a vain attitudiniser. There is sterling truth in his taste and style of writing—there is sincerity in his anguish—and his little pieces, particularly, are

the mere wringings of his heart. Who can doubt that his brow, the index of the soul, darkened as he wrote that fearful curse, the burden of which is "Forgiveness?" The paper on which was written his farewell to Lady Byron is still extant, and it is all blurred and blotted with his tears. His poem entitled "The Dream" is as sincere as if it had been penned in blood. And was he not sincere in sleep, when he ground his teeth to pieces in gnashing them? But his sincerity was not of that profound, constant, and consistent kind which deserves the stronger name of earnestness. It did not answer to the best description in poetry of the progress of such a spirit, which goes on

"Like to the Pontick sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps right on
To the Propontick and the Hellespont."

It was a sincerity such as the falsest and the most hollow of men must express when stung to the quick; for hath not he, as well as a Jew, "eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Is he not fed with the same food, and hurt by the same weapons? If you prick him, does he not bleed? If you tickle him, does he not laugh? If you poison him, does he not die? And if you wrong him, does he not revenge?" Purpose, therefore, in its genuine simplicity, and quiet, deep fixity, was wanting in Byron's character. And this greatly accounts for the wreck which he became; and for that misery—a misery which was wonderful, passing the wo of man—which sat down upon his spirit. Many accounts have been given of his grief. Macaulay says that he was a spoiled child. Shelley declares—

"The thought that he was greater than his
 kind
Had struck, methought, his eagle spirit
 blind
By gazing at its own exceeding light."

But the plain prose and English of it lay in his union of intensity of power with the want of intensity of purpose. He was neither one thing nor yet another. Life with him was neither, on the one

hand, an earnest, single-eyed effort, nor was it, could it be, a mere display. He believed, and trembled as he believed, that it was a serious thing to die, but did not sufficiently, if at all, feel that it was as "serious a thing to live." He would not struggle: he must shine; but could not be *content* with mere shining without struggle. And hence, ill at ease with himself, aimless and hopeless, "like the Cyclops—mad with blindness," he turned to bay against society—man—and his Maker. And hence, amid all that he has said to the world—and said so eloquently, and said so mournfully, and said amid such wide, and silent, and profound attention—he has *told* it little save his own sad story.

We pass, secondly, to speak of the relation in which he stood to his age. The relations in which a man stands to his age are perhaps threefold. He is either before it or behind it, or exactly on a level with it. He is either its forerunner; or he is dragged as a captive at its chariot-wheels; or he walks calmly, and step for step, along with it. We behold in Milton the man before his age—not, indeed, in point of moral grandeur or mental power; for, remember, his age was the age of the Puritans, the age of Hampden, Selden, Howe, Vane, and of Cromwell, who was a greater writer than Milton himself—only it was with the sword that he wrote—and whose deeds were quite commensurate with Milton's words. But, in point of liberality of sentiment and width of view, the poet strode across entire centuries. We see in Southey the man behind his age, who, indeed, in his youth, took a rash and rapid race in advance, but returned like a beaten dog, cowed, abashed, with downcast head, and tail between his legs, and ceased for the rest of his life to have much sympathy with the leading movements of society. We behold in Brougham one whom once the age was proud, in its ignorance, to claim as its child and champion, the express image of its bustling, restless, versatile, and onward character. In which of these relations, is it asked, did Byron stand to his age? We are forced to an-

swer, In none of them. He was not before his age in anything—in opinion, or in feeling. He was not, in all or many things, disgracefully behind it; nor did he move with equal and measured step in its procession. He stood to the age in a most awkward and uncertain attitude. He sneered at its advancement, and he lent money, and ultimately lost his life, in attempting to promote it. He spoke with uniform contempt of, and imitated as uniformly, the masterpieces of its literature. He abused Wordsworth in public, and in private "rolled him as a sweet morsel under his tongue;" or rather, if you believe himself, took him as a drastic dose, to purify his bilious and unhappy nature, by the strongest contrasted element that he could find. He often reviled and ridiculed revealed religion, and yet read the Bible more faithfully and stately than most professed Christians—made up in superstition what he wanted in faith—had a devout horror at beginning his poems, undertaking his journeys, or paring his nails on a Friday—and, had he lived, would probably have ended, like his own Giaour, as "Brother Byron," with hair shirt and iron-spiked girdle, in some Achaian or Armenian convent. He habitually trampled on, and seems sometimes to have really despised, the opinion of the public; and yet, in some points, felt it so keenly, that, says Ebenezer Elliott, "he would have gone into hysterics had a tailor laughed at him." And although, when the "Edinburgh Review" sought to crush him like a worm, he rose from the heel a fiery, flying serpent, yet, to the assaults of the meaner creatures of the press, he was pervious all over, and allowed minnikin arrows, which were beneath his laughter, to rouse his rage. Absurd and ludicrous the spectacle of this Laocoon, covered from head to foot with the snakes of supernal vengeance, bearing their burden with deep agonised silence, and yet starting and shrieking upon the application of a thorn, which the hand of some puny passing malignant had thrust into his foot! In one respect, we grant that Byron was the spirit of the age; he was

the representative of its wants, its weakness, its discontents, its dark unrest—but not of its aspirations, its widening charity, and its hopeful tendencies. His voice was the deep vague moan of the world's dream—his writhing anguish, the last struggle of its troubled slumber: it has since awaked, or is awakening, and, “as a dream when one awakeneth,” it is despising, too much despising, his image. He stood high, yet helpless, above our transition period, and all the helpless and the hopeless rallied round to constitute him first magistrate over a city in flames—supreme ruler in a blasted and ruined realm. In one thing he was certainly a prophet; namely, a prophet of evil. As misery was the secret sting of all his inspiration, it became the invariable matter of all his song. In some of his poems you have misery contemplating; in others, misery weeping aloud; in others, misery revolving and reproducing the past; in others, misery bursting the confines of the world, as if in search of a wider hell than that in which it felt itself environed; in others, misery stooping to turn and rend its real or imaginary foes; and in others, misery breaking out into hollow, hopeless, and heartless laughter. (What a terrible thing is the *laugh* of the unhappy! It is the very “echo to the seat where sorrow is throned.”) But in all you have misery: and whether he returns the old thunder in a voice of kindred power and majesty, or sings an evening song with the grasshopper at his feet—smiles the smile of bitterness, or sheds the burning tears of anger—his voice still speaks of desolation, mourning, and wo; the vocabulary of grief labours under the demands of his melancholy genius; and never more, till this scene of tears and sighs be ended, shall we meet with a more authentic and profound expounder of the wretchedness of man. And as such we deem him to have done good service; because he who approaches toward the bottom of human wo, proves that it is not altogether bottomless, however deep; and because the writings of Byron have saved us, in this country, what in France has been so pernicious,

“the literature of desperation:” they are a literature of desperation in themselves; they condense into one volume what in France has been diluted throughout many, and, consequently, our country has drained off at one draught, and survived the experiment, the poison which our neighbours have been sipping for years, to their deadly harm.

Thus, on the whole, we regard Byron neither as in any sense a creator, nor wholly as a creature of his period; but rather as a stranger entangled in the passing stream of its crowd, imperfectly adjusted to its customs, indifferently reconciled to its laws—among men, but not of them—a man of the *world*, but not a man of the age; and who has rather fallen furiously through it—spurning its heights, and seeking its depths—than left on it any deep or definite impression. Some men are buried, and straightway forgotten—shovelled out of memory as soon as shovelled into the tomb. Others are buried, and from their graves, through the hands of ministering love, arise fragrant flowers and verdant branches, and thus are they, in a subordinate sense, “raised in glory.” Others, again, lie down in the dust, and though no blossom or bough marks the spot, and though the timid shun it at evening-tides as a spot unblest, yet forgotten it can never be, for there lies the record of a great guilty life extinct, and the crown of crime sits silent and shadowy on the tombstone. This is Byron's memorial in the age. But, as even on Nero's tomb “some hand unseen strewed flowers,” and as “nothing dies but something mourns,” let us lay a frail garland upon the sepulchre of a ruin, and say, *requiescat in pace*, as we hurry on.

We come, thirdly, to speak of the leading features of his artistic execution, and the materials which his genius used. And here there are less mingled feelings to embarrass the critical contemplator. Strong, direct intellect, descriptive force, and personal passion, seem the main elements of Byron's poetical power. He sees clearly, he selects judiciously for effect from among the points he does

see, and he paints them with a pencil dipped in his own fiery heart. He was a splendid representative of the English character of mind. His lordly independence and high-spiritedness; his fearless avowal of his prejudices, however narrow, and passions, however coarse; his constant clearness and decision of tone and of style; his manly vigour and directness; his strong unreasoning instinctive sense; his abhorrence of mysticism; and his frequent caprices—all savoured of that literature which had reared Dryden, Pope, and Johnson; and every peculiarity of the English school seems to have clustered in and around him. Byron was, perhaps, with the exception of Shakspeare and Milton, the greatest *purely English* poet. His manner had generally all the clearness and precision of sculpture; indeed, his clearness serves often to disguise his depth. As obscurity sometimes gives an air of mystic profundity and solemn grandeur to a shallow puddle, so, on the other hand, we have seen pools among the mountains, whose pellucidity made them appear less profound, and where every small shining pebble was a bright liar as to the real depth of the waters; such pools are many of the poems of Byron, and we may add of Campbell.

His dominion over the darker passions is one of the most obvious features in his poetic character. He rode in a chariot drawn, if we may use the figure, by those horses described in the visions of the Apocalypse, "whose heads were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone." And supreme is his management of these dreadful coursers. Wherever human nature is fiercest and gloomiest—wherever furnace-bosoms have been heated seven times hotter by the unrestrained passions and the torrid suns of the East and the South—wherever man verges toward the animal or the fiend—wherever misanthropes have folded their arms, and taken their desperate attitude—wherever stands "the bed of sin, delirious with its dread"—wherever devours "the worm that cannot sleep, and never dies"—there the melancholy muse of Byron

finds its subjects and its haunts. Driven from a home in his country, he seeks it in the mansions of all unhappy hearts, which open gloomily, and admit him as their tenant and their bard. To escape from one's-self, is the desire of many, of all the miserable—the desire of the drunkard, of the opium-eater, of those who plunge into the vortex of any dissipation, who indulge in any delicious dream; but it is the singularity of Byron that he uniformly escapes from himself into something more miserable. His being transmigrates into a darker and more demoniac shape; he becomes an epicure even in wretchedness; he has supped full of common miseries, and must create and exhaust imaginary horrors. What infinite pity that a being so gifted, and that might have been so noble, should find it necessary perpetually to evade himself! Hence his writings abound, more than those of other authors, with lines and phrases which seem to concentrate all wretchedness within them—with texts for misanthropes and mottoes for the mouths of suicides. "Years all winters"—what a gasp is that, and how characteristic of him to whose soul summer had not come, and spring had for ever faded! The charge of affectation has often been brought against Byron's proclamations of personal wo. But no one, we believe, was ever a constant and consistent hypocrite in such a matter as misery; and we think we can argue his sincerity, not merely from his personal declarations, but from this fact, that all the characters into whom he shoots his soul are unhappy. Tasso writhing in the dungeon, Dante prophesying evil, not to speak of imaginary heroes, such as Conrad, Alp, the Giaour, and Childe Harold, betray in what direction ran the master current of his soul; and as the bells and bubbles upon the dark pool form an accurate measurement of its depth, so his mirth, in its wildness, recklessness, and utter want of genuine gaiety, tells sad tales about the state of a heart which neither on earth nor in heaven could find aught to cheer or comfort it.

Besides those intensely English qualities which we have enumerated as Byron's, there sprung out from him, and mainly through the spur of wo, a higher power than appeared originally to belong to his nature. After all his faculties seemed fully developed, and after critics and craniologists had formed their unalterable estimate of them, he began, as if miraculously, to grow into a loftier shape and stature, and compelled these same sapient judges, slowly and reluctantly, to amend their conclusions. In his "Cain," his "Heaven and Earth," and his "Vision of Judgment," he exhibited the highest form of the faculty divine—the true afflatus of the bard. He seemed to rise consciously into his own region; and, certainly, for gloomy grandeur, and deep, desolate beauty, these productions surpass all the writings of the period. Now, for the first time, men saw the Pandemonian palace of his soul fully lit, and they trembled at its ghastly splendour. Yet, curious it is to remark that those were precisely the poems which the public at first received most coldly. Those who shouted applause when he issued the two first elegant, but comparatively shallow, cantos of "Childe Harold," which were the reflection of other minds, shrank from him when he displayed the terrible riches of his own.

We need only mention the materials on which Byron's genius fed—and, indeed, we must substitute the singular term—for his material was not manifold, but one; it was the history of his own heart that his genius reproduced in all his poems. His poetry was the mirror of himself.

In considering, fourthly, the more characteristic of his works, we may divide them into his juvenile productions, his popular, and his proscribed works. His juvenile productions testified to nothing but the power of his passions, the strength of his ambition, and the uncertainty of his aims. His "Hours of Idleness" was, in one respect, the happiest hit he ever made; it was fortunate enough to attract abuse from the highest critical authority

in the empire, and thereby stirred his pride, and effectually roused his faculties. It required a scorching heat to hatch a Byron! In his "English Bards," he proved himself rather a pugilist than a poet. It is the work of a man of Belial, "flown with insolence and wine." His popular productions were principally written when he was still a favourite son of society, the idol of drawing-rooms, and the admired, as well as observed, of all observers. "Childe Harold" is a transcription of the serious and *publishable* part of his journal, as he travelled in Greece, Spain, and Italy. "The Giaour" is a powerful, half-length picture of himself. "The Bride of Abydos" is a tender and somewhat maudlin memory of Greece. "The Corsair" was the work of a fortnight, and seems to have brought one period of his life, as well as of his popularity, to a glittering point. In all this class of his poems, we see him rather revolving the memory of past, than encountering the reality of present, misery. You have pensive sentiment rather than quick and fresh anguish. But his war with society was now about to begin in right earnest; and, in prophetic anticipation of this, he wrote his "Parasina" and his "Siege of Corinth." These were the first great drops of the thunder-storm he was soon to pour down upon the world; and the second of them, in its heat and frenzied haste, proclaims a troubled and distracted state of mind. In referring his medical advisers to it as a proof of his mental insanity he rather blundered; for, although it wants the incoherence, it has the fury of madness. It is the most rapid and furious race he ever ran to escape from himself. Then came his open breach with English society, his separation from his lady, and his growling retreat to his Italian den. But ere yet he plunged into that pool, where the degradation of his genius, and where its power were perfect, he must turn round, and close in wilder, loftier measures the sad song of "Childe Harold," which in life's summer he had begun; and strange it was to mark, in those two last cantos, not only their deepened power and earnestness,

but their multiplied sorrow. He seemed to have gone away to Addison's "Mountain of Miseries," and exchanged one burden for a worse—sorrow for despair. He had fallen so low, that suicide had lost its charms: and when one falls beneath the suicide point, his misery is perfect; for his quarrel then is not with *life*, but with *being*. Yet how horribly beautiful his conversation with the dust of empires—with the gigantic skeleton of Rome—with the ocean, which meets him like that simulacrum of the Sea which haunted the madness of Caligula—with all the mighty miserable in the past—with those spirits which he summons from the "vasty deep"—or with those ill-favoured ones "who walk the shadow of the vale of death." He speaks to them as their equal and kindred spirit. "Hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming: they speak, and say unto him, Art thou become like unto us?" As another potentate, do those "Anarchs old"—Orcus, Hades, and the "dreaded Name of Demogorgon"—admit him into their company, and make him free of the privileges of their dreary realm.

Having thus taken a last proud farewell of society, with all its forms and conventionalities, he turned him to the task of pouring out his envenomed and disappointed spirit in works which society was as certain to proscribe as it was to peruse; and there followed that marvellous series of poems to which we have already referred as his most peculiar and powerful productions—most powerful, because most sincere. And yet the public proved how false and worthless its former estimate of Byron's genius had been, by denouncing those, his best writings, not merely for their wickedness, but for their artistic execution. It is humiliating to revert to the reviews and newspapers of that period, and to read the language in which they speak of "Cain," "Sardanapalus," and the "Vision of Judgment," uniformly treating them as miserable fallings-off from his former self—beneath even the standard of his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." "Cain" we regard not only as Byron's noblest production,

but as one of the finest poems in this or any language. It is such a work as Milton, had he been miserable, would have written. There is nothing in "Paradise Lost" superior to Cain's flight with Lucifer through the stars, and nothing in Shakspeare superior to his conversations with his wife Adah. We speak simply of its merits as a work of art—its object is worthy of all condemnation: that is, to paint a more soured and savage Manfred, engaged in a controversy, not merely with himself, but with the system of which he is one diseased and desperate member; in the unequal strife overwhelmed, and, as if the crush of Omnipotence were not enough, bringing down after him, in his fall, the weight of a brother's blood; and the object of the fable is not, as it ought to have been, to show the madness of all selfish struggle against the laws of God, but to more than intimate the poet's belief, that the laws which occasion such a struggle are cruel and unjust. There is an unfair distribution of misery and guilt in the story. The misery principally accrues to Cain; but a large proportion of the guilt is caught, as by a whirlwind, and flies up in the face of his Maker. The great crime of the poem is not that its hero utters blasphemies, but that you shut it with a doubt whether these blasphemies be not true. Milton wrote his great poem to "justify the ways of God to man;" Byron's object seems to be, to justify the ways of man to God—even his wildest and most desperate doings. The pleading is eloquent, but hopeless. It is the bubble on the ridge of the cataract praying not to be carried over and hurried on. Equally vain it is to struggle against those austere and awful laws by which moments of sin expand into centuries of punishment. Yet this was Byron's own life-long struggle, and one which, like men who fight their battles o'er again in sleep, he renewed again and again in every dream of his imagination.

"The Vision of Judgment," unquestionably the best abused, is also one of the best, and by no means the most profane, of his productions. It sprung from the savage disgust produced in his mind

by Southey's "double-distilled" cant, in that poem of his on the death of George III.—which, reversing the usual case, now lives suspended by a tow-line from its caricature. All other hatred—that of Johnson—that of Burke—that of Juvenal—that of all, save Junius—is tame and maudlin compared to the wrath of Byron expressed in this poem. Scorn often has the effect of cooling and carrying off rage—but here "the ground burns froze, and cold performs the effect of fire." His very contempt is molten; his tears of laughter, as well as of misery, fall in *burning* showers. In what single lines has he concentrated the mingled essence of the coolest contempt, and the hottest indignation!—

"A better farmer ne'er brush'd dew from lawn.
A worse king never left a realm undone."

"When the gorgeous coffin was laid low,
It seem'd the mockery of hell to fold
The rottenness of eighty years in gold."

"'Passion!' replied the phantom dim,
'I loved my country, and I hated him.'"

There spoke the authentic shade of Junius, or at least a spirit worthy of contending with him for the honour of being the "Best Hater" upon record.

And yet, mixed with the strokes of ribaldry, are touches of a grandeur which he has rarely elsewhere approached. His poetry always rises above itself, when painting the faded splendour wan—the steadfast gloom—the hapless magnanimity of the prince of darkness. With perfect ease he seems to enter into the soul, and fill up the measure and stature of the awful personage.

It were unpardonable, even in a rapid review, to omit all notice of "Don Juan," which, if it bring our notion of the man to its lowest point, exalts our idea of the poet. Its great charm is its conversational ease. How coolly and calmly he bestrides his Pegasus even when he is at the gallop. With what exquisitely quiet and quick transitions does he pass from humour to pathos, and make you laugh and cry at once, as you do in dreams. It is less a man writing, than a man *resign-*

ing his soul to his reader. To use Scott's beautiful figure, "the stanzas fall off as easily as the leaves from the autumnal tree." You stand under a shower of withered gold. And, in spite of the endless touches of wit, the general impression is most melancholy; and not *Rasselas*, nor *Timon*, casts so deep a shadow on the thoughtful reader as the "very tragical mirth" of *Don Juan*.

In settling, lastly, his rank as a poet, we may simply say, that he must be placed, on the whole, beneath and apart from the first class of poets, such as Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakspeare, and Goethe. Often, indeed, he seems to rush into their company, and to stand among them, like a daring boy amid his seniors, measuring himself proudly with their superior stature. And, possibly, had he lived, he might have ultimately taken his place amongst them, for it was in his power to have done this. But life was denied him. The wild steed of his passions—like his own "Mazeppa"—carried him furiously into the wilderness, and dashed him down into premature death. And he now must take his place as one at the very head of the second rank of poets, and arrested when he was towering up toward the first.

We remember a pilgrimage we made some years ago to Lochnagar. As we ascended, a mist came down over the hill, like a veil dropped by some jealous beauty over her own fair face. At length the summit was reached, though the prospect was denied us. It was a proud and thrilling moment. What though darkness was all around? It was the *very* atmosphere that suited the scene. It was "dark Lochnagar." And only think how fine it was to climb up its cairn—to lift a stone from it, to be in after-time a memorial of our journey, to sing the song which made it glorious and dear, in its own proud drawing-room, with those great fog-curtains floating around—to pass along the brink of its precipices—to snatch a fearful joy, as we leant over, and hung down, and saw from beneath the gleam of eternal snow shining up from its hollows, and columns, or rather perpen-

dicular seas of mist, streaming up upon the wind

"Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell,
Where every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heap'd with the damn'd like pebbles"—

tinged, too, here and there, on their tops by gleams of sunshine, the farewell beams of the dying day. It was the highest moment we ever experienced. We had stood upon many hills—in sunshine and in shade, in mist and in thunder—but never had before, nor hope to have again, such a feeling of the grandeur of this lower universe—such a sense of horrible sublimity. Nay, we question if there be a mountain in the empire, which, though seen in similar circumstances, could awaken the same emotions in our minds. It is not its loftiness, though that be great—nor its bold outline, nor its savage loneliness, nor its mist-loving precipices, but the associations which crown its crags with a "peculiar diadem"—its identification with the image of a poet, who, amid all his fearful errors, had, perhaps more than any of the age's bards, the power of investing all his career—yea, to every corner which his fierce foot ever touched, or which his genius ever sung—with profound and melancholy interest. We saw the name Byron written in the cloud-characters above us. We saw his genius sadly smiling in those gleams of stray sunshine which gilded the darkness they could not dispel. We found an emblem of his passions in that flying rack, and of his character in those lowering precipices. We seemed to hear the wail of his restless spirit in the wild sob of the wind, fainting and struggling up under its burden of darkness. Nay, we could fancy that this hill was designed as an eternal monument to his name, and to image all those peculiarities which make that name for ever illustrious. Not the loftiest of his country's poets, he is the most sharply and terribly defined. In magnitude and round completeness, he yields to many; in jagged, abrupt, and passionate projection of his own shadow over the world of literature, to none. The Genius of convulsion, a dire attraction, dwells around him, which

leads many to hang over, and some to leap down, his precipices. Volcanic as he is, the coldness of wintry selfishness too often collects in the hollows of his verse. He loves, too, the cloud and the thick darkness, and comes "veiling all the lightnings of his song in sorrow." So, like Byron beside Scott and Wordsworth, does Lochnagar stand in the presence of his neighbour giants, Ben Macdhui and Ben-y-boord, less lofty, but more fiercely eloquent in its jagged outline, reminding us of the *terribilis via* of the forked lightning, which it seems dumbly to mimic, projecting its cliffs like quenched batteries against earth and heaven, with the cold of snow in its heart, and with a coronet of mist round its gloomy brow.

No poet, since Homer and Ida, has thus everlastingly shot his genius into the heart of one great mountain, identifying himself and his song with it. Not Horace with Soracte—not Wordsworth with Helvellyn—not Coleridge with Mont Blanc—not Wilson with the Black Mount—not even Scott with the Eildons—all these are still common property, but Lochnagar is Byron's own—no poet will ever venture to sing it again. In its dread circle none durst walk but he. His allusions to it are not numerous, but its peaks stood often before his eye: a recollection of its grandeur served more to colour his line than the glaciers of the Alps, the cliffs of Jura, or the "thunder hills of fear," which he heard in Chimari; even from the mountains of Greece he was carried back to Morven, and "Lochnagar, with Ida, looked o'er Troy." Hence the severe, Dante-like, monumental, mountainous cast of his better poetry; for we firmly believe that the scenery of one's youth gives a permanent bias and colouring to the genius, the taste, and the style—*i. e.*, if there be an intellect to receive an impulse, or a taste to catch a tone. Many, it is true, bred in cities, or amid common scenery, make up for the lack by early travel; so did Milton, Coleridge, and Wilson. But who may not gather, from the tame tone of Cowper's landscapes, that he had never enjoyed

such opportunities? And who, in Pollok's powerful but gloomy poem, may not detect the raven hue which a sterile moorland scenery had left upon his mind? Have not, again, the glad landscape of the Howe of the Mearns, and the prospect from the surmounting Hill of Garvoek, left a pleasing trace upon the mild pages of Beattie's "Minstrel?" Did

not Coila colour the genial soul of its poet? Has not the scenery of his "own romantic town" made much of the prose and poetry of Sir Walter Scott what it is? So, is it mere fancy which traces the stream of Byron's poetry, in its light and its darkness, its bitterness and its brilliance, to this smitten rock in the wilderness—to the cliffs of Lochnagar?

GEORGE CRABBE.

To be the poet of the waste places of Creation—to adopt the orphans of the mighty mother—to wed her dowerless daughters—to find out the beauty which has been spilt in tiny drops in her more unlovely regions—to echo the low music which arises from even her stillest and most sterile spots—was the mission of Crabbe, as a descriptive poet. He preferred the Leahs to the Rachels of nature: and this he did not merely that his lot had cast him amid such scenes, and that early associations had taught him a profound interest in them, but apparently from native taste. He actually loved that beauty which stands shivering on the brink of barrenness—loved it for its timidity and its loneliness. Nay, he seemed to love barrenness itself; brooding over its dull page till there arose from it a strange lustre, which his eye distinctly sees, and which in part he makes visible to his readers. It was even as the darkness of cells has been sometimes peopled to the view of the solitary prisoner, and spiders-seemed friends in the depths of his dungeon. We can fancy, in Crabbe's mind, a feeling of pity for those unloved spots, and those neglected glories. We can fancy him saying, "Let the gay and the aspiring mate with nature in her towering altitudes, and flatter her more favoured scenes; I will go after her into her secret retirements, bring out her bashful beauties, praise what none are willing to praise, and love what there are few to love." From his early cir-

cumstances, besides, there had stolen over his soul a shade of settled though subdued gloom. And for sympathy with this, he betook himself to the sterner and sadder aspects of nature, where he saw, or seemed to see, his own feelings reflected, as in a sea of melancholy faces, in dull skies, waste moorlands, the low beach, and the waves meaning upon it, as if weary of their eternal wanderings. Such, too, at moments, was the feeling of Burns, when he strode on the scaur of the Nith, and saw the waters red and turbid below; or walked in a windy day by the side of a plantation, and heard the "sound of a going" upon the tops of the trees; or when he exclaimed, with a calm simplicity of bitterness which is most affecting—

"The leafless trees my fancy please:
Their fate resembles mine."

Oh! where, indeed, can the unhappy repair, to escape from their own sorrows, or worse, from the unthinking glee or constitutional cheerfulness of others, more fitly than into the wastes and naked places of nature? She will not then and there seem to insult them with her laughing luxuriance—her foliage fluttering, as if in vain display, with the glossy gilding of her flowers, or the sunny sparkle and song of her streamlets. But she will uplift a mightier and older voice. She will soothe them by a sterner ministry. She will teach them "old truths, abysmal truths, awful truths." She will answer their sighs by

the groans of the creation travelling in pain; suck up their tears in the sweat of her great agonies; reflect their tiny wrinkles in those deep stabs and scars on her forehead, which speak of struggle and contest; give back the gloom of their brows in the frowns of her forests, her mountain solitudes, and her waste midnight darkness; infuse something, too, of her own sublime expectancy into their spirits; and dismiss them from her society, it may be sadder, but certainly calmer and wiser men. How admirably is nature suited to all moods of all men! In spring, she is gay with the light-hearted; in summer, gorgeous as its sun to those fiery spirits who seem made for a warmer day; in autumn, she spreads over most hearts a mellow and unearthly joy; and even in winter—when her temple is deserted of the frivolous and the timid, who quit it along with the smile of the sun—she attracts her own few but faithful votaries, who love her in her naked sculpture, as well as in her glowing pictorial hues, and who enjoy her solemn communion none the less that they enjoy it by themselves. To use the words of a forgotten poet,* addressing spring—

"Thou op'st a storehouse for all hues of men.
To hardihood thou, blustering from the north,
Roll'st dark—hast sighs for them that would complain;
Sharp winds to clear the head of wit and worth;
And melody for those that follow mirth;
Clouds for the gloomy; tears for those that weep;
Flowers blighted in the bud for those that birth
Untimely sorrow o'er; and skies where sweep
Fleets of a thousand sail for them that plough the deep."

Crabbe, as a descriptive poet, differs from other modern masters of the art, alike in his selection of subjects, and in his mode of treating the subjects he does select. Byron moves over nature with a fastidious and aristocratic step—touch-

* Poor John Wright, author of "The Retrospect," and other poems.

ing only upon objects already interesting or ennobled, upon battle-fields, castellated ruins, Italian palaces, or Alpine peaks. This, at least, is true of his "Childe Harold," and his earlier pieces. In the later productions of his pen, he goes to the opposite extreme, and alights, with a daring yet dainty foot, upon all shunned and forbidden things—reminds us of the raven in the Deluge, which found rest for the sole of her foot upon carcasses, where the dove durst not stand—rushes in where modesty and reserve alike have forbidden entrance—and ventures, though still not like a lost archangel, to tread the burning marl of hell, the dim gulf of Hades, the shadowy ruins of the pre-Adamic world, and the crystal pavement of heaven. Moore practises a principle of more delicate selection, resembling some nice fly which should alight only upon flowers, whether natural or artificial, if so that flowers they seemed to be; thus, from sunny bowers, and moonlit roses, and gardens, and blushing skies, and ladies' dresses, does the Bard of Erin extract his finest poetry. Shelley and Coleridge attach themselves almost exclusively to the great—understanding this term in a wide sense, as including much that is grotesque, and much that is homely, which the magic of their genius sublimates to a proper pitch of keeping with the rest. Their usual walk is swelling and buskined: their common talk is of great rivers, great forests, great seas, great continents; or else of comets, suns, constellations, and firmaments—as that of all half-mad, wholly miserable, and opium-fed genius is apt to be. Sir Walter Scott, who seldom grappled with the gloomier and grander features of his country's scenery (did he ever describe Glencoe or Foyers, or the wildernesses around Ben Macdhui?), had (need we say?) the most exquisite eye for all picturesque and romantic aspects in sea, shore, or sky; and in the quick perception of this element of the picturesque lay his principal, if not only, descriptive power. Wordsworth, again, seems always to be standing above, though not stoop-

ing over, the objects he describes. He seldom looks up in rapt admiration of what is above him; the bending furze-bush and the lowly broom—the nest lying in the level clover-field—the tarn sinking away seemingly before his eye into darker depths—the prospect from the mountain summit cast far beneath him; at highest, the star burning low upon the mountain's ridge, like an "untended watchfire:" these are the objects which he loves to describe, and these may stand as emblems of his lowly yet aspiring genius. Crabbe, on the other hand, goes down on his knees, that he may more accurately describe such objects as the marsh given over to desolation from immemorial time—the slush left by the sea, and revealing the dead body of the suicide—the bare crag and the stunted tree, diversifying the scenery of the saline wilderness—the house on the heath, creaking in the storm, and telling strange stories of misery and crime—the pine in some wintry wood, which had acted as the gallows of some miserable man—the gorse surrounding with yellow light the encampment of the gipsies—the few timid flowers, or "weeds of glorious feature," which adorn the brink of ocean—the snow putting out the fire of the pauper, or lying unmelted on his pillow of death—the web of the spider blinding the cottager's window—the wheel turned by the meagre hand of contented or cursing penury—the cards trembling in the grasp of the desperate debauchee—the day stocking forming the cap by night, and the *garter at midnight*—the dunghill becoming the accidental grave of the drunkard—the poorhouse of forty years ago, with its patched windows, its dirty environs, its moist and miserable walls, its inmates all snuff, and selfishness, and sin—the receptacle of the outlawed members of English society (how different from "Poosie Nancy's!"), with its gin-gendered quarrels, its appalling blasphemies, its deep debauches, its ferocity without fun, its huddled murders, and its shrieks of disease dumb in the uproar around—the Bedlam of forty years ago, with its straw

on end under the restlessness of the insane; its music of groans, and shrieks, and mutterings of still more melancholy meaning; its keepers cold and stern, as the snow-covered cliffs above the wintry cataract; its songs dying away in despairing gurgles down the miserable throat; its cells how devoid of monastic silence; its "confusion worse confounded," of gibbering idiocy, monomania absorbed and absent from itself as well as from the world, and howling frenzy; its daylight saddened as it shines into the dim, vacant, or glaring eyes of those wretched men: and its moonbeams shedding a more congenial ray upon the solitude; or the sick-bed, or the death-bed of derangement—such familiar faces of want, guilt, and wo—of nakedness, sterility, and shame, does Crabbe delight in showing us; and is, in very truth, "nature's sternest painter, yet the best." In his mode of managing his descriptions, Crabbe is equally peculiar. Objects, in themselves counted commonplace or disgusting, frequently become impressive, and even sublime, when surrounded by interesting circumstances—when shown in the moonlight of memory—when linked to strong passion—or when touched by the ray of imagination. But it is the peculiarity and the daring of this poet, that he often, not always, tries us with truth, and nothing but truth, as if to bring the question to an issue—whether, in nature, absolute truth be not essential though severe poetry. On this question, certainly, issue was never so fully joined before. In even Wordsworth's eye there is a misty glimmer of imagination, through which all objects, low as well as high, are seen. Even his "five blue eggs" gleam upon him through a light which comes not from themselves—which comes, it may be, from the Great Bear, or Arcturus and his sons. And when he does—as in some of his feeblers verses—strive to see out of this medium, he drops his mantle, loses his vision, and describes little better than would his own "Old Cumberland Beggar." Shakspeare in his witches' caldron, and Burns in "haly table, are shockingly circumstantial; but

the element of imagination creeps in amid all the disgusting details, and the light that never was on sea or shore disdains not to rest on "eye of newt," "toe of frog," "baboon's blood," the garter that strangled the babe, the grey hairs sticking to the haft of the parricidal knife, and all the rest of the fell ingredients. Crabbe, on the other hand, would have described the five blue eggs, and, besides, the materials of the nest, and the kind of hedge where it was built, like a bird-nesting schoolboy; but he would not have given the "gleam." He would as accurately as Hecate, Canidia, or Cutty-sark, have made an inventory of the ingredients of the hell-broth, or of the curiosities on the "holy table," had they been presented to his eye: but could not have conceived them, nor would have slipped in that one flashing word, that single cross-ray of imagination, which it required to elevate and startle them into high ideal life. And yet, in reading his pictures of poor-houses, &c., we are compelled to say, "Well, that is poetry after all, for it is truth; but it is poetry of comparatively a low order—it is the last gasp of the poetic spirit: and, moreover, perfect and matchless as it is in its kind, it is not worthy of the powers of its author, who can, and has, at other times risen into much loftier ground."

We may illustrate still farther what we mean, by comparing the different ways in which Crabbe and Foster (certainly a *prose* poet) deal with a library. Crabbe describes minutely and successfully the outer features of the volumes, their colours, clasps, the stubborn ridges of their bindings, the illustrations which adorn them, so well that you feel yourself among them, and they become sensible to touch almost as to sight. But there he stops, and sadly fails, we think, in bringing out the living and moral interest which gathers around a multitude of books, or even around a single volume. This Foster has amply done. The speaking silence of a number of books, where, though it were the wide Bodleian or Vatican, not one whisper could be heard,

and yet where, as in an antechamber, so many great spirits are waiting to deliver their messages—their churchyard stillness continuing even when their readers are moving to their pages, in joy or agony, as to the sound of martial instruments—their awaking, as from deep slumber, to speak with miraculous organ, like the shell which has only to be lifted, and "pleased it remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there"—their power of drawing tears, kindling blushes, awakening laughter, calming or quickening the motions of the life's-blood, lulling to repose, or rousing to restlessness—the meaning which radiates from their quiet countenances—the tale of shame or glory which their title-pages tell—the memories suggested by the character of their authors, and of the readers who have throughout successive centuries perused them—the thrilling thoughts excited by the sight of names and notes inscribed on their margins or blank pages by hands long since mouldered in the dust, or by those dear to us as our life's-blood, who had been snatched from our sides—the aspects of gaiety or of gloom connected with the bindings and the age of volumes—the effects of sunshine playing as if on a congregation of happy faces, making the duskiest shine, and the gloomiest be glad—or of shadow suffusing a sombre air over all—the joy of the proprietor of a large library, who feels that Nebuchadnezzar watching great Babylon, or Napoleon reviewing his legions, will not stand comparison with himself seated amid the broad maps, and rich prints, and numerous volumes which his wealth has enabled him to collect, and his wisdom entitled him to enjoy—all such hieroglyphics of interest and meaning has Foster included and interpreted in one gloomy but noble meditation, and his introduction to Doddridge is the true "Poem on the Library."

In Crabbe's descriptions, the great want is of selection. He describes all that his eye sees with cold, stern, lingering accuracy—he marks down all the items of wretchedness, poverty, and vul-

gar sin—counts the rags of the mendicant—and, as Hazlitt has it, describes a cottage like one who has entered it to distract for rent. His copies consequently would be as displeasing as their originals, were it not that imagination is so much less vivid than eyesight, that we can endure in picture what we cannot in reality, and that our own minds, while reading, can cast that softening and ideal veil over disgusting objects which the poet himself has not sought, or has failed to do. Just as, in viewing even the actual scene, we might have seen it through the medium of imaginative illusion, so the same medium will more probably invest, and beautify, its transcript in the pages of the poet.

As a moral poet and sketcher of men, Crabbe is characterised by a similar choice of subject, and the same stern fidelity. The mingled yarn of man's everyday life—the plain homely virtues, or the robust and burly vices of Englishmen—the quiet tears which fall on humble beds—the passions which flame up in lowly bosoms—the *amari aliquid*, the deep and permanent bitterness which lies at the heart of the downtrodden English poor—the comedies and tragedies of the fireside—the lovers' quarrels—the unhappy marriages—the vicissitudes of common fortunes—the early deaths—the odd characters—the lingering superstitions—all the elements, in short, which make up the simple annals of lowly or middling society, are the materials of this poet's song. Had he been a Scottish clergyman, we should have said that he had versified his session-book; and certainly, many curious chapters of human life might be derived from such a document, and much light cast upon the devious windings and desperate wickedness of the heart, as well as upon that inextinguishable instinct of good which resides in it. Crabbe, perhaps, has confined himself too exclusively to this circle of common things which he found lying around him. He has seldom burst its confines, and touched the loftier themes, and snatched the higher laurels which were also within his reach. He has contented himself

with being a Lillo (with occasional touches of Shakspeare), instead of something far greater. He has, however, in spite of this self-injustice, effected much. He has proved that a poet, who looks resolutely around him—who stays at home—who draws the realities which are near him, instead of the phantoms that are afar—who feels and records the passion and poetry of his daily life—may found a firm and enduring reputation. With the exception of Cowper, no one has made out this point so effectually as Crabbe.

And in his mode of treating such themes, what strikes us first is his perfect coolness. Few poets have reached that calm of his which reminds us of Nature's own great quiet eye, looking down upon her monstrous births, her strange anomalies, and her more ungainly forms. Thus Crabbe sees the loathsome, and does not loathe—handles the horrible, and shudders not—feels with firm finger the palpitating pulse of the infanticide or the murderer—and snuffs a certain sweet odour in the evil savours of putrefying misery and crime. This delight, however, is not an inhuman, but entirely an artistic delight—perhaps, indeed, springing from the very strength and width of his sympathies. We admire as well as wonder at that almost *asbestos* quality of his mind, through which he retains his composure and critical circumspection so cool amid the confagurations of passionate subjects, which might have burned others to ashes. Few, indeed, can walk through such fiery furnaces unscathed. But Crabbe—what an admirable physician had he made to a lunatic asylum! How severely would he have "sifted out" every grain of poetry from those tumultuous exposures of the human mind! What clean breasts had he forced the patients to make! What tales had he wrung out from them, to which Lewis's tales of terror were feeble and trite! How he would have commanded them, by his mild, steady, and piercing eye! And yet how calm would his brain have remained, when others, even of a more prosaic mould, were reeling in sympathy with the surrounding

delirium! It were, indeed, worth while inquiring how much of this coolness resulted from Crabbe's early practice as a surgeon. That combination of warm inward sympathy and outward phlegm—of impulsive benevolence and mechanical activity—of heart all fire and manner all ice—which distinguishes his poetry, is very characteristic of the medical profession.

In correspondence with this, Crabbe generally leans to the darker side of things. This, perhaps, accounts for his favour in the sight of Byron, who saw his own eagle-eyed fury at man corroborated by Crabbe's stern and near-sighted vision. And it was accounted for partly by Crabbe's early profession, partly by his early circumstances, and partly by the clerical office he assumed. Nothing so tends to sour us with mankind as a general refusal on their part to give us bread. How can a man love a race which seems combined to starve him? This misanthropical influence Crabbe did not entirely escape. As a medical man, too, he had come in contact with little else than human miseries and diseases; and as a clergyman, he had occasion to see much sin and sorrow: and these, combining with the melancholy incidental to the poetic temperament, materially discoloured his view of life. He became a searcher of dark—of the darkest bosoms; and we see him sitting in the gloom of the abodes of thieves, murderers, and maniacs, and watching the remorse, rancour, fury, dull disgust, ungratified appetite, and ferocious or stupefied despair, which are there. And even when he pictures livelier scenes and happier characters, there steals over them a shade of sadness, reflected from his favourite subjects, as a dark, sinister countenance in a room will throw a gloom over many happy and beautiful faces beside it.

In his pictures of life, we find an un-frequent but true pathos. This is not often, however, of the profoundest or most heartrending kind. The grief he paints is not that which refuses to be comforted—whose expressions, like Agamemnon's face, must be veiled—which dilates almost to despair, and complains

almost to blasphemy—and which, when it looks to heaven, it is

"With that frantic air,
Which seems to ask if a God be there."

Crabbe's, as exhibited in "Phoebe Dawson," and other of his tales, is gentle, submissive; and its pathetic effects are produced by the simple recital of circumstances which might and often have occurred. It reminds us of the pathos of "Rosamund Gray," that beautiful story of Lamb's, of which we once, we regret to say, presumptuously pronounced an unfavourable opinion, but which has since commended itself to our heart of hearts, and compelled that tribute in tears which we had denied it in words. Hazlitt is totally wrong, when he says that Crabbe carves a tear to the life in marble; as if his pathos were hard and cold. Be it the statuary of wo—has it, consequently, no truth or power? Have the chiselled tears of the Niobe never awakened other tears, fresh and burning, from their fountain? Horace's *vis me flere* is not always a true principle. As the wit, who laughs not himself, often excites most laughter in others, so the calm recital of an affecting narrative acts as the meek rod of Moses applied to the rock, and is answered in gushing torrents. You close Crabbe's tale of grief, almost ashamed that you have left so quiet a thing pointed and starred with tears. His pages, while sometimes wet with pathos, are never moist with humour. His satire is often pointed with wit, and sometimes irritates into invective; but of that glad, genial, and bright-eyed thing we call humour (how well *named*, in its oily softness and gentle glitter!), he has little or none. Compare, in order to see this, his "Borough" with the "Annals of the Parish." How dry, though powerful, the one; how *sappy* the other! How profound the one; how *powky* the other! Crabbe goes through his "Borough" like a scavenger with a rough stark and stiff besom, sweeping up all the filth: Galt, like a knowing watchman of the old school—a *canny Charlie*—keeping a

sharp look-out, but not averse to a sly joke, and having an eye to the humours as well as misdemeanours of the streets. Even his wit is not of the finest grain. It deals too much in verbal quibbles, puns, and antitheses with their points broken off. His puns are neither good nor bad—the most fatal and anti-ideal description of a pun that can be given. His quibbles are good enough to have excited the laugh of his curate or gardener; but he forgets that the public is not so indulgent. And though often treading in Pope's track, he wants entirely those touches of satire, at once the lightest and the most withering, as if dropped from the fingers of a malignant fairy—those faint whispers of poetic perdition—those drops of concentrated bitterness—those fatal bodkin-stabs—and those invectives, glittering all over with the polish of profound malignity—which are Pope's glory as a writer, and his disgrace as a man.

We have repeatedly expressed our opinion, that in Crabbe there lay a higher power than he often exerted. We find evidence of this in his "Hall of Justice" and his "Eustace Grey." In these he is fairly in earnest. No longer dozing by his parlour fire over the "Newspaper," or napping in a corner of his "Library," or peeping in through the windows of the "Workhouse," or recording the select scandal of the "Borough," he is away out into the wide and open fields of highest passion and imagination. What a tale that "Hall of Justice" hears—to be paralleled only in the "Thousand and One Nights of the Halls of Eblis!"—a tale of misery, rape, murder, and furious despair; told, too, in language of such lurid fire as has been seen to shine o'er the graves of the dead! But in "Eustace Grey," our author's genius reaches its climax. Never was madness—in its misery—its remorse—the dark companions, "the ill-favoured ones," who cling to it in its wild way, and will not let it go, although it curse them with the eloquence of hell—the visions it sees—the scenery it creates and carries about with it in dreadful

keeping—and the language it uses, high, aspiring, but broken as the wing of a struck eagle—so strongly and meltingly revealed. And yet, around the dismal tale there hangs the breath of beauty; and, like poor Lear, Sir Eustace goes about crowned with flowers—the flowers of earthly poetry—and of a hope which is not of the earth. And, at the close, we feel to the author all that strange gratitude which our souls are constituted to entertain to those who have most powerfully wrung and tortured them.

Would that Crabbe had given us a century of such things. We would have preferred to the "Tales of the Hall"—"Tales of Greyling Hall," or more tidings from the "Hall of Justice." It had been a dark Decameron, and brought out more effectually—what the "Village Poorhouse" and the sketches of Elliott have since done—the passions, miseries, crushed aspirations, and latent poetry, which dwell in the hearts of the plundered poor; as well as the wretchedness which, more punctually than their veriest menial, waits often behind the chairs, and hands the silver dishes of the great.

We will not dilate on his other works individually. In glancing back upon them as a whole, we will endeavour to answer the following questions: 1st, What was Crabbe's object as a moral poet? 2dly, How far is he original as an artist? 3dly, What is his relative position to his great contemporaries? And, 4thly, what is likely to be his fate with posterity?

1st, His object.—The great distinction between man and man, and author and author, is purpose. It is the edge and point of character; it is the stamp on the subscription of genius; it is the direction on the letter of talent. Character without it is blunt and torpid. Talent without it is a letter, which, undirected, goes no whither. Genius without it is bullion—sluggish, splendid, uncirculating. Purpose yearns after and secures artistic culture. It gathers, as by a strong suction, all things which it needs into itself. Crabbe's artistic object is tolerably clear, and has been already indicated. His moral purpose is not quite so apparent.

Is it to satirise, or is it to reform vice? Is it pity, or is it contempt, that actuates his song? What are his plans for elevating the lower classes in the scale of society? Has he any, or does he believe in the possibility of their permanent elevation? Such questions are more easily asked than answered. We must say that we have failed to find in him any one overmastering and earnest object, subjugating everything to itself, and producing that unity in all his works which the trunk of a tree gives to its smallest, its remotest, to even its withered leaves. And yet, without apparent intention, Crabbe has done good moral service. He has shed much light upon the condition of the poor. He has spoken in the name and stead of the poor dumb mouths that could not tell their own sorrows or sufferings to the world. He has opened the mine, which Ebenezer Elliott and others, going to work with a firmer and more resolute purpose, have dug to its depths.

2dly, His originality.—This has been questioned by some critics. He has been called an edition, in coarser paper and print, of Goldsmith, Pope, and Cowper. His pathos comes from Goldsmith—his wit and satire from Pope—and his minute and literal description from Cowper. If this were true, it were as complimentary to him as his warmest admirer could wish. To combine the characteristic excellences of three true poets, is no easy matter. But Crabbe has not combined them. His pathos wants altogether the naïveté of sentiment and *curiosa felicitas* of expression which distinguish Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." He has something of Pope's terseness, but little of his subtlety, finish, or brilliant malice. And the motion of Cowper's mind and style in description differs as much from Crabbe's as the playful leaps and gambols of a kitten from the measured, downright, and indomitable pace of a hound—the one is the easiest, the other the severest, of describers. Resemblances, indeed, of a minor kind are to be found; but still Crabbe is as distinct from Goldsmith, Cowper, and Pope, as Byron from Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

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Originality consists of two kinds—one, the power of inventing new materials; and the other, of dealing with old materials in a new way. We do not decide whether the first of these implies an act of absolute creation; it implies all we can conceive in an act of creative power; from elements bearing to the result the relation which the Alphabet does to the "Iliad"—genius brings forth its bright progeny, and we feel it to be new. In this case, you can no more anticipate the effect from the elements, than you can, from the knowledge of the letters, anticipate the words which are to be compounded out of them. In the other kind of originality, the materials bear a larger proportion to the result—they form an appreciable quantity in our calculations of what it is to be. They are found for the poet, and all he has to do is, with skill and energy, to construct them. Take, for instance, Shakspeare's "Tempest," and Coleridge's "Anciente Marinere"—of what more creative art can we conceive than is exemplified in these? Of course, we have all had beforehand ideas similar to—a storm, a desert island, a witch, a magician, a mariner, a hermit, a wedding-guest; but these are only the Alphabet to the spirits of Shakspeare and Coleridge. As the sun, from the invisible air, draws up in an instant all pomps of cloudy forms—paradises brighter than Eden, mirrored in waters, which blush and tremble as their reflection falls wooingly upon them—mountains, which seem to bury their snowy or rosy summits in the very heaven of heavens—throne-shaped splendours, worthy of angels to sit on them, flushing and fading in the west—seas of aerial blood and fire—momentary cloud-crowns and golden avenues, stretching away into the azure infinite beyond them;—so from such stuff as dreams are made of, from the mere empty air, do those wondrous magicians build up their new worlds, where the laws of nature are repealed—where all things are changed without any being confused—where the earth is empty, and the sky is peopled—where material beings are invisible, and where spiritual beings become gross and

palpable to sense—where the skies are opening to show riches—where the isle is full of noises—where beings proper to this sphere of dream are met so often that you cease to fear them, however odd or monstrous—where magic has power to shut now the eyes of kings, and now the great bright eye of ocean—where, at the bidding of the poet, new, complete, beautiful mythologies, at one time sweep across the sea, and anon dance down from the purple and mystic sky—where all things have a charmed life, the listening ground, the populous air, the still or the vexed sea, the human or the imaginary beings—and where, as in deep dreams, the most marvellous incidents are most easily credited, slide on most softly, and seem most native to the place, the circumstances, and the time. “*This is creation,*” we exclaim; nor did Ferdinand seem to Miranda a fresher and braver creature than does to us each strange settler whom genius has planted upon its own favourite isle. Critics may, indeed, take these imaginary beings—such as Caliban and Ariel—and analyse them into their constituent parts; but there will be some one element which escapes them—laughing, as it leaps away, at their baffled sagacity, and proclaiming the original power of its Creator.

The other kind of originality is, we think, that of Crabbe. He takes, not makes, his materials. He finds a good foundation—wood and stone in plenty—and he begins laboriously, successfully, and after a plan of his own, to build. If in any of his works he approaches to the higher property, it is in “Eustace Grey,” who moves here and there, on his wild wanderings, as if to the rubbing of Aladdin’s lamp.

This prepares us for coming to the third question, What is Crabbe’s relative position to his great contemporary poets? He belongs to the second class. He is not a philosophic poet, like Wordsworth. He is not, like Shelley, a Vates, moving upon the uncertain but perpetual and furious wind of his inspiration. He is not, like Byron, a demoniac exceeding fierce, and dwelling among the tombs.

He is not, like Keats, a sweet and melancholy voice, a tune bodiless, bloodless—dying away upon the waste air, but for ever to be remembered as men remember a melody they have heard in youth. He is not, like Coleridge, all these almost by turns, and, besides, a sacred poet, singing at times strains so sublime and holy, that they might seem snatches of the song of Eden’s cherubim, or caught in trance from the song of Moses and the Lamb. To this mystic brotherhood Crabbe must not be added. He ranks with a lower but still lofty band—with Scott (as a poet), and Moore, and Hunt, and Campbell, and Rogers, and Bowles, and James Montgomery, and Southey; and surely they nor he need be ashamed of each other, as they shine in one soft and peaceful cluster.

We are often tempted, with Lord Jeffrey, to pity poor posterity on this score. How is it to manage with the immense number of excellent works which this age has bequeathed, and is bequeathing it? How is it to economise its time so as to read a tithe of them? And should it in mere self-defence proceed to decimate, with what principle shall the process be carried on, and who shall be appointed to preside over it? Critics of the twenty-second century, be merciful as well as just. Pity the *disjecta membra* of those we thought mighty poets. Respect and fulfil our prophecies of immortality. If ye must carp and cavil, do not, at least, in mercy, abridge. Spare us the prospect of this last insult, an abridged copy of the “Pleasures of Hope,” or “Don Juan,” a *new* abridgment. If ye must operate in this way, be it on “Madoc,” or the “Course of Time.” Generously leave room for “O’Connor’s Child” in the poet’s corner of a journal, or for “Eustace Grey” in the space of a crown-piece. Surely, living in the Millennium, and resting under your vines and fig-trees, you will have more time to read than we, in this bustling age, who move, live, eat, drink, *sleep, and die*, at railway speed. If not, we fear the case of many of our poets is hopeless, and that others, besides the author of “Silent Love,” would be wise to enjoy their pre-

sent laurels, for verily there are none else for them.

Seriously, we hope that much of Crabbe's writing will every year become less and less readable, and less and less easily understood; till, in the milder day, men shall have difficulty in believing that such physical, mental, and moral degradation, as he describes, ever existed in Britain; and till, in future Encyclopædias, his name be found recorded as a powerful but barbarous writer, writing in a barbarous age. The like may be the case with many, who have busied themselves more in recalling the past or picturing the present, than in anticipating the future. But there are, or have been, among us a few who have plunged beyond their own period, nay, beyond "all ages"—who have seen and shown us the coming eras:

"As in a cradled Hercules you trace
The lines of empire in his infant face"—

and whose voice must go down, in tones becoming more authoritative as they last, and in volume becoming vaster as they roll, like mighty thunderings and many waters, through the minster of all future time: concerting in lower key with those more awful voices from within the veil which have already shaken earth, and which, uttered "once more," shall shake not earth only, but also heaven. High destiny! but not his whose portrait we have now drawn.

We have tried to draw his mental, but not his physical likeness. And yet it has all along been blended with our thoughts, like the figure of one known from childhood—like the figure of our own beloved

and long-lost father. We see the venerable old man, newly returned from a botanical excursion, laden with flowers and weeds (for no one knew better than he that every weed is a flower—it is the secret of his poetry), with his high, narrow forehead, his grey locks, his glancing shoe-buckles, his clean dress somewhat ruffled in the woods, his mild countenance, his simple abstracted air. We, too, become abstracted as we gaze, following in thought the outline of his history—his early struggles—his love—his adventures in London—his journal, where, on the brink of starvation, he wrote the affecting words, "*O Sally for you*"—his rescue by Burke—his taking orders—his return to his native place—his mounting the pulpit-stairs, not caring what his old enemies thought of him or his sermon—his marriage—the entry, more melancholy by far than the other, made years after in reference to it, "*yet happiness was denied*"—the publication of his different works—the various charges he occupied—his childlike surprise at getting so much money for the "*Tales of the Hall*"—his visit to Scotland—his mistaking the Highland chiefs for foreigners, and bespeaking them in bad French—his figure as he went, dogged by the *caddie* through the lanes of the auld town of Edinburgh, which he preferred infinitely to the new—the "*aul' fule*" he made of himself in pursuit of a second wife, &c. &c.; so absent do we become in thinking over all this, that it disturbs his abstraction; he starts, stares, asks us in to his parsonage, and we are about to accept the offer, when we awake, and, lo! it is a dream.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

FIRST SITTING.

"HE was," it is said of Rousseau, "a lonely man—his life a long soliloquy." And the same words may be applied to the "sole king of rocky Cumberland," the

lord of Rydal Mount, the sultan of Skiddaw, the warlock of Windermere—William Wordsworth. He, indeed, mingled much with men, but reluctantly; and,

even while amidst them, his spirit preserved its severe seclusion. He strode frequently into society, but with an impatient and hasty step. It was this lofty insulation which marked out Wordsworth from the eminent of his era. While they were tremulously alive to every breath of public praise or blame, and never so much so as when pretending to despise the one and defy the other, he maintained the tenor of his way, indifferent to both. While his name was the signal for every species of insult—while one review was an incessant battery against his poetical character, and another, powerful on all other topics, returned it only a feeble reply on this—while the children of the nursery were taught to consider his rhymes as too puerile even for them, he remained unmoved; and, leaving poor Coleridge to burst into tears, the majestic brow of Wordsworth only acknowledged by a transient frown the existence of his assailants. And now that his name is a household word, and that his works have found their way to the heart of the nation, we believe that he was never once betrayed into an expression of undue complacency—that he felt himself precisely the man he was before—that he moved in his elevated sphere as “native and endued” into its element—and that the acclamations, as well as the abuse, of the public, failed to draw him forth from the sublime solitudes of his own spirit.

And we do think that this manly self-appreciation is one of the principal marks of true greatness. We find it in Dante, daring, in his gloomy banishment, to make himself immortal by writing the “Inferno.” We find it in Milton, “in darkness, and with dangers compassed round,” rolling out, nevertheless, the deep bass notes of his great poem as from some mighty organ, seated in his own breast. We find it in Burns, confessing that, at the plough, he had formed the very idea of his poems to which the public afterwards set its seal. We find it *not* in Byron, who, while professing scorn for the finest contemporary specimens of his species, nay, for his species in the abstract, was yet notoriously at the mercy

of the meanest creature that could handle a quill, to spurt venom against the crest of the noble Childe. But we do find it in Wordsworth, and still more in Scott, the one sustaining a load of detraction, and the other a burden of popularity, with a calm, imperturbable dignity. The author of “The Excursion” has indeed been called an egotist; but, while there is one species of egotism which stamps the weak victim of a despicable vanity, there is another which adheres to a very exalted order of minds, and is the needful defence of those who have stout burdens to bear, and severe sufferings to undergo. The Apostle Paul, in this grand sense, was an egotist, when he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith.” Dante was an egotist. Luther was an egotist. Milton was an egotist; and in this sense Wordsworth was an egotist too.

But what, it may be asked, was his burden and his mission? It is seen now not to have been the composition of pedlar poems—the sacrifice of great powers to petty purposes—the indulgence of a weak, though amiable eccentricity; or the mere love of being singular at the expense of good taste and common sense. But many still, we fear, are not aware of its real nature and importance. Wordsworth’s mission was a lofty one, and loftily fulfilled—to raise the mean, to dignify the obscure, to reveal that natural nobility which lurks under the russet gown and the clouted shoe; to extract poetry from the cottage, and from the turf-fire upon its hearth, and from the solitary shieling, and from the mountain tarn, and from the grey ancestral stone at the door of the deserted mansion, and from the lichens of the rock, and from the furze of the melancholy moor. It was to “hang a weight of interest”—of brooding, passionate, and poetical feeling, upon the hardest, the remotest, and the simplest objects of nature—it was to unite gorgeousness of imagination with prosaic literality of fact—it was to interweave the deductions of a subtle philosophy with the “short and simple annals of the poor.” And how to the waste

and meaningless parts of creation has he, above all men, given a voice, an intelligence, and a beauty? The sweet and solitary laugh of a joyous female, echoing among the hills, was to his ear more delightful than the music of many forests. A wooden bowl is dipped into the well, and comes out heavy, not merely with water, but with the weight of his thoughts. A spade striking into the spring ground, moves in the might of his spirit. A village drum, touched by the strong finger of his genius, produces a voice which is poetry. The tattered cloak of a poor girl is an Elijah's mantle to him. A thorn on the summit of a hill, "known to every star, and every wind that blows," bending and whispering over a maniac, becomes a banner-staff to his imagination. A silent tarn collects within and around it the sad or terrible histories of a sea; and a fern stalk floating on its surface has the interest of a forest of masts. A leech-gatherer is surrounded with the sublimity of "cloud, gorse, and whirlwind, on the gorgeous moor." A ram stooping to see his "wreathed horns superb" in a lake among the mountains, is to his sight as sublime as were an angel glancing at his features in the sea of glass which is mingled with fire. A fish leaps up in one of his tarns like an immortal thing. If he skates, it is "across the image of a star." Icicles to him are things of imagination. A snowball is a Mont Blanc; a little cottage girl a Venus de Medicis, and more; a water-mill, turned by a heart-broken child, a very Niagara of wo; the poor beetle that we tread upon is "a mailed angel on a battle-day," and a day-dream among the hills, of more importance than the dates and epochs of an empire. Wordsworth's pen is a stubble stalk from the harvest field. His language has not the swell of the thunder, nor the dash of the cataract—it is the echo of the "shut of eve," "when sleep sits dewy on the labourer's eye." His versification is a music sweet and simple as the running brook, yet profound in its simplicity as the unsearchable ocean. His purpose is to extract what is new,

beautiful, and sublime, from his own heart, reflecting its feelings upon the simplest objects of nature, and the most primary emotions of the human soul. And here lies his strength. It is comparatively easy for any gifted spirit to gather off the poetry creaming upon lofty subjects—to extract the imagination, which such topics as heaven, hell, dream-land, fairy-land, Grecian or Swiss scenery, almost involve in their very sounds; but to educe interest out of the every-day incidents of simple life—to make every mood of one's mind a poem—to find an epic in a nest, and a tragedy in a tattered cloak—thus to "hang a pearl in every cowlip's ear"—to find "sermons in stones," and poetry in everything—to have "thoughts too deep for tears" blown into the soul by the wayside flower—this is one of the rarest and most enviable of powers. And hence Wordsworth's song is not a complicated harmony, but a "quiet tune"—his instrument not a lyre, but a rustic reed—his poetic potation not Hippocrene, but simple water from the stream—his demon no Alecto or Tisiphone, but a sting-armed insect of the air—his emblem on earth not the gaudy tulip nor the luscious rose, but the bean-flower, with its modest, yet arrowy odour—his emblem in the sky, not the glaring sun, nor the gay star of morning, nor the "sun of the sleepless, melancholy star," nor the "star of Jove, so beautiful and large"—it is the mild and lonely moon shining down through groves of yew upon pastoral graves.

The mind of Wordsworth was a combination of the intellectual, the imaginative, and the personal. His intellect, though large and powerful, does not preside over the other faculties with such marked superiority as in the case of Milton, the most intellectual of all poets; but it maintains its ground, and never submits to a degrading vassalage. Destitute of Milton's scholastic training, it has evidently gone through the still severer crucible of a self-taught and sublime metaphysics. His imagination, again, is not rich and copious like Spenser's, nor

is it omnivorous and omnific like Shakspeare's, nor does it ever reach the sublimity of Milton's, nor is it the mere handmaid of the passions like Byron's, nor voluptuous and volatile like Moore's, nor fastidious like Campbell's, nor fantastic like Southey's. It is calm, profound, still, obscure, like the black eye of one of his own tarns. The objects he sets before us are few; the colours he uses are uniform; the tone is somewhat sombre, but the impression and intensity with which they stamp themselves on the view are immense. A sonnet with Wordsworth often goes as far as an ordinary epic; a single line does the work of an ordinary canto. This power of concentration, however, is only occasional, and alternates with a fine diffusion, so that, while at one time he compresses meaning into his words, as with the Bramah press of Young, at another, his poetry is as loosely and beautifully dispread as the blank verse of Wilson or Graham. But that which undoubtedly gives to the poetry of Wordsworth its principal power is its personal interest. His works are all confessions, not of crimes (unless to love nature too well be a sin), but of all the peculiarities of a poetical temperament. He retains and reproduces the boyish feelings which others lose with their leading-strings;—he "carries forward the first fresh emotions of childhood into the powers and passions of manhood" — he links the cradle to the crutch by the strong tie of his genius. Nothing which reminds him of his own youth—which awakens some old memory—which paints on an airy canvas some once familiar face—which vibrates on some half-forgotten string, comes amiss to Wordsworth. His antiquity may be said to begin with his own birth; his futurity to extend to the day of his own funeral. His philosophy may be summed up in the one sentence, "the child is father of the man."

If we were to try to express our idea of Wordsworth's poetry in a word, we might call it microscopic. Many apply a telescope to nature, to enlarge the great: he employs a microscope to magnify the small. Many,

in their daring flights, treat a constellation with as much familiarity as if it were a bunch of violets: he leans over a violet with as much interest and reverence as if it were a star. Talk of the Pleiades! "Lo! five blue eggs are gleaming there," to him a dearer sight. He turns to the works of nature the same minutely magnifying lens as Pope to the works of art. The difference is, that while the bard of Twickenham uses his microscope to a lady's lock, or to a gentleman's clouded cane, the poet of Windermere applies it to a mountain daisy or a worn-out spade.

In speaking of Wordsworth's writings, we must not omit a juvenile volume of poems, which we have never seen, but which we believe is chiefly remarkable, as showing how late his genius was of flowering, and how far in youth he was from having sounded the true depths of his understanding. We have somewhere read extracts from it, which convinced us, that, at an age when Campbell wrote his "Pleasures of Hope," Pope his sparkling "Essay on Criticism," Keats his "Hyperion," Wordsworth, so far from being a like miracle of precocity, could only produce certain puerile prettinesses, with all the merit which arises from absence of fault, but with all the fault which arises from absence of merit.

The "Lyrical Ballads" was the first effusion of his mind which bore the broad arrow of a peculiar genius; the first to cluster round him troops of devoted friends, and the first to raise against him that storm of ridicule, badinage, abuse, and misrepresentation, which has so recently been laid for ever. And, looking back upon this production through the vista of years, we cannot wonder that it should so have struck the minds of the public. Poetry was reduced to its beggarly elements. In the florid affectation of Darwin, and the tame, yet turgid verse of Hayley, it was breathing its last. Cowper, meanwhile, had left the stage. It was not surprising, that, in the dreary dearth which succeeded, a small bunch of wild flowers, with the scent of the moors, the tints of the sun, and the

freshness of the dew upon them, shot suddenly into the hands of the public, should attract immediate notice; that, while they disgusted the fastidious, they should refresh the dispirited lovers of truth and nature; that, while the vain and the worldly tore and trampled them under foot with fierce shouts of laughter, the simple-hearted took them up, and folded them to their bosoms; and that, while the old, prepossessed in favour of Pope and Voltaire, threw them aside as insipid, the young, inspired by the first outbreak of the French Revolution, and flushed by its golden hopes, caught and kissed them in a transport of enthusiasm. Such a bunch were the "Lyrical Ballads," and such was their reception. Destitute of all glitter, glare, pretension, they were truly "wildings of nature." Not that they mirrored the utmost depth or power of their author's mind—not that they gave more than glimpses of the occasional epic grandeur of "The Excursion," or the Miltonic music of the "Sonnets," but they discovered all the simplicity, if not all the strength, of his genius. Their faults we seek not to disguise or palliate—the wilful puerility, the babyish simplicity which a few of them affected—but still, as long as Derwentwater reflects the burning west in her bosom, and Windermere smiles to her smiling shores, and the Langdale Giants "parley with the setting sun," shall men remember Harry Gill, chattering for evermore; and Ruth, with the water-mills of her innocence, and the "tumultuous songs" of her frenzy; and Andrew Jones, with his everlasting drum; and the Indian mother, with her heart-broken woes; and last, not least, glorious old Matthew, with his merry rhymes and melancholy moralisings.

The next poetic production from his pen was entitled, "Poems, in two volumes." And here, interspersed with much of the childishness of the "Ballads," are some strains of a far higher mood. Here we meet, for instance, with the song of "Brougham Castle," that splendid lyric which stirs the blood like the first volley of a great battle. Here,

too, are some of his sonnets, the finest, we think, ever written, combining the simplicity, without the bareness, of Milton's, the tender and picturesque beauty of Warton's, with qualities which are not prominent in theirs—originality of sentiment, beauty of expression, and loftiness of design.

Passing over his after effusions—his "Peter Bell" and the "Waggoner," two things resembling rather the wilder mood of Coleridge than the sobriety of their actual parent, and his "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," a production scarcely worthy of the subject or author, though relieved by gleams of real poetry, and the "White Doe of Rylstone," with this single remark, that, of all the severe criticisms inflicted on Wordsworth, the review of this particular poem in the "Edinburgh" stands *facile princeps* for glaring injustice; and his series of "Sonnets on the River Duddon," a most happy thought, which we would like to see applied to other streams, as the Tay, the Earn, the Nith, the Dee, &c.—passing over one smaller poem of exquisite beauty on the "Eclipse in Italy," and with still more reluctance "Laodamia," the most chaste and classic of his strains, and which, says one, "might have been read aloud in Elysium to the happy dead"—we would offer a few remarks upon the huge half-finished pile called "The Excursion," the *national monument* of its author's mind.

It professes to be part of a poem called "The Recluse." So many witty, or would-be witty, things have been said about this profession by so many critics and criticasters, that we have not a single joke to crack on the subject. The magnitude of the entire poem is to us, as well as to them, a wonder and a mystery. Its matter is a topic more attractive. We remember asking De Quincey if he had seen "The Recluse," and why it was not given to the world? He answered, that he had read, or heard read, large portions of it; that the principal reason for its non-publication as yet was, that it contained (who would have expected it?) much that was political, if not personal, and drew with a strong and

unflattering hand some of the leading characters of the day. He added, that it abounded with passages equal to anything in "The Excursion," and instanced one, descriptive of France during the Revolution—contrasting the beauty and fertility of its vine-covered valleys and summer landscapes, with the dark and infernal passions which were then working like lava in the minds of its inhabitants—as magnificent.*

So much for "The Recluse," which the people of the Millennium may possibly see. "The Excursion," professing to be only part of a poem, was, nevertheless, criticised as a finished production, and condemned accordingly. A finished production it certainly is not. Cumbersome, digressive, unwieldy, abounding with bulky faults, not so witty as "Candide," nor so readable as "Nicholas Nickleby"—these are charges which must be allowed. But, after granting this, what remains? Exquisite pathos, profound philosophy, classic dignity, high-toned devotion, the moral sublime. The tale of Margaret is simple, yet most affecting! The account of the first brilliant sunburst of the French Revolution is sublime. The description of the churchyard among the mountains, with its tender memories and grass-green graves, would float many such volumes. But far the finest passage is that on the origin of the Pagan mythology.

Shall we rob ourselves of the varied beauties of "The Excursion," because one of the *dramatis personæ* is a pedlar, and because the book was originally a quarto of the largest size? No. Wordsworth is, like his own cloud, ponderous, and "moveth altogether, if he move at all." His excursions are not those of an ephemeron, and disdain duodecimos. We dare not put this *chef d'œuvre* of his genius on the same shelf with the "Paradise Lost;" but there are passages in both which claim kindred, and the minds of the twain dwell not very far apart. Having no wish to sacrifice one great

* Part of "The Recluse" has since appeared as "The Prelude." For our notion of it, see "The Eclectic" for November, 1854.

man to the manes of another—to pull down the living, that we may set up the cold idol of the dead—we may venture to affirm, that, if Milton was more than the Wordsworth of the seventeenth, Wordsworth was the Milton of the nineteenth century.

Among his later and smaller poems, the best, perhaps, is his "Ode on the Power of Sound." It is laboured and involved, but the labour is that of a giant birth, and the involution is that of close-piled magnificence. Up the gamut of sound how does he travel, from the sprinkling of earth on the coffin-lid to the note of the eagle, who rises over the arch of the rainbow, singing his own wild song; from the Ave Maria of the pilgrim to the voice of the lion, coming up vast and hollow on the winds of the midnight wilderness; from the trill of the black-bird to the thunder speaking from his black orchestra to the echoing heavens; from the

"Distress-gun on a leeward shore,
Repeated, heard, and heard no more,"

to the murmur of the main—for well

"The towering headlands, crown'd with mist,
Their feet among the billows, know
That ocean is a mighty harmonist;

from the faintest sigh that stirs the stagnant air of the dungeon, to the "word which cannot pass away," and on which the earth and the heavens are suspended. This were, but for its appearance of heaving effort, a lyric fit to be placed beside Shelley's "Ode to Liberty," and Coleridge's "France." Appropriately, it has a swell of sound, and a pomp of numbers, such as he has exhibited in no other of his poems; and yet there are moods in which we would prefer his "We are Seven," or one of his little poems on Lucy, to all its laboured vehemence and crudded splendour.

Wordsworth had a forehead broad and high, and bent under the weight of brooding thought; a few grey hairs streaming over it; an eye which, when still, seemed to "see more in nature than the eyes of other men," and when roused beamed forth with singular meaning; a face fur-

rowed with thought; a form bent with study; a healthy glow upon his cheek, which told of moorland walks and mountain solitude; a deep-toned voice; he excelled in reading his own poetry; was temperate in his habits; serene in his disposition; was fortunate in his circumstances and family connections; and lived and died one of the happiest of men. His religion was cheerful, sanguine, habitual; and we need not say how much it did to colour his poetry, and to regulate his life.

It is much to have one's fame connected vitally with the imperishable objects of nature. It is so with Burns, who has written his name upon Coila's plains, and rivers, and woods, in characters which

shall never die. It is so with Scott, who has for monument the "mountains of his native land," and the rustling of the heather of Caledonia as a perpetual pi-broch of lament over his ashes. So we believe that the memory of the great man whose character we have been depicting, is linked indissolubly with the scenery of the Lakes, and that men in far future ages, when awed in spirit by the gloom of Helvellyn—when enchanted by the paradisaical prospects of the vale of Keswick—when catching the first gleam of the waters of Windermere—or when taking the last look of Skiddaw, the giant of the region—shall mingle with every blessing they utter, and every prayer they breathe, the name of William Wordsworth.

SECOND SITTING.

Since the former sketch first appeared, the greatest laureate of England has expired—the intensest, most unique, and most pure-minded of our poets, with the single exceptions of Milton and Cowper, is departed. And it were lese-majesty against his mighty shade not to pay it another tribute, while yet his memory and the grass of his grave are green.

It is singular that only a few months elapsed between his death and that of the great antagonist of his literary fame—Lord Jeffrey (who, we understand, persisted to the last in his ungenerous and unjust estimate). How different the men! One of the acutest, most accomplished, most warm-hearted and generous of men, Jeffrey wanted that stamp of universality, that highest order of genius, that depth of insight and that simple directness of purpose, not to speak of that moral and religious consecration, which "give the world assurance of a man." He was the idol of Edinburgh and the pride of Scotland, because he condensed in himself those qualities which the modern Athens has long been accustomed to covet and admire—taste and talent rather than genius—subtlety of appreciation rather than power of origination—the logical understanding rather than the inventive insight—and because his name *had* sounded

out to the ends of the earth. But nature and man, not Edinburgh Castle or the Grampian Hills merely, might have been summoned to mourn in Wordsworth's departure the loss of one of their truest high-priests, who had gazed into some of the deepest secrets of the one, and echoed some of the loftiest aspirations of the other.

To soften such grief, however, there comes in the reflection, that the task of this great poet had been nobly discharged. He *had* given the world assurance, full, and heaped, and running over, of what he meant, and of what was meant by him.

The secret of Wordsworth's profound and peculiar love for Nature, even in her meaner and minuter forms, has been sought for in various directions. De Quincey seeks for it in a peculiar conformation of the eye, as if he actually did see more in the object than other men; but the critic has not sought to explain the rationale of this peculiarity. Mere acuteness of vision it cannot have been, else the eagle might have *felt*, though not written "The Excursion"—else the fact is not accountable why many of weak sight, such as Burke, have been rapturous admirers of Nature; and so, till we learn that Mr De Quincey has looked

through Wordsworth's eyes, we must call this a mere fancy. Hazlitt again, and others since, have accounted for the phenomenon by association; but this fails, we suspect, fully to explain the deep, native, and brooding passion in question—a passion which, instead of being swelled by the associations of after life, rose to full stature in youth, as "Tintern Abbey" testifies. One word of his own, perhaps, better solves the mystery—it is the one word "consecration"—

"The consecration and the poet's dream."

His eye had been anointed with eye-salve, and he saw, as some of his poet-predecessors had done, the temple in which he was standing, heard in every breeze and ocean billow the sound of a temple-service, and felt that the grandeur of the ritual, and of its recipient, threw the shadow of their greatness upon every stone in the corners of the edifice, and upon every eft crawling along its floors. Reversing the miracle, he saw "trees as men walking," heard the speechless sing, and, in the beautiful thought of "The Roman," caught on his ear the fragments of a "divine soliloquy," filling up the pauses in a universal anthem. Hence the tumultuous, yet awful joy of his youthful feelings to Nature. Hence his estimation of its lowliest features; for does not every bush and tree appear to him "a pillar in the temple of his God?" The leaping fish pleases him, because its "cheer" in the lonely tarn is of praise. The dropping of the earth on the coffin lid is a slow and solemn psalm, mingling in austere sympathy with the raven's croak, and in his "Power of Sound" he proceeds elaborately to condense all those varied voices, high or low, soft or harsh, united or discordant, into one crushing chorus, like the choruses of Haydn, or of heaven. Nature undergoes no outward change to his eye, but undergoes a far deeper transfiguration to his spirit—as she stands up in the white robes, and with the sounding psalmodes of her mediatorial office, between him and the Infinite I AM.

Never must this feeling be confounded

with pantheism. All does not seem to him to be God, nor even (strictly speaking) divine; but all seems to be immediately from God—rushing out from him in being, to rush instantly back to him in service and praise. Again the natal dew of the first morning is seen lying on bud and blade, and the low voice of the first evening's song becomes audible again. Although Coleridge in his youth was a Spinozist, Wordsworth seems at once, and for ever, to have recoiled from even his friend's eloquent version of that creedless creed, that baseless foundation, that system, through the *phenomenon* of which look, not the bright eyes of Supreme Intelligence, but the blind face of irresponsible and infinite necessity. Shelley himself—with all the power his critics attribute to him of painting night, animating atheism, and giving strange loveliness to annihilation—has failed in redeeming Spinoza's theory from the reproach of being as hateful as it is false; and there is no axiom we held more strongly than this—that the theory which cannot be rendered poetical, cannot be true. "Beauty is truth, and truth is beauty," said poor Keats, to whom time, however, was not granted to come down from the first glowing generalisation of his heart, to the particular creeds which his ripened intellect would have, according to it, rejected or received.

Nor, although Wordsworth is a devoted lover of nature, down to what many consider the very blots, or, at least, dashes and commas in her page, is he blind to the fact of her transient character. The power he worships has his "dwelling in the light of setting suns," but that dwelling is not his everlasting abode. For earth, and the universe, a "milder day" (words certifying their truth by their simple beauty) is in store, when "the monuments" of human weakness, folly, and evil shall "all be overgrown." He sees afar off the great spectacle of Nature retiring before God; the ambassador giving place to the King; the bright toys of this nursery—sun, moon, earth, and stars—put away, like childish things; the symbols of the Infinite lost in the Infinite

itself; and though he could, on the Saturday evening, bow before the midnight mountains and midnight heavens, he could also, on the Sabbath morn, in Rydal church, bow as profoundly before the apostolic word, "All these things shall be dissolved."

With Wordsworth, as with all great poets, his poetical creed passes into his religious. It is the same tune with variations. But we confess that in his case we do not think the variations equal. The mediation of nature he understands, and has beautifully represented in his poetry; but that higher mediation of the Divine Man between man and the Father does not lie fully or conspicuously on his page. A believer in the mystery of godliness he unquestionably was, but he seldom preached it. Christopher North, many years ago, in "Blackwood," doubted if there were so much as a Bible in poor Margaret's cottage ("Excursion"). We doubt so too, and have not found much of the "true cross" among all his trees. The theologians divide prayer into four parts—adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and petition. Wordsworth stops at the second. Nowhere do we find more solemn, sustained, habitual, and worthy adoration, than in his writings. The tone, too, of all his poems is a calm thanksgiving, like that of a long blue, cloudless sky, colouring, at evening, into the hues of more fiery praise. But he does not weep like a penitent, nor supplicate like a child. Such feelings seem suppressed and folded up as far-off storms, and the traces of past tempests are succinctly enclosed in the algebra of the silent evening air. And hence, like Milton's, his poetry has rather tended to foster the glow of devotion in the loftier spirits of the race—previously taught to adore—than, like that of Cowper and Montgomery, to send prodigals back to their forsaken homes; Davids to cry, "Against thee only have I sinned;" and Peters to shriek in agony, "Lord, save us: we perish."

To pass from the essential poetic element in a writer of genius to his artistic skill, is a felt, yet necessary descent—like

the painter compelled, after sketching the man's countenance, to draw his dress. And yet, as of some men and women, the very dress, by its simplicity, elegance, and unity, seems fitted rather to garb the soul than the body—seems the soul made visible; so it is with the style and manner of many great poets. Their speech and music without are as inevitable as their genius, or as the song for ever sounding within their souls. And why? The whole ever tends to beget a whole—the large substance to cast its deep yet delicate shadow—the divine to be like itself in the human, on which its seal is set. So it is with Wordsworth. That profound simplicity—that clear obscurity—that night-like noon—that noon-like night—that one atmosphere of overhanging Deity, seen weighing upon ocean and pool, mountain and mole-hill, forest and flower—that pellucid depth—that entireness of purpose and fulness of power, connected with fragmentary, wilful, or even weak execution—that humble, yet proud, precipitation of himself, Antæus-like, upon the bosom of simple scenes and simple sentiments, to regain primeval vigour—that obscure, yet lofty isolation, like a tarn, little in size but elevated in site, with few visitors, but with many stars—that Tory-Radicalism, Popish-Protestantism, philosophical Christianity, which have rendered him a glorious riddle, and made Shelley, in despair of finding it out, exclaim—

"No Deist, and no Christian he;
No Whig, no Tory.
He got so subtle, that to be
Nothing was all his glory"—

all such apparent contradictions, but real unities, in his poetical and moral creed and character, are fully expressed in his lowly but aspiring language, and the simple, elaborate architecture of his verse—every stone of which is lifted up by the strain of strong logic, and yet laid to music; and, above all, in the choice of his subjects, which range with a free and easy motion up from a garden spade and a village drum, to the "celestial vi-

sages" which darkened at the tidings of man's fall, and to the "organ of eternity" which sung pæans over his recovery.

We sum up what we have further to say of Wordsworth, under the items of his works, his life and character, and his death.

His works, covering a large space, and abounding in every variety of excellence and style, assume, after all, a fragmentary aspect. They are true, simple, scattered, and strong, as blocks torn from the crags of Helvellyn, and lying there "low, but mighty still." Few even of his ballads are wholes. They leave too much untold. They are far too suggestive to satisfy. From each poem, however rounded, there streams off a long train of thought, like the tail of a comet, which, while testifying its power, mars its aspect of oneness. "The Excursion," avowedly a fragment, seems the splinter of a larger splinter, like a piece of Pallas, itself a piece of some split planet. Of all his poems, perhaps, his sonnets, his "Laodamia," his "Intimations of Immortality," and his verses on the "Eclipse in Italy," are the most complete in execution, as certainly they are the most classical in design. Dramatic power he has none, nor does he regret the want. "I hate," he was wont to say to Hazlitt, "those interlocutions between Caius and Lucius." He sees, as "from a tower, the end of all." The waving lights and shadows, the varied loopholes of view, the shiftings and fluctuations of feeling, the growing, broadening interest of the drama, have no charm for him. His mind, from its gigantic size, contracts a gigantic stiffness. It "moveth altogether, if it move at all." Many of the little poems which he wrote upon a system are exceedingly tame and feeble. Yet often, even in his narrow bleak vales, we find one "meek streamlet—only one," beautifying the desolation; and feel how painful it is for him to become poor, and that, when he sinks, it is with "compulsion and laborious flight." But, having subtracted such faults, how much remains—of truth—of tenderness—of sober, eve-like grandeur—of purged beauties, white and clean as the lilies of Eden—of calm, deep

reflection, contained in lines and sentences which have become proverbs—of mild enthusiasm—of minute knowledge of nature—of strong, yet unostentatious, sympathy with man—and of devout and breathless communion with the Great Author of all! Apart altogether from their intellectual pretensions, Wordsworth's poems possess a moral clearness, beauty, transparency, and harmony, which connect them immediately with those of Milton; and beside the more popular poetry of the past age—such as Byron's and Moore's—they remind us of that unplanted garden, where the shadow of God united all trees of fruitfulness and all flowers of beauty into one; where the "large river," which watered the whole, "ran south," toward the sun of heaven, when compared with the gardens of the Hesperides, where a dragon was the presiding deity, or with those in the Metropolis, where Comus and his rabble rout celebrate their undisguised orgies of miscalled and miserable pleasure.

To write a great poem, demands years—to write a great undying example, demands a lifetime. Such a life, too, becomes a poem—higher far than pen can inscribe, or metre make musical. Such a life it was granted to Wordsworth to live in severe harmony with his verse—as it lowly, and as it aspiring, to live, too, amid opposition, obloquy, and abuse—to live, too, amid the glare of that watchful observation, which has become to public men far more keen and far more capacious in its powers and opportunities than in Milton's days. It was not, unquestionably, a perfect life, even as a man's, far less as a poet's. He did feel and resent, more than beseemed a great man, the pursuit and persecution of the hounds, whether "grey" and swift-footed, or whether curs of low degree, who dogged his steps. His voice from his mountains sounded at times rather like the moan of wounded weakness, than the bellow of masculine wrath. He should simply, in reply to his opponents, have written on at his poems, and let his prefaces alone. When will authors learn that, to answer an unjust attack, is merely to give it a keener edge,

and that all injustice carries the seed of oblivion and exposure in itself?

The sensitiveness of such writers might admit of some curious reflections. One would sometimes fancy that Apollo, in an angry hour, had done to his sons what fable records him to have done to *Marsyas*—*flayed* them alive. Nothing has brought more contempt upon authors than this—implying, as it does, a lack of common courage and manhood. The true son of genius ought to rush before the public, as the warrior into battle, resolved to hack and hew his way to eminence and power, not to whimper like a schoolboy at every scratch—to acknowledge only home-thrusts, large, life-letting-out blows—determined either to conquer or to die, and feeling that battles should be lost in the same spirit in which they are won. If Wordsworth did not fully answer this ideal, others have sunk far more disgracefully and habitually below it.

In private, Wordsworth, we understand, was pure, mild, simple, and majestic—perhaps somewhat austere in his judgments of the erring, and perhaps somewhat narrow in his own economics. In accordance, we suppose, with that part of his poetic system which magnified moleheaps to mountains, *pennies assumed* the importance of *pounds*. It is ludicrous, yet characteristic, to think of the great author of "The Recluse" squabbling with a porter about the price of a parcel, or bidding down an old book at a stall. He was one of the few poets who were ever guilty of the crime of worldly prudence—that ever could have fulfilled the old paradox, "a poet has built a house." In his young days, according to Hazlitt, he said little in society, sat generally lost in thought, threw out a bold or an indifferent remark occasionally, and relapsed into reverie again. In latter years, he became more talkative and oracular. His health and habits were always regular, his temperament happy, and his heart sound and hale.

We have said that his life, *as a poet*, was far from perfect. Our meaning is, that he did not sufficiently, owing to temperament, or position, or habits, sym-

pathise with the ongoings of society, the fulness of modern life, and the varied passions, unbeliefs, sins, and miseries of modern human nature. His soul dwelt apart. He came, like the Baptist, "neither eating nor drinking," and men said, "he hath a demon." He saw at morning, from London Bridge, "all its mighty heart" lying still; but he did not at noon plunge artistically into the thick of its throbbing life, far less sound the depths of its wild midnight heavings of revel and wretchedness, of hopes and fears, of stifled fury and eloquent despair. Nor, although he sung the "mighty stream of tendency" of this wondrous age, did he ever launch his poetic craft upon it, nor seem to see the *whitherwards* of its swift and awful stress. He has, on the whole, stood aside from his time—not on a peak of the past, not on an anticipated Alp of the future, but on his own Cumberland highlands—hearing the tumult and remaining still, lifting up his life as a far-seen beacon-fire, studying the manners of the humble dwellers in the vales below—"piping a simple song to thinking hearts," and striving to waft to brother spirits the fine infection of his own enthusiasm, faith, hope, and devotion. Perhaps, had he been less strict and consistent in creed and in character, he might have attained greater breadth, blood-warmth, and wide-spread power, have presented on his page a fuller reflection of our present state, and drawn from his poetry a yet stronger moral, and become the Shakspeare, instead of the Milton of the age. For himself, he did undoubtedly choose the "better part;" nor do we mean to insinuate that any man ought to contaminate himself for the sake of his art, but that the poet of a period will *necessarily* come so near to its peculiar sins, sufferings, follies, and mistakes, as to understand them, and even to feel the force of their temptations, and though he should never yield to, yet must have a "fellow-feeling" of, its prevailing infirmities.

The death of this eminent man took few by surprise. Many anxious eyes have for awhile been turned towards Rydal Mount, where this hermit stream was

nearly sinking into the ocean of the Infinite. And now, to use his own grand word, used at the death of Scott, a "trouble" hangs upon Helvellyn's brow, and over the waters of Windermere. The last of the Lakers has departed. That glorious country has become a tomb for her more glorious children. No more is Southey's tall form seen at his library window, confronting Skiddaw, with a port as stately as its own. No more does Coleridge's dim eye look down into the dim tarn, heavy laden, too, under the advancing thunder-storm. And no more is Wordsworth's pale and lofty front shaded into divine twilight, as he plunges at noonday amidst the quiet woods. A stiller, sterner power than poetry has folded into its strict, yet tender and yearning embrace, those

Serene creators of immortal things."

Alas! for the pride and the glory even of the purest products of this strange world! Sin and virtue, pleasure and poetry, the lowest vices and the highest aspirations, are

equally unable to rescue their votaries from the swift ruin which is in chase of us all:

"Golden lads and girls all must,
Like chimney-sweepers, come to dust."

But Wordsworth has left for himself an epitaph almost superfluously rich—in the memory of his private virtues—of the impulse he gave to our declining poetry—of the sympathies he discovered in all his strains with the poor, the neglected, and the despised—of the version he furnished of nature, true and beautiful as if it were nature *describing herself*—of his lofty and enacted ideal of his art and the artist—of the "thoughts, too deep for tears," he has given to meditative and lonely hearts—and, above all, of the support he has lent to the cause of the "primal duties" and eldest instincts of man—to his hope of immortality, and his fear of God. And now we bid him farewell in his own words—

"Blessings be with him, and eternal praise,
The poet, who on earth has made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight, by heavenly
lays."

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was far too harshly treated in his speculative boyhood; and it has often struck us that, had pity and kind-hearted expostulation been tried, instead of reproach and abrupt expulsion, they might have weaned him, ere long, from the dry bosom of atheism, to the soft breast of the faith and "worship of sorrow;" and the touching spectacle had been renewed, of the demoniac sitting, "clothed, and in his right mind," at the feet of Jesus. As it is, we deplore the atheism of such a spirit, with humility and bitterness of heart, and "wonder at it, with a great admiration." That a being of such richly endowed intellect, and warm quick beating heart—who was no worldling, tinged with no selfish or sinister motives, but a sincere, shy, and lofty enthusiast—standing up in a creation so infinitely full of testi-

monies to the existence of a Great Spirit; where there is not a flower that blossoms in the garden, but preaches that there is a God, nor a leaf that twinkles in the sunbeam, nor a cloud that passes over the moon, nor an insect which flutters in the breath of the gale, or creates a tiny tempest on the waves of the pool, but repeats and re-echoes the testimony that there is a God; where the lion roars it out amid his native wilds, and the humming-bird says it in every colour of her plumage, and every wafture of her wing; where the eagle screams up the tidings to the sun, and the sun, in reply, writes them round the burning iris of the eagle's eye; where the thunder, like a funeral bell hung aloft in the clouds, tolls out there is a Deity, and the earthquake mutters and stammers the same great truth below; where snow in its silence

and storm in its turmoil; summer in its beauty and winter in its wrath; the blossoms of spring and the golden glories of autumn, alike testify to a God; where the ten thousand orators of Nature—the thunderbolts, the hailstones, the rain-drops, the winds, the ocean waves, the flushing and the falling foliage of the woods, the lightnings of the sky, and the cataracts of the wilderness—are all crashing out, blazing out, thundering out, whispering out, and murmuring true and solemn tidings about the Being who made them all; who gave the torrents

"Their strength, their fury, and their joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam;"

who clothed the woods; who scooped out the bed of the sea; "who bringeth the wind out of his treasures, and maketh a path for the lightning of the thunder!"—that such a being, placed in the centre of so sublime a circle of witnesses, should say, "I doubt, I deny, I cannot believe that there is a God," nay, that he should have realised, in his imaginary experience, the tremendous dream of Jean Paul—have lifted himself up through the starry splendours of the universe, but found no God—have risen above their remotest suns, but found no God—have descended to the lowest limits of space—have looked down into the abyss, and heard the rain-drops descending, and the everlasting storm raging, but found no God; should have come back from an empty heaven to a fatherless world, and said, "We are all orphans: neither I nor you have any God"—is, in truth, a profound, and awful, and inscrutable mystery.

"Oh, star-eyed Shelley, didst thou wander there!

To wait us home the message of despair?"

What ailed, we may well inquire, this noble but misled spirit against the God who had so bountifully enriched him? What ailed him against his holy child Jesus, with his perfect character and his bleeding love? Why did he not just reverse his own first principle, which would have brought him to the first principle—the life and essence of the Christian faith?

He said, "Love is God." Why did he not change it into "God is Love!" He deified a vague but beautiful principle of Benevolence. Why did he not turn and see it in a purer, loftier form, condensed in the countenance, illustrated in the character, and sealed by the blood of Jesus?

And when, as the climax of his madness, he dared, in the album at Mont Anvert, to subscribe himself *Atheos*, do you not almost wonder that Nature, in her grandest forms surrounding the misguided man, did not, appalled at the spectacle, no longer able to endure, indignant at the conduct of him who was writing down, in God's power, a denial of his existence, burst silence and speak out—that the avalanches, rolling down, did not say, in every crash, "There is a God!"—that the mountain torrents, dashing by, did not cry, "There is a God!"—that the mountain snow, silent as death, did not awake to proclaim, ere it relapsed into everlasting dumbness, "There is a God!"—that Mont Blanc did not begin a chorus of acclamation, which all his brother giants would take up, echoing the tidings from their lofty summits, "There is a great and a glorious God!" But all was silence; and perhaps that indifference, that "silent magnanimity of Nature and her God," did more powerfully than any words rebuke the blasphemy. Shelley, in that wild moment, would have almost triumphed had his single word disturbed the harmony of creation, or brought down the thunderbolts of heaven. But that silence of the sun above, and the glaciers and mountains below, might have read a lesson to his proud heart, and taught him his own intense insignificance in the sight of Him, who no more regarded the denial to which he had summoned all the perverted heroism of his nature, and all the haughtiness of his then infuriated spirit, than a charioteer the one upward indignant curl of a crushed worm!

Ultimately, indeed, he admitted more fully than at first the existence of a great, pervading, though not creative mind, co-eternal with the universe. His

tone, too, in reference to Christ, underwent a change. He continued to read the Scriptures with delight till the last; and there are some grounds for believing that he was emerging from the shades of unbelief, when there came down upon him, so suddenly, the deeper darkness of death. We gladly turn from his creed to his poetical character. One grand objection to Shelley's poetry is its melancholious and whining tone. Thomas Carlyle seems to entertain this idea of it. We are surprised at this, and venture to deny it. Shelley was a doubter, a denier, a dogmatiser; but he was no whiner, no blubbing imitator of Byron, lying across the wheelway, or reclining on the shore; but a working man, or maniac, striving against real or imaginary ills; now with the flush of hope, and now with the fury of despair. Shelley was a workman, though his undertaking was a desperate one. He *shot* an infant finger amid the thunder-crashing spokes of the grim wheel of necessity; it was crushed; and if he did utter one wild wailing cry, as he drew it back, mangled, into his bosom, who shall blame him? Did Carlyle ever do more than *point*, with firm finger, to the black revolutions of that awful wheel? Shelley was a workman; but such a workman as, in Shinar of old, sought to reach heaven by piling brick on brick, and mortar on mortar; working, too, alone, under a black sky, and with guardian lightning blinding his eyes. Had Carlyle been a Christian, he might have stood behind the bewildered boy, half-shaken with laughter, yet half-rapt in wonder, at the fearless insanity of the enterprise, and said, as he patted the fair head, prematurely grey, "Build on, since no better may be. Better build in Shinar, than rot in Sodom: better build stones thus, than sepulchres with Nimrod. But, ah, poor child! were it not better still for thee to build with Noah an ark, or with Abraham an altar?" Another objection is, that mystic and shadowy obscurity which is said to adhere to his poetry. There are none readier than we to condemn wilful and deliberate mystification; it is the crying

sin of our age's literature. From a levathan Coleridge, with half of his huge shape in clear water, and the other embedded in mud, down to the smallest "tritons of the nunnows," splashing themselves into invisibility; from great unshorn originals, to the merest "echo's echo" and shadow's shade, there is a perpetual straining with many to involve themselves in a larger or lesser degree of darkness. Some even of the gifted of the day plunge, of mere *malice prepense*, into the dim, mistaking it for the deep. But Shelley is seldom guilty of this deliberate "darkening of counsel." The masters in the art of obscurity—for it is reduced to a regular system—produce it generally by an affected, or by an encumbered, or by a deficient phraseology: now, Shelley's style is one of the purest, most natural, most copious, and most fluent ever written. His command of language is not merely great, but absolute: words, the shortest or the longest, the most simple and the most abstract, Saxon or Latin, wait, winged and obedient, to body forth his rarest and most ethereal conceptions, instead of toiling after them for long leagues behind. Of versification, too, he is a perfect master; and we know that, in general, it flowed on him like a swift stream. He needed seldom than most poets to sacrifice clearness of sense to the necessities of rhyme: what, then, the secret of his obscurity?—for we must, of course, grant that obscure he often was. It sprung partly from his extreme subtlety of distinction; partly from the dreamy character of his subjects; partly from his passion for interweaving the abstractions of the schools with the living laurels of Parnassus; but principally from his incessant practice of allegory—a figure into which he was at once seduced by the preternatural liveliness of his imagination, and driven by the daring peculiarity of his opinions. If we try parts of his works by the common standards of descriptive and didactic poetry, their darkness is rayless, solid, impenetrable; but if we regard the whole as one mass of allegories, to which his system forms the master-key, we will not

find them more obscure than the "Faery Queen." Parts, again—passages, entire poems—are not only equal to the average in lucid transparency, but surpass, in that respect, the greater part of Byron and Wordsworth. Witness "The Cenci," from beginning to end; "Alastor," which, though vague in purpose, is in language perfectly transparent; the "Ode to Liberty;" long speeches and soliloquies in "Prometheus;" and many of his minor poems, which combine the clearness of the dew-drop and the grandeur of the uprolled thunder-cloud. And even when shades of hollow and soundless gloom alternate with points of dazzling lustre, the spell that comes upon the spirit is breathed up from the former as well as the latter, and you feel what is the "majesty of darkness:" and as what used to be called nebulae are resolvable by the power of the stronger telescopes, and their first filmy whiteness, after long observation, breaks up into billions of suns, so continued and watchful observation of Shelley's darker passages either explains them into beauties, crowded too thickly together, or at least makes them put on the resolvable aspect; and we feel that, were our eyes strengthened a little more, we could understand as well as wonder at them. Not a few other passages, indeed, are scattered throughout his voluminous works, which we doubt whether the author fully comprehended himself. Such is his last and worst poem, "The Triumph of Life;" which, notwithstanding its amber-like opening, some stray gleams of beauty throughout, and the strange Pilate-like question with which it abruptly closes, "Then, what is life? I cried"—the last poetical words, we believe, he wrote—is a piece of misty and melancholious confusion. But, in general, a real reader of Shelley will find that—as an aeronaut describes the sky of midnight, in the lofty regions of the air, to resemble a mass of black solid marble, which seemed, when he was come apparently within a yard or two of collision, to melt and admit him within—so do the mystic writings of this strange and great poet yield

and receive into their bosom the fearless explorer. His darkness is not that of Coleridge, which was partly, at least, the differential property of his mind; nor that of Carlyle, which proceeds from an uncouth terminology; nor that of Foster, which springs entirely from an *inopia verborum*, in proportion to his thinking powers; nor that of Hazlitt, which arises from a love of one-sided paradox; nor that of Byron, which is either the affectation of depth, or the mere turbulence of passion, tempesting and bedimning the waters with a sullen sediment; nor that of De Stael, which is the bewilderment of a sharp, but not subtle mind, in the fogs of a region too transcendental for its powers; nor that of Wordsworth, which is caused by the refinement of peculiar and personal association, the links of which are not visible, nor sought to be shown to the common eye; but something altogether distinct, partly indigenous (like the dim nebula or burr round certain stars, or as though a rose were to be seen through a faint halo of mist), and partly acquired; a composite formed less from natural tendency (for his juvenile works have least of it), than from a habit of reading German and high Greek; from another habit, relinquished before death, of eating opium; from an imperfect metaphysics, and from an imagination rendered morbid by a rambling life, by embarrassed circumstances at one period, and by calumny and persecution throughout the whole of his existence. Thus much—and somewhat too much—for the charge of mysticism, which was not essential to his genius—which has not vitiated the general structure of his poetry, nor shadowed a single passage of his prose—which, at worst, was only a *zodiacal* light round the luminary, and would have worn away, and left its body clear as it was great, had the orb not so suddenly gone down in darkness.

Another objection to Shelley's poetry is its planless, purposeless character. And that his plan is often obscure, and his purpose difficult of comprehension, we grant; but he seldom sets to work without an object, however shadowy that ob-

ject be, and has perpetrated fewer fragments than almost any poet of the day. In "Queen Mab," the purpose is tolerably plain—it is to upset the whole system of things as they are! There can be no more mistake about this object, than about that of the giants when they piled Pelion on Ossa. In his after and larger poems, such as "The Revolt of Islam" and "Prometheus Unbound," he pursues the same design, in a somewhat milder spirit, and swathes his dangerous thoughts in the golden mist of allegory. In fact, the ruin of his larger poems has been, that his purpose is but too evident. Unskilled in the double entendre of Voltaire, and the sly, leering insinuations of Gibbon, where more is "meant than meets the ear," he startles the echoes with what they (cold-blooded cowards!) expressed in whispers—he glories in propounding the most volcanic and revolutionary proposals, as if they were self-evident truths. "The Cenci," again, is not only full of purpose, but is one of the most finished tragedies ever penned. Every line is, as it were, given in on evidence, and the whole reads like one of those strange transcripts from the "red-leaved tablets" of the heart—a judicial trial. The stream of the passion winds not for a moment into those nooks and eddies of beauty in which Shakspeare loves to linger: it flows right forward in its sullen, yet glittering darkness; it has the precision and terrible calmness of Alfieri, without his cold sterility of style; the power and pathos of our elder dramatists, without their indecency, their carelessness, and their inequality. We recollect, indeed, but two of his considerable poems which are either totally void of purpose, or where the purpose is buried in beauty, like the lark in a sepulchre of sunshine, or like the nightingale in a grave of embowering leaves:—we mean "Alastor" and "Eipsychidion." The first is a professed picture of the wanderings and death of a poet; but so enveloped in visionary beauty, that you lose sight of the object altogether. It is like the history of the shadow of a cloud in its progress across

meadow, forest, lake, river, hill, and ocean, written by itself: so is the dim hero driven through a succession of splendid scenes, most beautifully pictured, to die, at length, unlamented and unwept; for who can weep for the departure of a shade? The other is, perhaps, the most eloquent rhapsody in the language. It is the "wild-flower wine" of poetry: the madness of rapture dances in its sounding measures; its "sky-tinctured" diction is like that of beings who bask under a brighter and hotter sun than this earth could bear—of the fiery-tressed inhabitants of Mercury or Venus, where a larger orb of day shines on mountains to which the Andes and Himalaya are pigmies. No order reigns throughout; yet on its shadowy thread are strung rare and sparkling gems, such as that inimitable description of a Grecian island, beginning:—

"It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as the wreck of Paradise."

Nor can we find any substantial ground for the charge of morbidity in the choice of his subjects. We can discover no raving among forbidden things—no ghoul-like gluttony of evil—no passion for dissecting depravity, peering into tombs, uplifting putrid shrouds, sitting down beside crumbling coffins, diving into the depth of asylums, eliciting a phosphoric light from decayed brains, and, by the gross candle of corruption, thus kindled, inspecting the records of infamy, and sifting the evidences of incest. This description—and is it over-coloured?—applies to Monk Lewis, to Maturin, to Victor Hugo, but not to Shelley. It is characteristic of him, as it is also of Godwin, and the authoress of "Frankenstein," that they generally keep within the limit which divides terror from horror, the singular from the morbid; and that, even when they touch upon interdicted topics, it is in a delicate and inoffensive style. The subject of "The Cenci," for instance, is almost too horrible for belief or allusion; and yet, so tenderly has he treated the theme, that, but for the known historical facts, you could not, with cer-

tainty, infer the nature of the crime which led to parricide. So far from dwelling with morbid avidity, as a late critic in "The Edinburgh Review" insinuates, upon the hideous subject, he throws a mystery around it; he represents it as something horrible, but nameless; no distinct finger-post points to its nature; its name never occurs; and the interest and power of the play are nearly independent of what is dark and disgusting in the theme. And we perceive that Shelley's motive in selecting the topic was not the wish for a strong and terrible stimulus to animate his tragedy with convulsive life, nor was it a desperate desire to astonish and affright the public by the hardihood of his choice, and to gather round him the interest of a man who, as a bravado, touches red-hot iron, or walks on the brink of a precipice; but solely the impression made upon him by the portrait of the all-lovely Beatrice, which haunted his fancy till he shrined it in song.

We will notice only one other absurd notion rather common about Shelley. He was, it seems, made for a translator, and it was very ridiculous in him to be anything else! We grant freely that he is one of the best translators of the age—as witness both his "Cyclops" and his "May-day Night;" but who would like a man, if confessedly of original genius, to subside into a mere translator? Translation is very well, as the amusement of a strong spirit; but to set two such beings as Coleridge and Shelley to toil and drudge in rendering Homer or Goethe into English! As soon put lions to the plough, or war-chargers to draw carts or caravans! Garrick was not merely a great actor, but a first-rate mimic. What would you think of the wisdom which should regret that he had not cultivated the latter art exclusively! A translator is a mimic—a splendid mimic, if you will. But was not Garrick better employed in tearing his white hair in "Lear," or beating Desdemona with that unspeakable look, in "Othello," than though he had become the standing miracle of mimicry? And was not Shelley better oc-

cupied when hymning the "Skylark"—heaping sublime curses on the killer of Adonais—describing the plague in the "Revolt of Islam"—mating Milton in his "Ode to Liberty"—or treading within the shadow of Shakspeare in "The Cenci"—than in gutting the "Faust," or translating odes to Mercury, the god of commerce and of thieves?

In examining Shelley's poetry, we must ever, in merest justice, remember his age. He died ere he had completed his twentieth year! We do not wish to plead this so much in extenuation of his faults; far less, under the unprofitable regret that he had not done more, to slur over and under-rate his actual achievements; but simply as a necessary element in our adequate estimate of their character. The first thing which strikes his reader is the air of *enthusiasm* which breathes around: you find yourself caught up from the low level of life into the atmosphere of mountain summits—a rarer, purer, prouder element. As there was, we are told, much of the seraph in his face—a rapt spiritual expression—which no artist could fully convey to canvas, so, in his verse, poetry is transfigured before your sight. Everything with him is in extremes. He has not joy, but rapture—not grief, but despair—not love, but agony—not courage, but martyrdom—not anger, but Pythian rage. His admiration of nature and of the great works of man, is a fine and noble delirium. The ardour which some poets affect, and which others can only sustain through short and occasional flights, is in him the mere motion of his mind. There is no resting, no dallying delay, no sleeping upon the wing, no looking round upon the spectators. It is an uninterrupted kindling flight, as if for existence. A lyrical poet sustains with difficulty his maddening rapture through a flight of some fifty or a hundred lines, and at the close sinks exhausted and panting, on the ground; but few, save Shelley, could support the transport of the ode throughout twelve books of Spenserian verse. Here, indeed, is the grand fault of his poetry. It is not a majestic walk, nor even a rapid race;

it is a long and stormy dance, in which few can keep up with the exhilarated and transported bard. As another feature akin to this, you observe traces of profound earnestness. "The terms bard, and inspired," says Macaulay, "which seem so cold and affected, when applied to others, were perfectly applicable to him. He was not a versifier, but a bard: his poetry was not an art, but an inspiration." You remark, too, in all his writings, the complete and despotic predominance of the *imaginative* power, as in all truly great poets, from Homer to Scott: you see that over all his faculties and attainments—over his intellect, his erudition, his pomp and profusion of language—the great light of genius holds sway, like the still sun compelling his planets to obedience by a principle inherent in their own natures. He combines imagination, fresh as that of childhood, and strong as that of madness, with the powers of a manly understanding and the accomplishments of finished scholarship. You are amazed at the *quantity* of his images. Like sparks from a conflagration, brilliant and thick amid the smoke of his mysticism, flashes out incessantly a stream, or storm, or whirlwind of images. Such is the "Cloud," that fine tissue of poetical star-dust, and the "Witch of Atlas," which is throughout composed of the sparkling bubbles of fancy—the Witch herself being a combination of Puck and Shakspeare's Mab, full of aerial waggery. You notice, too, the *unearthly* character of his images. They are culled from the rarest, the loftiest, and the wildest scenes of nature, from the grandest idealisms of art, from the most secret and unvisited chambers of the human soul, from the foam of hidden cataracts, from the ravines of lonely mountains, from snows untouched by the foot of man, from the "hiss of homeless streams," from the heart of sad and solitary woods, from the moan of midnight forests, from the "thousand harmonious sounds which nature creates in her solitudes," from the thrones of the thunder and the mansions of the dead, from Rome with its flowery ruins and gigantic death-smiles of art, from

sculpture and from painting, from the dim philosophy of Plato, and the tragic furies and fervours of Æschylus. From all these he has gathered colours which are not of earth—flowers of "arrowy odour," and figures of a colossal magnitude and symmetry. He, and he principally, of the English poets of our age, has united the peculiarities of the Grecian and Gothic schools. "No writer," again we quote Macaulay, "of this era had so many of the qualities which distinguished the great ancient masters. Had he lived to the full age of man, he would have produced a work of the very first rank in design and execution." You notice, as aforesaid, his prodigious command of *language*. A "reluctant dragon" to many, it is an obedient vassal to him. Whatever he bids it do is done. Be it to beautify still more the lovely, or to aggravate the dreadful; to fix down the evanescent, or to decipher the dark; to express either the last refinement of sentiment or the utmost rapture of feeling; to paint homely horror or panic fear; beauteous dream or sad reality; scenes beyond the power of pencil, or such as a painter might copy in literal transcript—a rich, varied, unaffected, free, and powerful diction is equally and ever ready. His style reminds you of the "large utterance of the early gods." It is a speech, handed down from Plato to Dante, from Dante to Bacon, from Bacon to Milton, Jeremy Taylor, and John Howe; from these to Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth. It is the "speech in which Spenser wrote his 'Faery Queen,' and Milton discoursed the Areopagiticæ to men, to angels, and to eternity." It is a speech of which we fear the type is failing among modern men. You observe, finally, about Shelley's poetry, the exceeding strength, sweetness, beauty, and music of his *versification*. His blank verse, without having Miltonic majesty, is elegance itself. His Spenserian stanza has not, except in parts, the mellifluous flow of Spenser, but it is less rugged and arbitrary than Byron's; and in energy, fire, and sweep of sound, leaves Beattie, Thomson, &c., far behind. But it is perhaps in

his odes that his intensely lyrical genius has produced the principal effects of sweet or stormy melody. They rise or fall, sink or swell, linger or hurry, lull to repose or awaken to tempestuous excitement, lap or pierce the soul, at the perfect pleasure of the poet, who can "play well upon his instrument," be it pan-pipe or lyre, jew's-harp or organ, timbrel or trump.

In order, however, to bring out more fully our idea of Shelley's subtle nature, let us, following a style of criticism which, though sometimes deceptive, casts strong light upon the *differences* of character, compare him with the two of his contemporaries whom he most resembled, Keats and Coleridge. It was for a long time customary to name him with Byron, as if he were a minor disciple in the same school, only out-Heroding Herod, and "blaspheming an octave higher." This was another of those erroneous notions about Shelley, which sprung from an utter ignorance of the subject. Between the two poets thus arbitrarily coupled together for a common doom, there existed as deep a difference as between a vulture and a dove. The one was the personification of sublime hatred; the other of mystic kindness. The broad tree of Byron's genius, with its many manner of fruits, some sweet as grapes, and others sour as the star Wormwood, was rooted deep in the soil of selfishness; the vine of Shelley's mind grew out of a disinterested benevolence. The secret of Byron's power was his sullen and concentrated passion; whereas sentiment was the soul of all the poetry of Shelley. The one was an inveterate sensualist; the other, during the larger part of his life, abstemious as a hermit. The one was perpetually offending delicacy in his writings; the other was horrified at whatever approached its limits. Byron's imagination was powerful, but poisoned and polluted; Shelley's was alike more copious and more pure. Both were sometimes called sublime maniacs; but, while the madness of the one was the fruit of remorse and the restlessness of a diseased spirit, Shelley's mania was that of a mild and sensitive mind: the one was the frenzy of Timon,

the other of Hamlet. As a popular and passionate poet, as a wit, satirist, and declaimer, if Byron have the advantage, Shelley would have had, if life had been granted, probably as decided a superiority, both as a genuine enthusiast and as a consummate artist, in originality of conception, and in dominion over the resources of language. Both stood aloof from their fellow-men; but, while retirement in Byron was the recoil of rage and scorn as of the stag at bay, in Shelley it was the retreat of the stricken deer to bleed and die. Byron reminds us of his own "Manfred," transferring his affections, and willing, were it possible, to transfer his relationship, his very being, from a shunned and hated race of "human mortals" to the mountains, or to their shadows, to the cataracts, or to their spray, to herbs, or stones, or eagles, or angels, or demons, or anything but man; nay, sometimes he reminds us of his own "Cain," hating and killing his brother because he cannot comprehend his God; whereas Shelley is Prometheus writhing on his rock, blasted by a thousand thunderbolts, yet retaining, amid torture, and the fear of deeper agony, and solitude, and contempt, and madness, a love for the race of man. Byron ever reminds us of a demon, superior to us in power and misery, wearing his genius as a crown of pain, holding a sceptre of intellectual sovereignty which scorches his hand, baptised with poetic inspiration as with burning gold, wretched himself, and striving to breathe up his own wo upon the sun, the glad earth, the face of man, and the countenance of heaven:—

"To make the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,
The tomb a hell, and hell itself a murkier
gloom;"

whereas Shelley is a milder, more patient, and more gentle being, who seeks to retain his sadness and circulate his joy, a playful, yet pensive Peri, wavering between Pandemonium and Paradise.

We are looking this moment upon the portraits of the T'wain, the "counterfeit presentment of two brothers," and can-

not but see the difference of their character expressed in every lineament. In the forehead and head of Byron, there is more massive height and breadth; Shelley's has a smooth, arched, spiritual expression; wrinkle there seems none on his brow; it is as if perpetual youth had there dropped its freshness. Byron's eye seems the focus of pride and power; Shelley's is mild, pensive, fixed on you, but seeing you through the mild mist of his own idealism. Defiance curls on Byron's nostril, and sensuality steeps his full large lip; the lower features of Shelley's face are frail, feminine, flexible. Byron's head is turned upwards, as if, having risen proudly above all his contemporaries, he were daring to claim kindred, or to demand a contest, with a superior order of beings; Shelley's is half-bent, in reverence and humility, before some great vision seen by his own eye alone. Misery, erect and striving to cover its retreat under an aspect of contemptuous fury, is the permanent and pervading expression of Byron's countenance; sorrow, shaded away and softened by hope and habit, lies like a "holier day" of still moonshine upon that of Shelley. In the portrait of Byron, taken at the age of nineteen, you see the unnatural age of premature passion—his hair is young, his dress is youthful, but his face is that of a full-grown man; in Shelley, you see the child, none the less that his hair is grey. Byron's face irresistibly suggests to your memory the words of Milton:—

"Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all, the archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and
care
Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride,
Waiting revenge."

Shelley recalls to us the description of the disguise assumed by him afterwards. (in *him*, however, no disguise):—

"And now a sprightly cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, but such that in his face
Youth smiles celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffused.
Under a coronet, his flowing hair

In curls on either cheek play'd; wings he
wore,
Of many a colour'd plume, sprinkled with
gold."

Between Keats and Shelley there exist many more points of similarity. Both were men of trembling sensibility, and a genius almost feminine in its delicacy; both sinned in point of extravagance of imagery; both exhibited a promise which the most mature of their productions did not fulfil; both were essentially young poets; both, nevertheless, have left behind them imperishable monuments of their powers; both, throughout their chief being, had to struggle with the infirmities of a feeble body and a fevered spirit; and of both, alas! the "sun went down while it was yet day." They were, the one the Wordsworth, and the other the Coleridge, of a new school of Lakers, not much inferior to the first; yet were they essentially distinct. Shelley attained early a manliness of thought and diction which Keats never altogether reached. His genius was fed, besides, by a far wider erudition, and came forth shining in the hues of German and Grecian lore, with neither of which the inspired apothecary's boy was acquainted, save through the dull medium of translations. Sustained, too, by a more determined and heroic spirit, Shelley bore the ordeal of attack much better than the trembling youth, who, when the bunch of early flowers, and "weeds of glorious feature," which he meekly presented was spurned, had nothing left but to die. But if Keats could not have sustained the long enthusiasm of the "Revolt of Islam," nor have elaborated the masterful "Cenci," it lay alike out of the power of Shelley, or perhaps of any of the poets of the day, to produce "Hyperion," in its colossal plan, its unearthly calm, with its statuesque shapes, its eloquence of despair, and all the dim beauties, austere splendours, and high original purpose, which excite your wonder that a dying boy could wear the buskins of Æschylus, the thunder-shod shaker of the Grecian stage. Superior as Shelley is in sustained stateliness, in sounding

march, in extent of knowledge, culture of intellect, and purity of taste, and free as he is from his rival's babyism of manner, affectations of style, endless sinkings away from the finest eloquence to the sheerest drivell—all those faults, in short, which, in Keats's own words, "denote a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished"—still, there are, even in the worst works of the author of "Endymion," such quaint originalities, single lines so sweet, single thoughts so profound; so much, in fine, of that pure element of power which clings to the memory and the heart—according to his own line, "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever"—as, taken in connection with his age, justify and compel the prognostic, that had he but outlived the fearful tenderness of his sensibilities, and outsoared the onset of his foes, Adonais would, in the "heaven of song," have sat above Alastor.

To Coleridge, Shelley bore a striking resemblance in the music of his verse, in the lyrical tone of his genius, in the pomp and power of his language, in the strange selection of his images, in the heat of his blood, in the diffusion and felt facility of his composition, and in that summer haze which swaddles so often the sun of his spirit. But in "energetic reason," in variety of knowledge, in comprehension, in gleams of sudden and searching truth, clearing away centuries of gloom, in incalculable unexpectedness, in single passages, figures, and thoughts of extreme lustre, and in a certain mysterious magic which floated about all the strange man did, from his most elaborate composition to his most careless table-talk, Coleridge rises at once above him and all his countrymen. As a poet, however, Shelley has displayed more variety of fancy, and is altogether swifter, subtler, more daring, more eccentric, and ethereal. As a talker, Coleridge was slow, solemn, calm, and enchaining; Shelley, loud, animated, fast and fervid, shrieking out his winged words. In appearance, Coleridge was of middle size; in age, fat, unctuous, reclined, grey-haired, with dim metaphysic eye; brow lofty, and very prominent in the observing organs; rich dreamy lips,

and voice resembling the "crush of the wood-pigeon's note." Shelley was tall, slender, stooping, worn to spirit and bone; small-faced, with sweet mouth; the hectic of death blooming on his cheek, and the fire of a fine madness rioting in his large open eye; with much of the peacock's beauty, he had also the peacock's voice, harsh and shrill in its higher notes, piercing in its whisper. As men, both were amiable, sensitive, forgiving; but, while in Coleridge there was a strong tendency to sensual enjoyments, to irresolution, and to indolence, Shelley was purged, earnest, active, resolute, and stripped, as one who was soon to join a spiritual company. In one point there was no comparison—Coleridge was a meek and humble disciple of Jesus Christ; and the latest cry of his penitent spirit was, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Shelley's first published writings were two novels, one of which only, "Zastrozzi," we have read.* It is quite unworthy of Shelley; nor, though written at fifteen, does it display any remarkable precocity of talents. Though full of ravings about deep bosoms, "scintillating eyes," &c., it contains not a gleam of his peculiar genius. Yet, whether it was from some interest in the story, or from the fact of its being the first draught of the hand which wrote "The Cenci," we could not give it up till the close. How great the rise in two years, from this genuine product of the Minerva Press, to "Queen Mab." The middle part of that poem is, indeed, as bad as possible; full of insane trash against commerce, monarchy, &c., as dull as it is disgusting; but the first two hundred lines, descriptive of the sleep of Ianthe, and the ascent of the magic car, are equal, in sustained power, beauty, and melody, to anything in the English language. Through even the waste darkness of the metaphysics which follow, are sprinkled some clear and picturesque descriptions. The figure of Abasuerus, the Wandering

* We have since read "The Rosicrucian." It is only a little better than the other—very crude and juvenile.

Jew, with his "non-essential shadow," is sublime; and a description of the Millennium, written with transcendent eloquence, brings the poem to a golden close. And all this Shelley had accomplished at an age when few, even of clever boys, had finished their first sonnet to Mary, or their monody over the death of a favourite terrier. About this time, having published an absurd atheistic pamphlet, he was taken before the grave and reverend seigniors of his university, and, refusing to retract, was formally expelled. He ran straightway, the young, fair-haired, bright-eyed enthusiast, to the lodgings of his friend, the author of "Shelley at Oxford," shrieking out, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, "I am expelled! I am expelled!" Thereafter he led a wild and wandering life, journeying through Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, &c., restless and wretched as Cain: collected the materials of "Alastor;" and, anticipating early dissolution from his consumptive habit, closed it by the death of the shadowy and spirit-like poet. To the same dark period of his history—

"When black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the path in which he moved alone"—

belongs the hapless history of his first marriage. With the circumstances of this unhappy affair, we are not sufficiently acquainted to pass on it any definite judgment. The marriage, first of all, was gone about with the utmost possible imprudence. Shelley then found, when it was too late, that there was an utter want of sympathy between him and his wife. We will not believe that a man, so amiable to all others, could act cruelly to her; but certainly there ensued a coldness, then an estrangement, and ultimately a separation. And terribly did the business terminate—in the suicide of his wretched wife, and in his own temporary derangement: a retreat from the world, even into the cave of madness, being a positive blessing and relief to his tormented spirit. And, alas! when he awoke from his dream, he found that his

children, too, had been torn from his paternal embrace, under a law surely far too stern and summary. In the "serener hour" which followed his marriage with the second Mrs Shelley, by the banks of the Thames, under the groves of Marlow, and in the "starlight smile" of the children she bore him, he wrote the "Revolt of Islam," by many thought the loftiest, as it is the largest, of his works. It was written principally in the open air, as the beautiful being sat in the twilight of the summer woods, or weltering in his boat upon the summer waters. He wrote it, he tells us, in six months; but the thoughts and feelings it included had been slowly accumulating for as many years. It was the first we read—part of it on the half-moon battery of Edinburgh Castle, while a thunder-storm was coming up the west—and we continue to regard it with all the ardour of early love. The melting music of the opening lines to Mary; the Spenser-like breadth and richness of its allegorical parts; its spiritual and ethereal tone; its raptures of natural description; the interest cast around the two lovers, who are its principal characters; the energy of its language; the strangeness of its story; the power of its individual pictures—such as that of the fight between the serpent and the eagle; the horrors of the plague, and the death of Laon and Laone; above all, the daring and dreamy representation of the future world, in which, notwithstanding his other errors, Shelley professed to be a believer—all, taken together, produced on us a profound impression, and have rendered its perusal an interesting reminiscence in our intellectual history. We felt its occasional tediousness; the unsuitableness of its stanza for narrative; the length and labour with which its allegories are spun out; the difficulty of keeping up such a high pitch of enthusiasm in its readers so long; its failure as an epic; and its impotence as a moral or political engine; but we had, nevertheless, the pleasing, yet solemn impression throughout, of being in the presence of a searching, original, and sublime genius. "Rosalind and Helen" is a more pathetic, but

much less powerful production. It is framed on an extremely simple plan. Two gentle females meet each other by the sides of Como's lake. A recognition follows. They had been friends in youth; but their paths had diverged, and their affections had been estranged from one another. They tell their stories in language reminding you of what is softest in the style of Crabbe, and least peculiar in that of the Lakers. Both are tales of woe: one had married an old man, who, from his "putrid shroud," had completed the misery which, in life, his tyranny had begun, by branding her in his will as an abandoned woman, from which dark blast of falsehood she took refuge in Italy. The other had wedded a poet-lover, a fine and noble spirit, a fac-simile of Shelley, who, after persecution unheard of, had "died and left her desolate." They meet here; and by the interchange of their tales, are reconciled to each other, and to their sad and solitary doom. This slender stream of narrative the poet conducts through much green and fresh pathos, some homely tragedy, and some eloquent imagery. It is quite free from his besetting sin of allegory, and is altogether the most pleasing and life-like of his minor poems. Concerning "Prometheus Unbound," which he wrote under the bright blue sky of Rome, and amid the vine-covered ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, opinions have widely varied. While some talk of it as a long spasmodic grasp at a height once attained, but to be reached by mortal no more, others vow, by all that's Grecian, that it approaches *Æschylus*, and is, by far, Shelley's greatest work. We incline, as our paper on "*Æschylus*" implies, to a medium view of the matter. Than the figure of Prometheus, and his opening soliloquy, and many of his after speeches, nothing can be more austere and antique: he is the very being whom the father of the Grecian stage had in his eye; mild, majestic, casting a loveliness from his meek face upon the rocks which hear his groans, and the vulture which drinks his blood; a being between man, demon, and Deity, far different from the Satan of

Milton, or the Lucifer of Byron; without the enormous pride of the one, or the lurid malignity of the other. The language, too, put into his mouth is worthy of him; free from the sulphurous foam of passion, "champing the bit," and from the writhing aneurs of crushed malice: it is calm amid its misery, dignified in the very depths of its woe. In describing the scenery of the Caucasus, the air of eternity, the "bright and burning cold," the dizzy ravines, the snowy sheen, the loneliness and the unspeakable age of the mountain, are admirably caught in the abrupt and tortured grandeur of Shelley's blank verse. And there is one short scene, descriptive of the downfall of Jupiter, sinking under the weight of Demogorgon, and of his final look—

"Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled
deep"—

which reaches the acmé of the sublime. How the cry of drowning Deity, "Ai! Ai!" rings in our ears. But the poem has great and incurable blemishes. It is utterly void of human interest. It is crushed under a load of thick allegorical darkness. As a catapult aimed at principalities and powers, it is deservedly feeble in its very hugeness, and "like a devilish engine back recoils." And even as a work of art it fails, from attempting too much. It is too like *Æschylus* to be equal to *Æschylus*. It reads, in parts, like a translation from the Greek; and this is fatal to its success. What essayist would succeed now by writing in the style of Plato? or what epic poet, by giving a duplicate of Homer? Besides, even as a revival of the Grecian drama, the work is imperfect. In the first part, *Æschylus* is emulated; but ere the close, the genius of Shelley irresistibly breaking out in all its peculiarities of abstract thought, and in all its extravagances of lyrical license, mars the verisimilitude. Still, if not the finest, this is the most ambitious and daring production of his pen, and perhaps calculated to give the highest impression of its author's powers,

and the deepest sorrow for their premature obscuration. Nowhere do we find more strongly than in its lyrics, a specimen of the Pythian *οὔρος*, the rush of poetic numbers, the tremendous gallop of an infuriated imagination.

"Adonais" is an elegy over John Keats, in the style of Lycidas, full of sweetness, sublimity, and pathos, but entangled with "wheel within wheel" of complicated allegory and thick-piled darkness. The best passage is that describing the procession of the mountain shepherds to mourn the death of their lost brother, "their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent." Byron comes, the "pilgrim of eternity, veiling all the lightnings of his song in sorrow," a proud and melancholy mourner. Moore disdains not to follow the hearse of the author of the "Pot of Basil," and thus is his presence described:—

"From her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall in music from
his tongue."

"What gentler form is hushed over the dead?" It is Leigh Hunt, the discoverer of the boy-poet, who found him as a naturalist finds a new variety of violet, while gazing on its native stream, amid the silent woods, and who "taught, loved, honoured the departed one." And in the rear of the laurelled company, lo! a strange, shadowy being, alone among the multitude. It is the poet of Prometheus, mourning, with thin, spirit-like wail, the departure of his friend. Listen to Shelley's picture of himself—one of those betrayals of personal emotion into which he is sometimes hurried, for he loved too many things, and thoughts, and beings, to be an egotist:—

"Mid others of less note came one frail form,
A phantom amongst men—companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and then he fled astray
With feeble steps, o'er the world's wilderness,
While his own thoughts along that rugged
way

Pursued like raging hounds their father
and their prey.

A pardlike spirit, beautiful and swift,
A love in desolation mask'd, a power
Girt round by weakness.

Of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart,
A herd-abandon'd deer, pierced by the
hunter's dart."

The close of the poem is remarkable for containing the prediction, or presentiment, that as Keats and he had been alike in their lives, so in their deaths they were not long to be divided:—

"I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar,
While, burning through the inmost veil of
heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the eternal
are."

It has been fulfilled. All of the gifted two that could die, lies now side by side in the same churchyard, under the blue of the same Italian sky.

Our space forbids us dilating on "The Cenci" more than we have done already. It would require a lengthened article to do justice to its conception of character; its firm and fearless, yet modest and dainty, depiction of the monstrous old man, whose gust of evil is so intense, and whose joy is so purely diabolical; of his feeble and broken-hearted wife, like a redbreast wedded to a vulture; above all, of Beatrice, that "loveliest specimen of the workmanship of God," with her "eyes swollen with weeping, and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene;" her "head bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall down about her neck;" her "forehead large and clear; her eyebrows distinct and arched; her lips with that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish;" and preserving, amid the circle of giddy horrors which revolves around her, the purity and greatness of her own soul. Nor must we dwell on its rigid and strong stream of purpose—its deep and quiet glances into the core of the human heart—the energetic simplicity of its style—

the power of the murder scene—the one exquisite bit, no more, of natural description which occurs in it—and the art by which the fiendish horrors of the beginning prepare for, and melt away into, the heartrending pathos of the end. How beautiful and affecting the last words of Beatrice, as she is being led along with her mother to early and horrible death:—

"Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear lord cardinal. Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot: ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How
often
Have we done this for one another! now
We shall not do it any more. My lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well."

Meant for the first of a series, it stands alone, the best of Shelley's productions; the first tragedy since Shakspeare, and one of the first poems in this or any age.

"Hellas" the poet himself called a mere improvise, but it is full of a rapid, torrent-like eloquence. As a drama it limps; but as a poem it storms and hurries on like a very Phlegethon. The revolution in Greece—in Greece! a country which had become a standing example, moral, and monument of degeneracy, bursting out suddenly as if its stagnant waters had been disturbed by an angel plunging amid them from the battlements of heaven—roused the soul of Shelley, then just falling asleep in its misery. It was "Vesuvius wakening Etna," and the result is before us in this the most vigorous and volcanic of his secondary poems, in which the lava stream of his feelings, scattering away his frequent mists, runs, and rushes, and roars, with a motion like that of Byron's fierce genius, when it produced the "Siege of Corinth." In a kindred strain of rapid vehemence, does Shelley exult over the downfall of the Turks, and predict the resurrection of old Greece. It is a wild prophetic impromptu, half-white foam, and half-red fire, lyrical withal, and only shadowed by the mystic shape of Ahasuerus; for here he takes a final farewell of the "Wandering Jew," a figure which had haunted his genius all along from "Queen

Mab," and another yet earlier poem, which he wrote along with Medwin, down to his "positively last appearance" in "Hellas." What strange charm the idea had over Shelley's mind we cannot tell; unless, perhaps, a resemblance between his own destiny and crime, and those of this fugitive and vagabond on the face of the earth. As it is, he makes in "Hellas" a very noble exit indeed.

Shelley's smaller pieces are very various in style and merit; some of them most ingeniously and ineffably impenetrable; others as lovely and lively, or as soft and plaintive little morsels as ever dropped from human pen. Such, for instance, are the sweet and pure Anacreontic, beginning, "The fountains mingle with the river;" the "Lines to an Indian Air;" the "Lines written in dejection at Naples;" the "Hymn to a Skylark," which might be set to that blitheest of birds' own music, and whose words dance like a fay in the silver shine of the moon; the "Sensitive Plant," the sweetest, strangest, dreamiest, thing in all his poetry, with that figure of the nameless lady in it, glorifying her garden for evermore; the "Ode to Naples," mounting into the very dome of the Temple of the Lyric Muse; the "Poem on the Aziola," and her "sad cry;" the "Lines on the Euganean Hills," with their eloquent remonstrance to the "Swan of Albion," then soiling his desperate wing in the "sins and slaveries foul" of the sea-Sodom; the "Mont Blanc;" "Julian and Maddalo," with its fine portraiture of Byron and himself in the undress of their Titanic souls, "rolling billiard-balls about," instead of pointing their batteries against the wide-mouthed artillery of heaven; and, lastly, "Peter Bell the Third," which, published since his death, has discovered an under-current of burning sarcasm to have run on in secret under the lake of his genius.

Shelley's prose works must not be omitted from the catalogue, if works they can be called, which were never meant for anything else than occasional effusions. They include two or three translations from Plato, the prefaces to his various poems, a few essays and criticisms,

published posthumously, and a selection from his correspondence. Yet, brief and unlaboured as they are, they raise our estimation of the man. They are free from the fever and wildness of his poetry. Their sentiment is finely generous and discriminating. Their tone of criticism contrasts well with the exclusiveness of the Lakers. Shelley had an intensely catholic taste, tremblingly alive to every variety and degree of excellence, equally fond of the Grecian and the Gothic schools; loving at once Keats and Moors, Bowles and Byron, Leigh Hunt and Coleridge, Hogarth and Leonardo da Vinci. His criticisms bring out the peculiarities of his authors or painters, amid a blaze of native beauty, a halo communicated by his own mind. Raphael was his especial favourite; and he held strong opinions as to his superiority to Michael Angelo, whose style he thought hard, coarse, and savage. His estimates of the remains of the classic school—of the Minerva—the Niobe, “shielding her children from some divine and inevitable wrong”—the Bacchantes, with their “hair caught in the whirlwind of their tempestuous dance”—are confessedly superior even to Winkelman’s. They are distinguished by chaaste and Grecian beauty. His prefaces are undoubtedly too presumptuous, too plainly prejudicating the case, and flinging down defiance in the face of the public. Now, without wishing that he had descended to indite any servile apology—of such feeble depreciation of doom he was, indeed, incapable—we could have liked if he had followed a more just and modest taste in this matter;—if stung though he was by depreciation into an intense and almost insane consciousness of himself, he had copied the example of John Keats, whose preface to “Endymion” is, in our judgment, an ideal specimen of such things, filled, as it is, with a proud and noble humility. “No feeling man,” he says, “will be forward to inflict punishment on me; he will leave me alone, knowing that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object.” Still the tone of Shelley’s prefaces is trumpet-like, their

march stately and majestic, their criticisms profound. Thus loftily does he describe his poetical education:—“I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests. Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields; I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the mere, visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished on their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been, to me, like external nature, a passion and enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the imagery of my poems is generally drawn.”

The correspondence of Shelley is distinguished by all his characteristics—his fancy, feeling, fire, purity of sentiment, feminine delicacy of taste, mild stateliness of diction, and, in addition to all this, by a piercing sagacity of observation, and instinctive propriety of sentiment, on every-day topics, which you could never have expected from the visionary cast of his poetry. How clearly he sees through Lord Byron, amid his admiration! how awake is he to his foibles! how honest in his advices! how alive in some points—alas! not in all—to his true power, his true fame, and happiness! how deeply chagrined and disgusted at his miserable deprecation of noble powers and amplest opportunities! How different from the crawling acyephants, who were glad to lick the very slime of sin from his proud feet! What tender gleams, too, are cast, in the same

correspondence, upon Shelley's domestic feelings and habits, on his love to his wife and family, on his amiable, forgiving, and benevolent disposition. Altogether—to parody an expression of Dr Johnson's—let him who would attain an English style, chaste but not cold, classical but not stiff, energetic but never extravagant, clear but never shallow, profound but never mystic, give his days and his nights to the prose of Shelley.

We are writing a criticism, not a life. But we would refer those who would know more about his personal and private manners, to Leigh Hunt's and Medwin's "Reminiscences;" to Talfourd's "Oration in Defence of Moxon;" to a series of papers which appeared in the "New Monthly Magazine," entitled, "Shelley at Oxford;" and to the recent life by his early friend, Captain Medwin. All agree in describing him as the most warm-hearted, the most disinterested, the most childlike, and, withal, the most eccentric of human beings. Whether lying asleep on the hearth-rug, with his small round head thrust into almost the very fire; or launching on the Serpentine, in defect of a paper boat, a fifty-pound note; or devouring large pieces of dry bread, amid his profound abstractions; or stalking along the streets of London, with his long and quiet steps; or snatching a child from its nurse's arms, snaking, the while, his long fair locks, and asking what it remembered of its antenatal state; or now scalding and now half-poisoning himself with chemical experiments; or discussing a point in Plato, under the twilight trees, with far-heard shrieking voice; or taking Leigh Hunt by the two hands, and asking him, with the most comical earnestness and grief, "Can you tell me the amount of the national debt?" or, another time, in a stage-coach, unintentionally terrifying an old lady out of her wits, by saying suddenly to his companion, in quotation from Shakspeare, "Hunt, I pray thee, let us sit upon the ground, and tell strange stories of the deaths of kings;" or rushing out of the room, in sweltering terror, as his wild imagination painted to him a

pair of eyes in a lady's breast; or writing to Rowland Hill for the use of Surrey Chapel to preach his peculiar views in; or, like Dr Johnson, lifting a poor houseless outcast upon his back, and carrying her to a place of refuge; or running about from cottage to cottage, in Marlow, visiting and helping the sick; or swallowing endless cups of tea; or basking in the hottest beams of an Italian sun, till he had made men suspect that he had been designed for the planet Mercury; or, though on all other subjects the wisest of the wise, the gentlest of the gentle, the bravest of the brave, yet, when *one* topic was introduced, becoming straightway insane, his eyes glaring, his voice screaming, his hand vibrating frenzy; or sailing in his crazy, Charonlike boat upon the Serchio; or *seen entering* a wood near Pisa, a little before his death, at a time when he was miles away—his character, on the whole, was one of the most interesting, and his life among the most romantic, in literary story. Every one must remember the catastrophe which robbed the world of this wonderful being. Everybody knows that, on the news of the arrival of Leigh Hunt in Italy, Shelley hastened to meet him. During all the time he spent in Leghorn, he was in brilliant spirits—to him ever a sure prognostic of coming evil. On his return to his home and family, his skiff was overtaken by a fearful hurricane, and all on board perished. His body, when found, was in a state unfit for removal. It was, therefore, under the auspices of Byron and Hunt, burned on the sea-shore, all but the heart, which would not consume. To a gentleman who, at the time, was with a glass surveying the sea, the scene of his drowning assumed a very striking appearance. A great many vessels were visible, and among them one small skiff, which attracted his particular attention. Suddenly a dreadful storm, attended by thunder and columns of lightning, swept over the sea, and eclipsed the prospect. When it had passed, he looked again. The larger vessels were all safe, riding upon the swell, the skiff only had gone down for ever. And in that skiff

was Alastor! Here he had met his fate. Wert thou, oh "religious sea!" only avenging on his head the cause of thy denied and insulted Deity? Were ye, ye elements, in your courses, commissioned to destroy him? Ah, there is no reply. The surge is silent. The elements have no voice. In the eternal councils the secret is hid of the reason of this man's death. And there, too, rests the still more tremendous secret of the character of his destiny. Let us shut the book, and clasp the clasp.

Note.—There is much in this paper the author would not write now; being convinced, however, that Shelley on the subject of religion was absolutely *insane*, and having still an admiration of the *man's* sincerity, as well as genius, we permit it to stand, contenting ourselves with adding a *caveat* to the readers of that edition of his works published by Moxon, in reference to the many abominations and blasphemies contained in many parts of it, and retained, we have heard, in opposition to the wishes of some of the poet's wisest and warmest friends. We allude to this afterwards.

THOMAS HOOD.

It is the lot of some men of genius to be born as if between Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Penseroso," their proximity to both originally equal, and their adhesion to the one or the other depending upon casual circumstances. While some pendulate perpetually between the grave and the gay, others are carried off bodily, as it happens, by the comic or the tragic muse. A few there are who seem to say, of their own deliberate option, "Mirth, with thee we mean to live"—deeming it better to go to the house of feasting than to that of mourning; while the storm of adversity drives others to pursue sad and dreary paths, not at first congenial to their natures. Such men as Shakspeare, Burns, and Byron, continue, all their lives long, to pass, in rapid and perpetual change, from the one province to the other; and this, indeed, is the main source of their boundless ascendancy over the general mind. In Young of the "Night Thoughts," the laughter, never very joyous, is converted, through the effect of gloomy casualties, into the ghastly grin of the skeleton Death—the pointed satire is exchanged for the solemn sermon. In Cowper, the fine schoolboy glee which inspires his humour goes down at last, and is quenched like a spark in the wild abyss of his madness—"John Gilpin" merges in the "Castaway." Hood, on the other hand, with his strongest tendencies originally

to the pathetic and the fantastic-serious, shrinks in timidity from the face of his inner nature—shies the stoop of the descending Pythonic power, and, feeling that if he wept at all it were floods of burning and terrible tears, laughs, and does little else but laugh, instead.

We look upon this writer as a quaint masquer—as wearing above a manly and profound nature a fantastic and deliberate disguise of folly. He reminds us of Brutus, cloaking under pretended idiocy a stern and serious design which burns in his breast, but which he chooses in this way only to disclose. A deep message has come to him from the heights of his nature, but, like the ancient prophet, he is forced to cry out, "I cannot speak—I am a child!"

Certainly there was, at the foundation of Hood's soul, a seriousness which all his puns and mummeries could but indifferently conceal. Jacques, in the forest of Arden, mused not with a profounder pathos, or in quainter language, upon the sad pageant of humanity than does he; and yet, like him, his "lungs" are ever ready to "crow like chanticleer" at the sight of its grotesquer absurdities. Verily, the goddess of melancholy owes a deep grudge to the mirthful magician who carried off such a promising votary. It is not every day that one who might have been a great serious poet will condescend to sink into a punster and editor

of comic annuals. And, were it not that his original tendencies continued to be manifested to the last, and that he turned his drollery to important account, we would be tempted to be angry, as well as to regret, that he chose to play the fool rather than King Lear in the play.

As a poet, Hood belongs to the school of John Keats and Leigh Hunt, with qualities of his own, and an all but entire freedom from their peculiarities of manner and style. What strikes us, in the first place, about him, is his great variety of subject and mode of treatment. His works are in two small duodecimo volumes; and yet we find in them five or six distinct styles attempted—and attempted with success. There is the classical—there is the fanciful, or, as we might almost call it, the "Midsummer Night"—there is the homely tragic narrative—there is the wildly grotesque—there is the light, and there is the grave and pathetic, lyric. And, besides, there is a style, which we despair of describing by any one single or compound epithet, of which his "Elm Tree" and "Haunted House" are specimens—resembling Tennyson's "Talking Oak"—and the secret and power of which, perhaps, lie in the feeling of mystic correspondence between man and inanimate nature, in the start of momentary consciousness with which we sometimes feel that in nature's company we are not alone, that nature's silence is not that of death; and are aware, in a high and grand sense, that we are "made of dust." We know few volumes of poetry where we find, in the same compass, so little mannerism, so little self-repetition, such a varied concert, along with such unique harmony of sound.

Through these varied numerous styles, we find two or three main elements distinctly traceable in all Hood's poems. One is a singular subtlety in the perception of minute analogies. The weakness, as well as the strength of his poetry, is derived from this source. His serious verse, as well as his witty prose, is laden and encumbered with thick-coming fancies. Hence, some of his finest pieces are tedious without being long. Little more than

ballads in size, they are books in the reader's feeling. Every one knows how resistance adds to the idea of extension, and how roughness impedes progress. Some of Hood's poems, such as "Lycus," are rough as the centaur's hide; and, having difficulty in passing along, you are tempted to pass them by altogether. And though a few, feeling that there is around them the power and spell of genius, generously cry, "There's true metal here, when we have leisure we must return to this," yet they never do. In fact, Hood has not been able to infuse human interest into his fairy or mythological creations. He has conceived them in a happy hour; surely on one of those days when the soul and nature are one—when one calm bond of peace seems to unite all things—when the sun seems to slumber, and the sky to smile—when the air becomes a wide balm, and the low wind, as it wanders over flowers, seems telling some happy tidings in each gorgeous ear, till the rose blushes a deep crimson, and the tulip lifts up a more towering head, and the violet shrinks more modestly away as at lovers' whispers; in such a favoured hour—when the first strain of music might have arisen, or the first stroke of painting been drawn, or the chisel of the first sculptor been heard, or the first verse of poetry been chanted, or man himself, a nobler harmony than lute ever sounded, a finer line than painter ever drew, a statelier structure and a diviner song, arisen from the dust—did the beautiful *idea* of the "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" dawn upon this poet's mind. But although he has conceived his fairies in a happy hour, and framed them with exquisite skill and a fine eye to poetic proportion, he has not made them alive—he has not made them objects of love; and you care less for his centaurs and his fairies than you do for the moonbeams or the shed leaves of the forest. How different with the Oberon and the Titania of Shakspeare! They are true to the fairy ideal, and yet they are human—their hearts warm with human passions, are fond of gossip, flattery, intrigue, and quarrel, as men or women

can be—and you sigh with or smile at them, precisely as you do at Theseus and Hippolyta. Indeed, we cannot but admire how Shakspeare, like the arc of humanity, always bends in all his characters into the one centre of man—how his villains, ghosts, demons, witches, fairies, fools, harlots, heroes, clowns, saints, sensualists, women, and even his kings, are all human, disguises, or half-lengths, or miniatures, never caricatures nor apologies for mankind. How full the cup of manhood out of which he could baptise—now an Iago, and now an Ague-cheek—now a Bottom, and now a Macbeth—now a Dogberry, and now a Caliban—now an Ariel, and now a Timon—into the one communion of the one family—nay, have a drop or two to spare for Messrs Cobweb and Mustardseed, who are allowed to creep in too among the number, and who attract a share of the tenderness of their benign father. As in Swift his misanthropy sees the hated object in everything, blown out in the Brobdignagian, shrunk up in the Lilliputian, flapping in the Laputan, and yelling with the Yahoo—nay, throws it out into those loathsome reflections, that he may intensify and multiply his hatred; so in the same way operates the opposite feeling in Shakspeare. His love to the race is so great that he would colonise with man all space, fairyland, the grave, hell, and heaven. And not only does he give to superhuman beings a human interest and nature, but he accomplishes what Hood has not attempted, and what few else have attempted with success—he adjusts the human to the superhuman actors; and the secret of this adjustment, as hinted in a former paper, lies entirely in the humanity which is diffused through every part of the drama. In it, as in one soft ether, float, or swim, or play, or dive, or fly, all his characters.

In connection with the foregoing defect, we find in Hood's more elaborate poetical pieces no effective story, none that can bear the weight of his subtle and beautiful imagery. The rich blossoms and pods of the peaflower-tree are there, but the strong distinct stick of support is

wanting. This defect is fatal not only to long poems, but to all save the shortest; it reduces them instantly to the rank of rhymed essays; and a rhymed essay, with most people, is the same thing with a rhapsody. Even dreams require a nexus, a niscus, a nodus, a point, a purpose. Death is but a tame shadow without the scythe. The want of a purpose in any clear, definite, impressive form has neutralised the effect of many poems besides Hood's—some of Tennyson's, and one entire class of Shelley's—whose "Triumph of Life" and "Witch of Atlas" rank with "Lycus" and the "Midnight Fairies"—being, like them, beautiful, diffuse, vague; and, like them, perpetually promising to bring forth solid fruit, but yielding at length leaves and blossoms only.

Subtle fancy, lively wit, and copious language, are the undoubted qualities of Hood as a poet. But, besides, there are two or three moral peculiarities about him as delightful as his intellectual; and they are visible in his serious as well as lighter productions. One is his constant lightness of spirit and tone. His verse is not a chant but a carol. Deep as may be his internal melancholy, it expresses itself in, and yields to, song. The heavy thunder-cloud of wo comes down in the shape of sparkling, sounding, sunny drops, and thus dissolves. He casts his melancholy into shapes so fantastic, that they lure first himself, and then his readers, to laughter. If he cannot get rid of the grim gigantic "shadow of himself," which walks ever before him, as before all men, he can, at least, make mouths and cut antics behind its back. This conduct is, in one sense, wise as well as witty, but will, we fear, be imitated by few. Some will continue to follow the Unbaptised Terror, in tame and helpless submission; others will pay it vain homage; others will make to it resistance equally vain; and many will seek to drown in pleasure or forget in business their impression that it walks on before them—silent, perpetual, pausing with their rest, running with their speed, growing with their growth, strengthen-

ing with their strength, forming itself a ghastly rainbow on the fumes of their bowl of festival, lying down with them at night, starting up with every start that disturbs their slumbers, rising with them in the morning, rushing before them like a rival dealer into the marketplace, and appearing to beckon them on behind it, from the death-bed into the land of shadows, as into its own domain. If from this dreadful forerunner we cannot escape, is it not well done in Hood, and would it not be well done in others, to laugh at, as we pursued its inevitable steps? It is, after all, perhaps only the future greatness of man that throws back this gloom upon his infant being, casting upon him confusion and despair, instead of exciting him to gladness and to hope.* In escaping from this shadow, we should be pawing the prospects of our immortality.

How cheerily rings Hood's lark-like note of poetry among the various voices of the age's song—its eagle screams, its raven croakings, its plaintive nightingale strains! And yet that lark, too, in her lowly nest, had her sorrows, and, perhaps, her heart had bled in secret all night long. But now the "morn is up again, the dewy morn," and the sky is clear, and the wind is still, and the sunshine is bright, and the blue depths seem to sigh for her coming; and up rises she to heaven's gate, as aforesaid; and as she soars and sings she remembers her misery no more; nay, hers seems the chosen voice by which Nature would convey the full gladness of her own heart, in that favourite and festal hour.

Best of all in Hood is that warm humanity which beats in all his writings. His is no ostentatious or systematic philanthropy; it is a mild, cheerful, irrepresible feeling, as innocent and tender as the embrace of a child. It cannot found soup-kitchens; it can only slide in a few rhymes and sonnets to make its species a little happier. Hospitals it is unable to erect, or subscriptions to give—silver and gold it has none; but in the orisons

* This thought we copy from Carlyle, who has copied it from the Germans, and they from Pascal.

of its genius it never fails to remember the cause of the poor; and if it cannot, any more than the kindred spirit of Burns, make for its country some "useful plan or book," it can "sing a sang at least." Hood's poetry is often a pleading for those who cannot plead for themselves, or who plead only like the beggar, who, reproached for his silence, pointed to his sores, and replied, "Isn't it begging I am with a hundred tongues?" This advocacy of his has not been thrown utterly away; it has been heard on earth, and it has been heard in heaven.

The genial kind-heartedness which distinguished Thomas Hood did not stop with himself. He silently and insensibly drew around him a little cluster of kindred spirits, who, without the name, have obtained the character and influence of a school, which may be called the Latter Cockney School. Who the parent of this school, properly speaking, was, whether Leigh Hunt or Hood, we will not stop to inquire. Perhaps we may rather compare its members to a cluster of bees settling and singing together, without thought of precedence or feeling of inferiority, upon one flower. Leigh Hunt and Hood, indeed, have far higher qualities of imagination than the others, but they possess some properties in common with them. All this school have warm sympathies, both with man as an individual, and with the ongoings of society at large. All have a quiet but burning sense of the evil, the cant, the injustice, the inconsistency, the oppression, and the falsehood, that are in the world. All are aware that fierce invective, furious recalcitration, and howling despair, can never heal nor mitigate these calamities. All are believers in their future and permanent mitigation; and are convinced that literature—prosecuted in a proper spirit, and combined with political and moral progress—will marvellously tend to this result. All have had, or have, too much real or solid sorrow to make of it a matter of parade, or to find or seek in it a frequent source of inspiration. All, finally, would rather laugh than weep men out of their follies, and ministries out of

their mistakes; and, in an age which has seen the steam of a tea-kettle applied to change the physical aspect of the earth, all have unbounded faith in the mightier miracles of moral and political revolution which the *mirth of an English fireside* is yet to effect when properly condensed and pointed. We rather honour the motives than share in the anticipations of this witty and brilliant band. Much good they have done and are doing; but the full case is beyond them. It is in mechanism, after all, not in magic, that they trust. We, on the other hand, have had more hope in the double-divine *charm* which Genius and Religion, fully wedded together, are yet to wield; when, in a high sense, the words of the poet shall be accomplished—

"Love and song, song and love, intertwined
evermore,
Weary earth to the suns of its youth shall
restore."

Mirth like that of "Punch" and Hood can relieve many a fog upon individual minds, but is powerless to remove the great clouds which hang over the general history of humanity; and around even political abuses it often plays harmless as the summer evening's lightning, or, at most, only loosens without smiting them down. Voltaire's smile showed the Bastille in a ludicrous light, as it fantastically fell upon it; but Rousseau's earnestness struck its pinnacle, and Mirabeau's eloquence overturned it from its base. There is a call in our case for a holier earnestness, and for a purer, nobler oratory.

From the variety of styles which Hood has attempted in his poems, we select the two in which we think him most successful—the homely tragic narrative, and the grave pathetic lyre. We find a specimen of the former in his "Eugene Aram's Dream." This may be called a tale of the Confessional; but how much new interest does it acquire from the circumstances, the scene, and the person to whom the confession is made! Eugene Aram tells his story under the similitude of a dream, in the interval of the school

toil, in a shady nook of the playground, and to a little boy. What a ghastly contrast do all these peaceful images present to the tale he tells, in its mixture of homely horror and shadowy dread! What an ear this in which to inject the fell revelation! In what a plain yet powerful setting is the awful picture thus inserted! And how perfect at once the keeping and the contrast between youthful innocence and guilt, grey-haired before its time!—between the eager, unsuspecting curiosity of the listener, and the slow and difficult throes by which the narrator relieves himself of his burden of years!—between the sympathetic, half-pleasant, half-painful shudder of the boy, and the strong convulsion of the man! The Giaour, emptying his polluted soul in the gloom of the convent aisle, and to the father trembling instead of his penitent, as the broken and frightful tale gasps on, is not equal in interest nor awe to Eugene Aram recounting his dream to the child, till you as well as he wish, and are tempted to shriek out, that he may awake, and find it indeed a dream. Eugene Aram is not, like Bulwer's hero, a sublime demon in love; he is a mere man in misery, and the poet seeks you to think, and you can think, of nothing about him, no more than himself can, except the one fatal stain which has made him what he is, and which he long has identified with himself. Hood, with the instinct and art of a great painter, seizes on that moment in Aram's history which formed the hinge of its interest—not the moment of the murder—not the long, silent, devouring remorse that followed—not the hour of the defence, nor of the execution—but that when the dark secret leaped into light and punishment; this thrilling, curdling instant, predicted from the past, and pregnant with the future, is here seized, and startlingly shown. All that went before was merely horrible; all that followed is horrible and vulgar: the poetic moment in the story is intense. And how inferior the laboured power and pathos of the last volume of Bulwer's novel to these lines!—

"That very night, while gentle sleep
The urchin eyelids kiss'd,

Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn
Through the cold and heavy mist;
And Eugene Aram walk'd between,
With gyves upon his wrist."

And here, how much of the horror is breathed upon us from the calm bed of the sleeping boy!

The two best of his grave, pathetic lyrics are the "Song of the Shirt" and the "Bridge of Sighs." The first was certainly Hood's great hit, although we were as much ashamed as rejoiced at its success. We blushed when we thought that at that stage of his life he needed such an introduction to the public, and that thousands and tens of thousands were now, for the first time, induced to ask—"Who's Thomas Hood?" The majority of even the readers of the age had never heard of his name till they saw it in "Punch," and connected with a song—first-rate, certainly, but not better than many of his former poems! It casts, to us, a strange light upon the chance medleys of fame, and on the lines of Shakspeare—

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

Alas! in Hood's instance, to fortune it did not lead, and the fame was brief lightning before darkness.

And what is the song which made Hood awake one morning and find himself famous? Its great merit is its truth. Hood sits down beside the poor seamstress as beside a sister, counts her tears, her stitches, her bones—too transparent by far through the sallow skin—sees that though degraded she is a woman still; and rising up, swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that he will make her wrongs and wretchedness known to the limits of the country and of the race. He echoes her voice—and hark! how, to that cracked tuneless voice, trembling under its burden of sorrow, now shrunk down into the whispers of weakness, and now shuddering up into the laughter of despair, all Britain listens for a moment—listens, meets, talks, and does little or nothing. It was much that one shrill shriek should rise and reverberate above

that world of wild confused wailings, which are the true "cries of London;" but, alas! that it has gone down again into the abyss, and that we are now employed in criticising its artistic quality, instead of recording its moral effect. Not altogether in vain, indeed, has it sounded, if it have comforted one lonely heart, if it have bedewed with tears one arid eye, and saved to even one sufferer a pang of a kind which Shakspeare only saw in part, when he spoke of the "proud *man's* contumely"—the contumely of a proud, imperious, fashionable, hard-hearted *woman*—"one that was a woman, but, rest her soul, she's dead."

Not the least striking nor impressive thing in this "Song of the Shirt" is its half-jesting tone, and light, easy gallop. What sound in the streets so lamentable as the laughter of a lost female! It is more melancholy than even the death-cough shrieking up through her shattered frame, for it speaks of rest, death, the grave, forgetfulness, perhaps forgiveness. So Hood into the centre of this true tragedy has, with a skilful and sparing hand, dropped a pun or two, a conceit or two; and these quibbles are precisely what make you quake. "Every tear hinders needle and thread," reminds us distantly of these words, occurring in the very centre of the Lear agony, "Nuncheon, it is a naughty night to swim in." Hood, as well as Shakspeare, knew that, to deepen the deepest woe of humanity, it is the best way to show it in the lurid light of mirth; that there is a sorrow too deep for tears, too deep for sighs, but none too deep for smiles; and that the *aside* and the laughter of an idiot might accompany and serve to aggravate the anguish of a god. And what tragedy in that swallow's back which "twits with the spring" this captive without crime, this suicide without intention, this martyr without the prospect of a fiery chariot!

The "Bridge of Sighs" breathes a deeper breath of the same spirit. The poet is arrested by a crowd in the street: he pauses, and finds that it is a female suicide whom they have plucked dead from the waters. His heart holds its

own coroner's inquest upon her, and the poem is the verdict. Such verdicts are not common in the courts of men. It sounds like a voice from a loftier climate, like the cry which closes "The Faust," "she is pardoned." He knows not—what the jury will know in an hour—the cause of her crime. He wishes not to know it. He cannot determine what proportions of guilt, misery, and madness have mingled with her "mutiny." He knows only she was miserable, and she is dead—dead, and therefore away to a higher tribunal. He knows only that, whate'er her guilt, she never ceased to be a woman, to be a sister, and that death, for him hushing all questions, hiding all faults, has left on her "only the beautiful." What can he do? He forgives her in the name of humanity; every heart says amen; and his verdict, thus repeated and confirmed, may go down to eternity.

Here, too, as in the "Song of the Shirt," the effect is trebled by the outward levity of the strain. Light and gay the masquerade his grieved heart puts on; but its every flower, feather, and fringe shakes in the internal anguish as in a tempest. This one stanza (coldly praised by a recent writer in the "Edinburgh Review," whose heart and intellect seem to be alike extinct, but to us how unspeakably dear!) might perpetuate the name of Hood:—

"The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver,
But not the dark arch,
Nor the black flowing river;
Mad from life's history—
Glad to death's mystery
Swift to be hurl'd,
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world!"

After all this, we "have not the heart," as Lord Jeffrey used to say, to turn to his "Whims and Oddities," &c., at large. "Here lies one who spat more blood and made more puns than any man living," was his self-proposed epitaph. Whether punning was natural to him or not, we cannot tell. We fear that with him, as with most people, it was a bad habit,

cherished into a necessity and a disease. Nothing could be more easily acquired than the power of punning, if, in Dr Johnson's language, one's mind were but to *abandon* itself to it. What poor creatures you meet, from whom puns come as easily as perspiration. If this was a disease in Hood, he turned it into a "commodity." His innumerable puns, like the minnikin multitudes of Lilliput supplying the wants of the Man Mountain, fed, clothed, and paid his rent. This was more than Aram Dreams or Shirt Songs could have done, had he written them in scores. Some, we know, will, on the other hand, contend that his facility in punning was the outer form of his inner faculty of minute analogical perception—that it was the same power at play—that the eye which, when earnestly and piercingly directed, can perceive delicate resemblances in things, has only to be opened to see like words dancing into each other's embrace; and that this, and not the perverted taste of the age, accounts for Shakspeare's puns; punning being but the game of football, by which he brought a great day's labour to a close. Be this as it may, Hood punned to live, and made many suspect that he lived to pun. This, however, was a mistake. For, apart from his serious pretensions as a poet, his puns swam in a sea of humour, farce, drollery, fun of every kind. Parody, caricature, quiz, innocent *double entendre*, mad exaggeration, laughter holding both his sides, sense turned awry, and downright, staring, slandering nonsense, were all to be found in his writings. Indeed, every species of wit and humour abounded, with, perhaps, two exceptions:—the quiet, deep, ironical smile of Addison, and the misanthropic grin of Swift (forming a stronger antithesis to a laugh than the blackest of frowns), were not in Hood. Each was peculiar to the single man whose face bore it, and shall probably re-appear no more. For Addison's matchless smile we may look and long in vain; and forbid that such a horrible distortion of the human face divine as Swift's grin (disowned for ever by the fine, chubby, kindly

family of mirth!) should be witnessed again on earth!

"Alas! poor Yorick. Where now thy squibs!—thy quiddities?—thy flashes that wont to set the table in a roar? Quite chopfallen?" The death of a man of mirth has to us a drearier significance than that of a more sombre spirit. *He* passes into the other world as into a region where his heart had been translated long before. To death, as to a nobler birth, had he looked forward; and when it comes his spirit readily and cheerfully yields to it, as one great thought in the soul submits to be displaced and darkened by a greater. To him death had lost its terrors, at the same time that life had lost its charms. But "can a ghost laugh or shake his gaunt sides?"—is there wit any more than wisdom in the grave?—do puns there crackle?—or do

"Comic Annuals" there mark the still procession of the years? The death of a humorist, as the first serious epoch in his history, is a very sad event. In Hood's case, however, we have this consolation: a mere humorist he was not, but a sincere lover of his race—a hearty friend to their freedom and welfare—a deep sympathiser with their sufferings and sorrows; and, if he did not to the full consecrate his high faculties to their service, surely his circumstances as much as himself were to blame. Writing, as we are, in Dundee, where he spent some of his early days, and which never ceased to possess associations of interest to his mind; and owing, as we do, to him a debt of much pleasure, and of some feelings higher still, we cannot but take leave of his writings with every sentiment of admiration and gratitude.

 ROBERT POLLOK.

OUR readers are aware that there once existed a strong prejudice against what was called religious poetry. The causes of this feeling were long to tell and wearisome to trace. Not the least of them was the authority of Dr Johnson, who, though enamoured of the sanctimonious stupidity of Blackmore, had yet an inveterate prejudice against religious poetry *per se*, and was at the pains to enshrine this "folly of the wise" in some of the tersest and most energetic sentences which ever dropped from his authoritative pen. Another cause lay, we think, in the supreme badness of the greater part of the *soi-disant* poetry which professed to be religious. Lumbering versions of the winged words of inspired men of God—verses steeped in maudlin sentiment, when not touched into convulsive life by fanaticism—hymns, how different from those of Milton or of the Catholic litany, full of sickly unction, or of babyish prattle;—such was, during the eighteenth century, the staple of our sacred song. If any one thinks our statement overcharged, let him put it to the test, by

taking up one of our old hymn-books, and comparing it, in its pert jingle and impudent familiarities, to the "strains which once did sweet in Zion glide," to our own rough but manly version of the Psalms, or to the later hymns of Cowper and Montgomery. It is like a twopenny trump, or a musical snuff-box, beside the lyre of David, or the organ of Isaiah. And just when the splendid success of Cowper, Montgomery, and others, had wiped out this bad impression of religious poetry, and when the oracular dogma of the lexicographer was dying into echo, a new source of prejudice was opened in the uprising of a set of pretended pious poets, or poetasters—who approaching the horns of the altar, not only held, but tugged with all their might—who treated divine things with the utmost coolness of familiarity—rushing within the hallowed circle of Scripture truth to snatch a selfish excitement—passing their own tame thoughts across the flame of the sanctuary, if they might thus kindle them into life; and doing all in their power to render the great little,

the reverend ridiculous, and the divine disgusting. These mock Miltons, though they had established a railway communication with the lower regions, and took monthly "Descents into hell," were quite intimate with the angel Gabriel, and conflagrated the creation as coolly as you would set up a rocket—made no very deep impression upon the public mind. Dismay and disgust, dying into laughter, were the abiding feeling with which they were regarded. And we know no better proof of Robert Pollok's essential superiority, than the fact, that his poem, amid the general nausea of such things, has retained its place; that the sins of his imitators have not been visited on his head; and that, while their tiny tapers have been all eclipsed, his solemn star shines on undimmed, reminding us, in its sombre splendour, of Mars, that dark red hermit of the heavens.

In examining Pollok's character as a poet, we are greatly helped by the compact unity of his actual achievement. When we speak of Pollok, we mean the "Course of Time." He did not, like many of greater mark, fritter down his powers in fugitive effusions. He is not remembered or forgotten as the author of literary remains, occasional essays, or posthumous fragments. He has incontestably written a book aspiring to completeness, of proud pretensions, hewn out of the quarry of his own soul, begun early, prosecuted with heroic perseverance, and cemented by his own life's-blood. Whatever we may think of the design or the execution, of the taste or the style, honour to the man who, in this age of fragments, and fractions of fragments, and first drafts, and tentative and tantalising experiments, has written an undeniable book! Nor let us forget the age of the writer. The fact, that a youth so impressed, by one effort of his mind, many, who were not straight-way deemed insane, as to draw forth the daring of equalling him with Milton, and his work with "Paradise Lost," speaks much in its favour. Ere the majority of educated men have completed their

mental training, or even formed the first vague dream of a *magnum opus*, his was resolved, revolved, rolled over in his mind for years, written, re-written, published, praised, and the author himself was away! Was not this much? And whatever malignity may say or "shriek," the mere unbounded and unequalled popularity of the book does prove a little more. We, indeed, look upon the nineteenth century as a very young century in the world's history—as but a babe in leading-strings. Still we do not think so little of it, after all, as to deem that a tissue of wordy worthlessness would run like wildfire—pass through some score of editions in less than eighteen years, and take its place, if not with the "Paradise Lost," with which it ought never to be named, yet certainly near the "Grave" and the "Night Thoughts." Let those who, in the face of the general estimate of a tolerably enlightened public, deny the "Course of Time" any merit, be, as De Quincey says on another occasion, "choked with their own bile!" There were, indeed, we admit, certain circumstances which, in some measure, explained the popularity of the poem apart altogether from its intrinsic merit. First of all, it was a religious poem, and this at once awakened a wide and warm interest in its favour. Galled by the godless ridicule of Byron, and chagrined by what they thought the vague and mystic piety of the Lakers, the religious community hailed the appearance of a new and true poet, who was ashamed of none of the peculiarities of one of the strictest of all their sects, with a tumult of applause. It was besides, a poem by a Dissenter. And between the gentle but timid genius of Michael Bruce, and the far more energetic song of Pollok, no poetry deserving the name had been produced among them. It was natural, therefore, that when, at length, a brilliant star broke forth in their firmament, they should salute its arrival with lawful and general pride. A few, indeed, of the more malignant of those who found themselves eclipsed, felt hatred, and pretended to feel contempt, for the poem.

But the principal cause of its popularity was the premature death of the poet. This lent instantly a consecrating magic to its every line—passed over it like a pitying hand, hiding its bulky faults—caused the poisoned arrows of many an intended critic to fall powerless from his grasp—aroused a tide of universal sympathy, and sympathy is akin to applause—put, in a word, the copestone on its triumph. Still the book had much merit of its own. It was, in the first place, on the whole, an original production. There were, it is true, as in all youthful works, traces of resemblance, and even imitation of favourite authors. Here Milton's majestic tones and awful sanctity were emulated; there, a shadow of a shade of Dante's terrible gloom was caught. In another place, the epigrammatic turns of Young were less successfully mimicked. Many passages resembled Blair's "Grave," in their rough vigour of style and unsparing anatomy of human feelings and foibles. Cowper's sarcasm and strong simplicity had also been studied to some purpose. Nor had the author feared to sharpen his holy weapons at the forge of Byron—that Philistine, who had come forth to defy the armies of the living God. Of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, he seemed to know little, else, perhaps, his tone had been more ethereal, and his verse more harmonious. And yet, notwithstanding such resemblances, and conscious or unconscious imitations, you felt, from the first, that you had to do with a man who thought, and looked, and wrote for himself. A strong and searching intellect looked out on you from the whole poem. And, scattered throughout, in nooks and corners of its scathed surface, were gleams of genuine genius—touches of natural pathos—strange and wild imaginings—rays of strong truthfulness in moral sentiment—lines memorable as if written in red characters, which, even more than its long and laboured passages, "gave the world assurance of a man." And thus, though the design was somewhat clumsy, and the painting coarse, and some parts of the execution little better than deli-

berate daubings, there was, nevertheless, a soul in the entire picture—an Eye looking forth from it which followed, pierced, and detained you. Another striking quality was its truth. Here was an honest, earnest man, talking to you, in solemn tones, of the most solemn things, and believing every word which he uttered. The awful truths of our faith had made, early, a profound impression upon his mind. The doctrine of future punishment, especially, had seized hold on his imagination, as with iron talons, and had found a fit commentary in the wild and desolate scenery where his infancy was nurtured. He never, for a moment, falters in pronouncing the tidings of wo against transgressors: he is full of the terrors of the Lord; and, with prophetic earnestness, and prophetic severity, he voices them fearlessly forth, and we seem to hear the thunder talking to us of the eternal decrees, and describing to us the everlasting burnings. His descriptions of hell show a man who had long brooded over the overwhelming thought—who had rolled the red idea in the furnace of his mind, till it was rounded into fearful distinctness of shape and symmetry—who had studied the scenery of Pandemonium, under the canopy of the thunder-cloud, in lone and wizard glens, in desolate moors, in sullen tarns, miniatures of the "last lake of God's wrath," in midnight dream, and drearier midnight wakefulness on his own pillow. And all such dark broodings he has collected and condensed into the savage figures which he has sculptured on the wall of the dwelling-place of the second death. And his pictures of punishment, though often tasteless, exaggerated, and unideal, are redeemed by their intense and burning sincerity. There is, indeed, around the whole poem, what we may call a flush of hectic truth; and you fancy mind and body crumbling down a step further to the tomb, in every succeeding syllable of the sepulchral work. We find the same quality in a work of far more artistic though fragmentary merit—written, too, by a dying hand (namely, "Hyperion")—where the splendours are all

hectic, and the power projected forward from eternity.

The next quality we find in the "Course of Time" is its gloomy cast and tone. Save the "Night Thoughts," and still more the "Inferno," it is the most mournful of books. A load of darkness lies upon the whole. In vain he struggles to smile: his smiles remind you of those which hideously disguise the tortures of the wrack-writhen victim. His sarcasms are searing; his invectives Tartarean; and, to our minds, the enumeration of the pleasures of earth, in the fifth book, is the most melancholy passage of the poem. It is a cold forced labouring against the grain. It is a collection of dead joys, pumped up artificially, not welling freely forth from a glad soul. How different from "L'Allegro," or even Byron's enumeration of sweets. So faded and forlorn are the pleasures he recounts, that you hardly wonder that he introduces among them a description of a sister's death-bed. And when he tries, at the close, to sing the millennial glory, his harp seems to refuse its office; and, as if prophetically conscious of the after-arrear of woes, it is "turned into mourning, and into the voice of those that weep." The poet's fingers seem paralysed—able only to take down a large geography, whence to transcribe the names of the nations who shall come to its light, but not to roll out the full diapason of a world's joy. The gloom of Pollok's poetry is evidently, like Dante's, indigenous. The darkness of Milton's mind sprung from excess of light; Blair's was the result of subject; Young's of circumstances; Cowper's of nervous disease; whereas Pollok's is flung from the forehead of his soul. It is no acquired or affected melancholy: like one of the stars described by Origen, he "rays out darkness" from the central gloom of his own heart; and not only the flowers of earth, but the splendours of heaven, crossed by the wind of his spirit, "darken like water in the breeze." Now, we regret exceedingly that he had not done more justice to the bright side of the picture. Christianity has been considerably injured by the melancholy and miserable

tone of some of its authors. We attribute in part the prejudice which exists against religion, to the severe and sombre light in which many of its poets constantly represent that gospel, which means, "News that it is well." A few, by the infused blackness of their own bile, have turned the fountain of the water of life into a Marah—the river of salvation into an Acheron—and have cast the shadow of their own disappointment, or disquiet, or disgust, upon the crystal transparency of the Sea of Glass and the golden pavement of the City of Glory! Thus has Dante carried the gloom of Gehenna with him into the heaven of heavens, and dared to darken with his frown the throne of the universe. Thus has Young breathed up his own personal sorrow upon the midnight sky, and seen the stars, those bright milestones on the way to immortality, through the mist of his own burning tears. Thus has Cowper seen little in Scripture save the grim reflection of his own mania, and read it chiefly as the charter of his perdition. And thus has Pollok discoloured the long track of millennial day by the shadow of his personal melancholy, leaving the "Pleasures of Piety" to be sung by a far feebler minstrel.

The book, again, is remarkable for its lofty and daring tone. Perhaps, indeed, this is a blemish rather than a beauty. Milton was lofty, because he could not help it. Sublimity is the shadow of his soul. It falls off gigantic from all his motions. He was daring, because in his glorious blindness the veil between heaven and earth was dropped. The medium of the interjacent universe was removed. Heaven became his mind's home, and he might be said to "lie in Abraham's bosom all the year." Dante's daring is that of a wounded and desperate spirit, treading upon terrible thoughts as upon burning ploughshares; with frightful accuracy and minuteness, writing the diary, and becoming the De Foe of Perdition. In all the calm of disgust and hopelessness, he treads alike the marvellous light of heaven, the twilight of purgatory, and the gloom of that "other place." About Pol-

lok's loftiness, there lies an air of effort; and about his daring, a slight taint of presumption. A youth, though of "great religious soul, retired in voluntary loneliness, and dipping oft his pen to write immortal things," may not be permitted the privileges of an old demigod of song, whose sole sun was the Schekinah, and whose only stars were the eyes of angels looking in upon his holy darkness; or of a deep-browed, eagle-eyed Italian, who, after his poem appeared, was pointed out in the streets as the "man who had been in hell." Still, if overdaring, he is original in his aspirations. His hell is not Milton's hell, nor Quevedo's, nor Dante's, nor Bunyan's. It is Pollok's own; and came to him in the night visions of his own spirit. We envy him not his property in the two terrible figures on the wall of the place. These are misereactions; spasmodic beyond the worst of Michael Angelo's. How far inferior to that one inscription in Dante, "Who enters here leaves hope behind." Substantially the two (the Worm that dieth not, and Eternal Death) are the same thing; and yet, after describing at full length the first, he says of the second, as if it were worse, "For ever undescribed let it remain." Both, nevertheless, are the product of his own mind. His heaven, too, is the building of his own genius; and his conception of wastes and wildernesses existing even there is one of the finest in the poem: one gifted spirit we know loved it for nothing else. His angels and devils play no conspicuous or important part. Perhaps the first are too prying and curious to be sublime: the others too hateful to excite our sympathies. His pictures of earth, its scenery, and its characters, are too dark to be true. His conception of the universe, as possessed of two centres—the one drawing up its subject orbs in the direction of heaven, and the other sucking down sinners to where "attraction turns the other way, and all things to some infernal centre tend"—is compounded of two images or theories, one occurring in Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," where the creation is represented

revolving round the throne of God, and the other in Scott's "Christian Life" (a book much in favour with Pollok), where all things evil and abhorred are described as "pressing down by necessity of their own nature," in search of some hidden magnet. How many efforts has the human mind made to figure to itself that vastitude of material existence which is above, and below, and around it! And how few even approach to the grandeur of the subject! Orreries are contemptible; at best pretty playthings. Worse still the image of a vast machine, as if space were only an enormous factory. Somewhat better the image of an immense book—the stars letters, the constellations words, and the firmaments leaves of glory. Better still, the fine thought of Campbell, if it indeed originated with him. Another, partly suggested by the old Scandinavian idea, came forcibly on us once while riding through dark fir woods in a moonlight autumn night: why not call the creation a tree, its root the throne, its leaves the stars, earth one withered leaf amid the green constellations, growing upwards towards boundless, measureless perfection, and the music of the spheres just the waving of the eternal boughs, in the one windlike spirit which pervades them all! So, streaming up from the uncreated root which we call the First cause, does creation germinate, and for ever grow! Pollok's book, too, is remarkable in general for its clearness and simplicity of thought and style; so much so, that we almost long for a little more of that fine German mysticism, without which it is, perhaps, after all, impossible to speak of the deepest and the loftiest—of eternity, space, night, infinitude. This element is too rare for Pollok's wing. When he tries to be obscure and profound, his fluttering is, to use his own term, "unearthly." Nay, sometimes, like Satan in the war of chaotic elements, he plumps down, fathoms and fathoms more, into a vague, void, and unimaginative darkness. Many of Milton's lines he might have written; but how far above the path of his genius were such words as these,

"The dreaded Name of Demogorgon?" And what abject nonsense he perpetrates in the description of the "atom which God had made superfluously, and needed not to build creation with, but cast aside with everlasting sense that once it was?" His peculiar power is understanding: he ratiocinates, declaims, inveighs, but rarely feels on his half-blinded eyes flashes of intuitive and transcendental truth. His is a thoroughly Scottish soul, clear even in its extravagances, common sense even in its wildness. His description of the resurrection, though vivid and vigorous, is as coarse as though done by a *resurrection-man*. We notice, too, the awful holiness of the spirit of this poem. There are few books in the language over whose frontispiece the inscription is so legibly written—"Off, ye profane;" if not the still more solemn motto—"Holiness to the Lord." We feel treading on ground consecrated by the shadow of the great Tribunal. Even Milton sometimes quits his Lebanon for Pindus, disports himself with the dreams of the Pagan mythology, and "wreaths his lithe proboscis" into giant mirth at the follies of the schools. Young, in multitudinous tropes and glittering antitheses, often trifles with his tremendous themes. Sometimes, across the most solemn and spiritual pages of Cowper, humour steals like a guilty thing. Blair's piety is sincere, but hangs round him in light and easy folds. But, with Pollok, there is no mirth, no trifling, and not a particle of genuine playfulness: all is severe and saturnine to repulsion and dismay. You are disposed to ask, Is this really piety, after all? Is she not a gladder, franker, milder, more amiable thing? Whether has this gloomy linner, or Jeremy Taylor, Howe, Milton, and Hall, succeeded in drawing the truer likeness? Is this she whom Jesus has represented in the divine Sermon on the Mount, or any one of the three fair sisters painted by Paul: Faith, with eagle-eye, contemplating the Invisible; Hope, looking as beautiful and happy as if a breeze from heaven were playing around her temples, and stirring her golden hair; and Charity, weeping over a

perishing world, and all the more lovely for her tears? Must there not be some mistake, or has Pollok's temperament, or the disease which was preying on his vitals as he wrote the poem, somewhat dimmed and distorted the features of the Bride of Heaven? Assuredly, holy ought to have been the spirit which dared to roll such withering numbers, and pass such sweeping verdicts down the "tide of time."

Akin to this, the poem is distinguished by its tone of intellectual and spiritual assurance. In a kind of divine dogmatism, it more resembles Milton's great work than in anything else. There is no doubt, nor shadow of a doubt, upon his mind; first, as to every part of his creed; and next, as to his individual capacity for expounding the same. No grand Perhaps is ever uttered; the very word never occurs. Sawing his path through difficulties, cutting Gordian knots, striking down all opponents, without modesty and without hesitation, he builds up his system, and clears his way. He addresses himself with unflinching confidence to greatest things. He has no momentary misgivings of his own fitness. He seems leaping up to meet the descending mantle half-way. Like Milton, he is intensely conscious of his dignity and size. And it is not his fault that his port is less princely, his panoply less terrible, his preparation less severe, his afflatus less powerful, and his stature less gigantic.

A pleasing feature of the poem is the vein of fine egotism which pervades it, and breaks out frequently in personal allusions and pensive reminiscences. This is one principal cause of its popularity. The poet who makes a harp of his own heart, and strikes its ruddy chords with skilful fearlessness, is sure of awakening the sympathies of the public. What so affecting in Milton as his allusions to his solitary position, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues;" or the melancholy magnanimity with which he touches, as it were, his blind orbs, and mourns over their premature eclipse? What finer in Cowper, than his "Castaway," or than his description of the "stricken deer that left the herd;" or in Burns, than his

"Vision," and his picture of himself, the inspired boy, in the lines,

"The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide
Among the bearded bear;
I turn'd the clipper-weeds aside,
And spared the symbol dear."

So in Pollok there is nothing to our minds so beautiful as his allusions to "Scotia's northern battlement of hills," seen from his father's house, in "morn of life," or than the brief history of himself which occurs in the earlier part of the poem. It adds to the effect of such passages, that the plan of the poem leads us to regard them as the reminiscences of a spirit shrined in heaven, and yet, from the centre of eternal glories, looking back with a moist eye and a full heart to the experiences of its earthly pilgrimage. And, to sum up the excellences of the book, there are in it some sustained and eloquent passages, which were alone sufficient to buoy up the entire poem, were it much more cumbrous, unequal, and faulty, than it is. The "Byron" will occur to the mind of every reader—a picture in which the artist seems for a season to become the subject as he paints him. The poet Byron has never himself described one of his burning heroes better, than Pollok the soul which created them. How well has he caught, especially, the self-involved and haughty repulsion of his spirit, "stooping to touch the loftiest thought," the education by which his soul was nurtured into poetry, and the waste and howling wilderness of its ultimate misery. Not so well, we think, has he given the characteristics of his genius. Byron is not the ethereal being whom he describes. He is not at "home where angels bashful look;" he is at home rather where demons pale and tremble. He is not an "old acquaintance of Nature." He has not the freedom of that city of God; it is but a city of refuge to him: he has been driven to it by disgust and agony. A "comet" he is, revered by the stars and responded to by the volcanoes of creation, but he is no "bird of heavenly plumage fair," descend-

ed from higher regions: he *has* "laboured up from beneath," and his wing wears the darkest soil of earthly passion. He "talks with the thunder as friend to friend," not because it is his most congenial companion, but because his miseries have left him no choice—the countenance of man is averted from him, and he is glad to gaze on the face of the thunder-cloud; his laurels withered or torn away, he must hide his bald head with a garland of the lightning's wing. He lays his hand upon the "ocean's mane;" but it is in despair, not familiarity. These, however, are petty blemishes in this noble passage. As a whole, it is powerfully conceived, and most powerfully expressed. Its words are winged, forked, and tempest-tuned: its motion is free, bold, vaulting; it is a rough, rapid, masculine, moral sketch, done apparently at one fierce sitting.

Other splendid passages we might name; such as that descriptive of the preparations for the Resurrection, the Address to the Ocean, &c. But we hasten to the less gracious task of pointing out a few of the faults of this remarkable book. And here a malignant critic might find "ample room and verge enough." Let us touch them as tenderly as we can. The book, first of all, is the most unequal of all works. While some parts of it are pure poetry, others are little better than stilted and stumbling prose. In aiming at the bare and bald simplicity of Homer, Dante, and Milton, its author sinks sometimes into sheer drivel. If Homer nods, Pollok must snore. The work is altogether, too, of a loose and shambling structure. It is a straggling street rather than a solid fortress. If a poem mean a piece of mental masonry, firm, compact, complete, the "Course of Time" is no poem at all. It is, in fact, a nondescript. It is not epic, it is not didactic. It has no story, and an exceedingly imperfect plan. In defect of incident, it is full of descriptions and moral portraitures, of all varieties and all merits, strung together on a dusky thread called the Course of Time. Consequently, as a whole, it lacks interest. Your eye kindles, and your heart

heaves, over certain passages; but over the rest you yawn portentously. Its moral pictures are repeated till you sicken, and spun out till you weary. Sometimes they are too general to be true, and are always painted in a *chiaro-scuro*, which, though true to principles, is false to fact. Often he states common truths with ridiculous emphasis, and heaps strong words, like too much fuel on a little fire, till it is utterly quenched. His imagination has force, but little richness; his intellect strength, but not subtlety; his language pith, but no melting beauty. He can command terror, but seldom tears. His genius has grasp, but no refinement. His tone, in reference to sinners, is far too harsh and exulting. He seems sometimes to insult and trample on their eternal sepulchre, as if the pressure of Almighty vengeance were not enough without the makeweight of his tread. His flames are fiercer than those of Dante and Milton; and he leaves none of their lingering touches of beauty and pathos on the surface of the lurid lake. Though writing in the nineteenth century, he has not sought to grapple with the grand moral aspects of punishment—never ventured beyond the familiar images of material pain—never tried to paint the successive descending stages of degradation in a spiritual being, given up to itself, as into the hands of a dire tormentor. This is a task which lies over for some profounder artist. He is better, too, at sounding the key-note than at finishing the melody. His prefatory flourishes are startling, but the anthem is not always worthy of the prelude. Had he ventured to describe the Flood, he would have expended his strength in the gathering of the animals and the elements: his pen had faltered in describing the unchained deluge—the darkened sun—the torrents of rain cleaving the gloom—the varied groups of drowning wretchedness—the ark riding in melancholy grandeur on the topmost billow of an ocean planet. As it is, he sweeps the stage nobly, for the “great vision of the guarded” Throne; he excites a thrill of shuddering expectation; on the tremendous

lyre of judgment, he strikes some brief strong notes, but recoils from the sounds he himself has made; and from an attempt to lift up his hand to the last trembling cords, he falls back exhausted and helpless. In fact, the poet reaches his climax at the sixth book. After this, he sinks down, struggling sore, but vainly, to break his fall. The last six books might almost have been spared. The subject, like strong sunlight, presses too heavily on his eye. He has a “vision of his own,” but it is not, on the whole, a happy vision. It does not fill and satisfy his own imagination, and how can it satisfy his reader’s? Indeed, the theme is too majestic for pencil or for pen. We felt this strongly when looking at Danby’s grand, but glaring “Opening of the Sixth Seal.” Notwithstanding the prodigality of blazing colour, the energy of some of the figures, and the mingled modesty and daring of the design, we not only felt a sense of oppressive splendour, but an overpowering sense of the unfitness of the topic for any pictorial representation. Danby very properly, it is true, ventures not to draw the features of that face from which heaven and earth are fleeing away; a small quiet cross alone, surrounded by the divine glory, gives the meaning and moral of the picture; but how feeble a simulacrum, even of the other features of the scene, is, after all, presented! What idea does that one wave of volcanic fire give of a world in “fiery deluge and without an ark?”—that flash of lightning splitting the rocks, of the thousand thunders on which the Judge shall be enthroned?—those scattered groups of surprised men and women, of the inhabitants of the whole earth arrested by the crash of doom?—that city toppling, of the capitals of the world reeling into ruin?—that one slave lifting up his arms to the morning of liberty which is dawning, of Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God? Nor, in the compass of poetry, do we know anything, save the *Dies iræ*, entirely worthy of the overwhelming subject. Prose-pictures of it are common in sermons; and, when well de-

livered, they may tell in the pulpit, but are perfectly powerless in print. Even in the pulpit, it is ridiculous enough to see a well-dressed youth, in gown and bands, with elaborately-arranged hair, and elaborately-balanced periods, and "start theatric practised at the glass," setting about the destruction of the universe—deliberately snuffing out its stars, like tapers—applying his match to the pillars of the globe—springing a mine under its cities, wiping away its oceans, as easily as, with cambric handkerchief, he does the sweat-drops from his lady-like brow; and closing, with a smile of supreme complacency, by quoting the words of Robert Montgomery:—

"Creation shudders with sublime dismay,
And, in a blazing tempest, whirls away."

Poets, too, and poetasters, have here alike signally failed. Young flutters toward it like a bird whose strong wing has been broken. The author of *Satan* rushes up, at first, with screams of ambitious agony; but, in fine, subsides and falls flat as a log. Pollok, as we have seen, gives the subject the slip, shrinking back, paralysed by its sublimity. Had Byron been a believer, he might have done it in the style of his "Darkness." But not till another Milton arise can we hope to see the epic of

"That day of wrath—that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away."

Upon the whole, this poem, though it be no finished piece of art, and no impetuous sunburst of nature—though its blemishes outnumber its beauties—must yet be admitted a powerful production, full of "things which the world will not willingly let die," and which, separated, possibly, from their context, and floating on the waters into which the volume itself shall have gone down, may long preserve the memory of the ambitious and resolute spirit whence they emanated. Class it with the highest productions of the human mind—with the "Iliad," the "Prometheus Vincetus," the "Lear," and the "Paradise Lost"—we may not, as long as the moon may not be ranked with

the sun, nor Ceres with Sirius. Place it even in the second file of poetical masterpieces—with the "Manfred," the "Cenci," the "Paradise Regained," and the "Excursion"—we dare not, so long as "Jove's satellites are less than Jove." But let it have its praise as belonging to the order which we may call "third among the sons of light," and its place on a sloping perch, at the top of which shines, in its starry lustre, the "Night Thoughts."

"Like some dark beauteous bird, whose
plume
Is sparkling with a thousand eyes."

Robert Pollok was himself a remarkable man. All the anecdotes we have heard of him leave the impression of a strong-minded, courageous, determined, sarcastic, earnest, and somewhat dogmatic spirit; with a thoroughly formed and fledged opinion of himself—with a hectic heat in his blood—holy contempt, rather than love, the element of his soul; and with a gay and bitter principle alternating in his mind and talk, now eliciting stormy glee, and now severe and pungent sarcasm. At college he scarcely signalled himself at all; how could he, whose thoughts were already consecrated to the "Course of Time?" He was no great prizeman; none of those who effloresce early and die away soon—who sell the chance of immortality for a gilded book—who leave college loaded with laurels, and are never heard of more. For this he was at once too modest and too proud. Yet, during his curriculum, he wrote those little tales, "Helen of the Glen," &c., which, though full of fine descriptive touches, are hardly equal to "Arcades" and "Lycidas;" and will never, even in the deep wake of the "Course of Time," sail on to posterity. Every one has heard the fate of his first sermon in the Hall—the loud and silly laughter with which that boyish burst was received—the fierce retort which broke from his lips, and the lofty indignation with which he drew back the first feeler of his poem into the den, and sheathed, for years, the bright weapon of his imagination. Every one knows, too, the effect which the buzzing

announcement of a great forthcoming work made, in Secession circles especially, and all the particulars of its after history. The despised of the Hall "awoke one morning and found himself famous." He was straightway fawned on, and crouched to, by many who had derided him before. He bore ill the strictures of honest and sincere friends. A review of the poem appeared in "Blackwood," written by a friend of our own, which, though by many thought too favour-

able, roused Pollok's ire, and terminated their friendship. Meanwhile the arrow of death had fixed itself deeply in his vitals. He resolved on many plans of works never to be accomplished; among others, a huge review of the ancient heathen world, which he wanted the learning to have executed, and which would have been the grave of his reputation. He died at length, in a strange land, unknowing and unknown; but the "Course of Time" has secured his immortality as a poet.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, LL.D.

ALAS, now, for the glories of the Lake country! Some score of years ago, proudly did it lift its head above the campaign of England to the south, and even toss northwards defiance from its Skiddaw and Saddleback towards "stately Edinburgh throned on crags," and the waving outline of the Grampian giants. Not only did it enclose, in its fine sweep, peaceful lakes, valleys "flat as the floor of a temple," tarns of austere beauty, forces flashing amid greenest umbrage, or bedewing grim rocks with an everlasting baptism; mountains, carrying off and up, by fine gradation (as if the one grew into the other while you gazed), beauty into grandeur; but it had attracted to its bosom a cluster of the wisest and rarest spirits then breathing in Britain. Sheltering the most of them from the non-appreciation or contempt of the critics of the era—an era which was "neither light nor dark," but lying betwixt the gross darkness of Darwin and Hayley, and the broad and blood-red uprise of Byron—they had sought a refuge from the mountains and the woods, which was not denied them. There stalked or sat, as it suited his quaint humour, and "murmured to the running brooks a music sweeter than their own." Wordsworth, the quiet tune of his verse not yet become a harmony to which nations listened in reverence. There Coleridge "talked like an angel, and did nothing

at all." There Southey pursued his indefatigable labours, under the sting of that long impulse which was so characteristic of him. There Wilson, De Quincey, Lloyd, and Hartley Coleridge, to say nothing of Bishop Watson, &c., were content and proud to be *Diis Minorum Gentium*. And now, where is all this illustrious company? Coleridge is dead, and died far from the murmur of Grassmere springs, and the rustle of the heath of Helvellyn. Wilson's princely figure is seen no more among the woods of Elleray, and is consigned to the sepulchre. De Quincey is now a denizen of the sweet village of Lasswade. Bishop Watson has left the plantations of Calgarth for ever. Lloyd is dead—a maniac. Hartley Coleridge, too, is departed. And, for some years, Wordsworth was left absolutely alone, Southey, first sending his mind before him, having at last sighed out his animal breath, and "returned to God who gave him." Long did the world sympathise with that mysterious obscurer which rested on his powers; and when the trembling hand of his wife drew half aside the curtain of his malady, many were the tears shed; but now the eclipse has passed away, and the orb with it. It were idle, and worse than idle, to grieve. More entirely, perhaps, than any man of his generation, except Wordsworth, Scott, and Goethe, had Southey done the work allotted to his

hand. While the premature departure of a Schiller, a Byron, and a Keats, gives you emotions similar to those wherewith you would behold the crescent moon snatched away, as by some "insatiate archer," up into the Infinite, ere it grew into its entire glory, Southey, with his three great contemporaries, was permitted to fill his full sphere, as broad, if not so bright, as theirs.

It was given to this illustrious man to unite powers usually deemed incompatible—a wild and daring fancy, a clear and ample intellect, unequalled perseverance of pursuit, attainments marvellous for variety, and minute mastery of their details, a flaming genius, and a patient research, a tone of mind the most ethereal, and habits of action the most mechanical; the utmost exaggeration, as a poet, to the utmost propriety, and elegance, and minute grace, as a writer of prose. As an author, he was at once the most eccentric and the most industrious. He is now as lawless as Shelley, and now as graceful as Addison; now erratic as Coleridge, and now plodding as Blackmore. His castles in the clouds are of solid masonry; his very abortions have marks of care and elaboration. This probably has injured our conception of his power. We hate to see a wizard for ever astride on his broomstick. We wish piles of magic to rise magically, and not by slow and laborious accumulation. We hear of the building of the Ark, but not of that of Jacob's ladder. That was let down, flashing suddenly its spiritual light across the desert and the brow of the sleeping patriarch. Southey's supernaturalisms smell too much of the oil—there's "magic in the web;" but the web is so vast, that the witchery thins away, by diffusion, into shadow; he forgets that tedium is the antithesis of terror, that it is the etiquette of ghosts to make short calls; that, when they stay too long, we think them bores, and that a yawn is more effectual in remanding them to limbo than even the crowing of the cock. In several of his poems his mind follows that stream of tendency which, some

years ago, drew our higher poetical genius towards the East, as if the font of Castalia were a travelling spring, and had thither transferred its waters. And there are in that region very potent attractions to the imagination. Its associations—as the cradle of the human race; as the seat of the primeval Paradise; as the throne of defunct empires; as the scene of miracles at which the cheek of man still turns pale; as the stage on which angels, prophets, and sages played their parts; as the fountain of the three Faiths (how diverse in character!) which have principally swayed the minds of intelligent man—Judaism, Mahometanism and Christianity—as the parent, besides, of those enormous superstitions, which appear indigenous as its tigers and reptiles, immense effluvia springing from the heat of its imagination, as these from the heat of its climate; as the land of the sun, who casts over it all a glare of severe appropriation, from Jerusalem to Japan; as swarming with vices and crimes, which surround it with a haze of moral horror; as teeming with wild and wondrous poetry; as the source of almost all pestilence and sweeping judgments; as abounding in barbaric wealth, "from its earth coming bread, and under it, turned up, as it were, fire—the stones of it sapphires, and the dust thereof gold;" and, above all, as nurturing a gorgeous scenery of widespread jungle, great sweeping rivers, deserts naked and bare, vast lonely plains, large tracts of territory stripped of their cities, peeled of their verdure, sucked dry of their rivers, and given up to eternal barrenness; and of mountains, every name of which is a poem, from where Lebanon looks down through his cedars to Calvary, to where Caucasus gazes on the Caspian, with his eye of snow; and to where, again, the Himalayan hills, supreme in height, withdrawn, as if in scorn, into their own inaccessible summits, carry up the outline of our planet nearest to the heavens. Associations of this kind have invested the East with a varied charm, and drawn toward it Byron, Moore, Southey, Croly, Beckford, the author of "Anastasius," and a host of others,

in search of the inspiration still supposed to linger about its sparkling waters and its golden groves. And while Moore has caught its sunny spirit, its effervescent liveliness of fancy, its elegance of costume, its profusion of colour, and its voluptuousness of tone; and Byron bathed in its darker fountains of passion, and revived its faded blasphemies, and sucked poison from its brilliant flowers, Southey has aspired to mate with the mightier and elder shapes of its superstition; to reanimate the cold idols of its worship; to climb its Swerga, to dive into its dreary Domdaniel caves, to rekindle the huge heaps of its ashes, or to rear over them a mausoleum, proud, large, and elaborate as their own forms. In this attempt he has had little sympathy. Hindooism is too far gone in dotage and death, to bleed the generous life-blood of poetry to any lancet. Its forms are too numerous, capricious, and ugly, its mythology too intricate, its mummeries too ridiculous, its colouring of blood too uniform. Byron and Moore knew this; and while the former, except in one instance, where he bursts into the neighbourhood of Eden, has never gone farther east than Turkey, the other flits about the fire-summits of Persia, and seeks to collect in his crystal goblet no element more potent or hazardous than the poetical essence of the faith of Mahomet. Yet "The Curse of Kehama" is a very grand poem, and its close reaches the most terrible shape of the sublime. In "Madoc," again, Southey has gone to the opposite quarter of the globe, has leaped into the New World, disturbed by his foot a silence unbroken from the creation, and led us amid those abysses of primeval darkness into which a path for the sunbeams had to be hewn, and amid which the lightning, sole visiter since the deluge, entered trembling, and withdrew in haste. Tearing, without remorse, the crown of discovery from the head of Columbus, he guides the bark of Madoc, a Welsh prince, through silent seas, to the American continent, and recounts many strange adventures which befell him there. There is much boldness, some poetry, and more tediousness in the attempt;

and we could have wished that the shade of Columbus had appeared (like that dire figure in Scott's noble picture of Vasco di Gama passing the Cape) to his slumbering spirit, and warned him off the forbidden shores. "Wat Tyler" is a feverish effusion of youth, love, and revolutionary mania. "Joan of Arc" we have never read. Many of his smaller poems are fine, particularly the "Holly Tree." Ah! he foresaw not that the high smooth leaves on its top were to be withered and blackened where they grew! But "Roderick, the last of the Goths," is perhaps the main pillar of his poetical reputation. It is a deep, sober, solemn narrative, less ambitious and more successful than his others. A shade of pensive piety hovers meekly over it. It is written all in a quiet under-tone, which were monotonous, but for the varied and picturesque story it tells. And behind it, in noble background, lies the scenery of Spain, with its mountain mosses, cork-tree groves, orange tints, and dancing fire-flies—the country of Cervantes and Don Quixote, where they still sing, as they go forth to labour, the "ancient ballad of Roncesvalles." His laureate odes are in general failures. Who can write poems any more than "yield reasons upon compulsion, Hal?" It is an incubus of obligation, under which the wings of genius higher than Southey's might succumb. We have sometimes figured to ourselves the horrible plight of one who was compelled to produce two poems in a week, as a minister has to preach two sermons. Scarce inferior to such a slavery, is that of a laureate who must sweat poetry out of every birth, baptism, burial, and battle, that occurs in the circle of the royal household or in the public history of the country. "The Vision of Judgment" brings this deplorable bondage to a point. We know not whether its design or its execution, its spirit or its versification, be more unworthy of the writer. It is half ludicrous, half melancholy, to see it now inserted among the notes of Byron's parody. There, degraded as if to the kitchen of that powerful but wicked *jeu*

d'esprit, it serves only to sance its poignancy. When shall the lines on the "Burial of Sir John Moore," or the "Dream," or Campbell's "Last Man," be thus kicked down-stairs by their caricatures? Never. Had not Southey's poem been worthless, it would have defied fifty parodies to laugh it out of circulation.

The leading qualities of his poetry are, exuberance of imagery; diffusion of style; manifest facility of execution; a somewhat ostentatious display of intimacy with the costume, or history, of the theme, or period; a wild, varied, and often exquisite versification; a frequent looseness and vagueness of phrase, strangely connected with an utter absence and abhorrence of mysticism, in the proper sense of the term; a sluggishness of occasional movement; a general want of condensation and artistic finish; and a pervading tone of moral and religious principle. His genius emits a deep, steady, permanent glow—never sharp tongues of flame. His poems, excellent in most of their parts, are heavy as wholes: and he must have been mortified, but need not have been surprised, that, while the brilliant pamphlets of Byron were racing on through instant popularity to eternal fame before his very eyes, his own larger, equally genuine, and far more laboured works, were so slowly gaining their way to a disputed immortality. After all, his principal defect as a poet is size:—his ghosts are too tall—his quaintnesses are in quarto—his airy verse, which had been admirable in short effusions, wearies when reverberated throughout the long vista of interminable narratives—his genius wears a train—with it has been entangled, and over it has well-nigh fallen. Very different it is with his prose. Here his fatal facility of verse forsakes him. He knows where to stop; and his language is pure, pellucid, simple, proper words dropping as by instinct into proper places. We prefer his style to Hall's, as less finished, but more natural, and better adapted for the uses of everyday composition. You never, go as early

as you please, catch the one in undress; the other always wears an elegant dishabille. Had Hall written a history or biography, it had been a stiff brocade business. Southey tells his story almost as well as Herodotus or Walter Scott. His "Lives" of Henry Kirke White and Nelson attest this; but so do also his other works—the "Life of Wesley," the "Book of the Church," the "Doctor" (containing, besides, so many odd fancies, and so much quaint humour, that men were slow to believe it his), his "Colloquies on Society," his "Lives" of Cowper and Bunyan, and his articles in the "Quarterly," all of which were purchased cheaply at £100 each.

We love him for his liking to dear old John Bunyan, though it cost him a wry face or two to digest the tough old Baptist. Next to the Bible, the "Pilgrim's Progress" is to us *the* Book. Never, while our soul is in time or eternity, can we forget thee, "ingenious dreamer," or that immortal road which thy genius has mapped out. Never can we forget the cave where thou dreamest, Dante-like, thy dream—the man with the book in his hand—the Slough of Despond—the apparition of Help—the sigh with which we saw Pliable turning round on the wrong side—the starry wicket-gate shining through the darkness—the cliffs of Sinai overhanging the bewildered wanderer—the Interpreter's house, with its wondrous visions—the man in the cage, and Him, the nameless, rising from the vision of the Judgment for evermore—the Hill Difficulty, with the two dreary roads, Danger and Destruction, diverging from its base—the arbour half-way up—the lions on the summit—the house Beautiful—that very solitary place the Valley of Humiliation, with now Apollyon spreading his dragon-wings in the gloom, and now, how sweet the contrast! the boy with the herb "heart's-ease" in his bosom, and that soft hymn upon his lips, reclining fearless among its gentle shades—that "other place," the Valley of the Shadow of Death, with its shuddering horrors—the town of Vanity—the dungeons of Despair—the Delectable Moun-

tains overtopped by Mount Clear, and that again by the golden gates of the city—the short cut to hell—the enchanted ground—Beulah, that lovely land, where the sun shineth night and day—the dark river over which there is no Bridge, the ridges of the Everlasting Hills rising beyond. As to the characters, we love them all—Christian with his burden, and the key called Promise in his bosom; Hopeful, ever answering to his name; Faithful, mounting on his fiery whirlwind the nearest way to the Celestial Gate; good Evangelist; manly Great-heart; Valiant-for-truth, with his "right Damascus blade" cleaving in blood to his hand; Little-faith grasping his jewels; Fearing, wallowing in his slough; Despondency and Much-afraid; even green-headed Ignorance and his complacent ferry-man; and have a slight tenderness for Byends himself, and that strange figure Old Atheist, with his hollow laughter; and "one will we mention dearer than the rest," Mercy, whom we love for the sweet name she bears, and because she approaches the very ideal of womanliness and modesty of character. "O, rare John Bunyan!" what a particle of power was deposited in thy rude body and ruder soul! With a "burnt stick for a pencil," what graphic, pathetic, powerful, tender, true, and terrible pictures hast thou drawn! Thou hast extorted admiration from infidels and high churchmen; from boys and bearded men; from a clown and a Coleridge (who read it now as a critic, regarding it as the first of allegories; now as a theologian, considering it the best system of divinity; and again as a boy, surrendering himself to the stream of the story); from a Thomas Campbell and a Robert Southey.

Southey was a very eloquent and generous critic, when no prejudice stood in the way. As a thinker, he was clear rather than profound; fond of crotchets, and infected with a most unaccountable and unreasonable aversion to the periodical press. As a religionist, his views were exceedingly definite and decided. His formula of Church of Englandism

fitted his mind exactly as a glove his hand. He had no patience with the mystic piety of Wordsworth and Coleridge. His opinions on all subjects were sharp, narrow, and prominent, as the corners of a triangular hat. Perhaps he had been yet more amiable, if his virtues had hung about him in softer and easier folds; if they had not been gathered in around him with such austere and Roman precision; and if they had rendered him more tolerant to the failings of others. Fiercely assailed by William Smith and Lord Byron, his retorts, keen and eloquent as they were, showed too plainly that the iron had entered into his soul. His change of political principle we believe to have been the result of conscientious conviction. The only blot on his escutcheon we know was his conduct to poor Shelley. We do not refer to his transcription and circulation of the mad post-fix in the album at Montanvert, but to the dark hints he threw out in one of his letters in reference to disclosures Shelley had made to him about himself, in the confidence of private communication. No provocation could justify such a breach of trust towards one who, as a "pilgrim of his genius," had visited his home. The obscurity of the insinuations only makes the matter worse.

Southey had much, it is said, of the poet in his appearance—was stately in form—had the "eye of the hawk and the fire therein"—a Roman nose forming his most expressive feature. On the whole, if not the greatest poet, he was the most industrious and accomplished *litterateur* of the day; and, if not the most marked, or unique, or attractive, was probably the most faultless of its literary characters.

Note.—Our recent reading of Cottle's "Recollections" has confirmed us in our verdict on Southey. He was undoubtedly harsh in his judgments both of Coleridge and Shelley. Possessed himself of a firm belief, he could not sympathise with the frantic but sincere struggles of one unhappily destitute of it; and, enjoying perfect self-control, he had not sufficient allowance to make for one in whose nature it had been omitted, and who could as

soon have acquired a new sense. His hinting to Cottle that he knew the whole of Shelley's early history (which he got from himself), and which he pronounces "execrable,"

was itself a piece of "execrable" meanness. His tone, too, in his correspondences, in reference to poor Coleridge, is stern, cold, and haughty.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

THERE is nothing more remarkable about the literature of this age, than the harmony it has exhibited, in many signal instances, between the analytic and imaginative powers; between the genius which combines, and the intellect which resolves—between an energetic philosophy, and a most ideal and impassioned poetry. In former times, a profound disconnection between faculties so seemingly opposite was taken for granted; a gulf, great, fixed, and impassable, was presumed to yawn drearily between the two regions. Men looked upon a person who combined a lively fancy with a discriminating judgment, as a kind of prodigy, or centaur not fabulous. Poetry they thought a disease, or madness in the blood, incompatible either with patient research, or with close and consecutive thought. Philosophy, on the other hand, they defined to be a cold, tame, and wingless thing; exploring the depths of science, yea, gazing on the height of the stars, with an eye which never kindled or softened for a moment. Before passing any harsh sentence on such flagrant conceptions, let us remember that there were cases and circumstances in the ages immediately preceding our own, which accounted for, and, in part, excused their formation. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, intellect and imagination were in close and firm alliance. Luther, and Galileo, and Lord Bacon, and Shakspeare, and Spenser; and, afterwards, Jeremy Taylor, Milton, Barrow, Howe, Donne, and Cowley, all added immense subtlety and strength of thought to great copiousness and fervour of imagery. They were all poets; and, if not all metaphysicians, were all, in the true and broad sense of the term, philosophers. They loved life, and books, and men; but they loved quite as well flowers,

and trees, and gardens, and running streams, and mountain prospects, and the meaning sculptured in the blue sky and the silent congregation of the stars. If they did not make nature so profound and peculiar a study as she has become to many in our day, and did not look upon her features with that mystic rapture which many feel, and more assume or aspire to, they loved her every whit as well, and with a fresher, warmer, heartier, and honester affection. Actæon-like, they saw her virgin and divine nakedness, but were not, Actæon-like, as is the case with our modern maddened enthusiasts, devoured by their own thoughts, as by ravening dogs. They were modest and holy worshippers. In the next century, matters altered materially for the worse. The Restoration not only came like a blight to wither the roses of poetry, but drew a line of separation between the gardens where they grew, and the cold arena of a mechanical science, and a common-sense metaphysics. To poets succeeded wits, and to philosophers philosophers. Even Newton, though with gleams of imagination and passion in his blood, contributed, by the extreme coldness of the external crust of his mind, to this unhappy and unnatural separation. Locke, again, the leader of the psychology of the nineteenth century, has scarcely poetry enough within him to colour a single sentence of his writings, and is, except Hobbes, the best specimen we remember of a clear, bare, snowy, and mountainous pile of intellect, deriving, from its extreme elevation, no mystic sublimity and no fiery hues. Bishop Butler, with all his acuteness, had only the half of a mind—the intellectual part—passion, fire, and imagination were wanting; his style is the coldest and tamest

of the mountains over which it rests, though exaggerated and enlarged, so Coleridge's ideas are never mere dreams, but bear a certain resemblance to earthly shapes. His language is even more singular than his thought; his style is not a mongrel or Babylonish style; but his curious collocations—the incalculable turns which his sentences take—their irregular length—the lack of all but a dim and shadowy unity between the various paragraphs making up a chapter, and the various periods composing a paragraph, remind you of the letters upon the wall, in his own dream—bright, yet obscure, which, taken separately, had a meaning, but of which the whole were riddles. Then—but who shall describe his versification, or untie the secret soul of its harmony? There is nothing in poetry so puzzles and astonishes us, as the sweet, fitful, changing, aerial, spiritual, and truly magical charm of Coleridge's verse. It exhibits at different times the softness of the breeze—the shriek of the rising gale—the lull of the wind, gathering itself up like a "midnight flower"—the dirge-like wail of the November blast—the shifting gusts of a veering storm—the solemn sound of a great north wind, blowing for days with one unmitigated tone, added to a certain unearthly modulation which an Æolian harp may image. How many varieties of versification has he attempted—to succeed in all! In his early poems, and in his "Remorse," he has woven greater fire and passion with the melody of Otway and Rowe. In his two principal odes, how great the pomp and swell of sound! In his sonnet to Schiller, the jew's-harp structure of the sonnet "becomes a trumpet." In his "Lines on Mont Blanc," he dares to lift the lyre which was light only in Milton's hand. In "Kubla Khan," his dreaming soul produces a solemn and sustained sweetness, which is not of this earth. In the "Rime of the Anciente Marinere," he gives a specimen of every variety of rhythm, as well as of language—the homely, the harsh, the soft, the abrupt, and the ethereal. And in "Christabel"

he has wedded one of the purest of poetical creations to a harmony soft as the whispers of love, and sweet as the talk of Elysium. Ages may occur ere the combination of fancy, feeling, and ear, all moving to the tune of a peculiar inspiration, produce such "soft and soul-like sounds" again. It is as if pines, waterfalls, roses, winds, seas, storms, harps, and organs, had yielded up their deepest secrets of harmony to the soul and the song of Coleridge.

Coleridge was a poet, a philosopher, a talker, and (incredible as it may seem!) a man. His poems are fragments, of an undiscovered orb of song, fallen down from the sky—snatches of superhuman melody dropping from the clouds—gay or serious, mild or awful, placid or Promethean—"voices from a loftier climate." Above almost all the poets of the day, he answers to our idea of a bard, a Vates, clad now with the shining robe, and now with the "deep-furrowed garment of trembling" which the prophet wears; less an author wielding his pen to write down his thought, than a pen seized and guided by the strong and sudden, or slow and measured hand of overhanging and invisible power. If we were to try to state, in one word, the leading quality of his poetry, we should say, with a critic, that it was unexpectedness—the occurrence of sentiments, images, and sounds, other than either you or the author were prepared for. This almost morbid agility of mind has led to the charges usually brought against his poetry, of mysticism, exaggeration, oddity, &c.; all which spring from an ignorance of the unavoidable action of the poet's mind, who met new thoughts at every turn of his way, and who, at least in his youth, when nearly all his poetry was produced, was

"Inspired beyond the guess of folly
By each rude shape, and wild unconquerable sound."

Another characteristic of his poetry is the use he has made in it of his philosophical powers. Not that he has sought, like Lucretius or Akenside, to reduce

any particular system to verse; nor that, when he wrote his leading poems, had his philosophical views assumed that total and expanded form which they took afterwards in his mind and talk; but you cannot read a page of his wildest poetry, without feeling that you have to do with a mind eminently watchful of mental phenomena, possessed of the introverted eye, "which broods and sleeps on its own heart." For example, how subtly has he refined on, as well as poetically represented, the passion of remorse; and, though there are far better acting plays than this contribution of Coleridge to his country's stage, we question if there be one which, in modern times, so gratifies the metaphysical "searcher of dark bosoms." And how finely daring to suspend the interest of a tragedy so wide and deep as that of the "bright-eyed Marinere," upon the shooting of a bird! This, in fact, was another contribution to the philosophy of the same dark passion which gives the name to his principal play, which he had studied at his own heart, and which he knew could be startled up into all its hydra horrors and stature from a very small egg, and a very slight trampling upon it. Besides these two peculiarities, unexpectedness and philosophical tendency, the poetry of Coleridge is remarkable for the variety of its keys;—he is little of a mannerist: how unlike "France, an Ode," to the "Hymn written in the Valley of Chamouni;" or "Christabel," to his "Fears in Solitude;"—for the width of its sympathies; for its tenderness of feeling; for the shade of sorrow flung by early grief upon it all, up from its plaintive strains to its most victorious raptures; for the sensibility he shares with all the Lake poets to the sights and sounds of nature—a sensibility which he and his brethren cherish, partly as an infantine emotion, and partly as a philosophical delight, and which they have nursed into a passion; and for a spirit of profound piety, which has made his verse an organ, uniting his heart with heaven. He might also be charged with occasional obscurity of purpose; with a certain mawk-

ishness, produced by the excess of his sympathy; here and there with an unnatural and unmanly despondence; in his earlier poems, with the usual splendid sins of a boy-genius, imitation and turgidity of language; in his later productions, with a fault exactly the reverse—simplicity approaching silliness; and all the errors, in short, into which Wordsworth was seduced by the adoption of a system; above all, with the unfinished and fragmentary cast of all his characteristic efforts. This, it is true, is an age of fragments, more or less colossal. "Childe Harold" is a fragment, as well as "Christabel;" "Don Juan," as really as "Kubla Khan;" "Faust," as well as "The Friend." Whence this fragmentary style has arisen, were a curious question. Is it from the union of unlimited ambition to limited power? or of creative energy disproportioned to artistic skill? or from a lack of mental foresight, and counting of intellectual cost? or is it from oddity and affectation? or from carelessness and caprice? or from a desire of piquing curiosity? or from the effect of those cold damps so incident to a high order of intellect, which often fall, even in the noon of genius, to quench its ardour, and the "hue of resolution to sickly o'er with the pale cast of thought?" or is it from the want of encouragement held out by a public, at once fastidious and incompetent, to truly original works? or is it from a combination of all, or many of these causes? In Coleridge, the influences which prevented him from completing his large and pregnant beginnings were various. It was partly indolence; partly opium; partly non-popularity and imperfect appreciation; partly the love of talk, which was far easier to him than writing; and partly the difficulty, in his manhood, of fully executing the designs of his teeming and glowing youth. And we can conceive few more melancholy sights than that of a great mind, conscious of the powers it possessed, feeling the first dawns of an Indian summer of late and unexpected success, but conscious too that its hour has gone by—that its nerve of purpose

and power is broken—that it has all the ambitions, some of the power, and all the cherished designs of its early days, but has lost the sustaining illusions, the enrapturing enthusiasm, the freshness of feeling, as well as the strength of constitution and the firmness of mind, necessary to take advantage of the turned tide, and to catch the favourable gale. Imagine his misery, whose *soul* had thus, to all intents and purposes, slipped from his grasp; whose youthful designs and dreams, all gorgeous as they were, were separated from him by entire continents of mental gloom, disappointment, guilt, grief, pain of body, and fever of soul; and could no more be called his, than the stars, "distinct but distant, clear, but, ah! how cold," which shone down on his waking agonies, or on his drugged and desperate repose. Coleridge continues "Christabel!" As well might a man of sixty hope to rival the high leap, or the far and strong stonecast, of himself at twenty-six! And still fonder and vainer the dream, cherished by him to the last, of writing an English "Faust" on the subject of Michael Scott—writing what it took Goethe, in the hey-day of his blood, to produce—with that faltering hand, that languid and shadowy look, that scorched liver, and that premature old age!

Instead of speculating as to what he might have done, let us look to what he has done. His juvenile poems are full of the faults incident to youth, and the first liberty of power let loose from its antenatal stillness. And yet never was the youthful joy of genius—a joy fed from the senses, the feelings, the intellect, and the imagination, into fourfold strength—more faithfully mirrored than in these. The French Revolution found in Coleridge, at first, one of its most devoted admirers. He sang of it in fierce odes, forming, perhaps, the finest poetry which shone out, like spray, from that tempestuous ocean. The "Ode on the Departing Year," with some harsh and wild truculence in the language, is an effusion full of the very frenzy and lightning of lyric fire. In a similar spirit, though in a very differ-

ent style, he wrote afterwards his "War Eclogue," perhaps the most Shaksperian of his strains. The parties in the brief dialogue are three abstractions, Fire, Famine, and Slaughter—hags of hate, to whom the witches of Middleton, Shakspeare, and Goethe are merciful, and who remind you rather of the Furies in "Æschylus." They meet—they discourse of politics and Pitt; laconic are the fiends; poetical also in their infernal hate. The blasted heath of Forres, nor the rafters of Pandemonium, ever listened to such tremendous talk. They have met to club their wits for the purpose of presenting a gift to an esteemed friend. What shall be given him? Shall he be "baited with the rabble's curse!" Shall he be ate by inches? Shall he be torn limb from limb? Poor, paltry, tokens these of respect and attachment, not worth inserting in a newspaper! Something else must be given. Listen! it is Fire that speaks, like Ulrica on the blazing towers of Torquilstone—a fiendish form, consumed by her own burnings:—

"O thankless beldames and untrue;
And is this all that ye can do
For him that did so much for you?
 Away, away.
I alone am faithful. I
Cling to him everlastingly."

'Tis a grand and terrific *jeu d'esprit*, and, as such, never needed any apology. Coleridge then, as afterwards, would have put his own finger into the fire, rather than have seen Pitt, or any other man, eternally consumed, even to a hair of their heads. This vein of poetical and witty invective is one which we are sorry he did not prosecute to a greater extent; for there lurked, amid his branching powers, a Swiftian gift of sarcasm. Witness the "Devil's Walk," and his "Lines on Mackintosh," worthy of the author of the "Legion Club." And whatever we think of the taste or propriety of such effusions, we see little to deplore in their spirit, when they are, as in this instance, the safety-valves of political or personal pique. Coleridge, after thus venting his momentary spleen, would like Mackin-

to be better ever afterwards. For this reason, as well as others, we should have rejoiced in a gallery of such things. But no; after all, the "Friend," who loved all he looked upon, from the orb'd sun to the staff which supported his steps as he wandered about Mr Gillman's premises, in his amiable old age, was not meant for a systematic satirist, and was far better employed in apostrophising Liberty—in singing of mariners who "come from a far countree"—and in building up, in his flowing talk, ten thousand glorious systems—than in making caricatures, however clever, of his fellow-worms.

We have alluded repeatedly to the hymn composed before sunrise in the vale of Chamouni. It is, if not the most Coleridgean of his poems, the most sustained and sublime. A hymn means an outpouring of lyric rapture, blended with devotional feeling, and tinged with the fire of the sanctuary. It supposes the accompaniment, not necessarily of organ, or of lyre, or of psalter, but of the human voice; an instrument invented and tuned by Omnipotence himself. And surely, since the 18th Psalm, describing the descent of the Deity, when

"On cherub and on cherubim,
Full royally he rode;
And on the wings of mighty winds,
Came flying all abroad;"

or, since the hymn Milton ascribes to our first parents at the door of their nuptial bower, there has never been a strain more worthy of the intention or the name of this divine species of poem. Chanted, perhaps, at first to the mountain echoes in Coleridge's deep and tender tones, it now sings itself, and is set everlastingly to a music of its own. The scene is the valley of Chamouni, filled with the voice of its "five torrents, fiercely glad," looking up with "awful reverence prone" to the monarch of mountains—with the star of morning glimmering over his crest, and all his avalanches, and virgin snows, and "living flowers," expecting the dawning of day. In the centre of the august amphitheatre appears the lonely poet,

who has risen early to pay homage to Nature, in the hour of her prime and grand audience; his eye kindling like a tarn when a sunbeam tinges it with splendour, and his soul mating with the majesty of the scene, and still in the hush of the expectation! But, though the mountains and the snows, and the few lingering stars, may keep silence, he cannot long; and, as the conscious and commissioned representative and tongue of surrounding nature, he bursts into involuntary song. He speaks what the creation seems to struggle to do, but is unable. He interprets the feeling of the great hour. "His soul swells vast to heaven." He gathers into his own eye, and voice, and dilating form, and inspired verse, the trembling adoration of the morning star—the silent worship of the eternal snows—the prayerful stir and flutter of the flowers—the haughty homage of the eagles, the storms, the wild goats, and the pines, bending and blackening on the skirts of everlasting winter—the deep harmonies of the torrents, and the hoarse, interrupted, and spirit-like psalm of the avalanches—and he lays down the vast accumulated offering before God. Nay, in the transport of the moment, he animates the mountain with life; he shoots into him his soul; he cuts the strings of his tongue, as natural affection did those of the dumb son of Croesus, that he may speak aloud his adoration; he constitutes him the ambassador of all the world,

"To tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises
God."

With a like lyrical rapture he has imbued "France, or Liberty, an Ode." Here the poet represents himself standing on the verge of one of the chalky cliffs of his native shore; below him the free waves of ocean are breaking in musical thunder; around him woods are waving in the free winds; above him free clouds are rushing through the free firmament; and over all a sun, who "yields homage only to eternal laws," is shining on a free land, and on a bared brow of a freeman. But beyond, what country lies across the waters?

France. And is she free? Alas! no;
for

"The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion, in mad
game
They burst their manacles, and wear the
name
Of freedom, graven on a heavier chain."

And then, throughout the poem, he gives in monologue, addressed to all free and eternal things, a confession of his feelings and acting toward France—his first boundless joy at her revolution—his fears, arising only to be rebuked—his growing rapture of sympathy with her people, making head against "Cimmerian Europe"—his songs of congratulation, sent, not unheard, across the waters—the bitter disappointment of his hopes—and his ultimate and magnanimous resolve to retire into his own soul, and to find liberty there, and in the everlasting forms and chainless harmonies of nature. Such is a faint analysis of one of the most perfect poems in the language—perfect as an ode; "the finest," says Shelley, "extant"—perfect as a composition, being a harmony without a break, a chrysolite without a flaw—perfect as the description of one entire "mood of his own mind"—and perfect as the history of a political process, through which almost all the enlightened and imaginative minds of that day hurried in rapid circle.

Concerning "Christabel," what shall we say? Trampled on by an Edinburgh reviewer, like a delicate flower by a blind beggar, the very re-action from this gross injustice has led to the opposite extreme. Nobody, indeed, but Coleridge could, from such slender and gossamer materials, have elaborated a structure at all. It is a written dream—a separated and vivified shadow; and who looks for bolts and drawbridges, and solid masonry, in a castle of clouds? Still, magic there must be in a web which caught such burnished flies as Scott and Byron; but where the charm lies, whether in the eel-like story sliding through your grasp, or in the Ariel-like versification, or in the child-angel prattle of the language, or in the character and figure of the heroine seen against a dim

discovered gulf of horror, which gapes through breaks in the tissue of the fairy thing, nobody can tell. Our honest belief is, that it is a poetic puzzle, never meant by its author to be anything else—an intended Torso—a finished fragment. It reminds us of no poem but "Kilmany," which we think superior. "Kilmany" is complete; whereas "Christabel" is a bit of moonstone. The verse of "Kilmany" is as fine, the poetry is richer, and the pale face of that radiant maid, who was "caught up to Paradise, and who heard things unutterable," is to us lovelier than the face of Christabel, though it is "beautiful exceedingly." Yet is this poem truly a "plant divine and strange"—bearing a dim and gorgeous flower, and emitting an unearthly odour. But how hopeless to dream of propitiating the mastiff of the Blue and Yellow with such a fair nosegay! The animal smelt it, and finding it was not of the earth earthy—fit neither for food nor fuel—tore it to pieces, trampled it in the dust; and the gardener who had reared, and who loved it, wept, it is said, like a child.

The "Rime of the Anciente Marinere" is a far more robust and powerful poem. If "Christabel" be the quintessence of female grace, the "Marinere" is the ideal of wierd and withered grandeur. He is a *tertium quid* between the beings of another world and the creatures of clay. He is not a ghost, but his hand is worn, and his lean figure almost lets the moonbeams through. He is not a fiend, but lives in the company of demons, and has them ever in his eye. He is a man, but is almost drained of everything human. He is on the earth, but hardly of it. Himself alone, he passes from land to land; how we are not informed. His eye glitters with an unearthly dew. His beard is the untouched growth of years. His forefinger is skinny as the forefinger of death. A terrible attraction lurks about him. He has "strange power of speech." He talks—all loathe, but all listen—yet is he withal mild, patient, and penitent; some great mountain of past crime for ever rearing its forked and

blood-red peaks before his view. There is not such another character in poetry. He is a pure creation;—Apollo coming "like night," and to the clang of his own celestial armour, upon the Grecian tents, is scarcely more appalling than this pale and wizard being, with the cold ring, produced by the weight of the albatross, still felt about his neck, and the "curse of a dead man's eye" haunting his looks,—passing "like night from land to land," and transferring the burden of his misery to the souls of the men who are appointed to be held by his eye. And then, such language as he uses—wild, unearthly, unlike the discourse of human beings! And such imagery—"nor dim nor red, like God's own head, the glorious sun uprist"—"as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean!" And such a tale he tells! Like the phantasmagoria of a mind which, even by day, and when sober, is a magic lantern, but which, when drunk or delirious at midnight, hoists all sail, crying, "Hollo, my fancy, whither wilt thou go?" so do the vapoury incidents sweep over the stage, till the reader's brain reels, and he becomes uncertain whether he or his author be mad, but sure that there is madness between them. And such *dramatis personæ*!—a nameless captain of a nameless ship—an albatross winnowing the sadly silent air—a mariner, in a freak, shooting the bird—a spirit, her lover, revenging the inhospitable deed—two skeleton figures dicing on the dead deck of a skeleton ship for the life of the mariner—a crew of demens reanimating a crew of corpses—two airy beings talking in strangest dialogue to each other about the guilty man—a being called Death-in-Life, found in no mythology—good spirits, who are not angels—a hermit, whom you can hardly believe not to be also a shadow—and a wedding guest, forming the sole link connecting the superhuman story with earthly life. The moral of the tale is pure and distinct, but so obvious, that we wonder that, to inculcate it, he has been at the pains of inventing a machinery so new and so stupendous.

His minor poems are, like the rest, fragments; fine breathings of his spirit, not elaborate displays of his power. Like the careless touches of a great musician on the piano, which are often more impressive than his grand bravuras; or like the casual strokes of a painter, which are sometimes more striking than his finished pictures, so do these slight and short effusions surpass such laboured efforts as "Remorse" and "Zapolya." In his stanzas entitled "Love," "earth has not anything to show so fair" as the closing lines describing the enthusiastic and holy tenderness of the enamoured maiden. How different the love of Coleridge from that of Byron? The one is a pure idealism, refined, gentle, chivalric, passing the love of women; the other is a combination of gross passion and flimsy sentimentalism; it is—but, pah! the subject is disgusting. "Kubla Khan" is a melody which, though with "sputtering noise rejected" by the critics of the "Edinburgh," the spirit of the age values, not merely as a "psychological curiosity," but loves for its ethereal imagery and its dream-like music. It is a new proof of the immortality of the soul. Coleridge was essentially a dreamer; and a gallery of the pictures of glory or of gloom which flashed upon his "half-shut eye," if represented on canvas or in fresco, would have formed a second Sixtine. There are, besides, many single little poems which fell casually from his pen; some of them reminding you of thunder-drops, large, heavy, electric, while others glitter like the orb'd dew from the womb of the morning.

Coleridge's prose is as peculiar as his verse. It is remarkable for length of sentence; for disregard of petty elegancies; for continual digressions; for a horizon of thought, ever retiring and widening as we advance; for the use of frequent archaisms of expression; for perpetual unexpectedness and occasional obscurity; and for great freshness and fervour of poetic imagery. His light is often dim, but never dry, so constantly is it moistened and bedewed by feeling and fancy. His "Friend," though ram-

bling and discursive, unsuccessful as an elucidation of his opinions, and unfortunate in its first absurd mode of publication, contains some noble prose writing; as, for instance, his picture of Luther in the Warteburg—"the heroic student sitting beside his lamp, which is seen by the lone traveller in the plain Bischofsroda like a star on the mountain;" his picture of the spirit of law "following the criminal like the sleepless eye of God;" and the one tale of suffering and patience which he interposes amid the sterner disquisitions of the book. His "Biographia Literaria" is a large ill-judged production. It is one vast digression; plan it has none. Large passages are pilfered bodily from Schelling. It is a series of unfulfilled promises, hung upon a thread of curious and characteristic biography. His "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit" are such a chapter as he would have thrown off from his spirit in one oracular night at Highgate. Once, and only once, in it does he kindle into high eloquence, in describing Deborah rising, in the calm majesty of a "mother in Israel," from "under her palm-tree on the mountain, where she had dwelt in peace aforesaid." It is very valuable, however, as opening up the important question of inspiration—according to Arnold, *the* most important since the Reformation. Here, as in his poetry, we prefer his smaller pieces. His "Notes of a Journey to the Brocken" prompt the wish that he had visited all the romantic regions in the world, from Norway to the Himalayan Hills. And his "Wanderings of Cain" is the most scriptural and primitive composition we know, except the "Vision of Mirza." Cain is indeed a most poetical subject. Stained by the first dye of gore, sealed by the hand of God from the punishment of men, but pursued by the cry of his brother's blood, from which he could no more escape than from himself, which became a part of himself, and which, even as the sound of the sea fills the shell, filled the trembling hollows of his ear, he is an object of profoundly pathetic, as well as tragic interest, fit for

the pen which drew Manfred on the Jungfrau, or for that which painted the Mariner in his "silent sea." And we cannot but think Coleridge has surpassed Byron in his representation of the first murderer. Byron's Cain is a being elaborately bad; the Cain of Coleridge has only the guilt of a moment upon his conscience. Byron's Cain is a metaphysical murderer; the Cain of Coleridge is the creature of impulse. In Byron the interest of Cain is dwarfed, and the grandeur of his guilt dwindles, beside the lurid beauty and eloquent blasphemy of Lucifer, who becomes the hero of the drama; the Cain of Coleridge appears solitary, bearing his own iniquity like a covering, and scathed by the fire of his own devouring remorse. Byron could not have created that figure of Abel, "whose feet disturbed not the sands," nor have written that fearful sentence describing the blasted beauty and might of the pallid murderer, "whose mighty limbs were wasted as by fire, and whose hair was as the matted locks upon the bison's forehead;" although neither could Coleridge, nor perhaps any being that ever breathed but Byron, have so personified the despair, or talked the sophistry and the eloquence of hell, or carried us up with the grim pair along that sullen but sublime flight through the stars, trembling and darkening as the infernal wings swept by, and through the shadowy shapes of former worlds which had arisen, passed, and perished, ere the "infant sun was rolled together, or had tried his beams athwart the gulf profound."

As a converser, Coleridge in the course of his life seems to have passed through three phases. In his youth, according to Lamb and Hazlitt, he was ardent, varied, impassioned, lofty; his voice sounded much, and the woods and hills echoed to his talk. This was the golden age of his conversation; and those who heard him speak with rapture of his exhibitions, the effect of which was increased by the dark profusion of his locks, the white and marble mass of his brow, the misty eloquence of his eye, the

rich dreamy air of his lips, and the atmosphere of enthusiasm which seemed to surround him, and which "swayed to his outline gracefully." Then he talked continually—ere breakfast, in his morning walk—at breakfast, "over tea and toast and honey"—at dinner, as a relish to "Welsh mutton and turnips"—after it, over his "flip"—in the stage-coach, to the wondering passengers—over the counter, to the staring shopmen—in the solitary inn, to the portly landlady, deeming him dropped from the moon; and, if he lacked company, to himself. He talked about all things, and a few others, from shoe-leather to the solar system; but his principal topics were metaphysics, theology, and poetry. He talked sometimes, though more rarely, in short and sparkling aphorism, and sometimes in long and linked declamation. He talked in the pulpit as well as in private; and by all accounts his sermons and their delivery were those of a poet. He talked, and many hearts burned within them. Wordsworth's guttural voice uttered its manly pleasure, Lamb's fine eye laughed over with joy, and Hazlitt's deep brow flushed in silence, or his tongue told in struggling accents his admiration of the man who first taught him to think, first agitated the pool of his sleeping soul. At the close of this brilliant period, refusing a fixed situation as a preacher, and not anxious to cage his eagle energies into the circle of any profession (a determination which he lived bitterly to regret), he took a tour to Germany, where he heard old Blumenbach; took the conceit out of Klopstock; visited the Brocken; and did and said a great many wonderful things. We refer to the recollections of De Quincey for the particulars of his after-career—his Maltese excursion; his connection with the "Morning Post;" his different series of lectures; his acquaintance with Lord Byron; and his deeper and more fatal intimacy with opium, which he put on as a garment, a garment of burning poison. During this period his conversation assumed its second phase—became less brilliant, and less imposing; equally abundant, but less uni-

formly successful; more dreamily abstruse, and less exuberantly poetical; less the overflowing of his mind, than the motion produced by the spur of external stimulus. To this period belong his melancholy failures at the Royal Institution, where, with face inflamed and tongue parched, he sucked oranges and drank water, and could scarcely, after all, get his jaws to move; his six-in-the-evening breakfasts, and so forth. The third was perhaps the most interesting of all. It included his residence under the roof of Mr Gillman, where—recovered in a measure from the influence of the dangerous drug, though still an invalid, the cloud of dejection having passed from off the sun of his fame as it drew toward the west, in the enjoyment of ease and plenty, and in the centre of friends and worshippers—he sat a Socrates giving his little senate laws, and consulted as though one did inquire at an oracle. It was fine to hear of statesmen, and popular poets, and great preachers, and accomplished literati, going out to sit as children at the feet of this once depreciated and abused man. Changed indeed from what he had been when his voice echoed in the woods of Foxden, when he could talk loftily and unwearied a livelong summer's day, and when his dark hair floated over his ivory forehead; he was now a frail and greyhaired old man, with feeble voice and wasted system. The bard had sunk or risen into the sage. The "Anciente Mariners" had still his glittering eye, and much of his strange power of speech. And how many were glad to drink wisdom on all subjects, from the science of the stars to the language of the flowers, at the now slender, soft, interrupted, but profound stream which issued from his lips! There might be seen the giant form of Edward Irving stooping to listen to the "old man eloquent." Leigh Hunt stepped in sometimes, and Coleridge took him to the garden, and talked to him of some favourite flower as an emblem and miniature of the universe. There Charles Lamb shot in often his spiritual countenance, ever sure of welcome for "auld lang-syne." There Wordsworth and Southey

showed occasionally their anointed heads. There Talfourd, and other young and generous spirits, including the blood relations of the bard, were no strangers. And there now and then appeared, from the hills of Scotland, the eagle eye and the "storm of golden hair" adorning the head of Wilson. And thus living and talking, the centre of such a circle, and the cynosure of such eyes, the good old man at length fell asleep.

As a man, he had his faults, all springing from one root—want of self-control—

and terminating in one apex—remorse—which ultimately softened into repentance, and was, we trust, crowned with pardon. But originally he had a heart as warm as his intellect was ample. If he sinned, he suffered, and rueful was the expiation. Let his admirers be warned from the rock where he split, and for him let this couplet in his epitaph be his excuse and his eulogium:—

"Mercy for praise, to be forgiven for fame,
He ask'd and hoped through Christ. Do
thou the same."

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

It is a fortunate thing for a poet to make a hit at starting. Once write a popular poem, or even song, and your name cleaves its native night, and obtains that floating notoriety which is rarely, if ever, lost, and which secures attention, if not fame, to whatever else you write. Not only are the booksellers for ever after your accommodating friends, but the public, when once familiarised with a name, after once relaxing its sage face into a smile of complacency, is loth to write itself down an ass, by recalling, however it may modify, its verdict. Otherwise with one whose struggles after renown, however vigorous, have altogether failed of introducing him into any circle of admirers, much wider than that which any talented man can command by the private exercise of his abilities. His name, if alluded to by any of his devoted friends, comes like a staggering blow to the ignorance of the portion of the pensive public which never heard of him or of his works before. Its mention, accordingly, is resented as an impertinence, and inch by inch must he continue to climb the sides, and probably die ere he reach the summit of the difficult hill. Fortunate, in truth, for a poet is the early culmination of his name; but only in a secular point of view, or when he happens to be a disinterested and enthusiastic devotee of his art. If he have no high religious purposes in its prosecu-

tion—if he be greedy of its immediate gains—if he love the hasty garlands of reputation better than that slow, deep, rich flower of fame which Nature, "who hardens the ruby in a million years, and works in duration in which Alps and Andes come and go like rainbows," rears by a long, late process—his rapid and instant popularity is a curse, and not a blessing, to his genius. Not every one can, like a Schiller or a Goethe, dally awhile with the meretricious mistress, reputation, drink from her hand the daintiest cup of her enchantments, and then, rejecting the wanton, bind himself up, by severe and solemn training, to gain the chary and chaste, but divine hand of fame—of that fame which is indeed "the spur that the clear spirit doth raise"—"the last infirmity of noble minds." Too many besides Thomas Campbell tarry in the Calypso Island till the sun be down, and Ithaca is still afar.

And yet we readily admit that this true poet began his career with a strong and pure love, if not the profoundest insight into the meaning and mystery of his art. Nowhere shall we find the poetical feeling more beautifully linked to the joyous rapture of youth than in the "Pleasures of Hope." It is the outburst of genuine enthusiasm; and even its glitter we love, as reminding us of the "shining morning face" of a schoolboy. But our objection

to Campbell is, that this precipitate shine of fame upon his young head dazzled his eyes, satisfied his ambition, chilled his love of his art, and excites the suspicion, that his real object all along had been the dowry of the muse, and not herself. The "Pleasures of Hope" bears no more proportion to the powers of its author than does the "Robbers" to those of Schiller, or "Werter" to those of Goethe. But where is Campbell's "Wallenstein," or his "Faust?" We have instead only such glimpses—the more tantalising that they are beautiful—of a rare and real vein of original genius, as are furnished in the "Last Man," "Hohenlinden," and "O'Connor's Child."

Campbell's great power was enthusiasm—subdued. His tempest moves on gracefully, and as to the sound of music. He arrests the fury of his turbulent vein by stretching forth the calm hand of taste, as an escaped lupatic is abated in a moment by the whisper of his keeper, or by his more terrible tap of quiet, imperious command. There is a perpetual alternation going on in his mind. He is this moment possessed by his imagination; the next, he masters and tames it, to walk meekly in the harness of his purpose; or, to use his own fine image, while his genius is flaming above, his taste below, "like the dial's silent power,"

"Measures inspiration's hour,
And tells its height in heaven."

He is inferior thus to the very first class of poets, whose taste and art are unconscious. His are at once conscious to himself and visible to others. Their works, like Nature's, arrange themselves into elegance and order, amid their impetuous and ecstatic motion; their apparent extravagances obey a law of their own, and create a taste for their appreciation; their hair, shed on the whirlwind, falls abroad, through its own divine instinct, in lines of waving beauty; their flashing eye enriches the day; their wild, uncontrollable step "brings from the dust the sound of liberty." But, if Campbell be too measured, and timid, and self-watchful, to appertain to those Demi-urgi of poetry, he

is far less to be classed with the imitative and the cold—the schools of Boileau and Pope. He not only belongs to no school; but, in short, deep gushes of genuine genius—in single thoughts, where you do not know whether more to admire the felicity of the conception, or the delicate and tremulous finish of the expression—in drops of spirit-stirring or melting song—and in a general manliness and chastity of manner, Campbell was perhaps the finest ARTIST of his day. His mind had the refinement of the female intellect, added to the energy of the classic man. His taste was not of the Gothic order, neither was it of the Roman; it was that of a Greek, neither grotesque nor finically fastidious. His imagery was select, not abundant; out of a multitude of figures which throng on his mind, he had the resolution to choose only the one which, by pre-established harmony, seemed destined to enshrine the idea. His sentiment was sweet, without being mawkish, and *recherché*, without being affected. Here, indeed, is Campbell's fine distinction. He never becomes metaphysical in discriminating the various shades, nor morbid in painting the darker moods of sentiment. He preserves continually the line of demarcation between sentiment and passion. With the latter, in its turbulence—its selfish engrossment—the unvaried, but gorgeous colouring which it flings across all objects—the flames of speech which break out from its lips, he rarely meddles. But of that quieter and nobler feeling, which may be called, from its stillness, its subdued tone, its whispered accents, its shade of pensiveness, the moonshine of the mind, he is pre-eminently the poet. His lines on "Revisiting a Scene in Argyleshire," and those on "Leaving a Scene in Bavaria," are the perfection of this species of poetry. They are meditations, imbued at once with all the tenderness of moonlight, and all the strength of sunshine. Manly is his melancholy, and even his sigh proclaims the breadth and depth of the chest from which it is upheaved.

"To bear is to conquer our fate," is the motto of this brave philosophy, which con-

trasts well with the wayward kicking of Byron against the pricks—with the whimper of poor Keats—with the unearthly shriek by which you track Shelley through his wildest wanderings in the mist—and with the sad propensity of the Lakers to analyse their tears ere they permit them to fall to the ground; to refine away their robust emotions into shadow; and to cover from their eyes the real calamities of existence by a veil of dream.

Campbell is *par excellence* the poet of the fair sex. There are no works which are more relished by cultivated females. His flight rises precisely to that pitch where they are able fully and gracefully to follow. The manly elegance, moreover, of his mental costume; the unaffected and becoming purity of his speech, so distinct from finical *purism*; the homage done to the private affections and gentle domestic ties—these being the qualities which please them in a man, are sure to fascinate them in a poet. "Gertrude of Wyoming" has brought this enviable kind of popularity to a point. It strives to embody all the quiet, without the insipidity of domestic life; and by the picturesque accompaniments of American woods, flageolets echoing from romantic towns, war-drums heard in the distance, tomahawks flashing in the sunset, Indians bursting across the stage, it does, to some extent, relieve that tedium and commonplace through which too often "glides the calm current of domestic joy." It is not, however, on the whole, an artistically finished work. It has no story; at least the tale it tells has little interest or novelty, and is somewhat wire-drawn. The characters are rather insipid. Gertrude's father is a volcano burned out. Gertrude herself is a pretty, romantic Miss of Pall Mall, dropped down by the side of the Susquehannah, where, undismayed by the sight of the dim aboriginal woods, she pulls out her illustrated copy of Shakspeare, and, with rapt look, and hand elegantly lost in the tangles of her hair, proceeds to study the character of Imogen, or *Lady Macbeth*, or *Mrs Ann Page*. Her lover is a "curled darling," who has gone the grand tour—has seen

the world, and returned, like a good-mannered youth, from the saloons of London, and the carnivals of Venice, in search of this beauty of the woods. Of Brandt, something might have been made, but nothing is. The poet thinks him hardly company for Master Henry the picturesque, and Miss Gertrude the romantic. Even Outalissi, ere qualified for intercourse with these paragons, must have his whiskers clipped, his nails pared, and become a sentimental savage, who shall go off with a fine nasal twang (talking in his pathetic death-song, by the way, of a clock that had found out the perpetual motion; for surely more than eight days had elapsed from the departure of the happy pair to the last song of the Indian, and yet he says, "Unheard their clock repeats its hours"). Nevertheless, the poem contains some of Campbell's finest things—brief and sudden escapes of his richest vein. What can be finer than such lines as the following:—

"Led by his dusky guide, like morning
brought by night."

"Till now in Gertrude's eyes their mirth
blue summer shone."

"Nor far some Andalusian saraband
Would sound to many a native roundelay;
But who is he that yet a dearer land
Remembers, over hills and far away?
Green Albyn," &c.

"Oh, earthly pleasure, what art thou in
sooth?
The torrent's smoothness, ere it dash be-
low."

"That fled composure's intellectual ray,
As Etna's fires grow dim before the rising
day."

And the exquisite words of Outalissi
to his Henry:—

"But thee, my flower, whose breath was
given
By milder genii o'er the deep,
The spirits of the white man's heaven
Forbid not thee to weep."

The dying speech of Gertrude is beautifully tender; but a few sobbed-out words, in the circumstances, would have been more natural, and far more affecting. Shakspeare or Schiller would have made a monosyllable unlock the human heart as

effectually as Campbell does by all the eloquence and linked sweetness of this artificial harangue. Let poets remember that the most affecting, and, on the whole, the most powerful words ever written by man, are probably those in Lear: "Prithee undo this button; thank you, sir." The opening description of "Wyoming" reminds us, at a distance, of that which commences the "Castle of Indolence;" but is less distinct in its grouping, less rich in its colouring, and, unluckily, no more than it resembles any actual scenery. So, at least, declare all Americans. It were ridiculous, therefore, to speak of Gertrude as a great poem. It is only a second-rate poem containing many first-rate things; a soft and tremulous string, supporting many inestimable pearls. Its tone is feeble; its spirit apologetic; the author is evidently afraid of his reputation. With gleams of truer genius than anything in the "Pleasures of Hope," it wants its frank, fearless, and manly enthusiasm, and neither has been, nor has deserved to be, one tithe so popular; except, indeed, with those who prefer it, because in preferring it they stand alone.

In "Theodric," again, and the "Pilgrim of Glencoe," you find the same sensitiveness as to renown, and sense of inferiority to his former self, attempting to conceal themselves under, we know not what, of a jaunty air of *nonchalance* and affected defiance. Intensely aware of the ludicrous aspect an old man would present mounted on a boy's stilts, he goes to the opposite extreme, and assumes a garrulous, free-and-easy, and somewhat pert and snappish tone, which we cordially dislike. "Theodric," indeed, is quite unworthy of its author's reputation, has scarcely a fine thing in it, and is little else than middling prose twisted into unmusical and shambling metre. In the other, you see now and then robust vigour; but, on the whole, the wicked exclamation, "*Eheu quantum mutatus ab illo,*" forces itself up into your lips at every turning of the bald and spiritless page. It is with a mixture of feelings, half pleasurable, half melancholy, that you revert from this faint reflection of the tartan to "Lo-

chiel's Warning," the most sublime and spirit-stirring of all Campbell's minor poems. Nowhere, save in some of Scott's battle scenes, or in Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," do we find the old Homeric spirit in finer preservation. The poet has shot into it all his Highland blood, like the *insani vim leonibus* by which Prometheus inspired his primitive man. No one but a descendant of the Callummore—who had slept in his plaid nights together 'mid the mists—who had crossed the foaming friths of the Hebrides while the spirit of the storm was shrieking above the white waves—who had been lost for weeks among the mountains—who had sallied forth with Christopher North, in lead of winter, from Glasgow College to Campsie Glen, and spent three days in making a snow man, "a great fellow, with a noble phrenological development, and face after the most approved Lavater shape," and then spent other three in taking him down—who had shuddered at broad-day at finding himself alone with the ravens and the streams on the solitary hillside, and trembled lest his every footfall, as it startled the deep silence, might awaken something more fearful than a ghost—who had thrilled to the scalp at hearing in the distance the long yell of the pibroch piercing the mist, or heard fitfully through lulls in the autumn hurricane—who had once or twice, in wild frolic, drank destruction to the house of Brunswick, and the memory of Prince Charlie, in draughts of usquebae, unchristened by revenue and unmitigated by water, and risen up from the fierce potation "a prophet in drink," while the mountains reeled around him, and the streams sang double, and two terrible suns flared in the afternoon heaven—no one who had not done all this, and, though born in Glasgow, much of this he actually did—could have risen to the height, or sustained the swell, of "Lochiel's Warning." How finely contrasted are the language and the attitudes of the parties in this almost Shaksperian interlocution!—the chieftain serene, yet stern, collected in his conscious courage and integrity; his arms folded; his look be-

speaking a calm indignation; the one erect, fixed, yet tremulous feather in his bonnet, but a type of the unity of his resolve and the chivalric determination of his soul: the wizard, bowing under the burden he proclaims, pale in the prospect of the measureless ruin which is at hand; his eye shot from the socket by the pressure of the bursting vision; erect before his chieftain, but bent low before his God;—the language of the one firm, direct, and contemptuous, tinged too with poetry, for he has a vision of his own, and his eye and his language kindle as he sees,

"Like reapers descend to the harvest of death,
Clanranald the dauntless, and Moray the proud,

'All plaided and plumed in their tartan array;'"—

that of the other abrupt, involved, vehement—all on end with the strange images of death which crowd in upon his soul, from the burning eyrie, beaconing the blackness of heaven, to the bridle of the riderless steed, "red with the sign of despair"—from the sighs of the iron-bound prisoner to the embers of the far-flaming summit, "like stars to the firmament cast." And fine at length it is to see how the terrors of the future pale before the courage of the present, as though a ghost were to tremble and turn before the ghost-seer; how the blue clear steel cuts the shadowy circle, and dissolves the dreadful spell, and the warrior leaves the stage, towering above his mystic adviser, and defying destiny itself. Disappointed and baffled, you see the wizard melting into his clouds, rolled together like the wounded spirit of Loda, while the hero steps onward with a step which seems to tread on necks, and a port which carries in it the assurance, if not of victory, at least of a glorious death.

In a softer style Campbell has written "O'Connor's Child," the sweetest, and most plaintive, and most romantic of all his strains. It is a poem, indeed, which can receive no adequate criticism but tears. Who durst make remarks on a production, while his eyes were making marks more eloquent and impressive far upon the soaked and blotted page? A tear is the truest and noblest Longinus.

"To Barry we give loud applause, to Garrick only tears." We pass this poem by in silence. Never did the noblest harp that rung in "Tara's halls" send forth a strain so sweet and subtle, and mournfully desolate, as this. Soft as the voice of gentlest woman is the flow of the verse—heartrending the pathos of the description, yet wild and high as the "Cameron's Gathering" rises the swell of the grandeur; and you say, as you might of that subterranean music which Humboldt describes rising from a cavern in South America, or as Ferdinand says of Ariel's music, "this is no mortal business, nor no sound that the earth owns."

"The Last Man" is in a more ambitious style. It was a topic out of Campbell's usual track, and verging on a field where the "giant angels" of genius have alone a right to disport themselves. It was such a subject as would have suited Dante (and what a "Last Man" would he himself have made! what an abrupt and haggard terminus had he been to the species, turning up that scathed face in gloomy triumph to the darkening sun and the reeling constellations!) or Michael Angelo, or him who drew Medusa, "gazing on the midnight sky upon the cloudy mountain peak supine." And yet with what easy mastery has Campbell treated it! With what a firm and tender hand does he bear the "pall of a past world!" In what terse, yet bold language does he describe the "twins in death"—yonder the sun darkening at his meridian height, as the Black Hand, of which eclipse is one premonitory finger, passes over him; and here the solitary son of Adam receiving on his eye his last light, and hailing him as they enter together into the eternal shadow. We have seen the taste of the idea questioned; but surely, if there be poetry in the thought of a first man—alone between the virgin earth and the abyss of stars—there must be more in the figure of a last man, forming a momentary link between an earth that is dissolving and a sky that is rolling together as a scroll. If there be poetry in the thought of the last man of the deluge, standing on the last peak of

a drowned world, there must be more in the idea of one, dauntless as he feels gaining on him the slow shadow of everlasting darkness. The execution of the poem is admirable—no exaggeration—no appearance of effort; and herein we deem it superior to Byron's "Darkness," which, in all but its dire literality and distinctness, is a dream of nightmare, where, murky as the gloom is, it is not dark enough to conceal the sneer of the central object—the poet himself—making mouths, which he imagines unseen, at the great funeral. Campbell's "Last Man" is very properly nameless—his previous history unknown—the interest is given him by the circumstances in which he stands, and he rises to the grandeur of his position while feeling himself sole mourner at the obsequies of a world. Perhaps, to make him a Christian was an error, because, first, the whole idea of the poem is inconsistent with Christian truth; and, secondly, as a mere artistic matter, the dreary magnificence of the scene had been enhanced, had he been represented as the last limb of the entire human family, about to be sucked down into the sea of annihilation. The poem altogether discovers in the poet a new and extensive district in his mind, which he never cultivated, but left shadowy, silent, and unbroken in the recesses of his spirit.

Had we been asked to give our vote for one best qualified to be the laureate of the rainbow, we should, even previous to experience, have preferred Campbell. His genius, pillared indeed on earth, yet rising by ethereal stages towards heaven, mildly reflective, rather than dazzlingly original, was just the genius to chant the praises of that fine old show of heaven, at which the "countryman stops to gaze," at the sight of which the little child claps his hands—that arrowless bow which "encompasseth the sky with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it." On the green, glad, and glittering earth, and between the father Sun and the fairest of his daughters, spanning the dark and dripping east, stands up the poet, and sings a

strain which ascends like "a steam of rich distilled perfumes," which arrests and eternises the brief beauty of the apparition, and which seems now the song of the earth's gratitude, and now the voice of the sun's tenderness for his evanishing child. Campbell's "Rainbow" does not bear aloft his thoughts to that region where round the throne there appears a "rainbow like unto an emerald,"—his is of this "dear green earth"—its beauty is the beauty of tears—it is the very rainbow which appeared in the departing clouds of the deluge, and

"As fresh in yon horizon dark,
As young its beauties seem,
As when the eagle from the ark
First sported in its beam."

It is not the rainbow as he has seen it shining above the Thames, and with hardly an eye among those of thousands marking its slighted loveliness; but the rainbow as he has seen it, binding Beneaw to Benvenue, Benmachhui to Cairngorm—the delight of the solitary shepherd or huntsman on the hill. And as we said, that never shall a shell be seen without recalling to the enthusiast the lines of Landor, so we can at least answer for ourselves, that seldom do we behold a rainbow, whether bridging the Highland valley, or seen by our eye alone over the silent and smokeless morning city, without recalling the lines of Campbell; and would always wish to think of his genius (if we may use the words) as "clothed with a rainbow."

Campbell's "Lines to Emigrants" are in the style of his earliest poem, but chastened down into severer beauty. In them he waves a white poetic hand to his departing brothers, and boldly furrows up, by the wing of his imagination, those primeval forests "where now the panther laps a lonely stream," and becomes a pioneer and prophet of the glorious future ages which he is privileged to read in their germ—

"As in a cradled Hercules we trace
The lines of empire in his infant face."

It is characteristic of Campbell, and how much does it say for his powers, that

whatever he did was in its own line the best. Thus, next to "Scots wha ha'e," "Hohenlinden" is the best war-song ever written. It catches, as in a cup, the spirit of the "revelry" of war—that wild steam of intoxication which hovers over the battle-field, till the genuine soldier awakens from a fight as from a giddy and gorgeous dream, and, like Caliban, "cries to sleep again." And in his two celebrated sea-songs, how proudly does he pace the deck. With what rough, tar-like confidence, does he face the terrors of the tempest of the sea-fight; and the "meteor flag of England," blazing over the smoke of battle, is a grander spectacle to him than a comet's hair, or than one of the serene and steadfast stars.

As a poet, he is what Byron is not—a classic—secure of immortality—his works exalted to the same shelf with those of Goldsmith, Collins, and Thomson.

His prose is liable to the charge of over-ambition, if not of affectation, but is clear, energetic, and felicitous. His critical dicta, as given forth in his "Specimens of the British Poets," in his "Life of Mrs Siddons," "Sir Thomas Laurence," &c., have often a decisive vigour about them, which reminds us of the oracularities of Dr Johnson. He paints his author; and, though you may dispute an opinion, who can deny a likeness?

Campbell, at college, was eminent for three things: his poverty, his wit, and his scholarship. A poor, little black-eyed boy, with his toes protruding through his shoes, he was wont to haunt the stove in the logic class; and when driven from it by tall dunderheads, used to pelt them with extempore epigrams, till, to his infinite delight, he got them to chase him through the class-room; and then the little vagabond, wheeling round, regained his warm corner. It was a high moment for him when he was raised to the post of Lord Rector in his native university. Unbounded was the enthusiasm which prevailed. Such crowding! such cramming! such questioning! "Have you seen him? and you? and you?" and after he was seen, and his fine, frank inaugural address was delivered, "Does

he come up to your expectations? isn't he a better speaker than we thought he had been? what expressive eyes he has got." And better still, when he mingled so familiarly with his constituents, walking arm-in-arm with them, and giving them (trembling to the very toes) the other and the other grasp of his warm right hand. What proud men we all were, when each of us received a copy of his first inaugural oration, with the magic words, "To so-and-so, from Thomas Campbell." We remember being in a debating society one evening, when the news arrived that the Lord Rector had unexpectedly come down from London on some matter affecting the interests of the students. It was an eccentric and chivalrous move on his part, and out rushed we in a body to meet and welcome him with respondent enthusiasm. We found him in his brother-in-law's, sipping his coffee, were most cordially received, and after some delightful chit-chat, and a warm-hearted speech or two, left him in a transport of admiration. He, too, felt his fame; and never—not when composing the "Pleasures of Hope?"—did his blood boil higher; and never was his tongue half so eloquent, as in his meetings with, and his buoyant and cordial speeches to, the students of Glasgow. In memory of the halcyon days of the "Good Lord Rector," some of the cleverer of his admirers established a Campbell Club. He was the first poet we ever saw; and for us to meet, hear, feel the tingling touch of the author of "O'Connor's Child," was a "thing to dream of, not to see." Great as was the enthusiasm of all the red-gowned electors, there was none in whose heart it beat more warmly than in his who now indites this feeble but sincere tribute to his fame.

But the poet of Hope has departed from among us; and with him has passed away that era of literature which stretched between the fall of Pope and the rise of Wordsworth. In Westminster Abbey now lie entombed, not only the remains of a fine though frail spirit, but of one beautiful age of English poetry. Peace, but not oblivion, to their united Manes!

T H O M A S M O O R E.

To be the poet *par excellence* of Ireland, the cleverest man in the cleverest nation in the world, is to hold no mean position, and that position we claim for Thomas Moore. We do not, of course, mean that he was by many degrees the greatest poet of his day; but, for sparkle, wit, and brilliance, his country's qualities, he is unsurpassed. The bard of the butterflies, he is restless, gay, and gorgeous as the beautiful creatures he delights to depict. It would require his own style adequately to describe itself. Puck putting a girdle round about the globe in forty minutes—Ariel doing his spiriting gently—the Scottish fairy footing it in the moonlight, the stillness of which seems intended to set off the lively and aerial motion—any of these figures may faintly express to us the elegant activities of Moore's mind and fancy. We are never able to disconnect from his idea that of minuteness. Does he play in the "plighted clouds?" It is as a "creature of the element," as tiny as he is tricky. Does he flutter in the sunbeam? It is as a bright mote. Does he hover over the form and face of beauty? It is as a sylph-like sprite, his little heart surcharged, and his small wings trembling with passion. Does he ever enter on a darker and more daring flight? It is still rather the flight of a fire-fly than of a meteor or a comet. Does he assail powers and potentates? It is with a sting rather than a spear—a sting small, sharp, bright, and deadly.

Thomas Moore was a poet by temperament, and by intellect a wit. He had the warmth and the fancy of the poet, but hardly his powerful passion, his high solemn imagination, or his severe unity of purpose. His verses, therefore, are rather the star-dust of poetry than the sublime thing itself. Every sentence is poetical, but the whole is not a poem. The dancing lightness of his motion affects you with very different feelings from those with which you contemplate the grave walk of didactic, or the stormy

race of impassioned poetry. You are delighted, you are dazzled; you wonder at the rapidity of the movements, the elegance of the attitudes, the perfect self-command and mastery of the performer; you cry out, "Encore, encore," but you seldom weep; you do not tremble or agonise; you do not become silent. Did the reader ever feel the blinding and giddy effect of level winter sunbeams pouring through the intervals of a railing as he went along? This is precisely the effect which Moore's rapid and bickering brilliance produces. Our mental optics are dazzled, our brain reels, we almost sicken of the monotonous and incessant splendour, "distinct but distant, clear, but ah, how cold!"

Our great quarrel with Moore's poetry, apart from its early sins against morality and good taste, is its want of deep earnestness and of high purpose. Not more trivial is the dance of a fairy in the pale shine of the moon, than are the majority of his poems. And, though he did belong to that beautiful family, he could not in his poetry meddle less with the great purposes, passions, and destinies of humanity. What to him are the ongoings and future prospects of what Oberon so finely calls the "human mortals?" He must have his dance and his song out. We believe that Thomas Moore was a sincere lover of his kind, and had a deep sympathy with their welfare and progress, but we could scarcely deduce this with any certainty from his serious poetry. Indeed, the term serious, as applied to his verse, is a total misnomer. Byron's poetry has often a sincerity of anguish about it which cannot be mistaken; he howls out, like the blinded Cyclops, his agony to earth and heaven. The verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge is a harmony solemn as that of the pines in the winter blast; Elliott's earnestness is almost terrific; but Moore flits, and flutters, and leaps, and runs, a very Peri, but who shall never be permitted to

enter the paradise of highest song, and to whom the seventh heaven of invention is shut for ever.

It were needless to dilate upon the beauties which he has scattered around him in this unprofitable career. His fancy is prodigious in quantity and variety, and is as elegant as it is abundant. Images dance down about us like hailstones, illustrations breathlessly run after and outrun illustrations, fine and delicate shades melt into others still finer and more delicate, and often the general effect of his verse is like that of a large tree alive with bees, where a thousand sweet and minute tones are mingled in one hum of harmony. Add to this, his free flow of exquisite versification, the richness of his luscious descriptions, the tenderness of many of his pictures, and the sunny glow, as of eastern day, which colours the whole, and you have the leading features of his poetical idiosyncrasy.

But it is as a wit and a satirist that Moore must survive. There is no "horse play in his raillery." It is as delicate as it is deadly. Such a gay gladiator, such a smiling murderer as he is! How small his weapon—how elegant his flourishes—how light but sinewy his arm—and how soon is the blow given—the deed done—the victim prostrate! His strokes are so keen, that, ere you have felt them, you have found death. He is an aristocratic satirist, not only in the objects, but in the manner of his attack. Coarse game would not feel that fine tremulous edge by which he dissects his high-bred and sensitive foes to the quick. We notice, too, in the spirit of his sarcastic vein, and this very probably explains its superiority, a much deeper and heartier earnestness. When he means to be serious, he trifles; when he trifles it is that he is most sincere. His work is play, his play is work. All his political feeling—all the moral indignation he possesses—all the hatred which, as an Irishman and a gentleman, he entertains for insincerity, humbug, and selfishness in high places—come out through the veil of his witty and elegant verse. Of a great satirist, only one element

seems wanting in Moore—namely, that cool concentrated malignity which inspires Juvenal and Junius. He tickles his opponent to death; they tear him to pieces. His arrows are polished; theirs are poisoned. His malice is that of a man; theirs is that of a demon. His wish is to gain a great end over the bodies of his antagonists; their sole object is to destroy or blacken the persons of their foes. His is a public and gallant rencounter; theirs a sullen and solitary assassination.

Moore may be regarded under the four phases of an amatory poet, a narrative poet, a satirical poet, and a prose writer. As an amatory poet, he assumed, every one knows, the *nom-de-guerre* of Tommy Little, and, as such, do not his merits and demerits live in the verse of Byron and in the prose of Jeffrey? These poems, lively, gay, shallow, meretricious, were the sins of youth; they were not, like "Don Juan," the deliberate abominations of guilty and hardened manhood. Their object was to crown vice, but not to deny the existence of virtue. They were unjustifiably warm in their tone and colouring, but they did not seek to pollute the human heart itself. It was reserved for a mightier and darker spirit to make the desperate and infernal attempt, and to include in one "wide waft" of scorn and disbelief the existence of faithfulness in man and of innocence in woman. Little's lyrics, too, were neutralised by their general feebleness; they were pretty, but wanted body, unity, point, and power. Consequently, while they captivated idle lads and love-sick misses, they did comparatively little injury. It is indeed ludicrous, looking back through the vista of forty years, and thinking of the dire puddle and pother which such tiny transgressions produced among the critics and moralists of the time; they seem actually to have dreamed that the morality of Britain, which had survived the dramatists of Queen Elizabeth's day, the fouler fry of Charles II.'s playwrights, the novels of Fielding and Smollett, the numerous importations of iniquity from the Continent,

was to fall before a few madrigals and double-entendres. No; like "dewdrops from the lion's mane," it shook them off, and pursued its way. Whatever mischief was intended, little, we are sure, was done.

As a narrative poet, Moore aimed at higher things, and, so far as praise and popularity went, with triumphant success. His "Lalla Rookh" came forth amid great and general expectation. It was rumoured that he had written a great epic poem; that Catullus had matured into Homer. These expectations were too sanguine to be realised. It was soon found that "Lalla Rookh" was no epic—was not a great poem at all—that it was only a short series of Oriental tales, connected by a slight but exquisite framework. Catullus, though stripped of many of his voluptuous graces, and much of his false and florid taste, remained Catullus still. And the greatest admirer of the splendid diction, the airy verse, the melodramatic incident, the lavish fancy of the poem, could not but say, if the comparison came upon his mind at all, "Ye critics, say how poor was this to Homer's style!" The unity, the compactness, the interest growing to a climax, the heroic story, the bare and grand simplicity of style—all the qualities we expect in the epic were wanting in "Lalla Rookh." It was not so much a poem, indeed, as a rhymed romance. Still, its popularity was instant and boundless. If it did not become a great, still, steadfast luminary in the heaven of song, it flashed before the eye of the world brief, beautiful, gorgeous, and frail—

"A tearless rainbow, such as span
The unclouded skies of Peristan."

And even yet, after the lapse of twenty years, there are many who, admiring the fine moral of "Paradise and the Peri," or melted by the delicate pathos of the "Fire-Worshippers," own the soft seductions of "Lalla Rookh," and in their hearts, if not in their understandings, prefer it to the chaster and more powerful poetry of the age.

The "Loves of the Angels" was a bold-

er but not a more successful flight. It was a tale of the "Arabian heaven;" and there is nothing, certainly, in these wondrous "thousand-and-one nights" more rich, beautiful, and dream-like in its imagination and pathos, as in those impassioned stories. But it was only a castle in the clouds, after all—one of those brilliant but fading pomps which the eye of the young dreamer sees "for ever flushing round a summer's sky." Its angels were mere winged dolls, compared to the "celestial ardours" whom Milton has portrayed, or even to those proud and impassioned beings whom Byron has drawn. In fact, the poem was unfortunate in appearing about the same time with Byron's "Heaven and Earth," which many besides us consider his finest production as a piece of art. Mere atoms of the rainbow fluttering round were the pinions of Moore's angels, compared to the mighty wings of those burning ones who came down over Ararat, drawn by the loadstars which shone in the eyes of the "daughters of men," and for which, without a sigh, they "lost eternity." And what comparison between the female characters in the one poem and the two whom we see in the other, waiting with uplifted eyes and clasped hands for the descent of their celestial lovers, like angels for the advent of angels? And what scene in Moore can be named beside the Deluge in Byron; with the gloomy silence of suspense which precedes it—the mysterious sounds heard among the hills at dead of night, which tell of its coming—the waters rising solemnly to their work of judgment, as if conscious of its justice and grandeur—the cries of despair, of fury, of blasphemy, as if the poet himself were drowning in the surge—the milder and softer wail of resignation mingling with the sterner exclamations—the ark in the distance—the lost angels clasping their lost loves, and ascending with them from the doom of the waters to what we feel and know must be a direr doom?

We have spoken already of Moore's character as a witty poet, and need only now refer to the titles of his principal humorous compositions, such as the

'Fudge Family in Paris,' the "Two-penny Post-Bag," "Cash, Corn, Currency, and Catholics." They constitute a perfect gallery of fun without ferocity, without indecency, and without more malice than serves to give them poignancy and point.

From Moore's "Life of Sheridan," we might almost fancy that though he had lisped in numbers, and early obtained a perfect command of the language and versification of poetry, yet that he was only beginning, or had but recently begun, to write prose. The juvenility, the immaturity, the false glare, the load of forced figure, the ambition and effort of that production, are amazing in such a man at such an age. It contains, of course, much fine and forcible writing; but even Sheridan himself, in his most ornate and adventurous prose, which was invariably his worst, is never more unsuccessful than is sometimes his biographer. Perhaps it was but fitting that the life of such a heartless, faithless, though brilliant charlatan, should be written in a style of elaborate falsetto and fudge.

We have a very different opinion indeed of his "Life of Byron." It is not, we fear, a faithful or an honest record of that miserable and guilty mistake—the life of Byron. We have heard that Dr MacGinn, by no means a squeamish man, who was at first employed by Murray to write his biography, and had the materials put into his hands, refused, shrinking back disgusted at the masses of falsehood, treachery, heartlessness, malignity, and pollution which they revealed. The same materials were submitted to Moore, and from them he has constructed an image of his hero, bearing, we suspect, as correct a resemblance to his character as the ideal busts which abound do to his face. When will biographers learn that their business, their sole business, is to tell the truth, or to be silent? How long will the public continue to be deceived by such gilded falsehoods as form the staple of obituaries and memoirs? It is high time that such were confined to the corners of newspapers and of churchyards. We like Moore's "Byron," not for its subject or its moral tone, but

solely for its literary execution. It is written throughout in a clear, chaste, dignified, and manly manner; the criticism it contains is eloquent and discriminating, and the friendship it discovers for Byron, if genuine, speaks much for its author's generosity and heart.

We must not speak of his other prose productions—his "Epicurean," "History of Ireland," &c. The wittiest thing of his in prose we have read is an article in the "Edinburgh Review" on, we think, "Boyd's Lives of the Fathers," where, as in Gibbon, jests lurk under loads of learning, double-entendres disguise themselves in Greek, puns mount and crackle upon the backs of huge folios, and where you are at a loss whether most to chuckle at the wit, to detest the animus, or to admire the erudition.

We had nearly omitted, which had been unpardonable, all mention of the "Irish Melodies"—those sweet and luscious strains which have hushed ten thousand drawing-rooms, and drawn millions of such tears as drawing-rooms shed, but which have seldom won their way to the breasts of simple unsophisticated humanity—which are to the songs of Burns what the lute is to the linnet—and which, in their title, are thus far unfortunate, that, however melodious, they are not the melodies of Ireland. It was not Moore, but Campbell, who wrote "Erin Mavourneen." "He," says Hazlitt, "has changed the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box."

Such is our ideal of Thomas Moore. If it do not come up to the estimate of some of his admirers, it is faithful to our own impressions; and what more from a critic can be required? We only add, that, admired by many as a poet, by all as a wit, he was as a man the object of universal regard; and we believe there is not one who knew him but would be ready to join in the words—

"Were it the last drop in the well,
 'Tis to thee that I would drink;
 In that water as this wine,
 The libation I would pour.
 Would be peace to thee and thine,
 And a health to thee, Tom Moore."

EDGAR POE.

We have sometimes amused ourselves by conjecturing—Had the history of human genius run differently—had all men of that class been as wise, and prudent, and good, as too many of them have been improvident, foolish, and depraved—had we had a virtuous Burns, a pure Byron, a Goldsmith with common sense, a Coleridge with self-control, and a Poe with sobriety—what a different world it had been; what each of these surpassing spirits might have done to advance, refine, and purify society; what a host of "minor prophets" had been found among the array of the poets of our own country! For more than the influence of kings, or rulers, or statesmen, or clergymen—though it were multiplied tenfold—is that of the "Makers" whose winged words pass through all lands, tingle in all ears, touch all hearts, and in all circumstances are remembered and come humming around us—in the hours of labour, in the intervals of business, in trouble, and sorrow, and sickness, and on the bed of death itself; who enjoy, in fact, a kind of omnipresence—whose thoughts have over us the threefold grasp of beauty, language, and music—and to whom at times "all power is given" in the "dreadful trance" of their genius, to move our beings to their foundations, and to make us better or worse, lower or higher men, according to their pleasure. Yet true it is, and pitiful as true, that these "Makers"—themselves made of the finest clay—have often been "marred," and that the history of poets is one of the saddest and most humbling in the records of the world—sad and humbling especially, because the poet is ever seen side by side with his own ideal, that graven image of himself he has set up with his own hands, and his failure or fall is judged accordingly. Cowper says, in his correspondence, "I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets;' in all that number I observed but one man whose mind seems

to have had the slightest tincture of religion, and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. But from the lives of all the rest there is but one inference to be drawn—that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people." This is certainly too harsh, since these lives include the names of Addison, Watts, Young, and Milton; but it contains a portion of truth. Poets, as a tribe, have been rather a worthless, wicked set of people; and certainly Edgar Poe, instead of being an exception, was probably *the* most worthless and wicked of all his fraternity.

And yet we must say, in justice, that the very greatest poets have been good as well as great. Shakspeare, judging him by his class and age, was undoubtedly, to say the least, a respectable member of society, as well as a warm-hearted and generous man. Dante and Milton we need only name. And these are "the first three" in the poetic army. Wordsworth, Young, Cowper, Southey, Bowles, Crabbe, Pollok, are inferior but still great names, and they were all, in different measures, good men. And of late years, indeed, the instances of depraved genius have become rarer and rarer; so much so, that we are disposed to trace a portion of Poe's renown to the fact that he stood forth an exception so gross, glaring, and defiant, to what was promising to become a general rule.

In character he was certainly one of the strangest anomalies in the history of mankind. Many men as dissipated as he have had warm hearts, honourable feelings, and have been loved and pitied by all. Many, in every other respect worthless, have had some one or two redeeming points; and the combination of "one virtue and a thousand crimes" has not been uncommon. Others have the excuse of partial derangement for errors otherwise monstrous and unpardonable. But none of these pleas can be made for Poe. He was no more a gentleman than he was a saint. His heart was as rotten

as his conduct was infamous. He knew not what the terms honour and honourable meant. He had absolutely no virtue or good quality, unless you call remorse a virtue, and despair a grace. Some have called him mad; but we confess we see no evidence of this in his history. He showed himself, in many instances, a cool, calculating, deliberate blackguard. His intellect was of the clearest, sharpest, and most decisive kind. A large heart has often beat in the bosom of a debauchee; but Poe had not one spark of genuine tenderness, unless it were for his wife, whose heart, nevertheless, and constitution he broke—hurrying her to a premature grave, that he might write "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven!" His conduct to his patron, and to the lady mentioned in his memoirs, whom he threatened to cover with infamy if she did not lend him money, was purely diabolical. He was, in short, a combination, in almost equal proportions, of the fiend, the brute, and the genius. One might call him one of the Gadarene swine, filled with a devil, and hurrying down a steep place to perish in the waves; but none could deny that he was a "swine of genius."

He has been compared to Swift, to Burns, to Sheridan, and to Hazlitt; but in none of these cases does the comparison fully hold. Swift had probably as black crimes on his conscience as Poe; but Swift could feel and could create in others the emotion of warmest friendship, and his outward conduct was irreproachable: it was otherwise with Poe. Burns had many errors, poor fellow! but they were "all of the flesh, none of the spirit:" he was originally one of the noblest of natures, and during all his career nothing mean, or dishonourable, or black-hearted, was ever charged against him; he was an erring man—but still a *man*. Sheridan was a sad scamp, but had a kind of *bon-homme* about him which carried off in part your feeling of disgust; and, although false to his party, he was in general true to his friends. Hazlitt's faults were deep and dark; but he was what Poe was not—an intensely honest man; and he paid the penalty thereof in unheard-of

abuse and proscription. In order to parallel Poe, we must go back to Savage and Dermody. If our readers will turn to the first or second volumes of the "Edinburgh Review," they will find an account of the last mentioned, which will remind them very much of Poe's dark and discreditable history. Dermody, like Poe, was a habitual drunkard, licentious, false, treacherous, and capable of everything that was mean, base, and malignant; but, unlike Poe, his genius was not far above mediocrity. Hartley Coleridge, too, may recur to some as a case in point; but he was a harmless being, and a thorough gentleman—amiable, and, as the phrase goes, "nobody's enemy but his own."

How are we to account for this sad and miserable story? That Poe's circumstances were precarious from the first—that he was left an orphan—that without his natural protector he became early exposed to temptation—that his life was wandering and unsettled—all this does not explain the utter and reckless abandonment of his conduct, far less his systematic want of truth, and the dark sinister malice which rankled in his bosom. Habitual drunkenness does indeed tend to harden the heart; but, if Poe had possessed any heart originally, it might, as well as in the case of other dissipated men of genius, have resisted, and only in part yielded to, the induration; and why *did* he permit himself to become the abject slave of the vice? The poet very properly puts "lust hard by hate" (and hence, perhaps, the proverbial fierceness of the bull), and Poe was as licentious as he was intemperate; but the question recurs, Why? We are driven to one of two suppositions: either that his moral nature was more than usually depraved *ab origine*—that, as some have maintained, "conscience was omitted" in his constitution; or that, by the unrestrained indulgence of his passions, he, as John Bunyan has it, "tempted the devil," and became the bound victim of infernal influence. In this age of scepticism such a theory is sure to be laughed at, but is not the less likely to be true. If ever man in modern times resembled at least a de-

moniac, "exceeding fierce, and dwelling among tombs"—possessed now by a spirit of fury, and now by a spirit of falsehood, and now by an "unclean spirit"—it was Poe, as he rushed with his eyes open into every excess of riot; or entered the house of his intended bride on the night before the anticipated marriage, and committed such outrages as to necessitate a summons of the police to remove the drunk and raving demon; or ran howling through the midnight like an evil spirit on his way to the Red Sea, battered by the rains, beaten by the winds, waving aloft his arms in frenzy, cursing loud and deep man, himself, God, and proclaiming that he was already damned, and damned for ever. In demoniac possession, too, of a different kind, it was that he fancied the entire secret of the making of the universe to be revealed to him, and went about everywhere shouting "Eureka"—a title, too, which he gave to the strange and splendid lecture in which he recorded the memorable illusion. And when the spirit of talk came at times mightily upon him—when the "witch element" seemed to surround him—when his brow flushed like an evening cloud—when his eyes glared wild lightning—when his hair stood up like the locks of a Bacchante—when his chest heaved, and his voice rolled and swelled like subterranean thunder—men, admiring, fearing, and wondering, said, "He hath a demon, yea, seven devils are entered into him." His tongue was then "set on fire," but set on fire of hell; and its terrific inspiration rayed out of every gesture and look, and spake in every tone. "Madness!" it will be cried again; but that word does not fully express the nature of Poe's excitement in these fearful hours. There was no incoherence either in his matter or in his words. There was, amid all the eloquence and poetry of his talk, a vein of piercing, searching, logical but sinister thought. All his faculties were shown in the same lurid light, and touched by the same torch of the Furies. All blazed emulous of each other's fire. The awful Soul which had entered his soul formed an exact counterpart to it, and the haggard "dream was one." One

is reminded of the words of Aird, in his immortal poem, "The Demoniac:"—

"Perhaps by hopeless passions bound,
And render'd weak, the mastery a demon o'er
him found:
Reason and duty all, all life, his being all
became
Subservient to the wild, strange law that
overbears his frame;
And in the dead hours of the night, when
happier children lie
In slumbers seal'd, he journeys far the flow-
ing rivers by.
And oft he haunts the sepulchres, where the
thin shoals of ghosts
Sit shiv'ring from death's chilling dews; to
their unbodied hosts,
That churm through night their feeble plaint,
he yells; at the red morn
Meets the great armies of the winds, high o'er
the mountains borne,
Leaping against their viewless rage, *tossing
his arms on high,*
And hanging balanced o'er sheer steeps
against the morning sky."

We are tempted to add the following lines, partly for their Dantesque power, and partly because they describe still more energetically than the last quotation, such a tremendous possession as was Herman's in fiction, and Poe's in reality:—

"He rose; a smother'd gleam
Was on his brow; with fierce motes roll'd his
eye's distemper'd beam;
He smiled, 'twas as the lightning of a hope
about to die
*For ever from the furrow'd brows of hell's
eternity;*
Like sun-warm'd snakes, *rose on his head a
storm of golden hair,*
Tangled; and thus on Miriam fell hot breath-
ings of despair:
'Perish the breasts that gave me milk! yea,
in thy mouldering heart
Good thrifty roots I'll plant, to stay next
time my hunger's smart.
Red-vein'd derived apples I shall eat with
savage haste,
And see thy life-blood blushing through, and
glory in the taste.'

Herman, in the poem, has a demon sent into his heart, in divine sovereignty, and that he may be cured by the power of Christ. But Poe had Satan substituted for soul, apparently to torment him before the time; and we do *not* see him ere the end sitting, "clothed and in his

right mind, at the feet of Jesus." He died, as he had lived, a raving, cursing, self-condemned, conscious cross between the fiend and the genius, believing nothing, hoping nothing, loving nothing, fearing nothing—a solitary wretch who had cut off every bridge that connected him with the earth around and the heavens above. This, however, let us say in his favour—he has died "alone in his iniquity;" he has never, save by his example (so far as we know his works), sought to shake faith or sap morality. His writings may be morbid, but they are pure; and if his life was bad, has he not left it as a legacy to moral anatomists, who have met and wondered over it, although they have given up all attempt at dissection or diagnosis, shaking the head, and leaving him alone in its shroud, with the solemn whispered warning to the world, and especially to its stronger and brighter spirits, "Beware!"

A case so strange as Poe's compels us into new and more searching forms of critical, as well as of moral analysis. Genius has very generally been ascribed to him; but some will resist and deny the ascription—proceeding partly upon peculiar notions of what genius is, and partly from a very natural reluctance to concede to a wretch so vile a gift so noble, and in a degree, too, so unusually large. Genius has often been defined as something inseparably connected with the *genial* nature. If this definition be correct, Poe was not a genius any more than Swift, for geniality neither he nor his writings possessed. But if genius mean a compound of imagination and inventiveness, original thought heated by passion, and accompanied by power of fancy, Poe was a man of great genius. In wanting geniality, however, he wanted all that makes genius lovely and beloved, at once beautiful and dear. A man of genius, without geniality, is a mountain clad in snow, companioned by tempests, and visited only by hardy explorers, who love sublime nakedness, and to snatch a fearful joy from gazing down black precipices; a man whose genius is steeped in the genial nature is an autumn landscape, suggesting not only

images of beauty, and giving thrills of delight, but yielding peaceful and plentiful fruits, and in which the heart finds a rest and a home. From the one the timid, the weak, and the gentle retire in a terror which overpowers their admiration; but in the other the lowest and feeblest find shelter and repose. Even Dante and Milton, owing to the excess of their intellectual and imaginative powers over their genial feelings, are less loved than admired; while the vast supremacy of Shakspeare is due, not merely to his universal genius, but to the predominance of geniality and heart in all his writings. Many envy and even hate Dante and Milton; and had Shakspeare only written his loftier tragedies, many might have hated and envied him too; but who can entertain any such feelings for the author of the "Comedy of Errors" and "Twelfth Night," the creator of Falstaff, Dogberry, and Verres? If genius be the sun, geniality is the atmosphere through which alone his beams can penetrate with power, or be seen with pleasure.

Poe is distinguished by many styles and many manners. He is the author of fictions as matter-of-fact in their construction and language as the stories of Defoe, and of tales as weird and wonderful as those of Hoffman; of amatory strains trembling, if not with heart, with passion, and suffused with the purple glow of love, and of poems, dirges either in form or in spirit, into which the genius of desolation has shed its dreariest essence; of verses, gay with apparent but shallow joy, and of others dark with a misery which reminds us of the helpless, hopeless, infinite misery which sometimes visits the soul in dreams. But, amid all this diversity of tone and of subject, the leading qualities of his mind are obvious. These consist of strong imagination—an imagination, however, more fertile in incidents, forms, and characters, than in images; keen power of analysis, rather than synthetic genius; immense inventiveness; hot passions, cooled down by the presence of art, till they resemble sculptured flame, or "lightning in the hand of a painted Jupiter;" knowledge rather *recherché* and

varied, than strict, accurate, or profound; and an unlimited command of words, phrases, musical combinations of sound, and all the other materials of an intellectual workman. The direction of these powers was controlled principally by his habits and circumstances. These made him morbid; and his writings have all a certain morbidity about them. You say at once, cool and clear as most of them are, these are not the productions of a healthy or happy man. But surely never was there such a calm despair—such a fiery torment so cased in ice! When you compare the writings with the known facts of the author's history, they appear to be so like, and so unlike, his character. You seem looking at an inverted image. You have the features, but they are discovered at an unexpected angle. You see traces of the misery of a confirmed debauchee, but none of his disconnected ravings, or of the partial imbecility which often falls upon his powers. There is a strict, almost-logical, method in his wildest productions. He tells us himself that he wrote "The Raven" as coolly as if he had been working out a mathematical problem. His frenzy, if that name must be given to the strange fire which was in him, is a conscious one; he feels his own pulse when it is at the wildest, and looks at his foaming lips in the looking-glass.

Poe was led by a singular attraction to all dark, dreadful, and disgusting objects and thoughts: maelstroms, mysteries, murders, mummies, premature burials, excursions to the moon, solitary mansions surrounded by mist and weighed down by mysterious dooms, lonely tarns, trembling to the winds of autumn, and begirt by the shivering ghosts of woods—these are the materials which his wild imagination loves to work with, and out of them to weave the most fantastic and dismal of worlds. Yet there's "magic in the web." You often revolt at his subjects; but no sooner does he enter on them, than your attention is riveted, you lend him your ears—nay, that is a feeble word, you surrender your whole being to him for a season, although it be as you succumb, body and soul, to the dominion of a

nightmare. What greatly increases the effect, as in "Gulliver's Travels," is the circumstantiality with which he recounts the most amazing and incredible things. His tales, too, are generally cast into the autobiographical form, which adds much to their living vraisemblance and vivid power. It is Coleridge's "Old Mariner" over again. Strange, wild, terrible, is the tale he has to tell; haggard, wo-begone, unearthly, is the appearance of the narrator. Every one at first, like the wedding-guest, is disposed to shrink and beat his breast; but he holds you with his glittering eye, he forces you to follow him into his own enchanted region, and once there, you forget everything, your home, your friends, your creed, your very personal identity, and become swallowed up like a straw in the maelstrom of his story, and forget to breathe till it is ended, and the mysterious tale-teller is gone. And during all the wild and whirling narrative, the same chilly glitter has continued to shine in his eye, his blood has never warmed, and he has never exalted his voice above a thrilling whisper.

Poe's power may perhaps be said to be divisible into two parts: first, that of adding an air of circumstantial verity to incredibilities; and, secondly, that of throwing a wierd lustre upon commonplace events. He tells fiction so minutely, and with such apparent simplicity and sincerity, that you almost believe it true; and he so combines and so recounts such incidents as you meet with every day in the newspapers, that you feel truth to be stranger far than fiction. Look, as a specimen of the first, to his "Descent into the Maelstrom," and to his "Hans Pfaal's Journey to the Moon." Both are impossible; the former as much so as the latter; but he tells them with such Dante-like directness, and such Defoe-like minuteness, holding his watch, and marking, as it were, every second in the progress of each stupendous lie, that you rub your eyes at the close, and ask the question, Might not all this actually have occurred? And then turn to the "Murders in the Rue St Morgue," or to

the "Mystery of Marie Roget," and see how, by the disposition of the drapery he throws over little or ordinary incidents, connected, indeed, with an extraordinary catastrophe, he lends

"The light which never was on sea or shore"

to streets of revelry and vulgar sin, and to streams whose sluggish waters are never disturbed save by the plash of murdered victims, or by the plunge of suicides.

In one point, Poe bears a striking resemblance to his own illustrious countryman, Brockden Brown—neither resort to agency absolutely supernatural, in order to produce their terrific effects. Once only does Poe approach the brink of the purely preternatural—it is in that dreary tale, the "Fall of the House of Usher;" and yet nothing so discovers the mastery of the writer as the manner in which he avoids, while nearing, the gulf. There is really nothing, after all, in the strange incidents of that story, but what natural principles can explain. But Poe so arranges and adjusts the singular circumstances to each other, and weaves around them such an artful mist, that they produce a most unearthly effect. Perhaps some may think that he has fairly crossed the line in that dialogue between Charman and Iras, describing the conflagration of the world. But, even there, how admirably does he produce a certain feeling of probability, by the management of the natural causes which he brings in to produce the catastrophe. He burns his old witch-mother, the earth, scientifically! We must add that the above is the only respect in which Poe resembles Brown. Brown was a virtuous and amiable man, and his works, although darkened by unsettled religious views, breathe a fine spirit of humanity. Poe wonders at, and hates man; Brown wonders at, but at the same time pities, loves, and hopes in him. Brown mingled among men like a bewildered and half-fallen angel; Poe like a prying fiend.

We have already alluded to the singular power of analysis possessed by this strange being. This is chiefly conspicuous

in those tales of his which turn upon circumstantial evidence. No lawyer or judge has ever equalled Poe in the power he manifests of sifting evidence—of balancing probabilities—of finding the *multum* of a large legal case in the *parvum* of some minute and well-nigh invisible point—and in constructing the real story out of a hundred dubious and conflicting incidents. What scales he carries with him! how fine and tremulous with essential justice! And with what a microscopic eye he watches every footprint! Letters thrown loose on the mantelpiece, bell-ropes, branches of trees, handkerchiefs, &c., become to him instinct with meaning, and point with silent finger to crime and to punishment. And to think of this subtle algebraic power, combined with such a strong ideality, and with such an utterly corrupted moral nature! We have hitherto scarcely glanced at his poetry. It, although lying in a very short compass, is of various merit: it is an abridgment of the man in his strength and weakness. Its chief distinction, as a whole, from his prose, is its peculiar music. *That*, like all his powers, is fitful, changeful, varying; but not more so than to show the ever-varying moods of his mind, acting on a peculiar and indefinite theory of sound. The alpha and omega of that theory may be condensed in the word "reiteration." He knows the effect which can be produced by ringing changes on particular words. The strength of all his strains consequently lies in their chorus, or "oure turn," as we call it in Scotland. We do not think that he could have succeeded in sustaining the harmonies or keeping up the interest of a large poem. But his short flights are exceedingly beautiful, and some of his poems are miracles of melody. All our readers are familiar with "The Raven." It is a dark world in itself; it rises in your sky suddenly as the cloud like a man's hand rose in the heaven of Palestine, and covers all the horizon with the blackness of darkness. As usual in his writings, it is but a common event idealised; there is nothing supernatural or even extraordinary in the incident re-

counted; but the reiteration of the one dreary word "nevermore;" the effect produced by seating the solemn bird of yore upon the bust of Pallas; the manner in which the fowl with its fiery eyes becomes the evil conscience or memory of the lonely widower; and the management of the time, the season, and the circumstances—all unite in making the Raven in its flesh and blood a far more terrific apparition than ever from the shades made night hideous, while "revisiting the glimpses of the moon." The poem belongs to a singular class of poetic uniques, each of which is itself enough to make a reputation, such as Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," or "Christabel," and Aird's "Devil's Dream upon Mount Acksbeck"—poems in which some one new and generally dark idea is wrought out into a whole so strikingly complete and self-contained as to resemble creation, and in which thought, imagery, language, and music combine to produce a similar effect, and are made to chime together like bells. What anti-tireness of effect, for instance, is produced in the "Devil's Dream," by the unearthly theme, the strange title, the austere and terrible figures, the singular verse, and the knotty and contorted language; and in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," by the ghastly form of the narrator—the wild rhythm, the new mythology, and the exotic diction of the tale he tells! So Poe's "Raven" has the unity of a tree blasted, trunk, and twigs, and root, by a flash of lightning. Never did melancholy more thoroughly "mark for its own" any poem than this. All is in intense keeping. Short as the poem is, it has a beginning, middle, and end. Its commencement how abrupt and striking—the time a December midnight—the poet a solitary man, sitting, "weak and weary," poring in helpless fixity, but with no profit or pleasure, over a black-letter volume; the fire half expired, and the dying embers haunted by their own ghosts, and shivering above the hearth! The middle is attained, when the raven mounts the bust of Pallas, and is fascinating the solitary wretch by his black,

glittering plumage, and his measured, melancholy croak. And the end closes as with the wings of night over the sorrow of the unfortunate, and these dark words conclude the tale:—

"And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor,
Shall be lifted Nevermore."

The same shadow of unutterable wo rests upon several of his smaller poems, and the effect is greatly enhanced by their gay and song-like rhythm. That madness or misery which *sings* out its terror or grief, is always the most desperate. It is like a burden of hell set to an air of heaven. "Ulalume" might have been written by Coleridge during the sad middle portion of his life. There is a sense of dreariness and desolation as of the last of earth's autumns, which we find nowhere else in such perfection. What a picture these words convey to the imagination:—

"The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisp'd and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere,
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year.
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid-region of Weir—
It was down by the dark tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

These to many will appear only words; but what wondrous words. What a spell they wield! Like a wasted haggard face, they have no bloom or beauty; but what a tale they tell! Weir—Auber—where are they? They exist not, except in the writer's imagination, and in yours, for the instant they are uttered, a misty picture, with a tarn, dark as a murderer's eye, below, and the last thin, yellow leaves of October fluttering above—exponents both of a misery which scorns the name of sorrow, and knows neither limit nor termination—is hung up in the chamber of your soul for ever. What power, too, there is in the "Haunted Palace," particularly in the last words, "they laugh, but smile no more!" Dante has nothing superior in all those chilly yet fervent words of his, where "the

ground burns frore and cold performs the effect of fire."

We must now close our sketch of Poe; and we do so with feelings of wonder, pity, and awful sorrow, tempted to look up to heaven, and to cry, "Lord, why didst thou make this man in vain?" Yet perhaps there was even in him some latent spark of goodness, which may even

now be developing itself under a kindlier sky. He has gone far away from the misty mid-region of Weir; his dreams of cosmogonies have been tested by the searching light of Eternity's truth; his errors have received the reward that was meet; and we cannot but say, ere we close, Peace even to the well-nigh putrid dust of Edgar Poe.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

SOME ten-years ago, the inhabitants of a large city in the north of Scotland were apprised, by handbills, that James Montgomery, Esq., of Sheffield, the poet, was to address a meeting on the subject of Moravian Missions. This announcement, in the language of Dr Caius, "did bring de water into-our mouth." The thought of seeing a live poet, of European reputation, arriving at our very door, in a remote corner, was absolutely electrifying. We went early to the chapel where he was announced to speak, and, ere the lion of the evening appeared, amused ourselves with watching and analysing the audience which his celebrity had collected. It was not very numerous, nor very select. Few of the grandees of the city had condescended to honour him by their presence. Stranger still, there was but a sparse supply of clergy, or of the prominent religionists of the town. The church was chiefly filled with females of a certain age, one or two stray "hero worshippers" like ourselves, a few young ladies who had read some of his minor poems, and whose eyes seemed lighted up with a gentle fire of pleasure in the prospect of seeing the author of those "beautiful verses on the Grave and Prayer," and two or three who had come from ten miles off to see and hear the celebrated poet. When he at length appeared, we continued to marvel at the aspect of the platform. Instead of being supported by the *élite* of the city, instead of forming a rallying centre of attraction and unity to all who had a sympathy with piety or with genius for leagues round it, a few obscure individuals pre-

sented themselves, who seemed rather anxious to catch a little *eclat* from him, than to delight to do him honour. The evening was rather advanced ere he rose to speak. His appearance, so far as we could catch it, was quite in keeping with the spiritual cast of his poetry. He was tall, thin, bald, with face of sharp outline, but mild expression; and we looked with no little reverence on the eye which had shot fire into the "Pelican Island," and on the hand (skinny enough, we ween) which had written "The Grave." He spoke in a low voice, sinking occasionally into an inaudible whisper; but his action was energetic, and his pantomime striking. In the course of his speech, he alluded, with considerable effect, to the early heroic struggles of Moravianism, when she was yet alone in the death-grapple with the powers of heathen darkness, and closed (when *did* he ever close a speech otherwise?) by quoting a few vigorous verses from himself.

We left the meeting, we remember, with two wondering questions in our ears: first, Is this fame? of what value reputation, which in a city of seventy thousand inhabitants is so freely acknowledged? Would not any empty, mouthing charlatan, any "twopenny tear-mouth," any painted, stupid savage, any clever juggler, any dexterous player upon the fiery harp-strings of the popular passions, have enjoyed a better reception than this true, tender, and holy poet? But, secondly, Is not this true, tender, and holy poet partly himself to blame? Has he not put himself in a false position? Has he

not too readily lent himself as an instrument of popular excitement? Is this progress of his altogether a proper, a poet's progress? Would Milton, or Cowper, or Wordsworth have submitted to it? And is it in good taste for him to eke out his orations by long extracts from his own poems? Homer, it is true, sang his own verses; but he did it for food. Montgomery recites them; but it is for fame.

We pass now gladly—as we did in thought then—from the progress to the poet-pilgrim himself. We have long admired and loved James Montgomery, and we wept under his spell ere we did either the one or the other. We will not soon forget the Sabbath evening—it was in golden summer tide—when we first heard his "Grave" repeated, and wept as we heard it. It seemed to come, as it progressed to come, from the grave itself—a still small voice of comfort and of hope even from that stern abyss. It was a fine and bold idea to turn the great enemy into a comforter, and elicit such a reply, so tender and submissive, to this challenge, "O grave, where is thy victory?" Triumphant in prospect over the Sun himself, the grave proclaims the superiority and immunity of the soul—

"The Sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
But thou, immortal as his Sire,
Shalt never die."

Surely no well in the wilderness ever sparkled out to the thirsty traveller a voice more musical, more tender, and more cheering, than this which Montgomery educes from the jaws of the narrow house. Soon afterwards we became acquainted with some of his other small pieces, which then seized, and which still occupy, the principal place in our regards. Indeed, it is on his little poems that the permanency of his fame is likely to rest, as it is into them that he has chiefly shed the peculiarity and the beauty of his genius. James Montgomery has little inventive or dramatic power; he cannot write an epic; none of his larger poems, while some are bulky, can be called great; but he is the best writer of hymns (under-

standing a hymn simply to mean a short religious effusion) in the language. He catches the transient emotions of the pious heart, which arise in the calm evening walk, where the saint, like Isaac, goes out into the fields to meditate; or under the still and star-fretted midnight; or on his "own delightful bed;" or in pensive contemplations of the "Common Lot;" or under the Swiss heaven, where evening hardly closes the eye of Mont Blanc, and stirs Lake Lemman's waters with a murmur like a sleeper's prayer: wherever, in short, piety kindles into the poetic feeling, such emotions he catches, refines, and embalms in his snatches of lyric song. As Wordsworth has expressed sentiments which the "solitary lover of nature was unable to utter, save with glistening eye and faltering tongue," so Montgomery has given poetic form and words to breathings and pantings of the Christian's spirit, which himself never suspected to be poetical at all, till he saw them reflected in verse. He has caught and crystallised the tear dropping from the penitent's eye; he has echoed the burden of the heart, sighing with gratitude to Heaven; he has arrested and fixed in melody the "upward glancing of an eye, when none but God is near." In his verse and in Cowper's, the poetry of ages of devotion has broken silence, and spoken out. Religion, the most poetical of all things, had, for a long season, been divorced from song, or had mistaken pert jingle, impudent familiarity, and doggerel, for its genuine voice. It was reserved for the bard of Olney and Sheffield to renew and to strengthen the lawful and holy wedlock.

Montgomery, then, is a religious lyricist, and, as such, is distinguished by many peculiar merits. His first quality is a certain quiet simplicity of language and of purpose. His is not the elaborate and systematic simplicity of Wordsworth: it is unobtrusive, and essential to the action of his mind. It is a simplicity which the diligent student of Scripture seldom fails to derive from its pages, particularly from its histories and its psalms. It is the simplicity of a spirit which religion has subdued as well as elevated, and which con-

sicously spreads abroad the wings of its imagination under the eye of God. As if each poem were a prayer, so is he sedulous that its words be few and well ordered. In short, his is not so much the simplicity of art, nor the simplicity of nature, as it is the simplicity of faith. It is the virgin dress of one of the white-robed priests in the ancient temple. It is a simplicity which, by easy and rapid transition, mounts into bold and manly enthusiasm. One is reminded of the artless sinkings and soarings, fingerings and hurrying, of David's matchless minstrelsies. Profound insight is not peculiarly Montgomery's forte. He is rather a seraph than a cherub; rather a burning than a knowing one. He kneels; he looks upward with rapt eye; he covers at times his face with his wing; but he does not ask solemn questions, or cast strong though baffled glances into the solid and intolerable glory. You can never apply to him the words of Grey. He never has "passed the bounds of flaming space, where angels tremble as they gaze." He has never invaded those lofty but dangerous regions of speculative thought, where some have dwelt till they have lost all of piety, save its grandeur and gloom. He does not reason, far less doubt, on the subject of religion at all; it is his only to wonder, to love, to weep, and to adore. Sometimes, but seldom, can he be called a sublime writer. In his "Wanderer of Switzerland," he blows a bold horn, but the echoes and the avalanches of the highest Alps will not answer or fall to his reveillé. In his "Greenland," he expresses but faintly the poetry of Frost; and his line is often cold as a glacier. His "World before the Flood" is a misnomer. It is not the young, virgin, undrowned world it professes to be. In his "West Indies," there is more of the ardent emancipator than of the poet; you catch but dimly, through its correct and measured verse, a glimpse of Ethiopia—the suppliant standing with one shackled foot on the Rock of Gibraltar, and the other on the Cape of Good Hope, and "stretching forth her hands" to an avenging God. And although, in the horrors of the middle passage, there were ele-

ments of poetry, yet it was a poetry which our author's genius is too gentle and timid fully to extract. As soon could he have added a storey to Ugolino's tower, or another circle to the "Inferno," as have painted that pit of heat, hunger, and howling despair, the hold of a slave vessel. Let him have his praise, however, as the constant and eloquent friend of the negro, and as the laureate of his freedom. The high note struck at first by Cowper in his lines, "I would not have a slave," &c., it was reserved for Montgomery to echo and swell up, in reply to the full diapason of the liberty of Ham's children, proclaimed in all the isles which Britain claims as hers. And let us hope that he will be rewarded, before the close of his existence, by hearing, though it were in an ear half-shut in death, a louder, deeper, more victorious shout arising from emancipated America, and of saying, like Simeon of old, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The plan of the "Pelican Island" was an unfortunate one, precluding as it did almost entirely human interest, and rapid vicissitude of events; and resting its power principally upon the description of foreign objects, and of slow though majestic processes of nature. Once, and once only, in this, and perhaps in any of his poems, does he rise into the rare region of the sublime. It is in the description of the sky of the south—a subject which, indeed, is itself inspiration. And yet, in that sky, the great constellations hung up in the wondering evening air, the Dove, the Raven, the Ship of Heaven, "sailing from Eternity;" the Wolf, "with eyes of lightning watching the Centaur's spear;" the Altar blazing, "even at the footsteps of Jehovah's throne;" the Cross, "meek emblem of redeeming love," which (bending at midnight as when they were taking down the Saviour of the world) greeted the eye of Humboldt as he sailed over the still Pacific, had so hung and so burned for ages, and no poet had sung their praises. Patience, ye glorious tremblers! In a page of this "Pelican Island"—a page bright as your own beams, and like them immortal, shall your splendour

be yet inscribed. This passage floats the poem, and will long memorise Montgomery's name.

Among Montgomery's smaller poems, the finest is the "Stanzas at Midnight," composed in Switzerland, and which we see inserted in Longfellow's romance of "Hyperion," with no notice or apparent knowledge of their authorship. They describe a mood of his own mind while passing a night among the Alps, and contain a faithful transcript of the emotions which, thick and sombre as the shadows of the mountains, crossed his soul in its solitude. There are no words of Foster's which to us possess more meaning than that simple expression in his first essay, "solemn meditations of the night." Nothing in spiritual history is more interesting. What vast tracts of thought does the mind sometimes traverse when it cannot sleep! What ideas, that had bashfully presented themselves in the light of day, now stand out in bold relief and authoritative dignity! How vividly appear before us the memories of the past! How do past struggles and sins return to recollection, rekindling on our cheeks their first fierce blushes unseen in the darkness! How new a light is cast upon the great subjects of spiritual contemplation! What a "browner horror" falls upon the throne of death, and the pale kingdoms of the grave! What projects are then formed, what darings of purpose conceived, and how fully can we then understand the meaning of the poet—

"In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the still nights were moonless, *have*
I known
Jays that no tongue can tell; my pale lip
quivers
When thought revisits them!"

And when, through the window, looks in on us one full glance of a clear large star, how startling it seems, like a conscious, mild, yet piercing eye; how soothingly it mingles with our meditations, and, as with a pencil of fire, points them away into still remoter and more mysterious regions of thought! Such a meditation Montgomery has embodied in these beau-

tiful verses; but then he is up amid the midnight and all its stars; he is out amid the Alps, and is catching on his brow the living breath of that rarest inspiration which moves amid them, then, and then alone.

We mentioned Cowper in conjunction with Montgomery in a former sentence. They resemble each other in the pious purpose and general simplicity of their writings, but otherwise are entirely distinct. Cowper's is a didactic, Montgomery's a romantic piety. Cowper's is a gloomy, Montgomery's a cheerful religion. Cowper has in him a fierce and bitter vein of satire, often irritating into invective; we find no traces of any such thing in all Montgomery's writings. Cowper's withering denunciations seem shreds of Elijah's mantle, torn off and set on fire in the whirlwind; Montgomery is clothed in the softer garments, and breathes the gentler genius, of the new economy. And as poets, Montgomery, with more imagination and elegance, is entirely destitute of the rugged strength of sentiment, the exquisite keenness of observation, the rich humour, and the awful personal pathos of Cowper.

Montgomery's hymns (properly so called) we do not much admire. They have in them often a false gallop of religious sentimentalism. Their unction has been kept too long, and has a savour not of the sweetest: they abound less, indeed, than many of their class in such endearing epithets as "dear Lord," "dear Christ," "sweet Jesus," &c.; but are not entirely free from these childish decorations. That one song sung by the solitary Jewish maiden in "Ivanhoe" (surely the sweetest strain ever uttered since the spoilers of Judah did by Babel's streams require of its captives a song, and were answered in that melting melody which has drawn the tears and praises of all time), is worth all the hymn-books that were ever composed. Montgomery's true hymns are those which bear not the name, but which sing, and for ever will sing, their own quiet tune to simple and pious spirits.

Of Montgomery's prose, we might say much that was favourable. It is truly

"Prose by a Poet," to borrow the title of one of his works. You see the poet every now and then dropping his mask, and showing himself in his true character. It is enough of itself to confute the vulgar prejudice against the prose of poets. Who, indeed, but a poet has ever written, or can ever write, good prose—prose that will live? What prose, to take but one example, is comparable to the prose of Shakspeare, many of whose very best passages—as Hamlet's description of man, Falstaff's death, the speech of Brutus, or that dreadful grace before meat of Timon, which is of misanthropy the quaintest and most appalling quintessence, and seems fit to have preceded a supper in Eblis—are not in verse? Montgomery's prose criticism we value less for its exposition of principles, or for its originality, in which respects it is deficient, than for its generous and eloquent enthusiasm. It is delightful to find in an author, who had so to struggle up his way to distinction, such a fresh and constant sympathy with the success and the merits of others. In this he does not remind us of the Lakers, whose tarn-like narrowness of critical spirit is the worst and weakest feature in their characters. Truly, a great mind never looks so contemptible as when, stooping from its pride of place, it exchanges its own high aspirations after fame for poor mouse-like nibblings at the reputation of others.

Many tributes have been paid of late years to the "Pilgrim's Progress." The lips of Coleridge have waxed eloquent in its praise; Southey and Macaulay have here embraced each other; Cheever, from America, has uttered a powerful sound in proclamation of its unmatched merits; but we are mistaken if its finest panegyric be not that contained in Montgomery's preface, prefixed to the Glasgow edition.* In it all the thankfulness

* We must not omit David Scott's illustrations—quite worthy of himself, although connected with an edition which, while calling itself the "Pilgrim's Progress," contains only the first half of it, and the letterpress of which is supplied by a gentleman who, ten years ago, discovered and proclaimed to the world, in

cherished from childhood, in a poet's and a Christian's heart, toward this benign and beautiful book, comes gushing forth; and he closes the tribute with the air of one who has relieved himself from a deep burden of gratitude. Indeed, this is the proper feeling to be entertained toward all works of genius; and an envious or malign criticism upon such is not so much a defect in the intellect as it is a sin of the heart. It is a blow struck in the face of a benefactor. A great author is one who presents us with a priceless treasure; and, if we at once reject the boon and spurn the giver, ours is not an error simply, it is a deadly crime.

The mention of Bunyan and Montgomery in conjunction, irresistibly reminds us of a writer who much resembles the one, and into whom the spirit of the other seems absolutely to have transmigrated—we mean, Mary Howitt. She resembles Montgomery principally in the amiable light in which she presents the spirit of Christianity. Here the Moravian and the Friend are finely at one. Their religion is no dire fatalism; it is no gloomy reservoir of all morbid and unhappy feelings, disappointed hopes, baffled purposes, despairing prospects, turning toward heaven, in their extremity, for comfort, as it is with a very numerous class of authors. It is a glad sunbeam from the womb of the morning, kindling all nature and life into smiles. It is a meek, woman-like presence in the chamber of earth, which meanwhile beautifies, and shall yet redeem and restore it—by its very gentleness righting all its wrongs, curing all its evils, and wiping away all its tears. Had but this faith been shown more fully to the sick soul of Cowper! were it but shown more widely to the sick soul of earth,

"Soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again."

And how like is Mary Howitt to Bunyan! Like him, she is the most sublime the "United Secession Magazine," that Robert Burns was no poet—proving this, we think, by quoting "Highland Mary."

of the simple, and the most simple of the sublime; the most literal and the most imaginative of writers. Hers and his are but a few quiet words: but they have the effect of "Open Sesame;" they conduct into deep caverns of feeling and of thought, to open which ten thousand mediocrists behind are bawling in vain. In "Marien's Pilgrimage" (thanks to the kind and gifted young friend who lately introduced us to this beautiful poem), we have a minor "Pilgrim's Progress," where Christianity is represented as a child going forth on a mission to earth, mingling with and mitigating all its evils; and is left, at the close, still wandering on in this her high calling. The allegory is not, any more than in Bunyan, strictly preserved; for Marien is at once Christianity personified and a Christian person, who alludes to Scripture events, and talks in Scripture lan-

guage; but the simplicity, the childlikeness, and the sweetness, are those of the gentle dreamer of Elstowe.

We return to James Montgomery only to bid him farewell. He is one of the few lingering stars in a very rich constellation of poets. Byron, Coleridge, Southey, Crabbe, Campbell, Shelley, Keats, are gone; some burst to shivers by their own impetuous motion; others, in the course of nature, have simply ceased to shine. Some of that cluster, including Montgomery, yet remain. Let us, without absurdly and malignantly denying merit to our rising luminaries, with peculiar tenderness cherish these, both for their own sakes, and as still linking us to a period in our literary history so splendid.

Note.—It is hardly necessary to add, that this was written ere the death of this eminent poet.

EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

We have sometimes wondered that the forge has not sooner sent forth its poetical representative. It is undoubtedly one of the most imaginative of the objects of artificial life, especially when standing solitary, and on the edge of a dark wood. Hear how a man of genius describes it:—"As I rode through the Schwarzald, I said to myself, That little fire, which glows across the dark-growing moor, where the sooty smith bends over the anvil, and thouapest to replace thy lost horse-shoe, is it a detached, separated speck, cut off from the whole universe, or indissolubly united to the whole? Thou fool! that smithy fire was primarily kindled at the sun; is fed by air that circulates from before Noah's deluge—from beyond the dog-star—therein, with iron force, and coal force, and the far stronger force of man, are battles and victories of force brought about. It is a little ganglion or nervous centre in the great system of immensity. Call it, if thou wilt, an unconscious altar, kindled on the bosom of the All, whose iron smoke

and influence reach quite through the All—whose dingy priest, not by word, but by brain and sinew, preaches forth the mystery of Force." A smith surrounded by an atmosphere of sparkles—sending out that thick thunder which Schiller seems to have loved above all other music—presiding at the wild wedlock of iron and flame, and baptising the progeny of the terrible Hymen in the hissing trough—so independent in his lonely stithy—lord of his hammer and his right arm—carrying back your imagination to the days when the hammer of Tubal-Cain awoke the virgin echoes of the antediluvian world, in first bending the stiff neck of the iron and the brass—or to the bowels of Etna and Vulcan—or to the groves and lucid streams of Damascus—or to Spain, and the Ebro, and Andrew Ferrara—while, perhaps, sweeps before the mind's eye a procession of the instruments of death, from the first shapeless mass of iron, fitted to the rough hand of a son of Cain, down through the Grecian javelin;

the Roman spear; the Persian scimitar; the Saracen blade, bright and sharp as the crescent moon; the great two-handed sword of the middle ages; the bayonet, which pierced a passage for the armies of Turenne; the pike; the battle-axe; the claymore of Caledonia; thus does imagination pile up a pedestal, on which the smith, his dusky visage, his uplifted hammer, and his patient anvil, look absolutely ideal; and the wonder is excited why till of late no "Message from the Forge" has been conveyed to the ears of men beyond its own incessant and victorious sound. And yet the forge had wrought and raved for ages, and amid all its fiery products reared no poet till it was said, "Let Ebenezer Elliott be." And though he stood forward somewhat ostentatiously as the self-chosen deputy to Parnassus of the entire manufacturing class, it is easy to find in the large rough grasp of his intellect, in the daring of his imagination, in the untameable fire of his uneven yet nervous line, in his impatient and contemptuous use of language, traces of the special trade over which he long presided; of the impression which a constant circle of fire made upon his imagination; and of the savage power which taught him at one time to wield the hammer and the pen with little difference in degree of animal exertion and mental fury. We can never divest our minds as we read him of the image of a grim son of the furnace, black as Erebus, riving, tearing, and smiting at his reluctant words; storming now and then at the disobedient ends of sentences; clutching his broad-nibbed quill, and closing the other and the other paragraph with the flourish of one who brings down upon the anvil a last sure and successful blow.

Elliott was unquestionably one of the most masculine men of our era. His poorest copy of verses; his wildest sins against good taste and propriety; his most truculent invective; and even the witless personalities by which it pleases him so often to poison his poetry and his prose, will not conceal the brawny muscle, the strong intellect, and the stronger passions of a man. Burns, in his haughtiest

moment, never grasped the sickle with a sturdier independence. From the side of his furnace he spoke in a tone of authority; and stern, decisive, and oracular, are his sentences. Indeed, his dogmatism is so incessant and so fierce, that were it not backed by such manifest power and earnestness, it would excite no feelings but disgust or pity. But we defy you to pity a man who points his abuse by shaking such a strong fist in your face. You feel, too, that your pity were quite thrown away, since he would not feel it through his tough hide. Restraining, therefore, your pity, and biting down the lip of your disgust, you start back, and keep at a respectful distance from a customer so formidable. Glancing critically at the inspired ironmonger, you see at once that strength is his principal characteristic; nor do you care to settle the question whether it be strength of intellect, or passion, or imagination, or a triple twist of all three. You are tempted, indeed, while looking at him, to believe that a really strong man is strong all around; and whatever fatal flaw may run through all his faculties, they must all support each other—intellect supplying the material, imagination the light, passion the flame, of the one conflagration. You say, as you look at him, whether hewing his way through nervous verse or rugged prose, here is a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—a Demi-urgus, like those strong three in Raphael's "Building the Ark," Shem, Ham, and Japheth, sawing at the massive timbers which are to swim the deluge and rest on Ararat, with a force, a gusto, and a majesty suitable to the tenants of an undrowned world; or like those "Vulcanian three that, in sounding caverns under Mongibello, wrought in fire—Brontes, and black Steropes, and Pyracmon." So stands, leans, labours, growls and curses at times, not loud but deep, with foot firmly planted, and down-bent flaming eye, this "Titan of the age of tools." You see, too, that he has the true vision of the poet—that mysterious eyesight which sees the spiritual as well as the material shadow which falls from off all things, and which to the bard alone

is naked and bare. Be this penetrating and incommunicable glance a blessing or a curse; and, as in the case of the second-sight, it is the one or the other, according to the objects presented—being, if a genial temperament show the unseen border of beauty which edges and flowers all things, one of the greatest of blessings; but if accident, or position, or a black bilious medium, discover the halo of misery which invisibly surrounds every object in this strange world, one of the greatest of curses: be it the one or the other, it has, and for ever, unsealed his eye. You regret to perceive, on more narrow inspection, that he has fixed his piercing gaze too much on the dark side of things—that his view is angular, not comprehensive—that passion has given his eye now a portentous squint, and now a ferocious glare—that he has seen through “shams,” not in the sense of seeing what even they contain of good and true, but seen through them as through empty spaces into the black, hollow, and hideous night.

You acknowledge, too, the presence of the “faculty” as well as the divine vision. His sight is not a struggling but an open sight. He has found, though a self-educated man, as it is called, fit and noble expression for his burning thoughts. His language is not rich, fluent, refined, or copious, but knotty, direct, and with a marrowy race and strength about it which are truly refreshing to those who are tired of reflection after reflection of a great native style, fading gradually away (like those small faint segments of rainbows mimicking the bow of heaven), till all is gloom. And when it rises to the breath of his indignation, when he mounts on the full whirlwind of his soul, you are irresistibly reminded of that impetuous prophet who gazed on the “terrible crystal,” and stood below the shadow of the visionary wheels, and walked barefoot upon the stones of fire, and saw in the porch the “dark idolatries of alienated Judah,” and plucked down forks of the lightning for words to express the fury of his ire, and heaved up from his breast burdens that “made the Pagan mountains shake and Zion’s cedars bow.” Elliott has

unquestionably, as the spirit moves him, at times, if not all the inspiration, all the fury of the prophet, his forgetfulness of self, his heat of spirit, the contortions and spasms by which he was delivered of his message, as of a demon. And yet, when it chooses him to “look abroad into universality,” and instead of inveighing against a corn-law, to walk forth into the corn-fields; to pierce the shady solitude of the lane; to converse with “cloud, gorse, and whirlwind on the gorgeous moor;” to spend his solitary Sabbath upon the mountain; to bare his heated brow in the fresh breeze, as an act—as an altar of worship to the poor man’s God;—what a delightful companion does the stern iron-worker become! You can scarcely believe that it is the same person, or that such bland and balmy accents could flow from the lips which, a little before, you saw white with foam, and written with denunciations. Striking, with large strides, through the silent suburbs of the morning city, he gets into the clear country; selects, from some imaginative motive, one among the many quiet paths which would be proud of the presence and ennobling step of a poet; absolutely shivers with the joys springing from a sense of security and solitude; enacts, in the fulness of his heart, a thousand wild vagaries; leaps aloft, or throws himself down, at large, upon the green bank, or talks eloquently to himself; or bespeaks the patient cow, or big-browed bull, in the pasture; or sits motionless upon the stile, “gazing himself away” at some point in the distant landscape; or plunges, at noon, into a wood, and lies dissolved in its shady coolness; emerges, and pursues his way; reaches some “Kirk of Ulpha,” with trees shadowing its horologe, and a river laving its churchyard wall; enters, with sturdy yet reverend step; bends his anointed head under the consecrated roof; amazes the simple worshippers, who see, from his eye and brow, that he is no common wanderer; climbs a hill behind, and has all the sublime savage re-born within him, at the sight of the far-off city, and heaves out, like an opened crater, some wild and angry

breathings; returns wearied, yet heart-full, in the evening shadows; dreams it all over in his bed, and rises in the morning to his strong hammer and fierce philippics again.

You are impressed always, as you consider this strong man, with the respect—the almost awe, which perfect honesty inspires. This, you say, is one who has trampled down the Python Falsehood, and all whose utterances come from the sincere and boiling heart within. This is one who can bear all the charges of imprudence, recklessness, folly, or madness, with which an honest man is sure to be saluted, as he ploughs on his straight, strong furrow through the field of the world. This is one who covets no other epitaph upon his sepulchre than the words, "Here lies one who, in an age of brazen-faced falsehood, of colossal cant, lived and died an honest man."

Reverting to his poetical and literary character, you miss much that might complete the character of the accomplished artist. Not only have you no great work, but no conception of it—no panting after it—no spirit of design adequate to even its idea. There is much muscular power, but it is an Apollyon, not an artistic energy. What a rare "Architect of Ruin," you say, would he be in a work of uncreation; but no Amphion lyre does he, or can he sway. He is not one of the "kings of melody;" his song has no linked sweetness—no long reach of swelling power—only transient touches, rude and sudden strokes, endangering the integrity of the instrument—groans and half blasphemies instead of airs, wrung out from its chords as from a spirit in pain, confess the hand of the master. You discern, too, a concentration of interest, eddying round one egotistic centre, which renders his genius essentially undramatic, and his dramas failures. In that massed up midnight of the primeval forests, depicted in "Kerhohah," for instance, Elliott walks with uncertain step, and seems to miss the green-sward of the English lane, the springy heath of the English upland, and the breezy clearness of the English day.

You are not surprised, in fine, to find him not only an original poet, but a generous and eloquent critic. His criticism is that of a fresh and fearless mind; never balancing his praise against his blame, in petty grocer-like scales—never cheeking a current of eulogium by some small jet of carping snarl—never doling out his praise in meagre modica—never passing, with the bound of malignant exultation, from drops of preliminary and extorted approbation to the more congenial work of wholesale detraction—never wrapping up his oracular praise or censure (as is becoming the fashion) in mysterious and unmeaning verbiage—never determinedly praising a man for what he possesses *not*, but stamping, at once, either the broad arrow of his approbation, or the broad black seal of his disgust, upon the particular author or book, and there an end. His verdicts have all the gusto of a native mind unhackneyed in the ways of literature—uninitiated in the mystery of puffery, and in the darker mystery of slander. They are written out, too, with the flourishes and dashes of a poet's handwriting, and remind us of Burns's frank and fire-blooded panegyrics.

His rhymes and hymns carry the seed of oblivion within themselves; but there is much in the Corn-law Rhymer which the world will not so readily let die. Above all, it will cherish the memory of the man; as, when was a true man ever forgotten? Mists may, for a season, hide or exaggerate his proportions; winds of abuse may blow him out of sight; he may be riddled with calumny, or starved to death; his ashes may fly, "no marble tells us whither;" but, sooner or later, he will be revealed in his proper dimensions, his contribution to the great stock of manly thoughts and utterances accurately ascertained, his niche settled and railed in, his statue elevated, and set unalterably upon its own base. High prospect to the true and the manly, and to them alone! The earth has never yet had so many real men as to afford to be able to drop even one of them from its list; and Elliott, too, we believe, felt that "the Great Soul of the world is just."

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM,
AND THE RURAL POETS.

"God made the country, and man made the town," says Cowper, in his brief, blunt, decisive way. It is a daring commonplace. It is a line which no man would have ventured to utter if he had lived all his days in cities, if he had not, like Peter Bell, set his face against the open sky "on mountains and on lonely moors." It contains in it a profound truth; for, as long as the architecture of the heavens surpasses the masonry of men, and the dome of the sky is nobler than that of St Paul's, and the smoke of the solitary cottage, ascending with its waving tongue as from the altar of the morning sacrifice, is more spiritual than the huge black column vomited from the mill, and leaves glancing in the sunbeams are more beautiful than red bricks, and torrents flashing in the red light of the receding storm are more glorious to behold than the putrid puddles and mud-cataracts of the streets, and avenues of oaks, of "old prodigious growth," better than dirty and vicious lanes, and mighty glens mantled with sunshine or with shade, and the solemn streets of forests, and the deep hollows of the everlasting hills, and the wild paths cut by cataracts for their own irresistible way, and rocks, the gigantic gateways of the thunder, are finer than squares however splendid, and streets however broad, and spires however lofty—as long as the span of the rainbow surpasses the arch of the bridge, and the harmonies of nature are more musical than the roar of vice arising from the twilight town, and the colour of health on the cheek of the peasant more pleasing than the cadaverous hue of disease whitening the cheek of the artisan, and man leaning over the fresh reeking earth is a more natural object than man bending above the forge and the furnace—shall we, with Cowper, continue to prefer the country to the town, and for the same reason—the one is the production of the

gross breath of miserable man; the other, each new morning, is the new emanation of eternal love and wisdom.

"God made the country, and man made the town." True, O bard of Olney! But true, too, it is, that God made the country poet, and man only the town. The anointing, at least, of the former is of a purer and richer kind. And all greatest poets, accordingly, have been more or less rural. How did Homer love this green earth, and that ever-sounding sea! And what a host of glad or terrible images has he culled from woody Ida, reedy Simois, Scamander's roaring waves, and the scenery of that Chian strand, whereon standing, he saw

"The Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea."

And how numerous the descriptions of nature which abound in the Greek tragedies: in Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion; in Lucretius, who loved the rounded wholes as well as the sifted atoms of the universe; in Virgil, whose "Georgics," next to the "Seasons," is the finest commentary genius has ever written upon nature; in Dante, who was haunted by images of "trim gardens" and golden fruitage all down the descending circles of the "Inferno;" in Shakspeare, who created the forest of Arden and the island of Prospero, and dreamed the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" in Milton, the Milton of "Paradise" and "Comus;" in Spenser, who "lays us in the lap of a lovelier nature, by stiller streams, and fairer meadows;" in Bunyan, whose little bits of scenery from that "very solitary place, the Valley of Humiliation," and the green meadow called Ease, up to the high platform of Mount Clear, and the precipices of Mount Danger, and the tableland of Beulah, are done in the finest style of simple pastoral painting; in Dryden, even, and Pope, who are

masters in describing—the one, the plain bold majesty of English landscapes, the pomp of avenues, the sweep of tree-surrounded parks; the other, all artificial glooms which man can, in grove, and grotto, and monastic aisle, and concealed cascade, create in mimicry of the mightier shadows which nature throws around her solitudes; in Byron, who, like a demon-painter, pounces upon all congenial objects, the mountain-peak islanded in perpetual snow, the glacier asleep in its old path of ruin, all “hells of waters,” the tormented river, the possessed cataract, the ocean in its hour of exorcism, “wallowing and foaming again,” the “sun of the sleepless,” or the blind staggering scenery of a darkened universe; and in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Wilson, Southey, Keats, &c., who aim at catching not the external face, nor the pervading expression merely, but the inmost soul, the subtlest meaning of nature’s solemn countenance.

But there is a class of poets who have come still more closely in contact with nature; who may be called naked, native men, newly dug out, and panting with the first strong throbbings of God-given existence. Such are Burns, Bloomfield, Clare, Hogg, and Cunningham. These all fall spontaneously into one bright cluster, which we may call the Constellation of the Plough. They are all, in current phrase, self-educated, though verily we like not the phrase. Either all men are self-educated or none. We incline to the latter alternative. A poor weakling were one who, in the strict sense, could be called a self-educated man. To educate any man it takes a universe; for what is any man but the complex result or focus of ten thousand lines of education, coming in from the extremities of the creation to meet in him? Call the men of whom we speak not self, but Nature-taught men; and you approximate the truth. Such an one, stepping forth into consciousness, finds himself in an illustrious academy, and his head schoolmaster is the sun. Subordinate teachers he has not a few, in the silent stars, the whispering breezes, the waving trees, the sparkling waters,

and the voices within his own soul, which respond to these in pre-established harmony. And thus does his education go on briskly with the revolving seasons, till his overflowing thoughts “voluntarily move harmonious numbers;” and because he cannot speak, he sings his emotions. Speak!—he cannot speak; but neither can a nightingale. Like her, he pours out the modulations of rude and artless melody—“He lisps in numbers, for the numbers come.”

Of Burns we have spoken before. We come now to speak of James Hogg and Allan Cunningham. And first, for the Ettrick Shepherd. Had he not been a shepherd, he had never been the peculiar poet he was—he would never have passed by acclamation into the post of poet-laureate to the “Fairy Queen;” with gallons of dew, collected into the cool basins of the rocks, instead of butts of sack—had he not innumerable times seen their misty scarfs exchanged by the morning hills for the sunny mantles of dawn, and a hundred streams surprised into glory by the fresh upland day—had he not a thousand times watched alone, and with kindling eye, the old struggle of the sun and the mist, ever-renewed, never-ending, on the hill—had he not slept all night in his plaid amid the coves of Ben-macdhui, and heard in half dream the sough of the “spirit of the storm”—had he not shouted on its top, in the triumphant although mistaken intuition that he stood on the highest land in Britain—had he not seen six times double at its base, magnifying Loch Avon from two miles to twenty-four in length (an assertion in which he persisted to the last)—had he not revelled with the fairies in the green moonlight, and met with ghosts past reckoning, and seen his own image mist-magnified and bowing to him from an opposite mountain, and slid down on ice from the top to the bottom of the huge Ben-more, and thrust his arm into the solid snow of a storm tumbling down *en masse* from the blackest of heavens—had he not, in short, been born and bred, nursed and dandled, in the arms of sublime superstition and in the cradle of the forest, he had never

been any more than a shrewd gossip, or the vain and vulgar burgeois of a country town. But for the accidental circumstances and scenery of his birth, the one wild vein given him would never have bled. Off the greensward or the heather, for on both he was at home, though most on the former—out of the mist and the spray of the linn—he was the very commonest of men. The Grey Mare's Tail was the lock of his strength, the maud his mantle of inspiration. To talk of Sir Walter Scott being strong only on the heather, is absurd; he was equally so on the turf of Sherwood Forest, amid the lilies of France, and on the sands of Syria. But Hogg could not transplant: the mountain air was the very necessity of his intellectual life, and the mystic ring of superstition the limit of his power. Out of this dread circle, he resembled, not the magician, but the magician's victim—weak, panting, powerless. No man has written such loads of dull insensate trash. No man was ever so careless of his reputation, or knew less wherein, not merely his great strength, but his poetic identity, lay; but no man, at the same time, could so easily and rapidly regain the position where he was all-powerful. He had but to shut his eyes—to touch his organ of wonder—to name the name *diablerie*—to tap on the wall, whence the death-tick was coming thick and strong, for a ghost, and James Hogg was himself again. Call not this, after-all, a narrow range—it was unmeasured, as superstition—it included in its dark span the domains of Fairy-land—the grave—

"Hell, Hades, Heaven, the eternal How and Where,
The glory of the dead, and their despair."

He was emphatically a "minion of the moon." He writes with a moonbeam on the semi-transparent leaves of the forest trees. "Labour dire it is, and weary wo," to climb with his celestial wanderers in their pilgrimage to the sun. His genius is not supernal enough to climb to that old flame—to overleap his dazzling fence of rays—to rest on his round, black ball—to look up to the arch of overhanging

glory, shutting out from him the universe—to enter his metropolis—to follow his march, "lingering not, hastening not," in the train of some vaster luminary—or to anticipate the results of that swift suction, by which he may yet draw all his subject worlds into his one whirlpool solitude; stripping himself of his own august retinue; rolling himself together, to be, in his turn, engulfed in the stream of some distant vortex. Better, though still with a coarse pencil, does he depict that lonely traveller, that Cain-world, which, thrust out of his native sphere, dreaded of men and angels, pursues his hideous way, "showering thin flame" through the solitudes of space. It was a stroke of genius transferring the conception of a Wandering Jew to the heavens, though the description of his progress, "clattering down the steep of night for ever," reminds us, in its grotesque familiarity, of the worst style of Blair and Pollok. It is curious, however, that, though so elegant and refined in almost all his pictures of the supernatural on earth, he is so coarse and commonplace in mating with the magnificence of the heavens. Why does a man, who must so often, lying on his back on a midnight hill, have seen the whole ocean of stars, now twinkling and shivering in the frosty air, now seemingly swept and burnished by the wind, now crossed by sudden meteors shooting like sea-mews over the bosom of the deep, always looking as if they wished to sparkle down some deep intelligence to man, whom they love and pity, but are for ever unable—so calm in their high eternity, so fixed yet fluctuating in their aspect, so fantastic and ideal in their forms—why does he, who must so often (like an artist on the floor of the Sistine Chapel, looking aloft at the spells which are pictured there) have studied in such favourable circumstances this gallery of heaven's own paintings, never describe, in language more choice than that of Sturm or Hervey, his impressions of their grandeur so unspeakable, their silence so profound, their separation from the world below and from each other so entire, their multitude so immense, their

lustre so brilliant, their order so regular, their motions so majestic and so calm? The reason perhaps lies in a theory we hold, which is, that mere genius, without what is usually called education, can never enter fully into the severe and spiritual beauty of the heavenly bodies. Either there is an aristocracy about the science of the stars which repels that class of minds of which we are now discoursing, or it may be, that, loving earth so well, the countenance of the sky is to them far, foreign, and insipid. Certain it is, we find little sympathy with the discoveries of modern science in this high field in any of their writings. Their allusions to them are few, and not very happy. To them the low fire on the hearth is more interesting than a sun when he shineth in his strength. Burns himself, sooth to say, has no great liking to the Day-star, under whose beams he has so often sweltered: he loves him principally as the evening sun, lighting him home to his cottage, or beckoning him to his assignation, what time the "plantain tops are tinged wi' goud by yon burnside." He likes the moon chiefly as it shines through the stacks in the barn-yard, or on the corn rigs, amid which he is courting his Jean—the morning star as it reminds him of the dread day his "Mary from his soul was torn." He watches with more interest the flight of trooping plovers on a grey October morning, than the roll of systems; and the solitary cry of a curlew affects him more than the "thunder psalm" of a thousand worlds. Bloomfield and Clare fly lower still; and a gorse-bush, bending under its buds of gold, is to them a more enchanting sight than the "milky-way." To Hogg, again, the moon is just the fairies' lamp, when she is not the accomplice of the ghost, or shines not with fond, consenting ray upon the witches' cauldron; the sun himself a plaything for the power of sorcery; the stars not nearly such imaginative objects as the "fairy ringlets" he meets upon the hill.

Omitting any special notices of the "Mountain Bard," "Madoc of the Moor," "Queen Hynde," "Winter Even-

ing Tales," &c. &c., we have a word, and no more, to say of the "Queen's Wake." Its framework, so much admired at the time, and so essential to the immediate popularity of the book, is now little else than a pretty impertinence. The power has shrunk up into one or two of the separate ballads, which, embalmed in their own wild odour, shall find their floating way into all after time. "Kilmenny" we love, like all the world, for its sweetness and spirituality; a sweetness more unearthly, a spirituality more intense, than are to be found anywhere else in the language of men, save (at a vast distance of superiority on Shakspeare's part) in the songs of Ariel in the "Tempest." We love it, too, because we know well, and from infancy have known, the glen up which went alone the maid in the "pride of her purity." It lies along a deep, green valley, sunk in between two high chains of hills—those of Abruchill and Dundurn—lifting their "giant-smouted" crags on the south, and on the north the hills of Crappich and Cluan, piled up like leaning Titans. This valley has evidently been once a part of Loch Earn. It is level, but sprinkled with little wooded eminences, once, no doubt, islets, and toward its western end rises a remarkable hill, called the hill of St Fillans, strangely contrasting with the black and heathery mountains which tower above it. It is green, round-headed, grassy, like a young Ochil which had been flung down among the gloomy Grampians. At the foot of the northern bulwark of the valley lies Dunira, alluded to in the poem ("It was na to meet wi' Dunira's men"), a place where the utmost refinement of art, in the form of a white-washed mansion, rich lawns, "shaven by the scythe and smoothed by the roller," fine shrubbery and elegant garden, is brought into contact, contrast, yet harmony, with the utmost wildness and grandeur of nature—a bare, knotted hill before, and behind it a mountain, wooded almost to the summit, like some awful countenance veiled but speaking in the tongues of a hundred waterfalls, which you hear but see not dashing, leaping, and murmuring down their downright and

headlong course, till, reaching the plain, they hush their voices, and become "stillest streams watering fairest meadows." To the west of this lovely place, lies the blue sheet of Loch Earn, back from which retires Benvoirlich, like a monarch, almost unseen by the lake, which yet owns his sway.

We have seen this scene from the summit of Dunmore and the side of Melville's monument, which stands upon it: seen it at all hours, in all circumstances, and in all seasons—in the clear morning, while the smoke of a thousand cottages was seen rising through the dewy air, and when the mountains seemed not thoroughly awakened from their night's repose—in the garish noonday, when the feeling of mystery was removed by the open clearness, but that of majesty in form and outline remained—in the afternoon, with its sunbeams streaking huge shadows, and writing characters of fire upon all the hills—in the golden evening, when the sun was going down over Benmore in blood—in the dim evening, to us dearer still, when a faint rich mist was steeping all the landscape in religious hues—in the waste night, while the moon was rising red in the north-east, like a torch uplifted by some giant hand—under the breezes and bashful green of spring—in the laughing luxuriance of summer—under the yellow shade of autumn—at the close of autumn, when the woods were red and the stubble sovereign of the fields—and again when hill, valley, and wood were spotted with snow, have seen it in a hush so profound, that you might have imagined nature listening for some mysterious tidings, and hardly dared to breathe; and in the cloudy and dark day, while the thunder was shaking the column and the lightning painting the landscape. And gazing at it whether in glimmer or in gloom, have we sometimes fancied that we saw that fearless form "gæing" up through the plains of Dalwhinnie and the fairy plantations of Dunira,

"To pu' the cress-flower from the well,
The scarlet hyp and the hynd berry,
And the nut that hang frae the hazel-tree,
For Kilmey was pure as pure could be."

And when gloaming especially had poured her dim divine hush over the dark hills and white castle of Abruichill, and allowed the last lingering ray of sunshine to rest on the crest of Benvoirlich, and hushed the streams of Glenlednick behind, and drawn a dewy veil over the plain of Dalginross before, and softened the call of the caldron in the glen below, and suffused over all the landscape of earth and heaven a sense unutterable of peace, and introduced into the scene, as a last glorious touch, the moon, to enhance the sense of solemnity, and to deepen the feeling of repose, have we, reclining on the hill, and seeing the stars coming out above the silent column, thought of the "eve in a sinless world," when,

"In ecstacy of sweet devotion,
Oh then the glen was all in motion;"

and owned the power of the "consecration," and felt the might of the "poet's dream."

Since we began the composition of these little sketches, Allan Cunningham, the honest, genial, dark-eyed, eloquent spirit, has departed. He is gone, not to his tryste beside "Arbigland tree," but to a darker assignation. No more he sings in firm, unquaking voice—

"There's tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud,
And hark the music, marineres,
The wind is piping loud,"

but has become himself a pale and piping shade.

With his memory are connected tender and unmingled emotions. He was a genuine "son of the soil." Nationality was his principal characteristic. His blood was as deeply imbued with Scottish feeling as one of our own upland rivers with the colour and flavour of the moss. In this respect he was a Burns—but a Burns shorn of all that was troubled and lurid in his idiosyncrasy. With Burns, he must have breathed the wish,

"That he, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or book might make,
Or sing a sang at least."

And, like Burns, his wish was granted; and many a sang, sweet and strong, pa-

thetic and bold, shall continue to link his name with that of his country. His genius was not only national, but provincial. It clung to Criffel, swam in Solway, and haunted the groves and scours of the Nith to the last. Dumfries-shire has reason to be proud of Allan Cunningham, and prouder because, in distance and absence, he never allowed his imagination, or his heart, to travel away from her well-loved fields.

Cunningham's mind was essentially lyrical; but the airy strings of his lyre were set in a strong, rough, oaken frame. Masculine boldness, verging often on extravagance, was his leading feature as a writer. You saw the strong stonecutter in all that he did. He hewed out his way through a subject as he was wont to do through many a block of granite and marble. Yet is his execution hardly so exact, and finished, and harmonious as you might have expected from one whose trade brought him so closely in contact with the proportions of things. It is often loose, disjointed, uneven; more like the work of a common mason, thoughtful only of the position of separate stones, than of an architect solicitous of the effect and grand outline of the whole. The Pagans represented their gods each with a musical instrument in his hand, denoting thus the exquisite and eternal harmony which prevails throughout the universe. So should all great artists be pictured, at once inspiring and controlling their conceptions, awakening and soothing their fires to the measured modulations of music. In this high sense Allan Cunningham was not an artist at all. He never felt on his intellect the control of the "spirit of law," that serene omnipresence which surrounds the steps of the highest genius, wherever it goes, and invests its own ideal of excellence with the authority of conscience. His mind wanders untamed, like a giant of the infant world, striding, with large uneven steps, through the monstrous wildernesses of that early time—startling with careless step the coiled-up dragons of the desert—dipping his fearless foot into the wet nest of the scorpion and the centiped—

shouting from the volcanic summit to some huge being unknown, sitting, silent, on the opposite peak—laying his lubber length on the dry, bald, burning rock, and snorting out from his deep chest terrific slumber; listening now and then to some snatch of melody from a distant vale, and controlling for awhile his wild step to its tone, or even dancing to its music; but relapsing as fitfully into his eccentric and uncontrollable motion. So particularly in "Sir Marmaduke Maxwell" and "Michael Scott" does his genius run riot in conscious and glorying error. His wanderings have about them this peculiarity—they are never those of the speculative intellect, moonstruck, and gathering mist as it deviates, but of the mere young fancy, burdening itself with a profusion of harmless flowers. He never returns, like some of your Germans and Germanised French, laden with poisons, mandragora and hemlock, opium and night-shade, *maux vomica* and herbane, which they have culled in the glooms of nature, and baptised in the blaspheming bitterness of their own spirits. His wanderings are those of hopeful and happy youth, not of fever, escaped from its keepers, arrowing the awestruck woods, or ending its agonies in the embrace of the "melancholy main." Health, indeed, genial, robust health, was the moral element of Cunningham's being. You say, as you read him, this is the handwriting of a happy man. Pleasure he has known; but he is not, manifestly, that degraded and most unblest being who has said to pleasure, Thou art my God; and you never find in his writings that stimulating and well-nigh putrid flavour which indulgence bequeaths. His abiding feeling, judging from his works, is a happiness compounded of "many simples," of a fine bodily temperament—enthusiasm fresh, but never fierce—wishes moderate and subdued—speculative intellect quiescent—habits of thought and action well intermingled, and both well adjusted—a quiet, deep principle of common sense intermingling with imagination, and an enacted consciousness of the fact, that the strong arm of man is the "sceptre of this planet;" and that he has a strong arm.

He was a poet, a novelist, a sketcher, and a critic. As a poet he stood high in the second class. He never ventured the conception or execution of any piece of rhymed heroism—any massive structure, rising slowly with elaborate pomp, and far-seen stress, and far-heard panting of divine endeavour; or else rushing up, with startling haste, like an exhalation. His erections are small and scattered, though denoting a muscular power equal to greater things. How fine these ballads in Cromek's collection, in their rude simplicity, their touches of fearless pathos, their originality, but slenderly disguised under the pretext of imitation—their quaint turns of expression, and their frequent escapes into real daring and grandeur of conception and language! They remind us, at a great interval, of the ballads of Schiller. They possess the abruptness, the direct dealing, the strong simplicity, the enthusiasm, of these extraordinary compositions; but have none of their depth of thought, their width of philosophic view, or the power and pressure, as if on the very sense, of their individual descriptions. Cunningham brings us no tidings from the "innermost main," where Schiller, a "diver lean and strong," dispports himself among the mighty shapes and nightier shadows: the salamanders, snakes, dragons; hammerfish "darkening the dark of the sea;" and "terrible sharks, the hyenas of ocean;" giving to the depths of the sea a life more dreadful than utter death—a motion more appalling than the uniformity of eternal silence. Yet Allan was a genuine lover of old ocean. Love to her, rather than that other feeling shadowed in Wordsworth's line, "of the old sea some reverential fear," in all her changing moods and Protean forms, was one of the ruling passions of his nature; and of him it might have been said, that

"His march was o'er the mountain wave,
His home was on the deep."

Hence those foam-drops of song, such as "a wet sheet and a flowing sea," which are in everybody's mouth, and his more elaborate romance of "Paul Jones," which nautical men blame as not smelling

strongly enough of the brine, and which critics coincide in censuring as having rather the fade flavour of a cask of salt water carted inwards than that of the real ocean,

"Rolling the wild profound eternal bass
In Nature's harmonies."

It can hardly be said, with all its occasional splendour and incessant energy, to have become a romance of even average popularity.

"Every man carries in him a madman." So is every author big with some mad project or other, which sooner or later blossoms into a deranged, or demi-deranged, volume. Sometimes it is its author's first, and then it either hurries him, before a storm of laughter, into oblivion, or it gains him only so much ridicule as to rouse him, if he be a brave man, by the rebound of indignation, into after excellence and immortal fame. Sometimes it is his last, and shelters under the charitable presumption of dotage. Sometimes it is mistaken for a quiz; and sometimes it is pardoned for the method, meaning, and otherwise inexpressible confidence which, as in "Sartor Resartus," its fantastic structure faintly conceals. Under none of those pleas can "Michael Scott" be defended. It is neither a sin of youth nor a drivel of age—neither a quiz nor a splendid quaintness. It was written in sober earnest, and as a trial of strength; and yet, with all its wasted power and spilt splendour, can be likened to nothing in earth, sea, or air, but the caldron of a Canidia or a Hecate, with thick sparkles interpiercing a thick smoke, through which you see, or seem to see, amid a tremendous "bubble and squeak," a hell-broth in the act of cookery, which a Cerberus might with sputtering noise reject; and which you are thankful that no power in air, earth, or sea, can compel you to swallow.

How different the "Maid of Elvar," with its soft shine of imagery, its lapse of Spenserian rhyme, its picturings of towered, and treed, and cottage-belted scenery, its murmuring tone, as of a "noontide bee," and all the separate beauties which nestle so thickly among

its embowering branches! How different, too, that series of traditions, tales, and sketches, which he wrote in the "London Magazine," and by which he turned up, with a share at once bold and tender, a tilth as yet rich and untried. Truly it was a palmy periodical during its brief reign, that same "London Magazine," whence the elegant genius and lively style of John Scott had departed, early quenched, alas! and quenched in blood; where Hazlitt's penetrating pen was scratching as in scorn his rude immortals; where De Quincey was transcribing, with tremulous hand, the most sublime and terrific dreams which opium and genius had ever bred between them; where Reynolds was edging in among graver matters his clever Cockneyisms; where Lamb was lisping his wise and witty small-talk; and where the idiomatic mind of Allan Cunningham was adding a flavour of Scottish romance, as of mountain honey, to the fine medley.

As a critic, his character may be estimated from his pen-and-ink sketches in the "New Monthly," his Life of Burns, his critique on Thomson, and his "Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects of Great Britain." His leading quality was constant healthiness of taste. He had no profound insight into principles, but neither was he ever misled into one-sided judgments; he was not endowed with profound discrimination, nor do you ever find in him volcanic bursts of enthusiasm, the violence of which is proportioned to the depth of dreary depression from which they spring, and which remind you of the snatches which a miserable man takes of all the pleasures within his reach, eager, short, hurrying. His criticisms are sweet-toned, sensible, generous; and as the building proceeds, the chisel ever and anon tunes itself to sudden impulse, moves quick as to some unseen power, and you feel that the builder is a poet. He excels rather in critical talk than criticism. He seldom hazards a new opinion; never a paradox. He is content to catch the cream of common opinion into his own silver cup. His originality lies in the power of modify-

ing the opinions of others, and in that fine forge of imagery which stands permanently in his own mind. His book on Painters is a gallery in itself. The English artists were precisely the theme for him. We question if he could have coped so worthily with the great Italians, in their knotty muscle, daring liberties, ethereal combinations, or in that palpable determination they evince to find their sole religion in their art—a determination so plain, that we could conceive them breaking up the true cross for pencils, as we know they crucified slaves for subjects. Leaving them to the tingling brush of Fuseli, Cunningham shows us in a fine mellow light, Gainsborough seated silent on his stile; Morland among his pigs; Barry propounding his canons of austere criticism, and cooking the while his steak; West arranging the tail of the

"Giant steed to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse,"

with as much coolness as he would his own cravat; Wilson with his hand trembling at his palette, half with enthusiasm, half with brandy; dear enthusiastic Blake painting Satan from the life—asking, "Jane Boucher, do you love me, lass?" and there at once a beginning and an end of the courtship; or seeing the great vision pictured in the lines—

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant depths or skies
Burnt the fervour of thine eyes!

Did he that made the lamb make thee?"

Opie lying all night awake with rapture, after his successful debut as a lecturer, or retorting the frown Peter Pindar sometimes cast at him from his enormous brows; Reynolds shifting his trumpet, or gazing with blandest look on his beautiful "child-cherubs;" Flaxman cherishing his lofty ideals; Fuseli rising on tip-toe, the bursting little man, towards the creations of the giant Italians, or bristling up against the Academy in such sort as to teach them that an inspired prophet

of Lilliput was worth a whole Brobdignag of blockheads. Thus are Allan's figures not set still and stiff at their palettes, but live, move, breathe, battle, love, burn, and die.

We are thankful to Cunningham for this book, not only because it is a monument of his own powers, but because it does justice to the claims of British art;—an art which, considering the disadvantages of climate and sky, and national coldness of feeling, and taste, and bigoted religious prejudices, with which it has had to contend, when compared with the Italian school, is perhaps the greater wonder of the two. We admit that we have had no prodigies like Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci—those kings of the Beautiful, who ruled with sway so absolute over all its regions, and shot their souls with equal ease and energy into a tower and a tune, a picture or a statue, a dome or a sonnet. These were monsters rather than men. We grant, too, that there has been but one Raphael—who was a man and no monster—and who of all men knew best the art of lifting man and woman quite out of earth "within the veil," and of showering on their face, and form, and bosom, and dress, beauty which is not of this cold clime—lustre unborrowed of that dim king of earthly day—meanings travelling out from eyes which seem set in eternity—motions of supernal grace and dignity—and who seemed made to supply the Christian's most craving desire after a pictured image of that face which was more marred than that of man—that form bent under the burden of a world's atonement in a bend more glorious than the bend of the rainbow—those arms which were instinct and vibrating with everlasting love—those long curling locks which seemed to twine lovingly round the thorns which pierced his pale majestic brow. No Raphael have we: the world has but one. Let Italy boast in him the Milton of painting, we have the Shakespeare. Hogarth is ours—in his comic lights and tragic shadows—in his humour, force, variety, truth, absolute originality, quaint but strong moral, and in that magic, all his own, by which, from the

very worst materials, he deduces the richest laughter, or a sense of moral sublimity which is more precious than pure gold. And, not to speak of many others, we can challenge the world from the beginning to show a genius more unique, more insulated in his craggy solitude—like a volcanic cliff shot up as by unseen and unbounded catapult from the depth of the sea—less prefigured by any preceding mind—less likely to be eclipsed by any other—more signally demonstrative in his single self of the truth, that the human mind is sometimes a native voice speaking immediately from the deep to the day—than the painter, the poet, the creator of the Deluge and Belshazzar's Feast.

We thank him, in fine, for this book, because, like ourselves, he loves the painter. We know nothing of the technicalities of the "serene and silent art;" we leave these to the "artist and his ape; let such describe the indescribable." But we dearly love our own ideal of the painter—as a graceful *alias* of the poet—as a genuine and bending worshipper of the forms by which the Great Artist has redeemed his creation from chaos, and of the colours by which he has enchanted it into heaven—as himself, one of the finest figures in the landscapes of earth, sitting motionless under the rainbow; or dumb as the pencil of the lightning is dashing its fiery lines upon the black scroll of the thunder-cloud; or copying in severe sympathy from the cataract: or seated "knitting" the mountain to the sky, on a crag above the eagle's eyrie; or leaning over the rural bridge, over which, perchance, in his reverie, he bedrops his pencil into the still water; or mixing unnoticed in the triumphal show, which, after living its little hour on the troubled street-page, shall live on his canvas for evermore; or gazing like a spirit into the eye of genius or on the brow and blush of beauty; or in his still studio, sitting alone, chewing the cud of those sweet and bitter fancies he is afterwards to embody in form; or looking, through hopeless yet happy tears, at the works of elder masters; or spreading before him the large canvas which he

must cause to glow into a princely painting, or perish in the attempt; or even drooping over an abortive design; or dashing his brush across it in the heat of his spirit; or maddening in love to the fair creation of his hands; or haunted by some terrible figure of his own drawing; or filling his asylum-cell with the chimeras of his soul; or dying with the last touch

given to an immortal work, and with no wish for any epitaph but this, "I also was a painter." "Somewhat too much of this;" therefore, dear Allan Cunningham, farewell!

"Perhaps in some far future land
We yet may meet—we yet may dwell;
If not, from off this mortal strand,
Immortal, fare-thee-well!"

JOHN KEATS.

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been written about the *morale* of men of genius. A nervous temperament has been ascribed to them, to which, as causes of unhappiness, are added indolence, vanity, irritability, insolation, and poverty. Disraeli, in his "Calamities of Authors," has taken up the doleful Jeremiad, and made a book of it. He could have made just as large a book about the calamities of carters. Our own experience of men of genius—and we have known not a few—is, that they are very much like their neighbours, in the qualities and circumstances referred to. Let us try the point by a brief induction of facts, ere proceeding to the unfortunate child of genius whose name heads the sketch. And, first, as to indolence. Homer seems to have been as active as most ballad-singers; and, verily, their trade is no sinecure. Æschylus was a tragedian, a leader of armies, and a writer of ninety plays. Demosthenes talked perpetually; and to talk at his pitch for a lifetime was something. Pindar added the activity of an Olympic jockey to the fury of a Pythoness. Virgil polished away all his life, and the labour of the file is no trifle. On what subject has Cicero not written? and an encyclopaedist is not thought the most indolent of animals. Horace, we admit, was indolent; not so Lucretius, who, besides other things, was at the pains of building up an entire system of the universe, in a long and lofty poem. Michael Angelo, Raphael, and all the great painters of Italy, worked without ceasing. Dante

was far too fierce and restless a spirit to be indolent. Erasmus made a book while on a journey. Shakspeare wrote thirty plays ere he was fifty. Milton felt himself ever in his "great Taskmaster's eye;" need we add that he laboured? Dryden is one of the most voluminous of writers. Pope wrote much, and polished more. Daniel Defoe was one of the most active men of his age. Goldsmith had too much writhing vanity to remain at repose. Johnson and Thomson were, indeed, indolent; but, in the former, it sprang from disease, and it prevented neither from doing great things. Cowper was indolent only when the fit of derangement was upon him. Alfieri might be called the galloping genius; and clearing thousands of miles, and writing tragedies by the dozen, are no despicable affairs. Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber, were never done with their graceful labours. Byron had all the activity of a scalded fiend. Wordsworth has been called indolent. He has, however, written "The Recluse;" and it is long since Jeffrey sought for a "powerful calculus" to compute its colossal magnitude. Southey was the most regularly industrious man of the day. Coleridge was of an indolent constitution; and yet, besides talking incessantly, he wrote a great deal. Shelley gave himself no rest till his eyes were shut and his heart hushed in death. He had drank poison, and he slept no more. The names of Scott, Goethe, Godwin, Schiller, Richter, Chalmers, &c. &c., need only be mentioned. We might just

as easily dispose of the charges of vanity, irritability, insulation, and all that sort of thing. As to poverty, Leigh Hunt, in a capital paper which appeared in the "New Monthly," many years ago, has knocked this vulgar error effectually on the head. And, with respect to happiness, we may give a few instances, to show that men of genius are made of a "mingled yarn," like the rest of the poor sons of Adam. We begin with Homer. Of his private life we know nothing. We must judge of him by the spirit of his works. It may be said, indeed, that this is scarcely fair, as a book is often a bad index of circumstances, and a worse of character. We are convinced, however, that the tone of a work is generally a fair mirror of a man's happiness. It gives, at least, an indefinite impression about it, against which it is vain to struggle. Exceptions may be named; and among others, the levity of "Don Juan." Alas! that is a ghastly gaiety. It is forced and frantic, the smile of a galvanised corpse. The pervading tone of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" is very different. They are the healthiest of works. There are in them no fits, no sullenness, no querulous complaints, not one personal allusion. Homer must have been a happy man. Æschylus was a darker spirit, but it was the darkness of elevation and grandeur, not of wretchedness, that surrounded him. His soul dwelt too much in the wildernesses of the universe; but there he would seem, nevertheless, to have had a large measure of enjoyment. His excitements are recorded to have been tremendous. No one had more of the Pythonic inspiration and rapture. Anacreon was as happy as good-nature and a pampered imagination could make him. Virgil seems to have had much quiet and tranquil enjoyment. To this, his being pathetic is no objection; for there is such a thing as the "joy of grief." And no miserable man could have counterfeited that serene grandeur and cheerful majesty that distinguish all his writings. Horace, again, is all careless hilarity. He runs over his subject with an ease and a grace quite peculiar to himself, and denoting

anything but wretchedness. He is, in fact, Anacreon, with a deeper dash of lyric rapture and enthusiasm. In modern times, Spenser seems to have passed his existence in a delightful dream. Refined luxury is, indeed, the element of "The Faery Queen." Though he had dined on ambrosia and sojourned in Elysium, he could not have written with a more intense feeling of the soft, the lovely, and the ecstatic. Considering all Milton's circumstances, is it wonderful that a shade of sorrow lies lightly on the pages of the "Paradise Lost;" that the sunny spirit of the "J. Allegro" and the "Comus" is not there? It is in these earlier productions that we are to look for the real tendencies and dispositions of his being. And where shall we find more geniality and true cheerfulness? A vein of wit, sometimes darkening into sarcasm, but more frequently venting itself in light sallies, is not the least wonderful thing about his prose compositions. The "Areopagitica" appears to be an index at once to his intellect and his dispositions; and, amid all its excellences, its sublimity, its depth, its completeness, the "deep organ tones" of its diction, nothing strikes us so much as its sustained, cheerful, and majestic calmness. It is as "thunder mingled with clear echoes." And the "many-folded" shell of Prometheus himself never discoursed more soothing and eloquent music. Dryden was a squabbling, impatient spirit, a man of strong passions and little principle; but there is no evidence of his having been a particularly miserable person. Although he fell away from his original faith, his conscience seems to have remained tolerably quiet.

We might mention, too, some minor poets, who show what even a moderate portion of the poetical temperament will do in the production of happiness: such as Phillips, an agreeable and pleasing person, by all accounts; and Parnell, who, though rendered less happy by particular circumstances, deserves to be mentioned as one of those who, half miserable and half happy, owe their misery to their circumstances, and their happiness to their mind; and Prior, who, like Cob-

bett, rusticated when he got out of the jail, where his political manœuvres, and nothing else, had placed him, and ended his days in a truly Roman retirement; and Gay, who did not belie his name; and Green, the strong-minded author of the "Spleen," who had very little of the splenetic about him; and, lastly, the two Tickells, whose very name savours of laughter, and who were, in fact, very happy fellows, though, indeed, little else. Addison belongs to a higher region, and both Pope and Steele bear testimony to the enthralling influence of his private society. That he was used ill by his wife, was not his fault. Byron says, he "died drunk." His habits during life were, indeed, too convivial. But what authority there is for this horrible statement, except a rumour circulated by an inveterate gossip (Horace Walpole), we have yet to learn. In spite of his acknowledged errors, however, and this reckless and malignant calumny, Addison was a sincere Christian, and a happy man. Pope was querulous and vain; but his bodily infirmities accounted for this. He felt composition an intense delight, and he did little else but compose. Swift was, indeed, wretched; but was the creator of the Yahoos, and the betrayer of Stella, worthy to be called a man? Thomson was seen eating peaches off a wall, with his hands in both pockets. He that could write the magnificent description of the "Torrid Zone," and enjoy this, must have been tolerably happy. We know but one story equal to it: it is that of a youth of talent, who, after a successful college campaign, was wont to go to bed in broad daylight, and take with him a new novel (cut, of course) and a couple of buttered rolls! Young's son told Johnson that his father was gloomy when alone. He might be so; but assuredly much of the gloom of the "Night Thoughts" is counterfeited. A man all his life notoriously hunting for preferment had scarcely time to gather such a load of solid darkness. Though he could hardly be abler than he was, he was evidently much happier than he pretended. True grief vents itself in monosyllables

and gasps of sound; not in mountainous accumulation of metaphors. Gray and Allan Ramsay seem both to have been happy men in different ways. Savage, in spite of Boswell's doubts, might still, we think, if there were time, be proved to have been the victim of a mother's mean revenge and unnatural cruelty. Boswell, indeed, leaves it at most doubtful, though Johnson's, Fielding's, and Steele's belief, added to universal impression, might, we think, have convinced him. One would feel regret, if the most interesting section of the most unique, if not the finest, biography in the language were to turn out a fiction. Johnson's gloom was the result of bodily distemper, and was confined to his solitary hours. The case of Cowper was indeed a singular one. He was not only a great genius, but a virtuous man, and yet miserable to madness. How is this to be accounted for? Religious melancholy will not do. If religion were productive of melancholy, why have so many religious men been cheerful? why have so many found in religion their chief consolation and enjoyment? Who ever felt miserable while the majestic organ was uplifting his soul to heaven? Or, if there were sadness, who would exchange it for a millennium of earthly delights? Religion has, over all spirits who feel its gentle influences, a power like that of the highest harmony. It may sadden, but it must elevate and ennoble. It was not, then, religion that overshadowed the soul of Cowper; nor was it even the Calvinistic rigour of his opinions. How many Calvinists could we name, as cheerful as it is possible to conceive, and who have yet held these doctrines, not as a cold confessional cant, but in the warm grasp of a living faith. Cowper, we imagine, was the victim of circumstances, acting on a highly morbid temperament—a species of temperament no more necessarily connected with genius, than a particular stature or a prominent nose. First of all, he was brutally used when a fag at school. This was well calculated to embitter his existence; for who ever forgets an injury or outrage inflicted at

that season, which is emphatically the season of memories, and when the arrow of anguish, being barbed, sticks in the wound for ever? Again, he had a love disappointment; and this, though it may only provoke the fop to one flutter of absurdity, and then leave him, does not part so easily with the intense spirit of the poet. It generally tears a portion of his life and vigour along with it. It may nerve his powers; but it certainly injures his happiness. Perhaps, too, regret for early levities, if not vices, may have mingled in his "cup of trembling." And certainly the persons around him did not display much wisdom or sense in their mode of managing his malady. Yet even he had elements of happiness in him: he had great enjoyment in composition and translation; perhaps greater still among his tame hares, and an affection for Mary Unwin that must have been productive of pure and deep delight. It is almost presumptuous in any one to speak of that affection. Well has it been called a specimen of the love that is "indestructible." No one who is even a little lower than the angels is qualified to speak of it, except in accents of humble and wondering admiration. Beattie and Wolcot seem to have enjoyed themselves much in their respective and very different places. Edmund Burke, although in some measure soured, had in the perpetual exercise of his noble faculties a daily source of delight. Scott was constitutionally a happy man; so were Cobbett and Godwin; so were Moore, Bowles, and Wordsworth. From this imperfect induction we may draw two inferences: first, that genius and happiness frequently hunt in couples; and, secondly, when they do not, accidental circumstances or bodily ailments generally account for their divorce. Byron's success in getting public attention to his personal woes, has produced two bad consequences: it has taught many to counterfeit sadness, and it has produced a false sentiment in the public mind. "How careworn and wretched that man looks!" "Oh, no wonder, he's a man of genius; preserve me from his midnight!" This is a common feeling,

and not too absurd to be beneath refutation. We hope we have said enough to excite doubts as to whether it be as true as it is prevalent.

Not unbefitting are these remarks, for at least the sake of contrast, to introducing to us John Keats, the hapless apothecary's boy. Seldom were circumstances less propitious to the growth of genius than those in which this fine spirit was reared. Michael Bruce had Lochleven and its romantic shores to awaken his vein of verse; Chatterton the inspiring environs of Bristol; Kirke White the placid richness of Nottinghamshire; Keats nothing but the scenery of his own soul! Transient and occasional were his glimpses of nature, but what a load of impression did he carry away with him! A mere boy, he seems an old acquaintance of nature, as if he had seen and studied her features in an antenatal state. His sense of beauty has been well called a disease. Whether, as De Quincey says of Wordsworth, his eye had more than a common degree of organic pleasure from the shows of earth and air, we cannot tell; but to us it appears as if the hue of the tulip were richer and more luscious, and the colour of the "gold cloud metropolitan" more intensely lustrous, and the smell of the bean-flower more arrowy in its odour, and the note of the nightingale more suggestive and sweet, and the shade of the pines productive of a diviner horror to him than to others, even of the inspired sons and daughters of mankind. We find scarcely anywhere but in his verse, and in the minor poems of Milton, such lingering luxury of descriptive beauty—such a literal, yet ideal translation of nature. Scarcely second to this painful and torturing sense of the Beautiful, which detained and rivetted his young soul to all that was lovely in idealism or reality, was his feeling of the most *Æschylean* shape of the sublime. He contrived, even through the thin and scraggy pipe of translation, to suck out the genuine spirit of the Grecian drama. The rough mantle, with its knobs of gold, which the author of "Prometheus Vinctus" wore so proudly, fell on, without crushing, the Cockney boy!

And then, a glorious truant, he turned aside into the wilderness of the Titans, and saw here Prometheus writhing on his rock, and yonder, in the shady sadness of a vale, "grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone;" below "Coecus, and Gyges, and Briareus, Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryion, with many more, the brawniest in assault, pent up in regions of laborious breath;" and above "blazing Hyperion on his orb'd throne;" here Thea, leaning over the discrowned deity, with "parted lips and posture motionless, like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;" and there Apollo, in the pangs of his divine birth, as "knowledge enormous makes a god of him." And seeing all this, and shrieking out his last word, "celestial," the pale youth died.

"Hyperion" is the greatest of poetical *Torsos*. "Left untold," like "Cambriscan" and "Christabel," and Burns's *Speech of Liberty*, it is perhaps better that it remains a fragment. Had only the two first books of "*Paradise Lost*" come down to us, we question if they had not impressed us with a higher opinion of the author's powers than the completed work. Such magnificent mutilations are regarded with a complex emotion, composed of admiration, expectation, and regret. Short and sustained, they seldom tire or disappoint. And the poem itself is so bold in its conception, so true to the genuine classical spirit, so austere and statuesque in its still or moving figures, so antique to awfulness in its spirit, and, above all, indicates a rise so rapid and so great from his other works, as from *Richmond Hill* to an *Alp*, that those who love not Keats are compelled to admire "Hyperion." It is, says Byron, "as sublime as *Aischylus*."

"Endymion" is the dyspeptic dream of a boy of genius. Steeped in Spenserian imagination, it is, on the other hand, stuffed with affectations and poornesses of fancy, thought, and language, almost incredible. Yet is there a beseeching innocence in its very weakness, which, while the imagination and beauty of parts ought to have commanded the admiration, might have awakened the pity of the harshest

critic. Like a boy lost in a wide wood, who now shrieks for terror under the hollow shade, now shouts for joy as he gains an eminence, whence he commands a far view over the surging tree-tops, now weeps aloud as he loses a path which promised to conduct him homewards, or now stumbles into a morass, now plucks a wild flower or a bunch of blaeberreries, and now defiles his hands by the merest fungus—so is Keats led astray through the tangled woodland of the Grecian Mythology, and "Endymion" is precisely such a "boy's progress." Brutal the beadle who, meeting such a bewildered child, should, notwithstanding the eloquence of his bright eyes, profuse and beauteous hair, bleeding hands and trickling tears, avenge his wanderings by the lash. And surely cruel the critics who stripped, and striped, and cut, and branded the Muse's Son.

"Isabella" is a versification of one of Boccaccio's finest stories; but on the simple thread of the narrative Keats has suspended some of his own richest gems. The story is that of two lovers, who loved "not wisely but too well." The brothers of the maiden, seducing the youth away under the guise of a journey, kill and bury him in the forest. Isabella, after long watching, and weeping, and uncertainty as to his fate, is warned of it in a dream, and, repairing to the forest where her true love lies, digs up his head, and hides it in a pot of sweet basil, over which she prays and weeps out her heart incessantly. Her cruel kinsmen, finding out the secret, remove the basil-pot, banish themselves, and their sister pines away. The story is told with exquisite simplicity, pathos, and those quiet quaint touches so characteristic of the author. Two expressions, instinct with poetry, cling to our memories. They occur in the same stanza:—

"So the two brothers and their *murder'd man*
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's
stream
Gurgles through straiten'd banks.
Sick and wan
The brothers' faces in the ford did seem—
Lorenzo's flush with love—they pass'd the
water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter."

What an awful leap forward of imagination in the first line! Florence saw no gore on Lorenzo's garments as he rode by; but the guilty eye of the brothers, and the purged eye of the poet, saw it all bedropped with gout of blood—the deed already done—the man murdered. No spectre bestriding spectre-steed, no fiend mounted on black charger, joining a solitary traveller at twilight among trackless woods, was ever such a terrible companion as to the two brothers and to us is the murdered man—his own apparition. And then, how striking the contrast between the wan, sick, corpse-like faces of the brothers and his, shining with the rose-hue of love! They enter an old forest, not swinging its dark cones in the tempest, but "quiet for the slaughter," as if supernaturally hushed for the occasion, as if by a special decree prepared and predestined to the silence of that hour, as if dumbly sympathising through all its red trunks and black rounded tops with the "deed without a name."

Much more gorgeous in style and colouring, and breathing a yet more intensely poetical spirit, is "St Agnes' Eve." It is a dream within a dream. Its every line wears *couleur de rose*. A curious feature of Keats' mind was its elegant effeminacy. No poet describes dress with more gusto and beauty. Witness his picture of Madeline kneeling at her devotions, and seeming, in the light of the painted window, "a splendid angel, newly dressed, save wings, for heaven," or "trembling in her soft and chilly nest," after having freed her hair from her "wreathed pearls," "unclasped her warmed jewels," "loosened her fragrant boddice," and,

"By degrees,
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees."

None, save Keats, and Tennyson after him, has adventured on the delicate yet lovely theme—the poetry of dress; a subject which, artificial as it is, is capable, in chaste and tender hands, of the most imaginative treatment. Who, following in their footsteps, shall write the rhymed history of dress, from the first reeking lion-hide worn by a warrior of the infant

world, down through the coloured skins of the Picts, the flowing toga of the ancients, the "garb of old Gaul," the turban of the Turks, the picturesque attire of the American Indians, the gorgeous vestments of God's ancient people, the kilt, the trews, and the plaid of Caledonia, the sandal or symar, or cloak, or shawl, or head-dress of various ages, to the great-coat of the modern Briton, who, in the description of Cowper, is

"An honest man, close button'd to the chin,
Broad-cloth without, and a warm heart
within."

The finest of Keats' smaller pieces are, "Lines written on Chapman's Homer" (the only translation which gives the savageism, if not the sublimity of Homer—his wild beasts maddening in their flesh-lustful fury, and his heroes "red wathshod" and which, in its original folio, Charles Lamb is said once to have kissed in his rapturous appreciation); the "Ode to a Nightingale," or rather to its voice, "singing of summer in full-throated ease;" the "Ode to a Grecian Urn," elegant as that "sylvan historian itself" (what a sigh for eternity in its description of the pair of pictured lovers, whom he congratulates "that ever thou wilt love, and she be fair!"); the "Ode to Autumn" "sitting careless on a granary floor," "her hair soft lifted by the winnowing wind;" and the dewy sonnet beginning—

"Happy is England, I could be content
To see no other verdure but its own."

In originality, Keats has seldom been surpassed. His works "rise like an exhalation." His language had been formed on a false system; but, ere he died, was clarifying itself from its more glaring faults, and becoming copious, clear, and select. He seems to have been averse to all speculative thought, and his only creed, we fear, was expressed in the words—"Beauty is truth—truth beauty."

His great defect lay in the want, not of a man-like soul or spirit, but of a man-like constitution. His genius lay in his body like sun-fire in a dew-drop, at once beautifying and burning it up. Griffin, the author of the "Collegians," describes

him (in deep consumption the while) hanging over the fatal review in the "Quarterly" as if fascinated, reading it again, and again, sucking out every drop of the poison. Had he but had the resolution, as we have known done in similar circumstances, of dashing it against the wall, or kicking it into the fire! Even Percival Stockdale could do this to "The Edinburgh Review," when it cut up his "Lives of the English Poets;" and John Keats was worth many thousands of him. But disappointment, disease, deep love, and poverty, combined to unman him. Through his thin materialism he "felt the daisies growing over him." And in this lowly epitaph did his soaring ambitions terminate:—"Here lies one whose name was writ in water." But why mourn over his fate, when the lamentation of all hearts has been already en-

shrined in the verse of "Alastor!" Let "Adonais" be at once his panegyric and his mausoleum:—

"The inheritors of unfulfill'd renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale: his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him,
And many more, whose names on earth are dark,
Though their transmitted effluence cannot die,
So long as fire outlives its parent spark,
Rose robed in dazzling immortality,
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry;
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent, alone, amid a heaven of song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper
of our throng.'

MRS HEMANS.

FEMALE authorship is, if not a great, certainly a singular fact. And if a singular fact in this century, what must it have been in the earlier ages of the world, when it existed as certainly as now, and was more than now a phenomenon, standing often insulated and alone? If, even in this age, *bluses* are *black-balled*, and homespun is still the "only wear," and music, grammar, and *gramarye* are the only three elements legitimately included and generally expected in the education of woman, in what light must the *Aspasia* and the *Sapphos* of the past have been regarded? Probably as *lusus naturæ*, in whom a passionate attachment to literature was pardoned as a pleasant peccadillo or agreeable insanity; just as a slight squint in the eye of a beauty, or even a far-off *faux pas* in her reputation, is still not unfrequently forgiven. But alas! by and by, the exception is likely to become the rule—the *lusus* the law; and, at all events, of female authorship the least gallant of critics is compelled now to take cognisance; and, without absolutely ad-

mitting this as *our* characteristic, we must confess the diffidence as well as the goodwill wherewith we approach a subject where respect for truth and respect for the sex are sometimes apt to jostle and jar.

The works of British women have now taken up, not by courtesy but by right, a full and conspicuous place in our literature. They constitute an elegant library in themselves; and there is hardly a department in science, in philosophy, in morals, in politics, in the *belles lettres*, in fiction or in the fine arts, but has been occupied, and ably occupied, by a lady. This certainly proclaims a high state of cultivation on the part of the many, which has thus flowered out into composition in the case of the few. It exhibits an extension and refinement of that element of female influence which, in the private intercourse of society, has been productive of such blessed effects—it mingles with the harsh tone of general literature, "as the lute pierceeth through the cymbal's clash"—it blends with it a vein of delicate discrimination, of mild charity, and

of purity of morals—gives it a healthy and happy tone, the tone of the fireside; it is in the chamber of our literature, a quiet and lovely presence, by its very gentleness overawing as well as refining and beautifying it all. One principal characteristic of female writing in our age is its sterling sense. It is told of Coleridge, that he was accustomed, on important emergencies, to consult a female friend, placing implicit confidence in her first instinctive suggestions. If she proceeded to add her reasons, he checked her immediately. "Leave these, madam, to me to find out." We find this rare and valuable sense—this short-hand reasoning—exemplified in our lady authors—producing, even in the absence of original genius, or of profound penetration, or of wide experience, a sense of perfect security, as we follow their gentle guidance. Indeed, on all questions affecting proprieties, decorums, what we may call the *ethics* of sentimentalism, minor as well as major morals, their verdict may be considered oracular, and without appeal. We remark, too, in the writings of females a tone of greater generosity than in those of men. They are more candid and amiable in their judgments of authors and of books. Commend us to female critics. They are not eternally consumed by the desire of being witty, astute, and severe, of carping at what they could not equal—of hewing down what they could or *would* not have built up. The principle, *nil admirari*, is none of theirs; and, whether it be that a sneer disfigures their beautiful lips, it is seldom seen upon them. And, in correspondence with this, it is curious that (in our judgments, and, we suspect, theirs) the worst critics are persons who dislike the sex, and whom the sex dislikes—musty fusty old bachelors, such as Gifford, or certain pedantic prigs in the press of the present day. Ladies, on the other hand, are seldom severe judges of anything, except each other's dress and deportment; and, in defect of profound principles, they are helped out by that fine native sense of theirs, which partakes of the genial nature, and verges upon genius itself.

Passing from such preliminary remarks, we proceed to our theme. We have selected Mrs Hemans as our first specimen of female authors, not because we consider her the best, but because we consider her by far the most feminine writer of the age. All the woman in her shines. You could not (unknowing of the author) open a page of her writings without feeling this is written by a lady. Her inspiration always pauses at the feminine point. It never "oversteps the modesty of nature," nor the dignity and decorum of womanhood. She is no sibyl, tossed to and fro in the tempest of furious excitement, but ever the calm mistress of the highest and stormiest of her emotions. The finest compliment we can pay her—perhaps the finest compliment that it is possible to pay to woman, as a moral being—is to compare her to "one of Shakspeare's women," and to say, had Imogen, or Isabella, or Cornelia become an author, she had so written.

Sometimes, indeed, Mrs Hemans herself seems seduced, through the warmth of her temperament, the facility and rapidity of her execution, and the intensely lyrical tone of her genius, to dream that the shadow of the Pythoness is waving behind her, and controlling the motions of her song. To herself she appears to be uttering oracular deliverances. But unfortunately her poetry, as to all effective utterance of original truth, is silent. It is emotion only that is audible to the sharpest ear that listens to her song. A bee wreathing round you in the warm summer morn her singing circle, gives you as much new insight into the universe as do the sweetest strains which have ever issued from this "voice of spring." We are reluctantly compelled, therefore, to deny her, in its highest sense, the name of poet—a word often abused, often misapplied in mere compliment or courtesy, but which ought ever to retain its stern and original signification. A *maker* she is not. What dream of childhood has she ever, to any imagination, re-born? whose slumbers has she ever peeped with new and terrible visions? what new form or figure has she annexed, like a se-

cond shadow, to our own idiosyncrasy, to track us on our way for ever? to what mind has she given such a stamp of impression as it feels eternity itself unable to efface? There is no such result from the poetry of Mrs Hemans. She is less a maker than a *musician*, and her works appear rather to rise to the airs of the piano than to that still sad music of humanity—the adequate instrument for the expression of which has not yet been invented by man. From the tremulous movement, the wailing cadences, the artistic pauses, and the conscious-swelling climaxes of her verse, we always figure her as modulating, inspiring, and controlling her thoughts and words to the tune of some fine instrument, which is less the vehicle than the creator of the strain. In her poetry, consequently, the music rather awakens the meaning, than does the meaning round and mellow off into the music.

With what purpose does a lady, in whom perfect skill and practice have not altogether drowned enthusiasm, sit down to her harp, piano, or guitar? Not altogether for the purpose of display—not at all for that of instruction to her audience—but in a great measure that she may develop, in a lawful form, the sensibilities of her own bosom. Thus sat Felicia Hemans before her lyre—not touching it with awful reverence, as though each string were a star, but regarding it as the soother and sustainer of her own high-wrought emotions—a graceful *alias* of herself. Spring, in its vague joyousness, has not a more appropriate voice in the note of the cuckoo than feminine sensibility had in the more varied but hardly profounder song of the author before us.

We wish not to be misunderstood. Mrs Hemans had something more than the common belief of all poets in the existence of the Beautiful. She was a genuine woman, and therefore the sequence (as we shall see speedily) is irresistible, imbued with a Christian spirit. Nor has she feared to set her creed to music in her poetry. But it was as a betrayal, rather than as a purpose, that

she so did. She was more the organ of sentiment and sensibility than of high and solemn truth—more a golden morning mist, now glittering and then gone in the sun, than a steady dial, at once meekly reflecting and faithfully watching and measuring his beams.

She was, as Lord Jeffrey well remarks, an admirable writer of *occasional* verses. She has caught, in her poetry, passing moods of her own mind—meditations of the sleepless night—transient glimpses of thought, visiting her in her serene hours—the “silver lining” of those cloudy feelings which prelude over her darker—the impressions made upon her mind by the more remarkable events of her everyday life—and the more exciting passages of her reading. Her works are a versified *journal* of a quiet, ideal, and beautiful life—the life at once of a woman and a poetess, with just enough, and no more, of romance to cast around it a mellow autumnal colouring. The songs, hymns, and odes in which this life is registered, are as soft and bright as atoms of the rainbow; like them, tears transmuted into glory, but no more than they great or complete. In many poets we see the germ of greatness, which might, in happier circumstances, or in a more genial season, have been developed. But no such germ can the most microscopic survey discover in her, and we feel that at her death her beautiful but tiny task was done. Indeed, with such delicate organisation, and such intense susceptivness as hers, the elaboration, the long reach of thought, the slow *cumulative* advance, the deep-curbed yet cherished ambition which a great work requires and implies, are, we fear, incompatible.

It follows naturally from this, that her largest are her worst productions. They labour under the fatal defect of tedium. They are a surfeit of sweets. Conceive an orchard of rose-trees. Who would not, stupified and bewildered by excess and extravagance of beauty, prefer the old, sturdy, and well-laden boughs of the pear and pippin, and feel the truth of the adage—“the *apple*-tree is the fairest tree in the wood?” Hence, few, compara-

tively, have taken refuge in her "Forest Sanctuary;" reluctant and rare the ears which have listened to her "Vespers of Palermo;" in her "Siege of Valencia" she has stormed no hearts, and her "Sceptic" has made, we fear, few converts. But who has not wept over her "Graves of a Household," or hushed his heart to hear her "Treasures of the Deep," in which the old Sea himself seems to speak, or wished to take the left hand of the Hebrew child and lead him up, along with his mother, to the temple service; or thrilled and shouted in the gorge of "Morgarten," or trembled at the stroke of her "Hour of Death?" Such poems are of the kind which win their way into every house, and every collection, and every heart. They secure for their authors a sweet garden plot of reputation, which is envied by none, and with which no one intermeddles. Thus flowers smile, unharmed, to the bolt which levels the pine beside them. Even a single sweet poem, flowing from a gentle mind in a happy hour, is as "ointment poured forth," and carries a humble name in fragrance far down into futurity, while the elaborate productions of loftier spirits rot upon the shelves. A Lucretius exhausts the riches of his magnificent mind in a stately poem, which is barely remembered, and never read. A Wolfe expresses the emotions of every heart at the recital of Sir John Moore's funeral in a few rude rhymes, and becomes immortal. A Shelley, dipping his pen in the bloody sweat of his lonely and agonised heart, traces voluminous lines of "red and burning" poetry, and his works are known only to some hardy explorers. A Michael Bruce transfers one spring-joy of his dying frame, stirred by the note of the cuckoo, to a brief and tear-stained page, and henceforth the voice of the bird seems vocal with his name, and wherever you hear its strange, nameless, tameless, wandering, unearthly voice, you think of the poet who sighed away his soul and gathered his fame in its praise. A Bayley constructs a work "before all ages," lavishes on it imagination that might suffice for a century of poets, and it lies, on some *recherché*

tables, like a foreign curiosity, to be seen, shown, and lifted, rather than to be read and pondered. A William Miller sings, one gloaming, his "Wee Willie Winkie," and the nurseries of an entire nation re-echo the simple strain, and every Scottish mother blesses, in one breath, her babe and his poet. We mention this, not entirely to approve, but in part to wonder at it. It is not just that one strain from, a lute or a Pan's-pipe should survive, a thunder-psalm — that effusions should, eclipse works.

Mrs Hemans' poems are strictly effusions; and not a little of their charm springs from their unstudied and extempore character. This, too, is in fine keeping with the sex of the writer. You are saved the ludicrous image of a double-dyed Blue, in papers and morning wrapper, sweating at some stupendous treatise or tragedy from morn to noon, and from noon to dewy eve; you see a graceful and gifted woman, passing from the cares of her family and the enjoyments of society, to inscribe on her tablets some fine thought or feeling, which had throughout the day existed as a still sunshine upon her countenance, or perhaps as a quiet, unshed tear in her eye. In this case, the transition is so natural and graceful, from the duties or delights of the day to the employments of the desk, that there is as little pedantry in writing a poem as in writing a letter, and the author appears only the lady in *flower*. Indeed, to recur to a former remark, Mrs Hemans is distinguished above all others by her intense womanliness; and as her own character is so true to her sex, so her sympathies with her sex are very peculiar and profound. Of the joys and the sorrows, the difficulties and the duties, the trials and the temptations, the hopes and the fears, the proper sphere and mission of woman, and of those peculiar consolations which the "world cannot give nor take away," that sustain her even when baffled, she has a true and thorough appreciation; and her "Records of Woman," and her "Songs of the Affections," are just audible beatings of the deep female heart. In our judgment, Mrs Ellis's

idea of woman is trite, vulgar, and limited, compared with that of "Egeria," as Miss Jewsbury used fondly to denote her beloved friend. What a gallery of Shakspeare's female characters would the author of the "Mothers, Daughters, and Women of England," have painted! What could she have said of Juliet? How would she have contrived to twist Beatrice into a pattern Miss? Perdita! would she have sent her to a boarding-school? or insisted on *finishing* the divine Miranda? Of that pretty Pagan, Imogen, what would she make? Imagine her criticism on Lady Macbeth, or on Ophelia's dying speech and confession, or her revelation of the "Family Secrets" of the "Merry Wives of Windsor!"

Next to her pictures of the domestic affections, stand Mrs Hemans' pictures of nature. These are less minute than passionate, less sublime than beautiful, less studies than free, broad, and rapid sketches. Her favourite scenery was the woodland, a taste in which we can thoroughly sympathise. In the wood there are a fulness, a roundness, a rich harmony, and a comfort, which soothe and completely satisfy the imagination. There, too, there is much life and motion. The glens, the still moorlands, and the rugged hills, will not move, save to one master finger, the finger of the earthquake, who is chary of his great displays; but before each lightest touch of the breeze the complacent leaves of the woodland begin to stir, and the depth of solitude seems instantly peopled, and from perfect silence there comes a still small voice, so sweet and sudden, that it is as if every leaf were the tongue of a separate spirit. Her favourite season was the autumn, though her finest verses are dedicated to the spring. Here, too, we devoutly participate in her feelings. The shortening day—the new outbursting from their veil of daylight of those, in summer, neglected tremblers, the stars—the yellow corn—the grey and pensive light—the joy of harvest—the fine firing of all the groves (not the "fading but the kindling of the leaf")—the frequent and moaning winds—the spiritual quiet in which, at other times, the stub-

ble fields are bathed—the rekindling of the cheerful fires upon the hearth—the leaves falling to their own sad music—the rising stackyards—the wild fruit, ripened at the cold sun of the frost—the "ineffable gleams of light dropping upon favourite glens or rivers, or hills that shine out like the shoulder of Pelops"—the beseeching looks with which, trembling on the verge of winter, the belated season seems to say, "Love me well, I am the last of the sisterhood that you can love;" in short, that indescribable charm which breathes in its very air, colours its very light, and sheds its joy of grief over all things, have concurred with some sweet and some sad associations to render autumn to us the loveliest and the dearest of all the seasons. As Mrs Hemans loved woodland scenery for its kindly "looks of shelter," so she loved the autumn principally for its correspondence with that fine melancholy which was the permanent atmosphere of her being. In one of her letters, speaking of an autumn day, she says, "The day was one of a kind I like—soft, still, and grey, such as makes the earth appear a pensive but a happy place." We have sometimes thought that much of Wordsworth's poetry should always be read, and can never be so fully felt as in the autumn, when "Laodamia," at least, must have been written. Should not poems, as well as pictures, have their peculiar light, in which alone they can properly be seen? Should not Scott be read in spring, Shelley in the fervid summer, Wordsworth in autumn, Cowper and Byron in winter, Shakspeare all the year round?

In many points, Mrs Hemans reminds us of a poet just named, and whom she passionately admired—namely, Shelley! Like him, drooping, fragile, a reed shaken by the wind, a mighty wind, in sooth, too powerful for the tremulous reed on which it discoursed its music; like him, the victim of exquisite nervous organisation; like him, verse flowed on and from her, and the sweet sound often overpowered the meaning, kissing it, as it were, to death; like him, she was melancholy, but the sadness of both was musical, tearful, ac-

tive, not stony, silent, and motionless, still less misanthropical and disdainful; like him, she was gentle, playful, they could both run about their prison garden, and dally with the dark chains which, they knew, bound them till death. Mrs Hemans, indeed, was not, like Shelley, a *vates*; she has never reached his heights nor sounded his depths, yet they are, to our thought, so strikingly alike as to seem brother and sister in one beautiful but delicate and dying family. Their very appearance must have been similar. How like must the girl, Felicia Dorothea Browne, with the mantling bloom of her cheeks, her hair of a rich golden brown, and the ever-varying expression of her brilliant eyes, have been to the noble boy, Percy Bysshe Shelley, when he came first to Oxford, a fair-haired, bright-eyed enthusiast, on whose cheek and brow, and in whose eye, was already beginning to burn a fire, which ultimately enwrapped his whole being in flames!

In Mrs Hemans' melancholy one "simple" was wanting, which was largely mixed in Shelley's—that of faithless dependency. Her spirit was cheered by faith—by a soft and noble form of the softest, noblest faith—a form reminding us much, from its balance of human, poetical, and celestial elements, of that of Jeremy Taylor—the "Shakspeare of divines." Although, as we have said, her poetry is not, of *prepnese* and purpose, the express image of her religious thought, yet it is a rich illustration of the religious tendency of the female mind. Indeed, females may be called the natural guardians of morality and faith. These shall always be safe in the depths of the female intellect, and of the female heart—an intellect, the essence of which is worship—a heart, the element of which is love. Unhired, disinterested, spontaneous is the aid they give to the blessed cause; leaning, indeed, in their lovely weakness, on Christianity, they, at the same time, prop it up through the wide and holy influences which they wield. Their piety, too, is no fierce and foul polemic flame—it is that of the feelings—the quick instinctive sense of duty—the wonder-stricken

soul and the loving heart—often it is not even a conscious emotion at all—but, in Wordsworth's language, they lie in

"Abraham's bosom all the year,
And God is with them, when they know
it not."

In Mrs Hemans' writings, you find this pious tendency of her sex unsoiled by an atom of cant, or bigotry, or exclusiveness; and shaded only by so much pensiveness as attests its divinity and its depth; for the gloom which often overhangs the earnest spirit arises from its more immediate proximity to the Infinite and the Eternal? And who would not be ready to sacrifice all the cheap sunshine of earthly success and satisfaction for even a touch of a shadow so sublime?

After all, the nature of this poetess is more interesting than her genius, or than its finest productions. These *descend* upon us like voices from a mountain-side, suggesting to us an elevation of character far higher than themselves. If not, in a transcendent sense, a poet, her life was a poem. Poetry coloured all her existence with a golden light—poetry presided at her needlework—poetry mingled with her domestic and her maternal duties—poetry sat down with her to her piano—poetry fluttered her hair and flushed her cheek in her mountain rambles—poetry quivered in her voice, which was a "sweet sad melody"—poetry accompanied her to the orchard, as she read the "Talisman," in that long glorious summer day which she has made immortal—and poetry attended her to the house of God, and listened with her to the proud pealing organ, as to an echo from within the veil. Poetry performed for her a still tenderer ministry: it soothed the deep sorrows, on which we dare not enter, which shaded the tissue of her history—it mixed its richest cupful of the "joy of grief" for her selected lips—it lapped her in a dream of beauty, through which the sad realities of life looked in, softened in the medium. What could poetry have done more for her, except, indeed, by giving her that supreme vision which she gives so rarely, and which she bestows often

as a curse, instead of a blessing! Mrs Hemans, on the other hand, was too favourite a child of the Muse to receive any such baleful boon. Poetry beautified her life, blunted and perfumed the thorns of her anguish, softened the pillow of her sickness, and combined with her firm and most feminine faith to shed a gleam of soft and tearful glory upon her death.

Thus lived, wrote, suffered, and died "Egeria." Without farther seeking to weigh the worth or settle the future place of her works, let us be thankful to have

had her among us, and that she did what she could, in her bright though sorely-tryed passage. She grew in beauty; was blasted where she grew; rained around her poetry, like bright tears from her eyes; learned in suffering what she taught in song; died, and all hearts to which she ever ministered delight have obeyed the call of Wordsworth to

"Mourn rather for that holy spirit,
Mild as the spring, as ocean deep;
For her who, ere her summer faded,
Has sunk into a dreamless sleep."

MRS ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

In selecting Mrs Hemans as our first specimen of Female Authors, we did so avowedly, because she seemed to us the most feminine writer of the day. We now select Mrs Browning for the opposite reason—that she is, or at least is said by many to be, the most masculine of our female writers.

To settle the respective spheres and calibres of the male and female mind, is one of the most difficult of philosophical problems. To argue, merely, that because the mind of woman has never hitherto produced a "Paradise Lost," or a "Principia," it is therefore for ever incapable of producing similar masterpieces, seems to us unfair, for various reasons. In the first place, how many ages elapsed ere the *male* mind realised such prodigies of intellectual achievement? And do not they still stand unparalleled, and almost unapproached? And were it not as reasonable to assert that man, as that woman, can renew them no more? Secondly, because the premise is granted—that woman *has* not—does the conclusion follow, that woman cannot excogitate an argument as great as the "Principia," or build up a rhyme as lofty as the "Paradise Lost?" Would it not have been as wise for one who knew Milton only as the Milton of "Lycidas" and "Arcades," to have contended that he was incapable of a great epic poem? And is

there nothing in Madame de Stael, in Rahel the Germaness, in Mary Somerville, and even in Mary Wollstonecraft, to suggest the idea of heights, fronting the very peaks of the "Principia" and the "Paradise," to which woman may yet attain? Thirdly, has not woman understood and appreciated the greatest works of genius as fully as man? Then may she in time equal them; for what is true appreciation but the sowing of a germ in the mind, which shall ultimately bear similar fruit? There is nothing, says one, which the human mind can conceive which it cannot execute; we may add, there is nothing the human mind can understand which it cannot equal. Fourthly, let us never forget that woman, as to intellectual progress, is in a state of infancy. Changed as by malignant magic, now into an article of furniture, and now into a toy of pleasure, she is only as yet undergoing a better transmigration, and "timidly expanding into life."

Almost all that is valuable in female authorship has been produced within the last half-century—that is, since the female was generally recognised to be an intellectual creature; and if she has, in such a short period, so progressed, what demimahometan shall venture to set bounds to her future advancement? Even though we should grant that woman, more from her bodily constitution than her mental,

is inferior to man, and that man having got, shall probably keep, his start of centuries, we see nothing to prevent woman overtaking, and outstripping with ease, his present farthest point of intellectual progress. We do not look on such productions as "Lear" and the "Prometheus Vincit" with despair; they are, after all, the masonry of men, and not the architecture of the gods; and if man may surpass, why may not woman, "taken out of his side," equal them?

Of woman, we may say, at least, that there are already provinces where her power is incontestable and supreme. And in proportion as civilisation advances, and as the darker and fiercer passions which constitute the *fera natura* subside, in the lull of that milder day, the voice of woman will become more audible, exert a wider magic, and be as the voice of spring to the opening year. We stay not to insist that the *sex* of genius is *feminine*, and that those poets who are most profoundly impressing our young British minds are those who, in tenderness and sensibility—in peculiar power, and in peculiar weakness—are all but females. And whatever may be said of the effects of culture, in deadening the genius of man, we are mistaken if it has not always had the contrary effect upon that of woman; so that, on entering on the far more highly civilised periods which are manifestly approaching, she will but be breathing the atmosphere calculated to nourish and invigorate, instead of weakening and chilling, her mental life. Mr De Quincey has, we think, conceded even more than we require, in granting that woman can die more nobly than man.* For whether is the writing or the doing of a great tragedy the higher achievement? Poor the attitude even of Shakspeare, writing "Macbeth," to that of Joan of Arc entering into the flames as into her wedding-suit. What comparison between the face inflamed of a Mirabeau or a Fox, as they thundered, and the blush on the cheek of Charlotte Corday, still extant, as her head was presented to the people? And who shall

* See a paper on Joan of Arc in the Selected Works of De Quincey.

name the depicter of the death of Beatrice Cenci with that heroine herself; or with Madame Roland, whose conduct on the scaffold might make one in "love with death?" If to die nobly demand the highest concentration of the moral, intellectual, and even artistic powers—and if woman has *par excellence* exemplified such a concentration—there follows a conclusion to which we should be irresistibly led, were it not that we question the minor proposition in the argument—we hold that man has often as fully as woman risen to the dignity of death, and met him, not as a vassal, but as a superior.

To say that Mrs Browning has more of the man than any female writer of the period, may appear rather an equivocal compliment; and its truth even may be questioned. We may, however, be permitted to say, that she has more of the heroine than her compeers. Hers is a high, heroic nature, which adopts for the motto at once of its life and of its poetry, "Perfect through suffering." Shelley says:—

"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in
song."

But wrong is not always the stern schoolmistress of song. There are sufferings springing from other sources—from intense sensibility—from bodily ailment—from the loss of cherished objects—which also find in poetry their natural vent. And we do think that such poetry, if not so powerful, is infinitely more pleasing and more instructive than that which is inspired by real or imaginary grievance. The turbid torrent is not the proper mirror for reflecting the face of nature; and none but the moody and the discontented will seek to see in it an aggravated and distorted edition of their own gloomy brows. The poetry of wrong is not the best and most permanent. It was not wrong alone that excited, though it unquestionably directed, the course of Dante's and Milton's vein. The poetry of Shakspeare's wrong is condensed in his sonnets—the poetry of his forbearance and forgiveness, of his gratitude and his happi-

ness, is in his dramas. The poetry of Pope's wrong (a scratch from a thorn hedge!) is in his "Dunciad," not in his "Rape of the Lock." The poetry of Wordsworth's wrong is in his "Prefaces," not in his "Excursion." The poetry of Byron's wrong is in those deep curses which sometimes disturb the harmony of his poems; and that of Shelley's in the maniacal scream which occasionally interrupts the pæans of his song. But all these had probably been as great, or greater poets, had no wrong befallen them, or had it taught them another lesson, than either peevishly to proclaim or furiously to resent it.

Mrs Browning has suffered, so far as we are aware, no wrong from the age. She might, indeed, for some time have spoken of neglect. But people of genius should now learn the truth, that *neglect* is not *wrong*; or, if it be, it is a wrong in which they often set the example. Neglecting the tastes of the majority, the majority avenges itself by neglecting them. Standing and singing in a congregation of the deaf, they are senseless enough to complain that they are not heard. Or should they address the multitude, and should the multitude not listen, it never strikes them that the fault is their own; they ought to have compelled attention. Orpheus was listened to; the thunder is; even the gentlest spring shower commands its audience. If neglect means wilful winking at claims which are *felt*, it is indeed a wrong; but a wrong seldom if ever committed, and which complaint will not cure; if it means, merely, ignorance of claims which have never been presented or enforced, where and whose is the criminality?

To do Mrs Browning justice, she has not complained of neglect nor injury at all. But she has acknowledged herself inspired by the genius of suffering. And this seems to have exerted divers influences upon her poetry. It has, in the first place, taught her to rear for herself a spot of transcendental retreat, a city of refuge in the clouds. Scared away from her own heart, she has soared upwards, and found a rest elsewhere. To those flights of idealism

in which she indulges, to those distant and daring themes which she selects, she is urged less, we think, through native tendency of mind, than to fill the vacuity of a sick and craving spirit. This is not peculiar to her. It may be called, indeed, the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand;" though strong and daring must be those that can successfully accomplish it. Only the steps—we had almost said of despair—can climb such dizzy heights. The healthy and the happy mind selects subjects of a healthy and a happy sort, and which lie within the sphere of every-day life and every-day thought. But for minds which have been wrung and riven, there is a similar attraction in gloomy themes; as that which leads them to the side of dark rivers, to the heart of deep forests, or into the centre of waste glens.

"Whither shall I wander," seems Mrs Browning to have said to herself, "to-day to escape from my own sad thoughts, and to lose, to noble purpose, the sense of my own identity? I will go eastward to Eden, where perfection and happiness once dwelt. I will pass, secure in virtue, the far-flashing sword of the cherubim; I will knock at the door and enter. I will lie down in the forsaken garden; I will pillow my head where Milton pillowed his, on the grass cool with the shadow of the Tree of Life; and I will dream a vision of my own, of what this place once was, and of what it was to leave it for the wilderness." And she has passed the waving sword, and she has entered the awful garden, and she has dreamed a dream, and she has, awaking, told it as a "Drama of Exile." It were vain to deny that the dream is one full of genius—that it is entirely original; and that it never once, except by antithesis, suggests a thought of Milton's more massive and palpable vision. Her paradise is not a garden, it is a flush on a summer evening sky. Her Adam is not the fair large-fronted man, with all manlike qualities meeting unconsciously in his full clear nature—he is a German metaphysician. Her Eve is *herself*, an amiable and gifted bluestocking, not the mere meek motherly woman, with what Aird beautifully calls

the "broad, ripe, serene, and gracious composure of love about her." Her spirits are neither cherubim nor seraphim—neither knowing nor burning ones—they are fairies, not, however, of the Puck or Ariel species, but of a new metaphysical breed; they do not ride on, but split hairs; they do not dance, but reason; or, if they dance, it is on the point of a needle, in cycles and epicycles of mystic and mazy motion. There is much beauty and power in passages of the poem, and a sweet inarticulate melody, like the fabled cry of mandrakes, in the lyrics. Still we do not see the taste of turning the sweet open garden of Eden into a maze—we do not approve of the daring precedent of trying conclusions with Milton on his own high field of victory—and we are, we must say, jealous of all encroachments upon that fair Paradise which has so long painted itself upon our imaginations—where all the luxuries of earth mingled in the feast with all the dainties of the heavens—where celestial plants grew under the same sun with terrestrial blossoms, and where the cadences of seraphic music filled up the pauses in the voice of God. Far different, indeed, is Mrs Browning's from Dryden's disgusting inroad into Eden—as different, almost, as the advent of Raphael from the encroachment of Satan. But the poem professed to stand in the lustre of the fiery sword, and this should have burned up some of its conceits, and silenced some of its meaner minstrelsy. And all such attempts we regard precisely as we do the beauties of the Apocrypha, when compared to the beauties of the Bible. They are as certainly beauties, but beauties of an inferior order—they are flowers, but not the roses which grew along the banks of the Four Rivers, or caught in their crimson cups the "first sad drops wept at committing of the mortal sin." "One blossom of Eden outblooms them all."

Having accepted from Mrs Browning's own hand sadness, or at least seriousness, as the key to her nature and genius, let us continue to apply it in our future remarks. This at once impels her to, and

fits her for, the high position she has assumed, uttering the "Cry of the Human." And whom would the human race prefer as their earthly advocate, to a high-souled and gifted woman? What voice but the female voice could so softly and strongly, so eloquently and meltingly, interpret to the ear of him whose name is Love the deep woes and deeper wants of "poor humanity's afflicted will, struggling in vain with ruthless destiny?" Some may quarrel with the title, "The Human," as an affectation; but, in the first place, if so, it is a very small one, and a small affectation can never furnish matter for a great quarrel; secondly, we are not disposed to make a man, and still less a woman, an offender for a word; and, thirdly, we fancy we can discern a good reason for her use of the term. What is it that is crying aloud through her voice to Heaven? It is not the feral or fiendish element in human nature. That has found an organ in Byron—an echo in his bellowing verse. It is the human element in man—bruised, bleeding, all but dead under the pressure of evil circumstances, under the ten thousand tyrannies, mistakes, and delusions of the world, that has here ceased any longer to be silent, and is crying aloud, in a sister's voice. The poem may truly be called a prayer for the times, though some may think its tone daring to the brink of blasphemy, and piercing almost to anguish.

Gracefully, from this proud and giddy pinnacle, where she had stood as the conscious and commissioned representative of the human race, she descends to the door of the factory, and pleads for the children enclosed in that crowded and busy hell. The "Cry of the Factory Children" moves you, because it is no poem at all—it is just a long sob, veiled and stifled as it ascends through the hoarse voices of the poor beings themselves. Since we read it, we can scarcely pass a factory without seeming to hear this psalm issuing from the machinery, as if it were protesting against its own abused powers. But, to use the language of a writer quoted a little before, "The Fairy Queen is dead, shrouded in a yard of cotton stuff made

by the spinning-jenny, and by that other piece of new improved machinery, *the souls and bodies of British children*, for which death alone holds the patent." From Mrs Browning, perhaps the most imaginative and intellectual of British females, down to a pale-faced, thick-voiced, degraded, hardly human, factory girl, what a long and precipitous descent! But, though hardly, she *is* human; and availing herself of the small, trembling, but eternally indestructible link of connection implied in a common nature, our author can identify herself with the cause, and incarnate her genius in the person, of the poor perishing child. How unspeakably more affecting is a pleading in behalf of a particular portion of the race, than in behalf of the entire family! Mrs Browning might have uttered a hundred "cries of the Human," and proved herself only a beautiful artist, and awakened little save an echo dying away in distant elfin laughter; but the cry of a factory child, coming through a woman's, has gone to a nation's heart.

Although occupied thus with the sterner wants and sorrows of society, she is not devoid of interest in its minor miseries and disappointments. She can sit down beside little Ella (the miniature of Alnaschar), and watch the history of her day-dream beside the swan's nest among the reeds, and see in her disappointment a type of human hopes in general, even when towering and radiant as summer clouds. Ella's dream among the reeds! What else was Godwin's Political Justice? What else was St Simonianism? What else is Young Englandism? And what else are the hopes built by many now upon *certain* perfected schemes of education, which, freely translated, just mean the farther sharpening and furnishing of knaves and fools?

Shadowed by the same uniform seriousness are the only two poems of hers which we shall farther at present mention—we mean her "Vision of Poets," and her "Geraldine's Courtship." The aim of the first is to present, in short compass, and almost in single lines, the characteristics of the greater poets of past and present

times. This undertaking involved in it very considerable difficulties. For, in the first place, most great poets possess more than one distinguishing peculiarity. To select a single differential point is always hazardous, and often deceptive. Secondly, after you have selected the prominent characteristic of your author, it is no easy task to express it in a word, or in a line. To compress thus an *Iliad* in a nutshell, to imprison a giant genie in an iron pot, is more a feat of magic than an act of criticism. Thirdly, it is especially difficult to express the *differentia* of a writer in a manner at once easy and natural, picturesque and poetical. In the very terms of such an attempt as Mrs Browning makes, it is implied that she not only defines, but describes the particular writer. But to curdle up a character into one noble word, to describe Shakspeare, for instance, in such compass, what sun-syllable shall suffice; or must we renew Byron's wish?—

"Could I unbosom and embody now
That which is most within me; could I
wreak
My thought upon expression!

And that *one word were Lightning*, I would
speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing
it as a sword."

Accordingly, this style of portraiture has seldom been prosecuted with much success. Ebenezer Elliott has a copy of verses after this fashion, not quite worthy of him. What, for example, does the following line tell us of Shelley?—

"Ill-fated Shelley, vainly great and brave."

The same words might have been used about Sir John Moore, or Pompey. Mrs Browning's verses are far superior. Sometimes, indeed, we see her clipping at a character, in order to fit it better into the place she has prepared for it. Sometimes she crams the half of an author into a verse, and has to leave out the rest for want of room. Sometimes over a familiar face she throws a veil of words and darkness. But often her one glance

sees, and her one word shows, the very heart of an author's genius and character. Altogether, this style, as generally prosecuted, is a small one, not much better than anagrams and acrostics—ranks, indeed, not much higher than the ingenuity of the persons who transcribe the "Pleasures of Hope" on the breadth of a crownpiece, and should be resigned to such praiseworthy personages. By far the best specimen of it we remember, is the very clever list involving a running commentary of the works of Lord Byron, by Dr MacGinn or Delta, we are not sure which of them, unless, indeed, it be Gay's "Catalogue Raisonné" of the portentous poems of Sir Richard Blackmore. Who shall embalm, in a similar way, the endless writings of James, Cooper, and Dickens?

"Lady Geraldine's Courtship," as a transcript from the "red-leaved tablets of the heart"—as a tale of love, set to the richest music—as a picture of the subtle workings, the stern reasonings, and the terrible bursts of passion—is above praise. How like a volcano does the poet's heart at length explode! How first all power is given him in the dreadful trance of silence, and then in the loosened tempest of speech! What a wild, fierce logic flows forth from his lips, in which, as in that of Lear's madness, the foundations of society seem to quiver like reeds, and the mountains of conventionalism are no longer found; and in the lull of that tempest, and in the returning sunshine, how beautiful, how almost superhuman, seem the figures of the two lovers, seen now and magnified through the mist of the reader's fast-flowing tears! It is a tale of successful love, and yet it melts you like a tragedy, and most melts you in the crisis of the triumph. On Geraldine we had gazed as on a star, with dry-eyed and distant admiration; but, when that star dissolves in showers at the feet of her poet-lover, we weep for very joy. Truly, a tear is a sad yet beautiful thing; it constitutes a link connecting us with distant countries, nay, connecting us with distant worlds. Gravitation has, amid all immensity,

wrought no such lovely work as when she rounded a tear.

From this beautiful poem alone, we might argue Mrs Browning's capacity for producing a great domestic tragedy. We might argue it, also, from the various peculiarities of her genius—her far vision into the springs of human conduct—into those viewless veins of fire, or of poison, which wind within the human heart—her sympathy with dark bosoms—the instinct for truth, which pierces often the mist of her dimmer thought, like a flash of irrepressible lightning—her fervid temperament, always glowing round her intellectual sight—and her queen-like dominion over imagery and language. We think, meanwhile, that she has mistaken her sphere. In that rare atmosphere of transcendentalism which she has reached, she respireth with difficulty and with pain. She is not "native and endued" into that element. We would warn her off the giddy region, where tempests may blow as well as clouds gather. Her sonnets in "Blackwood" are sad failures—the very light in them is darkness—thoughts, in themselves as untangible as the films upon the window pane, are concealed in a woof of words, till their thin and shadowy meaning fades utterly away. Morbid weakness, she should remember, is not masculine strength. But can she not, through the rents in her cloudy tabernacle, discern, far below in the vale, fields of deep though homely beauty, where she might more gracefully and successfully exercise her exquisite genius? She has only to stoop to conquer. By and by we may—using unprofanely an expression originally profane—be tempted to say, as we look up the darkened mountain, with its flashes of fire hourly waxing fewer and feebler, "As for this poetess, we wot not what has become of her."

While we are venturing on accents of warning, we might also remind her that there are in her style and manner peculiarities which a wicked world will persist in calling affectations. On the charge of affectation, generally, we are disposed to lay little stress—it is a charge so easily

got up, and which can be so readily swelled into a cuckoo cry; it is often applied with such injustice, and it so generally attaches to singularities in manner, instead of insincerities in spirit and matter. But why should a true man, or a true woman, expose themselves needlessly to such a charge? We think, in general, that true taste in this, as in matters of dress and etiquette, dictates conformity to the present mode, provided that does not unduly cramp the freedom and the force of natural motions. There is, indeed, a class of writers who are chartered libertines—who deal with language as they please—who toss it about as the autumn wind leaves; who, in the agony of their earnestness, or in the fury of their excitement, seize on rude and unpolished words, as Titans on rocks and mountains, and gain artistic triumphs in opposition to all the rules of art. Such were Wilson, Burke, and Chalmers. These men we must just take as they are, and be thankful for them as they are. We must just give them their own way. And whether such a permission be given or not, it is likely to be taken. "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook, or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest

down? will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? Will the Unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? canst thou bind him with his band in the furrow? will he harrow the valleys after thee? wilt thou believe that he will bring home thy seed, and gather into thy barn?" No; like the tameless creatures of the wilderness—like the chainless elements of the air—such men obey a law, and use a language, and follow a path of their own.

But this rare privilege Mrs Browning can hardly claim. And she owes it to herself and to her admirers to simplify her manner—to sift her diction of whatever is harsh and barbarous—to speak whatever truth she has to tell, in the clear articulate language of men—and to quicken, as she well can, the dead forms of ordinary verbiage, by the spirit of her own superabundant life. Then, but not till then, shall her voice break fully through the environment of coteries, cliques, and magazine readers, and fall upon the ear of the general public, like the sound, sweet in its sublimity, simple amid its complex elements, earthly in its cause and unearthly in its effect upon the soul, of a multitude of waters.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"POETICAL WORKS" pour in upon us after "poetical works;" and the worst is, for captious critics at least, that the majority of them are, as Jacob Tonson would have said, from "approved hands," "able pens," "persons of honour," poets and poetesses whose names are household words, whose writings are already classical, and on whom there exist criticisms nearly as classical as the poems! But how long must we wait ere we see such a title as "the *work*" of this or that distinguished author, his "Iliad," or his "Paradise Lost?" Alas! we are in this age doomed to live upon fragments, although, sometimes, as a variety, these are presented to us in "twelve" or two "bas-

kets," or even in one. At least twenty real poets have written, or are writing still, during what has passed of the nineteenth century; and although all of them have left, or are leaving, "poetical works," yet where is the "work" of any which fulfils the idea of the name? It is as if some such catastrophe as has shattered one stately planet of our system into Pallas, Vesta, and the rest, had visited the mind of this century, and split it up into disunited, although beautiful and centre-seeking, portions!

First, for the fact of this fragmentary tendency, and then for what seem to be the reasons which explain it. We may enumerate the following names as those

of real poets, dead or alive, included in the first half of the nineteenth century in Britain:—Bloomfield, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Professor Wilson, Hogg, Croly, Maturin, Hunt, Scott, James Montgomery, Pollok, Tennyson, Aird, Mrs Browning, Mrs Hemans, Joanna Baillie, and the author of "Festus." We leave this list to be curtailed, or to be increased, at the pleasure of the reader. But, we ask, which of those twenty-three has produced a work uniquely and incontestably, or even, save in one or two instances, professedly GREAT? Most of those enumerated have displayed great powers; some of them have proved themselves fit to begin greatest works; but none of them, whether he has begun, or only thought of beginning, has been able to finish. Bloomfield, the tame, emasculate Burns of England, has written certain pleasing and genuine poems smelling of the soil, but the "Farmer's Boy" remained what the Scottish poet would have called a "haffin callant," and never became a full-grown and brawny man. Wordsworth was equal to the epic of the age, but has only constructed the great porch leading up to the edifice, and one or two beautiful cottages lying around. Coleridge could have written a poem—whether didactic, or epic, or dramatic—equal in fire and force to the "Iliad," or the "Hamlet," or the "De Rerum Natura," and superior to any of the three in metaphysical truth and religious feeling—a work ranking immediately beside the "Paradise Lost;" but he has, instead, shed on us a shower of plumes, as from the wing of a falling angel—beautiful, ethereal, scattered, and tantalising. The most of Southey's poems are large, without being great—massive, without being majestic; they have rather the bulk of an unformed chaos, than the order and beauty of a finished creation. Campbell, in many points the Virgil of his time, has, alas! written no Georgics; his odes and lesser poems are "atoms of the rainbow;" his larger, such as "Gertrude of Wyoming," may be compared to those segments of the showery arch we see in a disordered evening sky; but he has reared

no complete "bow of God." Moore's "Lalla Rookh" is an elegant and laborious composition—not a shapely building; it is put together by skilful art, not formed by plastic power. Byron's poems are, for the most part, disjointed but melodious groans, like those of Ariel from the centre of the cloven pine; "Childe Harold" is his soliloquy when sober—"Don Juan" his soliloquy when half-drunk; the "Corsair" would have made a splendid episode in an epic—but the epic, where is it? and "Cain," his most creative work, though a distinct and new world, is a bright and terrible anomaly—a comet, instead of a sun. So, too, are the leading works of poor Shelley, which resemble Southey in size, Byron in power of language, and himself only in spirit and imagination, in beauties and faults. Keats, like Shelley, was arrested by death, as he was piling up enduring and monumental works. Professor Wilson has written "*Noctes*" innumerable; but where is his poem on a subject worthy of his powers, or where is his *work* on any subject whatever? Hogg has bound together a number of beautiful ballads, by a string of no great value, and called it the "Queen's Wake." Scott himself has left no solid poem, but instead, loose, rambling, spirited, metrical romances—the bastards of his genius—and a great family of legitimate, chubby children of novels, bearing the image, but not reaching the full stature, of their parent's mind. Croly's poetry, like the wing of his own "seraph kings," standing beside the sleeping Jacob, has a "lifted mighty plume," and his eloquence is always as classical as it is sounding; but it is, probably, as much the public's fault as his that he has never equalled his first poem, "Paris in 1815," which now appears a basis without a building. Maturin has left a powerful passage or two, which may be compared to a feat performed by the victim of some strong disease, to imitate which no healthy or sane person would, could, or durst attempt. James Montgomery will live by his smaller poems; his larger are long lyrics—and when was a long lyric any other than tedious? Hunt has sung many a joyous carol, and many a pathetic ditty,

but produced no high or lasting poem. Pollok has aimed at a higher object than almost any poet of his day; he has sought, like Milton, to enshrine religion in poetic form, and to attract to it poetic admirers; he did so in good faith, and he expended great talents, and a young life, in the execution; but, unfortunately, he confounded Christianity with one of its narrowest shapes, and hence the book, though eloquent in passages, and dear to a large party, is rather a long and powerful, though unequal and gloomy sermon, than a poem; he has shed the sunshine of his genius upon his own peculiar notions, far more strongly than on general truths; and the spirit of the whole performance may be expressed in the words of Burns, slightly altered, "Thunder-tidings of damnation." His and our friend, Thomas Aird, has a much subtler, more original and genial mind than Pollok's, and had he enjoyed a tithe of the same recognition, he might have produced a Christian epic on a far grander scale; as it is, his poems are fragmentary and episodic, although Dante's "Inferno" contains no pictures more tremendously distinct, yet ideal, than his "Devil's Dream upon Mount Acksbeck." Tennyson is a greater Calvinist, in one sense, than either of the Scottish poets we have named—he owes more to the general *faith* of others in his genius than to any special or strong *works* of his own. Bailey of "Festus" has a vast deal more richness of mind than Tennyson, but "Festus" seems either different from, or greater than, a *work*. We are reminded of one stage in the history of the nebular hypothesis, when Sir W. Herschel, seeing a central mass in the midst of a round burr of light, was almost driven to the conclusion that it was *something immensely greater than what we call a star*—a kind of monster sun. So with the prodigious birth men call "Festus."

It were easy to extend the induction to our lady authors, and to show that Mrs Hemans, Mrs Browning, Joanna Baillie, Mrs Shelley, &c., have abounded rather in effusions, or efforts, or tentative experiments, than in calm, complete, and perennial works.

And now for the reasons of this fragmentary phenomenon. These are various in various authors. In some it arises from the union of unlimited ambition with limited power—their energies, like the limbs of one running in a dream, sink below them; and they either relinquish the attempt as a bad job, or make a bad job of it by persevering. These betray a lack of mental foresight, and have not counted the intellectual cost. Others are stopped by sheer oddity and affectation. "Is it not," they say, "characteristic of genius to be irregular—to veer and falter in its lofty aspirations? Are not all *asterisks stars*? Perish the slow, cumulative, gin-horse process which rears up long elaborate works!" Others are injured by carelessness and caprice. Each new day brings its new scheme, and no scheme is ever permitted to consolidate or crystallise in its author's mind. Thus, Coleridge once read to a friend, from his pocket-book, a "list of eighteen different works which he had resolved to write, and several of them in quarto, *not one of which he ever effected*." To this is often added a desire to pique and stimulate curiosity, by ceasing ere they are well begun; and then they confound the stare of astonishment which succeeds the abrupt close with admiration. Others, again, stop short from the effect of sudden damps and chills of mind, found even in ardent temperaments to quench its ardour. It requires the "evening and the morning" to make the day, but the poet has, perhaps, only the evening to dream of immortal works; the morning has sterner duties. Sometimes he fails from the want of encouragement held out by the public. And sometimes bad bitter criticism kills at once the works he has produced and the capacity of producing more.

While holding strong opinions on this subject, we must not be understood to depreciate the quality or to deny the abundance of the poetry of this age. Never since the world began was there so much of the unconsolidated ether of genuine poetry—never were so many beautiful verses wandering about our literature or so many minds thinking and speaking in a poetical way. What we want, and the

age wants, is to see new Neptunes of song, separate poetic worlds, works of profound purpose, earnest tone, and high art, as well as of original genius.

To pass to the subject of this review, it is with a certain awe that we name the venerable Joanna Baillie. She belongs rather indeed to the past than to the present—to history, not to us. Living, we almost think of her as dead, or as a spiritual presence among us but not of us. Simple greatness is the leading feature of Miss Baillie's character and of her intellect. She has no airs—no artifices. Visit her, you find a plain, sensible woman, living with her plain, sensible sisters, any one of whom you would suspect as soon as her of the sin of authorship. Take up her works, and you find yourself in conversation with a rich, full, masculine, and yet womanly mind, conveying, through the characters in her dramas, the clear, constant stream of her own sentiments and feelings. It was the glory of Shakspeare that he never *was* himself—it is that of Joanna Baillie that, while never an egotist, she never ceases to be herself—"a deep, majestic, and high-souled woman." She is no female Shakspeare. Indeed, a female Shakspeare is an incongruous, and almost a ludicrous thought. The thorough identification with his characters, however atrocious or contemptible, which is Shakspeare's peculiarity, is precisely that which woman cannot or dare not exemplify.

A far more striking resemblance exists between Miss Baillie and Sir Walter Scott. Health and solidity of mind, lyrical fire and enthusiasm, a love of legendary lore, and attachment to the manners and customs, to the hills and woods, of "Auld Caledonia"—a tone of uniform respect for morality and religion—a clear, masculine, and unaffected eloquence, are qualities common to both. And although Miss Baillie, being less national in her subjects, and having chosen a less popular vehicle, has never obtained the same place or power in the literature of her country, her genius, on the whole, can hardly be pronounced much inferior. She stands up a sister of the Mighty Minstrel, holding

his hand, exhibiting a milder form of the same poetic and patriotic ardour, along with greater subtlety of thought, and more delicate discrimination of character, than ever belonged to him.

Ere glancing at some of Miss Baillie's works—the complete copy of which now lies before us—we have some remarks to offer on the famous criticisms of Lord Jeffrey upon her "Plays on the Passions." These are certainly among the ablest and subtlest products of his pen. Some secret *animus*, it is said, had stung him into an unusual display of powerful and vindictive acumen. Some of his objections are, undoubtedly, as strong as they are well put. He has attacked the plan of her plays, as cramping her motions; accused them of combining the faults of the French and of the English schools—the poverty of incident and uniformity of the one, with the irregularity and homeliness of the other; cast wholesale contempt upon her comedies; charged her plots with violent and systematic improbability, and her language with being a bad imitation of the Elizabethan dramatists; called her versification heavy, lifeless, and cumbrous; and seems to think that her genius is rather lyrical than dramatic.

Now her plan is, unquestionably, a yoke and trammel to her genius; but, first, this should exalt our idea of her powers, which have gained, to say the least, a partial triumph over it; and, secondly, her object in imposing on herself such trammels was commendable. She wished to lift up a strong protest, not only against the "artificial stateliness and wearisome pomp" of diction which prevailed in the tragedy of the time when her plays first appeared, but against its sacrifice of character and real passion, to mere bustle, and incident, and stage effect. If she becomes too metaphysical and minute in her descriptive analysis of the passions, it is the opposite of a much worse extreme.

Lord Jeffrey charges her with monotony in her characters—with having little sympathy with any but "the cheerful, the sensible, and the good"—a charge which, to a lady, is a high compliment—

a charge which is not, however, entirely true; since some of her most powerful pictures are of persons actuated by ambition, or burning with hatred, or foaming in frenzy. The creator of *De Montfort*, *Basil*, and *Orra*, goes, perhaps, as far as a lady gracefully can in sympathy with the fiercer and darker passions of human nature.

The critic, too, has subjected himself to the charge of inconsistency and self-contradiction. In his first paper he praises Miss Baillie for "taking for her model the middle style of Shakspeare;" and yet he afterwards speaks of the "constrained and unnatural air produced by her affectation of antiquated phraseology." He forgets, too, one reason she has for adopting many of the phrases of the old dramatists. Her *subjects* are generally as romantic and far-withdrawn as her language. When writing on "an Election," or a "Country Inn," her language is modern; but why should she not light up a "Beacon" of the time of the Crusades at Shakspeare's torch, or describe the downfall of Constantinople in language reminding you of "the large utterance of those early gods" of the stage? If occasionally too colloquial, it arises from the reaction of disgust at the buckram and conventional style which was the rage at the time when she "arose," the Deborah of the drama.

That her comedies are not equal to her tragedies, is conceded; and to readers fresh from the incessant wit of Sheridan, or the bustling farce and riotous humour of Goldsmith, they may not seem comedies at all; but if they seldom provoke laughter, they never excite contempt—they are full of good sense, discrimination of character, a certain lady-like dignity, and are written in easy, vigorous, unaffected diction.

It is true that her genius was more lyrical than dramatic; but the dramatic quality in her was also strong. It is to be regretted that she had not written more "lyrical dramas" like the "Beacon," and that she had not sprinkled lyrics with a more liberal hand through the rest of her plays

But while Lord Jeffrey is right in considering in Miss Baillie's plays a greater freedom and play of passion, in thinking them stiffened by system, and paralysed in part by the laborious anatomy she pursues; and in ridiculing the notion of a "tragedy and a comedy on every passion" (somewhat like a poet who should write on "the pains of hope, as well as its pleasures," or on the pleasures of remorse, instead of the pains); he has not dwelt with sufficient fidelity and fondness on her counterbalancing merits, which he acknowledges, indeed, but acknowledges with a grudge—her profound subtlety—her knowledge of human nature, alike in its fluctuating forms and its eternal essence—her touches of natural description, so sudden and so striking—the wild, legendary grandeur which surrounds her at times—the candour, charity, and womanliness of her nature—her freedom from every taint of the grossness of the early dramatists—and the strong, yet delicate imagery in which she enshrines her thoughts; like a star set in the trembling crystal of a summer-evening lake.

We propose to speak of some of Miss Baillie's plays individually, and then of her miscellaneous works. Her first play is "Basil"—intended to illustrate the passion of love. The story is very simple. A noble, brave, and generous-hearted general, on his march to battle, falls into the toils of the fair daughter of a king, who has an interest that he should delay his march. In a fatal hour, he consents to remain for a day, and does so, in opposition to the urgent counsels of a friend. He sees thus more of his innamorata, who dallies with his passion; but his soldiers are excited to a mutiny, which is with difficulty repressed; and toward evening the tidings arrive that a battle has been fought in Basil's absence, and his laurels tarnished. He resolves on suicide, flees, and is found bleeding to death in a cave. There his friend, his soldiers, and ultimately his beloved, find him, and amid the wailings of their varied sorrow he expires.

It will be seen, from this short analysis,

that the play is rather an illustration of the power of infatuation than of the passion of love. It is a picture of the madness of love, rather than of the "exalted portion of the pain." Basil's passion is rather a "nympholepsy," than a natural, probable, and powerful feeling. His taking refuge in suicide for such a slight cause as the gaining of a battle in his absence, is a weak baseness, unworthy of his character. Surely the desertion of his soldiers was a heavier blow than the success of his rival general. And yet, while he meets and quells the one with manly promptitude and triumphant success, he falls without a struggle before the other. Rossinberg is a mere *fidus Achates*. Victoria is a flirt of feeling; and although she talks of taking the veil after Basil's death, we leave her with the impression that in a year she will be singing, "No, I won't be a nun—no, I shan't be a nun." The rest of the characters are of no mark, with the exception of Mirando, the orphan, a sweet, sly, affectionate boy, of whom, however, more might have been made.

The power and beauty of "Basil" lie, not in the conception or execution of the whole, but in the excellence of particular scenes, and the beauty of individual sentences. The scene where Basil suppresses the mutiny of his soldiers is admirable. Miss Baillie has had, probably, in her eye the story of Cromwell blowing out insurrection and its ringleader's brains at one and the same moment. So Basil, while he speaks, holds his pistol at a refractory soldier's head. The scene of the masks is managed with much graceful dexterity. The close of the play, around the dying Basil, is very harrowing, and has cost us tears, albeit not used to the melting mood. But the most subtle and successful scene is, we think, that between Victoria and Basil in the grove. Indeed, all love scenes show best by the light of nature. What to unimpassioned readers appears vulgar, ludicrous, or absurd, when described as passing in a parlour or drawing-room, assumes a very different aspect when shown amid the soft hush and spiritual beauties of an evening river-

side, and in the light of an autumn moon. We feel, then, that the beautiful picture has received its proper setting—its ideal frame. Who has forgot, for example, the moonlit love-scene in the "Merchant of Venice," or the interview of Waverley and Flora near the waterfall? Nature is the great asylum of lovers—shelters them from the laugh of the world—adopts them as her children—and seems to fondle them with all her woods, to accompany their low voices with all her waters, and to light their tender and music-measured steps with all her stars.

We quote a part of this fine scene.

"Victoria. But we must leave this grove
—the birds fly low:

This should forebode a storm, and yet o'er-head

The sky, bespread with little downy clouds
Of purest white, would seem to promise
peace.

How beautiful those pretty snowy clouds!

Basil. Of a most dazzling whiteness!

Vic. Nay, nay, a veil that tempers heaven's
brightness,

Of softest, purest white.

Bas. As though an angel, in his upward
flight,

Had left his mantle floating in mid-air.

Vic. But thou regard'st not!

Bas. Ah! what should I regard, where
should I gaze?

For in that far-shot glance, so keenly watch'd,
That sweetly rising smile of admiration,
Far better do I learn how fair heaven is,
Than if I gazed upon the blue serene."

Robert Burns visited the Caldron Linn, in company with Charlotte Hamilton, the "fairest maid on Devon's banks." She and the other ladies of the party wondered that he did not admire the scenery more. The fact was, he was too much occupied in admiring *them*. So, even after what we have said, we suspect that other lovers, besides Burns and Basil, love the reflection of nature in their mistress's eye rather than its direct vision. Both, however, are, and are often felt to be, best.

Victoria's description of the circumstances in which she found the orphan Mirando is very beautiful and very touching:—

"Perch'd in his nurse's arms, a rustic quean,
 Ill suited to the lovely charge she bore;
 How steadfastly he fix'd his looks upon
 me,
 His dark eyes shining through forgotten
 tears—
 Then stretch'd his little arms, and call'd
 me mother!
 What could I do? I took the bantling
 home;
 I could not tell the imp he had no mother."

"Shaksperian" is an epithet we are sparing of, but we feel tempted to apply it to the above little picture.

Not so well do we like the incident of old maimed Geoffrey holding back his general from his purpose of ruin by his one remaining hand, while Basil turns round, looks on him with softness, and says,

"Two would not hold so well, old honour'd
 veteran."

Yet in a moment his fury returns, and he breaks violently from him, leaving the old man deploring that he has not another hand to stop him. Surely this is grotesque to the brink of absolute farce. It reminds us of a picture we have seen of a desperate lover springing over a precipice, with the maiden—too late repentant—holding him back in vain by his coat-tails.

Altogether, "Basil" is full of interest, and abounds in lively and eloquent passages, if it be not in the highest or most powerful tragic vein.

"De Montfort" takes a darker and more daring flight. In it the poet seeks to sow the flowers of beauty upon the "murk and haggard rocks" of hatred. Here, again, however, both the choice of the subject and the management of it are liable to certain objections. In the first place, De Montfort's hatred, like Basil's love, is hardly a natural feeling. It is exaggerated to frenzy. It is neither demoniac nor human. It is neither the warm and generous resentment of a noble nature, nor the slow, quiet, calm, deadly animosity of an Iago. It unites fiendish intensity to maniac ferocity. It is hatred without a cause. No such feeling ever existed, or ever could, in such a breast as De Montfort's is represented to be.

And, secondly, Miss Baillie does not relieve the pressure of the improbability by tracing the gradual progress of the fell passion, by showing it slowly rising, often resisted, yet growing with Montfort's growth, and strengthening with his strength, till at last it towers beside him—of equal stature with himself, a dark, inseparable companion. Instead of this, when De Montfort first appears on the stage, his feeling to Rezenvelt is already fully formed. Thirdly, we question much if even a more moderate degree of the horrid passion, unrelieved by a mixture of softer feelings, were susceptible of graceful or effective treatment. Othello's real feeling to Cassio is not jealousy (jealousy is a transition state, and implies the existence of doubt), it is hatred; but then there is blended with it a strong lingering affection for Desdemona; and in the wavering balance, and fierce and swift interchange of those two passions, lies much of the power of the play. But mere unmingled hatred cannot awaken much sympathy; or though it do suck us in, by the eloquence with which it is accompanied, its suction is felt to be that of a Maelstrom—crushing while it enthral. And to this original difficulty, the author of "De Montfort" has added another. She has caricatured hatred, added "blackness" to "darkness," made "hell a murkier gloom;" and it is a proof of her powerful genius, that she has not utterly sickened and disgusted, but simply oppressed and overwhelmed us in the experiment.

The characters in "De Montfort" are not strikingly original, nor is the poetry equal to that of "Basil." The second duel between De Montfort and Rezenvelt is a clumsy expedient to hasten the catastrophe—clumsy, because an exact duplicate of the first. Could he not have been irritated into murder in some other way than by being disarmed in single fight, a second time, by his deadly foe? The murder, its discovery, and the consequent remorse, are forcibly described—but without any remarkable felicity of thought or imagery. The scenes succeeding De Montfort's death are—according

to the author herself—superfluous. They approach the face of the horror too closely, and keep the curtain suspended too long. The imagery is less new or happy than in the rest of Miss Baillie's works. We cannot admire the following:—

"O heavenly friendship,
Thou dost exalt the sluggish souls of men,
By thee conjoin'd, to great and glorious
deeds;
As two dark clouds, when mix'd in middle
air,
With vivid lightnings flash, and roar su-
blime."

This would better describe the collision of enemies than the conjunction of friends. Milton employs precisely the same image to describe the impending strife of Death and the Devil! Better far is the following:—

"Half-utter'd praise is to the curious mind,
As to the eye half-veil'd beauty is,
More precious than the whole."

The power of "De Montfort," in short, lies in the strong, dark stream of the hero's passion—a stream from which tender and sensitive minds must ever shrink as from an arm of Acheron, nourishing but a few dusky flowers, receiving as it rolls on a tributary of blood, and over which droops the stately form of Jane De Montfort, in the dignity and majestic silence of a true sister's and heroine's woe!

"Orra" is a play unfortunate in its subject; the story is that of a young lady driven mad by the apprehension of ghosts, but it has some beautiful passages. We quote one which has been often quoted before:—

Didst thou ne'er see the swallow's veering
breast,
Winging the air beneath some murky cloud,
In the sunn'd glimpses of a stormy day,
Shiver in silvery brightness;
Or boatman's oar, as vivid lightning flash,
In the faint gleam, that like a spirit's path
Tracks the still waters of some sullen lake;
Or lonely tower, from its brown mass of
woods,
Give to the parting of a wintry sun
One hasty glance in mockery of the night,
Closing in darkness round it! Gentle friend!
Chide not her mirth, who was sad yester-
day,
And may be so to-morrow."

We like to witness such splendid accumulations of imagery, so common in Shakspeare and in Jeremy Taylor; but which our modern criticism would explode as oriental, tasteless, and un-English. One critic lately asked, how we would like to see a "midnight all stars." Why, very well—once, like the inhabitants of Neptune, we were accustomed to it! They, if such beings there be, have a far more splendid firmament than ours, and would, doubtless, think ours somewhat cold and barren. So we beg leave to prefer the glory-sparkling and thick-studded pages of Jeremy Taylor and James Thomson—of Bacon and Burke—of Isaac Taylor and Christopher North—of Schiller and Jean Paul—to those of Tillotson and Atterbury, of Addison and Pope, of Lord Brougham, Sir John Herschel, and the "Quarterly Review."

The catastrophe of Orra is a powerful and harrowing picture of madness, and ranks Miss Baillie with those who have best depicted that sad calamity—with Crabbe, Richardson, Scott, and Shakspeare themselves. But the last words of Orra are too horrible to be affecting, or to be quotable; whereas the words of Lear, even at their wildest, never trespass the bounds of good taste; they are worthy of one "every inch a king," and who is royal in his very rags and ravings.

We pass to speak, lastly, of the "Beacon," and with peculiar pleasure. It is certainly one of the most delicious dramatic *morceaux* in the language. Even Lord Jeffrey's fastidious, half-affected frown and sharp sneer relax over the beautiful flame of the "Beacon," and he looks and talks like a despot in love: We wish we had room to quote his analysis of the story—in our notion, the happiest of all his many happy outlines of the plots of poems, novels, and plays (in drawing up which he displayed, in general, consummate tact and liveliness); and free from the flippancy and sad propensity to sneer which disfigured many of them. But we cannot admit that the story has no merit, nor any "pretensions to probability." Surely it is at least as probable as that of the "Lady of the

friend, long absent? *or*, the son returned from a far journey at sea? *or*, a messenger to relate the tidings of a friend's deadly illness? *or*, a ghastly maniac astray from his keepers? *or*—for imagination, awaked at midnight, will have midnight fancies—the sheeted dead? *or*, your own wraith? *or*, the Enemy? *or*, incarnate Death himself—attired in some such fearful fashion as this—

"In reveller's plight he is bedight;
With a vest of cramoisie meet;
But his mantle behind that streams to the wind
Is a corse's bloody sheet?"

It is pleasing to pass from such dreams and legends to her songs, which we hesitate not to say are only inferior to those of Burns—superior to those of Haynes Bayly and Moore, and quite equal to those of Sir Walter Scott and Campbell. Need we speak of "The Gowan glitters on the sward," "Saw ye Johnny coming?" "Tam o' the Linn," or the "Weary pund o' tow?" Every Scotchman in the world, worthy of the name, knows these by heart; while, perhaps, thousands are ignorant that they are by Joanna Baillie. We quote one in English of a different description.

SONG.

"What voice is this, thou evening gale,
That mingles with thy rising wail;
And as it passes, sadly seems
The faint return of youthful dreams?
Though now its strain is wild and drear,
Blithe was it once as skylark's cheer—
Sweet as the night-bird's sweetest song,
Dear as the lip of infant's tongue.
It was the voice, at whose sweet flow
The heart did beat, and cheek did glow,
And lip did smile, and eye did weep,
And motion'd love the measure keep.
Oft be thy sound, soft gale of even,
Thus to my wistful fancy given;
And as I list the swelling strain,
The dead shall seem to live again."

We regret we have not time to do more justice to the merit of Miss Baillie's songs—to their dignified simplicity—their purity—their quiet, *paroxy* humour—their pastoral tenderness, and all the other truly Doric qualities which distinguish them.

Her poems on general subjects are not, on the whole, equal to her others, or to herself. Some of her devotional strains are bald and tame, although here and there, as in the hymn at page 837, she rises on wings of worship soft as a dove's and strong as an eagle's. But her muse is seldom a seraph. Her poem—page 792—on the death of Sir Walter Scott has many such prosaic lines as the first couplet:—

"Thou pleasant noble bard, of fame far
spread,
Now art thou gather'd to the mighty dead."

Nor can we coincide with the criticism, any more than admire the poetry, of the following:—

"A tale like 'Waverley' we yet may con,
But shall we read a lay like 'Marmion?'"

That Scott's poems are superior to his novels, is a literary heresy of some magnitude. We grant, indeed, that parts of the "Lay" and of "Marmion," and the whole of the "Lady of the Lake," are quite worthy of his genius. But, in the first place, they reveal only a segment of Scott's mind—his minstrel spirit and fire; they contain little trace of his humour, strong insight into human nature, and power of personifying various characters. Secondly, as artistic compositions, they are even more flimsily and hurriedly put together. Thirdly, by assuming the name of poems, they have subjected themselves to a much severer ordeal—we try them by such standards as the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey;" whereas, where was the novel previous to Scott, except "Don Quixote," which had risen into the region of lofty art at all? Richardson, Fielding, and Defoe, with all their merits, belonged to a far lower class. Goethe had only, as yet, written "Werter." So that, while Scott's poems are of a secondary order in their school, his novels are first in theirs. Fourthly, Scott's poems are often centos—always imitative; his novels are a creation—a fact as new as the Flood, or the Reformation. And, fifthly, if we combine the consideration of quantity with quality, the poems of Scott sink like a driblet in the ocean. What are three clever me-

trical romances—the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," and the "Lady of the Lake" (we drop at once the "Lord of the Isles," and more reluctantly "Rokeby," from the list, because confessedly inferior), to "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," the "Antiquity," "Rob Roy," "Old Mortality," "Heart of Midlothian," "Ivanhoe," "Kenilworth," "Quentin Durward," the "Talisman," and the "Fair Maid of Perth," with all the wondrous masses of description, dialogue, eloquent reflection, clear, easy writing, costume, character, historical information, and romantic interest, which they contain?

We were just preparing to bring this criticism to a close when a newspaper arrived, containing the intelligence of Miss Baillie's death. She died at the good old age of eighty-nine, full of years, of good deeds, and of well-deserved honours. She "sleeps well," although far in death from her beloved native manse of Bothwell. Peace to her ashes! In the circumstances in which her death has unexpectedly placed us, it is a pleasing thought that we were speaking of her in a reverent spirit, and that there is not a word in our critique which, on reflection, we feel inclined to alter. Nay, we are glad to leave it as it is—an estimate of the living, not a panegyric upon the dead. Yet we must now be permitted another sentence in addition to what we had written ere the painful tidings reached us.

Few writers have passed through life with less of the pains and penalties of an authorship than Joanna Baillie. We are not intimately conversant with the parti-

culars of her life, nor disposed to forestal the office of her biographer; but we speak in this, we are certain, the general sentiment of the literary world. She has had few literary feuds, and none of the disgraceful notoriety of many of her contemporaries. She has neither fought nor puffed on her way, but has won it by the calm, cumulative progress of successive excellence. She has never forgot the woman in the authoress; never bated a jot of the dignity of the lady, that she might gain the laurels of the poet. Her course has been the quiet, deep, fruitifying progress of a river hid in woods; and speaking in the flush of the woods and fields it has nourished, rather than in the clamour of its voice, or in the sheen of its waters. She has, above all, in the general tone of her poetry, as well as in many of her separate strains, done ample homage to the leading principles of morality and religion, and is therein entitled to a deeper praise than the name of poet by itself usually justifies.

Thus do our great ones pass away! Another splendid gem on the circlet of our female authors had but a few days before dropped into the dust—Mrs Shelley. She, too, was a name to "start a spirit"—a name interesting through many associations, and from her own merits much and warmly admired. But her creed was cold—her mind was morbid—her works have a gigantic, but abortive greatness—and we, for our part, had rather have written one "Beacon" than one hundred "Frankensteins." What meaneth, after all, this going out of our stars in clusters? Is it because the day is near the breaking, and the Sun about to arise?

THOMAS AIRD.

"BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE" has unquestionably collected around it one of the most distinguished of the many clusters into which the literary men of the present day have gravitated. Its roll of names is a brilliant one, including "that great Scotsman with the meteor-pen," as the Corn-

Law Rhymer calls him, Wilson; Lockhart, the sharp, and caustic, and manly spirit; Hogg, the "poet-laureate to the Faery Queen;" Galt, the Defoe of Scotland, the only writer we know completely up to Sawney in all his wily ways; Delta, the tender and beautiful poet; MacGillan,

the wild wag; De Quincey, the lawful inheritor of Coleridge's mystic throne and appetite for the poppy; Doubleday, the elegant dramatist; Warren, the vigorous weaver of melo-dramatic tale; Croly, the impetuous and eloquent; Simmons, that fine scion of the Byronic school of poetry; Moir, the accomplished critic; Ferrier, the rising metaphysician; and last, not least, Thomas Aird, author of "Religious Characteristics," "Othuriel," &c., whom we propose, as he is comparatively little known, more particularly to introduce to our readers, and who certainly, in point of original genius, is surpassed by few of the names we have just cited.

Thomas Aird is, we say, a man of original genius. He sees all things, from a constellation to a daisy, in a certain severe and searching light. His mind is stiffened by nature's hand into one earnest position. His stream of thought is not broad, nor winding, but narrow, deep, moving right onward, and lurid in its lustre, as though a thunder-cloud were "bowed" over it throughout its entire course. His original sympathies are obviously with the dark, the stern, and the terrible. He delights, or rather is irresistibly led, to paint the fiercer passions of the human soul, the drearier aspects of nature, the gloomy side of the future world. While his heart is full of the milk of human kindness, his genius has a raven wing, and an almost Dantesque dreadfulness of tone. All his works are studies from Scripture, but breathe more of the element of Sinai than of Calvary. He has evidently spent his youth in meditative solitude, with more thoughts than books; Bunyan and the Bible all his library, but these deeply pondered have pressed down a load of influence upon his genius, and account at once for its monotony and its power. He "curdles up" meaning into his words, oftentimes to an oppressive degree. In his desire to do justice to the fulness of the view presented him of a scene or a subject, in manly aversion to the gingerbread, the lackadaisical, the merely pretty, he is apt to become harsh, elliptic, abrupt, obscure, at once to stuff too much thought

into his words, and to pack it too closely together. His great power lies in description—knotty, minute, comprehensive and piercing portraiture. He has hardly the constructive faculty, is perhaps unable to produce a whole; but what a strange, unearthly light he casts on the jagged edges and angles of things! Inevitably does he leave the impression upon you, as you read, whether it be to blame or to praise, This is no echo, but a native voice, sounding from the inner penetralia of nature's own temple. "His mind," says Wilson, "dwells in a lofty sphere." He breathes freely an air which it is difficult for inferior men to respire. He is drawn, by a native attraction, to the snowy summits of high and holy thought. There, as the "moon glazes the savage pines" around, as the wind lifts the unresisting snow at his feet, as the melancholy song of the Aurora sounds past him like the pant of spirits, he meditates strangely, and with folded arms, upon life and death—"Erebus and old Nox," Chaos and Demogorgon—wild shapes, meanwhile, sweeping by in the wan moonlight; demoniacs from Galilee, who seem already to "dwell 'mid horned flames and blasphemy in the red range of hell;" gibbering ghosts, with "fire-curved, cinder-crust-ed tongues;" a Father's form, dilating wrathfully as it comes; sooty negroes, with black enormous trumpets at their lips; Nebuchadnezzar, with insane eyes, lightning through his feathery hairs; and, bringing up the rear, the "grizzly terror" himself, the fiend-dreamer on Mount Acksbeck, "like fiery arrow shot aloft from some unmeasured bow." This sphere is certainly lofty, but remote from human sympathies; as solitary as it is sublime, a "dread circle," carved by the magician like a scalp, on a snowy and savage hill, and across which few, save congenial spirits, can ever break. Aird's genius, indeed, is not, like that of Milton, one to the appreciation of which men must and will grow. It is rather, in its intense peculiarity, like that of Coleridge or Shelley, which, if you hate, you hate at once and for a long time; which, if you love, you love at first sight, and

"even to the end." Hopeless of his works ever becoming popular, we do not despair of seeing them take up, in the hearts of a select few, the place due to their originality, their power, their daring, and their religious spirit. His faults are obscurity, mannerism, a want of flow and fluency of verse, a style often cumbered and perplexed, and an air—it is no more—of elaborate search after peculiarities of thought and expression. Such are, however, we believe, nothing but excrescences upon the robust oak of his essential originality. It is the struggle of a native mind to convey itself in a vehicle so imperfect as words, which has begot all those minute strangenesses of style, which are but the wild veerings of a strong-winged bird, beating up against a contrary wind. Nature has given Aird genius in high measure, but art has not added the calm and completeness of an equal empire over words. His power over them is great; but it is a convulsive despotism, rather than a mild, steady, and legitimate sway. His language is picturesque and powerful; but comes from far, and comes as a captive. His obscurity, the grievous fault of his earlier productions, has been manfully sifted out of his later writings. His mannerism he has not been able altogether to remove. It adheres to him, and will as long as he lives.

Such is the short portraiture of a unique, who, had his ambition been equal to his powers, might have taken, long ere now, a much higher place; one who is strong and rounded in his originality as in a castle, but who has laid down all the peculiarities of that genius, and all the keys of that castle, meekly and gently at the foot of the Cross; who has never, we believe, sung one strain which did not mount, ere its close, as if by instinct, to heaven. He is, in the true sense, a religious poet; not merely making an occasional irruption into the consecrated region with some; not singing with others certain sickly strains of loathsome sweetness and affected unction; not, with a third class, "breaking into blank the gospel of St Luke, and boldly pilfering from the Pen-

tateuch," but viewing the Cross through the medium of his own genius. His soul dwells in the haunted climes of Palestine, "tosses its golden head afar on the snowy mountains cold" of Mount Lebanon, reclines on the banks of the Lake of Galilee, mounts Tabor Hill, and sees, with kindling rapture, the eclipsed light of heaven bursting forth from every pore of the Saviour's transfigured frame—his form, long bent under a weight of wo, erecting itself like a palm-tree from pressure; his eye shining out like a sun from the skirts of a departed cloud; his brow expanding into its true dimensions, its wrinkles fleeing away, its sweat-drops of climbing toil changed by that sudden radiance into bright bubbles of glory, when

"Light o'erflow'd him like a sea, and raised
his shining brow,
And the voice came forth that bade all
worlds the Son of God avow."

In another and a darker mood, he follows the Demoniac amid the tombs, or traces him along the crackling margin of the Dead Sea, or pursues Nebuchadnezzar into the wilderness, or catches the skirts of Ezekiel, advancing under the very ring of the wheels, "so high that they were dreadful;" or reverently, tenderly, and from afar off, follows the footsteps of the awful Sufferer into the gloom of Gethsemane, or up the ascent of Calvary's quaking hill. He has caught much of the spirit of the olden Hebrew prophet bards; their abruptness, austere imagination, and shadowy sanctities. He has drunk out his inspiration from those deep springs, which at the rod of prophecy sprang out of the Syrian wilderness. His genius, as it is said of Bunyan, has not been dipped in dews of Castalie, but baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

His first work (beyond a volume of juvenile poems, inclusive of "Murtzouffe," a tragedy, discovering less dramatic than poetic power) is entitled "Religious Characteristics." It attracted at the time considerable notice, and is still fresh in the memories and much in the hands of those who allowed their generous penetration to pierce past the rough rind of

its style, into the rare power and beauty which its core contained. Among these, we can enumerate Wilson, who introduced it to the world in one of those glowing panegyrics which, able to stamp splendour upon mediocrity itself, are ever sure to wreath round genius a supplementary halo, and accomplish the paradox of the poet, by gilding refined gold, painting the lily, and perfuming the violet. Dr Chalmers, too, we have occasion to know, has expressed his sympathy in terms of high approbation. If the public did not, to the full, corroborate these high verdicts, the fault was not with the substance of the book, but lay partly in the loose, crude, and elliptic style in which its conceptions were cloudily involved, and partly in the disjointed and fragmentary character of the plan. It seemed less a book, growing up from the seed of the first conception into one regular and living whole, like a tree with one root, one trunk, one circulating sap, and one apex, than a succession of loose, brilliant leaves, shed down on the tempest—some fresh and vivid, others withered and dark, and others red with fiery and convulsive life. Its power, therefore, lay in parts, as its weakness was in the total and ultimate effect. It contained the crowding and unmethodised thoughts of a young and ardent mind on the most solemn of subjects, and showed how deeply such meditations had already wrought themselves into the tissue of his thoughts. It testified, too, to his early intimacy with the olden giants of English theology, especially with the "glad prose" of Jeremy Taylor; and the thought, in its unexpectedness, elevation, and quaintness, and the style, in its rugged involutions, careless splendour, and frequent alternation of blotches and beauties, bore a striking resemblance to "all of dark and bright" which met in theirs. Besides sudden sparkles of that beautiful and peculiar imagery in which Aird's best conceptions immediately, and of necessity, incarnate themselves, there were two or three passages, long, sustained, gathering a glow from the friction of their own majestic movement, which ought alone to have buoyed up the book. We refer to one

especially in a chapter on Christian Principles, inclusive, in its long and sounding sweep, of a panegyric on the character of Christ, and, by a strange and rapid transition, of a picture of the place of punishment, which, in gloom intertangled with gloom, like yew branches in a storm, and a dreary pathos breathing around all, and language sweating under the demands of the stern moral limner, leaves all prose portraiture of the ghastly thing behind. Not Jeremy Taylor, not John Scott, not John Howe, not Baxter, not that old divine, H. Smith, in his description of the sinner, "with the crown of vengeance set upon his head, and many glittering faces looking on," has surpassed Aird's woodcut of that "other place," as he drearily calls it, with its "soliloquies that fearfully mouth the far-off heavens;" its "sounding rains of fire that come ever on;" its Ambition, "lashed with a bigger and redder billow;" its "Avarice crying through hell for all his gold to buy off the sharking worm that will not die nor let him alone;" its "awful laver of fierce but unregenerating fire." We have read this passage—itsself a poem—to ourselves, till our blood ran cold; we have read it to others, till they have been shaken by its power from shivering crown to trembling toe. It is, indeed, in Wilson's language, "a grand and a magnificent strain, not easy to be surpassed."

Another similar burst closes the volume. It is a picture of the Millennium, which, painting itself on the retina of a poet's eye, towers up a rainbow above the gloomy future. In this animated sketch, after a short struggle between intellect and genius, the latter, a fierce-eyed charioteer, mounts the car, snatches the reins, and rushes forward impetuously, with sounding thongs and wheels, that "bicker and burn to gain the expected goal." The description everywhere effloresces into poetry, and emulates those found in "The Task" and "The Course of Time;" but no more than these contains any deep, distinct, and philosophical plan of the probable phenomena of a realised Millennium. It is the part of poets to build up each his own Utopia, "like gay castles

in the clouds, that pass for ever flushing round a summer sky," to wax eloquent in picturing the splendid sunset of the world's day, the golden pinnacle in which its rising fabric is to terminate, the airy dome catching the colours of heaven which is to be suspended o'er its finished temple, the glories, half of earth and half of a loftier climate, which are to change it into a Beulah-world, risen from its place nearer to the sun, moving in more solemn yet swifter paces in the galaxy of its Creator's favour, and "rolling the rapturous hosanna round" of its Redeemer's praise. To show us all this through an atmosphere of imagination, is easy for a mind like Aird's or Pollok's; but—to accumulate sedate probabilities, to follow the future germination of great principles into great results, to reduce the estimates of exaggeration to a calm and modest amount, to settle the questions as to the beginning, the duration, the nature, and the close of this expected period; to remove, by an induction at once philosophic and religious, the difficulties which oppose, and the doubts which deny, the progress and perfectibility of the species; to trace the various lines of prediction, inspired and uninspired, all meeting in this ultimate focus; to unravel the dazzling hieroglyphics of poetic language, and to substitute for their cloudy light the clear, chaste, and consummate radiance of Christianised philosophy—this would require powers almost Baconian in their depth and range. And even though such powers thus exerted did produce a theory of a Millennium exquisitely vraisemblable, their possessor would probably be mortified to find the structure he had raised mistaken for a vagary of a vaster, and more perplexed, and less pleasing character than the poet's—deemed a vision equally with his, but shorn of all that makes a vision valuable, lovely, or dear.

Mr Aird's next work of size is the "Captive of Fez." It is a tale of love, intrigue, captivity, and battle. As a story, its interest is slight, and rendered less by the obscurity in which many of its strongest points are sheathed, and by the extreme perplexity, obliqueness, and involu-

tion of the purely dramatic part of the volume. The light of the narrative, which often, in condensation and rapid energy, reminds you of "The Corsair," is carefully clouded by the speeches. Strangest peculiarities of expression and epithet are needlessly introduced, as if for the purpose of marring the classic force and dignity of the diction. There are, however, single lines of much force and picturesqueness, certain situations and scenes of barbaric impressiveness; two or three of the characters show that not in vain have they breathed the atmosphere of Africa, felt its sands scorch their feet, and its suns smite their cheeks, and its heat, like lion's blood, injected into their veins; and here, too, as in all Mr Aird's works, the descriptive passages are uniformly excellent—terse, peculiar, yet genuine transcripts of whatever scene presents itself to his eye. Were the "Captive of Fez" rewritten, its smaller knottinesses lopped off, its dense dialogue clarified, its narrative and description retained, we know no poem in heroic rhyme more worthy to be placed beside Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite," and Byron's "Lara."

The larger portion of his other poems have appeared in "Blackwood." From these, we single out three for special notice:—"The Devil's Dream on Mount Acksbeck," "The Demoniac," and "Nebuchadnezzar." Of all Mr Aird's productions, the first of these impresses us with the deepest respect for his genius. It is one of the most original poems in this or any language. It has evidently been poured out entire, "as from a mould," burning, molten. Standing alone at midnight, the poet turns his visionary eye to the north, the most poetical quarter of the sky, and perceives a glow suffusing it, as though a sun were about to rise where sun never rose before. At the same time, a noise as of trampling waves is heard. He continues to gaze, till, lo! no sun, or star, or even lurid comet, but a "grizzly terror," starting up from below. Who can it be? It is no obedient seraph, calmly cleaving the air on some great behest of the Eternal King. No: it is an unclean spirit, whose wild hurry

proclaims his hell. It is he who erst alighted on "Niphates' Mount." It is the Infernal King.

"And up he went, from native might, or holy sufferance given,
As if to strike the starry boss of the high
and vaulted heaven."

Following with eager, yet cowering eye, the terrible parabola of his flight, he descends him, after scouring the Syrian wilderness, and catching, as in a mirage, one joyful glimpse of the triumphs of Mahomet, his chosen child, perching upon Tabor Hill, still hallowed by memories of the hour when Jesus, on its summit, let out his hidden glory in a sea-like flood. Startled at the thought of this, and shrinking even from the image of that awful brow, the Fiend can find no rest there for the sole of his feet any more than in the immediate shadow of the throne; and down, a diver in search of oblivion, he plunges over "Tabor's trees." Westward, then, and right on, like a raven seeking her twilight crag, he "tracks his earnest way." Rising, next, till lost in the beams of day, he flits like a cloud over Africa, and exults in the seen slavery of her sable children. Again he mounts the chariot of the Night, and sails with her till Mount Acksbeck, shining through the gloom, attracts his eye. The poet stays not to tell us where Acksbeck is, or that it is nowhere but in his own imagination; not in Caucasus, not in Himalaya, not in the Andes, perhaps in the Delectable Mountains, where Mount Clear looks through crystalline air right upward to the golden gates of heaven, and where Mount Danger, shuddering, looks down evermore its own dark precipices: suffice it, an Acksbeck was needed, and from the depth of the poet's soul an Acksbeck was upheaved, and there the wild traveller "closed at length his weary wing, and touched the shining hill." As he pauses, and rests on the mountain, the poet pauses, too, to trace more closely the features of his own sublime reproduction; to see "Care a shadow" far down in the pool of his "proud immortal eye;" to count the "spots of glory" which here

and there his "saddened aspect mock;" to pass his finger across the deep scars of the old thunder uneffaced on his brow; to sound the "master-passions" which within are weaving the "tempest of his soul;" and to mark a sullen slumber, a "grim and breathless gleam," stealing over his lurid and dragon-lidded eyes. Yes, the Fiend sleeps, and dreams—and such a dream? It represents, in three dread galleries, his future history. In the first, he finds himself borne away

"Where Lethe's slippery wave
Creeps like a black and shining snake into a
silent cave."

It is a place of "still and pictured life;" its roof is "ebon air;" and, drearily down, shining through it, "blasted as with dim eclipse," the ghosts of the sun and the moon "are there." It is the grave of the lost world; and the Fiend exults as he sees the workmanship of his own hands, "beauty caught by blight;" the thunder-fires of heaven hanging like snow upon the cedar branches above; beneath the simulacrum of the creation shrunk and travailing in pain, and all around diffused the silent river of Oblivion. Short-lived the joy of the Demon over this place of "God's first wrath." He is hurried on to the place of which his throne is the centre, and never did it look so ghastly to him as now, through the light of his "Dream." In the midst of this second lake, his soul, as with "meshes of fire," is bowed down, to mark what may thence be seen above and around. And there follows a picture of the place of punishment as tremendous in its condensation, its hieroglyphic horror, as anything even in Dante; it may be called, indeed, the essence of the "Inferno," and reminds us of Hall's daring expression, "distilled damnation." "Far off, upon the fire-burnt coast," some beings are seen standing. They are naked; and o'er them rests no red sheet of fire, nor are they wafted down upon them from above, as in Dante, flakes of flame, but, like a "stream of mist," in *mockery of coolness*, the "wrath is seen to brood." Half-way stands an angel-form, covering his face

with his wing (ah! how like, yet how different from the attitude of the cherubim on high, veiling their faces with their wings!), "intent to shield his special suffering." Nearer, as if from above, rueful voices are heard, which, in reality, come from the depths of the lake. And—but it were wrong not to quote the following stanza:—

"And ever as, with grizzly gleam, the crested waves came on,
Uprose a melancholy form, with short impatient moan,
Whose eyes like living jewels shone, clear-purged by the flame,
And sore the salted fires had wash'd the thin immortal frame;
And backward, in sore agony, the being stripp'd its locks,
As maiden in her beauty's pride her clasped tresses strokes."

There is nothing in Dante superior to this. Imagination shrieks as she sees through the hideous surge, ever and anon, the eyes of Eternal Torture shining out, like "living jewels." And what a picture is this of the being stripping its locks, as a maiden her clasped tresses! The revulsion here from the thin, shivering, withered, writhing hairs of this lost one, to the thick and clustering tresses of beauty, is appalling. Meanwhile, around the lake, high hills seem reeling in sympathy with the breaking waves, a circumstance reminding us of Hogarth's houses in Gin Alley, sharing in the fell spirit, and tumbling in the contagious drunkenness of the scene; and above there is a dance of lightnings,

"Crossing evermore,
Till, like a red bewilder'd map, the sky is scribbled o'er;"

a line of inspired coarseness; and in the unseen cupola over all are heard the mutterings of the mustering stores and thunders of wrath. Nor must the Fiend rest even here. From the company, and the sounds, and the bustle, dreary as they are, of the second lake, he is "stormed away" to experience the tormenting powers which are folded up in Idleness and Silence. At first, the vision sweeps through soft and unsubstantial shades, till, in the gloom, he descries, like a "red and angry

plate," a lake, a lonely lake, prepared for his abode. It is the "last lake of God's wrath," and may well therefore be

"A mirror where Jehovah's wrath in majesty alone
Comes in the Night of Worlds to see its armour girded on."

"Thou glorious mirror," says Byron, "where the Almighty's form glasses itself in tempests;" but grander than even the stormy ocean, catching the dim contour of Deity, is this grim Lake looking-glass for the Wrath of the Eternal, travelling from afar to see its "armour girded on." "All here is solemn idleness:" Silence guards the coast, and broods over the lake; no islands begem that ocean, no sun shines above—one "rim of restless halo marking the internal heat" is all the illumination; "no lonely harper comes to harp upon that fiery coast," and the Fiend feels, as he enters it, that "he is the first that ever burst upon that silent sea." Ten thousand years of tranced agony pass away, when, lo! "a change comes o'er the spirit of his dream:" a sound is in his ears, breaking the hot and hideous silence. It is the sound as of the "green-leaved earth," and there is balm and moisture in every accent; a form of beauty, soft and cool, flits into the gloom—

"A low sweet voice is in his ear, thrills through his inmost soul,
And these the words that bow his heart with softly-sad control."

And there follow words worthy of cherubic lips, like the droppings of Hybla's honey, or as the dew of Hermon; words beautiful exceedingly in themselves, in the rich flow of their music, in their melting tenderness, in their chastened imagery; but far more beautiful from the stern and awful groundwork amid which they are set, and the contrast they supply to the harsh and difficult numbers which crash and jar out the music of perdition after and before. They rise like an island of flowers upon the surface of the burning lake; they are like moonbeams softening and paling the light of the eternal flames:—

"No sister e'er hath been to thee, with pearly eyes of love—

No mother e'er hath wept for thee, an out-cast from above—

No hand hath come from out the cloud, to wash thy scarred face—

No voice to bid thee lie in peace, the noblest of thy race.

But bow thyself to God of love, and all shall yet be well;

And yet in days of holy peace and love thy soul shall dwell;

And thou shalt dwell 'mid leaves and rills, far from this torrid heat,

And I, with streams of cooling milk, will bathe thy blister'd feet.

And when the unbidden tears shall start, to think of all the past,

My mouth must haste to kiss them off, and chase thy sorrows fast.

And thou shalt walk in soft white light, with kings and priests abroad,

And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the hills of God."

And while those sweetest accents are falling like snow upon his parched ears, "dewy lips" are kissing his, till his "lava breast is cool." He wakes, and behold it is a dream! He wakes in dread revulsion, "as from a mighty blow." He wakes, and springs a moment upon his wing, to know if his wonted strength has left him. He wakes, and all the fiend is re-born within his breast. Haunted by the image of that last lake, with its tide of "idle, dull" eternity approaching, he would bury himself in blank oblivion—but "from his fear recoils again in pride, like mighty bow." Turning his eyes up to the silent night, he sees, not as his ambition would desire, trouble and terror shed from his presence over the works of God—no flying angels watching his career, but all silently, scornfully calm. The "planets, undisturbed by him, are shining in the sky;" and, as they shine, they seem to smile out still, infinite, eternal contempt upon him. Every star is as a finger of scorn pointed at his head. And, on his great lurid wing, that living thunder-cloud, the dews are distilling as on the blade of summer grass. This, oh! this stings him to madness.

"The silent magnanimity of Nature and her God

With anguish smote his haughty soul, and sent his hell abroad."

This calm universal neglect is to him more horrible than the horned flames of hell. Has he for this "led the embattled seraphim to war"—fronted the thunder of Jehovah—felt the down-griding sword of Michael—seen the rushing chariot of Immanuel—sat for ages unshrinking on the burning throne—borne, on his solitary shoulder, the Atlantean weight of the Infernal Empire—for this! to be no more noticed in the silent universe than is one leaf of nettle, or nightshade, carelessly floating on the breeze. And this shall he continue to bear! No; no more tame truces. He shall do open battle once more for his old domains.

"He shall upward go, and pluck the windows of high heaven,
And stir their calm insulting peace, though tenfold hell be given."

Like the lightning which, in "haste, licks up the life of man," aloft he springs, and is lost to sight in the far upper ether. The poet's heart now heaves high, expecting some signal judgment to go forth from the bosses of the Almighty's buckler, on which the Fiend has rushed so madly. But he waits in vain. No disturbance "blenches the golden tress or dims the eye sublime" of the stars, shining aloft in the fields of air. No red arm of anger is bared against their assailant. "Down headlong through the firmament he falls upon the north;" with drooping pinion, reversed arms, despairing eye, he sets where he rose:

"'Twas God that gave the Fiend a space, to prove him still the same,
Then bade wild hell, with hideous laugh,
be stirr'd its prey to claim."

Such is a faint analysis of a very remarkable production, which bears no resemblance to the majority of so-called poems, than does a meteoric stone, hissing from the upper air, to a piece of vulgar whinstone. It is enough of itself to make a reputation. A single poem can do this in one of three cases—when it is the only production of its author's mind, as in the case of Pickens' "Donochthead;" or when it is either exquisitely excellent, or intensely peculiar, as with Wolfe's "Lines on

the Burial of Sir John Moore," and Christopher Smart's "David." Now, "The Devil's Dream" has both the latter recommendations. It is altogether unlike any other poem ever written; and it is possessed, besides, of exalted merit. Everything is in intense keeping. Its large volume of verse—its rugged rhythm—the impenetrable obscurities which, like jet-black ornaments, are wreathed around it—its severe and awful spirit—its unearthly diction—the throes and labours of its execution—the daring homeliness of its imagery, and the whole conception of the character of its hero, are terribly true to each other, and entitle it to rank with any one book of the "Inferno." As in that great poem, too, beauty, like a vein of vegetation led along the margin of the eternal pit, and down its very sides, wins its irresistible way into the centre of the horror.

How would honest Jean Paul, that dear dreamer of all gorgeous and grotesque chimeras, have rejoiced over this Bowden emulation of his Baireuth inspirations! He would have dreamed it over again, with variations all his own, rays shooting still farther and more daringly into the abysses of night. Yet we doubt if even he could have compressed so much mystic meaning into the same compass—have struck off, from the mint of his imagination, an infernal medal so thickly inscribed. And it is clear that the Scotchman has not copied from the German. The resemblances are produced by a kindred genius, the peculiarity of which, perhaps, is, that its wing loves, in serious sport, to dip into the darkness which envelops the left side of Mirza's ocean of eternity. Both are birds of the tempest, but it is that storm which beats upon the shore which is "heaped with the damned like pebbles." Both "affect the shade;" but it is of the worm that dieth not, and eternal darkness.

The "Demoniac" is distinguished by a bare and nervous simplicity, which sorts well with the scene and the time of the story—the scene being Judea; the time, when it was being consecrated by the tread of blessed feet and the baptism of

divine blood. The riot of imagination, the pomp of words, the melody of numbers, are exchanged for a breathless air, a severe reserve, a prosaic literality, which fall with the precision and power of staturary upon the soul. The tale is told, as it might have been, by one to his fellow-standing under the darkness which, above the cross, blotted out the universe! Thus, in guttural pantings, in rude interjections, in sounds straggling and simple, is the powerful, strange, and most melting story disclosed. We admire, especially, the picture of the fiend-possessed, into the sad secrets of whose very soul the poet seems privileged to pierce; and surely never was there finer subject for idealising verse than those ancient demoniacs, with their wild locks floating in the wind of hell, "tormented before the time," all luminous with unearthly light, pacing the tombs, or plunging into the lake of Sodom, or crunching the salt ashes by its sides, or driven away, away, on the breath of their dreadful inmates, or crying to the rocks to cover them; or, in the intervals of their bondage, waiting with breathless hearts and bloodshot staring eyes for the coming of their tormentors; or wallowing and foaming in the pangs of their exorcism; or, in a milder light, afterwards, clothed and in their right mind, at the feet of their deliverer. All this Aird has included in the one figure of Herman, whose young, fresh, joyous hunter soul is supplanted by a demon, till breathed back by Jesus. We like, too, the modesty with which the poet has abstained from a subject so tempting to the rash and reckless as the Crucifixion. Feeling that this is a subject too "solemn for fiction, too majestic for ornament"—a scene across which a curtain should be sacredly stretched—he stands, like Peter, "afar off." His genius, he feels, may disport itself upon the breakers of the burning lake, but here must furl its plume of fire. And yet how impressive his representation, and how worthy of a great artist! He watches the tragedy of the universe, through the eyes of Herman's heart-sick mother, who, disappointed in her search for Christ to cure her son, has entered a

wood in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, when "a horror of great darkness falls, the quenched day is done;" and through that darkness sounds first a dull deep shock, as of some far-fallen pile of ages, and then "steps, as if shod with thunder," are heard amid the gloom; and then outsprings from that brief eclipse the day, with livelier, fresher beam, as if from the womb of the morning; and seems to ray out, even to *her* half-taught soul, the intelligence that the burden is borne, the battle won, the tragedy over, and the great Sufferer away.

We like this looking at the Cross, as men do to the sun, through the half-shut eye. It contrasts well with the impudent familiarities of French preachers, and of not a few modern poets. It reminds us of the turning aside from this great sight of Milton himself, who, not choosing to look at it, even as Aird does, through the double darkness of a forest and a quenched sun, has, in his "Paradise Regained," avoided the subject altogether. The close of the poem, again, is just the calm of the mildest of sunsets, transferred to the page, which softly pictures the evening life of the heroine, "setting in the bosom of her God;" and is, we know, almost the only passage in all his works which satisfies the fastidious taste of the author.

A nobler subject than Nebuchadnezzar, for tragedy or epic, Scripture does not furnish. There is an oriental gusto about all he does, a passionate pomp, a wild vein of poetry about him, which invest him, from first to last, with a dream-like magnificence. Whether we see him, that patient Apollyon! growing grey with his soldiers before the indomitable Tyre—nursing in his breast, the while, a deadly revenge for his deferred hopes; or riding into the affronted temple of Jehovah; or rising, in affright, from his dream of the dreadful Image, and the more dreadful Stone that smote it to dust; or rearing, in mirrory of his vision, the Image on the plains of Dura; or, looking into the burning fiery furnace, and seeing *four* men walking therein; or listening again, in the land of dream, to the fell cry, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches;"

or walking in the palace of Babylon; or driven from men, with dew for his perfumes, grass for his delicate bread, feathers instead of hairs, claws digging into the dust, instead of nails dyed in henna; or, in fine, a meek worshipper of Him who removeth kings—he furnishes scope the most abundant for artistic treatment, and for more than Mr Aird has accomplished. He has written neither a tragedy nor an epic, but the most finished of all his poems; a firm, nervous, and manly narrative; with fewer prominent beauties, or glaring defects, than some of his other works. We like in it the strong simplicity of the diction; the wild energy of parts of the dialogue; the precision and pomp of some individual descriptions; the conception of Ezekiel, turning from men to mountains, as more congenial companions, and continuing, even in the wilderness, very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and of Cyra, sweetest daughter of Israel. She, indeed, is one of the finest of female natures. Her love is wonderful, passing that of women; but the soul of Deborah mounts often to her wild eyes. Her lips have never been kissed but by "a prophetess's fire." Every inch a woman—nay, a child—the hand of God is on her head; and it is no secular fury which slumbers in those fairy fingers, and amid the strings of that lightsome lyre, by which she soothes the soul of the imperial maniac. That maniac himself, perhaps, is not drawn in such vivid and startling colours as we should have liked. He is too tame, too submissive; lacks the touch of insane grandeur which would have befitted his character—should have been made to fight his battles o'er again in the desert, to have taken a rock for the platform of his palace—a pool for the sea which laved imperial Tyre—and have tossed from his white lips the eloquence of a noble despair. Nor do we much admire the conception or execution of the underplot of the piece—the attempt on the king's life. It violates probability; who durst have sought a life protected by the inviolate sacredness of madness? circled in by the curse of the Eternal! Thank God, bad as human nature is,

that curse has generally been a hedge round its victim, a hedge nearly as strong as his blessing. Few have sought to "break those whom God hath bowed before." It distracts, too, the tissue and interest of the tale. The apparition of the king, in his own palace, at the critical moment, is, however, managed with much art and energy. The close has that unexpectedness of simplicity which distinguishes one or two of Hall's perorations; that, for instance, in the sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte, in which you are permitted, contrary to what you supposed from the elaboration of previous parts, to slide gently down from the subject, not hurled headlong from the back of a rolling period. Altogether, it is an epic in miniature, though the poetry mantles most around the bushy locks of Ezekiel, and the subtle lyre of Cyra.

We must not dilate on Mr Aird's other poems—on his "Father's Curse," with the calm sweet stream of its commencement, and the red torrent of energy which forms its close; on his "Mother's Grave"—lines more tender than any, since Cowper's on the receipt of his "Mother's Picture," though without the uniform simplicity and clearness of that delicious poem; on his "Mother's Blessing"—a series of beautiful descriptions, suspended on the string of a rather improbable and mediocre story; on his "Byron"—a high mettled gallop upon an old road, with more flow of sound, and less energy of sense, than his wont; or on his "Churchyard Eclogues," which may be compared to apple-trees growing near a graveyard, rich with the fatness of death. One figure in the second of those strange poems we particularly remember. It is that of a lost one, whose eternal employment is, on the sand of his "own place, aye to write his mother's name," and for ever does a horned tongue of flame pass by which erases that sad literature, and chases the wretch along the waste. 'Tis a dreary figure, and may be called a "character omitted in the 'Devil's Dream.'" "Othuriel," again, is the ghost of "Nebuchadnezzar," with all its simplicity, but without its strength. The tale is some-

what tamely told; and, as you read, the fear will not flee, "Has his strength gone out from him? has he become weak as other men?"

He has written, besides, in "Blackwood" and "Fraser," some prose stories of great power. Who that has read, has forgot "Buy a Broom," the most poetical of tales, and one of the most interesting? A tale is seldom read twice; but this tale has a charm besides the story—that of exquisite description, and fine, rich, mellow, and musical writing. Oh, for a Century, a Decameron, of such stories! They would positively raise the standard of the kind of composition. A strong prejudice exists against a tale; when once it "has been told," it is treated with contempt. And yet tales have constituted some of the finest productions of the human mind. What is the "Falcon?"—a tale. What "Tam O'Shanter?"—a tale. What one of Shakspeare's finest dramas?—the "Winter's Tale." What the noblest flight of Scott in the region of the supernatural?—"Wandering Willie's Tale." A tale is the germ of every other kind of composition—of novel, tragedy, comedy, epic, and all. It is the first key to turn the infant heart, which swells up to the very eyes at its mother's tale. It is often the last to win its way into the fastness of age, which weeps, and thrills, and shakes its grey locks at nothing so much as at a tale. Remember, ye sneerers at stories, the "Tale of Troy Divine," the "Arabian Nights," the tales told by Turcomans to rapt audiences, in the glorious evenings of the East; the tales of the "Great Spirit" and the "Great Waters" recounted by half-inspired red men to their children, in the forests and by the beacon-fires of the West.

Mr Aird is a native of Bowden, Roxburghshire. His parents, who still live, are in humble circumstances, but of the most amiable and respectable characters. He was originally intended for the church, but chose to turn aside into the flowery by-paths of literature. He was much distinguished at college; and his productions in "Blackwood" gained him a large share of notice among the more discrimi-

nating. He was employed for some time in editing the "Edinburgh Weekly Journal," after the death of James Ballantyne. He passed from thence to the editorship of the "Dumfries Herald"—an office which he still fills with great ability.

Mr Aird is a man of simple, unassuming manners, and high moral character.

In Dumfries, no man is more respected and loved. His appearance is striking. His figure is erect and manly. His head is well developed, especially in the moral organs. His lips are singularly rich and expressive. His whole appearance denotes a man whose "soul is like a star, and dwells apart."

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

AMERICA has been long looking for its Poet, and has been taught by many sages to believe that hitherto it has been looking in vain. Each new aspirant to the laurel has been scanned with a watchfulness and jealousy, proportioned to the height of expectation which had been excited, and to the length of time during which that expectation has been deferred; and because the risen Poet did not supply the vacuum of centuries—did not clear all the space by which Britain had got the start of her daughter—did not include in his single self the essence of Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton, and Byron—his genius was pronounced a failure, and his works naught. Tests were proposed to him, from which our home authors would have recoiled. Originalities were demanded of him, which few British writers, in this imitative age, have been able to exemplify. As in "Macbeth," not the "child's," but the "armed head," was expected to rise first from the vacant abyss. American literature must walk before creeping, and fly before walking. Not unfrequently our British journals contained programmes of the genius and writings of the anticipated Poet, differing not more from common sense, than from each other. "He must be intensely national," said one authority. "He must be broadly Catholic—of no country," said a second. "He must be profoundly meditative, as his own solitary woods," said a third. "He must be bustling and fiery, as his own railways," said a fourth. One sighed for an American Milton; another predicted the uprising of another

Goethe, "Giant of the Western Star;" and a third modestly confined his wishes within the compass of a second Shakspeare.

Pernicious as, in some measure, such inordinate expectations must have proved to all timid and vacillating minds in America, it did not prevent its bolder and more earnest spirits from taking their own way—by grafting upon the stock of imported poetry many graceful and lovely shoots of native song. In spite of the penumbra of prejudice against American verse, more fugitive floating poetry of real merit exists in its literature than in almost any other. Dana has united many of the qualities of Crabbe to a portion of the wierd power of Coleridge's muse. Percival has recalled Wordsworth to our minds, by the pensive and tremulous depth of his strains. Bryant, without a trace of imitation, has become the American Campbell—equally select, simple, chary, and memorable. In reply to Mrs Hemans, have been uttered a perfect chorus of voices—

"Sweet and melancholy sounds,
Like music on the waters."

Emerson has poured forth notes, sweet now as the murmur of bees, and now strong and unhappy as the roar of torrents; and with a voice of wide compass, clear articulation, and most musical tones, has Longfellow sung his manifold and melting numbers.

The distinguishing qualities of Longfellow seem to be beauty of imagination, delicacy of taste, wide sympathy, and mild earnestness, expressing themselves

sometimes in forms of quaint and fantastic fancy, but always in chaste and simple language. His imagination sympathises more with the correct, the classical, and the refined, than with the outer and sterner world, where dwell the dreary, the rude, the fierce, and the terrible shapes of things. The scenery he describes best is the storied richness of the Rhine, the golden glories of the Indian summer, the environs of the old Nova Scotian village, or the wide billowing prairie; and not those vast forests, where a path for the sunbeams must be hewn, nor those wildernesses of snow, where the storm and the wing of the condor divide the sovereignty. In the midst of such dreadful solitudes, his genius rather shivers and cowers, than rises and reigns. He is a spirit of the Beautiful, more than of the Sublime; he has lain on the lap of Loveliness, and not been dandled, like a lion-cub, on the knees of Terror. The magic he wields, though soft, is true and strong. If not a prophet, torn by a secret burden, and uttering it in wild, tumultuous strains, he is a genuine poet, who has sought for, and found, inspiration, now in the story and scenery of his own country, and now in the lays and legends of other lands, whose native vein, in itself exquisite, has been highly cultivated and delicately cherished.

It is to us a proof of Longfellow's originality, that he bears so well and meekly his load of accomplishments and acquirements. His ornaments have not crushed him, nor impeded the motions of his own mind. He has transmuted a lore, gathered from many languages, into a quick and rich flame, which we feel to be the flame of Genius.

It is evident that his principal obligations are due to German literature, which over him, as over so many at the present day, exerts a certain wild witchery, and is tasted with all the sweetness of the forbidden fruit. No writer in America has more steeped his soul in the spirit of German poetry, its blended homeliness and romance, its simplicity and fantastic emphasis, than Longfellow; and, if he does not often trust himself amidst the welter-

ing chaos of its philosophies, you see him, lured by their fascination, hanging over their brink, and rapt in wonder at their strange, gigantic, and ever shifting forms. Indeed, his "Hyperion" contains two or three most exquisitely absurd bits of transcendentalism.

Longfellow is rather a romantic and sentimental, than a philosophical poet. He throws into verse the feelings, moods, and fancies of the young or female mind of genius, not the cogitations of philosophy. His song is woven of moonlight, not of summer sunshine. To glorify abstractions, to flush clear, naked truth into beauty, to "build" up poems slowly and solidly, as though he were piling pyramids, is neither his aim nor his attainment. He gathers, on the contrary, roses and lilies—the roses of the hedge and lilies of the field, as well as those of the garden—and wreaths them into chaplets for the brow and neck of the beautiful. His poetry is that of sentiment, rather than of thought. But the sentiment is never false, nor strained, nor mawkish. It is always mild, generally manly, and sometimes it approaches the sublime. It touches both the female part of man's mind and the masculine part of woman's. He can at one time start unwonted tears in the eyes of men, and at another kindle on the cheeks of women a glorious glow of emotion, which the term *blush* cannot adequately measure; as far superior to it as is the splendour of a sunset to the bloom of a peach.

We have been struck with the variety of Longfellow's poems. He has written hitherto no large, recondite work. His poems are all short and occasional. He has exhibited no traces of a comic vein. His sphere is that of sentiment, moralising elegantly upon many objects. And yet, within that sphere there is little mannerism, repetition, or self-imitation. His sentiment assumes a great variety of aspects. Now it is tender to tears, and now heroic to daring; now it muses, and now it dreams; now it is a reverie, and now a rapture; now it is an allegory, now a psalm, and again a song; everything, in short, save a monotony. Nor

is this the many-sidedness of a mocking-bird. The sentiment of the varied song, as well as the song of the varied sentiment, is ever *his own*.

One of the most pleasing characteristics of this writer's works is their intense humanity. A man's heart beats in his every line. His writings all

"Take a sober colour from the eye,
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."

He loves, pities, and feels with, as well as for, his fellow "human mortal." Hence his writing is blood-warm. He is a brother, speaking to men as brothers, and as brothers are they responding to his voice. Byron addressed men as reptiles or fiends; Wordsworth and others soliloquise, careless whether their voice be listened to or not. But no poet can be so much loved who does not speak from the broad level of humanity. If we dare apply the language, "he must be touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and have been tempted in all points as we are." He must have fallen and risen, been sick and sad, been joyful and pensive, drank of the full cup of man's lot, ere he can so write that man will take his writings to his heart, and appropriate them as part of the great general human stock. A prophet may wrap himself up in austere and mysterious solitude; a poet must come "eating and drinking." Thus came Shakspeare, Dryden, Burns, Scott, Goethe; and thus have come in our day Hood and Longfellow.

Besides this quality of generous, genial manhood, Longfellow is distinguished by a mild earnestness. No poet has more beautifully expressed the depth of his conviction, that life is an earnest reality—a something with eternal issues and dependencies; that this earth is no scene of revelry, or market of sale, but an arena of contest. This is the inspiration of his "Psalm of Life:—

"Life is real, Life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal:
'Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment and not sorrow,
Is our being's destined way;

But to act that each to-morrow
Finds us farther than to-day.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time,—

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."

Glancing again critically at Longfellow's poems, we find that his genius is essentially lyrical. Neither the severity of epic power, nor the subtlety of the dramatic genius, are his. But how swiftly and surely does he respond to those passing impulses which come upon his soul, like winds from the forest, and which, like sudden gusts, are brief, musical—now swelling into high rapture, and now dying away in tremulous pathos! Mrs Hemans and Sir Walter Scott once coincided in remarking, that each tree gives forth a peculiar cadence to the wind; and we have ourselves noticed, that from the willow, there issues a dry, hissing, *eery* sound; from the sycamore, a full murmur, as if the tree were one bee-hive; from the pine, a deep, mellow, lingering tone, as though each cone were an ivory key; and from the oak a strong, sturdy, reluctant rustle, as if it were an unwilling instrument in the hand of the blast. Thus do Longfellow's finer poems play themselves off upon the autumn trees of the Western forest, as upon harps of gold—one being sad and stern—another, quiet and full, as of many murmurs rounded into one calm—a third, soft and long-drawn—and a fourth, rough, abrupt, and tormented into music.

Ere speaking of some of his poems in

detail, we must permit ourselves a word on his "Hyperion." We shall never forget the circumstances of its first perusal. We took it, as our pocket companion, with us, on our first walk down the Tweed, by Peebles, Inverleithen, Clovenford, Ashestiel, and Abbotsford. It was fine, at any special bend of the stream, or any beautiful spot along its brink, taking it out, and finding in it a conductor to our own surcharged emotions. In our solitude, we felt "we are not alone, for these pages can sympathise with us." The course of "Hyperion," indeed, is that of a river, winding at its own sweet will—now laughing and singing to itself, in its sparkling progress, and now slumbering in still, deep pools; here laving corn-fields and vineyards, and there lost in wooded and sounding glens. Interest it has much—incident, little; its charm is partly in the "Excelsior" progress of the hero's mind, partly in the sketches of the great German authors, and principally in the sparkling imagery and waving, billowy language of the book. Longfellow, in this work, is Jean Paul Richter, without his grotesque extravagances, or riotous humour, or turbulent force. He seems a much smaller and more simple form of the same genus.

We have just alluded to "Excelsior," one of those happy thoughts which seem to drop down, like fine days, from some serener region, which meet instantly the ideal of all minds, and run on afterwards, and for ever, in the current of the human heart. We can now no more conceive of a world without "Excelsior" than of a world without the "Iliad," the "Comus," or the "Midsummer Night's Dream." It has expressed in the happiest and briefest way what many minds in the age had been trying in vain to express. Thousands, therefore, were ready to cry out, "That's my thought; that's my desire; that's myself; I bear that banner; I fear not to die that death!" "Excelsior" typifies much that is heroic, and high, and disinterested in the age. "Excelsior!" cries the student, as he climbs the steep ascent of science. "Excelsior!" cries the poet, who takes up Parnassus

as but a little thing. "Excelsior!" cries the thinker; "I have passed the transcendental, let me have at the divine." "Excelsior!" cries the liver; "let me reach virtue, not merely as a law, but as a life." "Excelsior!" cries everywhere the young time; "let us onward and upward, though it be into the regions of the storm; we are weary of the past, let us try what the future will do for us." "Excelsior!" cry the dying, who feel that death is but a door into the Infinite; "let us up and breathe a purer atmosphere!"

"Excelsior" is *Life* and its *Psalm personified*. Longfellow has written in it his glowing hopes of the future, as well as his theory of the past. That figure, climbing the evening Alps, in defiance of danger, of man's remonstrance, and of woman's love, is a type of man struggling, triumphing, purified by suffering, perfected in death. And it insinuates strongly the poet's belief in that coming era in human history, when the worth and grandeur of man's regenerated *life* will cast a calm and beauty, at present inconceivable, around his *death*.

Next to "Excelsior" and the "Psalm of Life," we are disposed to rank "Evangeline." Indeed, as a work of art, it is superior to both, and to all that Longfellow has written in verse. Save "Hyperion," it is his *only* piece of pure and elaborate art. We began to read it under a certain degree of prejudice at the measure, which has been so vulgarised by Southey, in his lamentable "Vision of Judgment." But soon Southey, "Vision of Judgment," and all, were forgotten. Acadia—Arcadia it might be called—and the sweet moonlight of Evangeline's face, crowded the whole sky of our imagination. Nothing can be more truly conceived, or more tenderly expressed, than the picture of that primitive Nova Scotia, and its warmhearted, hospitable, happy, and pious inhabitants. We feel the air of the "Fore-world" around us. The light of the Golden Age—itsself joy, music, and poetry—is shining above. There are evenings of summer or autumn tide so exquisitely beautiful, so complete in their own charms, that the entrance of the

moon is felt almost as a painful and superfluous addition; it is like a candle dispelling the wierd darkness of a twilight room. So we feel, at first, as if *Evangeline*, when introduced, were an excess of loveliness — an amiable eclipser of the surrounding beauties. But even as the moon, by and by, vindicates her intrusion, and creates her own "holier day," so with the delicate and lovely heroine of this simple story—she becomes the centre of the entire scene. She is that noblest of characters, a *lady in grain*. She has borrowed her motions and attitudes from the wind-bent trees; her looks have kindled at the stars; her steps she has unwittingly learned from the moving shadows of the clouds. On her way home from confession, "when she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music." Thus should all lives be led, all steps be tuned; and thus they shall, whenever Christian Love, instead of Law, shall lead the great dance of human life. Purest of virgins, art thou to be sacrificed? Finest of vessels, art thou to be dashed in pieces? It seems almost cruel in the poet to try her so painfully, and to send her to seek her sole redress in heaven.

We think every reader must feel that the first part of "*Evangeline*" is far superior to the second. *Evangeline's* search after her lover is beautifully described, but becomes at last oppressive and painful. We cry out, in our sorrow and disappointment, for Acadia, with its crowing cocks, bursting barns, flowery meadows, and happy hearts back again.

The descriptions of American scenery in "*Evangeline*" are, in general, extremely picturesque and beautiful. Witness this, for example:—

"Now had the season return'd, when the
nights grow colder and longer,
And the retreating Sun the sign of the
Scorpion enters;
Birds of passage sail'd through the leaden
air from the icebound
Desolate northern bays, to the shores of the
tropical islands.
Harvests were gather'd in; and, wild with
the winds of September,
Wrestled the trees of the forest, as *Jacob*
of old with the angel."

The picture of the Indian summer is finer still, with the exception of the conceit with which it closes:—

"Array'd in its robes of russet, and scarlet,
and yellow;
Bright with the sheen of the dew, each
glittering tree of the forest
Flash'd like the *plane-tree* the *Persian*
adorn'd with mantles and jewels."

This last line contains a poor and forced memory. What an injury to the glorious forest-tree to compare it to the foolish and contemptible freak referred to. The simile is alike far-fetched and worthless. "I say unto you, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

By a similar conceit (a mode of writing quite unusual with him), has he spoiled one of his finest passages:—

"Meanwhile, apart in the twilight-gloom of
a window's embrasure,
Sat the lovers, and whispering together,
beholding the moon rise
Over the pallid sea, and the silvery mist of
the meadows,
Silently, one by one, in the infinite mea-
dows of heaven,
Blossom'd the lovely stars, the *forget-me-
nots of the angels.*"

Next to the spectacle of a man destroying a noble constitution, or marring fine faculties, is that of an author deliberately spoiling a passage which otherwise had touched or trembled on perfection. It is a case of literary *felo de se*. What business had the idea of a forget-me-not at such a moment? Gabriel Lajeunesse himself, we are certain, enamoured as he was, and even in that most imaginative hour, never could dream of seeing an angel with a knot of stars on his breast while visiting his true love.

Such faults are rare in this writer. Once or twice, indeed, he approaches the brink of the bathos, and snatches one of those few, perilous, and precious flowers which bloom along it. Thus, in "*Hyperion*," he compares a glacier to a gauntlet of ice, thrown down by winter, in defiance of the sun; a thought so beautiful, that you forget the danger which he has encountered and escaped in finding it for you.

A striking little copy of verses he has entitled "The Light of Stars." His "bright particular star" is not the "star of Jove, so beautiful and large," nor the star of lovers, Venus, nor the star of suicides, Saturn. It is the star of warriors, "the red light of Mars." We share with him in his feelings. Mars has, to men, more points of interest and sympathy than almost any other planet. One frozen band at least binds us to it. One white signal has been hung out by this near vessel; snow and winter are there. And if, as pled, there be inhabitants, these inhabitants must be somewhat like ourselves. There may be *fires*, there may be *hearths*, there may be *homes* in Mars! There may be struggle, there may be sin, there may be death—there is mystery, there may be victory! What home sounds, what thrilling tones, what an array of signals, what a sheaf of telegraphic rays, from that red planet! Hear Longfellow—

"Earnest thoughts within me rise,
When I behold afar,
Suspended in the evening skies,
The shield of that red star.

O star of strength! I see thee stand,
And smile upon my pain;
Thou beconest with thy mailed hand,
And I am strong again.

Within my breast there is no light,
But the cold light of stars;
I give the first watch of the night
To the red planet Mars."

We must not overlook a poem entitled "Footsteps of Angels." Who are the angels who visit and imprint his heart? No cherubim—dim to him amid all their blaze of intelligence. No strange seraphs—cold to him amid all their flames of fire. They are the friends of his youth—the loved of his early heart—now sons and daughters of the grave. The eye of his heart sees them; the ear of his heart hears their soft footsteps, and their voices so low and sweet. Have all of us not at times such angel visits? Are we not at this moment summoned to look up, and see and hear them? Ah! we know that strong, deep-furrowed face, that lofty brow, those locks sprinkled with grey, that eye

restless with the fire of intelligence, and with the light of paternal affection. We know too well, that young form, that step light as the roe's upon the mountains, that clear blue eye, that brown curling head, that forehead so high, that face so pale and beautiful, over which, ere her ten winters had passed, death had spread a ghastlier paleness—it is our Agnes, at once sister and child! And we cry,

"Oh God! if it be thus, and thou
Art not a madness and a mockery,
We yet might be most happy."

Longfellow's writings are in general prophetic of, and preparatory for, the grand reconciliation of man, both as regards man the individual, and man the species. In his "Arsenal," and his "Occultation of Orion," he shadows forth the "coming of the milder day," when there is

"Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of War's great organ shakes the
skies!
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise."

And both in "Hyperion" and "Evangeline," the agency of sorrow, in purging the eye, subduing the senses, watering all the stronger plants in the soul's garden, is abundantly recognised.

We cannot linger much longer with this delightful writer. He has scattered many other delicious drops of song along his course. Such are—"Rain in Summer," "To a Child," "To the Driving Cloud," and "The Old Clock on the Stairs." These are all amiable carols, inspirited with poetic life, decorated with chaste image, and shadowed with pensive sentiment, like the hand of manhood laid gently upon the billowing head of a child.

The character of a translator's own genius may be gathered with considerable accuracy from his selection of pieces to translate. In general, the graceful bends to the graceful, the pensive sighs back to the pensive, and the strong shadows the strong. Longfellow has not dared any lofty heights, or sounded any dark hollows, of foreign poetry. The exquisite patriarchal simplicities of the Swedish

ballad have attracted his kindred spirit. It is not "deep calling unto deep." It is one corn-field responding to another, across the hedge, under one soft westerly breeze. Need we do more than allude to "The Children of the Lord's Supper," which, both in verse and spirit, is the model of "Evangeline." Thus he characterises himself as a translator:—"The translation is literal, perhaps to a fault. In no instance have I done the author a wrong, by introducing into his work any supposed improvements or embellishments of my own. I have preserved even the measure, that inexorable hexameter in which, it must be confessed, the motions of the English muse are not unlike those of a prisoner dancing to the music of his chains; and perhaps, as Dr Johnson said of the dancing-dog, "the wonder is not that she should do it so well, but that she should do it at all."

We close our paper with feelings of gratitude and respect for our transatlantic author. It is pleasant, in this melancholy world, to "light upon" such "cer-

tain places," where beautiful dreams, and lofty, generous aspirations, lift us up, on a ladder, into ideal regions, which are yet to become real; for every such aspiration is a distinct step upwards to meet our expected New Jerusalem of man, "coming down as a bride adorned for her husband." Every volume of genuine poetry, besides, constitutes a cool grotto of retreat. We love, too, even better than the poetry of this volume, its sunny, genial, human, and hopeful spirit. Perhaps there are more depth and power, certainly there are more peculiarity and strangeness, in Emerson's volume, but over all of it is suspended a dry, rainless cloud of gloom, which chills and withers you. You become, it may be, a wiser, but certainly a sadder man. Longfellow sheds a chequered autumnal light, under which your soul, like a river, flows forward, serene, glad, strong, and singing as it flows—

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE subject of the following sketch seems a signal example of the intimate relation which sometimes exists between original genius, and a shrinking, sensitive, and morbid nature. We see in all his writings the struggle of a strong intellect to "turn and wind the fiery Pegasus" of a most capricious, volatile, and dream-driven imagination. Tennyson is a curious combination of impulse, strength, and delicacy approaching to weakness. Could we conceive, not an Æolian harp, but a grand piano, played on by the swift fingers of the blast, it would give us some image of the sweet, subtle, tender, powerful, and changeful movements of his verse, in which are wedded artificial elegance, artistic skill, and wild, impetuous impulse. It is the voice and lute of Ariel; but heard not in a solitary and enchanted

island, but in a modern drawing-room, with beautiful women bending round, and moss-roses breathing in their faint fragrance through the half-opened windows. Here, indeed, lies the paradox of our author's genius. He is haunted, on the one hand, by images of ideal and colossal grandeur, coming upon him from the isle of the Syrens, the caves of the Kraken, the heights of Ida, the solemn cycles of Cathay, the riches of the Arabian heaven; but, on the other hand, his fancy loves, better than is manly or beseeching, the tricky elegancies of artificial life—the "white sofas" of his study—the trim walks of his garden—the luxuries of female dress—and all the tiny comforts and beauties which nestle round an English parlour. From the sublime to the snug, and *vice versa*, is with him but a

single step. This moment toying on the carpet with his cat, he is the next soaring with a roc over the valley of diamonds. We may liken him to the sea-shell which, sitting complacently and undistinguished amid the commonplace ornaments of the mantelpiece, has only to be lifted to give forth from its smooth ear the far-rugged boom of the ocean breakers. In this union of feminine feebleness and imaginative strength, he much resembles John Keats, who at one time could hew out the vast figure of the dethroned Saturn, "quiet as a stone," with the force of a Michael Angelo, and, again, with all the gusto of a milliner, describe the undressing of his heroine in the "Eve of St Agnes." Indeed, although we have ascribed, and we think justly, original genius to Tennyson, there is much in his mind, too, of the imitative and the composite. He adds the occasional languor, the luxury of descriptive beauty, the feminine tone, the tender melancholy, the grand aspirations, perpetually checked and chilled by the access of morbid weakness, and the mannerisms of style which distinguish Keats, to much of the simplicity and the philosophic tone of Wordsworth, the peculiar rhythm and obscurity of Coleridge, and a portion of the quaintness and allegorising tendency which were common with the Donne, Withers, and Quarleses, of the seventeenth century. What is peculiar to himself is a certain carol, light in air and tone, but profound in burden. Hence his little lyrics—such as "Oriana," "Mariana at the Moated Grange," the "Talking Oak," the "May Queen"—are among his most original and striking productions. They tell tales of deep tragedy, or they convey lessons of wide significance, or they paint vivid and complete pictures, in a few lively touches, and by a few airy words, as if caught in dropping from the sky. By sobs of sound, by half-hints of meaning, by light, hurrying strokes on the ruddy chords of the heart, by a ringing of changes on certain words and phrases, he sways us as if with the united powers of music and poetry. Our readers will, in illustration of this, re-

member his nameless little song, beginning

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey crags, O sea!"

which is a mood of his own mind, faithfully rendered into sweet and simple verse. It is in composition no more complicated or elaborate than a house built by a child, but melts you, as that house would, were you to see it after the dear infant's death. But than this he has higher moods, and nobler, though still imperfect aspirations. In his "Two Voices" he approaches the question of all ages—Whence evil? And if he, no more than other speculators, unties, he casts a soft and mellow light around this Gordian knot. This poem is no fancy piece, but manifestly a transcript from his own personal experience. He has sunk into one of those melancholy moods incident to his order of mind, and has become "awcary of the sun," and of all the sun shines upon—especially of his own miserable idiosyncrasy. There slides in at that dark hour a still small voice: how different from that which thrilled on Elijah's ear in the caves of Horeb! It is the voice of that awful lady whom De Quincey calls *Mater tenebrarum*, our lady of darkness. It hints at suicide as the only remedy for human woes:—

"Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?"

And then there follows an eager and uneasy interlocation between the "dark and barren voice," and the soul of the writer, half spurning and half holding parley with its suggestions. Seldom, truly, since the speech by which Despair in Spenser enforces the same sad argument, did misanthropy breathe a more withering blight over humanity and human hopes; seldom did unfortunate by a shorter and readier road reach the conclusion, "there is one remedy for all," than in the utterance of this voice. Death in it looks lovely; nay, the one lovely thing in the universe. Again and again, the poet is ready to yield to the desire of his own heart, thus seconded by the mystic voice, and, in the words of one who often listened to the

same accents, to "lie down like a tired child, and weep away this life of care." But again and again the better element of his nature resists the temptation, and beats back the melancholy voice. At length, raising himself from his lethargy, he rises, looks forth—it is the Sabbath morn, and, as he sees the peaceful multitudes moving on to the house of God, and as, like the Ancient Mariner, he "blesses them unaware," straightway the spell is broken, the "dull and bitter voice is gone," and, hark!

"A second voice is at his ear,
A little whisper, silver-clear;"

and it gives him a hidden and humble hope, which spreads a quiet heaven within his soul. Now he can go forth into the fields, and

"Wonder at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers,
You scarce can see the grass for flowers."*

All nature calls upon him to rejoice, and to the eye of his heart, at least, the riddle is read.

Tennyson, in some of his poems as well as this, reveals in himself a current of thought tending towards very deep and dark subjects. This springs partly from the metaphysical bias of his intellect, and partly from the morbid emotions of his heart. And yet he seems generally to toy and trifle with such tremendous themes—to touch them lightly and hurriedly, as one might hot iron—at once eager and reluctant to intermeddle with them. Nevertheless, there is a perilous stuff about his heart, and upon his verse lies a "melancholy compounded of many simples." He is not the poet of hope, or of action, or of passion, but of sentiment, of pensive and prying curiosity, or of simple stationary wonder, in view of the great sights and mysteries of Nature and man. He has never thrown himself amid the heats and hubbub of society, but remained alone, musing with a quiet but observant eye upon the tempestuous pageant which is

* This fine line is borrowed from an old poet.

sweeping past him, and concerning himself little with the political or religious controversies of his age. There are, too, in some of his writings, mild and subdued vestiges of a wounded spirit, of a heart that has been disappointed, of an ambition that has been repressed, of an intellect that has wrestled with doubt, difficulty, and disease.

In "Locksley Hall," for instance, he tells a tale of unfortunate passion with a gusto and depth of feeling which (unless we misconstrue the mark of the branding-iron) betray more than a fictitious interest in the theme. It is a poem breathing the spirit of, and not much inferior to, Byron's "Dream," in all but that clear concentration of misery which bends over it like a bare and burning heaven over a bare and burning desert. "Locksley Hall," again, is turbid and obscure in language, wild and distracted in feeling. The wind is down, but the sea still runs high. You see in it the passion pawing like a lion who has newly missed his prey, not fixed as yet in a marble form of still and hopeless disappointment. The lover, after a season of absence, returns to the scene of his early education and hapless love, where of old he

"Wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long
result of time."

A feeling, cognate with, and yet more imperious than, those of his high aspirations springs up in his mind. It arises in spring like the crest of a singing-bird. It is the feeling of love for Amy his cousin, sole daughter of her father's house and heart. The feeling is mutual, and the current of their true love flows smoothly on, till interrupted by the interference of relatives. Thus far he remembers calmly; but here recollection strikes the fierce chord of disappointment, and he bursts impetuously forth—

"O, my cousin, shallow-hearted! O, my
Amy, mine no more!
O, the dreary, dreary moorland—O, the
barren, barren shore!"

Darting then one hasty and almost vindictive glance down her future history,

he predicts that she shall lower to the level of the clown she has wedded, and that he will use his victim a little better than his dog or his horse. Nay, she will become

"Old and formal, suited to her petty part;
With her little hoard of maxims, preaching
down a daughter's heart."

But himself, alas! what is to become of him? Live he must—suicide is too base an outlet from existence for his brave spirit. But what to do with this bitter boon of being? There follow some wild and half-insane stanzas expressive of the ambitions and uncertainties of his soul. It is the Cyclops mad with blindness, and groping at the sides of his cave. He will hate and despise all women, or at least all British maidens. He will return to the orient land, whose "larger constellations" saw a father die. He will, in his despair, take some savage woman who shall rear his dusky race. But no—the despair is momentary—he may not mate with a squalid savage; he will rather revive old intellectual ambitions, and renew old aspirations, for he feels within him that the "crescent promise of his spirit has not set." It is resolved—but, ere he goes, let every ray of remaining love and misery go forth in one last accusing, avenging look at the scene of his disappointment and the centre of his wo:—

"Howsoever these things be, a long farewell
to Locksley Hall.

Now, for me, the woods may wither; now,
for me, the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blacken-
ing over heath andholt;
Cramming all the blast before it, in its
breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain, or
hail, or fire, or snow,

For a mighty wind arises, roaring seaward,
and I go."

And thus the ballad closes, leaving, however, with us the inevitable impression that the unfortunate lover is not done with Locksley Hall nor its bitter memories—that Doubting Castle is not down, nor Giant Despair dead—that the calls of the curlews around it will still resound in his ears, and the pale face of

its Amy, still unutterably beloved, will come back upon his dreams—that the iron has entered into his soul—and that his life and his misery are henceforth commensurate and the same.

Among the more remarkable of Tennyson's poems, besides those already mentioned, are "The Poet," "Dora," "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," "Enone," "The Lotos Eaters," "Ulysses," "Godiva," and "The Vision of Sin." "The Poet" was written when the author was young, and when the high ideal of his heart was just dawning upon his mind. It is needless to say, that his view of the powers and influences of poetry is different with what prevails with many in our era. Poetry is, with him, no glittering foil to be wielded gaily on gala-days. It is, or ought to be, a sharp two-edged sword. It is not a baton in the hand of coarse authority—it is a magic rod. It is not a morning flush in the sky of youth, that shall fade in the sun of science—it is a consuming and imperishable fire. It is not a mere amusement for young lovesick men and women—it is as serious as death, and longer than life. It is tuned philosophy—winged science—fact on fire—"truth springing from earth"—high thought voluntarily moving harmonious numbers. His "Poet" is "dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love," and his words "shake the world."

The author, when he wrote "The Poet," was fresh from school, and from Shelley, his early idol. Ere writing "Dora," he had become conversant with the severer charms of Wordsworth; and that poem contains in it not one figure or flower—is bare, literal, and pathetic as the Book of Ruth. Its poetry is that which lies in all natural life, which, like a deep quiet pool, has only to be disturbed in the slightest degree to send up in dance those bells and bubbles which give it instantly ideal beauty and interest, and suddenly the pool becomes a poem!

His "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" is a poem of that species which connects itself perpetually, in feeling and memory, with the original work, whose

quintessence it collects. It speaks out the sentiments of millions of thankful hearts. We feel in it what a noble thing was the Arabian mind—like the Arabian soil, "all the Sun's"—like the Arabian climate, fervid, golden—like the Arabian horse, light, elegant, ethereal, swift as the wind. "Oh, for the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid!" Oh, for one look—though it were the last—of that Persian maid, whom the poet has painted in words vivid as colours, palpable almost as sense. Talk of enchantment! The "Thousand-and-One Nights" is one enchantment—more powerful than the lamp of Aladdin, or the "Open Sesame" of Ali Baba. The author, were he *one*—not many—is a magician—a genie—greater than Scott, than Cervantes, equal to Shakspeare himself. What poetry, passion, pathos, beauty of sentiment, elegance of costume, ingenuity of contrivance, wit, humour, farce, interest, variety, tact in transition, sunniness of spirit, dream-like wealth of imagination, incidental but precious light cast upon customs, manners, history, religion—everything, in short, that can amuse or amaze, instruct or delight, the human spirit! Like the "Pilgrim's Progress," devoured by boys, it is a devout study for bearded men.

Tennyson has expressed, especially, the moonlight voluptuousness of tone and spirit which breathes around those delicious productions, as well as the lavish magnificence of dress and decoration, of furniture and architecture, which were worthy of the witch element, the sunny climate, and the early enchanted era, where and when they were written. But we doubt if he mates adequately with that more potent and terrible magic which haunts their higher regions, as in the sublime picture of the Prince's daughter fighting with the Enchanter in mid air, or in the mysterious grandeur which follows all the adventures of Aboulfauaris. With this, too, indeed, he must have sympathy; for it is evident that he abundantly fulfils Coleridge's test of a genuine lover of the "Arabian Nights." "Do you admire," said the author of "Kubla

Khan" to Hazlitt, "the Thousand-and-One Nights?"—"No," was the answer.—"That's because you *don't dream*." But surely, since the "noticeable man, with large grey eyes," awoke in death from his long life-dream, no poet has arisen of whom the word were more true than of Tennyson, whether in reproach or commendation, asleep or awake—"Behold this dreamer cometh."

In "Enone," we find him up on the heights of Ida, with the large footprints of gods and goddesses still upon its sward, and the citadel and town of Troy, as yet unfallen, as yet unassailed, visible from its summit. Here the poet sees a vision of his own—a vision which, recorded in verse, forms a high third with Wordsworth's "Laodamia" and Keats' "Hyperion," in the classical style. Less austere and magnificent than the poem of Keats, which seems not so much a torso of earthly art as a splinter fallen from some other exploded world—less chaste, polished, and spiritual, than "Laodamia," that Elgin marble set in Elysian light, it surpasses both in picturesque distinctness and pathetic power. The story is essentially that of "Locksley Hall," but the scene is not among the flat and sandy moorland of Lincolnshire, but in the green gorges and lawns of Ida. The deceived lover is Enone, daughter of a river-god. She has been deceived by Paris, and her plaint is the poem. Melancholy her song, as that of a disappointed woman—melodious as that of an aggrieved goddess. It is to Ida, her mother mountain, that she breathes her sorrow. She tells her of her lover's matchless beauty—of her yielding up her heart to him—of the deities descending to receive the golden apple from his hands—of his deciding it to Venus, upon the promise of the "fairest and most loving wife in Greece"—of his abandonment of Enone, and of her despair. Again and again, in her agony, she cries for death; but the grim Shadow, too busy in hewing down the happy, will not turn aside at her miserable bidding. Her despair at last becomes fury; her tears begin to burn; she will arise—she will leave her dreadful solitude—

"I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and, ere the stars come forth,
Talk with the wild Cassandra; for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of arm'd men.
What this may be I know not; but I know
That whoso'er I am, by night and day,
All earth and air seems only burning fire."

And fancy follows *Cenone* to *Ilium*, and sees the two beautiful broken-hearted maidens meeting, like two melancholy flames, upon one funeral pile, mingling their hot tears, exchanging their sad stories, and joining, in desperate exultation, at the prospect of the ruin which is already darkening, like a tempest, round the towers and temples of *Troy*. It is pleasant to find from such productions that, after all, the poetry of Greece is not dead—that the oaks of *Delphos* and *Dodona* have not shed all their oracular leaves—that the lightnings in *Jove's* hand are still warm—and the snows of *Olympus* are yet clear and bright, shining over the waste of years—that *Mercury's* feet are winged still—and still is *Apollo's* hair unshorn—that the mythology of *Homer*, long dead to belief, is still alive to the airy purposes of poetry—that, though the "dreadful infant's hand" hath smitten down the gods upon the capitol, it has left them the freedom of the *Parnassian Hill*; and that a *Wordsworth*, or a *Tennyson*, may even now, by inclining the ear of imagination, hear the river-god plunging in *Scamander*—*Cenone* wailing upon *Ida*—*Old Triton* blowing his wreathed horn; for never was a truth more certain, than that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

We had intended to say something of his "Lotos-Eaters," but are afraid to break in upon its charmed rest—to disturb its sleepy spell—to venture on that land "in which it seemed always afternoon"—or to stir its melancholy, mild-eyed inhabitants. We will pass it by, treading so softly that the "blind mole may not hear a footfall." We must beware of slumbering, and we could hardly but be dull on the enchanted ground.

While "The Lotos-Eaters" breathes the very spirit of luxurious repose, and seems, to apply his own words, a perfect poem in "perfect rest," "*Ulysses*" is

the incarnation of restlessness and insatiable activity. Sick of *Ithaca*, *Argus*, *Telemachus*, and (*sub rosa*) of *Penelope* too, the old, much-enduring *Mariner King* is again panting for untried dangers and undiscovered lands:—

"My purpose holds,
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die."

Tennyson, with his fine artistic instinct, saw that the idea of *Ulysses* at rest was an incongruous thought, and has chosen rather to picture him journeying ever onwards toward infinity or death—

"It may be, that the gulfs will wash us
down—
It may be, we shall reach the happy isles,
And see the great *Achilles*, whom we
knew."

And with breathless interest, and a feeling approaching the sublime, we watch the grey-headed monarch stepping, with his few aged followers, into the bark, which is to be their home till death, and stretching away toward eternity; and every heart and imagination cry out after him—"Go, and return no more."

"*Godiva*" is an old story newly told—a delicate subject delicately handled—the final and illuminated version of an ancient and world-famous tradition. Its beauty is, that, like its heroine, it is "clothed on with chastity." It represents the imagination as gently and effectually as her naked virtue did the eye. We hold our breath, and shut every window of our fancy, till the great ride be over. And in this trial and triumph of female resolution and virtue, the poet would have us believe that nature herself sympathised—that the light was bashful, and the sun ashamed, and the wind hushed, till the sublime pilgrimage was past—and that, when it ended, a sigh of satisfaction, wide as the circle of earth and heaven, proclaimed *Godiva's* victory.

"The Vision of *Sin*" strikes, we think, upon a stronger, though darker, chord than any of his other poems. There are in it impenetrable obscurities, but, like jet black ornaments, some may think them dearer for their darkness. You

cannot, says Hazlitt, make "an allegory go on all fours." A vision must be hazy—a ghost should surely be a shadow. Enough, if there be a meaning in the mystery, an oracle speaking through the gloom. The dream is that of a youth, who is seen riding to the gate of a palace, from which

"Came a child of sin,
And took him by the curls, and led him in."

He is lost straightway in mad and wicked revel, tempestuously yet musically described. Meanwhile, unheeded by the revellers, a "vapour (*the mist of darkness!*) heavy, hueless, formless, cold," is floating slowly on toward the palace. At length it touches the gate, and the dream changes, and such a change!

"I saw
A grey and gap-tooth'd man, as lean as Death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn."

And, lighted there, he utters his bitter and blasted feelings in lines reminding us, from their fierce irony, their misanthropy, their thrice-drugged despair, of Swift's "Legion Club;" and—as in that wicked, wondrous poem—a light sparkle of contemptuous levity glimmers with a ghastly sheen over the putrid pool of malice and misery below, and cannot all disguise the workings of that remorse which is not repentance. At length this sad evil utterance dies away in the throat of the expiring sinner, and behind his consummated ruin there arises a "mystic mountain range," along which voices are heard lamenting, or seeking to explain, the causes of his ruin. One says—

"Behold it was a crime
Of sense, avenged by sense, that wore with
time."

Another—

"The crime of sense became
The crime of malice, and is equal blame."

A third—

"He had not wholly quench'd his power—
A little grain of conscience made him sour."

And thus, at length, in a darkness visible of mystery and grandeur, the "Vision of Sin" closes:—

"At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
To which an answer peal'd from that high
land,
But in a tongue no man could under-
stand;
And on the glimmering limit, far with-
drawn,
God made himself an awful rose of dawn."

A reply there is; but whether in the affirmative or negative, we do not know. A revelation there is; but whether it be an interference in behalf of the sinner, or a display, in ruddy light, of God's righteousness in his punishment, is left in deep uncertainty. Tennyson, like Addison in his "Vision of Mirza," ventures not to withdraw the veil from the left side of the eternal ocean. He leaves the curtain to be the painting. He permits the imagination of the reader to figure, if it dare, shapes of beauty, or forms of fiery wrath, upon the "awful rose of dawn," as upon a vast background. It is his only to start the thrilling suggestion.

After all, we have considerable misgivings about placing Tennyson—for what he has hitherto done—among our great poets. We cheerfully accord him great powers; but he is, as yet, guiltless of great achievements. His genius is bold, but is waylaid at almost every step by the timidity and weakness of his temperament. His utterance is not proportionate to his vision. He sometimes reminds us of a dumb man with important tidings within, but only able to express them by gestures, starts, sobs, and tears. His works are loopholes, not windows, through which intense glimpses come and go, but no broad, clear, and rounded prospect is commanded. As a thinker, he often seems like one who should perversely pause a hundred feet from the summit of a lofty hill, and refuse to ascend higher. "Up! the breezes call thee—the clouds marshal thy way—the glorious prospect waits thee, as a bride adorned for her husband—angels or gods may meet thee on the top—it may be thy Mountain of Transfiguration." But no; the pensive or wilful poet chooses to remain below.

Nevertheless, the eye of genius is flashing in Tennyson's head, and his ear is un-

stopped, whether to the harmonies of nature, or to the still sad music of humanity. We care not much in which of the tracks he has already cut out he may choose to walk; but we would prefer if he were persuaded more frequently to see visions and dream dreams—like his "Vision of Sin"—imbued with high purpose, and forming the Modern Metamorphoses of truth. We have no hope that he will ever be, in the low sense, a popular poet, or that to him the task is allotted of extracting music from the railway train, or of setting in song the "fairy tales of science"—the great astronomical or geological discoveries of the age. Nor is he likely ever to write anything which, like the poems of Burns or Campbell, can go directly to the heart of the entire nation. For no "Song of the Shirt," even, need we look from him. But the imaginative-ness of his nature, the deep vein of his moral sentiment, the bias given to his mind by his early reading, the airy charm of his versification, and the seclusion in which he lives, like a flower in its own peculiar jar, all seem to prepare him for becoming a great spiritual dreamer, who might write not only "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," but "Arabian Nights" themselves, equally graceful in costume, but impressed with a deeper sentiment, chastened into severer taste, and warmed with a purer flame. Success to such pregnant slumbers! soft be the pillow as that of his own "Sleeping Beauty;" may every syrup of strength and sweetness drop upon his eyelids, and may his dreams be such as to banish sleep from many an eye, and to fill the hearts of millions with beauty!

On the whole, Tennyson is less a prophet than an artist. And this alone would serve better to reconcile us to his silence, should it turn out that his poetic career is over. The loss of even the finest artist may be supplied—that of a prophet, who has been cut off in the midst of his mission, or whose words some envious influence or circumstance has snatched from his lips, is irreparable. In the one case, it is but a painter's pencil that is broken; in the other, it is a magic

rod shivered. Still, even as an artist, Tennyson has not yet done himself full justice, nor built up any structure so shapely, complete, and living, as may perpetuate his name.*

Alfred Tennyson is the son of an English clergyman in Lincolnshire. He is of a retiring disposition, and seldom, though sometimes, emerges from his retirement into the literary coteries of London. And yet welcome is he ever among them—with his eager physiognomy, his dark hair and eyes, and his small, black tobacco-pipe. Some years ago, we met a brother of his in Dumfries, who bore, we were told, a marked, though miniature resemblance to him, a beautiful painter and an expert versifier, after the style of Alfred.

The particulars of his literary career are familiar to most. His first production was a small volume of poems, published in 1831. Praised in the "Westminster" elaborately, and extravagantly eulogised in the "Englishman's Magazine" (a periodical conducted by William Kennedy, but long since defunct, and which, according to some malicious persons, died of this same article)—it was sadly mangled by less generous critics. "Blackwood's Magazine" doled it out some severely-sifted praise; and the author, in his next volume, rhymed back his ingratitude in the well-known lines to "Rusty, musty, fusty, crusty Christopher," whose blame he forgave, but whose praise he could not. Meanwhile, he was quietly forming a small but zealous cohort of admirers; and some of his poems, such as "Mariana," &c., were universally read and appreciated. His second production was less successful, and deserved to be less successful, than the first. It was stuffed with wilful im-

* His "Princess," published since the above, is not even an attempt towards a whole. Nor do we admire so much as the public his "In Memoriam." It is a succession of fine quaint moralisings, with many timid gleams of thought, but with no adequate subject, no consecutive power, no new insight, no free, strong motion, no real unity, and discovering rather an elaborate and imitative ingenuity than original genius.

pertinences and affectations. His critics told him he wrote ill, and he answered them by writing worse. His third exhibited a very different spirit. It consisted of a selection from his two former volumes, and a number of additional pieces—the principal of which we have already analysed. In his selection, he winnows his former works with a very salutary severity; but what has he done with that delectable strain of the "Syrrens?" We think he has acted well in stabling and shutting up his "Krakens"

in their dim ocean mangers; but we are not so willing to part with that beautiful sisterhood, and hope to see them again at no distant day, standing in their lovely isle, and singing,

"Come hither, come hither, and be our lords,
For merry brides are we.
We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words.

Ye will not find so happy a shore,
Weary mariners, all the world o'er.
Oh fly, oh fly no more."

 DR GEORGE CROLY.

Not only is the literary divine not a disgrace to his profession, he is a positive honour. His pulpit becomes an eminence, commanding a view of both worlds. He is a witness at the nuptials of truth and beauty, and the general cause of Christianity is subserved by him in more ways than one; for, first, the names of great men devoted at once to letters and religion neutralise, and more than neutralise, those which are often produced and paraded on the other side; again, they show that the theory of science sanctified, and literature laid down before the Lord, has been proved and incarnated in living examples, and does not therefore remain in the baseless regions of mere hypothesis; and, thirdly, they evince that, even if religion be an imposture and a delusion, it is one so plausible and powerful as to have subjugated very strong intellects, and that it will not therefore do for every sciolist in the school of infidelity to pretend contempt for those who confess that it has commanded and convinced them.

Literary divines, next to religious laymen, are the chosen champions of Christianity. We say next to laymen, for, when they come forth from their desks, their laboratories, or observatories, and bear spontaneous testimony in behalf of religion, it is as though the "earth" again

should "help the woman;" and the thunder of a Bossuet, a Massillon, a Hall, or a Chalmers breaking from the pulpit, does not speak so loud in behalf of our faith as the "still, small voice" issuing from the studious chamber of an Addison, a Boyle, a Bowdler, an Isaac Taylor, and a Cowper. But men who might have taken foremost places in the walks of letters and science, and yet have voluntarily devoted themselves to the Christian cause, and yet continue amid all this devotion tremblingly alive to all the graces, beauties, and powers of literature, are surely standing evidences at least of the sincerity of their own convictions, if not of the truth of that faith on which these convictions centre. And when they openly give testimony to their belief, we listen as if we heard science and literature themselves pronouncing the creed, or swearing the sacramental oath of Christianity.

Such an one is Dr George Croly. He might have risen to distinction in any path he chose to pursue; he has attained wide eminence as a literary man; he has never lost sight of the higher aims of his own profession; and he is now in the ripe autumn of his powers, with redoubled energy and hope, about to dive down in search of *new* pearls in that old deep which communicates with the omniscience of God.

Dr Croly is almost the last survivor of that school of Irish eloquence which included the names of Burke, Sheridan, Grattan, Curran, and Flood. He has most of the merits, and few of the faults, of that school. A singular school it has been, when we consider the circumstances and character of the country where it flourished. The most miserable has been the most eloquent of countries. The worst cultivated country has borne the richest crop of flowers—of speech. The barrenness of its bogs has been compensated by the rank fertility of its brains. Its groans have been set to a wild and wondrous music—its oratory has been a safety-valve to its otherwise intolerable wrongs. Yet, over all Irish eloquence, and even Irish humour, there hovers a certain shade of sadness. In vain they struggle to smile or to assume an air of cheerfulness. A sense of their country's wretchedness—their Parish position—the dark doom that seems suspended over everything connected with the Irish name, lowers over and behind them as they speak or write. Amidst the loftiest flights of Burke's speculation, the gayest bravuras of Sheridan's rhetoric, the fiercest bursts of Grattan's or Curran's eloquence, this stamp of the branding-iron—this downward drag of degradation—is never lost sight of or forgotten.

Ireland! art thou a living string of God's great lyre, the earth; or art thou an instrument, thrown aside like a neglected harp, and only valuable for the chance notes of joy or sorrow, mad mirth or despair, which the hands of passengers can discourse upon thee? Art thou only a wayward child of the mighty mother, or art thou altogether a monstrous and incurable birth? Has nature taught thee thy notes of rant mirth or yet richer pathos, or have torture and tyranny, like cruel arts of hell, awoke within thee those slumbering energies which it were well for thee had slept for ever? Well for thee it may be, but not for the world; for thy loss has been our gain, and from thy long and living death has flowed forth that long, swelling, sinking, always dying, yet never dead music, which

now sounds thy requiem, and may peradventure herald thy future resurrection.

Dr Croly has not altogether escaped the pervasive gloom of his country's literature. This speaks in the choice of his subjects, and in the lofty, ambitious tone of his manner. He would spring up above the sphere of Ireland's dire attraction! "Farthest from her is best." Irish subjects, therefore, are avoided, although from no want of sympathy with Ireland. Regions either enjoying a profounder calm, or torn by nobler agonies than those of Erin, are the chosen fields for his muse. Of his country's wild, reckless humour, always reminding us of the mirth of despairing criminals, singing and dancing out the last dregs of their life, Croly is nearly destitute. For this his genius is too stern and lofty. He does not deal in sheet lightning, but in the forked flashes of a withering and blasting invective. But in richness of figure, in strength of language, in vehemence of passion, and in freedom and force of movement, he is eminently Irish. Stripped, however, he is—partly by native taste, and partly by the friction of long residence in this country—of the more glaring faults of his country's style, its turbulence, exaggeration, fanfaronade, florid diffusion, and that ludicrous pathos which so often, in lieu of tears of grief, elicits tear-torrents of laughter. To use the well-known witticism of Curran, he has so often wagged his tongue in England, that he has at last caught its accent, and his brogue is the faintest in the world. The heat of the Irish blood and its wild poetical afflatus he has not sought, nor, if he had, would have been able to relinquish.

Dr Croly's principal power is that of gorgeous and eloquent description. There are five different species of the describer. The first describes a scene or character as it appears to him, but as it really is not, he having, through weakness of sight or inaccuracy of observation, missed the reality, and substituted a vague something, more cognate to himself than to his object. The second is the literal describer—the bare, bald truth before him is barely and baldly caught—a certain spirit

that hovered over it, as if on wing to fly, having amid the bustling details of the execution been disturbed and scared away. The third is the ideal describer, who catches and arrests that volatile film, expressing the life of life, the gloss of joy, the light of darkness, and the wild sheen of death; in short, the fine or terrible something which is really about the object, but which the eye of the gifted alone can see, even as in certain atmospheres only the rays of the sun are visible. The fourth is the historical describer, who sees and paints objects in relation to their past and future history, who gets so far *within* the person or the thing as to have glimpses behind and before about it, as if he belonged to it, like a memory or a conscience; and the fifth is the universal describer, who sees the object amidst its total bearings, representing in it more or less fully the great whole of which it is one significant part. Thus, suppose the object a tree, one will slump up its character as large or beautiful—words which really mean nothing; another will, with the accuracy of a botanist, analyse it into its root, trunk, branches, and leaves; a third will make its rustle seem the rhythm of a poem; a fourth will see in it, as Cowper in Yardley Oak, its entire history, from the acorn to the axe, or perchance from the germ to the final conflagration; and a fifth will look on it as a mouth and mirror of the Infinite—a slip of *Igdrasil*. Or is the object the ocean—one will describe it as vast, or serene, or tremendous, epithets which burden the air but do not exhaust the ocean; another will regard it as a boundless solution of salt; a third will be fascinated by its terrible beauty; a fourth, with a far look into the dim records of its experience, will call it (how different from the foregoing appellations!) the "*melancholy* main;" and the fifth will see in it the reflector of man's history, the shadow and mad sister of earth—the type of eternity!

These last three orders, if not one, at least slide often into each other, and Dr Croly appears to us a combination of the third and the fourth. His descriptions

are rather those of the poet than of the seer. They are rapid, but always clear, vivid, strong, and eloquent, and over each movement of his *pen* an invisible *pencil* seems to hang and to keep time.

Searching somewhat more accurately for a classification of *minds*, they seem to us to include five orders—the prophet, the artist, the analyst, the copist, and the combination in part of all the four. There is, first, the prophet, who receives immediately and gives out unresistingly the torrent of the breath and power of his own soul, which has become touched by a high and holy influence from behind him. This is no MECHANICAL office; the fact that he is chosen to be such an instrument, itself proclaims his breadth, elevation, power, and patency. There is next the artist, who receives the same influence in a less measure, and who, instead of implicitly obeying the current, tries to adjust, control, and get it to move in certain bounded and modulated streams. There is, thirdly, the analyst, who, in proportion to the faintness in which the breath of inspiration reaches him, is the more desirous to *turn round upon it*, to reduce it to its elements, and to trace it to its source. There is, fourthly, the copist—we coin a term, as *he* would like to turn the far-off *sigh* of the aboriginal thought, which alone reaches him, into a new and powerful spoken word—but in vain. And there is, lastly, the combination of the whole *four*—the clever, nay, gifted mimic, whose light energy enables him to circulate between, and to be sometimes mistaken for, them altogether.

Dr Croly is the artist, and in general an accomplished and powerful artist he is. There is sometimes a little of the slapdash in his manner, as of one who is in haste to be done with his subject. His style sometimes sounds like the horse-shoes of the belated traveller, "spurring apace to gain the timely inn." He generally, indeed, goes off at a gallop, and continues at this generous, breakneck pace to the close. He consequently has too few pauses and rests. He and you rush up panting, and arrive breathless

at the summit. And yet there is never anything erratic or ungraceful about the motion of the thought or style. If there be not classical repose, there is classical rapture. It is no vulgar intoxication—it is a debauch of nectar; it is not a Newmarket, but a Nemean race.

Dr Croly's intellectual distinction, is less philosophic subtlety, than strong, nervous, and manly sense. This, believed with perfect assurance, inflamed with passion, surrounded with the rays of imagination, and pronounced with a dogmatic force and dignity peculiarly his own, constitutes the circle of his literary character—a circle which also includes large and liberal knowledge, but which has been somewhat narrowed by the influence of views, in our judgment, far too close and conservative. Especially, as we have elsewhere said, whenever he hears the French Revolution he loses temper, and speaks of it in a tone of truculence, as if it were a virulent ulcer, and not a salutary blood-letting to the social system—the stir of a dunghill, and not the explosion of a volcano—the effort of a few earthworms crawling out of their lair, and producing a transient agitation in their native mud, and not a Vesuvius, moved by internal torments to cast out the central demon, and with open mouth to appeal to Heaven. To Croly this revolution seems more a retribution of unmitigated wrath, than a sharp and sudden surgical application, severe and salutary as cautery itself. Now that we have before us a trinity of such revolutions, we have better ground for believing that they are no anomalous convulsions, but the periodical fits of a singular subject, whom it were far better to watch carefully and treat kindly, than to stigmatise or assault. Bishop Butler, walking in his garden with his chaplain, after a long fit of silent thought, suddenly turned round, and asked him if he did not think that nations might get mad as well as individuals. What answer the worthy chaplain made to this question we are not informed, but we suspect that few now would coincide with the opinion of the bishop. Nations are never mad, though often mistaken and often diseased;

or, if mad, it is a fine and terrible frenzy, partaking of the character of inspiration, and telling, through all his blasphemy and blood, some great truth otherwise a word unutterable to the nations. What said that first revolution of France? It said that men are men, that "God hath made of one blood all nations who dwell upon the face of the earth," and it proved it, alas! by *mingling* together in one tide the blood of captains and of kings, of rich and poor, of bond and free; it destroyed for ever the notion of men being dust under the tread of power, and showed them at the least to be gunpowder, a substance always dangerous, and always, if trod on, to be trod on warily. What said the three days of July, 1830? They said, that if austere, unlimited tyranny exceed in guilt, diluted and dotard despotism excels in folly, and that the contempt of a people is as effectual as its anger in subverting a throne. And what is the voice with which the world is yet vibrating, as if the sun had been struck audibly and stunned upon his mid-day throne? It is that, as a governing agent, the days of expediency are numbered, and that henceforth not power, not cunning, not conventional morality, not talent, but truth has been crowned monarch of France, and, if the great experiment succeed, of the world.*

It is of Dr Croly as a prose writer principally that we mean to speak. His poetry, though distinguished, and nearly to the same extent, by the qualities of his prose, has failed in making the same impression. The causes of this are various. In the first place, it appeared at a time when the age was teeming to very riot with poetry. Scott, indeed, had betaken himself to prose novels; Southey to histories and articles; Coleridge to metaphysics; Lamb to "Elia;" and Wordsworth to his "Recluse," like the alchemist to his secret furnace. But still, with each new wound in Byron's heart, a new gush of poetry was flowing, and all eyes were watching this bard of the many sor-

* Alas! alas! This was too evidently written in 1848.

rows, with the interest of those who are waiting silent or weeping for a last breath; and at the same time a perfect crowd of true poets were finding audience, "fit though few." Wilson, Barry Cornwall, Hogg, Hood, Clare, Cunningham, Milman, Maturin, Bowles, Crabbe, Montgomery, are some of the now familiar names which were then identified almost entirely with poetical aspirations. Amid such competitors Dr Croly first raised his voice, and only shared with many of them the fate of being much praised, considerably abused, and little read. Secondly, more than most of his contemporaries, he was subjected to the disadvantage which in a measure pressed on all. All were stars seeking to shine ere yet the sun (that woful blood-spattered sun of "Childe Harold") had fairly set. Dr Croly suffered more from this than others, just because he bore in some points a strong resemblance to Byron, a resemblance which drew forth, both for him and Milman, a coarse and witless assault in "Don Juan." And, thirdly, Dr Croly's poems were chargeable, more than his prose writings, with the want of continuous interest. They consisted of splendid passages, which rather stood for themselves than combined to form a whole. The rich "bugle blooms" were trailed rather than trained about a stick, scarce worthy of supporting them, and this, with the monotony inevitable to rhyme, rendered it a somewhat tedious task to climb to the reward which never failed to be met with at last. "Paris in 1815," however, was very popular at first; and "Cataline" copes worthily, particularly in the closing scene of the play, with the character of the gigantic conspirator, whose name even yet rings terribly, as it sounds down from the dark concave of the past.

His prose writings may be divided into three classes: his fictions, his articles in periodicals, and his theological works. We have not read his "Tales of the Great St Bernard," but understand them to be powerful though unequal. His "Colonna the Painter" appeared in "Blackwood," and, as a tale shadowed by the deadly lustre of revenge, yet shining in the

beauty of Italian light and landscape, may be called an unrhymed "Lara." His "Marston; or Memoirs of a Statesman," is chiefly remarkable for the sketches of distinguished characters, here and in France, which are sprinkled through it, somewhat in the manner of Bulwer's "Devereux," but drawn with a stronger pencil and in a less capricious light. To Danton, alone, we think he has not done justice. On the principle of *ex pede Herculem*, from the power and savage truth of those colossal splinters of expression, which are all his remains, we had many years ago formed our unalterable opinion, that he was the greatest, and by no means the worst, man who mingled in the *melée* of the Revolution—the Satan, if Dr Croly will, and not the Moloch of the Paris Pandemonium—than Robespierre abler—than Marat, that squalid, screeching, demon, more merciful—than the Girondin champions more energetic—than even Mirabeau stronger and less convulsive; and are glad to find that Lord Brougham has recently been led, by personal examination, to the same opinion. The Danton of Dr Croly is a hideous compound of dandyism, diabolism, and power—a kind of coxcomb butcher, who with equal coolness arranges his moustaches and his murders, and who, when bearded in the Jacobin Club, proves himself a bully and a coward. The real Danton, so broad and calm in repose, so dilated and Titanic in excitement, who, rising to the exigency of the hour, seemed like Satan, starting from Ithuriel's spear, to grow into armour, into power, and the weapons of power—now uttering words which were "half battles," and now walking silent, and unconscious alike of his vast energies and coming doom, by the banks of his native stream—now pelting his judges with paper bullets, and now laying his head on the block proudly, as if that head were the globe—was long since pointed out by Scott as one of the fittest subjects for artistic treatment, either in fiction or the drama, "worthy," says he, "of Schiller or Shakspeare themselves."

Dr Croly's highest effort in fiction is

unquestionably "Salathiel." And it is verily a disgrace to an age, which devours with avidity whatever silly or putrid trash popular authors may be pleased to issue—such inane commonplace as "Now and Then," where the only refreshing things are the "glasses of wine" which are poured out at the close of every *third* page to the actors (alas, why not to the readers!), naturally thirsty amid such dry work, or the coarse horrors which abound in the all-detestable "Lucretia"—that "Salathiel" has not yet, we fear, more than reached a second edition. It has not, however, gone without its reward. By the ordinary fry of circulating library readers neglected, it was read by a better class, and by none of those who read it forgotten. None but a "literary divine" could have written it. Its style is steeped in Scripture.

But Croly does more than snatch "live coals from off the altar" to strew upon his style; his spirit as well as his language is oriental. You feel yourselves in Palestine; the air is that through which the words of prophets have vibrated and the wings of angels descended—the ground is scarcely yet calm from the earthquake of the crucifixion—the awe of the world's sacrifice, and of the prodigies which attended it, still lowers over the land—still gapes unmened the rent in the veil—and still are crowds daily convening to examine the fissure in the rocks, when one lonely man, separated by his proper crime to his proper and unending wo, is seen speeding, as if on the wings of frenzy, toward the mountains of Naphtali. It is Salathiel, the hero of this story—the Wandering Jew—the heir of the curse of a dying Saviour, "Tarry thou till I come."

As an artistic conception, we cannot profess much to admire what the Germans call the "Everlasting Jew." The interest is exhausted to some extent by the very title. The subject predicts an eternity of sameness, from which we shrink, and are tempted to call him an everlasting bore. Besides, we cannot well realise the condition of the wanderer as very melancholy, after all. What a fine opportunity must the fellow have of seeing the world, and the glory and the

great men thereof! Could one but get up behind him, what "pencilings" could one perpetrate by the "way!" What a triumph, too, has he over the baffled skeleton, death! What a new fortune each century, by selling to advantage his rich "reminiscences!" What a short period at most to wander—a few thousand years! And what a jubilee dinner might he not expect, ere the close, as the "oldest inhabitant," with perhaps Christopher North in the chair, and De Quincey (whom some people suspect, however, of *being* the said personage himself) acting as croupier! Altogether, we can hardly, without ludicrous emotions, conceive of such a character, and are astonished at the grave face which Shelley, Wordsworth, Mrs Norton (whose "Undying One," by the way, is dead long ago, in spite of a review, also dead, in the "Edinburgh"), Captain Medwyn (would he too had died ere he murdered the memory of poor Shelley!), Lord John Russell (who, in his "Essays by a gentleman who had left his Lodgings," has taken a very, very faint sketch of the unfortunate Ahasuerus), and Dr Croly, put on while they talk of his adventures.

The interest of "Salathiel," beyond the first splendid burst of immortal anguish with which it opens, is almost entirely irrespective of the character of the Wandering Jew. It is chiefly valuable for its pictures of oriental scenery, for the glimpses it gives of the cradled Hercules of Christianity, and for the gorgeous imagery and unmitigated vigour of its writing. Plot necessarily there is none; the characters, though vividly depicted, hurry past, like the rocks in the "Walpurgis Night"—are seen intensely for a moment, and then drop into darkness; and the crowding adventures, while all interesting individually, do not gather a deepening interest as they grow to a climax. It is a book which you cannot read quickly, or with equal gusto at all times, but which, like "Thomson's Seasons," "Young's Night Thoughts," and other works of rich massiveness, yield intense pleasure, when read at intervals, and in moments of poetic enthusiasm.

Dr Croly's contributions to periodicals are, as might have been expected, of various merit. We recollect most vividly his papers on Burke (since collected), on Pitt, and a most masterly and eloquent outline of the career of Napoleon. This is as rapid, as brief almost and eloquent, as one of Bonaparte's own bulletins, and much more true. It constitutes a rough, red, vigorous chart of his fiery career, without professing to complete philosophically the analysis of his character. This task Emerson lately, in our hearing, accomplished with much ingenuity. His lecture was Napoleon in *essence*. He indicated his points with the ease and precision of a lion-showman. Napoleon, to Emerson, apart from his splendid genius, is the representative of the faults and the virtues of the *middle class* of the age. We heard some of his auditors contend that he had drawn two portraits instead of one; but in fact Napoleon was two, if not more, men. Indeed, if you draw first the bright and then the black side of any character, you have two beings, which the skin and brain of the one actual man can alone fully reconcile. The experience of every one demonstrates at the least a dualism; and who might not almost any day sit down and write a letter, objurgatory, or condoling, or congratulatory to "my dear yesterday's self?" Each man, as well as Napoleon, forms a sort of Siamese twins—although, in his case, it was matter of thankfulness that the cord could not be cut.

Of Dr Croly's book on the "Revelation" we have spoken formerly. Under the shadow of that inscrutable pyramid it stands, one of the loftiest attempts to scale its summit and explain its construction; but to us all such seem as yet ineffectual. A more favourable specimen of his theological writing is to be found in his volume of "Sermons," published some time ago. The public has reason to congratulate itself on the little squabble which led to their publication. Some conceited persons, it seems, had thought proper to accuse Dr Croly of preaching sermons above the heads of his audience, and suggested greater simplicity. Now,

after a careful perusal of them, we would suggest, even without a public phrenological examination of those auditors' heads, that, whatever be their situation in life, they are, if unable to understand these discourses, incapable of their duties, are endangering the public, and should be remanded to school. Clearer, more nervous, and, in the true sense of the term, simpler discourses have not appeared for many years. Their style is in general pure Saxon—their matter strong, manly, and his own—their figures always forcible, and never forced—their theology sound and scriptural—and would to God such sermons were being preached in every church and chapel throughout Britain! They might recall the many wanderers who, with weary heart and foot, are seeking rest elsewhere in vain, and might counteract that current which is drawing away from the sanctuaries so much of the talent, the virtue, and the honesty of the land.

Dr Croly, as a preacher, in his best manner, is faithfully represented in those discourses, particularly in his sermons on "Stephen," the "Theory of Martyrdom," and the "Productiveness of the Globe." We admire, in contrast with some modern and ancient monstrous absurdities to the contrary, his idea of God's purpose in making his universe—not merely to display his own glory, which, when interpreted, means just, like the stated purpose of Cæsar, to extend his own *name*. Surely to circulate his essence and image—to proclaim himself merciful, even through punishment—and even in hell-flames to write himself down Love, is, as Dr Croly proclaims it, "the chief end" of God! His sermon on Stephen is a noble picture—we had almost said a daguerreotype—of that first martyrdom. His "Productiveness of the Globe" is richer than it is original. His "Theory of Religion" is new, and strikingly illustrated. His notion is, that God, in three different dispensations—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian—has developed three grand thoughts—first, the being of God; secondly, in shadow, the doctrine of atonement; and thirdly, that

of immortality. With this arrangement we are not entirely satisfied, but reserve our objections till the "conclusion of the whole matter," in the shape of three successive volumes on each of these periods, and the idea of each, has appeared, as we trust it speedily shall.

We depicted, some time since, in a periodical, our visit to Dr Croly's chapel, and the impression made by his appearance, and the part of his discourse we heard. It seemed to us a shame to see the most accomplished clergyman in London preaching to so thin an audience; but perhaps it is accounted for partly by the strictness of his conservative principles, and partly by the stupid prejudice which exists against all literary divines. Latterly, we are told, his attendance has greatly increased.

We are sorry we cannot, ere we conclude, supply any particulars about his history. Of its details we are altogether ignorant. In conversation, he is power-

ful and commanding. Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, we remember, describes him as rather disposed to take the lead, but so exceedingly intelligent that you entirely forgive him. He has been, as a literary man, rather solitary and self-asserting—has never properly belonged to any clique or coterie—and seems to possess an austere and somewhat exclusive standard of taste.

It is to us, and must be to the Christian world, a pleasing thought to find such a man devoting the maturity of his mind to labours peculiarly professional; and every one who has the cause of religion at heart must wish him God speed in his present researches. Religion has in its abyss treasures yet unsounded and unsunned, though strong must be the hand, and true the eye, and retentive the breath, and daring, yet reverent the spirit of their successful explorer—and such we believe to be qualities possessed by Dr Croly.

SYDNEY YENDYS.

THIS book* we hesitate not to pronounce the richest volume of recent poetry next to "Festus." It is a "wilderness" of thought—a sea of towering imagery and surging passion. Usually a man's first book is his richest, containing, as it generally does, all the good things which had been accumulating in his portfolio for years before he published. But while "The Roman" was full of beauties, "Balder" is overflowing, and the beauties, we think, are of a rarer and profounder sort. There was much poetry in "The Roman," but there was more rhetoric. Indeed, many of the author's detractors, while granting him powers of splendid eloquence, denied him the possession of the purely poetic element. "Balder" must, unquestionably, put these to silence, and convince all worth convincing, that Yendys is intensely and transcendently a poet.

* "Balder." By the Author of "The Roman."

In two things only does "Balder" yield to "The Roman." It has, as a story, little interest, being decidedly subjective rather than objective; and, secondly, its writing is not, as a whole, so clear. In "The Roman," he was almost always distinctly, dazzlingly clear. The Monk was never in a mist for a moment; but Balder, as he has a Norse name, not unfrequently speaks or bellows from the centre of northern darkness. We speak, we must say, however, after only one reading; perhaps a second may serve to clear up a good deal that seems obscure and chaotic.

The object of the poet is to show that natural goodness, without the divine guidance, is unable to conduct even the loftiest of the race to any issue but misery and despair. This he does in the story of Balder—a man of vast intelligence, and aspiring to universal intellectual power—who, partly through the illness of his

wife, represented as the most amiable of women, and partly through his own unsatisfied longings of soul, is reduced to absolute wretchedness, and is left sacrificing her life to his disquietude and baffled ambition. The poem has one or two interlocutors besides Balder and Amy, but consists principally of soliloquies uttered and songs sung by these two in alternate scenes, and has very little dramatic interest. It is entitled "Balder, Part First;" a title which pretty broadly hints that a second poem—with a far sublimer argument (the inevitable sequel of the former), showing how, since natural goodness fails in reforming the world, or making any man happy, divine Goodness must be expected to perform the work—may be looked for.

We pass from the general argument and bearing of the poem, to speak more in detail of its special merits and defects. The great merit of the book, as we have already hinted, is its Australian wealth of thought and imagery. Bailey must look after his laurels; Tennyson, Smith, and Bigg are all in this one quality eclipsed by Yendys. Nor are the pieces of gold small and of little value; many of them are large nuggets—more precious than they are sparkling. Here, for instance, is a cluster of noble similitudes, reminding you of Jeremy Taylor's thick rushing "So have I seen:"—

"Nature from my birth
Confess'd me, as one who in a multitude
Confesseth her beloved, and makes no sign;
Or as one all unzoned in her deep haunts,
If her true love come on her unaware,
Hastes not to hide her breast, nor is afraid;
Or as a mother, 'mid her sons, displays
The arms their glorious father wore, and, kind,
In silence, with discerning love commits
Some lesser danger to each younger hand,
But to the conscious eldest of the house
The naked sword; or as a sage, amid
His pupils in the peopled portico,
Where all stand equal, gives no precedence,
But by intercalated look and word,
Of equal seeming, wise but to the wise,
Denotes the favour'd scholar from the crowd;
Or as the keeper of the palace-gate
Denies the gorgeous stranger, and his pomp
Of gold, but at a glance, although he come
In fashion as a commoner, unstart'd,
Lets the prince pass."

By what a strong, rough, daring figure does Balder describe the elements of his power:—

"Thought, Labour, Patience,
And a strong Will, that, being set to boil
The broth of Hecate, would shred his flesh
Into the caldron, and stir deep, with arms
Flay'd to the seething bone, ere there default
One tittle from the spell—these should not
strive
In vain!"

"The repose
Of Beauty—where she lieth bright and still
As some spent angel, dead-asleep in light
On the most heavenward top of all this world,
Wing-weary."

Of what follows death he says—

"The first, *last secret all men hear, and none*
Betray."

"My hand shakes;
But with the trembling eagerness of him
Who buys an Indian kingdom with a bead."

"Fancy, like the image that our boors
Set by their kine, doth milk her of her tears,
And loose the terrible unsolved distress
Of timid Nature."

"Men of drug and scalpel still are men.

I call them gnomes
Of science, miners who scarce see the light,
Working within the bowels of the world
Of beauty."

"Love
Makes us all poets —"

"From the mount
Of high transfiguration you come down
Into your common lifetime, as the diver
Breathes upper air a moment ere he plunge,
And by mere virtue of that moment lives
In breathless deeps, and dark. We poets
live

Upon the height, saying, as one of old,
'Let us make tabernacles: it is good
To be here.'"

"Dauntless Angelo,
Who drew the Judgment, in some daring
hope
That, seeing it, the gods could not depart
From so divine a pattern."

"Sad Alighieri, like a waning moon
Setting in storm behind a grove of bays."

The descriptions which follow, in pages 91 and 92—of Milton and Shakspeare—are very eloquent, but not, it appears to us, very characteristic. They are splendid evasions of their subjects. Reading Milton is *not* like swimming the Alps, as an ocean sinking and swelling with the

billows; it is rather like trying to fly to heaven, side by side with an angel who is at full speed, and does not even see his companion—so eagerly is he straining at the glorious goal which is fixing his eye, and from afar flushing his cheek. Nor do we much admire this:—

"Either his muse
Was the recording angel, or that hand
Cherubic which fills up the Book of Life,
Caught what the last relaxing gripe let fall
By a death-bed at Stratford, and henceforth
Holds Shakspeare's pen."

No, no, dear Sydney Yendys, Shakspeare was no cherub, or seraph either; he was decidedly an "earth spirit," or rather, he was just honest, play-acting, ale-drinking Will of Stratford, with the most marvelous daguerreotypic brow that ever man possessed, and with an immense fancy, imagination, and subtle, untrained intellect besides. He knew well a "Book of Life;" but it was not "the Lamb's!"—it was the book of the wondrous, living, loving, hating, maddening, laughing, weeping heart of man. Call him rather a diver than a cherub, or, better still, with Hazlitt and Scott, compare him to that magician in the eastern tale who had the power of *shooting his soul* into all other souls and bodies, and of looking at the universe through *all human eyes*. We are, by this comparison of Shakspeare to an angel, irresistibly reminded, of Michael Lambourne in "Kenilworth," who, after in vain trying to enact Arion, at last tears off his vizard, and cries "Cog's-bones!" He was none of Arion, or Orion either, but honest Mike Lambourne, that had been drinking Her Majesty's health from morning till midnight. Lambourne was just as like Orion, or his namesake the archangel Michael, as Shakspeare like a cherubic recorder.

Now for another cluster of minor, but exquisite, beauties, ere we come to give two or three superb passages:—

"Sere leaf, that quiverest through the sad-
still air;
Sere leaf, that waverest down the sluggish
wind;
Sere leaf, that whirlest on the autumn gust,
Free in the grassy anarchy of death:

The sudden gust that, *like a headsman wild,*
Uplifteth beauty by her golden hair,
To show the world that she is dead indeed."

"The bare hill-top
Shines near above us; I feel like a child
Nursed on his grandsire's knee, *that longs*
to stroke
The bald bright forehead; shall we climb?"

"She look'd in her surprise
As when the Evening Star, *ta'en unaware,*
While *fearless she pursues across the Heavens*
Her Lover-Sun, and on a sudden stands
Conquest in the pursuit, before a world
Ugazing, in her maiden innocence
Disarms us, and so looks, that she becomes
A worship evermore."

"The order'd pomp and sacred dance of
things."

"This is that same hour
That I have seen before me as a star
Seen from a rushing comet through the
black
And forward night, which orbs, and orbs,
and orbs,
Till that which was a shining spot in space
Flames out between us and the universe,
And burns the heavens with glory."

We quoted his description of Night
once before from MS. We give it again,
however:—

"And lo! the last strange sister, but though
last,
Elder and haught, called Night on earth,
in heaven
Nameless, for in her far youth she was
given,
Pale as she is, to pride, and did bedeck
Her bosom with innumerable gems.
And God He said, 'Let no man look on her
For ever;' and, begirt with this strong spell,
The Moon in her wan hand, she wanders
forth,
Seeking for some one to behold her beauty;
And wheresoe'er she cometh, eyelids close,
And the world sleeps."

This description has been differently
estimated. Some have called it magni-
ficent, and others fantastic; some a match-
less gem, and others a colossal conceit.
But we think there can be but one opin-
ion about the following picture of Even-
ing. It seems to us as exquisitely beau-
tiful as anything in Spenser, Wordsworth,
or Shelley:—

"And seest thou her who *knedeth clad in gold*
And *purple,* with a *flush upon her cheek,*

And upturn'd eyes, full of the love and sor-
row
Of other worlds! 'Tis said, that when the
sons
Of God did walk the earth, she loved a star."

Here the description should have stopped, and here we stop it, wishing that the author had. But it is curious and characteristic, not so much of the genius as of the temperament (or rather of bodily weakness, influencing that temperament) of this gifted poet, that he often sinks and falls on the very threshold of perfection. Another word, and all were gained, to the very measure and stature of Miltonic excellence; but the word comes not, or the wrong word comes instead; and as Yendys, like the tiger, takes no second spring, the whole effect is often lost. We notice the same in Shelley, Keats, and especially in Leigh Hunt, who has made and spoiled many of the finest poetic pictures in the world. Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Alexander Smith, are signal in this, that all their set descriptions and pet passages are finished to the last trembling articulation; complete even to a comma. Yendys has, perhaps, superior, or equal genius; he has also an equal will and desire to elaborate; but, alas! while the spirit is always willing, the flesh is often weak.

Speaking of the Resurrection to Amy, Balder says:—

"My childhood's dream. Is it a dream?
For thou
Art such a thing as one might think to see
Upon a footstone, sitting in the sun,
Beside a broken grave."
"I have been like
A prophet fallen on his prostrate face
Upon the hill of fire."

Such is the prophet above. Mark him now, as he comes down to mankind:—

"In the form
Of manhood I will get me down to man!
As one goes down from Alpine top with
snows
Upon his head, I, who have stood so long
On other Alps, will go down to my race,
Snow'd on with somewhat out of divine air;
And merely walking through them with a
step
God-like to music, like the golden sound

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Of Phœbus' shoulder'd arrows, I will shake
The laden manna round me, as I shake
Dews from this morning tree."

He has, two or three pages after this, a strange effusion, called the "Song of the Sun," which we predict shall divide opinion still more than his "Night." Some will call it worthy of Goethe; others will call it a forced extravaganza, a half-frenzied imitation of Shelley's "Cloud." We incline to a somewhat intermediate notion. At the first reading, it seemed to us to bear a suspicious resemblance, not to Shelley's "Cloud," but to that tissue of noisy nonsense (where, as there was no reason, there ought at least to have been rhyme), Warren's "Lily and the Bee." Hear this, for instance. Mark, it is Sol that speaks:—

"Love, love, love, how beautiful, oh love!
Art thou well-awaken'd, little flower?
Are thine eyelids open, little flower?
Are they cool with dew, oh little flower?
Ringdove, Ringdove,
This is my golden finger;
Between the upper branches of the pine
Come forth, come forth, and sing unto my
day."

Who will encore the sun in such ditties as these? But he has some more vigorous strains, worthy almost of that voice wherewith Goethe, in his "Prologue to Faust," has represented him making "music to the spheres:—"

"I will spend day among you like a king!
Your water shall be wine because I reign!
Arise, my hand is open, it is day!
Rise! as men strike a bell, and make it
music,
So have I struck the earth, and made it
day.
As one blows a trumpet through the valleys,
So from my golden trumpet I blow day.
White-favour'd day is sailing on the sea,
And, like a sudden harvest in the land,
The windy land is waving gold with day!
I have done my task;
Do yours. And what is this that I have
given,
And wherefore? Look ye to it! As ye can,
Be wise and foolish to the end. For me,
I under all heavens go forth, praising God."

Well sung, old Baal! Thou hast become a kind of Christian in these latter days. But we have seen a far stronger,

less mystic, and clearer song, attributed to thy lips before, although Yendys has not. *His*, as a whole, is not worthy either of thee or himself!

But what beautiful words are these about the sun's darling—Summer—immediately below this Sun-song?—

"Alas! that one
Should use the days of summer but to live,
And breathe but as the needful element
The strange, superfluous glory of the air!
Nor rather stand apart in awe beside
Th'untouch'd Time, and saying o'er and o'er,
In love and wonder, 'These are summer-
days.'"

We quote but one more of these random and ransomless gems:—

"The Sublime and Beautiful,
Eternal twins, one dark, one fair;
She leaning on her grand heroic brother,
As in a picture of some old romaunt."

We promised next to quote one or two longer passages. We wish we had room for all the description of Chamouni, which, like the scene, is unapproachable—the most Miltonic strain since Milton—and this, because it accomplishes its sublime effects merely by sublime thought and image, almost disdainingly sought but simple and colloquial words. Yet we must give a few scattered stones from this new Alp in descriptive literature—this, as yet, the masterpiece of its author's genius:—

"Chamouni, 'mid sternest Alps
The gentlest valley; bright meandering track
Of summer, when she winds among the snows
From land to land. Behold its fairest field
Beneath the bold-scarr'd forehead of the hills
Low lying, like a heart of sweet desire,
Pulsing all day a living beauty deep
Into the sullen secrets of the rocks,
Tender as Love amid the Destinies
And Terrors; whereabout the great heights
stand,
Down-gazing, like a solemn company
Of grey heads met together to look back
Upon a far-fond memory of youth."

"There being old
All days and years they maunder on their
thrones
Mountainous mutterings, or through the vale
Roll the long roar from startled side to side,
When whose, lifting up his sudden voice
A moment, speaketh of his meditation,
And thinks again. There shalt thou learn
to stand

One in that company, and to consume
With them, saying, 'Thou, oh Alp, and thou,
and thou,
And I.' Nathless, proud equal, look thou
take
Heed of thy peer, lest he perceive thee not—
Lest the wind blow his garment, and the hem
Crash thee, or lest he stir, and the mere
dust
In the eternal folds bury thee quick."

Coleridge, in his "Hymn to Mont Blanc"—a hymn of which it is the highest praise to say that it is equal to the subject, to Thomson's hymn at the end of "The Seasons," to Milton's hymn put into the mouth of our first parents, and to this grand effusion of Sydney Yendys—says,

"Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty
voice,
And straight stood still,
Motionless torrents—silent cataracts!"

Balder has thus nobly expanded, if he ever (which we doubt) thought of, the Coleridgean image:—

"The ocean of a frozen world;
A marble storm in *monumental rage*;
Passion at nought, and strength still strong
in vain—
A wrestling giant, spell-bound, but not dead,
As though the universal deluge pass'd
These confines, and when forty days were o'er,
Knew the set time obedient, and arose
In haste. But Winter *lifted up his hand*,
And stay'd the everlasting sign, which strives
For ever to return. Cold crested tides,
And cataracts more white than wintry foam,
Eternally in act of the great leap
That never may be ta'en—these fill the gorge,
And rear upon the steep uplifted waves
Immoveable, that proudly *feign to go*."

There follow a number of verses, not so clearly representing the magnificent idea in the author's mind to ordinary readers as we might have wished. Yet all this dim gulf of thought and image is radiant, here and there, with poetry. But how finely this passage sweetens and softens the grandeur before and after:—

"Here, in the lowest vale,
Sit we beside the torrent, till the goats
Come tinkling home at eve, with pastoral
horn,

Slow down the winding way, plucking sweet
 grass
 Amid the yellow pansies and harebells blue.

The milk is warm,
 The cakes are brown;
 The flax is spun,
 The kine are dry;
 The bed is laid,
 The children sleep;
 Come, husband, come,
 To home and me.

So sings the mother as she milks within
 The chalet near thee, singing so for him
 Whom every morn she sendeth forth alone
 Into the waste of mountains, to return
 At close of day, like a returning soul
Out of the Infinite: lost in the whirl
 Of changing systems, and the wilderness
 Of all things, but to one remember'd trust,
 One human heart, and unforgotten cell,
 True in its ceaseless self, and in its time
 Restored."

There follows a fine picture of the
 "trouble" making cold the Alpine sum-
 mits as the sun sets:—

"For they do watch
 The journey of the setting sun, as one
 Who, when the weaker inmates of the house
 Have sunk about his feet in dews and shades
 Of sorrow, watches still, with brows of light
 And manly eye, a brother on his way;
 But when the lessening face shines no return,
 Through distance slowly lengthening, and
 sinks slow
 Behind the hill-top, nor him, looking back,
 The straining sense discerns, nor the far sound
 Of wheels, *stands fix'd in sudden gloom pro-
 found,*
 And thoughts more stern than wo."

This, too, is very striking—

"These fall back aghast in sight
 Of everlasting Winter, where, snow-borne
 In his white realm, for ever white, he sits
 Invisible to men; and in his works
 Gives argument of that which seen makes
 faint
 Aspiring Nature, and his throne a mount
 Not to be touch'd."

As the darkness deepens, the poet,
 resting his eye upon the vast snow of the
 upper hills, which alone continues visible,
 is reminded of a Norland legend; and
 with a powerful picture of it the noble
 strain closes:—

"There was a legend wild—whisper'd at eve,
 Late round the dying watchfires to swed
 men

In these dead seasons, whence our Danish
 sires—

Of the Great Arctic Ghost, the efficient
 power
 And apparition of the frozen North,
 The mystic Swan of Norna, the dread bird
 Of destiny, world-wide, with roaring wings
 Flapping the ice-wind and the avalanche,
 And white and terrible as polar snows—
 By them unseen, behold it! through the
 night
 Swooping from heaven, its head to earth,
 its neck
 Down-streaming from the cloud; above the
 cloud,
 Its great vans through a rolling dust of
 stars,
 Thundrous descending in the rush of fate."

Our readers will notice, in these and
 the foregoing extracts, a vast improve-
 ment over "The Roman" in the music
 of the versification. The verse of "The
 Roman" was constructed too much on
 the model of Byron, who often closes
 and begins his lines with expletives and
 weak words. The verse of Yendys is
 much more Miltonic. We give, as a
 specimen of this, and as one of the finest
 passages in the poem, the following de-
 scription of Morn:—

"Lo, Morn,
 When she stood forth at universal prime,
 The angels shouted, and the dews of joy
 Stood in the eyes of earth. While here she
 reign'd,
 Adam and Eve were full of orisons,
 And could not sin; and so she won of God,
 That ever when she walketh in the world,
 It shall be Eden. And around her come
 The happy wonts of early Paradise.
 Again the mist ascendeth from the earth,
 And watereth the ground; and at the sign,
 Nature, that silent saw our wo, breaks forth
 Into her olden singing; near and far
 The full and voluntary chorus tune
 Spontaneous throats.

Once again
 The heavens forget their limits, pinions bright
 O'erpassing mix th' ethereal bounds with ours,
 And winds of morning lead between their
 wings
 Ambrosial odours, and celestial airs,
 Warm with the voices of a better world:
 Dews to the early grass, light to the eyes,
 Brooks to the murmuring hills, spring to the
 earth,
 Sweet winds to opening flowers, moan to the
 heart.
 But more than dew to grass, or light to
 eyes,

Or brooks to murmuring hills, or spring to
earth,
Or winds to opening flowers, morn to the
heart!
Once more to live is to be happy; Life,
With *backward streaming hair, and eyes of
haste,*
That look beyond the hills, doth urge no more
Her palpitating feet; her wild hair falls
Soft through the happy light upon her limbs;
She turns her wondering gaze upon her-
self,
Sweet saying 'It is good.'

We are heal'd;

The curse falls from our eyelids; all the
thorns
And thistles that do plague us, *clad in gems,*
Stand round.
All fetters break.

We are not dogs

Nail'd to a needful den, but wing'd lions,
And walk the earth from choice—the fair free
earth.

The pulse of Being flows; the ills that ran
Along her veins, the hand of Incubus
Upon her throat, are gone like night! All
things

Do well, and still his function is to each
Consummate welfare: as the unheeded garb
Upon the rising and the falling breast
Of beauty, that still moveth as she moves,
Breathes with her breath, and quivers with
her sighs,
So Nature's varied robe lies light on her.

Morn hath no past.

Primeval, perfect, ahe, not born to toll,
Steppeth from under the great weight of
life,
And stands as at the first.

As love, that hath his cell

In the deep secret heart, doth with his breath
Enrich the precincts of his sanctuary,
And glorify the brow, and tint the cheek;
As in a summer-garden, one beloved,
Whom roses hide, unseen fills all the place
With happy presence; as to the void soul,
Beggard with famine and with drought, lo,
God!

And there is great abundance; so comes
MORN,
Pleniſhes all things, and completes the
world."

Listen to his description of England.
It is elaborate, but the elaboration is suc-
cessful:—

"This dear English land!

This happy England, loud with brooks and
birds,
Shining with harvests, cool with dewy trees,
And bloom'd from hill to dell; but whose best
flowers
Are daughters, and Ophelia still more fair

Than any rose she weaves; whose noblest
floods

The pulsing torrent of a nation's heart;
Whose forests stronger than her native oaks
Are living men; and whose unfathom'd lakes,
For ever calm, the unforgett'd dead
In quiet grave-yards, willow'd seemly round,
O'er which To-day bends sad, and sees his
face;

Whose rocks are rights, consolidate of old,
Through unremember'd years, around whose
base

The ever-surgings roll and roar
Perpetual, as around her cliffs the seas,
That only wash them whiter; and whose
mountains

Souls that from this mere footing of the earth
Lift their great virtues, through all clouds of
Fate,

Up to the very heavens, and make them rise,
To keep the gods above us."

At the foot of the page we find some-
thing far better:—

"Balder. Is this blossom sweet?

Doctor. Most fragrant.

Balder. Yet I pluck'd it on a rock
Where common grass had died.

Learn this, my friend:

The secret that doth make a flower a flower,
So frames it, that to bloom is to be sweet,
And to receive to give. The flower can die,
But cannot change its nature, though the
earth

Starve it, and the reluctant air defraud;
No soil so sterile, and no living lot
So poor, but it hath somewhat still to spare
In bounteous odours. Charitable they
Who, be their having more or less, so have,
That less is more than need, and more is
less

Than the great heart's good-will."

We could select a hundred passages of
equal merit; but, as faithful critics, are
bound now to take notice, and that at
some little length, of what we think the
defects of this remarkable poem.

We think that the two main objections
to "Balder" will be monotony and ob-
scurity. We will not say of the hero,
what an admirer of Yendys said of the
Monk in "The Roman," that he is a
great bore and humbug; but we will say
that he talks too much and does too little.
The poem is little else than one long so-
liloquy—a piece of thinking aloud; and
this kind of mental dissection, however
masterly, begins, toward the end of 282
pages, to fatigue the reader. "Balder"

is in *this* respect a poem of the Manfred and Cain school, but is far longer, and thus falls more on the attention than they. A more fatal objection is the great obscurity of much in this poem. The story does not pervade it, as a clear road passes through a noble landscape, or climbs a lofty hill, distinct even in its windings, and forming a line of light, connecting province with province; it is a footpath piercing dark forests, and often muffled and lost amid their umbrage. The wailings of Balder toward the close become oppressive, inarticulate, and half-frenzied; and from the lack of interest connected with him as a person, seem unnatural, and produce pain rather than admiration. This obscurity of Yendys has been, as we hinted before, growing on him. We saw few traces of it in "The Roman." It began first to appear in some smaller poems he contributed to the "Athenæum," and has, we trust, reached its climax in the latter pages and scenes of "Balder." It is produced partly by his love of personification and allegory—figures in which he often indeed greatly excels; partly by a diseased subtlety of introspective thought; partly by those fainting-fits to which his demon (like a very different being, Giant Despair in the "Pilgrim") is subject at certain times, and partly by a pedantry of language, which is altogether unworthy of so masculine a genius.

Take two specimens of this last-mentioned fault:—

"Adjusting every witness of the soul,
By such external warrants I do reach
Herself; the centre and untaken core
Of this enchanted castle, whose far lines
And strong circumvallations, in and in
Concentring, I have carried, but found not
The foe that makes them deadly; and I
stand

Before these most fair walls; and know he lies
Contain'd, and in the wont of savage war
Prowl round my scathless enemy, and plot,
Where, at what time, with what consum-
mate blow,
To storm his last retreat, and sack the sense
That dens her fierce decease."

The second is worse, with the exception of the first four lines:—

"As one should trace

An angel to the hill wherefrom he rose
To heaven, and on whose top the vacant steps,
In march progressive, with no backward print,
A sudden cease. Sometimes, being swift, I
meet

His fallen mantle, torn off in the wind
Of great ascent, whereof the *Attalic pomp*
Between mine eyes and him perchance con-
ceals

The *bare celestial*. Whose still happier speed
Shall look up to him, while the *blinding toy*,
In far perspective, is but as a plume
Dropp'd from the eagle? Whose *talarian*
feet

Shall stand unshod before him while he
spreads
His pinions?"

His description of the heroine, with all its exquisite touches, is considerably spoiled by a similar unwise elaboration and intricacy of language:—

"But when the year was grown,
And sweet by warmer sweet to nuptial June,
The *flowery adolescence* slowly fill'd,
Till, in a *passion of roses*, all the time
Flush'd, and around the glowing heav'
made suit,
And onward through the *rank and buxom*
days," &c.

There is a mixture of fine fancy with the quaintness and odd phraseology of what follows:—

"She came in September,
And if she were o'erlaid with lily leaves,
And *substantiv'd by mere content of dew*,
Or limb'd of flower-stalks and sweet pedicles,
Or made of golden dust from thigh of bees,
Or caught of morning mist, or the unseen
Material of an odour, her *pure text*
Could seem no more remote from the corrupt
And seething compound of our common flesh!"

A splendid passage near this is utterly spoiled by language as apparently affected as anything in Hunt's "Foliage," or Keats' "Endymion":—

"Nature thus—
The poet Nature singing to herself—
Did make her in sheer love, having delight
Of all her work, and doing all for joy,
And built her like a temple wherein cost
Is absolute; dark beam and hidden raft
Shittim; each secret work and covert use
Fragrant and golden; all the virgin walls
Pure, and within, without, *prive and apart*
From buried plinth to viewless pinnacle,
Enrich'd to God."

In justice, we must add one of the better passages of this very elaborate, and in many points signally felicitous description:—

"Yet more I loved
An art, which of all others seem'd the voice
And argument, rare art, at better close
A chosen day, worn like a jewel rare
To beautify the beauteous, and make bright
The twilight of some sacred festival
Of love and peace. Her happy memory
Was many poesies, and when serene
Beneath the favouring shades, and the first
star
She audibly remember'd, they who heard
Believed the Muse no fable. As that star
Un sullied from the skies, out of the shrine
Of her dear beauty beautifully came
The beautiful, untinged by any taint
Of mortal dwelling, neither flush'd nor
pale,
Pure in the naked loveliness of heaven—
Such and so graced was she."

Smith and Yendys differ very materially in their conception of woman. Smith's females are houris in a Mahometan heaven; those of Yendys are angels in the Paradise of our God. Smith's emblem of woman is a rich and luscious rose, bending to every breath of wind, and wooing every eye; that of Yendys is a star looking across gulfs of space and galaxies of splendour, to one chosen earthly lover, whose eyes alone respond to the mystic messages of the celestial bride. Smith's idea of love, though not impure, is passionate; that of Yendys is more Platonic than Plato's own. We think that the true, the human, the poetic, and the Christian idea of love, includes and compounds the sensuous and the spiritual elements into one—a *tertium quid*—diviner, shall we say? because more complete than either; and which Milton and

Coleridge (in his "Love") have alone of our poets adequately represented. Shelley, like Yendys, is too spiritual; Keats, like Smith, is too sensuous. Shakspeare, we think, makes woman too much the handmaid, instead of the companion, of man: his yielding, bending shadow, not his sister and friend:—

"Stronger Shakspeare felt for *man* alone."

Ere closing this critique, we have to mention one or two conclusions in reference to Yendys' genius, which this book has deeply impressed on our mind. First, his *forte* is not the drama or the lyrical poem. The lyrics in this poem are numerous, but none of them equal to Smith's "Garden and Child," or to his own "Winter Night" in "The Roman;" none of them entirely worthy of his genius. Nor is he strikingly dramatic in the management of his scenes and situations. He should give us next, either a great prose work, developing his peculiar theory of things, in the bold, rich, and eloquent style of those articles he contributed to "The Palladium," "The Sun," and "The Eclectic;" or he should bind himself up to the task he has already in his eye, that of constructing a great epic poem. We know no writer of the age who, if he will but clarify somewhat his style, and select some stern, high, continuous narrative for his theme, is so sure to succeed in this forsaken walk of the Titans. The poet who has coped with the Coliseum, the most magnificent production of man's art, and with Chamouni, the grandest of God's earthly works, need shrink from no topic, however lofty; nay, the loftier his theme the better.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

THERE is something exceedingly sweet but solemn in the strain of thought suggested by the appearance of a new and true poet. Well is his uprising often compared to that of a new star arising in the midnight. What is he? whence has he come? whither is he going? and how

long is he to continue to shine? Such are questions which are alike applicable to the planet and to the poet. A new poet, like a new planet, is another proof of the continued existence of the creative energy of the "Father of Spirits." He is a new messenger and mediator between

the Infinite and the race of man. Whether rising or falling, retreating or culminating, in aphelion or in perihelion, he is continually an instructor to his kind. There is never a moment when he is not *seen* by some one, and when to be seen is, of course, to shine. And if his mission be thoroughly accomplished, the men of future ages are permitted either to share in the shadow of his splendour, or to fill their empty urns with the relict radiance of his beams.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;"

so a poet, a *king* of beauty, is for ever a joy or a terror; a gulf of glory opening above, or an abyss of torment and mystery gaping below.

'Tis verily a fearful gift that of poetic genius; and fearful, especially, through the immortality which waits upon all its genuine inspirations, whatever be their moral purpose and tendency. Thus, a Marlowe is as immortal as a Milton—Congreve as a Goldsmith—a Byron or Burns as a Wordsworth or James Montgomery—an Edgar Poe as a Longfellow or a Lowell. Just look at the dreadful, the unquenchable, the infernal *life* of Poe's Lyrics and Tales. No one can read these without shuddering, without pity, and sorrow, and condemnation of the author, without a half-muttered murmur of inquiry at his Maker—"Why this awful anomaly in Thy works?" And yet no one can avoid reading them, and reading them again, and hanging over their lurid and lightning-blasted pages, and thinking that this wondrous being wanted only two things to have made him the master of American minds—virtue and happiness. And there steals in another thought, which deepens the melancholy and eternalises the interest—what would Poe now give to have lived another life than he did, and to have devoted his inestimable powers to other works than the convulsive preparation of such terrible trifles—such *nocturnal nugs*—as constitute his remains? And still more emphatically, what would Swift and Byron now exchange for the liberty of suppressing their fouler and more malignant works

—works which, nevertheless, a world so long as it lies in wickedness shall never willingly let die?

Alas! it is *too late*; *εργαστο*, as the Greek play has it. The shaft of genius once ejaculated can be recalled no more, be it aimed at Satan or at God. And hence in our day the peculiar propriety, nay, necessity, of prefacing or winding up our praise of poetic power by such a stern caution to its possessor as this:—"Be thou sure that thy word, whether that of an angel or a fiend, whether openly or secretly blasphemous, whether loyal or rebellious to the existence of a God and of his great laws, whether in favour of the alternative Despair or the alternative Revelation, the only two possible, shall endure with the endurance of earth, and shall remain on thy head either a halo of horror or a crown of glory."

Claiming, as we do, something of a paternal interest in Alexander Smith, we propose, in the remainder of this paper, first characterising his peculiar powers, and secondly, adding to this estimate our most sincere and friendly counsel as to their future exercise.

It is a labour of love; for ever since the straggling, scratching MS., along with its accompanying letter, reached our still study, we have loved the author of the "Life Drama;" and all the more since we met him in his quiet yet distinct, modest yet manly personality. And perhaps the opportunities of observation which have been thus afforded may qualify us for speaking with greater certainty and satisfaction, both to ourselves and others, than the majority of his critics, about the principal elements of his genius.

We may first, however, glance at some of the charges which even his friendly critics have brought against him. He has been accused of over sensuousness. The true answer to this is to state his youth. He is only twenty-five years of age, and wrote all those parts of the poem to which objections have been made when he was two or three years younger. Every youth of genius *must* be sensuous; and if he write poetry, ought, in truth to his own nature, to express it there. Of course

we distinguish between the sensual and the sensual. Smith is never sensual; and his most glowing descriptions, no more than those in the "Song of Songs," tend to excite lascivious feelings. Female beauty is a natural object of admiration, and a young poet filled with this passionate feeling, were a mere hypocrite if he did not voice it forth in verse, and, both as an artist and as an honest man, will feel himself compelled to do so. Had Wordsworth himself written poetry at that period of his life to which he afterwards so beautifully refers in the lines—

"O happy time of youthful lovers,
O balmy time, in which a love-knot on a
lady's brow
Seem'd fairer than the fairest star in
heaven"—

it had perhaps been scarcely less richly flesh-coloured than the "Life Drama." In general, however, the true poet, as he advances in his life and in his career, will become less and less sensual in feeling and in song. Woman's form will retreat farther back in the sky of his fancy, and woman's ideal will come more prominently forward; she will "die in the flesh, to be raised in the spirit;" and this inevitable process, through which even Moore passed, and Keats was passing at his death, shall yet be realised in Alexander Smith, if he continue to live, and his critics consent to wait. If our readers will compare Shelley's conception of woman, in his juvenile novels "Zastrozzi" and the "Rosicrucian," with Beatrice Cenci, or the graceful imaginary female forms which play like creatures of the elements in the "Prometheus," he will find another striking instance of what we mean. In some cases, perhaps, the process may be reversed, and the young poet who began with the ideal may, in after life, descend to the real, and drown his early dream of spiritual love in sensual admiration and desire. But these we think are rare, and are accounted for as much from physical as from mental causes.

Smith has been called an imitator, or even a plagiarist. We are not careful

to answer in this matter, except by again referring to his age. All young poets are imitators. "Poetry," says Aristotle, "is imitation." It begins with imitation, and it continues in imitation, and with imitation it ends. The difference between the various stages only is, that in boyhood and early youth poets imitate other poets, and that in manhood they pass from the study of models which they may admire to error and extravagance, to that great original, which, without blame, excites an infinite and endless devotion. That Smith has read and admired, and learned of Keats, and Shelley, and Tennyson, and many others, is obvious; but it is obvious, also, that he has read his own heart still more closely, and has learned still more from the book of nature. Every page contains allusions to his favourite authors; but every page, too, contains evidences of a rich native vein. The man who preserves his idiosyncrasy amid much reading of the poets, is more to be praised than he who, in horror at plagiarism, draws a *cordon sanitaire* around himself, and refuses to cultivate acquaintance with the great classics of his age and country. A true original is often most so when he is imitating or even translating others. So Smith has marvellously improved some of the few figures he has borrowed. The objects shown are sometimes the same as in other authors, but he has cast on them the mellowing, softening, and spiritualising moonlight of his own genius.

A still more common objection is a certain monotony of figure which marks his poetry. He draws, it is said, all his imagery from the stars, the sea, the sun, and the moon. Now we think we can not only defend him in this, but deduce from it an argument in favour of the power and truth of his genius. What bad or mediocre poet could have meddled with these old objects without failure? Nothing in general so vapid as odes to the moon, or sonnets on the sea. But Smith has lifted up his daring rod to the heavens, and extracted new and rich imagination from their unfading fires. He has once more laid a poet's hand upon

the ocean's mane, and the sea has known his rider, and shaken forth a stormy poetry to his touch. Besides, his circumstances have prevented him from coming in contact habitually with aught but nature's elementary forms, and he has sung only what was most familiar to his mind. What could he have told us about the

"Alps and Apennines,
The Pyrenean and the river Po,"

whose summer excursions never, till of late, extended farther than Invernaid or Glencoe, and to whom

"The stars were nearer than the fields?"

Nothing worth listening to; and therefore he watches the moon circling large and queenly over the smoky tiles of the Gallowgate; or he contemplates the round red sun, shining rayless through the Glasgow morning fogs; or he sees the head of the Great Bear or the foot of Orion glimmering on him at the corner of the streets; or, striking out from the city, he marks the

"Labouring fires come out against the dark.
Where, with the night, the country seem'd
on flame;

Innumerable furnaces and pits,
And gloomy holds, in which that bright
slave, Fire,

Doth pant and toil all day and night for man,
Throw large and angry lustres on the sky,
And shifting lights across the long black
roads."

Or, in his rare holidays, he sails to Loch Lomond, or paces the banks of Loch Lubnaig, and fancies eclipse instead of sunshine bathing the crags of Benledi, and shadowing into terror and inky darkness the placid lake. Thus has he sought to realise and to utter the poetry which he has found around him, and, verily, great has been his reward. Few as are the objects he describes, what a depth of interest he attaches to them. With what lingering gusto does he describe them. In proportion to the smallness of their number, is the strength of his love, the felicity of his descriptions, and the energy and variety of the poetic use he makes of them. It is as if he were apprehensive of immediate blindness com-

ing to hide them from his view, and were anxious previously to daguerreotype them for ever before the eye of his soul.

In this we are reminded of Ossian; and the defence put in by Blair on behalf of the monotony of the objects of his poetry may be used with fully more force in reference to Smith. His figures, like Ossian's, are chiefly derived from the great primary forms of nature, but their application is still more various, and much less than the Highland bard does he repeat himself, not to speak of the far subtler and intenser spirit of imagination which pervades the latter poet. For we fearlessly venture to assert, that no poet that ever lived has excelled Smith in the beauty and exquisite analogical perception displayed in his images from nature. We select a few on this principle, that we have not seen them quoted in any other of the reviews or notices:—

"The anguish'd earth shines in the moon—a
moon."

"Now the fame that scorn'd him while he
lived
Waits on him like a menial."

"His part is worst that touches this base
world;

Although the ocean's inmost heart be pure,
Yet the salt fringe that daily licks the shore
Is gross with sand."

"The vain young night
Trembles o'er her own beauty in the sea."

"The soft star that in the azure east
Trembles in pity o'er bright bleeding day."

"The hot Indies, on whose teeming plains
The seasons four, knit in one flowery band,
Are dancing ever."

"Oh, could I lift my heart into her sight,
As an old mountain lifts its martyr's cairn
Into the pure sight of the holy heavens."

"His cataract of golden curls."

"The married colours in the bow of heaven."

"The while the thoughts rose in her eyes,
like stars
Rising and setting in the blue of night."

"The earnest sea
... ne'er can shape unto the listening
hills

The lore it gather'd in its awful age.
The crime for which 'tis lash'd by cruel
winds

'To shrieks, mad spoomings to the frighted
hills."

"A gallant, our'd like Absalom,
 Cheek'd like Apollo, with his luted voice."
 "'Tis four o'clock already. See the moon
 Has climb'd the blue steep of the eastern
 sky,
 And sits and tarries for the coming night.
 So let thy soul be up and ready arm'd,
 In waiting till occasion comes like night."
 "The marigold was burning in the marsh,
 Like a thing dipp'd in sunset."

By the way, not one critic, so far as we know, has noticed the exquisite poem from which this last line is quoted—a poem originally entitled "The Garden and the Child," and which alike we and the author consider the best strain in the whole "Life Drama." Our readers will find it in page 91. Its history is curious. Mr Smith was trudging one day to his work along the Trongate, when he saw a child "beautiful as heaven." There was no more work for him that day. Her face haunted him; her future history rose before his fancy; and in the evening he wrote the poem (or rather it "came upon him") in the space of two hours. Certainly it reads like inspiration. It is one gush of tender or terrible beauty. The author now says of it (p. 101):—

"I almost smile
 At the strange fancies I have girt her with—
 The garden, peacock, and the black eclipse,
 The still grave-yard among the dreary hills,
 Grey mourners round it. I wonder if she's
 dead.
 She was too fair for earth."

The child is another little Eva. We must say that we love not only little children, but all who love them. Especially we sympathise with all those who have some one dead and sainted image of a child hanging up in the chamber of their heart, as Kate Wordsworth hangs in De Quincey's, as A. V. hangs in our own, and who daily and nightly pay their orisons to the Great God who dwelt in it for a season. We suspect that scarce one who has lived to middle age but can remember some such early sunbeam, which shone as only sunbeams in the morning can shine, and returned with its freshness and glory all untainted to the fountain whence it sprang, bearing with it in its

return to heaven a whole, loving, yearning, broken, yet submissive heart. Perhaps, after all, this feeling may have prejudiced us in favour of "The Garden and the Child," but certainly it was the perusal of it which first increased to certainty our previous notion that Mr Smith was one of our truest poets.

It convinced us, too, that he had a heart. This, we fear, has of late been a vital deficiency in many of our most celebrated bards. The odious examples of Goethe and Byron, the constant inculcation, by critics, of the necessity of reaching artistic merit at every expense and every hazard, and the solitary or divorced life of some of our literary men, not to speak of the withering effects of scepticism and of a modified licentiousness, have all tended to deaden or mislead, or to render morbid, the feelings of our men of genius. Neither Keats nor Tennyson, nor Rogers nor Henry Taylor, have given, in their poetry, any decided evidence of that warm, impulsive, childlike glow, which all men agree in calling "heart." They have proved abundantly that they are artists, and even poets, but have failed to prove that they are men.

We rejoice, however, to recognise in our younger generation of poets—in Yendys and Smith, and Bigg and Bailey—symptoms that a better order of things is at hand, and that the principle, "the Greatest of these is Love," so long acknowledged in religion, shall by and by be felt to be the law of poetry—understanding, too, by love, not a mere *liking* to all things, not a mere indifferentism, raised on its elbow to contemplate objects, but a warm, strong, and enacted preference for all things that are "lovely and true, and of a good report."

The great distinction between the speaker and the singer in this age, as in past ages, is, perhaps, music. Many now, as ever, possessing all other parts of the poet—genius, originality, constructive power—are doomed (sad fate!) all their lives long to the level of prose by their deficiency in ear, their want of music. Apollo's soul may be in them, but Apollo's lute they can by no means tune. Look

at Walter Savage Landor! No one can doubt that he is intensely and essentially a poet, and that his prose and verse contain little bursts of glorious poetic music. But they are brief; they are broken; they are not sustained; they are perpetually intermingled with harsh and harrow-like paragraphs, and both his prose and verse conjoin in proving that he never could have elaborated any long, linked, and continuous harmony. Feeling all this, we have watched with considerable interest and care Smith's versification, trying it, however, not by any artificial standard, but solely by the ear; and our decided opinion is, that he has been destined by nature to sing rather than to speak his fine thoughts to the world. His poetry abounds with every variety of natural music.

Take that of the ballad, in this specimen:—

"In winter, when the dismal rain
Comes down in slanting lines,
And Wind, that grand old harper, smote
His thunder harp of pines.

When violets came and woods were green,
And larks did skyward dart,
A Love alit and white did sit
Like an angel on his heart.

The Lady Blanche was saintly fair,
Nor proud, but meek her look;
In her hazel eyes her thoughts lay clear
As pebbles in a brook.

The world is old, oh! very old;
The wild winds weep and rave:
The world is old, and grey, and cold,
Let it drop into its grave."

Or take a specimen of what we may call the Wordsworthian measure, culled from "The Garden and the Child:"—

"She sat on shaven plot of grass,
With earnest face, and weaving
Lilies white and freak'd pansies
Into quaint delicious fancies;
Then, on a sudden, fancying
Her floral wreath, she would upspring,
With silver shouts and ardent eyes,
To chase the yellow butterflies,
Making the garden ring;
Then gravely pace the scented walk,
Soothing her doll with childish talk."

"That night the sky was heap'd with clouds;
Through one blue gulf profound,
Begirt with many a cloudy crag,
The moon came rushing like a stag,
And one star like a hound;
Wearily the chase I eyed,
Wearily I saw the Dawn's
Feet sheeming o'er the dewy lawns.
Oh God! that I had died.
My heart's red tendrils all were torn,
And bleeding, on that summer morn."

Or take a specimen of rich voluptuous blank verse:—

"I will be kind when next he brings me
flowers
Pluck'd from the shining forehead of the
morn,
Ere they have oped their rich cores to the
bee;
His wild heart with a ringlet will I chain,
And o'er him I will lean me like a heaven,
And feed him with sweet looks and dew-
soft words,
And beauty that might make a monarch
pale,
And thrill him to the heart's core with a
touch;
Smile him to Paradise at close of eve,
To hang upon my lips in silver dreams."

Or hear this sterner, loftier, more epical strain:—

"A grim old king,
Whose blood leap'd madly when the trumpets
bray'd
To joyous battle 'mid a storm of steeds,
Won a rich kingdom on a battle-day;
But in the sunset he was ebbing fast,
Ring'd by his weeping lords. His left hand
held
His white steed, to the belly plash'd with
blood,
That seem'd to mourn him with its drooping
head;
His right his broken brand; and in his ear
His old victorious banners flap the winds.
He call'd his faithful herald to his side—
'Go! tell the dead I come.' With a proud
smile,
The warrior with a stab let out his soul,
Which fled, and shriek'd through all the
other world—
'Ye dead! my master comes!' And there
was pause
Till the great shade should enter."

Does not this description remind you of Homer's style? How rugged yet powerful its melody! We could quote many other passages, all corroborating our statement that Smith is naturally a master of

music, and needs only a careful culture to complete the mastery. Since the appearance of the "Life Drama," he published a little chant in a Glasgow newspaper, entitled "Barbara," the copy of which we have mislaid, else we would have quoted it as a final triumphant proof of his musical power, as well as of his lyrical genius. It is one of the most touching little laments in the language. But here a question of greater moment occurs—Has this young poet, in addition to his exquisite imagery, his heart, and his music, a true and deep vein of thought, and does that thought, as all deep veins of reflection should do, run into religion? What is his theory of things? Is he a Christian, or is he a mere philosophic speculator, or poetic visionary? Now here, we think, is the vital defect of the poem, the one thing which prevents us applying to it the epithet "great." Mr Smith is, we believe, no infidel; and his poetry breathes, at times, an earnest spirit; but his views on such subjects are extremely vague and unformed. He does not seem sufficiently impressed with the conviction that no poem ever has deserved the name of "great," when not impregnated with religion, and when not rising into worship. His creed seems too much that of Keats—

"Beauty is truth—truth beauty."

We repeat, that he should look back to the past, and think what are the poems which have come down to us from it most deeply stamped with the approbation of mankind, and which appear most likely to see and glorify the ages of the future. Are they not those which have been penetrated and inspired by moral purpose, and warmed by religious feeling? We speak not of sectarian song, nor of the common generation of hymns and hymn writers, but we point to Dante's "Divina Comedia," to all Milton's poems, to Spenser's "Faerie Queen," to Herbert's "Temple," to Young's "Night Thoughts," to Thomson's "Seasons," to some of the better strains of Pope and Johnson, to Cowper, to Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. These, and not Keats, or

Shelley, or Tennyson, or Byron, are our real kings of melody; they are our great, clear, healthy standards of song; they are all alike free from morbid weakness, moral pollution, and doubtful speculation; and the poet who would not merely shine the meteor of a moment, the stare of fools, and the temporary pet of the public, but would aspire to send his name down, in thunder and in music, through the echoing aisles of the future, and become a benevolent and beloved potentate over distant ages, and millions yet unborn, must tread in their footsteps, and seek after the hallowed sources of their inspiration.

This leads us, in the last place, to give our young poet a few sincere and friendly counsels. When he appeared first, he was, we know, and complained that he was, "deluged with advice." That deluge has now subsided, and we would desire, in its subsidence, to try to collect the essence of the moral it has left, and to impress it on his serious attention.

We will not reiterate to him the commonplaces he must have heard, *ad nauseam*, about bearing his honours meekly, and not being dazzled and spoiled with success, &c. That success has, indeed, been unparalleled for at least thirty years. The last case at all in point was Pollok's "Course of Time," but this, if our readers will remember, did not become popular till after its author's premature death had surrounded, as it were, all its pages with a black border, and made it to be read as men read the record of the funeral of a king. But Smith "arose one morning and found himself famous." That this sudden glare of fame on a head so young, were it not as strong as it is young, might have produced injurious effects, was a matter of some probability. But that danger, we think, is now past, and there are other dangers more to be dreaded, which may be on their way.

Mr Smith should neither, on the one hand, rest under his laurels, nor, on the other, be too eager to snatch at more. Let him deeply ponder on the subject of his second poem, and let him carefully elaborate its execution. Let him mercifully shear away all those small manner-

isms of style of which he has been accused. Let him burn his Tennyson and his Keats; he has read them now long enough, and further perusal were not profitable. He has lately had the opportunity of extending his sphere of survey; he has seen the finest scenery in Scotland and South Britain; he has mingled with much of its most distinguished literary society, and is now the secretary to an illustrious university, and in the metropolis of his native land. Let him select a topic for his new poem which will permit him to avail himself of these new advantages, and let him pour into it every drop of the new blood and every ray of the new light he has recently acquired. We rejoice to learn that he is no *improvisatore* in composition; that he loves to write slowly; that he enjoys the labour of the file; that almost every line in his "Life Drama" was written several times—rejoice in this, because it assures us that his next work shall be no hasty effusion, hatched by the heat of success, but that it shall be a calm and determined trial of his general and artistic strength. His styles and manners are, as our extracts have proved, manifold, and he might attain mastery in all. But we would earnestly ask him to give us more of that stern Homeric grandeur we find in his picture, quoted above, of the dying king:—

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood."

We close this "deluge of advice," if he will call it so, by other three distinct counsels:—First, let him advance to nobler models than those he seems hitherto, almost exclusively, to have studied. We have been told that he has commenced a careful reading of Goethe, which may be of considerable benefit to him in the art of expression, as Goethe's style is generally supposed to be nearly faultless. But let him not rest there, since there are far loftier and far safer ridges on the Parnassian hill. We name, as the models to which he ought to give his days and his nights, Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakspeare's sterner tragedies, and, above all, the poetry of the Bible. That he has read all these, we doubt not. What we

wish him to do, is to study them; to roll their raptures, and to catch their fire; to make them his song in the house of his pilgrimage; and at their reverend and time-honoured altars, not only to kindle the fire of his own genius, but to consume, as chaff, whatever puerilities may have hitherto contributed to lessen the brightness of the flame.

Secondly, he must become less sensuous; in other words, he must put off the youth, and put on the man. He must think and sing less about "ringlets," and "waists," and "passion-panting breasts," &c. &c. All such things we pardon in him now, but shall be less disposed to forgive after a few years have passed over his head. A boy Anacreon may be borne with, but a middle-aged or old Anacreon is a nuisance, especially when he might have been something far higher. For the sake of poetry, let him proceed to veil the statue of the Venus, and to uncover those of the Apollo, the Mars, and the Jupiter.

Our last counsel is the most momentous. He has himself painted in glowing colours his ideal of the poet, as one who shall "consecrate poetry to God, and to its own high uses." Let him proceed with stern and firm step to fill up his own ideal, and accomplish his own prophecy. Let him be the great sublime he draws. Of this he may be certain, that the poet of the coming time must be a believer in the future as well as a worshipper of the past. He may not be a sectarian, but he must be a Christian. We do not want him to write religious poetry in the style of Watts or Montgomery, or any one else; but we want him to devote his fine powers more than he has hitherto done to the promulgation of high spiritual truth; if not, we foresee that one or two of his competitors in the poetic race, whom he has meantime outstripped, may overtake him, and come into the goal amid a deeper gush of applause and of thankfulness, from that large class who now look upon poetry as a serious thing, and are disposed to consult it as a subordinate oracle of the Most High. But we will not anticipate,

far less despair. The vaticination of our hearts tells us that, apart altogether from comparative awards and successes, there are noble fields before Alexander Smith, and that his own words shall not fail of fulfilment:—

"I will go forth 'mong men, not mail'd in scorn,

But in the armour of a pure intent;
Great duties are before me, and great songs.
And, whether crown'd or crownless, when I fall,

It matters not, so as God's work is done.
I've learn'd to prize the quiet lightning deed,
Not the applauding thunder at its heels,
Which men call Fame."

Note.—Since this was written, Mr Smith, in conjunction with Mr Dobell, has issued a small volume of War-Sonnets, two-thirds of which are very mediocre, and one-third of which is excellent. Neither of them, however, answers our idea of a great war-poet. We are yet looking for the Tyrtæus of the Crimean struggle.

J. STANYAN BIGG.*

THERE are, every tyro in criticism knows, three great schools or varieties in Poetry—the objective, the subjective, and the combination of the two. The best specimens of the first class are to be found in Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," in Burns's poems, and in Scott's rhymed romances; of the second, in the poetry of Lucretius, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and some of the Germans; and of the combination of the two, in Shakspeare, Milton, Schiller, and Byron. Of late, almost all our poets of much mark have betaken themselves to the subjective. We propose, ere coming to Mr Bigg, first, inquiring into the causes of this; and, secondly, urging our young poets, by a few arguments, to intermix a larger amount of the objective with their poetry.

One cause of the propensity of our rising race of poets to the subjective, has undoubtedly been the force of example. The poets who are at present acting with most power on the young mind of the age are intensely subjective, and some of them to the brink of morbidity. The influence wielded over the lovers of poetry by Homer, Scott, or Burns, is slender, compared to that which Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and the rest of the bardic brotherhood—the sons of Mist by Thunder—are exerting. The writings of the former are devoured like new novels, and then thrown aside. The writings of

the latter are tasted slowly, and in drops—are studied—are carried into solitude—are read by the sides of lonely rivers, or on silent mountain-tops, and ultimately surround the young aspirants with an atmosphere which goes with them where they go, rests with them where they rest, and hovers over their pens when they write. To the charm of these poets, it adds mightily that they are said to be, and are, more or less heterodox in their creeds. This gives a peculiar gusto to their works, the reading of which becomes a sweet and secret sin, smacking of the taste of the "stolen waters" and the "pleasant bread." Thus are two luxuries—that of the indulgence of daring thought, and something resembling contraband desire—united in the perusal of our later subjective poets.

Secondly, we live in a period of deep thoughtfulness, and great intellectual doubt. Never were there so many thinking. Never was thought so much at sea. Never were there so many "searchings of heart." Our blessed Lord mentions, as one of the most striking signs of his Second Advent—"perplexity." "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity—the sea and the waves roaring!" This sign is around us, even at the doors. The political and the moral, the intellectual and the religious worlds, are all equally perplexed, and in darkness. It is a midnight,

* "Night and the Soul:" a Dramatic Poem.

meaning, weltering ocean, on which we are all embarked, and the day-star has not yet risen. Our poetical spirits are sharing, to a very large extent, in this perplexity; and this has led to incessant introspective views and pensive contemplations. After Byron, there rose a short-lived race of rhymsters, who pretended to scepticism and gloom, but whose real object was to produce a stimulating effect upon the minds of their readers; and who, like quack doctors, distributed drugs to others, of which they themselves never tasted a drop. It is very different now. A real yearning uncertainty and thirst after more light are now heard crying, if not shrieking, in many of our poets. All recent poems of mark, such as the "Life Drama," "Balder," "Festus," and "Night and the Soul," are more or less filled with those thoughts which wander through eternity; those beatings of strong souls against the bars of their earthly prison-house; those profound questions uplifted to heaven—"Whence evil? What the nature of man, and what his future destiny? What, who, and where is God?" True poets must sympathise with the tendency of their times, and as that, at present, is transitional, uncertain, and uneasy, their poetry must partake, in some measure, of that uncertainty and that unrest.

In connection with this, is the prevalent study of the transcendental philosophy by our poets. It was long imagined that poetry and philosophy were incompatible—that no poet could be a philosopher, and that no philosopher could be a poet. What God had often joined, man put asunder. It has, however, been for some time surmised that critics were in this wrong. The fact that Milton was thoroughly conversant with the philosophies of his day, and the example set by the German poets, and by the Lakers, who combined ardent poetic enthusiasm with diligent and deep study of metaphysics, have rectified opinion on this point, and sent our young poets to their Kants, their Fichtes, and their Hamiltons, as well as to their Shaksperes and their Goethes. From these and other causes, it has come about, that at an age when

the gifted youth of the past were singing of their Helens or their Marys—apostrophising their spaniels and robin-red-breasts, or describing the outward forms of sky and earth around their native village, their successors in the present are singing of the mysterious relations of nature to the human soul; are galloping their Pegasus from galaxy to galaxy; and are now entering the heaven of heavens, and now listening to the sound of the surge of penal fire, breaking on the "sark and haggard rocks" of that "other place."

Now, we are far from seeking to deny that this is, *on the whole*, what it should be, as well as what, inevitably, it must have been. It were as vain altogether to condemn, as at all to try to resist, the stream of an age-tendency. Nay, this state of things has some advantages, and teems with some promise. It proves that the minds of men are becoming more serious and thoughtful, when even our youths of genius are less poets than preachers. It shows that we are living in a more earnest period. It proves progress, since our very youth have passed points where the mature manhood of the past thought it prudent and necessary to halt. It suggests hope, that in a future age there may be still higher, quicker, and more certain and solid advancement. But, looking at the matter on the other side, the exclusively subjective cast of much of our best poetry has produced certain evils. In the first place, it has tended to overcast the renown of our great objective poets, particularly among the young. Homer, Scott, Campbell, and Burns, are still, indeed, popular, but not so much, we think, as they were, and are read rather for their mere interest, than for their artistic and poetic excellence. Relished by many they still are, as sweet morsels; but seldom, if at all, studied as *models*. Secondly, it, on the other hand, excludes our really good poets of the subjective school from many circles of readers, who, seeking for some objective interest in poems, and finding little or none, are tempted to close them in weariness, or fling them away in disgust. Thomson, Cowper, Byron, as well as Shakspeare and

Milton, addressed themselves to all classes of minds, except the very lowest, and succeeded in fascinating all. Browning, and many besides, speak only to the higher minds, and verily they have their reward; their works are pronounced unintelligible and uninteresting by the majority of readers, and while loudly praised, are little read. How different it had been, if these gifted men had wreathed their marvellous profusion of thought and imagery round some striking story, or made it subservient to some well-constructed plot! The "Paradise Lost" and the "Pilgrim's Progress" are devoured by millions for their fable, who are altogether incapable of understanding their interior meaning, or perceiving their more recondite beauties. "Prometheus Unbound," and "Paracelsus," are read with pleasure by the more enthusiastic, but are *caviare*, not only to the general reader, but to many thousands who love poetry with a passion. Tennyson, on the other hand, with all his subtlety and refinement, seldom forgets to throw in such touches of nature, and little fragments of narrative, as secure a kindly reception for his poems, at once with the severest of critics, and the least astute of schoolboys. Why should poets be read only by poets, or by philosophical critics? We think that every good poem should be constructed on the same model with a good sermon, in which the preacher, if a sensible man, takes care that there shall be at once milk for babes, and strong meat for them that are of full age; or upon the model of that blessed book, the Bible, which contains often in the same chapter the grandest poetry and the simplest pathos; here, "words unutterable," which seem to have dropped from the very lips of the heavenly oracle, and there, little sentences, which appear made for the mouths of babes and sucklings; here, "deeps where an elephant may swim; and there, shallows where a lamb may wade!"

Thirdly, this systematic subjectivism is almost certain to produce systematic obscurity and methodical mysticism. If an original writer sit down to compose poetry, either without the thought of any audi-

ence, or with only that of a few superior minds in view, he almost inevitably falls into peculiarities of thought, and idiosyncrasies of language, which suit only an esoteric class of readers, and will often baffle even them. If a poet only seek to "move himself," leaving it, as beneath him, to the "orator" to "move others," the consequence will be fatal, not only to his popularity, but to his genuine power. He will move nobody but himself. Look again to Browning's poetry: a wonderful thing it is, in many points and parts; but, as a whole, it is a book of puzzles—a vast enigma—a tissue of hopeless obscurity in thought, and of perplexed, barbarous, affected jargon in language. The same is true with much of Emerson's volume of poems. It is easy for these authors to accuse the reader of being dull in comprehension. The reader thinks he has a greater right to retort the charge of dullness upon the author. Where fire is, it shines; where a star is, it beams: the *differentia* of light is to be seen. But the density of much of our modern poetry is "dark as was Chaos, ere the infant Sun was rolled together, or had tried his beams across the gulf profound." It is amusing to watch the foolish faces put on by the admirers of this kind of rhymed riddles or blank-verse conundrums, when even they are unable to make out the meaning of some portentous passage, through which not a ray of light has been permitted to shine, and from which grammar and sense have been alike divorced; and to hear their mumbled apologies to the effect, "Depend on it, there are sunbeams in this cucumber, provided we were able to extract them!"

Another evil is the increase of a false, pretentious, and pseudo-philosophic style of criticism, which, by being constantly exercised upon mystic or super-subtle poetry, becomes altogether incapable of appreciating any other, and often finds subjective meanings, where the objective alone was intended by the poet. The great master of this art abroad is Ulrici, whose "Midsummer Night's Dream" of Shakspeare passes with many for a piece of profound and unmatched analysis. Speci-

ments of the class are rife at home, and we deplore the increase amongst us of a style of criticism, which seeks to illustrate the *ignotum* by the *ignotius*, as though midnight could add illumination to mist.

What, then, is it asked, do we propose that our poets should do? Should they, as Professor Blackie in his Stirling speech seems to think, abandon subjective song altogether; and, burning their Wordsworth and Shelley, betake themselves to ballad-poetry, Homer, Scott, and Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome?" By no means. This is not a legitimate conclusion from what we have now said. There remains a more excellent way. The third and best style, combining the direct dealing, the definite plan, and the clear purpose, the interest and the simpler style of objective poetry, with the depth, the thoughtfulness, the catholicity, and the universal references of subjective, should be attempted by our rising bards. They need not be at a loss either for models or subjects. All Shakspeare may become their exemplar. Let them look especially to his "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Timon," and notice how, in these masterpieces of his genius, he has united the subtlest reflection and loftiest imagination, to the liveliest interest and the warmest human feeling. How clear he is, too, amid all his depth; how direct amid all his passion; and how masculine amid all his subtlety, not to speak of the infinite variety produced by his interchange of the gay with the grave—the comic with the tragic elements. Or let them study not Shelley's "Prometheus," but his "Cenci;" and take not the monstrosity of the story, but the manhood of the style, for their model. Or let them read "Wallenstein," and the other great dramas of Schiller. Or let them consult Byron himself, and see how, in "Manfred," in "Sardanapalus," and in "Cain," he has combined the deepest thought *he* was capable of, and admirable artistic management of style and character, with vividness of individual portraiture and intensity of interest. As to subjects, they are inexhaustible, as long as there are so many passages and

characters in history waiting for treatment; panting, shall we say, for that incarnation which genius only can give. We point at present to one, a gigantic one—to Danton. Which of our young poets, our Smiths, Masseys, Biggs, and Yendyses, shall win a crown of immortal fame, by writing a rugged historical drama, after the old "Julius Cæsar" or "Richard the Third" fashion, developing the character, and casting the proper glare of grandeur on the death of that wild wondrous Titan of the French Revolution? "Danton," said Scott, long ago, "is a subject fit for the treatment of Shakspeare or Schiller."

After all the deductions and exceptions implied in the foregoing remarks, we cannot but express our delight at the fine flush of genuine poetry which the last few years have witnessed alike in England, Ireland, and Scotland. In a MS. volume, we find some sentences written by us in the year 1836, when we were newly of age, which we transcribe, because they express anticipations which have been of late signally fulfilled. "It is objected, 'People will not now-a-days read poetry.' True, they will not read what is called poetry. They will not read tenth-rate imitations of Byron. They will not read nursery themes for which a schoolboy would be flogged. They will not read respectable commonplace. They will not read even the study-sweepings of reputed men, who imagine, in their complacency, that the universe is agape for the rinsings of their genius. But neither will people, if they can help it, eat raw turnips, or drink ditch-water, nor have willingly done so, from the flood downwards, to our knowledge. But people would read real poetry, were it given them. Indeed, an outcry about the decline of poetry is sure, sooner or later, to provoke a re-action. It will, indeed, encourage an enterprising spirit. 'The field,' he will say, 'lies clear, or is peopled only by Lilliputians, supplicating to be spit upon rather than neglected. Why should not I enter on it?' The age is now awake. The slightest symptoms of original power are now recognised. And we often figure

to ourselves the rapture with which a great poet, writing in the spirit of his age, would now be welcomed by an age whose manuals are already Wordsworth and Goethe."

No mean place among our rising poets must be allowed to J. Stanyan Bigg, who has once more challenged interest for the lake country of Cumberland, on account of the poetic genius it still inspires and fosters. He was born, we believe, at least he now resides, in Ulverston. He has, we understand, published some time ago a juvenile volume of poems, but this we have not seen. Part of his present work appeared, like Smith's "Life Drama," piecemeal in "The Critic;" and the Groombridges have now placed the whole before us, in the shape of this handsome, portable, and well-printed volume.

Mr Bigg—although classable in strict logic and method with the school of Bailey, and although bearing certain marked resemblances to Alexander Smith—is yet distinctively original; being less mystical than Festus, less sensuous than Smith—more humane and more Christian, we think, than either. He shines not so much in outstanding passages of intense brilliance, or in single thoughts of great depth, as in a certain rich pervasive spirit of poetry, in which (to use the word applied to it by a generous rival-bard) all his verses are "soaked." His poetry has not yet gathered into firm sunlike shape, but rather resembles what Dr Whewell in his "Plurality of Worlds" supposes many of the stars still to be—fiery matter unconsolidated, and having hitherto cast off no worlds. Yet the light and the fire are genuine, and may be expected, in due time, to bring forth results both useful and splendid. We seem to perceive the following peculiarities, besides, in Mr Bigg's poetry:—His imagery is remarkable for its boldness and variety. He has exhibited an equal appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime. He has that noble rush of thought and language which is so characteristic of genuine inspiration. He has a keen perception of the analogies subsisting be-

tween nature and the mind of man. And his hope in the destiny of humanity is founded on Christian grounds. These are his main merits. We shall, ere we have done, notice what seem his defects.

First, Mr Bigg's imagery is uncommonly varied and bold. None of his figures are so striking, or so highly wrought, as some in the "Life Drama," but there is a greater abundance and variety of them. The nature of his theme ("Night") leads him to select many from the scenery of that season—its stars, its wailing winds, the many mysterious sights and sounds which haunt its solitude. But, besides these, he gathers analogies from a thousand other regions, and skirts his Night with a bright border of Daylight imagery. Here, for instance, are some sweet and soothing figures:—

"Bless them, and bless the world. Oh may
it rest
In peace upon thy bosom, like a ship
On the unrippled silver of the sea,
Or like a green tree in the circling blue
Of the bright joyousness of summer-morns."

Here, again, is a rich Arabian-Night kind of fancy:—

"Thou speakest in soul-pictures, yet I see
Thy meaning rising through them, free and
simple
As a young princeling from the grand state-
bed,
Where his white limbs have been enswathed
all night
In gold and velvets."

As a proof of his variety, we give a passage containing, in the space of a few lines, three figures, all good, and all so diverse from each other:—

"Oh, 'twere as if a dank dishevell'd night
Should rush up, madly haunted by the
winds,
All black as Erebus, upon the steps
Of a great laughing oriental day.
I should be wretched as a cold lone house,
Standing a mark upon a northern moor,
Raves-deep in snow, surrounded by black
pools,
Pelted by winter, ever anger-pale,
To lose you; having tasted of such bliss,
Such sweet companionship, such holy joy,
'Twere as if earth should be flung back
again,

All singing as she is, and crown'd with flowers,
 Into the reeking cycles of her past:
 Instead of valleys, sedge swamps, and fens,
 With grim, unwieldy reptiles trailing through,
 And in the place of singing, bellowings,
 And the wild roar of monsters on the hills."

That "cold lone house," what a picture! It is worthy of Crabbe; only Mr Bigg gives it a personification more powerful than that poet would probably have done, and you feel for it as if it were a forlorn human being. How often we have regarded houses in the country with similar emotions. One seemed sheltering itself, and consciously cowering, amid the woods which screened it from the northern blast. Another seemed shivering on a bare and bald exposure. A third, of mean aspect, but set on a hill, seemed ashamed of its exalted beggary and far-seen nakedness, and striving for ever in vain to be hid. A fourth stood up with the majesty of an Atlas, in castellated dignity between earth and heaven, meeting the scene and the sun like an equal. A fifth seemed melancholy amid its eternal moors. And a sixth, a ruin, glared through the dull eyes of its broken windows and dilapidated loopholes, in rage and defiance, to a landscape over which it had once looked abroad in pride, protection, and love.

Secondly, Mr Bigg seems equally attracted by, although not equally successful in, the beautiful and the sublime. Specimens of the sublime are found in his poetry; one of the finest, we think, is the following:—

"Were all nature void, one human thought,
 Self-utter'd and evolved in act, left like
 A white bone on the brink of the abyss,
 As the sole relic of what once had been:
 Thou, who perceivest at a glance the all
 In one, who scannest all relationships,
 In whom all issues meet concentrative—
 Couldst from this puny fragment of thy works
 Recall, and re-arrange, and re-construct
 The mighty mammoth-skeleton of things,
 And fold it once more in its spotted skin,
 And bid the Bright Beast live."

Another is this. Speaking of the pre-Adamite earth, he says:—

"She lay desolate and dumb as they,
 Save when volcanoes lifted up their voice—

Olden Isaiahs in the wilderness—
 And told unto the incredulous wastes wild
 tales
 Of the great after-time—the age of flowers,
 Of songs and blossoms, MAN, and grassy
 graves."

But it is in the region of the beautiful that our poet is most at home. He has watered his muse at Grasmere Springs, and at the placid Lake of Windermere, rather than at the turbid waves of "grey Loch Skene," the still, slumbering, inky depths of Loch Aven and Loch Lea, or the streams of the Cona, moaning and foaming amid the rocks and gloomy precipices of Glencoe. We give two specimens of the many beautiful and pathetic strains with which this volume abounds. The following occurs at page 33:—

"A fair young girl,
 To whom one keen wo, like the scythe of
 Death,
 Had sever'd at a stroke the ties of earth—
 The tender trammelage of love and hope—
 And not released the spirit from its clay,
 But left it bleeding out at every pore,
 Clinging with torn hands to its prison-bars,
 And gasping out towards the light, in vain.
 For she had loved, and been deserted; and
 All her heart's wealth was now return'd to
 her
 Base metal, and not current coin. Her love,
 Which went forth from her bright and beautiful,
 Came back a ghastly corpse, to turn her heart
 Into a bier, and chill it with its weight
 Of passive wo for ever. But the shock
 Had turn'd the poles of being, and henceforth,
 In circles ever narrowing, her soul
 Went wheeling like a stricken world round
 heaven."

EDITH.

Eyes she had, in whose dark lustre
 Slumber'd wild and mystic beams;
 And a brow of polish'd marble—
 Pale abode of gorgeous dreams—
 Dreams that caught the hues and splendours
 Which the radiant future shows,
 For the past was nought but anguish,
 And a sepulchre of woes;
 Therefore from its scenes and sorrows
 All her heart and soul were riven,
 And her thoughts kept ever wandering
 With the angels up to heaven.

When they told her of the pleasures
 Which the future had in store,
 When her sorrows would have faded,
 And her anguish would be o'er;

Told her of her wealth and beauty,
 And the triumphs in her train;
 Told her of the many others
 Who would sigh for her again:
 She but caught one-half their meaning,
 While the rest afar was driven:
 'Yes' she murmur'd, 'they are happy—
 They, I mean, who dwell in heaven!'

When they wish'd once more to see her
 Mingling with the bright and fair;
 When they told her of the splendour
 And the rank that would be there;
 Told her that, amid the glitter
 Of that brilliant living sea,
 There were none so sought and sigh'd for,
 None so beautiful as she;
 Still she heeded not the flattery,
 Heard but half the utterance given:
 'Yes,' she answer'd, 'there are bright ones,
 Many too, I know—in heaven!'

When they spoke of sunlit glories,
 Summer days, and moonlit hours; •
 Told her of the spreading woodland,
 With its treasury of flowers;
 Clustering fruits, and vales, and mountains,
 Flower-banks mirror'd in clear springs,
 Winds whose music ever mingled
 With the hum of glancing wings—
 Scenes of earthly bliss and beauty
 Far from all her thoughts were driven,
 And she fancied that they told her
 Of the happiness of heaven.

For one master-pang had broken
 The sweet spell of her young life;
 And henceforth its calm and sunshine
 Were as tasteless as its strife;
 Henceforth all its gloom and grandeur,
 All the music of its streams,
 All its thousand pealing voices,
 Spoke the language of her dreams;
 Dreams that wander'd on, like orphans
 From all earthly solace driven,
 Searching for their great Protector,
 And the palace-gates of heaven.

Another (a poem on Childhood) we meet
 in page 171:—

"Always lightest was her laughter,
 There was dream-land in its tone;
 Though she mingled with the children,
 Yet she always seem'd alone.
 And her prattle—'twas but child's talk,
 Yet it always sparkled o'er
 With a strange and shadowy wisdom,
 With a bird-like fairy lore,
 Which you could not help but fancy
 You had somewhere heard before,
 In some old-world happy version
 By a bright Klyman shore.
 All the little children loved her—
 None so joyous in their play;

And yet ever there was something
 Which seem'd—ah! so far away
 From the joyance and the laughter,
 And the streamlet's crisping foam—
 'Twas as if some little song-bird
 Had dropp'd down from yon blue dome,
 Warbling still among the others,
 Wandering with them where they roam,
 And yet hallowing remembrance
 With low gushes about home!
 Oh, the glory of those child-eyes!
 Oh, the music of her feet!
 Oh, those peals of spirit-laughter,
 Coming up the village street!
 Shall we never hear her knocking
 At the little ivied door?
 Will she never run to kiss us,
 Bounding o'er the oaken floor?
 Has that music gone for ever?
 Are those tender lisplings o'er?
 Oh, the terror! oh, the anguish,
 Of that one word—evermore!

Ever was she but a stranger
 Among the sublunary things:
 All her life was but the folding
 Of her gorgeous spirit-wings—
 Nothing more than a forgetting—
 Still she gave more than she took
 From the sunlight or the starlight,
 From the meadow or the brook:—
 There was music in her silence,
 There was wisdom in her look;
 There was raying out of beauty
 As from some transcendent book;
 She was wonderful as grottoes
 With strange gods in every nook!
 And at night, amid the silence,
 With her little prayer-clasp'd hands,
 She look'd holy as the Christ-church
 Rising white in Pagan lands:—
 Seem'd she but the faltering prelude
 To a great tale of God's throne—
 As a flower dropp'd out of heaven
 Telling whither it has grown.
 But she left us—she, our angel—
 Without murmur, without moan;
 And we woke and found it starlight—
 Found that we were all alone,
 And as desolate as birds'-nests,
 When the fledglings have all flown!
 But our house has been made sacred—
 Sacred every spot she trod;
 For she came a starry preacher,
 Dedicating all to God.
 Render thanks unto the Giver,
 Though his gift be out of sight,
 For a jubilant to-morrow
 Shall come after this to-night!
 She hath left a spirit-glory
 Blending with the grosser light—
 Oh, the earth to us is holy!
 Oh, the other world is bright!"

Thirdly, Mr Bigg exhibits that noble rushing motion of thought and language which testifies so strongly to a genuine inspiration, in which words seem to pursue each other, like wheels in a series of chariots, with irresistible force and impetuous velocity. Nowhere out of "Festus" do we find passages which heave and hurry along with a more genuine afflatus, than in many of Mr Bigg's pages. Take two long passages, both of which are "instinct with spirit." The first will be found at page 21.—

"The night is lovely, and I love her with
A passionate devotion, for she stirs
Feelings too deep for utterance within me.
She thrills me with an influence and a power,
A sadden'd kind of joy I cannot name,
So that I meet her brightest smile with tears.
She seemeth like a prophetess, too wise,
Knowing, ah! all too much for happiness;
As though she had tried all things, and had
found
All vain and wanting, and was thenceforth
steep'd

Up to the very dark, tear-lidded eyes
In a mysterious gloom, a holy calm!
Doth she not look now just as if she knew
All that hath been, and all that is to come?
With one of her all-prescient glances turn'd
Towards those kindred depths which slept for
aye—

The sable robe which God threw round him-
self,

And where, pavilion'd in glooms, he dwelt
In brooding night for ages, perfecting
The glorious dream of past eternities,
The fabric of creation, running adown
The long time-avenues, and gazing out
Into those blanks which slept before time was:
And with another searching glance turn'd up
Towards unknown futurities—the book
Of unborn wonders—till she hath perused
The chapter of its doom; and with an eye
Made vague by the dim vastness of its vision,
Watching unmoved the fall of burning worlds,
Rolling along the steep sides of the Infinite,
All ripe, like apples dropping from their
stems;

Till the wide fields of space, like orchards
stripp'd,

Have yielded up their treasures to the garner,
And the last star hath fallen from the crown
Of the high heavens into utter night,
Like a bright moment swallow'd up and lost
In hours of after-anguish; and all things
Are as they were in the beginning, ere
The mighty pageant trail'd its golden skirts
Along the glittering pathway of its God,
Have that the spacious halls of heaven are fill'd

With countless multitudes of finite souls,
With germ-like infinite capacities,
As if to prove all had not been a dream.
'Tis this that Night seems always thinking of;
Linking the void past to the future void,
And typifying present times in stars,
To show that all is not quite issueless,
But that the blanks have yielded starlike one
To cluster round the sapphire throne of God
In bliss for ever and for evermore!
Oh, yes, I love the Night, who ever standeth
With her gemm'd finger on her rich ripe lip,
As if in attitude of deep attention,
Catching the mighty echoes of the words
Which God had utter'd ere the earth was
form'd,

Or ere you Infinite blush'd like a bride
With all her jewels; and I love the flowers,
And their soft slumber, as they lie around
In the sweet starlight, bathed in love-like
dew,

And looking like young sisters, orphans too,
Left to our watchful care and guardianship,
To keep them from the rough-voiced, barly
winds,

And see that naught invades their soul-like
sleep.

Thou canst not tell me what I do not love,
In all this dark-robed family of peace:
The temporary hush of the low winds,
And their uprising wail; the shadows there
Cast from the long dark shrubberies, that
move

And rest again on the greensward, and nod
Their hearselike plumage to the passing
winds;

The deep, unclouded light, half glow, half
gloom,

Dark, and yet lustrous, gleaming with a fire
Whose sources seem unfathomable; love
Even the very grass beneath our feet,
Whose graceful blades I almost fear to tread on,
Because, when I have pass'd, they raise them-
selves

Again, half in reproach, so quietly
Turning themselves once more unto the heaven
That cherishes and feeds them, I could weep
That I had crush'd them underneath my foot;
Even yon tree, standing so lonely there,
As if it dream'd of all the music which
Its branches used to hold when in their prime,
Ere it became a dead and blasted thing
Upon the bosom of the living world,
Which she still weareth, as a maiden wears
The wither'd flowers of the sweet Long-Ago,
Ere love itself and lover both were dead!
And yet I love it too—grim ancient thing.
All, all; oh, yes, I dearly love them all!"

The second, still finer, meets us at
page 39:—

"Oh thought! what art thou but a fluttering
leaf

Shed from the garden of Eternity?
The robe in which the soul invests itself
To join the countless myriads of the skies—
The very air they breathe in heaven—the
gleam

That lights it up, and makes it what it is—
The light that glitters on its pinnacles—
The luscious bloom that flushes o'er its
fruits—

The odour of its flowers, and very soul
Of all the music of its million harps—
The dancing glory of its angels' eyes—
The brightness of its crowns, and starlike glow
Of its bright thrones—the centre of its bliss,
For ever radiating like a sun—
The spirit thrill that pulses through its halls,
Like sudden music vibrating through air—
The splendour playing on its downy wings—
The lustre of its sceptres, and the breeze
Which shakes its golden harvests into light—
The diamond apex of the Infinite—

A ray of the great halo round God's head—
The consummation and the source of all,
In which all cluster and all constellate,
Grouping like glories round the purple west
When the great sun is low. For what are
stars

But God's thoughts indurate—the burning
words

That roll'd forth blazing from his mighty lips
When He spake to the breathless infinite,
And shook the wondrous sleeper from her
dream?

Thus God's thoughts ever call unto man's soul
To rouse itself, and let its thoughts shake off
The torpor from their wings, and soar and sing
Up in the sunny azure of the heavens:
And when at length one rises from its rest,
Like the mail'd Barbarossa from his trance,
He smiles upon it, in whatever garb
It is array'd:—whether it stretches up
In grand cathedral spires, whose gilded vanes,
Like glorious earth-tongues, lap the light of
heaven;

Or rounds itself into the perfect form
Of marble heroes, looking a reproof
On their creators for not gifting them
With one spark of that element divine
Whose words they are; or points itself like
light

Upon the retina, in breathing hues
And groups of loveliness on speaking canvas;
Or wreaths itself in fourfold harmony,
Making the soul a sky of rainbows; or
Sweeping vast circuits, ever stretching out
Broad-arm'd and all-embracing theories;
Or harvesting its brightness focal-wise,
All centring in the poet's gem-like words,
Fresh as the odours of young flowers, and
bright

As new stars trembling in the hand of God.
In all its grand disguises he beholds
And blesses his fair child. For thought is one,

As souls are in their essence, and it works
By kindred laws and processes in all;—
Whether it flames within thy mind, oh God,
And publishes itself in spheres of light,
In worlds of spirits—effluences of thee,
And shows its mighty convoluted throes
In embryotic suns and nebulae;
Or glimmers dimly in the humble mind
Of one of thy earth's children, whose grand
wish

And festival ambition is to bow
To thee; and whose most lofty thought is but
As the upturning of an eye in prayer;
Still are they one in nature—the great thought
That ray'd out into constellated worlds,
And the weak thought that went up in a
sigh—

The grand and lofty thought that, lover-like,
Hung a new star-string on the neck of heaven,
And the poor, lowly one that, bee-like,
brought

The honey of a pious wish to thee;
And this is one drop in that luminous flood;
One note from a light string of the great harp;
One leaf in all the universal wreath;
One point of all the glory of thy throne;
One atom of the substance of all worlds;
One gem upon the costly floor of heaven;
One tiny firstling among all the wealth

Which, going from thee glances, is return'd
As suns. And to thine eye one human thought
Interprets all the rest; the dynasties
Of mightiest intellect or martial power,
The Pharaohs and the Cæsars, and the times
Of Persian splendour and of Grecian might—
One human thought, invested in an act,
Lays bare the heart of all humanity,
And holds up, globule-like, in miniature
All that the soul of man hath yet achieved,
Its Paradies Lost, its glorious Iliads,
Its Hamlets and Othellos, and its dreams
Rising in towering Pyramids and Fanes,
To show that earth hath raptures heaven-
ward;

And like the touch'd lips of a hoary saint,
Utters dim prophecies of after-worlds,
Making sweet music to the ear of God,
Like Memnon's statue thrilling at the sun;
And as the New Year opening into life
Is all-related to the ages, so
Are man's works unto thine, Almighty God;
And as the ages to eternity,
So are all works to thee, Great Source of all!"

Fourthly, the author of "Night and the Soul" has a quick perception of those real, but mysterious analogies which bind mind and nature together. The whole poem is indeed an attempt to show the thousand points in which Night, in its brightness and blackness, its terror and its joy, its clouds and its stars, its calm

and its storm, comes in contact with human hopes, fears, aspirations, doubts, faults, and destinies. For example, he says—

"The solemn Night comes hooded, like a nun
From her dark cell, while all the laughing
stars

Mock the black weeds of the fair anchorite.
Sorrow is but the sham and slave of joy;
And this sweet sadness that thou wottest of
Is but the dusky dress in which our bliss,
Like a child sporting with the weeds of wo,
Chooses a moment to enrobe itself."

Two beautiful separate strains will show
still better what we mean. One we find
at page 113:—

"Thou pleadest, love, and all things plead;
For what is life but endless needing?
All worlds have wants beyond themselves,
And live by ceaseless pleading.

The earth yearns towards the sun for light;
The stars all tremble towards each other;
And every moon that shines to-night
Hangs trembling on an elder brother.

Flowers plead for grace to live; and bees
Plead for the tinted domes of flowers;
Streams rush into the big-soul'd seas;
The seas yearn for the golden hours.

The moon pleads for her preacher, Night;
Old ocean pleadeth for the moon;
Noon flies into the shades for rest;
The shades seek out the noon.

Life is an everlasting seeking;
Souls seek, and pant, and plead for truth;
Youth hangeth on the skirts of age;
Age yearneth still towards youth.

And thus all cling unto each other;
For nought from all things else is riven.
Heaven bendeth o'er the prostrate earth;
Earth spreads her arms towards heaven.

So do thou bend above me, love,
And I will bless thee from afar;
Thou shalt be heaven, and I the sea
That bosometh the star."

The other occurs at page 117, and is a
powerful collection of gloomy images:—

"I stand beside thy lonely grave, my love:
The wet lands stretch below me like a bog;
Darkness comes showering down upon me fast;
The wind is whining like a houseless dog;—
The cold, cold wind is whining round thy
grave,

It comes up wet and dripping from the fen;
The *lonesome twilight creeps into the dark,*
Like a dun, angry lion to his den.

There is a forlorn moaning in the air—
A sobbing round the spot where thou art
sleeping;

There is a dull glare in the wintry sky,
As though the eye of heaven were red with
weeping.

Sharp gusts of tears come raining from the
clouds,

The ancient church looks desolate and wild,
There is a deep, cold shiver in the earth,
As though the great world hunger'd for her
child.

The very trees fling their gaunt arms on high,
Calling for Summer to come back again;
Earth cries that Heaven has quite deserted
her;

Heaven answers but in showers of drizzling
rain.

The rain comes plashing on my pallid face;
Night, like a witch, is squatting on the
ground;

The storm is rising, and its howling wail
Goes baying round her, like a hungry hound.

The clouds, like grim, black faces, come and
go.

One tall tree stretches up against the sky;
It lets the rain through, like a trembling hand
Pressing thin fingers on a watery eye.

The moon came, but ahrank back, like a young
girl

Who has burst in upon funereal sadness;
One star came—Cleopatra-like, the Night
Swallow'd this one pearl in a fit of madness,
And here I stand, the weltering heaven above,
Beside thy lonely grave, my lost, my buried
love!"

Fifthly, this poet deduces a grand
Christian moral from his story and whole
poem. Alexis, his hero, after outliving
many difficulties, trials, and doubts, comes
to a Christian conclusion, in which he ex-
presses the following magnificent passage
(page 155):—

"The heart is a dumb angel to the soul,
Till Christ pass by, and touch its bud-like
lips.

Not unto thee, bold spirit on the wing,
Does the bright form of Truth reveal itself.
Soar as thou wilt, the heavens are still above,
And to thy questionings no answer comes—
Only the mocking of the dumb, sad stars.

A while thy search may promise thee success,
And now and then wild lights may play above,
Which, with exultant joy, thou takest for
The gleaming portals of the home of Truth—
'Twas but a mirage where thou saw'st thy-
self,

And not the image of the passing God!
Oh, with what joy we all set out for truth—
Newer Crusaders for the Holy Land—

Till one by one our guides and comrades fall,
And then some starry night, some cold bleak
night,

We find we are alone upon the sands,
Far from all human aids and sympathies,
While the black tide comes roaring up the
waste.

The highest truths lie nearest to the heart;
No soarings of the soul can find out God.
I was a bee who woke one summer night,
And taking the white stars for flowers, went
up

Buzzing and booming in the hungry blue;
And when its wings were weary with the
flight,

And the cold airs of morn were coming up,
Lo! the white flowers were melting out of
view,

And it came wheeling back—ah! heavily—
To the great laughing earth that gleam'd be-
low!

God will not show himself to prying eyes:
Could Reason scale the battlements of heaven,
Religion were a vain and futile thing,
And Faith a toy for childhood or the mad;
The humble heart sees farther than the soul.
Love is the key to knowledge—to true power;
And he who loveth all things, knoweth all.
Religion is the true Philosophy!
Faith is the last great link 'twixt God and
man.

There is more wisdom in a whisper'd prayer,
Than in the ancient lore of all the schools:
The soul upon its knees holds God by the
hand;

Worship is wisdom as it is in heaven!
'I do believe! help Thou my unbelief!'
Is the last, greatest utterance of the soul.
God came to me as Truth—I saw Him not;
He came to me as Love—and my heart broke,
And from its inmost depths there came a cry,
'My Father! oh, my Father! smile on me;
And the Great Father smiled.

Ah! 'tis a blessed world—a theatre
Where mighty purposes play out their parts:
We see not half its beauty till we are
That which we see through love. The holy
heart

Fulfills the dream of olden alchemists,
Turning all things it touches into gold.
The highest wisdom of the wisest seer
Is that which brings his childhood back to
him.

Christ was the babe's Apostle; and his words
Breathe the pure air of childhood, and its
faith:

Stoop, stoop, proud man, the gate of heaven
is low,

And all who enter in thereat must bend!
Reason has fields to play in, wide as air;
But they have bounds, and if she soar beyond,
Lo! there are lightnings and the curse of God,
And the old thunder'd 'Never!' from the
jaws

Of the black darkness and the mocking waste.
Come not to God with questions on thy lips;

He will have love—love and a holy trust,
And the self-abnegation of the child.
'Tis a far higher wisdom to believe,
Than to cry 'Question,' at the porch of
truth.

Think not the Infinite will calmly brook
The plummet of the finite in its depths.
The humble cottager I saw last night,
Sitting among the shadows at his door,
With his great Bible open on his knee—
His grandchild sporting near him on the
grass,
When his day's work was done—and point-
ing still

With horny finger as he read the lines,
Had, in his child-like trust and confidence,
Far more of wisdom on his furrow'd brow,
Than Kant in proving that there is a God,
Or Plato buried in Atlantis dreams!
I was a pilgrim gone in search of Him;
Reason, my guide, went wheeling through the
dark,

And still I follow'd with a faltering joy,
Until at last we reach'd the utmost verge,
Where 'Hither and no Farther!' is inscribed,
And my guide vanish'd, leaving me alone—
Alone—and the bright shrine I sought far off!
Alone—and the great waste behind me there,
Shutting me out from love and sympathy;
And there before, a waste yet wider still.

Ah! then it was my sturdy heart was touch'd:
I first felt awe, then love, then confidence;
And when I came once more into the world
From this soul-pilgrimage, behold! it smiled:
And it was morn, and all the birds were up,
And the one heart of all things throbb'd with
joy;

And the old hills lay sleeping, sleek in sun-
light;

It was a jubilee in praise of God—
An Orphic song—a festal hymn of praise!
I saw all seeming eccentricities
Were but the playing of the wider laws,
While law itself was systematic Love.
The passing winds sang vesper hymns to me;
And the old woods seem'd whispering, 'Let
us pray!'

Still more directly is the moral of the
poem stated in the following words, which
leave Alexis a "little child."—

"The last secret that we learn is this—
That being is a circle after all.
And the last line we draw in after life,
Rejoins the arc of childhood when complete:
That to be more than man is to be less."

We need not dwell on the identity of
this statement with the words of Jesus—
"Except a man become as a little child,
he can in no wise enter the kingdom of
heaven;" nor express our joy at finding

these words—which are at present a stumbling-block to many, in this proud and sceptical age, when intellect is worshipped as a God, and humility is trampled on as a slave—taken up, set in the splendid imagery, and sung in the lofty measures of one of our most gifted young poets.

We have not analysed the story, for this reason, that story, properly speaking, there is none. Two couples are the principal interlocutors—Ferdinand and Caroline; Alexis and Flora. The first are all bliss and blue sky together; they seem almost in heaven already. Alexis, again, is a kind of Manfred, without the melancholy end of that hero. Certain spirits form a conspiracy against him, and lead him through wild weltering abysses of struggle—very powerfully described—during which he forgets poor Flora, and a lady named Edith dies in love for him. When he returns to himself, and reaches the solid ground of hope, he returns to Flora too, and they are left in a very happy frame—she blessing the hour of his deliverance, and he resuming his old poetical aspirations. The poem closes with a song, in the "Lockeley Hall" style, on the "Poet's Mission," which is not, we think, in the author's best manner; and will be thought, by many, not quite in keeping with the Christian moral of the poem before enunciated.

And now for fault-finding. First, we state the want of objective interest. "Night and the Soul" is just a heap of fine and beautiful things. The story has no hinge. The plot is nothing. You might almost begin to read the book at the end, and close it at the beginning. Secondly, there is no dramatic skill displayed in the management of the dialogue. All the characters talk equally well, and all talk too long. All are poets or poetesses, uttering splendid soliloquies. Hence inevitably arise considerable monotony and tedium. Thirdly, we demur to that Spirit-scene altogether. Either these beings should have been described as doing *more*, or doing *less*. As it is, their introduction is a mere excrescence, although it is redeemed by much

striking poetry. Fourthly, there is a good deal of the *hideous* in the poem, imitated, apparently, from the worse passages of "Festus." We give one specimen—the worst, however, in the volume (page 132):—

"Last night I dream'd the universe was mad,
And that the sun its Cyclopean eye
Roll'd glaring like a maniac's in the heavens;
And moons and comets, link'd together,
scream'd
Like bands of witches at their carnivals,
And stream'd like wandering hell along the
sky;
And that the awful stars, through the red
light,
Glinted at one another wickedly,
Throbbing and chilling with intensest hate,
While through the whole a nameless horror
ran;
And worlds dropp'd from their place i' the
shuddering,
Like leaves of Autumn, when a mighty wind
Makes the trees shiver through their thickest
robes;
Greatspheres crack'd in the midst, and belch'd
out flame,
And sputtering fires went crackling over hea-
ven:
And space yawn'd blazing stars; and Time
shriek'd out,
That hungry fire was eating everything!
And scorch'd fiends, down in the nether hell,
Cried out, 'The universe is mad—is mad!'
And the great thing in its convulsions flung
System on system, till the caldron boil'd,
(Space was the caldron, and all hell the fire,
And every giant limb o' the universe
Dilated and collapsed, till it grew wan,
And I could see its naked ribs gleam out,
Beating like panting fire—and I awoke.
'Twas not all dream;—such is the world to
me."

This will never do. Fifthly, Mr Bigg appears to us to write too fast, and too diffusely. Many of his passages would be greatly improved by leaving out every third line.

This, however, is an ungracious task, and we must hurry it over. The author of "Night and the Soul" is a genuine poet. He has original genius—prolific fancy—the resources, too, of an ample scholarship—an unbounded command of poetic language—and, above all, a deeply-human, reverent, and pious spirit breathing in his soul. On the future career of such an one, there can rest no shadows

of uncertainty. A little pruning, a little more pains in elaborating, and the selection of an interesting story for his future poems, are all he requires to rank him, by and by, with our foremost living poets.

PHILIP JAMES BAILEY.

THESE sketches are by no means intended as a complete literary history of the age; yet we believe that in our "Galleries" few names of great note will be found altogether omitted. To omit, at all events, a distinct notice of such a phenomenon as "Festus," were unpardonable, and to this we now address ourselves. "Festus" is, indeed, a phenomenon. "When I read 'Festus,'" said poor David Scott to us, "I was astonished to find such work going on in a mind of the present day." It seemed to him, as Edinburgh on first view was called by Haydon, a "giant's dream." Indeed, it much resembles one of Scott's own vast unearthly pictures, the archetypes of which he may have recognised now in that world of shadows, of which he was born and lived a denizen; for surely, if ever walked a "phantom amongst men," it was the creator of "Vasco," "Sarpedon," and the "Resurrection of the Cross."

The first feeling which affected many besides us at the perusal of "Festus," was a shock of surprise, mixed with pain, and not free from a shade of disgust. If we did not "believe," we trembled; if we did not sympathise, we shuddered. Everything was so strange, that the whole seemed monstrous. We can compare our feelings to nothing else than Cain's flight with Lucifer through the stars. We found ourselves caught up on dark and mighty wings, through wildernesses of dim and shadowy objects, worlds unpeopled, worlds half-created, worlds peopled by forms so monstrous that solitude seemed sweet in the comparison—"gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire." But just as disgust and terror were about to drive us away from this weltering chaos, a light appeared, softer than sunlight, warmer than moonlight—the light of genius—which beckoned us on, and in which, at

last, all the abortional shapes and unearthly scenery became beautiful as the landscapes of a dream. It was an angel after all, and not an eccentric demon, who was our conductor, and we yielded ourselves gladly to his gentle guidance, although the path lay over all prodigious and unspeakable regions. We want words to express the wonder which grew upon us, as each page opened like a new star, and we felt that the riches of thought, and imagery, and language, scattered through the poem, were absolutely "fineless," and that the poet's mind was as vast as his theme. That vague but thrilling wonder has subsided into a calm but profound sense of the various elements of power and beauty which compose the "one and indivisible" "Festus."

It is, first of all, an original production. Some, indeed, have called it a mere cento from Goethe, Byron, and Shelley. We grant at once that it bears a striking resemblance to some of the productions of those three; but the resemblance is only that of a kindred subject and a kindred elevation. It is a new comet in an old sky. As well call "Manfred" a copy of "Faust," or "Faust" of Job, as trace "Festus" to a slavish imitation of any preceding poem. It takes its place instantly as the lawful member of a family of sublime eccentrics, who have pierced more or less boldly into forbidden regions "beyond the solar path and milky-way," and whose fiery tresses tell on their return that they have neared the ardours, now of the light that is full of glory, and now of the flames that shall never be quenched. In all these, however, the argument and object are different. Job, as we have shown elsewhere, contains a solution of the grand problem of the reconciliation of individual man to God, and to the difficulties of the universe, through a divine

medium. "Faust" is a fragmentary attempt to settle the same question, apart from supernatural aid. "Manfred" howls back to both, that such reconciliation is impossible, and that the riddle of the universe is absolutely illegible by man. Shelley's "Prometheus" is the argument of the "Faust" extended from man the individual to man the species; while Bailey's "Festus" is the argument of Job applied, in like manner, to the whole human family. He takes a similar view to that which Blake has so beautifully developed in his illustrations of the book of Job. "Festus" is to the one as Job to the other—a type of the fall and recovery of all men. The scene of "Faust" and of "Prometheus" is in earth; that of Job and of "Festus" is (essentially) in eternity.

That the book of Job is intended to teach universal restoration, we do not, notwithstanding Blake, believe. But one principal object of "Festus" is to promulgate this dream. A lovely dream, verily, it is. That the surprise of a final deliverance should pierce into the darkness of the second death—that heads bowed down on the pillows of despair should be raised up to look and be lightened by the THIRD ADVENT of a more glorious "star of Lethe" than was ever Mercury as he descended into the Pagan shades—that "faces faded in the fire" should glow with the freshness of eternal youth—that the prey should be taken out of the hands of such mighty ones, and the captives from a fate so terrible, that the spring of a sublimer resurrection should reach the remote Hecla of hell, substituting flowers for flames, and for ice sunshine—that the words of the "Devil's Dream" should be fulfilled even in the case of the eldest born of Anarchy and Sin—

"Thou shalt walk in soft white light, with
kings and priests abroad,
And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon
the hills of God"—

is a most captivating notion, and might be credited, had it the slightest ground in the Word of God, or anywhere but in the poetic fancy or the wild wish of man. As it is, it rises up before us, a brilliant but unsubstantial and fading pomp, like a

splendid evening sky; or if it die not altogether away, it must be from its connection with the imperishable fame of "Festus."

We could have wished that the author of this poem had severed its masses of beauty from a moral or theological system. All such unions are dangerous to poems. Milton, indeed, has surmounted the difficulty; and while we spurn Shelley's assertion that the system of Christianity shall by and by only be remembered in Milton's poem, we grant that the "Paradise Lost" is a subordinate evidence of its truth, as well as a rich halo around its central and solid greatness. To Pollok's work, again, his high Calvinism has proved partly a blessing and partly a bane—inwrought as it is into the entire structure of the poem, it has created either blind partisans or bitter enemies; only a few have been able to look through the "fire-mist" into the poetical beauties which are hid beneath it. In like manner, while Festus has been adopted and fondled by the large sect (large at least in America) calling itself Universalists, its doctrines have repelled many of the orthodox, who otherwise would have rejoiced in the "wilderness of sweets" and the forest of granddeurs which its circuit includes. Nor must Mr Bailey imagine that he has, by his notion of a universal restoration, in any effectual way recommended religion to the sceptical of the present day. Eternal punishment, fifty years ago, was a great stumbling-block to unquiet spirits. Such have generally now travelled on so far towards Naturalism or Pantheism, that they will not return at the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely—they will laugh at the fine dream, as a man would at the offer of sugar-plums for food, and walk on their own ungovernable way. They will ask, must not the reason for a hell at all be an *infinite* one, and, if so, is it not likely to be an *eternal* reason too? In every great house, is there not a furnace for the dross, as well as a light in the drawing-room? If sin be of an expansive character, will not punishment expand along with it? or, if God means to destroy sin hereafter, why does he not

begin by abolishing it here? And what need, they will ask again, of any hell afterwards, when justice is done now? And, again, your theory may prove the book *human*, but does it prove it *divine*?

Thus innocuously will the milk and rose-water of Bailey's doctrine drop upon the iron scales of modern scepticism, which seeks now, not so much to object to our special form of revelation, as to deny revelation altogether.

Bailey's originality is not merely that of plan, but of thought and style. He "hath a demon." He speaks as immediately told from behind. All conventionalisms are spurned—all opposites paired—all contradictions reconciled—all elements mingled—all tenses lost in the holy and glorious hubbub of "Festus." He is evidently a boy at blood-heat, but an inspired boy. We have been as much amazed to find critics treating "Festus"—sometimes with praise, sometimes with blame—as an elaborate piece of art, as Byron was to find his "Don Juan"—the child of gin and sin—treated by the Germans as an artistic work. But Bailey's book is the effect of the intoxication of youth—a powerful and lawful stimulant, which the poor jaded hack of the "Examiner" or "Athenaeum," or any such small critic, is as incapable of sympathising with, as he is now of imbibing.

These miserable effigies of critics, when they approach books like "Festus," should really read the "Riot Act;" for certainly such works do rebel against all arbitrary authority, and do stir the air and lead the wind with extravagant liberties of thought and word, which neither they nor their fathers (Rymer, Dennis, &c.) were able to bear. We have, within the last few years, witnessed (through such critics) the strange phenomena of a Dickens deified and a Christopher North (save in Scotland) forgotten; a Warren's "Now

and Then" in its third edition, and Air's "Poems" scarcely out of their first; Macaulay crowned with the richest laurels of the historic muse, and Thomas de Quincey, with a genius, an intellect, and a learning qualifying him for an historian as far superior to the ex-Edinburgh member as was Tacitus to Suetonius, comparatively neglected; a "Course of Time" and a "Silent Love" in their teens of editions, and "Festus," after sixteen years, in its fifth; phenomena somewhat substantiating the assertion of an old clever clergyman about the march of intellect, "It has certainly been very rapid of late—it has *marched out of sight*."

The poem of "Festus," however, has by no means lost its reward. Its evident earnestness—its holy yet charitable spirit—its inexhaustible fountain of imagery—its individual thoughts of splendour, like spots of sunshine amid the dark forests around—its long sweeping passages, which seem to *grow* visibly and audibly before you—its infinite variety—the spirit and music of its songs—the living aspect of its characters—the bold but striking generality of its descriptions—the simplicity, or force, or beauty, or languor, of its language—the broad picture of life it presents—prove it, apart from its theological pretensions, one of the greatest poems in the age. We should, perhaps, forbear to add, that, besides the warm verdict of the thinking youth of the country, it has gained the praise of Bulwer, Montgomery, Wilson, Tennyson, Binney, David Scott, Professor Nichol, Samuel Brown, and others of equal note. Partial, or insincere, or interested praise (although we by no means apply these terms to the above), and also malicious censure, may be told here to stand aside, inasmuch as "Festus" has written its own indelible impress upon a very broad, true, and responsive section of the intellectual world. "You may know it by its fruits."

Part Second.—French Revolutionists.

MIRABEAU.

ONE is sometimes tempted to suppose that our earth hangs between two centres, to which she is alternately attracted, like those planets which are said to be suspended between the double stars, and that she now nears a blue and mild, and now a blood-red and fiery sun. There are beautiful days and seasons, which stoop down upon us like doves from heaven, and give us exquisite but short-lived pleasure, in which our world appears a "pensive, but a happy place"—the sky the dome of a temple; Eden recalled, and the Millennium anticipated: we are then within the attraction of our milder Star. There are other days and seasons, the darkness of which is lighted up by the foam of general frenzy, like the lurid illumination lent by the spray to the tossed midnight ocean—when there is a crying, not for wine, but for blood, in the streets—when the mirth of the land is darkened, and when all hearts, not filled with madness, fail for fear. Such are our revolutionary eras, when our Red Sun is vertical over us, shedding disastrous day, and portending premature and preternatural night.

The value of revolutions lies more in the men they discover, than in the measures they produce. For a superior being how grand and interesting the attitude of standing, like John, on the sand of the sea-shore, and seeing the beasts, horned or crowned, fierce or tame, which arise from the waves which revolution has churned into fury, to watch them while yet fresh and dripping from the water,

and to follow the footprints of their progress! From the vantage-ground of after-time, the human observer is able to take almost a similar point of view. He has this, too, in his favour. The lives of revolutionists, as well as of robbers, are generally short; their names are written laconically and in blood—their characters are intensified, and sharply defined by death—their footsteps are the few but forcible stamps of desperate courage and recklessness; and the artist, if at all competent for the task of depiction, is helped by the terrible unity and concentration of his subject. If, besides, he be fond of "searching dark bosoms," where are to be found darker bosoms than those of revolutionists? if he loves rock scenery, what rock like the Tarpeian, toppling over its Dead Sea? if he loves to botanise among the daring flowers of virtue, which border the giddiest precipices of guilt, let him come hither; if he wishes to brace his nerves, and strengthen his eyesight, and test his faith by sights and sounds of wo, here is his field; if he wishes to be read, and to send down a thrill from his red-margined page into the future, let him write worthily of revolutionists. The "History of Catiline's Conspiracy" has survived less from its intrinsic merit, than because it records the history and fate of one who aspired to be a revolutionist on a large scale, although he succeeded only in becoming the broken bust of one.

Our motive in the present series is somewhat different from any we have

now stated. We formerly drew portraits of God's selected and inspired men. To bring out, by contrast, the colour and tone of these, we are tempted now to draw faithfully, yet charitably, the likenesses of some generally supposed to be the *Devil's* selected and inspired men. Nor are we indifferent, at the same time, to the moral purposes which such painting, and the contrast implied in it, may serve.

We begin with Mirabeau, the first-born of the French Revolution—a revolution in himself. In any age and country, Mirabeau must have been an extraordinary man. We may wish—the more because we wish in vain—that he had lived in an age of religious faith, when the solar centre of the idea of a God might have harmonised and subdug his cometary powers. Had he lived in the time of the Reformation, he had been either a Huguenot of the Huguenots, or a fiercer Guise; but, thrown on an age and a country of rampant denial and licentiousness, he must deny and be lewd on a colossal scale. He was not, we must remark, of that highest order of minds, whose individualism, approaching the infinite, stands alone in whatever age, and which rejects or selects influences according to its pleasure. Mirabeau belonged to that class whose mission is to *exaggerate* with effect the tendency and spirit of their nation and period, and thus to precipitate either their sublimation or their *reductio ad absurdum*. In him the French beheld all their own peculiarities, passions, and powers magnified into magnificent caricature, even as they had seen them exhibited on a *miniature* scale in Voltaire; and hence their intoxicated admiration, and their wild sorrow at his death. When he fell, it was as the fall of the statue on the summit of their national column.

Some of Mirabeau's admirers speak of him as if he were something better than a French idol—as if he partook of a universal character—as if a certain fire of inspiration burned within him, classing him with Burns, and elevating him far above Burke. We cannot, we must confess, see any such stamp of universality

on his brow, or rod of divination in his hand. Of all Frenchmen (and he was hardly one), Rousseau alone appears to us to have so risen out of French influences as to have caught on his wings an unearthly fire, not indeed streaming down from heaven, but streaming up from hell. His *was* a Pythonic frenzy. He spake to the ear of humanity falsely often, but earnestly and powerfully always. His dress might be that of a harlequin, but his bosom was that of a man fanatically in earnest. He was the most sincere man France ever reared. To a pitch of prophetic fury, Mirabeau neither rose by nature like Rousseau, nor, like Burke, was stung by circumstances. He could at all times manage his thunderbolts with consummate dexterity, could husband his enthusiasms, and never allowed himself to be carried away all-powerful in his very helplessness upon the torrent he had stirred. He *had* genius hung up on the armoury of his mind, and could upon occasion take down the bright weapon and dye it in blood; but genius never *had* him like a spear in its blind and awful grasp.

Which quality of the Frenchman was wanting in Mirabeau? The versatility, levity, brilliance, instability, irritability, volubility, the enthusiasm of moments, the coldness of years, the immorality, now springing from tempestuous passions, and now from the cool conclusions of atheism, the intuitive understanding, the declamatory force of the genuine Gaul, were all found in him, but all expanded into extraordinary dimensions through the combustion of his bosom, and all pointed by the romantic circumstances of his story. His originality, like Byron's, lay principally in that wild dark blood which had run down through generations of semi-maniacs, till in him it was connected with talents as wondrous as *it* was hot.

Mirabeau, as the basis of his intellectual character, possessed intuitive sagacity, and sharp common sense. He was "all eye." His very arm outstretched, and finger up-pointed, seemed to *see*. No gesture, no motion of such a man, is blind or insignificant. His very silence is full of meaning; his looks are as wings!

as the words of others. Mirabeau's insight was sharpened by experience, by calamity, by vice, by the very despair which had once been the tenant of his bosom. "The glance of melancholy is a fearful gift." Add the intellect of a fallen demi-god to the savage irritation of a flayed wild beast, and the result shall be the exasperated and hideous penetration of a Mirabeau. The rasping recollections of his persecuted childhood and wandering youth, the smouldering ashes of his hundred amours, the "sweltered venom" collected in his long years of captivity, along with his uncertain prospects and unsettled principles, had not only hardened his heart, but had given an unnatural stimulus to his understanding, which united the coherence of sanity with the cunning, power, and fury of madness. This wondrously endowed and frightfully soured nature was by the Revolution—its incidents, adventures, and characters—supplied with an abundance of food sure to turn to poison the moment it was swallowed, and to nourish into keener activity his perverted powers.

To counterbalance this strongly-stimulated, self-confident, and defiant intellect, there was little or no moral sense. Whether, as we have heard it alleged of certain characters, *omitted* in his composition, or burned out of him by the combined fires of cruelty on the part of his father, and excess on his own, we cannot say, but it did become microscopically small. Indeed, it seems to us to have been a most merciful arrangement for Mirabeau's fame, that he died before the revolutionary panic had come to its height. In all probability, he would have acted the sanguinary tyrant on a larger scale than any of the terrorists; for France had come to such an apoplectic crisis, that blood must relieve her. All that was wanted, was a hand unprincipled and daring enough to apply the lancet. Who bolder and more unprincipled than Mirabeau? And who had passed through such an indurating and embittering process? Possessed of a thousand wrongs, steeled by atheism, drained of humanity, he had undoubtedly more wisdom, cul-

ture, and self-command than his brother revolutionists, and would have been a butcher of genius, and scattered about his blood (as Virgil is said to do his dung in the *Georgics*) more elegantly and gracefully than they. But in him, too, slumbered the savage cruelty of a Marat, and in certain circumstances he would have been equally unscrupulous and unsparing.

Mirabeau's imagination has been lavishly panegyrised. It does not, we think, so far as we have been able to judge from the specimens we have seen, appear to have been very copious or creative. Its figures were striking and electrical in effect, rather than poetical; they were always bold, but never beautiful, and seldom, though sometimes, reached the sublime. The grandest of them will be familiar to our readers: "When the last of the Gracchi expired, he flung dust towards heaven, and from this dust sprung Marius!—Marius, less great for having exterminated the Cimbric, than for having prostrated in Rome the power of the nobility." A little imagination goes a far way in a Frenchman. Edmund Burke has in almost every page of his "*Regicide Peace*" ten images as bold and magnificent as this, not to speak of his subtle trains of thinking which underlie, or of those epic swells of sustained splendour, which Mirabeau could not have equalled in madness, in dreams, or in death.

The oratory of Mirabeau seems to have been the most imposing of his powers. Manageable and well managed as a consummate race-horse, it was fiery and impetuous as a lion from the swelling of Jordan. In the commencement of his speeches, he often hesitated and stammered; it was the fret of the torrent upon the rock, ere it rushes into its bed of wrath and power; but once launched, "torrents less rapid and less rash." His face as of a "tiger in small-pox"—his eye blazing with the threefold light of pride, passion, and genius—his fiery gesticulation—his voice of thunder—the strong points of war he blew ever and anon—the strong intellect, which was the solid basis below the sounding foam—all united

to render his eloquence irresistible. His audiences felt, that next to the power of a great good man, inspired by patriotism, genius, and virtue, was that of a great bad man, overflowing with the Furies, and addressing Pandemonium in its own Pandemonian speech. Even the dictates and diction of mildness, sense, and mercy, as they issued from such lips, had an odd and yet awful affect. It was, indeed, greatly the gigantic but un ludicrous oddity of the man that enchanted France. Having come from prison to reign, smelling of the rank odours of dungeons, with nameless and shadowy crimes darkening the air around him, with infamous books of his composition, seen by the mind's eye dangling from his side, there he stood, rending up old institutions, thundering against kings, and deciding on the fate of millions. What figure more terribly telling and piquant could even France desire? Monster-loving she had always been, but no such magnificent monster had ever before sprung from her soil, or roared in her senate-house. Voltaire had been an ape of wondrous gifts; but here was a Creature from beyond chaos come to bellow over her for a season, and, unable and afraid to laugh, she was compelled to adore.

As an orator, few form fit subjects for comparison with Mirabeau, because few have triumphed over multitudes in spite of, nay, by means of, the infamy of their character added to the force of their genius. Fox is no full parallel. He was dissipated, but his name never went through Europe like an evil odour, nor did he ever wield the condensed and Jove-like power of Mirabeau. He was one—and not the brightest—of a constellation: the Frenchman walked his lurid heaven alone. Sheridan was a dexterous juggler, playing a petty personal game with boy-bowls; Mirabeau trundled cannon-balls along the quaking ground. Sheridan was commonplace in his vices; Mirabeau burst the limits of nature in search of pleasure, and then sat down to inoculate mankind, through his pen, with the monstrous venom. As the twitch of Brougham's nose is to the tiger face of

the Frenchman, so the eccentricity of the one to the Herculean frenzy of the other. Mirabeau most, perhaps, resembles the first Cæsar, if not in the cast of oratory, yet in private character, and in the commanding power he exerted. That power was, indeed, unparalleled; for here was a man ruling not creation, but chaos; here was the old contest of Achilles with the rivers renewed; here was a single man grappling in turn with every subject and with every party, throwing all in succession himself, or dashing the one against the other—smatching from his enemies their own swords—hated and feared by all parties, himself hating all, but fearing none—knowing all—and himself as unknown in that stormy arena as a monarch in his inmost pavilion—dissecting all characters like a knife, himself like that knife remaining one and indivisible—and doing all this alone; for what followers, properly speaking, save a nation at a time, had Mirabeau? We hear of single men being separate "estates:" the language, as applied to *him*, has some meaning.

It has often been asked, What would have been his conduct, had he lived? Some say dogmatically, that because he was on terms with the king at the time of his death, he would have saved the monarchy; while a few suppose that he would have rode upon the popular wave to personal dominion. If it were not idle to speculate upon impossibilities, we might name it as our impression, that Mirabeau would have been, as all his life before, guided by circumstances, or impelled by passions, or overpowered by necessity, and become king's friend or king, as fate or madness ruled the hour. Perhaps, too, the revolution was getting beyond even his guidance. *He* might have sought to ride erect in the stirrups, and been thrown; while Marat grasped the throat and mane of the desperate animal with a grasp which death only could sever. Perhaps the monarchy was not salvable; perhaps, while seeking to conserve this ripe corn, the sickle might have cropped the huge head of the defender; perhaps the revolution, which latterly "devoured its

own children." would have devoured him, leaving him the melancholy comfort of Ulysses in the Cyclop's cave—"Noman shall be the last to be devoured." But all such inquiries and peradventures are for ever vain.

Mirabeau's death was invested with dramatic interest. He died in the midst of his career; he sank like an island; he died while all eyes in Europe were fixed upon him; he died while many saw a crown hovering over his head; he died undiscovered, concealing his future plans in the abyss of his bosom, and able to "adjust his mantle ere he fell;" he died, reluctant less at dying, than at not being permitted to live. All his properties seemed to rise up around him as he was leaving the world. His voluptuousness must have one other full draught: "Crown me with flowers, sprinkle me with perfumes, that I may thus enter on the eternal sleep." His levity must have one more ghastly smile: "What!" as he heard the cannon roaring, "have we the funeral ere the Achilles be dead?" His vanity must cry out, "They will miss me when I am gone. Ay, support that head; would I could leave thee it!" His wild unbelief must once more flash up like a volcano fading in the dawn: "If that sun be not God, he is his cousin-german." His intellect had, perhaps, in the insight of approaching death, passed from previous uncertainty and vacillation to some great scheme of deliverance for his country; for he said, "I alone can save France from the calamities which on all sides are about to break upon her." And having thus gathered his powers and passions in full pomp around his dying couch, he bade them and the world farewell.

France had many tears to shed for him; we have not now one tear to spare. His death, indeed, was a tragedy, but not of a noble kind. It reminds us of the death of one of the evil giants in the "Pilgrim's Progress," with their last grim looks, hard-drawn breathings, and bellowings of baffled pride and fury. It was the selfish death of one who had led an intensely selfish life. What grandeur it had sprung from its melodramatic accompa-

niments, and from the mere size of the departing unclean spirit. A large rotten tree falls with a greater air than a small, whose core is equally unsound. Nor was the grief of France more admirable than the death it bewailed. It was the howl of weak dependency, not of warm love. They mourned him, not for himself, but for the shade and shelter he gave them. Such a man must have been admired and feared, but could not have been sincerely or generally beloved. Mr Fox, on the other hand, having what Mirabeau wanted—a heart—fell amid the sincere sorrows of his very foes, and his country mourned not for itself, but for him, as one mourns for a first-born.

We were amused at Lamartine's declaration about Mirabeau: "Of all the qualities of the great man of his age, he wanted only honesty"—a *parlous want!* Robin Hood was a very worthy fellow, if he had been but honest. A great man deficient in honesty, what is he but a great charlatan, a sublime scamp, a Jove-Judas—to apply, after Mirabeau's own fashion, a compound nickname?

Such a Jove-Judas was Mirabeau. Without principle, without heart, without religion; with the fiercest of demoniac and the foulest of human passions mingled in his bosom; with an utter contempt for man, and an utter disbelief of God, he possessed the clearest of understandings, the most potent of wills, the most iron of constitutions, the most eloquent of tongues—united the cool and calculating understanding of an arithmetician to the frenzied energies and gestures of a Menad—the heart and visage of a Pluto to something resembling the sun-glory and sun-shafts of a Phœbus. Long shall his memory be preserved in the list of "Extraordinary (human) Meteors," but a still and pure luminary he can never be counted. Nay, as the world advances in knowledge and virtue, his name will probably deepen in ignominy. At present, his image stands on the plain of Dura with head of gold and feet of iron, mingled with miry clay, and surrounded by not a few prostrate admirers; but we are mistaken if, by and by, there be not millions to

imitate the conduct of the undecieved revolutionists (who tore down his bust), and push him, in wrath, off his pedestal. Carlyle attributes to him with justice an

"eye," but, though strong, it was not single, and is it not written, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness!"

MARAT, ROBESPIERRE, AND DANTON.

ONE obvious effect of the upheavings of a revolution is to develop latent power, and to deliver into light and influence east-down and crushed giants, such as Danton. But another result is the undue prominence given by convulsion and anarchy to essentially small and meagre spirits, who, like little men lifted up from their feet in the pressure of a crowd, are surprised into sudden exaltation, to be trodden down whenever their precarious propping gives way. Revolution is a genuine leveller; "small and great" meet on equal terms in its wide grave; and persons, whose names would otherwise have never met in any other document than a directory, are coupled together continually, divide influence, have their respective partisans, and require the stern crucible of death to separate them, and to settle their true position in the general history of the nation and the world.

Nothing, indeed, has tended to deceive and mystify the public mind more than the arbitrary conjunction of names. The yoking together of men in this manner has produced often a lamentable confusion as to their respective intellects and characteristics. Sometimes a mediocrist and a man of genius are thus coupled together; and what is lost by the one is gained by the other, while the credit of the whole firm is essentially impaired. Sometimes men of equal, though most dissimilar intellect, are, in defiance of criticism, clashed into as awkward a pair as ever stood up together on the floor of a country dancing-school. Sometimes, for purposes of moral or critical condemnation, two of very different degrees of criminality are tied neck and heels together, as in the dreadful undistinguishing "marriages of the Loire." Some-

times the conjunction of unequal names is owing to the artifice of friends, who, by perpetually naming one favourite author along with another of established fame, hope to convince the unwary public that they are on a level. Sometimes they are produced by the pride or ambition, or by the carelessness or caprice, of the men or authors themselves. Sometimes they are the deliberate result of a shallow, though pretentious criticism, which sees and specifies resemblances where, in reality, there are none. Sometimes they spring from the purest accidents of common circumstances, common cause, or common abode, as if a crow and a thrush must be kindred because seated on one hedge. From these and similar causes, have arisen such combinations as Dryden and Pope, Voltaire and Rousseau, Cromwell and Napoleon, Southey and Coleridge, Rogers and Campbell, Hunt and Hazlitt, Hall and Foster, Paine and Cobbett, Byron and Shelley, or Robespierre and Danton.

In the first histories of the French Revolution, the names of Marat, Robespierre, and Danton, occur continually together as a triumvirate of terror, and the impression is left that the three were of one order, each a curious compound of the maniac and the monster. They walk on, linked in chains, to common execution, although it were as fair to tie up John Ings, Judge Jeffreys, and Hercules Furens. A somewhat severer discrimination has of late unloosed Marat from the other two, and permitted Robespierre and Danton to walk in couples.

Yet, of Marat, too, we must say a single word—"Marah" might he better have been called, for he was a water of bitterness. He reminds us of one of those small, narrow, inky pools we have seen in

the wilderness, which seem fitted to the size of a suicide, and waiting in gloomy expectation of his advent. John Foster remarked, of some small "malignant" or other, that he had never seen so much of the "essence of devil in so little a compass." Marat was a still more compact concentration of that essence. He was the prussic acid among the family of poisons. His unclean face, his tiny figure, his gibbering form, his acute but narrow soul, were all possessed by an infernal unity and clearness of purpose. *He* never rested; he never slumbered or walked through his part; he fed but to refresh himself for revolutionary action; he slept but to breathe himself for fresh displays of revolutionary fury. Milder mood or lucid interval there was none in him. The wild beast, when full, sleeps; but Marat was never full—the cry from "the worm that dieth not," within him, being still "Give, give," and the flame in his bosom coming from that fire which is "never to be quenched."

If, as Carlyle seems sometimes to insinuate, earnestness be in itself a divine quality, then should Marat have a high place in the gallery of heroes; for, if an earnest angel be admirable, chiefly for his earnestness, should not an earnest imp be admirable too? If a tiger be respectable from his unflinching oneness of object, should not a toad, whose sole purpose is to spit sincere venom, crawl amid general consideration too? But we suspect, that over Carlyle's imagination the quality of greatness exerts more power than that of earnestness. A great regal-seeming ruffian fascinates him, while the petty scoundrel is trampled on. His soul rises to mate with the tiger in his power, but his foot kicks the toad before it, as it is lazily dragging its loathsomeness through the wet garden-beds. The devils, much admired as they stood on the burning marl, lose caste with him when, entering the palace of Pandemonium, they shrink into miniatures of their former selves. Mirabeau, with Carlyle, is a cracked angel; Marat, a lame and limping fiend.

Some one has remarked, how singular it is that all the heroes of the French Re-

volution were *ugly*. It seems as curious to us, that they were either very large or very little persons. Danton was a Titan; Mirabeau, though not so tall, was large, and carried a huge head on his shoulders; whereas Marat and Napoleon were both small men. But the French found their characteristic love of extremes gratified in all of them. Even vice and cruelty they will not admire, unless sauced by some piquant oddity, and served up in some extraordinary dish. A little, lean, corporal-like Napoleon, conquering the Brobdignagian marshals and emperors of Europe, and issuing from his nut-like fist the laws of nations; a grinning death's-head like Voltaire, frightening Christendom from its propriety, were stimulating to intoxication. But their talent was gigantic, though their persons were not; whereas, Marat's mind was as mean and his habits as low, as his stature was small and his looks disgusting. Here, then, was the requisite French ragout in all its putrid perfection. A scarecrow—his rags fluttering and his arms vibrating in a furious wind—became, for a season, the idol of the most refined and enlightened capital in Europe.

Had we traced, as with a lover's eye, the path of some beautiful flash of lightning, passing, in its terrible loveliness, over the still landscape, and seen it omitting the church spire, which seemed proudly pointing to it as it passed—sparing the old oak, which was bending its sacrificial head before its coming—touching not the tall pine into a column of torch-like flame, but darting its arrow of wrath upon the scarecrow in the midst of a bean-field, and by the one glare of grandeur revealing, ere it consumed, its "looped and ragged" similitude to a man, its aspiring beggary and contorted weakness—it would have presented us with a fit though faint image of the beautiful avenger, the holy homicide, the daughter of Nemesis by Apollo—Charlotte Corday—smiting the miserable Marat. Shaft from heaven's inmost quiver, why wert thou spent upon such a work? Why not have ranged over Europe, in search of more potent and pernicious tyrants, or, at least, have darted into the

dark heart of Robespierre? Such questions are vain; for not by chance, but by decree, it came about that a death from a hand by which a demi-god would have desired to die, befell a demi-man, and that now this strange birth of nature shines on us for ever, in the light of Charlotte Corday's dagger and last triumphant smile.

Yet, even to Marat, let us be merciful, if we must also be just. A monster he was not, nor even a madman; but a manikin of some energy and acuteness, soured to a preternatural degree, and whose fury was aggravated by pure fright. He was such a man as the apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet" would have become in a revolution; but Marat, instead of dealing out small dozes of death to love-sick tailors and world-wearied seamstresses, rose by the force of desperation to the summit of revolutionary power, cried out for 80,000 heads, and died of the assault of a lovely patriotic maiden, as of a sun-stroke. And yet Shakspeare has a decided *penchant* for the caitiff wretch he so graphically paints, and has advertised his shop to the ends of the earth. So, to vary the figure, let us pity the poor phial of prussic acid, dashed down so suddenly, and by so noble a hand, whom mortals call Marat. Nature refuses not to appropriate to her bosom her spilt poisons, any more than her shed blooms—appropriates, however, only to mix them with kindlier elements, and to turn them to nobler account. And let us, in humble imitation, collect and use medicinally the scattered drops of poor acrid Marat.

Marat was essentially of the *canaille*—a bad and exaggerated specimen of the class, whom his imperfect education only contributed to harden and spoil. Robespierre and Danton belong, by birth and training, by feelings and habits, to the middle rank—Robespierre sinking in the end below it, through his fanaticism, and Danton rising above it, through his genius and power. Both were "limbs of the law," though the one might be called a great toe, and the other a huge arm; and, without specifying other resemblances, while Marat lost his temper and almost

his reason in the *mêlée* of the Revolution, both Robespierre and Danton preserved to the last their selfpossession, their courage, and the full command of their intellectual faculties.

Robespierre reminds us much of the *worst* species of the old Covenanter—a picture of whom is faithfully drawn by Sir Walter in Burley, and in our illustrious clansman, the "gifted Gilfillan." Such beings there did exist, and probably exist still, who united a firm belief in certain religious dogmas to the most woful want of moral principle and human feeling, and were ready to fight what they deemed God's cause with the weapons of the devil. Their cruelties were cool and systematic; they asked a blessing on their assassinations, as though savages were to begin and end their cannibal meals with prayer. Such men were hopelessly steeled against every sentiment of humanity. Mercy to their enemies seemed to them treason against God. No adversary could escape from them. A tiger may feed to repletion, or be disarmed by drowsiness; but who could hope to appease the *ghost of a tiger*, did such walk? Ghosts of tigers, never slumbering, never sleeping, cold in their eternal hunger, pursuing relentlessly their devouring way, were the fanatics—the Dalziels and Claverhouses, as well as the Burleys and Mucklewraths, of the seventeenth century.

To the same order of men belonged Robespierre, modified, of course, in character and belief, by the influences of his period. The miscalled creed of the philosophers of France in the eighteenth century, which, with many of themselves, was a mere divertisement to their intellects, or a painted screen for their vices, sunk deep into the heart of Robespierre, and became a conviction and a reality with him. So far it was well; but, alas! the creed was heartless and immoral, as well as false. Laying down a wide object, it permitted every license of vice or cruelty in the paths through which it was to be gained. Robespierre became, accordingly, the worst of all sinners—a *sinner upon system*—a political Antinomian, glorying in his shame, to whom blood itself be-

came at last an abstraction and a shadow; the guillotine only a tremendous shuttle, weaving a well-ordered political web; and the tidings of the fall of a thousand heads agreeably indifferent, as to the farmer the news of a cleared hay or harvest field.

That Robespierre had at the first any appetite for blood, is not now asserted by his bitterest foe. That he ever even acquired such a monstrous thirst, seems to us very unlikely. His only thought would be, at the tidings of another death, "Another sacrifice to my *idea*; another obstacle lifted out of its way." Nero's wish that his enemies had but "one neck" was, we think, comparatively a humane wish. It showed that he had no delight in the disgusting details, but only in the secure result of their destruction. *He* is the unnatural monster who protracts the fierce luxury, and sips his deep cup of blood lingeringly, that he may know the separate flavour of every separate drop. Robespierre, no more than Nero, was *up* to such delicately infernal cruelty.

Carlyle frequently admits Robespierre's sincerity, and yet rates him as little other than a sham. We account for this as we did in the case of Marat. He is regarded as a SMALL sincerity; and the sincerity of a small man contracts, to Carlyle's eye, something of the ludicrous air in which a Lilliputian warrior, shouldering his straw-sized musket, and firing his lead-drop bullets, seemed to Gulliver. "Bravo, my little hero!" shouts the historian, with a loud laugh, as he sees him, with "sky-blue breeches," patronising the houseless idea of a Divine being, "prop away at the tottering heavens, with that new nine-pin of thine; but why is there not rather a little nice doll of an image in those showy inexpressibles, to draw out and complete the conversion of thy people? and why not say, 'These be thy gods, O toy and toad-worshipping France?'" To bring him to respect, while he admits, the sincerity, we would need to disprove the smallness, of our Arras advocate. Now, compared to truly great men, such as Cromwell—or to extraordinary men, such as Napoleon, Mirabeau, and Danton—Robespierre was small enough. But surely it was no pigmy

whose voice—calm, dispassioned, and articulate—ruled lunatic France; who preserved an icy coolness amid a land of lava; who mastered, though it was only for a moment, a power like the Revolution; and who threw from his pedestal, though it was by assailing in an unguarded hour, a statue so colossal as Danton's. Rigid, Roman-like purpose—keen, if uninspired, vision—the thousand eyes of an Argus, if not the head of a Jove or the fist of a Hercules—perseverance, honesty, and first-rate business qualities—we must allow to Robespierre, unless we account for his influence by Satanic possession, and say—"Either no *dunce* out *Diabolus*." Carlyle attributes his defeat and downfall to his pertinacious pursuit of a shallow logic to its utmost consequences. Probably he thus expresses, in his own way, the view we have already sought to indicate. Robespierre was the sincere, consistent, unclean apostle of an unclean system—a system of deism in theology—of libertinism in morals—of mobocracy in politics—of a "gospel," according to Jean Jacques,—a gospel of "liberty, equality, fraternity:" a liberty ending in general bondage, an equality terminating in the despotism of unprincipled talent, a fraternity dipping its ties in blood. With faithful, unflinching footstep, through good report and bad report, he followed the genius of revolution in all her devious, dark, dangerous, or triumphant paths, till she at last turned round in anger, like a dogged fiend, and rent him in pieces.

In dealing with Robespierre, we feel, more than with Marat, that we are in contact with an intelligent human being, not an oddity and mere splinter of a man. His *idea* led, and at last *dragged* him, but did not devour nor possess him. His cruelty was more a policy, and less a raging passion; and his great moral error lay in *permitting* a theory, opposed to his original nature, to overbear his moral sense, to drain him of humanity, and to precipitate him to his doom. If he had resisted the devil, he would have fled from him.

In rising from Robespierre to Danton, we feel like one coming up from the lower plains of Sicily into its western coast—

the country of the Cyclopes, with their one eye and gigantic stature; their courage, toil, ferocity, impiety, and power. Danton *did* tower Titanically above his fellows, and, with little of the divine, was the strongest of the earth-born. He had an "Eye," like a shield of sight, broad, piercing, and looking straight forward. His intellect was clear, intuitive, commanding, incapable of the theoretical and abhorrent of the visionary. He was practical in mind, although passionate in temperament and figurative in speech. His creed was atheism, not apparently wrought out by personal investigation, or even sought for as an opiate to conscience, but carelessly accepted, as the one he found fashionable at the time. His conduct, too, was merely the common licentiousness of his country, taking a larger shape from his larger constitution and stronger passions. His political faith was less definite and strict, but more progressive and practical, and more accommodated to circumstances, than Robespierre's. His patriotism was as sincere as Robespierre's, but hung about him in more easy and voluminous folds. It was a toga, not a tunic. A sort of lazy greatness, which seemed, at a distance, criminal indifference, characterised him when in repose. His cupidity was as Cyclopean as his capacity. Nothing less than a large bribe could fill such a hand. No common goblet could satisfy such a maw. Greedy of money, for money's sake, he was not. He merely wished to live, and all Paris knew what he meant by living. And with all the royal sops to Cerberus, he remained Cerberus still. Never had he made the pretensions of a Lord Russell or Algernon Sidney, and we know how they were subsidised. His "poverty, but not his will, consented." Had he lived in our days, a public subscription—a "Danton testimonial, all subscriptions to be handed in to the — office of Camille Desmoulins"—would have saved this vast needy patriot from the disgrace of taking supplies from Louis, and then laughing a wild laughter at his provider, as he hewed on at the foundations of his throne.

In fact, careless greatness, without prin-

ciple, was the key to Danton's merits and faults—his power and weakness. Well did Madame Roland call him "Sardanapalus." When he found a clover field, he rolled in it. When he had nothing to do, he did nothing; when he saw the necessity of doing something immediately, he could condense ages of action into a few hours. He was like some dire tocsin, never rung till danger was imminent, but then arousing cities and nations as one man. And thus it was that he saved his country and lost himself, repulsed Brunswick and sunk before Robespierre.

It had been otherwise, if his impulses had been under the watchful direction of high religious or moral, or even political principle. This would have secured unity among his passions and powers, and led to steady and cumulative effort. From this conscious greatness and superiority to the men around him, there sprung a fatal security and a fatal contempt. He sat on the Mountain, smiling, while his enemies were undermining his roots; and while he said, "He dares not imprison me," Robespierre was calmly muttering, "I will."

It seemed as if even revolution were not a sufficient stimulus to, or a sufficient element for, Danton's mighty powers. It was only when war had reached the neighbourhood of Paris, and added its hoarse voice to the roar of panic from within, that he found a truly Titanic task waiting for him. And he did it manfully. His words became "half-battles." His actions corresponded with, and exceeded his words. He was as calm, too, as if he had created the chaos around him. That the city was roused, yet concentrated—furious as Gehenna, but firm as fate, at that awful crisis—was all Danton's doing. Paris seemed at the time but a projectile in his massive hand, ready to be hurled at the invading foe. His alleged cruelty was the result, in a great measure, of this habitual carelessness. Too indifferent to superintend with sufficient watchfulness the administration of justice, it grew into the Reign of Terror. He was, nevertheless, deeply to blame. He ought to have cried out to the mob, "The way to the prisoners in the Abbaye

lies over Danton's dead body;" and not one of them had passed on. He repented, afterwards, of his conduct, and was, in fact, the first martyr to a milder regime. Not one of his personal enemies perished in that massacre: hence the name "butcher" applied to him is not correct. He did not dabble in blood. He made but one fierce and rapid irruption into the neighbourhood of the "Red Sea," and returned sick and shuddering therefrom.

His person and his eloquence were in keeping with his mind and character. We figure him always after the pattern of Bethlehem Gabor, as Godwin describes him: his stature gigantic, his hair a dead black, a face in which sagacity and fury struggle for the mastery—a voice of thunder. His mere figure might have saved the utterance of his watchword—"We must put our enemies in fear." His face was itself a "Reign of Terror." His eloquence was not of the intellectual, nor of the rhetorical cast. It was not laboured with care, nor moulded by art. It was the full, gushing utterance of a mind seeing the real merits of the case in a glare of vision, and announcing them in a tone of absolute assurance. He did not indulge in long arguments or elaborate declamations. His speeches were Cyclopean cries, at the sight of the truth breaking, like the sun, on his mind. Each speech was a peroration. His imagination was fertile, rugged, and grand. Terrible truth was sheathed in terrible figure. Each thought leaped into light, like Minerva, armed with bristling imagery. Danton was a true poet, and some of his sentences are the strongest and most characteristic

utterances amid all the wild eloquence the Revolution produced. His curses are of the streets, not of Paris, but of Pandemonium; his blasphemies were sublime as those heard in the trance of Sicilian seer, belched up from fallen giants through the smoke of Etna, or like those which made the "burning marl" and the "fiery gulf" quake and recoil in fear.

Such an extraordinary being was Danton. There was no beauty about him, but there were the power and the dreadful brilliance, the rapid rise and rapid subsidence, of an Oriental tempest. Peace—the peace of one of the monsters of the Egyptian desert, calm-sitting and colossal, amid long desolations and kindred forms of vast and coarse sublimity—be to his ashes!

It is lamentable to contemplate the fate of such a man. Newly married, sobered into strength and wisdom, in the prime of life, and with mildness settling down upon his character, like moonlight on the rugged features of the Sphinx, he was snatched away. "One feels," says Scott of him, "as if the eagle had been brought down by a 'mousing owl.'" More melancholy still to find him dying "game," as it is commonly called—that is, without hope and without God in the world—caracoling and exulting, as he plunged into the waters of what he deemed the bottomless and the endless night; as if a spirit so strong as his could die—as if a spirit so stained as his could escape the judgment—the judgment of a God as just as he is merciful; but also—blessed be his name!—as merciful as he is just.

VERGNIAUD.

ELOQUENCE, like many other powers of the human mind, lies often dormant and unsuspected, till it be elicited by circumstances. The quantity of *silent* eloquence awaiting deliverance in a nation, is only to be calculated by those who can compute the amount of undeveloped electri-

city in the earth or sky. Genius is *natus haud factus*; but eloquence is often *facta haud nata*. Rouse ordinary men to the very highest pitch, and they never even approach to the verge of genius, because *it* is the unsearchable and subtle result of a combination of rare faculties with

rare temperament; but any man, touched to the quick, may become, for a season, as eloquent as Demosthenes himself. The child, when struck to a certain measure of brutality, utters screams and words, and assumes attitudes, of high eloquence, and every sob of her little heart is an "Oration for the Crown." How eloquent the pugilist, when his blood is up, and the full fury of the fray has kindled around him, and made his very fists seem inspired! What speeches have sometimes come from the gutter, where a drunk Irishman is leaving Curran far behind, in the grotesque combinations of his mad-dened fancy and the "strange oaths" of his infuriated passions! And how many dull men has the approach of death stirred up into an almost superhuman tide of eloquence, as if both soul and tongue were conscious that their time was short! Perhaps the most eloquent words ever spoken by man were those of Jackson, the Irish rebel, who, having swallowed poison ere his trial commenced, called his advocate to his side when the pleading was over, and gasped out, as he dropped down dead, in a whisper which was heard like thunder (using the language of Pierre, in "Venice Preserved"), "*We have deceived the Senate.*"

Upon this principle, we need not be surprised that revolutions, while developing much latent genius, have inspired far more of genuine eloquence. A collection, entitled the "Oratory of Revolutionists," would contain the noblest specimens of human eloquence. What the speeches of Cicero, compared to those of Cataline or Cethegus! What poor things, in mere eloquence, the long elaborate orations of Pitt and Fox, to the electric words, the spoken signals, the sudden lightning strokes, to even the mere gestures, of Mirabeau and Danton! And has not the recent Italian revolution—quenched though it has been—roused one orator worthy of any age or country, Gavazzi—the actual of Yendys' ideal and magnificent "Monk," the tongue of Italy, just as Mazzini is its far-stretching and iron hand?

Such remarks may fitly introduce us

to Vergniaud, the most eloquent of the "eloquent of France," the *facile princeps* of the Girondins—that hapless party who, with the best professions and the most brilliant parts (*parts not powers*—the distinction is important, and so far explains their defeat), committed an egregious and inexorable mistake: they mistook their *age* and their *work*, and, as they did not discern their time, their time revenged itself by trampling on them as it went on its way.

The most misplaced of this misplaced party was Vergniaud. But no more than his party was he fitted, as some would have it, for those Roman days to which he and they incessantly reverted their gaze. Sterner, stronger spirits were then required, as well as in the times of the French Revolution. The Girondins were but imitative and emasculate Romans at the best. Vergniaud would have been in his element in the comparatively peaceful atmosphere of Britain. There, a Charles Grant on a larger scale, he might have one-third of the day "sucked sugar-candy," the other third played with children, and in the evening either sat silent or poured out triumphant speeches, as he pleased. But in France, while he was playing at marbles, others were playing at human heads. His speeches were very brilliant; but they wanted the point which Robespierre's always had—the edge of the guillotine. And for want of that terrible finish, they were listened to, admired, but not obeyed.

"Slaves," says Cowper, "cannot breathe in England." We may parody his words thus, "*Whigs* cannot breathe in France." Britain has long been their element; but France demands either colder or hotter spirits. That balancing of opinions, that avoidance of all extremes, that reverence for the past modified by respect for the present, by the exercise of which party differences have been so frequently reconciled in this country, seem mere trifling or impertinence to the torrid revolutionary hearts in France, or even to those extreme royalist natures in her, of whom we may say that the "ground burns free, and frost performs the effect of fire." And

such a French Whig was Vergniaud: possessed of an impetuous and ardent nature, a fiery eloquence, and an impulsive intellect, all running in the narrow channel of his party. In Britain, he would have been counted a "Whig, and something more." In France, he was reckoned a "Revolutionist, and something less;" in other words, a *weak* Revolutionist—the most fatal and miserable of all forms of weakness. A timid flash of lightning, a remorseful wave in an angry ocean, a drivelling coward among a gang of desperadoes, a lame and limping wolf among the herd descending from the Apennines upon the snow-surrounded village—such are but figures for the idea of one who pauses, halts, stammers, and makes play, amid the stern, earnest, and rushing realities of a revolution.

The Girondins were, we suspect, as a party, a set of fantastic fribbles, filled with a small fallacious thought, and without the unity or the force to impose even a shred of it upon the world. In the fine image of Grattan, "after the storm and tempest were over, they were the children of the village come forth to paddle in the streamlets." Barbaroux seems a brilliant coxcomb. Brissot was an unarmed and incapable ruffian. "who," said the dying Danton, "would have guillotined me as Robespierre will do." Condorcet was a clear-headed, cold-hearted, atheistic schemer. Roland was an able and honest *prig*. Louvet was a compound of sentiment and smut. The only three redeeming characters among the party were Madame Roland, Charlotte Corday, and Vergniaud; and yet, sorry saints, in the British sense, any of these make, after all: being nothing else than an elegant intrigante, with a brave heart and a fine intellect within her, a beautiful maniac, and an orator among a thousand, without the gifts of common energy or common sense.

"They sought," says Carlyle, "a republic of the virtues, and they found only one of the strengths." Danton thought otherwise, when he said, "they are all Brothers-Cain." His robust nature and Cyclopean eyesight made him recoil from

the gingerbread imitation of the Romans, the factitious virtues, the elegant platitudes of language, and the affected refinements of the saloons of the Girondins. He smelt blood, with his large distended nostril, amid all their apocryphal finery. Had they succeeded, they might have gilded the guillotine, or substituted some more classical apparatus of death; but no other cement than blood could they or would they have found for their power at that crisis. At this they aimed; but, while the Jacobins fought with bare rapiers, the Girondins fought with buttoned foils; while the one party threw away the scabbard, the other threw away the sword.

Vergniaud lives on account of the traditional fame of his eloquence; his eloquence itself can hardly be said to be alive. The extracts which remain are, on the whole, diffuse and feeble. Even his famous prophecy, Ezekiel-like, of the fall of thrones, is tame in the perusal. What a contrast between his sonorous and linked harangues, and the single volcanic embers issuing from the mouth of Mirabeau or Danton, or even the nasal "I pronounce for doom," which constituted the general oratory of Robespierre! Vergniaud neither attained to the inspired monosyllables of the one, nor to the infernal croakings of the other. His speeches were, indeed, as powerful as mellifluous. It was a cataract of honey which poured from his lips. Their effect for the time was irresistible: like the songs in Pandemonium, they, for a season, "suspended hell, and took with rapture the thronging audience;" but it was only for a season. When the orator ceased to be seen and heard, his words ceased to be felt. Hence he was only able to pronounce the funeral oration of his party, not to give it any living or permanent place in the history of his country. He had the tongue, but he wanted the profound heart and the strong hand to be the deliverer of France.

He broke at last, as breaks a wave of ocean—the most beautiful and eloquent of the deep, starred with spray, diffuse in volume—upon a jagged rock, which

silently receives, repels, and extinguishes the bright invader. The echoes of his eloquence still linger, like ghosts amid the halls of history, but his name has long since faded into partial insignificance, and, in comparison with his manlier and stronger foes, has not even the sound which that of Eschines now bears beside that of Demosthenes. He fell, and being the weaker, he could not but have fallen in the death-and-life struggle.

The account of his and the other Girondists' last night in prison is pronounced by Carlyle "not edifying." And yet, as with all last scenes, noble elements are mingled with it. They sing "tumultuous songs;" they frame strange, satiric dialogues between the devil and his living representatives; they discourse gravely about the happiness of the peoples; they talk, too, in wild and whirling words, of the immortality of the soul, and the scenes so near, beyond the guillotine and the grave. Vergniaud, like Hannibal, had secreted poison, but as it is not enough for his friends as well as himself, therefore "to the dogs—he'll none of it." His eloquence, too, bursts out, like an expiring flame, into glorious bravuras. If not edifying, surely this was one of the most interesting of scenes. Who can or dare reproduce it to us in words? Where now the North capable of this "Noctes?" We think Carlyle himself might, twenty years ago, have given it us, in a rough and rapid manner. As it is, "for ever undescribed let it remain."

It was intensely French. *They never die like the wolf described by Macaulay—*

*"Which dies in silence biting hard,
Among the dying hounds."*

They must go out either in splendour or in stench, but both must be palpable and ostentatious. A Vergniaud, quiet, serene, meditative, lost in contemplation of the realities before him, or even saying, quietly, like Thistlewood to Inga, "We shall soon

know the great secret," is an incongruous conception. He must speak and sing, laugh and speculate, upon the brink of the abyss. Might not, by the way, a panoramic view of *national deathbeds*, and how they are met and spread, tell us something about national character, and about things more important far?

Having been compelled, shortly but severely, to express our notion of Vergniaud and his abortive party, we are not, at the same time, disposed to part with either in anger. They did their best; they did their *no work* in an elegant and artistic manner; and now, like the Gracchi of ancient Rome, they are honourable, more for what they were reputed to be, than for what they effected. Let the hymn of the "Marseillaise," which the Girondists sung at the foot of the scaffold, in ghastly gradation, waxing feebler and fainter, till it died away in *one* dying throat, be their everlasting remembrancer and requiem.

"Such an act of music! Conceive it well! The yet living chant there—the chorus so rapidly wearing weak! Samson's axe is rapid; one head per minute, or little less. The chorus is worn out. Farewell, for evermore, ye Girondins! Te Deum! Fauchet has become silent; Valaze's dead head is lopped; the sickle of the guillotine has reaped the Girondins all away—the eloquent, the young, the beautiful, and brave! O Death, what feast is toward in thy ghastly halls?"

"Such," says Carlyle, "was the end of Girondism. They arose to regenerate France, these men, and have accomplished *this*. Alas! whatever quarrel we had with them, has not their cruel fate abolished it? Pity only survives. So many excellent souls of heroes sent down to Hades—they themselves given as a prey to dogs and all manner of birds! But here, too, the will of the Supreme Power was accomplished. As Vergniaud said, 'The Revolution, like Saturn, is devouring its own children.'"

N A P O L E O N.

A VERY interesting book were a history of the histories of Napoleon—a criticism on the criticisms written about him—a sketch of his sketchers! He, who at one period of his life had the monarchs and ambassadors of Europe waiting in his antechamber, has enjoyed since a levee, larger still, of the authors, orators, and poets of the world. Who has not tried his hand at painting the marvellous mannikin of Corsica—nature's pride and shame—France's glory and ruin—who was arrested and flung back, when he was just vaulting into the saddle of universal dominion? What eminent author has not written either on the *pros* or the *cons* of this prodigy of modern men? To name only a few: Horsley has tried on him the broad and powerful edge of his invective—Hall has assailed him with his more refined and polished indignation—Foster has held up his rugged iron hands in wonder at him—Byron has bent before him his proud knee, and become the laureate of his exile—Hazlitt has fought his cause with as much zeal and courage as if he had belonged to his Old Guard—Coleridge has woven his metaphysic mazes about and about him—Wordsworth has sung of him, in grave, solemn, and deprecatory verse—Southey has, both in prose and rhyme, directed against him his dignified resentment—Scott has pictured him in Don Roderick, and written nine volumes on his history—Brougham, Jeffrey, and Lockhart, have united in fascinated admiration or fine-spun analysis of his genius—Charles Phillips has set his character in his most brilliant antithesis, and surrounded his picture with his most sounding common-places—Croly has dashed off his life with his usual energy and speed—Wilson has let out his admiration in many a glorious gush of eloquence—the late B. Symmons has written on him some strains the world must not let die (his "Napoleon Sleeping" is in the highest style of art, and on Napoleon, or aught that was his, he could not choose but write nobly)—

Channing, in the name of the freedom of the western world, has impeached him before high Heaven—Emerson has anatonised him, with keenest lancet, and calmly reported the result—Carlyle has proclaimed him the "Hero of Tools"—and, to single out two from a crowd, Thiers and Alison have told his history with minute and careful attention, as well as with glowing ardour of admiration. Time would fail us, besides, to speak of the memoirs, favourable or libellous—of the dramas, novels, tales, and poems—in which he has figured, in primary or in partial display. Surely the man who has borne such discussion, endured such abuse, sustained such panegyric, and who remains an object of curiosity, wonder, and inquiry still, must have been the most *extraordinary* production of modern days. He must have united profundity and brilliance, splendour and solidity, qualities creating fear and love, and been such a compound of the demigod and the demon, the wise king and the tyrant, as the earth never saw before, nor is ever likely to behold again.

This, indeed, is the peculiarity of Napoleon. He was profound, as well as brilliantly successful. Unlike most conquerors, his mind was big with a great thought, which was never fully developed. He was not raised, as many have stupidly thought, upon the breath of popular triumph. It was not "chance that made him king," or that crowned him, or that won his battles. He was a *cumulative* conqueror. Every victory, every peace, every law, every movement, was the step of a giant stair, winding upward toward universal dominion. All was systematic. All was full of purpose. All was growingly progressive. No rest was possible. He might have noontday breathing-times, but there was no nightly repose. "Onwards" was the voice ever sounding behind him: nor was this the voice of his nation, ever insatiate for novelty and conquest; nor was it the mere "Give, give" of his restless ambition; it was the voice

of his ideal, the cry of his unquenchable soul. He became the greatest of warriors and conquerors, or at least one of the greatest, because, like a true painter or poet, he *came down* upon the practice of his art, from a stern and lofty conception, or hypothesis, to which everything required to yield. As Michael Angelo subjected all things to his pursuit and the ideal he had formed of it, painted the crucifixion by the side of a writhing slave, and, pious though he was, would have broken up the true cross for pencils, so Napoleon pursued *his* ideal through tempests of death-hail and seas of blood, and looked upon poison, and gunpowder, and men's lives, as merely the box of colours necessary to his new and terrible art of war and grand scheme of conquest.

But were the art and the scheme, thus frightfully followed out, worthy and noble? Viewed in a Christian light, they hardly were. The religion of Jesus denounces war, in all save its defensive aspects. But, when we try Napoleon by human standards, and compare his scheme with that of other conquerors, both seem transcendently superb. He saw clearly that there was no alternative between the surges of anarchy and the absolute government of one master-mind. He saw that what was called "balance of power" was a feeble and useless dream, and that all things in Europe were tending either to anarchy or a new absolutism—either to the dominion of millions, or of that one who should be found a match for millions. He thought himself that one. His iron hand could, in the first place, grasp the great sceptre; and his wise and powerful mind would afterwards consolidate his dominion by just and liberal laws. "On this hint he spake"—in canon. This purpose he pursued with an undeviating energy, which seemed, for a season, sure and irresistible as one of the laws of nature. The unity of his tactic only reflected the unity of his plan. It was just the giant club in the giant hand. Of his system of strategy, the true praise is simply that it gave a fit and full expression to his idea—it was what heroic rhyme was to Dryden, blank

verse to Milton, and the Spenserian stanza to Byron.

To his scheme, and his mode of pursuing it, there occur, however, certain strong objections; but all, or nearly all, founded upon principles the truth of which *he* did not recognise. First, it is a scheme impossible. No one human arm or mind can ever govern the world. There is but One person before whom every knee shall bow, and whose lordship every tongue shall confess. Napoleon saw that there is no help for the world, but in the absolute dominance of a single mind; but he did not see that this mind, ere it can keep as well as gain dominion, and ere it can use that dominion well, must be divine. Who can govern even a child without perpetual mistakes? And how much less can one ungifted with divine knowledge and power govern a world?

But, secondly, Napoleon mistook the means for gaining his object. He thought himself invested with immunities which he did not possess. The being who can repeal the laws of justice and mercy—who can pursue plans of ultimate benevolence through paths of profound and blood-sprinkled darkness—who can command the Canaanites to be extirpated, and permit the people of Rabbah to be put under axes and saws of iron, and raise up base, bad, or dubious characters, to work out his holy purposes, must be a being superior to man—must be God. Whereas the man, however endowed, who violates all conventional as well as moral laws in seeking his object—who can "break open letters, tell lies, calumniate private character," as well as assassinate and poison, must be pronounced a being in many respects inferior to mankind, a human Satan, uniting magnitude of object and of power to detestable meanness and maliciousness of character and of instrumentality. We ought, perhaps, to apologise for bringing thus, even into momentary contrast, the Governor of the universe, and his mysterious but most righteous ways, and the reckless actions of the Emperor of the French.

A greater mistake still was committed by Napoleon, when he allied himself with

the princes of Europe, when he ceased to be the soldier and the Cæsar of democracy, and when, above all, he sought to found a house, and was weak enough to believe that he could ever have a successor from his own loins equal to himself. Cromwells and Napoleons are but thinly sown, and "not transferable" might be written on their brains. Here we see another proof of the gross miscalculation he made of his own, and indeed of human nature. "My children must be as great as myself," was his secret thought: otherwise, "I am God, and gods must spring from me." But it is not in human nature to continue a hereditary series of able and wise rulers, far less a procession of prodigies. From heaven must come down the one immutable Man, who is without beginning of days or end of life, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and the days of whose years are for ever and ever.

But, thirdly, taking Napoleon on his own godless ground, in seeking his great object, he neglected some important elements of success. He not only committed grave errors, but he omitted some wise and prudent steps. He reinstated the crosier, and re-crowned the Pope, instead of patronising a moderate Protestantism. He was more anxious to attack aristocrats than the *spirit* of oligarchy. He sought rather to crush than to transfuse the Jacobin element. He contrived elaborately to disguise his real purpose, the dream of his imagination, under the trappings and pretensions of vulgar ambition, and thus created a torrent of prejudice against himself. He made the contest against Russia assume the aspect of a strife between two butchers for a very fair heifer, rather than that of civilisation bearding, since it could not interpenetrate, barbarism—of the hunter seeking the bear in his den. The enthusiasm he kindled was chiefly that of the love of martial glory, or of attachment to his flag and person, not of the "idea" which possessed his own breast. Hence the ardour of his army, being of the "earth earthy," yielded quickly to the first gush of genuine patriotism which arose to op-

pose them, and which, though as narrow as intense, was, in comparison, fire from heaven. Perhaps, in truth, his inspiring idea was not easily communicable to such men as those he led, who, shouting "Vive la France," or "Vive l'Empereur," little imagined that he was paving, on their carcasses, his path to the title and the throne of an Omniarch.

The theory of Napoleon, thus propounded, seems to explain some points in his character which are counted obscure. It accounts for his restless dissatisfaction with the success he did gain. What were Belgium, Holland, and Italy to him, who had formed not the mere dream, but the hope and design of a fifth monarchy? It explains his marvellous triumphs. He fought not for a paltry battle-field, nor for the possession of an island, but to gain a planet, to float his standard in the breezes of the whole earth! Hence an enthusiasm, a secret spring of ardour, a determination and a profundity of resource, which could hardly be resisted. How keen the eye and sharpened almost to agony the intellect, of a man gambling for a world! It explains the strange gloom, and stranger gaiety, the oddness of manner, the symptoms which made many think him mad. The man, making a fool of the world, became often himself the fool of a company, who knew not besides that he was the fool of an idea. The thought of universal dominion—the feeling that he was made for it, and tending to it—this made him sometimes silent when he should have spoken, and sometimes speak when he should have been silent—this was a wierd wine which the hand of his Demon poured out to him, and of which he drank without measure and in secret. It explains the occasional carelessness of his conduct. It explains the truth and tenderness, the love of justice and the gleams of compassion, which mingled with his public and private conduct. He was too wise to under-rate, and too great not to feel, the primary laws of human nature. And he intended that, when his power was consolidated, these should be the laws of *his* empire. His progress was a voyage

through blood, toward mildness, peace, and justice. But in that ocean of blood there lay an island, and in the island did that perilous voyage terminate, and to it was our daring hero chained, till his soul departed. Against *one* island had this continental genius bent all the fury and the energy of his nature, and in *another* island was he for a time imprisoned, and in a *third* island he breathed his last.

Our theory, in fine, accounts for the calm firmness with which he met his reverses. His empire, indeed, had fallen, but his idea remained intact. He might never express it in execution; but he had thrown it down on the arena of the world, and it lies still in that "court of the Gentiles." It has started anew, in these degenerate days, an invigorating thought, the thought of a single ruler for this distracted earth; a thought which, like leaven, is sure to work on till it leaven all the lump; and is to be fulfilled in a way of which many men dream not. Napoleon, though he failed in the attempt, felt, doubtless, the consolation of having *made* it, and of having thereby established for himself an impersonal and imperishable glory. The reality of empire departed when he resigned; but the bright prophetic dream of empire only left him when he died, and has become his legacy to the world.

Such, we think, were Napoleon's purpose and its partial fulfilment. His powers, achievements, and private character remain. His powers have been, on the one hand, unduly praised, and, on the other, unduly depreciated. His unexampled success led to the first extreme, and his unexampled downfall to the latter. While some have talked of him as greater than Cæsar, others think him a clever impostor, a vulgar conjurer, with one trick, which was at last discovered. Our notion lies between. He must, indeed, stand at some distance from Cæsar—the all-accomplished, the author, the orator—whose practical wisdom was equal to his genius—who wore over all his faculties, and around his very errors and crimes, a mantle of dignity—and whose one immortal bulletin, "Veni, vidi,

vidi," stamps an image of the energy of his character, the power of his talents, and the laconic severity of his taste. Nor can he be equalled to Hannibal, in rugged daring of purpose, in originality of conception, in personal courage, or in indomitable perseverance—Hannibal, who sprang like a bulldog at the throat of the Roman power, and who held his grasp till it was loosened in death. But neither does he sink to the level of the Tamerlanae or Bajazeta. His genius soared above the sphere of such skilful marshals and martinets as Turenne and Marlborough. They were the slaves of their system of strategy; he was the king of his. They fought a battle as coolly as they played a game of chess; he was full of impulses and sudden thoughts, which became the seeds of victory, and could set his soldiers on fire even when he remained calm himself. In our age, the name of Wellington alone can balance with his. But, admitting the Duke's great qualities, his iron firmness, his profound knowledge of his art, and the almost superhuman tide of success which followed him, he never displayed such dazzling genius, and, without enthusiasm in himself, seldom kindled it in others. He was a clear steady star; Napoleon, a blood-red meteor, whose very downfall is more interesting than the other's rising. Passing from comparisons, Napoleon possessed a prodigal assortment of faculties. He had an intellect clear, rapid, and trenchant as a scimitar; an imagination fertile in resources, if incorrect in taste; a swift logic; a decisive will; a prompt and lively eloquence; and passions often concentrated and quiet as a charcoal furnace. Let us not forget his wondrous faculty of silence. He could talk, but he seldom babbled, and seldom used a word too much. His conversation was the reflex of his military tactics. As in the field he concentrated his forces on a certain strong point, which when gained, all was gained; so in conversation he sprang into the centre of every subject, and, tearing out its heart, left the minor members to shift for themselves. Pro- found in no science save that of war,

what he knew, he knew thoroughly, and could immediately turn to account. He called England a "nation of shopkeepers;" but he was as practical as a shopkeeper himself—the emperor of a shopkeeping age. Theorisers he regarded with considerable contempt. Theories he looked at, shook roughly, and asked the inexorable question, "Will they stand?" Glimpses of truth came often on him like inspiration. "Who made all that, gentlemen?" was his question at the atheistic *savans*, as they sailed beneath the starry heavens, and denied the Maker. The misty brilliance, too often disguising little, of such a writer as Madame De Stael was naught in his eyes. How, had he been alive, would he have laughed over the elegant sentimentalism of Lamartine, and with a strong contemptuous breath blown away, like rolled shavings, his finest periods! Yet he had a little corner of literary romance in his heart. He loved Ossian's Poems. For this his taste has been questioned; but to literary taste Napoleon did not pretend. He could only criticise the arrangements of a battle, was the author of a new and elegant art of bloodshed, and liked a terribly terse style of warfare. But, in Ossian, he found fire amid fustian; and partly for the fustian, and partly for the fire, he loved him. In fact, Ossian is just a Frenchified version of Homer; and no wonder that it pleased at once Napoleon's martial spirit and his national taste. The ancient bard himself had been too simple. M'Pherson served him up with flummery, and he went sweetly down the throat of our melodramatic hero.

Napoleon's real writings were his battles. Lodi let us call a wild and passionate ode; Austerlitz an epic; and Waterloo a tragedy. Yet, amid the bombast and falsetto of his bulletins and speeches, there occur coils of genuine fire, and gleams of lofty genius. Every one remembers the sentence, "Frenchmen, remember that from the top of these pyramids forty centuries look down upon your actions;" a sentence enough to make a man immortal. In keeping with the genius discovered in this, were his allu-

sions to the "sun of Austerlitz," which, as if to the command of another Joshua, seemed to stand still at his bidding—his belief in destiny, and the other superstitions which, like bats in a mid-day marketplace, flitted strangely to and fro through the clear and stern atmosphere of his soul, and prophesied in silence of change, ruin, and death.

Like all men of his order, Napoleon was subject to moods and fits, and presents thus, in mind, as well as in character, a capricious and inconsistent aspect. Enjoying the keenest and coldest of intellects, and the most iron of wills, he had at times the fretfulness of a child, and at other times the fury of a demon. He was strong, but surrounded by contemptible weaknesses. Possessing the French empire, he seemed himself at times "possessed"—now of a miserable imp, and now of a master-fiend. Now almost a demigod, he is anon an idiot. Now organising and executing with equal wisdom and energy complicated and stupendous schemes, he falls frequently into blunders which a child might have avoided. You are reminded of a person of majestic stature and presence, who is suddenly seized with St Vitus's Dance. How strange the inconsistencies and follies of genius! But not a Burns, seeing two moons from the top of a whisky-barrel—nor a Coleridge, dogged by an unemployed operative, to keep him out of a druggist's shop—nor a Johnson, standing in the rain to do penance for disobedience to his father—nor a Hall, charging a lady to instruct her children in the belief of ghosts—nor a Byron, shaving his brow to make it seem higher than it was, or contemplating his hands, and saying, "These hands are white"—is a more striking specimen of the follies of the wise, of the alloys mingled with the "most fine gold," than a Napoleon, now playing for a world, and now cheating one of his own officers at whist.

We sometimes envy those who were privileged to be contemporaries of the battles of Napoleon, and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, while each splendid series was yet in progress. The first

Italian campaign might have made the blood of Burke (opposed though he was) dance on his very death-bed, for there he was lying at the time. And how grand, for a poetic ear, to have heard the news of Jena, and Austerlitz, and Wagram, and Borodino, succeeding each other like the boom of distant cannon, like the successive peals of a thunderstorm! Especially when that dark cloud of invasion had gathered around our own shores, and was expected to burst in a tempest of fire, how deep must have been the suspense, how silent the hush of the expectation, and how needless, methinks, sermons, however eloquent, or poems, however spirit-stirring, to concentrate, or increase, or express, the land's one vast emotion!

Looking back, even now, upon the achievements of Napoleon, they seem still calculated to awaken wonder and fear—*wonder* at their multitude, their variety, their dream-like pomp and speed, their power and terrible beauty, and that they did not produce a still deeper impression upon the world's mind, and a still stronger reverberation from the world's poetry and eloquence; and *fear*, at the power sometimes lent to man, at its abuse, and at the possibilities of the future. Another Napoleon may rise, abler, wickeder, wiser, and may throw heavier barricades of cannon across the path of the nations, crush them with a rougher rod, may live to consolidate a thicker crust of despotism over the world, may fight another Austerlitz without a Waterloo, and occupy another St Cloud without another St Helena; for what did all those far-heard cannon proclaim, but "How much is possible to him that dareth enough, that feareth none, that getteth a giant's power, and useth it tyrannously like a giant.—that can by individual might, reckless of rights, human or divine, rise and ride on the topmost billow of his age!"*

In looking more closely and calmly at those battles of Napoleon, we have a little,

* This paragraph, written early in 1851, has since received two emphatic comments—we need we name Louis Napoleon and Nicholas?

though not very much, of misty exaggeration and false glory to brush away. Latterly, they lose greatly that air of romance and miracle which surrounded the first campaigns of Italy. The boy, who had been a prodigy, matures into the full-grown and thoroughly-furnished man. The style, which had been somewhat florid, but very fresh and powerful, becomes calmer and rather less rapid. Napoleon, who had fought at first with an energy that seemed superhuman, against great odds of experience and numbers, fights now with many advantages on his side. He is backed by vast, trained, and veteran armies. He is surrounded by generals only inferior to himself, and whom he has himself reared. And, above all, he is preceded by his Gorgon-headed Fame, carrying dismay into the opposing ranks, nerving his own men into iron, and stiffening his enemies into stone. And, although longer and sterner ever became the resistance, the result of victory was equally sure. And now he has reached a climax; and yet, not satisfied therewith, he resolves on a project, the greatest and most daring ever taken or even entertained by him. It is to disturb the Russian bear in his forests. For this purpose he has collected an army, reminding you of those of Jenghiz Khan or Tamerlane, unparalleled in numbers, magnificent in equipment, unbounded in confidence and attachment to their chief, led by officers of tried valour and skill, and wielded and propelled by the genius of Napoleon, like one body by one living soul. But the "Lord in the heavens did laugh;" the Lord held him and his force "in derision." For now his time was fully come. And now must the decree of the Watchers and the Holy Ones, long registered against him, begin to obtain fulfilment. And how did God fulfil it! He led him into no ambushade. He overwhelmed him with no superior force. He raised up against him no superior genius. But he took his punishment into his own hand. He sent winter before its time, to destroy him and his "many men so beautiful." He loosened snow, like a

flood of waters, and frost, like a flood of fire, upon his host; and Napoleon, like Satan, yielded to God alone, and might have exclaimed, with that lost archangel—

“Into what pit thou seest,
From what height fallen, so much the
stronger proved
He with his thunder, and, till then, who knew
The force of those dire arms?”

Thus had man and his Maker come into collision, and the potsherd was broken in the unequal strife. All that followed resembled only the convulsive struggles of one down, taken, and bound. Even when cast back, like a burning ember, from Elba to the French shores, it was evidently all too late. His “star” had first paled before the fires of Moscow, and at last set amid the snows of his flight from it.

Of the private character of Napoleon there are many contradictory opinions. Indeed, properly speaking, he had no private character at all. For the greater part of his life, he was as public as the sun. He ate and drank, read and wrote, snuffed and slept in a glare of publicity. The wrinkles, darkening into gloom, on that massive forehead, did indeed conceal many a dark and secret thought; but his mere actions and habitudes were all public property. How tell what he was in private, since in private he never was? He was like the man who had “lost his shadow.” No sweet relief, no dim and tender background in his character. Whatever private virtues he might have possessed, never found an atmosphere to develop them in; nay, they withered and died in the surrounding sunshine. He had no time to be a good son, or husband, or father, or friend. The idea which devoured him devoured all such ties too. Still, we hope that he never ceased to possess a heart, and that much of his spathy and apparent hardness of nature was the effect of policy, or of absence of mind. A thousand different spectators report differently of his manner in private. To some, he appeared all grace and dignity; to others, a cold, absent fiend, lost in schemes of far-off villany; to a third

class, an awkward and unmannered blunderer; and to a fourth, the very demon of curiosity, a machine of questions, an embodied inquisition. One acute spectator, the husband of Madame Rahel, reports a perpetual scowl on his brow, and a perpetual smile on his lips. We care very little for such representations, which rather describe the man’s moods than the man himself. We heard once, we protest, a more edifying picture of him from the lips of a Scottish innkeeper, who declared that he believed “Boney, when he was at leisure, aye sat, wi’ his airm in a bowl o’ water, resting on a cannon-ball, an’ nae doubt meditating mischief!” It were difficult to catch the features of an undeveloped thought—and what else was Napoleon?

As concentration was the power of his mind, so it was the peculiarity of his person. His body was a little vial of intense existence. The thrones of Europe seemed falling before a ninepin! He seemed made of skin, marrow, bone, and fire. Had France been in labour, and brought forth a mouse? But it was a frame formed for endurance. It took no punishment, it felt no fatigue, it refreshed itself by a wink, its tiny hand shivered kingdoms at a touch, and its voice, small as the “treble of a fay,” was powerful and irresistible as the roar of Mars, the homicidal god. Nature is often strange in her economies of power. She often packs her poisons and her glorious essences alike into small bulk. In Napoleon, as in Alexander the Great and Alexander Pope, a portion of both was strangely and inextricably mingled.

We might deduce many lessons from this rapid sketch of the Emperor of the French. That “moral of his story,” of which Symmons speaks, would require seven thunders fully to express it. We will not dwell on the commonplaces about “vaulting ambition,” “diseased pride,” “fallen greatness,” “lesson to be humble and thankful in our own spheres,” and so on. Napoleon was a brave, great man; in part mistaken, perhaps also in part insane, and also in a large part guilty. But he did a work—not his full work, but still a work that he only could have ac-

complished. He continued that shaking of the sediments of the nations, which the French Revolution began. He pointed attention with his bristling guns to the danger the civilisation of Europe is exposed to from the *Russian silent conspiracy of ages—cold, vast, quietly progressive, as a glacier gathering round an Alpine valley.* He shook the throne of the Austrian domination, and left that of his own successors tottering to receive them. He drew out, by long antagonism, the resources of Britain. He cast a ghastly smile of contempt, which lingers still, around the papal crown. While he proved the disadvantages, as well as advantages, of the domination of a single human mind, he unconsciously shadowed forth the time when one divine hand shall take the kingdom—his empire, during its palmy days, forming a feeble, earthly emblem of the reign of the Universal King.

A new Napoleon, were he rising, would not long continue to reign. But even as

the ancient polypharmist and mistaken alchemist was the parent and the prophecy of those modern chemists, so, in this age, Napoleon has been the unwitting pioneer and imperfect prophet of a Sovereign, the extent and the duration of whose kingdom shall equal and surpass his wildest dreams. Did he, by sheer native genius, nearly snatch from the hands of all kings their time-honoured sceptres—nearly confirm his sway into a concentrated and iron empire—and prove the advantages of centralisation, as they were never proved before? And *why* should not "another king, one Jesus," exerting a mightier might, obtain a more lasting empire, and form the only real government which, save the short theocracy of the Jews, ever existed on earth? We pause—nay, nature, the world, the church, poor afflicted humanity, distracted governments, falling thrones, earth and heaven together, seem to pause with us, to hear the wherefore to this why.

Part Third.—Nobelists.

WILLIAM GODWIN.

"Who's Godwin?" said once a respectable person to us, while panegyrising in our own way the venerable sage. As we hear the question echoed by some of our readers, we propose to tell them a little about him, and do not despair of getting them to love him, ere we be done. William Godwin was a philosopher, and a philosophical novelist, an essayist, a biographer, at one period a preacher,* and the author of a volume of sermons, the writer of one or two defunct tragedies, a historian, the founder of a small but distinguished school of writers, in England and America; and, in spite of his errors, an exceedingly candid, generous, simple-minded, and honest man. His intellect was clear, searching, sagacious, and profound. He thought every subject out and out for himself, using, however, the while, the aids derived from an enlarged intimacy with still deeper and subtler understandings. His was not that one-sided intensity of original view which is at once the power and the weak-

* Godwin, we have been told since writing this sketch, had succeeded his father, who was strictly orthodox, in his pulpit: he read sometimes his own sermons, and sometimes his father's, to his congregation. The latter, which were known by their evangelical sentiment and their dingy colour, were much admired; the former not at all. So soon as the stock of paternal discourses was fairly exhausted, the future author of "Caleb Williams" resigned his charge, and betook himself to London and literature. This we state on the authority of his present successor in the same pastoral charge.

ness of a very rare order of minds. He had not the one huge glaring orb of a Cyclops, letting in a flood of rushing and furious splendour, and rendering its possessor miserable in his might: his mental glance was mild, full, penetrating, and comprehensive. He was not gifted with the power of adding any new truth to the precious catalogue. He was the eloquent interpreter and fearless follower out of the subtle speculations of such men as Berkeley, Hobbes, Hume, Coleridge, and Ricardo. There was a "daring consistency" in the mode by which he built up his system of the universe. Seizing on the paradoxes of preceding philosophers, stones rejected by other builders, he put them together, interfused them with a certain cement of his own, and reared with them a towering and formidable structure. His "Theory of Political Justice" was a Tower of Babel, composed of the most contradictory materials, "in ruin reconciled:" partly of the sophistries of Hume, partly of the subtleties of Jonathan Edwards; here a stone from the quarries of Spinoza, and there a bale of goods from the warehouse of Adam Smith. The grand principle pervading his works was, that love to being in general ought, if not to annihilate, to overshadow private relations and individual charities. Snatching this paradox, or, at best, partial truth, from the holy hand of the author of the "Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will," he carried it around as a touchstone to every

institution of society. We can easily conceive what wild work he would thus make. He became, indeed, in the language of Burke, one of the "ablest architects of ruin," as if he had learned it from the "old earthquake demon," described by his celebrated son-in-law. On titles and on property, on monarchy and on marriage, on commerce and on gratitude, he trode with disdain. Necessity, he proclaimed, in one of the most fascinating and eloquent chapters of philosophical criticism we have ever read, to be the Mother of the World. And yet everything must be changed! Thrones were bubbles; titles, nicknames; crowns, momentary circles in the stream of ages; the marriage-ring, degrading as the link of the prisoner, or the round fetter of the slave. Old things were to pass away: all things to be made new. Even the "law and the testimony" were to be veiled, if not obliterated. A new era must burst upon the world. Man must erect himself from his thousand slaveries—free—

"Equal, sceptreless;

Unclass'd, tribeless, and nationless;
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself, just, gentle, wise, but man—
Passionless? No; but free from guilt and
pain,
Which were, for his will made and suffer'd
them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like
slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability:—
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane."

It was a brilliant, but dangerous vision; one of those sun-tinted phantasms which rose from the gulf of the French Revolution, ere it had yet become an abyss of blood. We have recounted it thus calmly, because its author was a harmless and sincere enthusiast; because, gossamer though its web was, it caught for a season such dragon-flies as Coleridge and Wordsworth (who said to a student, "Burn your books of chemistry, and read 'Godwin on Necessity'"); because, thirdly, it has long ago vanished from the public attention, and, indeed, before his death,

its more obnoxious parts were either expressly or silently renounced by the writer himself.

It were vain at this time of day to analyse or argue against a forgotten dream. Enough to acknowledge, which we do now with all safety, that it was a work of much power and eloquence; that it was written in a clear, terse, fluent, and even brilliant style; that, though the root of the thinking lay generally in other writers, yet the bold turn and shoot of the branches, and the fell lustre of the fruit, were all his own; and that it must always be interesting as one of the most deliberate, laboured, and daring attempts ever made by man, to found a system of society utterly distinct and insulated from every other that has existed before. It may be called an effort by a single hand to "roll back the eternal wheels of the universe." And now, to recur to a former figure, it seems to the imagination, through the vista of half-a-century, to rise up a great, grotesque structure, which, unsanctioned by Deity, unfinished by its architect, deserted by its friends, mutilated by its foes, stands an everlasting monument of the mingled wisdom and folly, the strength and the weakness of man.

Never did book rise or sink more rapidly. Now it flared a meteor, "with fear of change perplexing monarchs," as well as lightening into many a still chamber, and many an enthusiast heart; and now it sunk a cold and heavy dreg upon the ground. While "Caleb Williams" is in every circulating library, and needed at one time more frequently, we have heard, than almost any novel, to be replaced, the "Inquiry into Political Justice" is read only by a few hardy explorers, and reminds them, contrasting its past influence with its present neglect, of some cataract, once the terror and the glory of the wilderness, but which, by the fall of its cliff of vantage; has been robbed of its voice of thunder, shorn of its Samson-like locks of spray, dwarfed into comparative insipidity, deserted by its crowding admirers, and left to pine alone in the desert of which it was once the pride, and to sigh for the days of

other years. And yet, while of "Caleb Williams" it was predicted by some sapient friend that, if published, it would be the grave of his literary reputation, the other lifted him, as on dragon wings, into instant and dangerous popularity; the "Inquiry" was the balloon which bore him giddily up—the novel the parachute which broke his fall.

As a novelist, indeed, Godwin, apart from the accidents of opinion and popular caprice, occupies a higher place than as a philosopher. As a philosopher, he is neither altogether new nor altogether true; he is ingenious, but unsafe, and the width of the field he traverses, and the celerity with which he runs across it, and the calm dogmatism with which he announces the most extreme and startling opinions, excite suspicions as to the depth of his knowledge, and the comprehension of his views. They surround the figure of the sage with an air and edging of charlatantry. As a novelist, on the contrary, he passes for no more than he is—a real and robust original. He proceeds in this walk with the exulting freedom and confidence of one who has hit on a vein entirely new. He imagines a character after his own heart; a quiet, curious, prying, philosophical being, with a strong underdash of the morbid, if not of the mad; and he thickens around him circumstances which, by making him altogether a misanthrope, and nearly a maniac, bring out all the powers and the passions of his nature. The main actor in each of his tales, at first recumbent, is, at length, ere you leave him, rampant with whatever may be the pervading principle of his being. And so with the author himself; he, too, catches fire by running. At first slow, embarrassed, uninteresting, commonplace, he becomes rapid, ardent, overpowering. The general tone of his writing, however, is calm. "In the very whirlwind of his passion, he begets a temperance which gives it smoothness." His heat is never that of the sun with all his beams around him; but of the round rayless orb seen shining from the summit of Mont Blanc, still and stripped in the deep black ether.

He has more passion than imagination. Even his passion he has learned more by sympathy than by personal feeling. And amid his most tempestuous scenes, you see the calm and stern eye of philosophic analysis looking on. His imagery is not copious, nor always original, but its sparseness is its strength; it startles you with unexpected and momentary brilliance; the flash comes sudden as the lightning; like it, too, it comes from the clouds, and, like it, it bares the breast of heaven in an instant, and in an instant is gone. No preparatory flourish or preliminary sound—no sheets of useless splendour;—each figure is a fork of fire which strikes, and needs no second blow. Nay, often his images are singularly commonplace, and you wonder how they move you so, till you resolve this into the power of the hand which flings its own energy in them. His style is not the least remarkable thing about his compositions. It is a smooth succession of short and simple sentences, each clear as crystal, and none ever distracting the attention from the subject to its own construction. It is a style in which you cannot explain how the total effect rises out of the individual parts, and which is forgotten as entirely during perusal as is the pane of glass through which you gaze at a comet or a star. The *form*, too, favours the general effect. Each narrative takes the shape of an autobiography, and the incessant recurrence of the pronoun *I* transports you to a confessional, where you hear told you, in subdued tones, a tale which might "rouse the dead to hear." Systematically he rejects the use of supernatural machinery, profuse descriptions, and mere mechanical horrors. Like Brockden Brown, he despises to summon up a ghost from the grave; he invokes the "mightier might" of the passions of living flesh; he excites terror often, but it is the terror which dilated man wields over his fellow—colossal and crushing, but distinct; not the vague and shadowy form of fear which springs from preternatural agency. His path is not, like that of Monk Lewis and Maturin, sulphureous and slippery, as through some swart mine; it is a *terribil*

via, but clear, direct, above-ground. He wants, of course, the multitudinous variety of Scott, the uniform sparkle of Bulwer, the wit of the author of "Anastasius," the light effervescent humour of Dickens, the oriental gusto and gorgeousness of Beckford, the severe truth of Mrs Inchbald and Miss Austin, the caustic vein and ripe scholarship of Lockhart, the refined elegance of Ward, the breadth of Cooper, the rough, sarcastic strength of Marryatt, the grotesque horror of the Victor Hugo school; not to speak of the genial power of Cervantes, the humour of Le Sage, the farce of Smollett, Fielding's anatomising eye, Richardson's mastery over the tragedies of the fireside, Defoe's minute and lingering touch; but, in one savage corner of the art, we see him seated, Salvator-like, among the fiercest forms of nature, scarcely seen, yet insensibly mingling with his thoughts, and directing his pencil—drawing with fearless dash the ruins, not of cities, but of men—painting, to use his own words, the "sublime desolation of mighty souls," and searching, not, like Byron, the "dark bosoms" of pirates, and red-handed lords, and men of genius exalted to the cold and dismal elevation of universal doubt, and self-exiled and insulated sinners, mad with the memory of crime, changing the still bosom of Alpine solitudes into the howling bedlam of their own remorse, and shriving themselves amid eternal snow; but turning inside out the "dark bosoms" of dismissed body-men, moody solitaries, chivalric murderers, strong spirits soured into something more dreadful than misanthropy, and alchemists, cut off by gold, as by a great gulf, from the sympathies of their fellow-men; in exploring such breasts, Godwin is one of the mightiest of masters. His novels resemble the paintings of John Martin, being a gallery, nay, a world in themselves; and it is a gloomy gallery and a strange world. In both, monotony and mannerism are incessant, but the monotony is that of the sounding deep, the mannerism that of the thunderbolts of heaven. Martin might append to his one continual flash of lightning, which is present in all his pictures, now

to reveal a deluge, now to garland the brow of a fiend—now to rend the veil of a temple, and now to guide the invaders through the breach of a city—the words, "John Martin, his mark." Godwin's novels are not less terribly distinguished, to those who understand their cipher—the deep scar of misery, branded, whether literally, as in "Mandeville," or figuratively, as in all his other tales, upon the brow of the "Victim of Society."

We well remember our first reading of "Caleb Williams." We commenced it about nine o'clock at night, sitting by ourselves in a lonely room, read on and on, forgetful of time, place, and of the fact, especially, that our candle was going out, till, alas! at one of the most enchanting of its situations, it suddenly dropped down, and we were in darkness! It was a most provoking position. The family were "dead asleep," not a spark of light to be got, and there were we, sitting with the book we had been devouring in our hands, pressing it in our eagerness to our breast, and yet unable to see a syllable of its contents. It was, we remember, in our seventeenth year, and we did not bear the disappointment so philosophically as we would now. We went to bed intensely chagrined, were long of sleeping—when we did sleep, dreamed stupid, miserable dreams about Hawkins and Tyrrell, and by earliest dawn were up and tearing out its heart. There is about it a stronger suction and swell of interest than in any novel we know, with the exception of one or two of Sir Walter's. You are in it, ere you are aware. You put your hand playfully into a child's, and are surprised to find it held in the grasp of a giant. It becomes a fascination. Struggle you may, and kick—but he holds you by his glittering eye. There is no convulsion in the narrative either, few starts or spasms, no string of asterisks (that base modern device), to quicken your flagging curiosity; no frightful chasms yawn in your face; the stream is at once still as a mill-lead, and strong as a rapid. But it has higher merits than that of mere interest—a very subordinate kind of excellence, after all; for does not a will interest more than a

"Waverley?"—nay, the letter of a friend, more than the most sublime production of the human mind? There is a uniqueness in the whole conception of the tale; the incidents are imagined with much art, and succeed each other with breathless rapidity; the moral, so far as it respects the then wretched state of prison discipline and legal forms, is strongly pointed; and the writing, though far from elegant or finished, has in parts the rude power of those sentences which criminals and maniacs scrawl upon their walls or windows, in the eloquence of desperation. The characters are not Englishmen (none of Godwin's characters, indeed, seem to belong to any country; they are all, like their creator, philosophers, and citizens of the world, be they thieves or jailors, highwaymen or hags, ruffians or gentlemen), but they are generally men. We like Falkland least of all, though we tremble at him, as the terrible incarnation of the principle of honour. He is certainly a striking creation; but resembles rather one of the fictitious beings of heraldry, than a real man. No such noble nature was ever so soured into a fiend; no such large heart was ever contracted into a scorpion-circle of fire, narrowing around its victim. Godwin's Falkland is, in truth, a more monstrous improbability than his daughter's Frankenstein. He is described as a paragon of benevolence and virtue; and yet, to preserve, not the consciousness of honour, but, as Fuseli remarked, its mere reputation, he sets himself deliberately, by every despicable art, by every enormous energy of injustice, to blast a being whom, all the while, he respects and admires. And you are expected, throughout the whole career of the injury, to blend admiration of the inflicter with sympathy for the victim. It is an attempt to reconcile the most glaring moral contradictions, an attempt worthy of the author of the far-famed chapter on "Necessity," and an attempt in which, strange to say, he nearly succeeds. You never altogether lose your regard for Falkland, and this chiefly because Caleb Williams himself never does. To his eye, above the blood of Tyrrell, and the

gallows of the Hawkins, and his own unparalleled wrongs, the genius of Falkland continues to soar, and his spirit is "rebuked under it," as Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. And how affecting his apparition towards the close—his head covered with untimely snow, his frame palsied by contending passions, dying of a broken heart! Caleb, though he be standing at bay, relents at the sight of the hell which suppressed feeling has charactered upon his forehead; and Falkland dies at length, forgiven by him, by you, by all. Williams himself is the creation of circumstances, and has all the prominent points in his character struck out by the rude collisions he encounters. Originally, he is neither more nor less than a shrewd, inquisitive youth. He is never much more, indeed, than a foil to the power and interest of his principal. Tyrrell is a brute, nor even an English brute; but a brute proper and positive. He is drawn sternly and *con amore*. The other characters, Miss Melville, Raymond, Collins, &c., are very insipid, with the exception of Gines, the bloodhound, who is painted with the force, gusto, and almost *inhuman* sympathy of a Landseer; and the hag who attempts the life of Caleb in the robber's den, a dire figure, pointed into powerful relief by her butcher's cleaver, a coarser Clytemnestra, if great things may be likened to small. Such is "Caleb Williams," a work which made an era in the fictitious writing of the age, and which has not only created a school of imitators, but coloured insensibly many works which profess and possess independent claims: such as the Paul Cliffords, Eugene Arams, Rookwoods, and Oliver Twists, of Bulwer, Ainsworth, and Boz, which, but for it, we verily believe, had never been. Written with the care and consciousness of one who felt himself writing for immortality, it still keeps its place, amid the immense fry of ordinary tales, embalmed and insulated in the rough salt of its own essential and original power.

If "Caleb Williams" be the most interesting and popular, "St Leon" is the most pathetic and imaginative of his

tales. It does not, indeed, in our judgment, do full justice to the character of an alchemist;—a character which ought to attract more interest now-a-days, when chemistry has approached the verge of secrets nearly as wonderful as that which he sought by self-denial, and abstinence, and unwearied perseverance, and solemn prayer. A genuine seeker after gold seems to us to have been one of the noblest characters in the darker ages. He was no wretched quack-salver, like Dousterswivel; no half-dupe, half-devil, deceiving others no more than he was himself deceived, like Alasco—a being driven, by the pure malignity of his nature, to converse with the family of poisons, as with familiar spirits; seen, by fancy, surrounded by drugs as by demons, and enjoying a tingling luxury from handling all the concentrations of death; squeezing out from leaf, and flower, and mineral, their most secret subtleties of mischief; and liking no looking-glass for his pale features so well as that which a cup of distilled destruction, forced from the hand of reluctant nature, supplied. Nor was he a mere slave of avarice; he was a being of quite another order. He gloried, like the hunter, not so much in the prey as in the chase: it was not the glittering dross he cared for; but partly the excitement, the enthusiasm, the terror, and the transport of the search; partly the power and the pleasure, the benevolent influence and the glory, which were expected to result from the acquirement. He valued not the golden key, except that by it he hoped to open the vast folding-doors, and to stand in the central halls of Nature's inmost temple—halls flaming with "diamond and with gold." The true alchemist was a "true man, with the deep Demetrian idea of matter, as a Proteus, living in his heart; an impracticable dialectics, instead of a working logic, in his hands; and an imagination distracted and oppressed by the variance of these—the divine idea, and the meanness of his instrumentality." He was no petty distiller, dissolver, and weigher; but the worthy ancestor of the true chemists who have followed in his track—the Stahls, the Priestleys, the

Blacks, the Lavoisiers, the Daltons, Davys, and Faradays. It was not gold so much he sought, as the idea of gold. He looked on gold as the first bright round of the ladder of earthly perfection, the top of which reached into heaven. It was with him no ultimate eminence; but only a *vous-tu*, whence he might move the world. As an attempt, too, to follow the most shadowy and sublime of Nature's footsteps—to take her in her form, to enter into her profoundest secrets, and learn her most unimaginable cipher—it required the severest training, habits of the minutest observation, the deepest study, combined with the most active and practical research. Nor was the alchemist, in our ideal of his character, one of those "fools who rush in where angels fear to tread." He sought not rashly to rend the robe of nature, to gaze upon her "naked loveliness," or snatch the sceptre rudely from her hand. He was a modest and a holy worshipper; he lived on bread and water, he subdued the flesh, he mortified the spirit, he fasted, he prayed; he went to his crucible, as to a shrine; he searched and tried his heart, as if he were about to celebrate a sacrament. Disappointed a thousand times, he still persevered; baffled by the turnings and windings of his goddess, he continued to follow her footsteps in the snow, and never despaired of reaching her very home; rejected of her great communion again and again, again and again he stretched out his daring hand to the dread elements on her table; and, though defeated in his ultimate end, verily he had his reward in the pangs of the purifying process, in the furnace of the refining affliction, in the glorious stoop of the attitude, which made him bend evermore, like one that prayeth, over the rarest operations of God, and in the glimpses of truth which shone upon him through the ruins of his hopes, and, at last, through the rents in his shattered frame. If Nature did not lead him to her bald and Pisgah pinnacle, she did conduct him to many a towering elevation, and many a fair prospect she expanded before him. If she taught him not to create gold, she taught him to ana-

lyse air, to simplify the forms of matter, to weigh gases in scales, and atoms in a balance. If she realised not his yet grander dream of living for ever, she combined, with the sounder hopes of Christianity, in qualifying him for an unearthly immortality, and she surrounded his death with an interest and a grandeur peculiar to herself. Yes, Alchymy had her martyrs, worthy of the name; and the exit of the sublime visionary was often in fine keeping with his character. He died, not, like Alasco, by the glass mask breaking, and permitting the fume of the poison to pierce his brain; nor by accidentally swallowing the draught he had prepared for others; nor by despairing suicide; but worn away to a skeleton by the watchings and fastings, the hopes and fears, the ecstasies and agonies, of many a studious year; on his cheek, the hectic of death contending with the flush of expectation: for have not the fingers of many dreams pointed to this night, as that when the light of gold is to break upon him, like a finer dawn from the ashes of the furnace, and the residuum of the process is to be the julp of immortality—the time midnight; Sirius shining through the skylight of his solitary room; standing on the very threshold of his hopes; another blast but to be given, another ingredient but to be added, and all is gained:—see, then and there, the alchymist expires, with a light like the news of some great victory still shining on his features, ere they are settled into the rigidity of death!

This is our ideal of an alchymist: and has Godwin satisfied this ideal? We must answer, No. St Leon is not a seeker for the philosopher's stone, nor yet its finder. He gains it by no protracted and painful process; he stumbles upon it by chance. It is not a reward; it is not a result; it drops at his feet as from the clouds. He wears, therefore, its mystic crown awkwardly, and like a *parvenu*. He never, somehow, seems satisfied that he has a proper claim to it, nor are you. What right, you say, has this broken-down, moody gambler and ex-count to a gift so rare, which so many prophets and

righteous men have desired in vain? Unworthy of its possession, no wonder that it avenges itself by making him the most miserable of men. The evils, too, of the successful alchymist's position are, we think, somewhat overdrawn. Money, it is true, cannot unlock every dungeon, melt every refractory element, or quench the fury of devouring flames; but it is clearly not answerable for the calamities into which his own recklessness or extravagance, or the savage superstitions of his age, plunge the Count St Leon. Because he neglects ordinary precautions, and indulges needless expense, must the power of gold, as an engine of vast benevolence and amelioration, be reduced to a negative quantity? Indeed, the book defeats its own apparent object. As a satire upon gold, it is dull and powerless. As a picture of its princely prerogatives, it is captivating in the extreme. More successfully still, though not more justly, does he depict the misery of immortality on earth. He impresses us with the deepest sense of the dreary position of a man, whose stupendous privileges have only rendered him "alone in the world." Who does not pity St Leon burying his noble wife, bidding farewell to his charming daughters, and setting forward on his solitary journey, "friendless, friendless, alone, alone!" Who weeps not with him, as he feels that his gift has insulated him for ever; that an immortal can form no abiding connection with "the ephemeron of an hour?" This is the impression which the author wishes to give, and he does give it; and it is most melancholy. But, perhaps, he has not brought out with due force the other side of the medal—the consolations of such a solitude; a solitude, like that of the brideless sun, diffusing, unweariedly, his tide of power and splendour; of the solitary stars; of the "childless cherubs." All truly great men, indeed, whatever were their connections, have felt the pleasures and the pangs of severe consecration to some high purpose; and that the former are not inferior to the latter. "The lion is alone, and so are they." Tenderly do they love their kind; but they see them

from too great an elevation, to expect or extend much reciprocity of feeling. Genius is essential solitude; and this solitude is sublime, if it be dreary. The man of imagination has a crucible in the inner chamber of his soul, where his heart is, and with which no stranger intermeddeth. Wordsworth was as lonely in the most brilliant coterie, as amid the caves of Helvellyn. Coleridge talked away; but his *eye was ever alone*. Byron stood among the crowd—and such a crowd!—"among them, but not of them"—as if gazing down the corries of Loch-nagar. Chalmers by his wandering look proclaimed that his spirit dwelt apart from his audience, even while thrilling it into one soul. Hall, in his higher moments, seemed entirely unconscious of the presence of his congregation. Wilson's voice, in the most crowded class-room, seemed to go on alone, like a separate existence. Such a solitude who dares to pity? who envies not? And yet Godwin expects us to sympathise with the child of immortality, merely because he is alone! Still, "St Leon" is a magnificent romance. We all remember the grand outburst of his feelings after he knows the secret; though it rises less from the fact that the mysteries of nature are open, than that they are open to *him*. Hence, in the celebrated exclamation, "For *me* the wheels of the universe are made to roll backwards," we must lay the emphasis on the second word. But better than this, is that melancholy figure of the stranger, whose name is not given; whose history you must guess from the disconnected expressions of his despair; whose mysterious entrance is announced in words so significant and thrilling, like a blast of trumpets, and whom you doubt, in your perplexity, to be an incarnation of the fiend; so disastrous is the influence he sheds on the cottage by the lake, and on the destiny of its inmates. He reminds us of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." Like him, he is nameless; like him, he passes "like Night from land to land;" like him, he has strange power of speech; like him, he carries a deep burden of secret upon his breast, which he

must disclose; like him, he has a special message to an individual, which colours all the after-history of his being. Like the wedding guest, St Leon becomes a wiser and a sadder man.

And then there is the noble Marguerite de Damville, the ideal of a matron, a mother, a wife, a woman; whose every step moves to the music of lofty purpose, and before whom her husband, even while holding the keys of nature and of immortal life, dwindles into insignificance. Blessings on thee, William Godwin, for this fine creation! a creation realising all our fondest dreams of the majesty, purity, and wisdom, which gracious Nature can build up, when she pleases, in one woman's form. She is the true magician of the tale; and you feel that a love like hers is stronger than death, and mightier than gold; and that God may give to the "insect of an hour" more of his own image and glory, than the most mysterious gifts, even eternal youth itself, can confer on the unworthy. She reminds us of the lines descriptive of Godwin's own daughter, written by her impassioned husband:—

"And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak.

Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whisper'd to subdue my fondest fears.

And through thine eyes, even in thy soul, I see

A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.
They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring child.

I wonder not; for one then left the earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of her departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee through the tempests dark
and wild

Which shake these latter years; and thou
canst claim

The shelter from thy sire of an immortal
name."

And while she is the loveliest, Bethlem Gabor is the most terrific character in this or in almost any tale. He is a "bear bereaved of his whelps." His castle has been burned; his wife and babes, "all his

pretty ones," murdered; and he steps up upon their corpses into a giant of misanthropy. His figure itself proclaims his character. His stature is Titanic; his hair, a dead black; his face, all scarred and scorched with sword and flame; one eye is gone, but the other has gathered up into its solitary orb the fury which fell with it, and glares with a double portion of demoniac meaning. His voice is thunder; and as he talks in a torrent of imprecation against man, and nature, and Eternal Providence, his stature dilates, his breast swells and heaves like an angry wave, and a "supernatural eloquence seems to inspire and enshroud him." His every thought is tingured with gall. "He never sees a festive board, without being tempted to overturn it; never a father surrounded with a smiling family, without feeling his soul thrill with suggestions of murder." Holding man to be a more mischievous reptile than any that crawls on Africa's sands; a viler insect than any that floats in the thick atmosphere of India's jungles; a more malignant monster than any that roams over the Arabian desert; a more ravenous devourer than any that infests the Caribbean Sea—he has sworn both loud and deep to wage against him an unmitigated and eternal warfare. He looks demoniacally even into the faces of little children. He would willingly see the whole race enclosed in the hollow of one curse. He hates God, because he is the father of man; he hates himself, because he is a man. He has no pleasure from any source but hatred: none from the works of creation, on which he casts a malignant scowl; none from love, for he loves no one, not even himself; none from devotion, for he will not kneel; none from hope, for his element is despair; none from anticipation, unless he could expect that the throats of all men were contracted into one, and that one were within the reach of his eager axe. He is the Polyphemus of the miserable; and is drawn by those few rude touches which proclaim the hand of a master. He seems, like that fatal bark in "Lycidas," to have been "built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark;" conceived and finished in

that gloomy hour of life which falls at some time or other upon all earnest spirits, from which Shakspeare himself did not escape, and which, in Godwin, was produced or exaggerated by the disappointment of the fresh hopes of his youth, and by the overthrow of the pyramidal pile of Political Justice which he had reared at such perverted pains. Charles we do not admire; and all his intercourse with his disguised father is in wretched taste, and brings the tale to a lame and impotent close. Fine descriptive passages are sprinkled throughout, such as that of "Gambling," the "Storm among the Mountains," &c; but the individual incidents are generally quite subordinate to the characters and the moral of the story. From this statement, however, we must except the escape from the Inquisition. Nothing in fiction (except the robber-scene in "Count Fathom," which is quite destitute of its moral grandeur) surpasses in interest St Leon's sudden dash from the midst of the procession of the victims of the auto-da-fe, through an unexpected and momentary opening, down the lane; his affair with the Jew, whom he compels to secrete him, and purchase for his use the materials of the elixir of immortal life; his sudden and horrible feeling that he is dying; his haste in compounding the julap; the state of insensibility into which he sinks for a moment; the attempt he makes with the last efforts of expiring nature to swallow the draught of immortality; the sweet sleep, be-dropt with golden dreams, that follows; and his starting to consciousness, a new-made man, eternal youth rioting in his veins, the same Count Leon that he was on the morning of his marriage with Marguerite de Damville.

We must dismiss this enchanting fiction, with its minor beauties of style, its use of Scripture allusions, which are in fine keeping with the spiritual cast of the story; its high tone of morality; its sympathy with all those private affections which the "Inquiry" denounced; its melting pathos. Next to "Ivanhoe," we consider it the most ideal and poetical romance in the English language.

Mandeville is, like Bethlem Gabor, a misanthrope, but wants the energy and grandeur of that extraordinary character. He is not maddened into the feeling by circumstances; he hates, because he has nothing else to do. It is but in him the escape of immeasurable ennui. Godwin was probably seduced into this miscreation by the success of Gabor, forgetting that to reproduce any character is dangerous, and that what will pass, nay tell, in a sketch, may be intolerable in a full-length portraiture. The power of this tale—and it has great power—lies not in story, for story there is little; nor in variety, for variety there is none; nor in characters, for character of any prominence there is but one—Mandeville himself; but in the minute and painstaking analysis of hatred, as it roots itself in the soil of one morbid spirit, and gradually, as it grows, covers all with the blackness of darkness; and in the eloquence of certain insulated passages, collecting the pith of the fell passion, and reminding you of those dark, soundless wells in the wilderness, into which you tremble to look down at noon-day. And what an exit the hero has at length, leaving the stage with that ghastly gash upon his face, which grins out the intelligence that Clifford has set his mark on him, and that he is his for ever!

We notice in this work, and in his yet later productions, a vaster wealth and profusion of imagery than in his earlier works. We notice this also in Burke's "Regicide Peace," and in Scott's "Life of Napoleon." Whether it spring from a desiré to hide the baldness of age by forced and thickening laurels, or arise from the imaginative power rallying all its forces previous to dissolution, certainly the phenomenon is curious; and the contrast between the more than youthful riot of figure and exuberance of language, and the age of the writer, produces in our minds strange and mournful emotions.

"Fleetwood" and "Cloudesley," with many beauties of thought and style, are but faint reflexes of the others, and we may silently drop both from the catalogue of the works, begirt by which he shall yet

stand "before the dread tribunal of To-come," to receive the verdict of immortality.

His "Inquirer" is made up of orts and fragments which were over from the great feast of the "Inquiry." It contains "matter of much pith and moment," though it be too paradoxical, and stately, and dogmatic, to rank among the "Essays of England." His "Life of Chaucer" includes some ingenious dissertations, but is a total misnomer, inasmuch as it contains little or no biography. His "Essay on Sepulchres" is full of learning, and seems to have been a favourite with its author; but crushed down under its ominous title, it is now safely deposited in the tomb of the Capulets. His "Lives of Milton's Nephews" were another still birth. He is better at writing the life of a fictitious, than a real personage. His sermons—called curiously "Sketches from History"—which we glanced over, *à la* Charles Lamb, at a book-stall in Glasgow, a good many years ago, are rather dry, and we do not wonder that he soon ceased to be a preacher. His tragedies were sins of youth, and—are forgotten for ever. His "Life of Mary Wolstonecraft" is a slight but interesting sketch of a strange unhappy life. As a historian of the Commonwealth, he labours under the deep disadvantage of having little sympathy with the religious spirit of the period; nor does he narrate with peculiar interest or power, but is careful, inquisitive, ingenious, and rather cold and passionless. His final "Thoughts on Man" were collected into a posthumous volume, which we never saw. He was one of the most indefatigable of authors, and has founded a school, including his son, a youth of promise early cut off; his daughter, the brilliant authoress of "Frankenstein," "The Last Man," &c.; that rare American, afterwards to be commemorated, Brockden Brown, whose "Wieland," "Ormond," "Arthur Mervyn," "Edgar Huntly," &c., track his path closely and daringly, yet possess a distinct originality of their own; and Shelley, whose eagle-winged genius did not disdain to "do errands in the vasty deep, and business i' the veins of

earth," at the bidding of this potent Prospero, his father-in-law. Godwin, as we have seen, was for awhile a Dissenting clergyman. Traces of his early habits of thought and reading are to be found in his use of Scripture language, in the dictatorial tone and the measured and solemn march of his compositions. Coming to London, he acted for awhile as a reporter for the public press. His genius seems to have remained totally unsuspected by his most intimate friends, till the publication of "Caleb Williams." They even thought him utterly destitute of "natural imagination!" Mary Wolstonecraft, that crazy, but excessively clever and brilliant creature, after flirting with Fuseli and Southey, gave Godwin her hand. She died in giving birth to the present Mrs Shelley. In conversation, she was incomparably her husband's superior. This, indeed, was not his *forte*, and hence he was often put down by the stupid and superficial, as stupider and shallower than themselves. He cared not; but, though out-crowded in coteries, he retired to his study, and wrote "immortal things," leaving them to talk themselves hoarse. Even Coleridge never did justice to Godwin's powers. Hearing him boast of having maintained a dispute with Mackintosh for several hours, the poet replied, "Had there been a man of

genius in the room, he would have settled it in five minutes." When the same distinguished twain were on one occasion making light of Wordsworth, Coleridge said, "He strides on so far before you both, that he dwindles in the distance." After Mary Wolstonecraft's death, he married a second time. One of Godwin's principal friends was Curran, who waxed ever eloquent in private, when defending him from the abuse it became fashionable to pour upon his head. He was one of the most candid of men, and spoke well of those who were trampling him to the dust. He did, indeed, exhibit here and there, throughout his career, symptoms of a slight misanthropical tendency; but in general well sustained the dignity of the sage and the conscious immortal. He had courage, too, of no ordinary kind, and needed it all to sustain the reaction of prodigious popularity; every species of attack, from the sun-shafts of Burke, Mackintosh, and Hall, to the reptile calumnies of meaner assailants; and a perpetual struggle with narrow circumstances. He enjoyed, we believe, however, a pension for a few years ere his death. He is now only a name; but it is a name as great as the fame of "Caleb Williams," as wide as the civilised world, and as lasting as the literature of his native land.

MRS SHELLEY.

MUCH as we hear of Schools of Authors, there has, properly speaking, been but one in British literature—at least within this century. There was never, for example, any such thing as a Lake school. A school supposes certain conditions and circumstances which are not to be found among the poets referred to. It supposes, first of all, a common master. Now, the Lake poets had no common master, either among themselves or others. They owned allegiance neither to Shakspeare, nor Milton, nor Wordsworth. Each stood near, but each stood alone, like the stars com-

posing one of the constellations. A school, again, implies a common creed. But we have no evidence, external or internal, that, though the poetical diction of the Lakers bore a certain resemblance, their poetical creed was identical. Indeed, we are yet to learn that Southey had, of any depth or definitude, a poetical creed at all. A school, again, supposes a similar mode of training. But how different the erratic education of Coleridge, from the slow, solemn, silent degrees by which arose, like a temple, the majestic structure of Wordsworth's mind! A school, besides,

implies such strong and striking resemblances as shall serve to overpower the specific differences between the writers who compose it. But we are mistaken if the dissimilarities between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey be not as great as the points in which they agree. Take, for example, the one quality of speculative intellect. That, in the mind of Coleridge, was restless, discontented, and daring; in Wordsworth, still, collected, brooding perpetually over narrow but profound depths; in Southey, almost totally quiescent. The term Lake School, in short, applied at first in derision, has been retained, principally, because it is convenient—nay, suggests a pleasing image, and gives both the public and the critics “glimpses that do make them less forlorn” of the blue peaks of Helvellyn and Skiddaw, and of the blue waters of Derwent and Windermere.

The Cockney School was, if possible, a misnomer more absurd—striving, as it did, in vain to include, within one term, three spirits so essentially distinct as Hazlitt, Keats, and Leigh Hunt: the first a stern metaphysician, who had fallen into a hopeless passion for poetry; the second the purest specimen of the ideal—a ball of beautiful foam, “cut off from the water,” and not adopted by the air; the third, a fine tricky medium between the poet and the wit, half a sylph and half an Ariel, now hovering round a lady’s curl, and now stirring the fiery tresses of the sun—a fairy fluctuating link, connecting Pope with Shelley. We need not be at pains to cut out into little stars the Blackwood constellation, or dwell on the differences between a Wilson, a Lockhart, and a James Hogg.

One school, however, there has appeared within the last fifty years answering to all the characteristics we have enumerated—namely, the Godwin School, who, by a common master—the old man eloquent himself—a common philosophical as well as poetical belief, common training, that of warfare with society, and many specific resemblances in manner and style, are proclaimed to be one. This cluster includes the names of William Godwin,

Mary Wolstonecraft, Brockden Brown of America, Shelley, and Mrs Shelley.

Old Godwin scarcely got justice in “Tait’s Magazine” from Mr De Quincey. Slow, cumbersome as he was, there was always a fine spirit animating his most elephantine movements. He was never contemptible—often commonplace, indeed, but often great. There was much in him of the German cast of mind—the same painful and plodding diligence, added to high imaginative qualities. His great merit at the time—and his great error, as it proved afterwards—lay in wedding a partial philosophic system with the universal truth of fiction. Hence, the element which made the public drunk with his merits at first, rendered them oblivious afterwards. “Caleb Williams,” once denounced by Hannah More as a cunning and popular preparation of the poison which the “Political Justice” had contained in a cruder form, is now forgotten, we suspect, by all but a very small class. “St Leon” “Fleetwood,” “Mandeville,” and “Cloudsley,” with all their varied merits, never attracted attention, except through the reflex interest and terror excited by their author’s former works. Thus political excitement has been at once a raising and a ruining influence to the writings of a great English author—ruining, we mean, at present, for the shade of neglect has yet to be created which can permanently conceal their sterling and imperishable worth. After the majority of the writings of Dickens have perished—after one-half of Bulwer’s and one-fourth of Scott’s novels have been forgotten—shall some reflective spirits be found following the fugitive steps of Caleb Williams, or standing by the grave of Marguerite de Damville, or sympathising with the gloom of Mandeville, or of Bethlem Gabor, as they do well to be angry even unto death. If sincerity, simplicity, strength of thought, and power of genius, can secure immortality to any productions, it is to the fictions of Godwin.

Mary Wolstonecraft—since we saw her countenance prefixed to her husband’s memoir—a face so sweet, so spiritual,

so far withdrawn from earthly thoughts, steeped in an enthusiasm so genuine; we have ceased to wonder at the passionate attachment of Southey, Fuseli, and Godwin to the gifted being who bore it. It is the most feminine countenance we ever saw in picture. Fuseli once, when asked if he believed in the immortality of the soul, replied in language rather too rough to be quoted *verbatim*, "I don't know if you have a soul, but I am sure that I have." We are certain that he believed in the existence of at least one other immortal spirit—that of the owner of the still, serene, and rapt countenance on which he hopelessly doted. It is curious that, on the first meeting of Godwin and his future wife, they "interdespised"—they recoiled from each other, like two enemies suddenly meeting on the street, and it required much after-intercourse to reconcile them, and ultimately to create that passion which led to their union.

Mary Wolstonecraft shone most in conversation. From this to composition, she seemed to descend as from a throne. Coleridge describes her meeting and extinguishing some of Godwin's objections to her arguments with a light, easy, playful air. Her fan was a very falchion in debate. Her works—"History of the French Revolution," "Wanderer of Norway," "Rights of Women," &c.—have all perished. Her own career was chequered and unhappy; her end was premature—she died in childhood of Mrs Shelley; but her name shall live as that of a deep, majestic, and high-souled woman—the Madame Roland of England—and who could, as well as she, have paused on her way to the scaffold, and wished for a pen to "record the strange thoughts that were arising in her mind." Peace to her ashes! How consoling to think that those who in life were restless and unhappy, sleep the sleep of death as soundly as others—nay, seem to sleep more soundly, to be hushed by a softer lullaby, and surrounded by a profounder peace, than the ordinary tenants of the grave. Yes, sweeter, deeper, and longer is the repose of the *truant* child, after his day of wandering is over, and the night of his rest is come.

Another "wanderer o'er eternity" was Brockden Brown, the Godwin of America. And worse for him, he was a wanderer, not from, but among men. For Cain of old, it was a relief to go forth from his species into the virgin empty earth. The builders of the Tower of Babel must have rejoiced as they saw the summit of their abortive building sinking down in the level plain; they fled from it as a stony silent satire on their baffled ambition, and as a memorial of the confusion of their speech—it scourged them forth into the wilderness, where they found peace and oblivion. A self-exiled Byron or Landor is rather to be envied; for though "how can your wanderer escape from his own shadow?" yet it is much if that shadow sweep forests and cataracts, fall large at morning or evening upon Alps and Apennines, or swell into the Demon of the Brocken. In this case, misery takes a prouder, loftier shape, and mounts a burning throne. But a man like Brockden Brown, forced to carry his sorrow into the press and thick of human society, nay, to coin it into the means of procuring daily bread, he is the true hero, even though he should fall in the struggle. To carry one's misery to market, and sell it to the highest bidder, what a necessity for a proud and sensitive spirit! Assuredly Brown was a brave struggler, if not a successful one. Amid poverty, neglect, non-appreciation, hard labour, and the thousand *niaiserie*s of the crude country which America then was, he retained his integrity; he wrote on at what Godwin calls his "story-books;" he sought inspiration from his own gloomy woods and silent fields; and his works appear, amid what are called "standard novels," like tall, wind-swept American pines amid shrubbery and brushwood. His name, after his untimely death (at the age of thirty-nine), was returned upon his ungrateful country—from Britain, where his writings first attained eminent distinction, while even yet Americans, generally, prefer the adventure and bustle of Cooper to the stern, Dante-like simplicity, the thoughtful spirit, and the harrowing and ghost-like interest of Brown.

Of Shelley, having spoken before, what more can we say? He seems to us as though the most beautiful of beings had been struck blind. Mr De Quincey, in unconscious plagiarism from ourselves, compares him to a "lunatic angel." But perhaps, after all, his disease might be better denominated blindness. It was not because he saw falsely, but as if, seeing and delaying to worship the glory of Christ and his religion, that delay was punished by a swift and sudden darkness. Imagine the Apollo Belvidere animated and fleshed, all his dream-like loveliness of form retained, but his eyes remaining shut! Thus blind and beautiful stood Shelley on his pedestal, or went wandering, an inspired sleep-walker, among his fellows, who, alas! not seeing his melancholy plight, struck and spurned, instead of gently and soothingly trying to lead him into the right path. We still think, notwithstanding Mr De Quincey's eloquent strictures in reply, that if pity and kind-hearted expostulation had been employed, they might have had the effect, if not of weaning him from his errors, at least of modifying his expressions and feelings—if not of opening his eyes, at least of rendering him more patient and hopeful under his eclipse. What but a partial clouding of his mind could have prompted such a question as he asked upon the following occasion?—Haydon the painter met him once at a large dinner party in London. During the entertainment, a thin, cracked, shrieking voice was heard from the one end of the table, "You don't believe, do you, Mr Haydon, in that execrable thing, Christianity?" The voice was poor Shelley's, who could not be at rest with any new acquaintance till he ascertained his impressions on that one topic.

Poets, perhaps all men, best understand themselves. Thus no word so true has been spoken of Shelley, as where he says of himself, that "an adamantine veil was built up between his mind and heart." His intellect led him in one direction—the true impulses of his heart in another. The one was with Spinoza; the other with John. The controversy raged between

them like fire, and even at death was not decided.

It is not at all to be wondered at, that two such spirits as Shelley and Mary Godwin, when they met, should become instantly attached. On his own doctrine of a state of pre-existence, we might say that the marriage had been determined long before, while yet the souls were waiting in the great antenatal antechamber! They met at last, like two drops of water—like two flames of fire—like two beautiful clouds which have crossed the moon, the sky, and all its stars, to hold their midnight assignation over a favourite and lonely river. Mary Godwin was an enthusiast from her childhood. She passed, she tells us, part of her youth at Broughty Ferry, in sweet and sinless reverie among its cliffs. The place is to us familiar. It possesses some fine features—a bold promontory crowned with an ancient castle jutting far out the Tay, which here broadens into an arm of the ocean—a beach, in part smooth with sand, and in part paved with pebbles—cottages lying artlessly along the shore, clean as if washed by the near sea—sandy hillocks rising behind—and westward, the river, like an inland lake, stretching around Dundee, with its fine harbour and its surmounting Law, which, in its turn, is surmounted by the far-blue shapes of the gigantic Stucknachroan and Benveirlich. Did the Bay of Spezzia ever suggest to Mrs Shelley's mind the features of the Scottish scene? That scene, seen so often, seldom fails to bring before us her image—the child, and soon to be the bride, of genius. Was she ever, like Mirza, overheard in her soliloquies, and did she bear the shame, accordingly, in blushes which still rekindle at the recollection? Did the rude fishermen of the place deem her wondrous wise, or did they deem her mad, with her wandering eye, her rapt and gleaming countenance, her light step moving to the music of her maiden meditation? The smooth sand retains no trace of her young feet—to the present race she is altogether unknown; but we have more than once seen the man of genius, and its lover, turn round and look

at the spot, with warmer interest and with brightening eye, as we told them that she had been there.

We have spoken of Mrs Shelley's similarity in genius to her husband—we by no means think her his equal. She has not his subtlety, swiftness, wealth of imagination, and is never caught up into the same rushing whirlwind of inspiration. She has much, however, of his imaginative and of his speculative qualities—her tendency, like his, is to the romantic, the ethereal, and the terrible. The tie detaining her, as well as him, to the earth is slender; her protest against society is his, copied out in a female hand; her style is carefully and successfully modelled upon his; she bears, in brief, to him the resemblance which Laone did to Laon, which Astarte did to Manfred. Perhaps, indeed, intercourse with a being so peculiar, that those who came in contact with, either withdrew from him in hatred, or fell into the current of his being, vanquished and enthralled, has somewhat affected the originality and narrowed the extent of her own genius. Indian widows used to fling themselves upon the funeral pyre of their husbands; she has thrown upon that of hers her mode of thought, her mould of style, her creed, her heart, her all. Her admiration of Shelley was an idolatry. Can we wonder at it? Separated from him in the prime of life, with all his faculties in the finest bloom of promise, with peace beginning to build in the crevices of his torn heart, and with fame hovering ere it stooped upon his head—separated, too, in circumstances so sudden and cruel—can we be astonished that from the wounds of love came forth the blood of worship and sacrifice? Wordsworth speaks of himself as feeling for "the Old Sea some reverential fear." But in the mind of "Mary" there must have lurked a feeling of a still stronger kind toward that element which *he*, next to herself, had of all things most passionately loved—which he trusted as a parent—to which he exposed himself, defenceless (he could not swim—he could only soar)—which he had sung in many a strain of matchless sweetness, but which betrayed and destroyed him—how can she, with-

out horror, hear the boom of its waves, or look without a shudder either at its stormy or its smiling countenance? What a picture she presents to our imagination, running with dishevelled hair along the sea-shore, questioning all she met if they could tell her of her husband—nay, shrieking out the dreadful question to the surges, which, like a dumb murderer, had done the deed, but could not utter the confession!

Mrs Shelley's genius, though true and powerful, is monotonous and circumscribed—more so than even her father's—and, in this point, presents a strong contrast to her husband's, which could run along every note of the gamut—be witty or wild, satirical or sentimental, didactic or dramatic, epic or lyrical, as it pleased him. She has no wit, nor humour—little dramatic talent. Strong, clear description of the gloomier scenes of nature, or the darker passions of the mind, or of those supernatural objects which her fancy, except in her first work, somewhat *laboriously* creates, is her *forte*. Hence her reputation still rests chiefly upon "Frankenstein." She unquestionably made him; but, like a mule or a monster, he has had no progeny.

Can any one have forgot the interesting account she gives of her first conception of that extraordinary story, when she had retired to rest, her fancy heated by hearing ghost tales; and when the whole circumstances of the story appeared at once before her eye, as in a camera obscura? It is ever thus, we imagine, that truly original conceptions are produced. They are cast—not wrought. They come as wholes, and not in parts. It was thus that "Tam o' Shanter" completed, along Burns's mind, his wild race in a single hour. Thus Coleridge composed the outline of his "Ancient Mariner," in one evening walk near Nether Stowey. So rapidly rose "Frankenstein;" which, as Moore well remarks, has been one of those striking conceptions which take hold of the public mind at once and for ever.

The theme is morbid and disgusting enough. The story is that of one who

finds out the principle of life, constructs a monstrous being, who, because his maker fails in forming a female companion to him, ultimately murders the dearest friend of his benefactor, and, in remorse and despair, disappears amid the eternal snows of the North Pole. Nothing more preposterous than the meagre outline of the story exists in literature. But Mrs Shelley deserves great credit, nevertheless. In the first place, she has succeeded in her delineation; she has painted this shapeless being upon the imagination of the world for ever; and beside Caliban and Hecate, and Death and Life, and all other weird and gloomy creations, this nameless, unfortunate, involuntary, gigantic Unit stands. To succeed in an attempt so daring, proves at once the power of the author, and a certain value even in the original conception. To keep verging perpetually on the limit of the absurd, and to produce the while all the effects of the sublime, takes and tasks very high faculties indeed. Occasionally, we admit, she does overstep the mark. Thus the whole scene of the monster's education in the cottage, his overhearing the reading of the "Paradise Lost," the "Sorrows of Werter," &c., and in this way acquiring knowledge and refined sentiments, seems unspeakably ridiculous. A Caco-demon weeping in concert with Eve or Werter is too ludicrous an idea. But it is wonderful how delicately and gracefully Mrs Shelley has managed the whole prodigious business. She touches pitch with a lady's glove, and is not defiled. From a whole forest of the "nettle danger," she extracts a sweet and plentiful supply of the "flower safety." With a fine female footing, she preserves the narrow path which divides the terrible from the disgusting. She unites, not in a junction of words alone, but in effect, the "horribly beautiful." Her monster is not only, as Caliban appeared to Trinculo, a very pretty monster, but somewhat poetical and pathetic withal. You almost weep for him in his utter insulation. Alone! dread word, though it were to be alone in heaven! Alone! word hardly more dreadful, if it were to be alone in hell!—

"Alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea;
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony."

Wrapped around by his loneliness, does this gigantic creature run through the world like a lion who has lost his mate in a forest, seeking for his kindred being, but seeking for ever in vain. He is not only alone, but alone because he has no being like him throughout the whole universe.

What a scene is the process of his creation, and especially the hour when he first began to breathe, to open his ill-favoured eyes, and to stretch his ill-shapen arms toward his terrified author, who, for the first time, becomes aware of the enormity of the mistake he has committed—who has had a giant's strength, and used it tyrannously like a giant, and who shudders and shrinks back from his own horrible handiwork! It is a type, whether intended or not, of the fate of genius, whenever it dares either to revile or to resist the common laws, obligations, and conditions of man and the universe.

Scarcely second to her description of the moment when, at midnight, and under the light of a waning moon, the monster was born, is his sudden apparition upon a glacier among the high Alps. This scene strikes us the more, as it seems the fulfilment of a fear which all have felt, who have found themselves alone among such desolate regions. Who has not at times trembled lest those ghastlier and drearier places of nature, which abound in our own Highlands, should bear a different progeny from the ptarmigan, the sheep, the raven, or the eagle; lest the mountain should suddenly crown itself with a Titanic spectre, and the mist, departing, reveal demoniac forms, and the lonely moor discover its ugly dwarf, as if dropped down from the overhanging thunder-cloud; and the forest of pines show unearthly shapes sailing among their shades; and the cataract overboil with its own wild creations? Thus fitly, amid scenery like that of some dream of nightmare, on a glacier as on a throne, stands up before the eye of his own maker, the

Miscreation, and he cries out, "Whence and what art thou, execrable shape?"

In darkness and distance, at last, the being disappears, and the imagination dares hardly pursue him as he passes amid those congenial shapes of colossal size, terror, and mystery, which we fancy to haunt those outskirts of existence, with, behind them at midnight, "all Europe and Asia fast asleep, and before them the silent immensity and palace of the Eternal, to which our sun is but a porch-lamp."

Altogether, the work is wonderful as the work of a girl of eighteen. She has never since fully equalled or approached its power. One distinct addition to our original creations must be conceded her—and it is no little praise; for there are few writers of fiction who have done so much out of Germany. What are they in this respect to our painters—to Fuseli,

with his quaint brain, so prodigal of unearthly shapes—to John Martin, who has created over his head a whole dark, frowning, but magnificent world—or to David Scott, our late dear friend, in whose studio, while standing surrounded by pictured poems of such startling originality, such austere selection of theme, and such solemn dignity of treatment (forgetting not himself, the grave, mild, quiet, shadowy enthusiast, with his slow, deep, sepulchral tones), you were almost tempted to exclaim, "How dreadful is this place!" *

* Since writing this, we have read more carefully the "Last Man." Though the gloomiest, most improbable, and most hopeless of books, it abounds in beautiful descriptions, has scenes of harrowing interest, and depicts delicately the character of Shelley, who is the hero of the story.—We need not inform our readers that Mrs Shelley has, since this sketch was written, departed this life.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

BYRON, Southey, Macaulay, and Lockhart, are all, amid their variety of gifts, distinguished by an intense Anglicanism of spirit and style. Byron—spurned by England, and spurning England in return—yet bore with him into his banishment all the peculiarities of his country's literature: its directness, its dogmatism, its clearness, and its occasional caprice. And never is he so heartily and thoroughly English as when he is denouncing or ridiculing the land of his fathers. It is impossible to conceive of him, in any circumstances, sinking down to the level of an Italian improvisatore, or subliming into a German mystic, or of being aught but what he was—a strange compound of English blackguard, English peer, and English poet. His knowledge of German was limited; and even when he stole from it, it was what it had stolen from the elder authors of England. His admiration of Goethe was about as genuine and profound as a schoolboy's of Homer, who has read a few pages of the "Iliad" in

Greek, and has not read Pope's or Cowper's translation. And though he talked of writing his *magnum opus* in Italian, after he had fully mastered the language, it was easy to perceive that to his "land's language" he in reality desired to commit the perpetuity of his fame, and that England was the imaginary theatre before which he went through his attitudes of enthusiasm, and assumed his postures of despair. Southey, again, in creed, in character, in purpose, in genius, and in diction, was English to exclusiveness. Macaulay's writings, starred so richly with allusions to every other part of every other literature, do not, we are positive, above half-a-dozen times recognise the existence of the German—a single sneer is all he vouchsafes to our modern Germanised English authors; his strongest sympathies are with our native literature; and his sharp, succinct, and nervous manner, is the exact antithesis of that which is the rage of the Continent. And Lockhart, the subject of this notice, though he

is versant with foreign tongues—though he has translated from the Spanish, has travelled in Germany, and gazed on the Jove-like forehead of the author of "Faust," was, is, and is likely to continue, a Saxon to the backbone.

We had almost called Lockhart the Dryden of his day. Certainly, he has much of glorious John's robust and careless strength of style, and of his easy and vaulting vigour of versification. Like Dryden, too, whether lauding his friends, or vituperating his foes—whether applying the caustic of satire, or inditing the fiery lyric—whether bursting into brief and chary raptures, or sneering behind the back of his own enthusiasm, he is always manly, measured, disdainful alike of petty faults and petty beauties. Like Dryden, he is never greater than when, in translation or adaptation, he is rekindling the embers of other writers. Like Dryden, he is never or rarely caught into the "seventh heaven of invention;" he is sometimes majestic, but never sublime; and has little pure passion, no dramatic vein, and but occasional command over the fountain of tears. From Dryden, however, he differs in this, that while he is equally good at reasoning in rhyme, or expressing didactic truth, as at painting character or scenery, Lockhart's great strength lies in picturesque and powerful description of the oddities of character, of the darker vagaries of the human heart, or of the broader or more general features of Nature.

The two main characteristics of this writer's mind are, we think, sympathy with the sterner passions, and scorn for the lighter foibles and frailties of man. From the first have sprung those energetic, though somewhat overcharged, pictures which startle and appal us in "Adam Blair" and "Matthew Wald." To the latter we owe the sparkling humour, the bitter satire, and the brilliant badinage of "Peter's Letters," "Reginald Dalton," and all his splendid sins in the pages of "Blackwood." Besides those master features, he possesses, beyond all question, a strong and sagacious intellect, a clear and discriminating vein of criticism, a

vigorous rather than a copious imagination, thorough rather than profound learning, and a style, destitute, indeed, of grace or elegance, but native, nervous, and powerful. He has, withal, no great subtlety of view, or width of comprehension, or generosity of feeling, and not a particle of that childlike simplicity, earnestness, and abandonment, which are so often the accompaniments of genius. Indeed, if genius be, as we deem it is, a voice from the depths of the human spirit; the utterance, native and irresistible, of one possessed by an influence which, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth; comes, he knows not whence, and goes, he knows not whither; a lingering echo of that infinite ocean from which we have all come; the bright limit between the highest form of the intellectual, and the lowest form of the divine—if the man under its influence be a "maker," working out, in imitation of the great demiurgic Artist, certain creations of his own; a "declarer," more or less distinctly, of the awful will of the unseen Lawgiver, seated within his soul—a string to an invisible harper—a pen guided by a superhuman hand—a trumpet filled with a voice which is as the sound of many waters:—if this definition of genius be admitted, we question if he possesses it at all; if it be not, in truth, only high talent which sharpens his keen nostril, and animates the vigorous motions of his understanding.

As a novelist, his first production was "Valerius," which he read, Willis tells us, sheet after sheet, as it was written, to Christopher North, and was encouraged by his approbation to put it to press. It is a stern and literal reproduction of the classical periods. Its style has, in general, the coldness and chasteness of a translation from the Latin. Its best passage is that descriptive of the amphitheatre, which is written with a rugged power worthy of the scene, in which the

"Buzz of eager nations ran
In murmur'd pity or out roar'd applause,
As man was slaughter'd by his fellow-man.
And wherefore slaughter'd? Wherefore,
but because

Such were the bloody circus' genial laws,
And the imperial pleasure."

And yet we question if one line of "Childe Harold," or one stanza of "The Prophecy of Capys," do not more to *refresh* the Titanic skeleton of ancient Rome to the imagination and heart, than the entire novel of "Valerius."

In "Adam Blair" he strikes upon a deeper and darker chord. It is a tale of guilt, misery, and repentance. "Adam Blair," the happy father, husband, and minister, becomes, in the providence of God, a prostrate widower; and afterwards, in a sudden gust of infatuated passion, a miserable sinner. He repents in sackcloth and ashes—receives, in himself, that reward of his error which was meet—retires into private life—and dies a humbled, but happy man. Over the whole tale, as Mrs Johnstone somewhere says, there lies the "shadow of the hour and power of darkness." We will not soon forget that figure of the new-made widower, tossing amid the twilight trees, while, in moments of time, "ages of agony are passing over his bruised spirit." But with deeper interest imagination follows Adam Blair rushing from the scene of his guilt into the heart of the Highland wilderness, where the dark eye of a tarn stares up at him, like a reflection of his own guilty conscience; and where he curdles, into one gloomy rehearsal, all the after-experiences of humiliation, and madness, and misery, which are before him. Suddenly the scene changes: a milder but solemn light falls upon the picture, as, a sadder and wiser man, the culprit enters the assembly of his brethren, and himself declares the fact and circumstances of his fearful fall. It is a scene for a great moral painter. The assembly met in full conclave—a "crown of glory" rising here and there on a hoary patriarchal head—the entrance, like that of a stray spirit, of the bewildered man—the solemn faces, "darkening like water in the breeze," as his appearance outruns his words, in telling the dismal tale—might well inspire the truest and finest of pencils.

The moral of this story has been objected to, but we think without sufficient

grounds. What is the real moral of any tale? Is it not its permanent impression—the last burning trace it leaves upon the soul? And who ever read "Adam Blair" without rising from the perusal saddened, solemnised, smit with a profound horror at the sin which had wrought such hasty havoc in a character so pure, and a nature so noble? This effect produced, surely the tale has not been told in vain.

"Matthew Wald" is a series of brief and tragic sketches, ending in melodramatic madness and horror. Matthew is a soured, disappointed man. His wife, Joan, answers to that best description of a good wife—a *leaning prop* to her husband. Katherine Wald, his early but lost love, comes and goes, like a splendid apparition. A sadder shadow (poor Perling Joan) passes to perish below the chariot wheels of her proud seducer. Her tale is told with exquisite beauty and pathos. But by the most powerful thing in the book is the murder in Glasgow. Matthew Wald goes to reside with an old and, seemingly, pious couple, John Macewan, a shoemaker, and his wife. They are very industrious, but very poor. One market-day, John brings in a drover with him to his inner apartment, and, after a short talk, goes out again, telling his wife and lodger, who are in the kitchen, that the drover is drunk, has gone to bed, and must not be disturbed for awhile. In a little, Matthew notices a dark something creeping toward him, from the door of the room. It is a stream of blood. He bursts open the door, and finds the drover robbed and murdered. Meanwhile John pursues his way westward; comes at evening to a cottage on a lonely moor; enters to ask a drink of water; discovers a woman dying; kneels down by her bedside, and prays a "long, a powerful, an awful, a terrible prayer;" rises, and pursues his way. He is arrested in Arran, tried, and condemned, protesting that it was a "sair temptation of the Evil One." He is brought to the scaffold; the people hoot, and cast dead cats in his face; he says only, "Poor things, they're unco unceevil." Wald, the moment ere he is turned off,

feels the old murderer's pulse; its beat is as calm, even, and iron as his own. The whole story is recounted with a sort of medical coolness, which renders it appalling.

We forget the exact date of "Reginald Dalton;" but, from internal evidence, we might almost conclude that it was written during, or shortly after, the author's honeymoon, amid the groves of Chiefswood, and with the murmurs of the Tweed and the voice of the gentle Sophia Scott mingling in his ear. "Valerius" was the flower of his early scholarship; "Adam Blair" and "Matthew Wald" seem to have been both conceived, if not both written, in that dark passage through which often the youth of high intellect enters into manhood. But "Reginald Dalton," gay, lively, varied, only slenderly shadowed with the hues of sorrow, is the work of a matured and married man, whose aims in life are taken, and whose prospects in it are fair. It is one of the most agreeable of tales. With no passages in it so powerful as some in "Adam Blair" and "Matthew Wald," framed of a less unique and indivisible structure than "Valerius," which reads like one letter found in Pompeii, it is much more bustling, animated, and readable than any of the three. The scene is chiefly, and the interest entirely, in Oxford. The step of the author becomes quickened so soon as it touches the streets of the old city. And, while deeply reverent of his Alma Mater, he is not afraid to dash a strong and fearless light upon her errors of discipline, and abuses of practice. The incidents of the tale, however, are rather improbable and involved. Its love scenes are tedious—its pathos feeble—its characters, with the signal exception of the Edinburgh writer, neither striking nor new. The merit lies entirely in the truth and vigour of the description—in the lively manner in which the tale is told, and in the incessant stream of clever and sparkling things which runs down throughout the whole.

"Peter's Letters" excited a prodigious sensation at the time of its appearance. It was so personal, so quizzical, so impudent, and so desperately clever. Its il-

lustrations were so good, and so grotesque withal. And then there was the slightest possible shade of mystification about the fact of the authorship, to give a last tinge to the interest. It, accordingly, ran like wildfire. Steamers and track-boats were not considered complete without a copy. It supplanted guide-books in inns. A hundred country towns, aware that a "chield was takin' notes" among them, were on the daily look-out for the redoubtable Peter, with his spectacles, his Welsh accent, his Toryism, his inordinate thirst for draught porter, and his everlasting shandry-dan. Playfair, Leslie, &c., writhed under its personalities, but much more under its pictures. It became so popular in Leicester, that Robert Hall actually attacked it from the pulpit. After all, it is one of the most harmless and amusing of brochures. We bear with even its broad unblushing and unwinking bigotry, and like the hearty openness with which he brandishes his knife and fork; the force of its more elaborate sketches (such as those of John Clerk and Dr Chalmers); his famous funny pictures of the Burns dinner; the day at Craigcrook; and, above all, the Monday dinner, of thirty years ago, given to, and a little beyond, the life; and, better still, the faces and heads seen as if through a microscope, which lent their left-handed illustration to the whole. Those of Jeffrey, Hogg, and Chalmers, were particularly felicitous.*

In the year 1826, Lockhart left the bar, where he had paid unsuccessful homage to Themis, for the editorship of the "Quarterly Review." On the occasion of leaving Edinburgh for London, a dinner was given him, where he happily enough excused himself from making a long speech, on the plea that if he could have made such a speech, no such occasion had ever occurred. Great expectations were formed about his management of that powerful periodical. Gifford had only a little before dropped his bloody *ferula* in death; and it became an eager question with the literary world, whether

* "Peter's Letters" was partly the work of Professor Wilson.

Lockhart would introduce a milder *regime*, or only exchange whips for scorpions. Not a few expected the latter to be the more probable consequence. We remember a periodical writer at the time raising a warning cry to the Cockneys, whose enemy was now coming up among them. Lockhart, however, knew better than to occupy all the ground and perpetuate all the feuds of his predecessor. The times, too, had changed, and with the times the tastes. The objects, moreover, of assault were now *hors de combat*. Shelley was dead; Hunt was bankrupt and broken-hearted; Hazlitt was desperate and at bay, and a rumour ran that his horns were tipped with poison; the minor writers of the school had perished under the attack of their virulent enemy; Lamb's gentle luminary had slowly risen into "a star among the stars of mortal night;" and it was not now safe to clamour at Hesperus. Besides, Lockhart was a man of another spirit from his forerunner; and it must be admitted, that though he has several times sinned, and sinned deeply, yet that, on the whole, his management of "The Quarterly" has been manly and open, as well as able and energetic. If he has not, on the one hand, been a pervading genius, giving life and unity to the entire journal, neither has he been a mere string of red tape, tying the articles together; and far less an omnipresent poison, collecting here and there into a centre its deadlier virus, and tinging the whole with its dilution of death.

As a biographer, he has written lives of Burns, of Napoleon, and of his great father-in-law. His biography of Burns is scarcely a minute, careful, and complete estimate of his character and genius; it is a rude but true bust of the poet, and, like all busts, it contains the intellect, but omits the heart. It possesses, however, one or two striking passages, and altogether forms a fit introduction to Allan Cunningham's loving and lingering biography, and to the rich marginal commentaries of Carlyle and Wilson.

His *Life of Napoleon* (in the "Family Library") is also no more than a sketch,

though a vigorous, faithful, and *con amore* contribution to the preparations for a yet unwritten life of the Corsican prodigy. Lockhart, as well as Croly, Wilson, and all the abler conservative writers, does full justice to the genius of Napoleon. Like Madame de Stael, he is ready to exclaim, "It will never do to tell us that all Europe was for years at the mercy of a coward and a fool." He thinks it intensely ridiculous for writers to try to show, by lengthy argumentation, how absurd it was for a man to have gained the battles which, by all the rules of war, he ought to have lost; what a pity it was that the Archduke Charles and Blücher had not learned the all-important lesson, "never to know when they were beaten;" and that, on the whole, Napoleon was the stupidest man in Europe, and his career little else than one glorious blunder! This, with minds like Lockhart's, Croly's, and Wilson's, verily, "will never do." If Napoleon were a blockhead, what a "thrice double ass" was that vast moon-calf of a world, which, from California to Japan, either trembled at or adored him!

In writing the "*Life of Scott*," the Napoleon of the novelists, Lockhart undertook a far more difficult and delicate task. And, without pretending that he has solved altogether the problem of the mighty wizard's life, and without entering at all into the moot points and fretting details of the execution, we feel thankful for the work, on the whole, as furnishing a variety of interesting and select facts. The philosophy of the life it was not his part, else it was fully in his power, to have contributed. And if the panegyric be now and then too unsparing, and the style here and there be a little careless, and the tone be sometimes too snappish and overbearing; and if he seem, once or twice, to lean back too ostentatiously upon the merits of his subject and the advantages of his position; and if his general estimate of his hero be rather that of the son-in-law than of the critic, let us, remembering the difficulties of the undertaking, forgive its defects.

It were unpardonable to omit notice of his "*Spanish Ballads*;" some of which

the hero of that romantic land might sing, as he was rushing into the midst of the fray; while others might be chanted by the labourer going forth to his toil, mingling on his lips with the "Ancient Ballad of Roncesvalles," and others by the village beauty, mourning the loss of her "ear-rings," which have dropt into the envious wayside well. They are, to use a fine distinction, not translations but transfusions of the soul and spirit of the original Spanish.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.

FIRST SITTING.

PERHAPS the leading authors of the age may be divided into three classes. First, those who have written avowedly and entirely for the few; secondly, those who have written principally for the many; and, thirdly, those who have sought their audience in both classes, and have succeeded in forming, to some extent, at once an exoteric and an esoteric school of admirers. Of the first class, Coleridge and Wordsworth are the most distinguished specimens; Scott and Dickens stand at the head of the second; and Byron and Bulwer are *facile principes* of the third. Both these last-named writers commenced their career by appealing to the sympathies of the multitude; but by and by, either satiated by their too easy success, or driven onward by the rapid progress of their own minds, they aimed at higher things, and sought, nor sought in vain, a more select audience. Byron's mind originally unfond of, if not unfit for, speculation, was enticed upwards to those rugged and dangerous tracts of thought, where he has gathered the rarest of his beauties, by intimacy with Shelley, by envious emulation of his Lake contemporaries, and, above all, by the pale hand of his misery, unveiling to him heights and depths in his nature and genius which were previously unknown and unsuspected, and beckoning him onward through their grim and shadowy regions. He grew at once, and equally, in guilt, misery, and power. An intruder, too, on domains where some other thinkers had long fixed their calm and permanent dwelling, his appearance was the more startling. Here was a dandy discussing the great questions of natural and moral evil; a *roué* in silk stockings meditating suicide and mouth-ing blasphemy on an Alpine rock; a brilliant and popular wit and poet setting Spinoza to song, and satirising the principalities and powers of heaven, as bitterly as he had done the bards and reviewers of earth. Into those giddy and terrible heights, where Milton had entered a permitted guest, in "privilege of virtue;" where Goethe had walked in like a passionless and prying cherub, forgetting to worship in his absorbing desire to know; and on which Shelley was wrecked and stranded in the storm of his fanatical unbelief, Byron is upborne by the presumption and the despair of his mental misery. Unable to see through the high walls which bound and beset our limited faculties and little life, he can at least dash his head against them. Hence in "Manfred," "Cain," "Heaven and Earth," and "The Vision of Judgment," we have him calling upon the higher minds of his age to be as miserable as he was, just as he had in his first poems addressed the same sad message, less energetically, and less earnestly, to the community at large. And were it not unspeakably painful to contemplate a noble mind engaged in this profitless "apostleship of affliction," this thankless gospel of proclamation to men, that, because they are miserable, it is their duty to become more so; that, because they are bad, they are bound to be worse, we might be moved to laughter by its striking resemblance to the old story of the fox who had lost his tail.

In the career of Bulwer, we find a faint yet traceable resemblance to that of Byron. Like him, he began with wit, satire, and persiflage. Like him, he affected, for a season, a melodramatic earnestness. Like him, he was at last stung into genuine sincerity, and shot upwards into a higher sphere of thought and feeling. The three periods in Byron's history are distinctly marked by the three works, "English Bards," "Childe Harold," and "Cain." So "Pelham," "Eugene Aram," and "Zanoni," accurately mete out the stages in Bulwer's progress. Minor points of resemblance might be noted between the pair. Both sprung from the aristocracy; and one, at least, was prouder of what he deduced from Norman blood than from nature. Bulwer, like Byron, is a distinguished dandy. Like him, too, he has been separated from his wife; like him, he is liberal in his politics. And while Byron, by way of doing penance, threw his jaded system into the Greek War, Bulwer has, with better result, leaped into a tub of cold water!

Point and brilliance are at once perceived to be the leading qualities of Bulwer's writing. His style is vicious from excess of virtue, weak from repletion of strength. Every word is a point, every clause a beauty, the close of every sentence a climax. He is as sedulous of his every stroke, as if the effect of the whole depended upon it. His pages are all sparkling with minute and insulated splendours; not suffused with a uniform and sober glow, nor shown in the reflected light of a few solitary and surpassing beauties. Some writers peril their reputation upon one long difficult leap, and, it accomplished, walk on at their leisure. With others, writing is a succession of hops, steps, and jumps. This, in general, is productive of a feeling of tedium. It teases and fatigues the mind of the reader. It at once wearies and provokes. If in Bulwer's writings we weary less than in others, it is owing to the artistic skill with which he intermingles his points of humour with those of sententious reflection or vivid narrative. All is point: but the point perpetually varies from "gay to

grave, from lively to severe;" including in it raillery and reasoning, light dialogue and earnest discussion, bursts of political feeling and raptures of poetical description; here a sarcasm, almost worthy of Voltaire, and there a passage of pensive grandeur, which Rousseau might have sealed with his tears. To keep up this perpetual play of varied excellence, required at once great vigour and great versatility of talents; for Bulwer never walks through his part, never prosés, is never tame, and seldom, indeed, substitutes sound for sense, or mere flummery for force and fire. He generally writes his best; and our great quarrel, indeed, with him is, that he is too uniformly erect in the stirrups, too conscious of himself, of his exquisite management, of his complete equipment, of the speed with which he devours the dust; and seldom exhibits the careless grandeur of one who is riding at the pace of the whirlwind, with perfect self-oblivion, and with perfect security.

Bulwer reminds us less of an Englishman Frenchified, than of a Frenchman partially Anglicised. The original powers and tendencies of his mind, his eloquence, wit, sentiments, and feelings, his talents and his opinions, his taste and style, are those of a modern Frenchman. But these, long subjected to English influences, and long trained to be candidates for an English popularity, have been modified and altered from their native bent. In most of his writings, however, you breathe a foreign atmosphere, and find very slight sympathy with the habits, manners, or tastes of his native country. Not Zanoni alone, of his heroes, is cut off from country, as by a chasm, or if held to it, held only by ties which might with equal strength bind him to other planets; all his leading characters, whatever their own pretensions, or whatever their creator may assert of them, are in reality citizens of the world, and have no more genuine relation to the land whence they spring, than have the winds, which linger not over its loveliest landscapes, and hurry past its most endeared and consecrated spots. Eugene Aram is not an Englishman; Rienzi is hardly an Italian. Bulwer

is, perhaps, the first instance of a great novelist obtaining popularity without a particle of nationality in his spirit or in his writings.

We do not question his attachment to his own principles or his native country; but of that tide of national prejudice which, Burns says, "shall boil on in his breast till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest," he betrays not one drop. His novels might all have appeared as translations from a foreign language, and have lost but little of their interest or verisimilitude. This is the more remarkable, as his reign exactly divides the space between that of two others, who have obtained boundless fame, greatly in consequence of the very quality, in varied forms, which Bulwer lacks. Scott's knowledge and love of Scotland, Dickens' knowledge and love of London, stand in curious antithesis to Bulwer's intense cosmopolitanism and ideal indifference.

Akin to this, and connected either as cause or as effect with it, is a certain dignified independence of thought and feeling inseparable from the motion of Bulwer's mind. He is not a great original thinker; on no one subject can he be called profound, but on all he thinks and speaks for himself. He belongs to no school either in literature or in politics, and he has created no school. He is too proud for a Radical, and too wide-minded for a Tory. He is too definite and decisive to belong to the mystic school of letters—too impetuous and impulsive to cling to the classical—too liberal to be blind to the beauties of either. He has attained, thus, an insulated and original position, and may be viewed as a separate, nor yet a small, estate in our intellectual realm. He may take up for motto, "*Nullius in verba magistri*;" he may emblazon on his shield "*Desdichado*." Some are torn, by violence, from the sympathies and attachments of their native soil, without seeking to take root elsewhere; others are early transplanted in heart and intellect to other countries; a few, again, seem born rooted up, and remain so for ever. To this last class we conceive Bulwer to

belong. In the present day, the demand for earnestness, in its leading minds, has become incessant and imperative. Men speak of it as if it had been lately erected into a new test of admission into the privileges alike of St Stephen's and of Parnassus. A large and formidable jury, with Thomas Carlyle for foreman, are diligently occupied in trying each new aspirant, as well as *back-speiring* the old, on this question—"Earnest or a sham? Heroic or hearsay? Under which king, Bezonian? speak, or die." Concerning this cry for earnestness, we can only say, *en passant*, that it is not, strictly speaking, new, but old; and, surely, as that great question of Deborah's to recreant Reuben—"Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds to hear the bleating of the flocks?" or that more awful query of the Tiahbites—"How long halt ye between two opinions?" that it is, in theory, a robust truth; and sometimes, in application, an exaggeration and a fallacy; and that, unless preceded by the words "enlightened" and "virtuous," earnestness is a quality no more intrinsically admirable, nay, as blind and brutal, as the rush of a bull upon his foeman, or as the foaming fury of a madman. Bulwer is not, perhaps, in the full sense of the term, an earnest man; but we deem him to possess, along with much that is affected, much also that is true, and much that is deeply sympathetic with sincerity, although no devouring fire of purpose has hitherto filled his being. And, as we hinted before, his later writings exhibit sometimes, in mournful and melancholy forms, a growing depth and truth of feeling. Few, indeed, can even sportively wear for a long time the yoke of genius without its iron entering into the soul, and eliciting that voice of eloquent sorrow or protest which becomes immortal.

Bulwer, as a novelist, has, from a compound of conflicting and imported materials, reared to himself an independent structure. He has united many of the qualities of the fashionable novel, of the Godwin philosophical novel, and of the Waverley tale. He has the levity and thorough-bred air of the first, much of

the mental anatomy and philosophical thought which often overpower the narrative in the second, and a great deal of the dramatic liveliness, the historical interest, and the elaborate costume of the third. If, on the other hand, he is destitute of the long, solemn, overwhelming swell of Godwin's style of writing, and of the variety, the sweet, natural, and healthy tone of Scott's, he has some qualities peculiar to himself—point, polish—at times a classical elegance—at times a barbaric brilliance, and a perpetual mint of short, sententious reflections—compact, rounded, and shining as new-made sovereigns. We know no novelist from whose writings we could extract so many striking sentences containing fine thoughts, chased in imagery, "apples of gold in a network of silver." The wisdom of Scott's sage reflections is homely but commonplace; Godwin beats his gold thin, and you gather his philosophical acumen rather from the whole conduct and tone of the story, and his commentary upon it, than from single and separate thoughts; Dickens, whenever he moralises in his own person, becomes insufferably tame and feeble. But it is Bulwer's beauty that he abounds in fine, though not far, gleams of insight; and it his fault that sometimes, while watching these, he allows the story to stand still, or to drag heavily, and sinks the character of novelist in that of brilliant essay-writer, or inditer of smart moral and political apophthegms. In fact, his works are too varied and versatile. They are not novels or romances so much as compounds of the newspaper article, the essay, the political squib, the gay and rapid dissertation, which, along with the necessary ingredients of fiction, combine to form a junction, without constituting a true artistic whole.

Reserving a few remarks upon one or two other of his works till afterwards, we recur to the three which seem to typify the stages of his progress—"Pelham," "Eugene Aram," and "Zanoni." "Pelham," like "Anastasius," begins with a prodigious affectation of wit. For several pages the reading is as gay and as wea-

risome as a jest-book. You sigh for a simple sentence, and would willingly dig even for dullness as for hid treasure. The wit, too, is not an irrepressible and involuntary issue, like that from the teeming brain of Hood: it is an artificial and forced flow; and the author and his reader are equally relieved, when the clear path of the tale at length breaks away from the luxuriant shrubbery in which it is at first buried, and strikes into more open and elevated ground. It is the same with "Anastasius;" but "Pelham" does not reach those heights of tenderness, of nervous description, and of solemn moralising, which have rendered the other the prose "Don Juan," and something better. It is, at most, a series, or rather string, of clever, dashing, disconnected sketches; and the moral problem it works out seems to be no more than this, that under the corsets of a dandy there sometimes beats a heart.

In "Eugene Aram," Bulwer evidently aims at a higher mark, and, in his own opinion, with considerable success. We gather his estimate of this work from the fact that he inscribes a laboured and glowing panegyric on Scott with the words, "The Author of Eugene Aram." Now, probably, he would exchange this for "The Author of Zanoni." Nor should we, at least, nor, we think, the public, object to the alteration. "Eugene Aram" seems to us as lamentable a perversion of talent as the literature of the age has exhibited. It is one of those works in which an unfortunate choice of subject neutralises eloquence, genius, and even interest. It is with it as with "The Monk" and "The Cenci," where the more splendid decorations which surround the disgusting object, the more disgusting it becomes. It is, at best, deformity jewelled and enthroned. Not content with the native difficulties of the subject—the triteness of the story—its recent date—its dead level of certainty—the author has, in a sort of daring perversity, created new difficulties for himself to cope withal. He has not bid the real pallid murderer to sit to his pencil, and trusted for success to the severe accuracy of the

portraiture. Him he has spirited away, and has substituted the most fantastic of all human fiends. Call him rather a graft from Godwin's Falkland, upon the rough reality of the actual "Eugene Aram;" for the worst of the matter is, that, after fabricating a being entirely new, he is compelled, at last, to clash him with the old pettifogging murderer, till the compound monstrosity is complete and intolerable. The philosopher, the poet, the lover, the sublime victim fighting with more "devils than vast hell can hold," sinks, in the trial scene, where precisely he should have risen up like a "pyramid of fire," into a sophister so mean and shallow, that you are reminded of the toad into which the lost archangel dwindled his stature. The morality, too, of the tale seems to us detestable. The feelings with which you rise from its perusal, or, at least, with which the author seems to wish you to rise, are of regret and indignation, that, for the sin of an hour, such a noble being should perish, as if he would insinuate the wisdom of quarrel with the laws of retribution. It is not wonderful that, in the struggle with such self-made difficulties, Bulwer has been defeated. The wonder is, that he has been able to cover his retreat amid such a cloud of beauties; and to attach an interest, almost human, and even profound, to a being whom we cannot, in our wildest dreams, identify with mankind. The whole tale is one of those hazardous experiments which have become so common of late years, in which a scanty success is sought at an infinite peril; like a wildflower, of no great worth, snatched, by a hardy wanderer, from the jaws of danger and death. We notice in it, however, with pleasure, the absence of that early levity which marked his writing, the shooting germ of a nobler purpose, and an air of sincerity fast becoming more than an air.

In saying that "Zanoni" is our chief favourite among Bulwer's writings, we consciously expose ourselves to the charge of paradox. If we err, however, on this matter, we err in company with the author himself, and, we believe, with all Germany,

and with many enlightened enthusiasts at home. We refer, too, in our approbation, more to the spirit than to the execution of the work. As a whole, as a broad and brilliant picture of a period and its hero, "Rienzi" is perhaps his greatest work, and "that shield he may hold up against all his enemies." "The Last Days of Pompeii," on the other hand, is calculated to enchant classical scholars, and the book glows like a cinder from Vesuvius, and most gorgeously are the reelings of that fiery drunkard depicted. The "Last of the Barons," again, as a cautious yet skilful filling up of the vast skeleton of Shakspeare's conception of Warwick, is attractive to all who relish English story. But we are mistaken, if on that class who love to see the Unknown, the Invisible, and the Eternal looking in upon them, through the loops and windows of the present; whose footsteps turn instinctively toward the thick and the dark places of the "wilderness of this world;" or who, by deep disappointment or solemn sorrow, have been driven to take up their permanent mental abode upon the perilous verge of the unseen world—if "Zanoni" do not, on such, exert a mightier spell, and to their feelings be not more sweetly attuned, than any other of this writer's books. It is a book not to be read in the drawing-room, but in the fields—not in the sunshine, but in the twilight shade—not in the sunshine, unless, indeed, that sunshine has been saddened and sheathed by a recent sorrow. Then will its wild and mystic measures, its pathos, and its grandeur, steal in like music, and mingle with the soul's emotions, till, like music, they seem a part of the soul itself.

No term has been more frequently abused than that of religious novel. This, as commonly employed, describes an equivocal birth, if not a monster, of which the worst and once most popular specimen is "Coelebs in Search of a Wife." It is amusing to see how its authoress deals with the fictitious part of her book. Holding it with a half shudder, and at arm's-length, as she might a phial of poison, she pours in the other and the other

infusion of prose criticism, commonplace moralising, and sage aphorism, till it is fairly diluted down to her standard of utility and safety. But a religious novel, in the high and true sense of the term, is a noble thought: a parable of solemn truth, some great moral law, written out, as it were, in flowers: a principle old as Deity, wreathed with beauty, dramatised in action, incarnated in life, purified by suffering and death. And we confess, that to this ideal we know no novel of late that approaches so nearly as "Zanoni." An intense spirituality, a yearning earnestness, a deep religious feeling, lie upon its every page. Its beauties are not of the "earth, earthy." Its very faults, cloudy, colossal, tower above our petty judgment-seats, as if towards some higher tribunal.

Best of all is that shade of mournful grandeur which rests upon it. Granting all its blemishes, the improbabilities of its story, the occasional extravagances of its language, let it have its praise for its pictures of love and grief—of a love leading its votary to sacrifice stupendous privileges, and reminding you of that which made angels resign their starry thrones for the "daughters of men;" and of a grief too deep for tears, too sacred for lamentation, the grief which he increaseth that increaseth knowledge, the grief which not earthly immortality, which death only can cure. The tears which the most beautiful and melting close of the tale wrings from our eyes are not those which wet the last pages of ordinary novels: they come from a deeper source; and, as the lovers are united in death, to part no more, triumph blends with the tenderness with which we witness the sad yet glorious union.

Amid the prodigious number of Bulwer's other productions, we may mention one or two "dearer than the rest." "The Student," from its disconnected plan, and the fact that the majority of its papers appeared previously, has seemed to many a mere published portfolio, if not an aimless collection of its author's study-sweepings. This, however, is not a fair or correct estimate of its merits. It in reality contains the cream of Bulwer's periodical

writings. And the "New Monthly Magazine," during his editorship, approached our ideal of a perfect magazine; combining, as it did, impartiality, variety, and power. His "Conversations with an Ambitious Student in Ill Health," though hardly equal to the dialogues of Plato, contain many rich meditations and criticisms, suspended round a simple and affecting story. The word "ambitious," however, is unfortunate; for what student is not, and should not be, ambitious? To study, is to climb "higher still, and higher, like a cloud of fire." Talk of an ambitious chamois or of an ambitious lark, as lief as of an ambitious student. The allegories in "The Student" strike us as eminently fine, with glimpses of a more creative imagination than we can find in any of his writings save "Zanoni." We have often regretted that the serious allegory, once too much affected, is now almost obsolete. Why should it be so? Shall truth no more have its mounts of transfiguration? Must Mirza no more be overheard in his soliloquies? And is the road to the "Den" of Bunyan lost for ever? We trust, we trow not. In "The Student," too, occurs his far-famed attack upon the anonymous in periodical writing. We do not coincide with him in this. We do not think that the use of the anonymous either could or should be relinquished. It is, to be sure, in some measure relinquished as it is. The tidings of the authorship of any article of consequence, in a Review or Magazine, often now pass with the speed of lightning through the literary world, till it is as well known in the book-shop of the country town, or the post-office of the country village, as in Albemarle or George Street.

But, in the first place, the anonymous forms a very profitable exercise for the acuteness of our young critics, who become, through it, masters in the science of internal evidence, and learn to detect the fine Roman hand of this and the other writer, even in the strokes of his t's and the dots of his i's. Besides, secondly, the anonymous forms for the author an ideal character, and fixes him in an ideal position; and hence many writers have

surpassed themselves, both in power and popularity, while writing under its shelter. So with Swift, in his "Tale of a Tub;" Pascal, Junius, Sydney Smith, Isaac Taylor, Walter Scott; Addison, too, was never so good as when he put on the short face of the "Spectator." Wilson is never so good as when he assumes the glorious *alias* of Christopher North. And, thirdly, the anonymous, when preserved, piques the curiosity of the reader, mystifies him into interest; and, on the other hand, sometimes allows a bold and honest writer to shoot folly, expose error, strip false pretension, and denounce wrong, with greater safety and effect. A time may come when the anonymous will require to be abandoned; but we are very doubtful if that time has yet arrived.

In pursuing, at the commencement of this paper, a parallel between Byron and Bulwer, we omitted to note a stage, the last in the former's literary progress. Toward the close of his career, his wild shrieking earnestness subsided into Epicurean derision. He became dissolved into one contemptuous and unhappy sneer. Beginning with the satiric bitterness of "English Bards," he ended with the fendish gaiety of "Don Juan." He laughed at first that he "might not weep;" but ultimately this miserable mirth drowned

his enthusiasm, his heart, and put out the few flickering embers of his natural piety. The deep tragedy dissolved in a poor yet mournful farce. We trust that our novelist will not complete his resemblance to the poet, by sinking into a satirist. 'Tis indeed a pitiful sight, that of one who has passed the meridian of life and reputation, grinning back, in helpless mockery and toothless laughter, upon the brilliant way which he has traversed, but to which he can return no more. We anticipate for Bulwer a better destiny. He who has mated with the mighty spirit which had almost reared again the fallen Titanic form of republican Rome; whose genius has travelled up the Rhine, like a breeze of music, "stealing and giving odour;" who, in "England and the English," has cast a rapid but vigorous glance upon the tendencies of our wondrous age; who, in his verse, has so admirably pictured the stages of romance in Milton's story; who has gone down, a "diver lean and strong," after Schiller into the innermost main," lifting with a fearless hand the "veil that is woven with night and with terror;" and in "Zanoni" has essayed to relume the mystic fires of the Rosicrucians, and to reveal the dread secrets of the spiritual world, must worthily close a career so illustrious.

SECOND SITTING.

The attention of the Scottish public has of late been strongly attracted to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, through his visit to Edinburgh, and the elegant and scholarly addresses he delivered there. We propose taking the opportunity so lawfully and gracefully furnished by his recent appearances among us, to analyse again at some length, and in a critical yet kindly spirit, the leading elements of his literary character and genius.

Bulwer has been now twenty-seven years before the public, and has, during that period, filled almost every phase of authorship and of thought. He has been a critic, an editor, a dramatist, a historian, a politician, a speculator in metaphysics, a poet, a novelist, the editor of a

magazine, a member of Parliament, a subject of the cold-water cure, a philosophical Radical, and a moderate Conservative. In his youth he worshipped Hazlitt and Shelley; in his middle age he vibrated between Brougham and Coleridge; and, of late, he associates with Alison and Aytoun! He has poured out books in all manners, on all subjects, and in all styles; and his profusion might have seemed that of a spendthrift, if it had not been for the stores in the distance which even his scatterings by the wayside revealed. For versatility of genius, variety of intellectual experience, and the brilliant popularity which has followed him in all his diversified career, he reminds us rather of Goethe or Voltaire,

than of any living author. Like them, he has worshipped the god Proteus, and so devoutly and diversely worshipped him, that he might almost, at times, be confounded with the object of his adoration.

We think decidedly, however, that this boundless fertility and elasticity have tended to lessen the general idea of Bulwer's powers, and to cast an air of tentative experiment and rash adventure over many of his works. Had he concentrated himself upon some grand topic, his fame had now been equally wide, not less brilliant, and much more solid than it is. Had he taken some one lofty Acropolis by storm, and shown the flag of his genius floating on its summit, instead of investing a hundred at once, he had been, and been counted, a greater general. We would willingly have accepted two or three superb novels, one large conclusive history, along with a single work of systematic and profound criticism, in exchange for all that motley and unequal, although most varied and imposing mass of fiction, history, plays, poems, and politics, which forms the collected works of Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.

Some of Sir Edward's admirers have ventured to compare him to Shakspeare and to Scott. Such comparisons are not just. Than Shakspeare he owes a great deal less to nature, and a great deal more to culture, as well as to that indomitable perseverance to which he has lately ascribed so much of his success, so that we may indeed call the one the least, and the other the most cultivated of great authors; and to Scott he is vastly inferior in that simple power, directness of aim, natural dignity, manly spirit, fire, and health, which rank him immediately below Homer. We may here remark that, notwithstanding all that has been said and sung about the genius of Scott, we are convinced that justice has never been done to one feature of his novels—we mean their excellence as specimens of English style. Except in Burke and De Quincey, whose mode of thinking is so very different, we know of no passages in English prose which approach the better parts of the Waverley series in the union

of elegance and strength, in manly force, natural grace, and noble rhythmical cadence. Would that any word of ours could recall the numerous admirers of the morbid magnificence and barbarous dissonance of Carlyle's style; of the curt affected jargon which mars the poetic beauty of Emerson's; of the loose fantastic verbiage in which Dickens chooses to indite most of his serious passages; and of the laboured antithesis, uneasy brilliance, and assumed carelessness, of Macaulay; and induce them to take up again the neglected pages of Burke, with all the wondrous treasures of wisdom, knowledge, imagery, and language they contain, and to read night and day Scott's novels—not for their story, or their pictures of national manners, but for the sake of their wells of English undefiled; the specimens of picturesque, simple, rich, and powerful writing, which they so abundantly contain.

Bulwer, too, although even in his most favoured hours he cannot write like Scott, is distinguished by the merit of his style. It has more point, if not so much simplicity; if possessing less strength, it has far more brilliance; and it has, moreover, a certain classical charm—a certain Attic elegance—a certain tinge of the antique—which few writers of the age can rival. If Disraeli's mode of writing remind you of the gorgeous dress of Jewish females, with their tiaras shining on the brow, their diamond necklaces gleaming above the breast, the vivid yellow or deep red of their garments, their brodered hair, and pearls, and costly array, Bulwer's, in his happier vein, reminds you of the attire of the Grecian women, shod with sandals, clothed with the simple yet elegant tunic, and bearing each on her head a light and tremulous urn.

Passing from his style, we have some remarks to make on the following points connected with him—the alleged non-poetical nature of his mind, his originality, the impersonal faculty he possesses to such a degree, his remarkable width of mind, his dramatic power, the fact that, with all his frequent flippancy, levity, and excess of point, he is equal to all the

great crises of his narrative; and finally, to that power or principle of *growth* which has been so conspicuous in his literary history.

First, not a few have maintained that Bulwer, with all his brilliant effect and eloquence, is not, properly speaking, a poet. An eloquent detractor of his has said—"The author is an orator, and has tried to be a poet. Dickens' John the Carrier was perpetually on the verge of a joke, but never made one: Bulwer's relation to poetry is of the same provoking kind. The lips twitch, the face glows, the eyes light; but the joke is not there. An exquisite *savoir faire* has led him within sight of the intuitions of poetic instinct. Laborious calculation has almost stood for sight, but his maps and charts are not the earth and the heavens. His vision is not a dream, but a nightmare; you have Parnassus before you, but the light that never was on sea or shore is wanting. The whole reminds you of a lunar landscape, rocks and caves to spare, but *no atmosphere*. It is fairyland travelled by dark. How you sigh even for the chaos, the *discordia semina* of genius, while toiling through the impotent waste of this sterile maturity."

This is vivid and vigorous, but hardly just. We need meet it only by pronouncing one magic word—"Zanoni." Who that ever read that glorious romance, with its pictures of love, and life, and death, and the mysteries of the unseen world; the fine dance of the human and the preternatural elements which are in it, and keep time so admirably to the music of the genius which has created both, and the melting sublimity of its close—will deny the author the name of poet? Or who that has ever read those allegories and little tales which are sprinkled through "The Student" and the "Pilgrims of the Rhine," can fail to see in them the creative element? Or, take the end of his Harold, the death of Rienzi, the scene of the Coiners in "Night and Morning," and the closing chapters of the "Last Days of Pompeii"—the terms "oratory" or "art" will not measure these: they are instinct with

power; their words are the mighty rushing wings of a supernal tempest; and to us, at least, they always, even at the twentieth perusal, give that deep delightful shiver, that thrill of awful joy, which proclaims that the Spirit of Genius is passing by, and is making every hair on our flesh start up to do him obeisance.

True genius is, and must be, original; so that the terms "original genius" are a poor pleonasm. Now, we think that Bulwer can be proved to have originality; and originality in any department of the fine arts is genius. His thought, his imagery, his style, his form of fiction, are all intensely his own; and, *therefore*, since exerted on ideal subjects, are all those of a poet. He began his career, indeed, as most writers do, with imitation. He found certain models in vogue at the time, besides some which, although not generally popular, were recommended to him by his own taste. Hence, in his early novels, he has now Godwin, now Scott, and now the authors of what were then called the fashionable novels, such as Tremaine and Almacks, in his eye. But he soon soared out of these trammels, and exhibited, and began to realise, his own ideal of fiction, the peculiarity of which perhaps lies in the extreme *breadth* of the purpose he seeks through the novel and romance to fulfil. He has tried to make it a cosmopolitan thing—a mirror—not of low or high life exclusively, not of the everyday or the ideal alone, not of the past, or present, or future, merely; but of each and all;—each set in its proper proportions, and all shown in a brilliant light. Ward, and the whole of that school, including Disraeli in his "Vivian Grey" and "Young Duke," wrote for the fashionable classes. Godwin wrote for political and moral philosophers. Dickens writes for Londoners, Lever for Irishmen, and Thackeray for the microscopic students of human nature everywhere. Even Scott neither expressed the spirit of his own age, nor ever attempted to reproduce the classical periods; nor has he discovered any sympathy with the mighty metaphysical, moral, and religious problems with which

all thinkers are now compelled to grapple. But Bulwer has written *of* the world, and *for* the world, in the broadest sense; has described society, from the glittering crown of its head, to the servile sole of its foot; has painted all kinds of life, the high, the middle, the mean, the town and the country, the convulsive and the calm—that of noblemen, of gamblers, of students, of highwaymen, of murderers, and of milliners; has mated with the men and manners of all ages; has reproduced, with startling vraisemblance, the ancient Roman times, and breathed life into the gigantic skeletons of Herculaneum and Pompeii; has coped with many of the social and moral questions, as well as faithfully reflected the salient features of our own wondrous mother-age; and has with bold foot invaded those regions of speculation which blend with the shadows and splendours of the life to come. It is this wide and catholic character which makes his writings so popular on the Continent. We do not, indeed, say that he has completely filled up the broad outline of his purpose; otherwise he had been the greatest novelist, perhaps also the greatest writer, in the world. But he has succeeded so far as to induce us to class him with the first authors of his time. He *has*, although with much effort, long training, and over consciousness both of the toil and the triumph, fairly lifted himself above this "ignorant present time," and caught on his wings the wide calm light of the universe. Yet, with all this Goethe-like breadth, he has none of his icy indifference; but is one of the most fervid and glowing, as well as clear and cosmopolitan, of modern writers.

His depth has often been denied, nor are we careful to maintain it. There are in some of our authors certain quiet subtle touches, certain profound "asides," certain piercing single thoughts, which proclaim a native vein, communicating directly with the great Heart of Being; but which we seldom, if ever, find in Bulwer. Although he be, in our judgment, a true poet, he is not a poet of the very highest order. But, perhaps, his exceeding width may be taken as in some

measure a compensation for his deficiency in depth. Indeed, some may even contend, that if there be the same *amount* of *mind*, it is of little consequence whether it be diffused over a hundred intellectual regions, or gathered together in one or two profound pits; that as depth and height are only relative terms, so it is with width and depth; and that as you call the sky indifferently either lofty or profound, so a very wide man is deep in one way and direction, and a very deep man is wide in another. Be this as it may, and there seems a proportion of truth as well as of fallacy in it, we contend that the writer who, like Bulwer, has traversed such varied regions, found and filled, or made and inspired, so many characters, imbibed the spirit, talked the language, and reproduced the soul of so many times, must be a great man, whether we call him or not a GREAT poet.

One element of poetic power he unquestionably has: he is impersonal; and, on the whole, very little of an egotist. In "Pelham," indeed, and one or two more of his earlier novels, while he was yet trifling with his pen, and had not taken any full or calm aim at his object, he seemed often to be glancing obliquely at his own image in the mirror of self-conceit, partly from a wish to re-assure his confidence in himself, and partly from that spirit of indolent vacancy which often falls upon a writer who is only half-hearted in his task, and who must stir himself to renewed action by the spur of vanity. But, latterly, he has risen to a higher region, and has contrived, while "shooting his soul" into a thousand personages, fictitious or real, high and low, wicked and good, commonplace and romantic, to forget his own elegant and *récherché* person—his own fastidious habits and tastes, his own aristocratic birth and training, and to remember nothing save the subject or idea which has entered, filled, and transfigured him. For example, Eugene Aram, though a monster, is not a mere distorted shadow of the author; Rienzi is not Bulwer, nor is Walter Montreal, nor is Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, nor is Warwick the King-maker. These,

and many of his other heroes, are not projections of the writer's image; but are either bold individual creations, or sternly true to the truth of history. Wordsworth has accused even Goethe of multiplying his own image under Protean disguises; and of being an egotist under the semblance of an absolute and colourless catholicity; and on this account most justly ranks him beneath Shakspeare, who can become, and is delighted to become, everybody except himself. Bulwer, on the contrary, has often approached the Shaksperian method, with this difference, that while the novelist passes from soul to soul with labour dire and weary wo, and, like the magician in the story of Fadlallah, has to die in agony out of his own idiosyncrasy, ere he is born in joy and exultation into that of others, Shakspeare melts into the being of all other men as softly as snow into a river, and as easily as one dream slides within and becomes a part and portion in another or another series of dreams. But the power in the novelist, as well as in the world-poet, is magical, and of itself suffices to prove him a writer of genius.

His dramatic quality is in fact only a form or *alias* of his great width and the impersonal habit of his mind, and need not be dilated on. We prefer to say something about the power he has of rising to the level of most of the great critical points in the stories which he narrates. It is, we grant again, often by effort, by a sweat like that of Sisyphus, that he gets his big stone to the top of the hill, but once there, it remains, a triumphal mark—a far-seen trophy of perseverance and power. We grant him, in his general style, too uniformly lively and brilliant. He is like those writers of whose works it has been said, "the whole is not always a poem, while every sentence is poetry." But, first, this is complimentary to his powers, few are so Australian in their intellectual wealth; and were, secondly, the charge pressed, Bulwer might reply as a student is once said to have done:—"Your papers are all equally excellent," said his professor.—"Then," replied he, "I'll take care that

in my next some parts shall be *divine*." And thus sometimes our author does answer in this matter. He approaches great and noble topics, each one, like the brethren of Jerubbaal, "resembling the son of a king;" he girds up his loins to mate with their majesty; he effects his purpose; and what Hazlitt says of Milton becomes *nearly* true of him—"he is always striving to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them." Effort, when united with weakness, and ending in the fate of the frog in the fable, is a pitiable spectacle; but not so that effort which is prompted by manly ambition, which is sustained by genuine and growing strength, and which, when it has gained the success it deserves, appears only less wonderful and less sublime than that perfect ease of nature with which another very rare class of writers work their still mightier works. We have specified already a few of those superb passages by which Bulwer has made out his claim to be the Milton, while Scott is the Shakspeare, of novelists. Even Scott has seldom surpassed the death of Walter Montreal, or the picture of Vesuvius drunk with devouring fire, and staggering in his terrible vomit.

What is genius? is a question to which many answers have been returned. It is, says De Quincey, "mind steeped and saturated in the genial nature." It is, say others, "impassioned truth—thought become phosphorescent!" It is, say others, "original imagination united with constructive power." Without discussing these definitions, or propounding another, we shall state one element which is essential to genius—*Genius is Growth*. A man of genius is always a man of limitless growth, with a soul smitten with a passion for growth, and open to every influence which promotes it—one who grows always like a tree, by day and by night, in calm and in storm, through opposition and through applause, in difficulty and in despair—nay, on the chill death-bed itself his soul continues to grow, and never more rapidly than there, when he sometimes says, with the dying Schiller, "many things are becoming plain and

clear to me." It is this which, perhaps, proves best his greatness and his relation to the Infinite. The man of talent grows to a certain point, and there stops: Genius knows of no stops, and no periods. Even the wings of eagles, "knitting," though they do, the mountain with the sky, have their severe limit fixed in the far ether; but the wings of angels have none. Emerson speaks of nature as saying, in answer to all doubts and difficulties, "I grow, I grow." So there hums through the being of a true poet the low everlasting melody (truer than that fabled of nature, since the growth of matter is only temporary, while that of mind is eternal), "I also grow, and shall grow for ever." This growth may sometimes seem to retrograde, just as there are, it is said, certain plants which grow downwards, but downwards in *search of light*; and so the poet-soul, when it stoops, is only stooping to see, and when it turns, is only turning to conquer. This growth may sometimes be lost sight of amid the darkness of neglect, or covered up in the night of calamity, or buried in foliage produced by its own vigour; but, even as fairies were said to hear the flowers growing, there *are* ears of fairy fineness, which never cease to be aware of the musical growth of men of the true and sovereign seed, springing up like flowers to everlasting life—arising in harmony and in incense toward the heavens of God.

Yes! For this growth is often, if not always, holy and celestial, as well as poetical and harmonious. The man who really grows, grows in wisdom, love, and purity, as well as in genius and artistic excellence. It is as a whole that he grows, it is in God and toward God that his being develops itself. Not a few gifted persons, indeed, have been arrested in their career by early death, or by dissipation, and appear now in stunted or blasted forms along the horizon of history. But it is a remarkable fact, that most men of genius who have been permitted to outlive the dangerous period of the passions, and to attain the majestic noon of middle life, or the still evening of old age, have become either pious, or at least

moral, good-tempered, and exemplary men. We need only name Young, Johnson, Southey, Coleridge, Goethe, even Moore in some measure, Shelley, and, so far as we can ascertain, Shakspeare himself, in proof of this. Time, which so often freezes and contracts men of more prosaic mould into a shrivelled selfishness which seems chiller than death itself, in the case of those whose minds had originally burned like a furnace seven times heated, only modifies the flame, mingles with it the salt of common sense, if not the frankincense of piety, and renders it more kindly in its outgoings to men, if it does not turn it upward in tongues of sacrifice and worship to the great Fountain of Light and Father of Spirits. And when piety mingles with the maturity of genius in any gifted soul, it becomes a sight more beautiful than any that this fair creation can show us. The man then, instead of standing with the mere moralist, and the mere cold speculator, on the outside of things, becomes a "partaker of the divine nature;" does not with others discern with lacklustre eye merely the fiery fences and outward semblances of the Infinite, but sees, and swims, and grows in that holy and boundless element itself.

That Bulwer has as yet attained the consummation so devoutly to be wished, which our last sentence describes, we dare not affirm. But certainly he has grown, and his growth has been of a total and vital sort. His first two or three works were distinguished chiefly by sentimentalism and cleverness—a sentimentalism scarcely amounting to genius, and a cleverness hardly attaining to wit. In "Eugene Aram" he displayed a morbid and melodramatic earnestness, strongly characteristic of that uneasy and thick-sighted mood of mind which was his at the time, and which he was increasing by the study of the French "School of Desperation." In the "Last Days of Pompeii" and "Rienzi," you saw him throwing out his mind upon subjects which carried him as far as possible away from his own unsatisfied reason, torturing doubts, and agitating passions. Then, in "Zanoni," the

strong spirit was heard beating against the bars of its misery—and its life; and asking in its despair questions at Destiny and the world unseen. Then, in his "Ernest Maltravers," his "Alice," and his "New Timon," he seemed backing out of spiritual speculations into a certain sneering voluptuousness worthy of Wieland, of Byron, or of Voltaire. And, lastly, in his "Caxtons" and "My Novel," there seems to have risen on his path what the Germans call an "aftershine" of Christianity—a mild, belated, but divine-seeming day, in which he is walking on still, and which he doubtless deeply regrets had not sooner gleamed over his chequered way. His allusions to the experiences of Robert Hall, and to the benignant influence of the Christian faith in soothing the woes of humanity, which abound in the "Caxtons" especially, are exceedingly beautiful, and have opened to Bulwer's genius the doors of many a heart that were obstinately shut against him before. The moral tone of these latter novels, too, is much sweeter, healthier, and purer than that of his earlier tales. Their artistic execution is not only equal, but we think in many respects superior. If there is in them less artifice, there is more real art; and if they have less of the glare and bustle of rhetoric, they have more of the soul of poetry. If they dazzle and astonish less, they are infinitely more pleasing, and if they abound not so much in rapid adventures, thrilling situations, and romantic interest, they idealise common life, and show the element of poetic interest as well as the soul of goodness which are found amongst the middle classes of society. One character in his last novel is perhaps the finest of all his creations—we mean, of course, Burley. In the very daring implied in taking up the *name* of the most original character Scott ever drew, old John Balfour, the stern homicide of Magus Muir, and connecting it with the most novel and striking character Bulwer ever depicted, there was genius. Who would venture even to *call* the hero of a new play Macbeth, or Lear, or Hamlet? Unless the play were of transcendent

merit, the very name so presumptuously assumed would condemn it, as assuredly as John Galt's "Lady Macbeth" was condemned. But, in spite of this preliminary prejudice, Bulwer's Burley is not only as entirely different from Scott's, as a rough literary man of the nineteenth century must be from a rough soldier of the seventeenth; but as a picture of a strange, wild, half-mad man of genius, full, nevertheless, of the milk of human kindness, and of the warmest and noblest feelings, it is almost perfect, and of itself sufficient to immortalise the author.

In contemplating Bulwer's career, we are impressed, in fine, with one or two reflections of a somewhat interesting and important kind. It teaches us the might and worth which lie in determined struggle and invincible perseverance. We do not, by any means, dislike those splendid *coup de mains* of literary triumph we find in such cases as Byron, Macaulay, Charles Dickens, and Alexander Smith, all of whom "arose one morning and found themselves famous." Nay, we glory in them, as proofs of the power of the human mind, and as auguries of the more illustrious successes reserved for yet brighter and purer spirits in the future. They show what man can do, and hint what man yet *may* do. But we love still better to see a strong spirit slowly urging his way against opposition, often driven back but never discouraged, often perplexed but never in despair, often cast down but never destroyed, often falling but never fallen, and at last gaining a victory as undeniable as that of a jubilant summer sun. Such was Milton, such Johnson, such Burke, such Wordsworth, such Disraeli, and such Bulwer. The success of these men looks less like the result of accident, or of popular caprice, or of magic, and more like the just and lawful, although late, reward of that high merit which unites moral energy with intellectual prowess, and becomes thus far more useful as an example and a stimulus to others. Not one in a hundred millions can expect such a tropical sunrise of success as befell Byron; but any one who unites a considerable degree of capacity

with indomitable determination, may become, if not a Bulwer, yet in his own department an eminent and influential man.

We are still more struck with this perseverance, when we remember Bulwer's position in society. Possessed of rank and ample fortune, he has laboured as hard as any bookseller's hack in the empire; proving thus that his love for literature was as sincere as his ideal of it was high, and redeeming it from a certain shade of contempt which has of late, justly or unjustly, rested upon it. It cannot be denied that various causes, such as the poverty of many of our authors, and the mean shifts to which it has often reduced them; the dissipation and blackguardism of a few others; the envious spirit and quarrelsome disposition of a third class; the vast amount of mediocre writing which now pours from the press; the number of pretenders whom the hot and sudden sunlight of advancing knowledge has prematurely quickened into reptile life; not to speak of the engrossment of the public mind with commercial speculation and politics, and the contemptuous indifference of many of our aristocracy and many of our clergy to literary things and literary men, have all combined rather to lower Polite Letters in the eyes of the public. And nothing, on the other hand, can tend, or has tended, more to reinstate it in its proper place of estimation than the fact, that not a few, distinguished and successful in other professions, in arts or in arms, at the bar or in the pulpit, have gloried in casting in their lot with this despised profession—have submitted to its drudgeries, borne its burdens, and aimed at and gained its laurels. Eminent lawyers have become *litterateurs*. Eminent officers have become writers of travels. Eminent clergymen have become editors of periodicals and authors of scientific treatises. Eminent physicians, men of fashion, barristers, lords of session, and even peers of the realm, have all aspired to the honour connected with the name of Poet. And Bulwer has brought this to a bright climax, by blending the lustre of rank and riches with the distinctions of the highest lite-

rary celebrity. We fear that literature, as a profession, will never thrive to any great extent in this country. The gains of authors are becoming smaller and smaller in each section of the century; and the fact that all our literature threatens soon to be "afloat in the great gulf-stream of cheapness," will probably, *we* at least think, reduce them further still. In this case, we must depend more than ever upon the supplies from non-professional men, non-commissioned officers, shall we call them? in the great literary army. Nor need we fear that this will at all deteriorate the value of literary productions. It will have, we think, precisely the opposite effect. Professional *litterateurs* are often forced by necessity to put to press productions totally unworthy of their talents, and in general to dilute and weaken by diffusion their powers. It is obvious that those who write only when leisure permits, and the spur of impulsive excites, are less liable to this temptation. And looking both to the past and present, we find that the greatest and best, on the whole, of our writers have not been authors by profession. Shakspeare's profession was not authorship, but the stage. Milton was a schoolmaster and a secretary. Addison, too, was a secretary of state. Pope was a man of private fortune. Fielding was a justice. Richardson kept a shop; so did Godwin. Cowper lived on his patrimony, and on gifts from his relatives. Burns was a farmer and gauger. Wordsworth was a stampmaster. Croly is a rector. John Wilson was a professor. Shelley was a gentleman of fortune, and heir to a baronetcy. Byron was a peer. Carlyle has an estate. Browning is a man of fortune and family. Of Jeffrey, Macaulay, Sidney Smith, Hall, and Foster, we need not speak. And our present hero is the proprietor of Knebworth, as well as a scholar, orator, wit, novelist, and poet.

We close this paper, by expressing our very hearty congratulations to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton on his recent reception and appearances in Edinburgh; our warm gratitude for the hours of pleasure and profit his numerous works have given us; and

an ardent wish that his future life may be calm and bright; and that the current of thought and feeling in his future works may take, still more decidedly than of late, a practical and a Christian course, and catch on its last waves the hues of heaven's light, blended with the tints of fancy and of poetry!

BENJAMIN DISRAELI.*

THESE are two races, the contrast between whose former and present position is so deep and marked, as to produce the most melancholy reflections. We refer, of course, to the Greeks and the Jews. The ancient Greek was the noblest of nature's children; he was not so much a man as he was a petty god—or, rather, some statue that had walked down from its pedestal. Mrs Jameson says of the Venus de Medici, that she looks as if she *would* come down if she *could*, while the Hercules Farnese looks as if he *could* come down if he *would*. Were he thus to descend, he were the *alter idem* of the nobler of the ancient Greeks, in whom beauty and grandeur met together—elegance and energy embraced each other—and in whom, if symmetry seemed sometimes to disguise strength, strength was ever present, albeit half-seen, to support the symmetry. Their very children were taught to contend for prizes for beauty, and had statues erected to them if they succeeded. Their style of dress was itself a dream of beauty. Their language was as picturesque as it was expressive and rich. They inhabited a country which to all the romantic variety of Scottish landscape added the richness and warmth of an oriental clime: now towering up into the snowy grandeur of Olympus, and now softening into the unparalleled luxuriance of the Vale of Tempe; here rugged as the defile of Thermopylæ, and there panoramic as the Bay of Athens. The creations of their genius were just the projected images of their own beautiful selves. The heroes of their song were themselves,

in shapes of sublime trial and ideal contest. Their gods were themselves—walking on the mountain-tops of imagination, and covered with celestial glory as with snow. Their hell was the contorted reflection of their own Macedonian defiles or Albanian deserts; and their heaven was the coloured image of their own Cretan vales. Towering over this magnificent people—the heroes of a hero-land, the Mont Blancs of a mountain region—were the grand men of Greece, men whose names sound yet like peals of thunder—Pericles, Epaminondas, Demosthenes, Socrates, Aristotle, Alexander, Plato, Homer—in whom the beauty of the land became all but divine, its strength Herculean, and its sublimity that of an Alp in the evening sun, or a hero of celestial race when his set time is come, and when he feels himself growing into a god. And then its statuary, so cool, and clear, and bright, and its oratory and logic, naked, nervous, and gigantic as a Thracian gladiator; and its drama, at once formal and fiery, passionate as the bosoms and one as the wall of Pandemonium; and its philosophy, seeking to draw down the secrets of the gods to men, even as Franklin afterwards led down the lightning from its cavern like a lion in a leash; and its poetry, either in its narratives and pictures, clear and literal as a mirror in the statechamber of kings—or, in its choruses and dramatic raptures, deep and dithyrambic as that melancholy music which seeks, it is said, not altogether in vain, to soothe the agonies of the lost, and

* The Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.: a Literary and Political Biography, addressed to the New Generation.—Tancred. By B. DISRAELI.

“To mitigate and suage,
With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and
chase
Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow,
and pain,
From mortal or immortal minds!”

Such was Greece, such were the Grecians. What is it, and what are they now? Even in their late-won and blood-cemented freedom, what are they? Alas! we must still say,

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more;" and throw the shroud of silence over the corpse of the beautiful!

Still more striking, however, is the contrast between the ancient and the modern Jews. As the Greeks were the favourite people of nature, the Jews were the chosen people of God. As the Greeks seemed their own deities come down to men, the Jews were the representatives of that inscrutable ONE who filleth immensity, and the praises thereof. In Him they lived, and moved, and had their being. As a nation, they rose and sunk on God as on a wave—now heaven-high, and now deep as the centre. Their progress seemed the progress of God's plan in the world; their decline, the temporary retreat of the awful billow. In their prosperity, they were like angels basking in the face of their Father—under their beatings, and burdens, they still continued, like Balaam's ass, to see God where none else beheld him. Along with the meteors which marked their advance in the wilderness—the pillars of fire and of cloud—there hung a mystic haze of miraculous destiny over all their motions. God cut a passage for them through the water of the Red Sea, and through the fire of that great and terrible wilderness. He translated them while yet alive to himself, and lo! the nation became as insulated as it was powerful; and was verily "a royal nation and a peculiar people." He fed them with meat from heaven, and gave them drink from the depths which slumber under the rocks of the desert. When he slew them, it was by no hand but his own—Abraham slaying, as it were, his son; and heaps on heaps their "carcasses fell in the wilderness." As he had lighted up the wilderness with strange splendours during their passage, and made Sinai speak to them in thunder, so, when he brought them into the Promised Land, it

began to flow with milk and honey, to gleam with supernatural glory, and to ring with divine voices. In the midst of that land there arose, like a high palace, the Temple, with its marble and gold, its profound symbols, and mute and mighty prophecies; around were seen the stately steps of kings, walking like gods in the earth, because bearing in their hands the sceptres which God had lent, and was to resume; up streamed the smoke of incense, which, though ascending in volumes, hiding the sun, hid not the white garments and the oracular gems of the ministering priests; on every side were heard the cries of prophets speaking from the immediate inspiration of the Most High, and whose eyes shone with the lustre of very visions of God; and behold! to it at length arrived God's only begotten Son, meek and lowly, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, riding upon an ass, and yet welcomed by hosannas, which, first echoed by all Jerusalem, at last were taken up by distant lands, and have swelled into a diapason as wide as the world. A nation so peculiar and so sacred were the Jews, that, even when bowed, broken, and dispersed at last, it was under a burden no less weighty than the blood of the Eternal Son of God. His blood, invoked by, fell on them like a fiery rain; and staggering and shrieking under it, they have wandered ever since among the nations.

Such were they; but how great the change! Hear the words of that master in our literary Israel, Scott, on this subject:—"Thou hast spoken the Jew," said Rebecca to Bois-Guilbert, 'as the persecution of such as thou art has made him. Heaven in ire has driven him from his country, but industry has opened up to him the only road to power and to influence, which oppression has left unbarred. Read the history of the ancient people of God, and tell me if those by whom Jehovah wrought such marvels among the nations were then a people of misers and usurers! And know, proud knight, we number names amongst us to which your boasted northern nobility is as the gourd compared to the cedar—names that ascend far back to those high times when

the Divine Presence shook the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and which derive their splendour from no earthly prince, but from *the awful voice which bade their fathers be nearest of the congregation to the Vision*. Such were the princes of the House of Jacob.' Rebecca's colour rose as she boasted the ancient glories of her race; but faded, as she added, with a sigh, 'Such ~~were~~ the princes of Judah—now such no more. They are trampled down like the shorn grass, and mixed with the mire of the ways.'

The spectacle of the decay of the Greeks is not nearly so melancholy as that of the Jews. The Greeks resemble dethroned kings; the Jews banished angels. The one nation has fallen from an earthly height; the other, like Lucifer, from heaven. The Greeks have always met with sympathy; there is, even still, a strong and fierce prejudice burning against the Jews. The Greeks have made very considerable efforts to recover from their degradation; the Jews, as a class, are still writhing in the dust of mean callings, and of the still lower spirit of contempt with which these are regarded. No one, when a Greek passes, cries out in scorn, "There's a Greek;" but many, when they see the dark eye and bent figure of a son of Abraham passing by, still sneer out the bitter taunt, "There's a Jew." Still, too true is the memorable contrast of Coleridge, as expressing the two uttermost poles of national condition—between the cry of Isaiah, "Hear, oh heavens, and give ear, oh earth!" and that of "Old Clo'" from a street-broker.

We fancy that we perceive the continued prevalence of this ungenerous feeling in the recent attacks of a large portion of the press upon Benjamin Disraeli; and we shall try, in this paper, to do all we can to counteract it. We are no Jews nor Greeks either; no admirers of Disraeli's political character, or of all his literary works; but we love fair play; we know Disraeli to be a man of high genius, and altogether independent of our praise; but we know also, how easy it is

for base underlings, and an irresponsible gang of minor and malignant critics, to injure any reputation, and derogate from any name, and wish to devote a paper to place this brilliant man's literary merits in a proper point of view.

Before giving our own opinion of Disraeli's literary and intellectual qualities, we have a few remarks to make on that biography of him which now lies before us. It is an able production, but is neutralised in a great measure by its spirit of fierce, slow, partisan, bloodhound hatred. Every line of it is written in revenge as in red ink. We know nothing positively of the author; but one might imagine that it was the work of the dismissed secretary or the disgraced valet of the brilliant Hebrew. Since Bourrienne's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, we remember no book which sets itself with such deliberate determination, with such unflagging animosity, with such remorseless malignity of purpose, to damage a public character. Even its concessions are meant to be fatal, and its praise is always the prelude to a sentence of perdition. Emerson speaks of some whose "blame is a kind of praising"—this author's praise is a kind of blaming. To renew a former figure, you hear the voice of the *slenthound* in every paragraph. Now it is a deep-mouthed incessant bay; now it is the growl of disappointment at finding the scent cold; and now it is the cry of fresh delight at coming upon it again. Were there but two beings in the earth, and these two enemies, they would but typify Benjamin Disraeli and his unknown biographer. The latter at least writes as if he were created for the purpose of trying to degrade and dishonour the name of the former.

Now, without judging as to the motives, we beg leave to demur as to the wisdom of the course here pursued. If Disraeli be such a tenth-rate man as this biography would imply, whence this extreme eagerness to vilify and blacken him? If he be little else than a fool, why be it at such pains to prove him a villain? The very effort and elaboration exerted in demonstrating the latter of these proposi-

tions, show that the former is felt to be a falsehood. The two parts of the biography—the "literary" and the "political"—in fact, clash against and extinguish each other.

We promised in the introduction not to enter on Disraeli's political career. We have not, in fact, studied it closely, except in the pages of this biography; but these, while professing to teach the contrary, have convinced us that, more than nine-tenths of our statesmen, Disraeli has been guided by a thought—a great, glittering, one "Star" suspended in the sky of his soul—which, be it from heaven or hell, he has faithfully followed, so faithfully, that *its* revolutions and changes have been confounded with *his*!

But we pass to his literary character; and here his biographer has done him very gross injustice. Whoever this writer may be, he is but a sorry judge of literature. The only indication of good taste he gives is his unbounded admiration of the wisdom and genius of Edmund Burke. While coinciding to the depths of our heart with this, we venture, first, to ask if Burke was, *outwardly*, the most consistent of authors or statesmen; and, secondly, would recommend to this author Burke's style, as a better model, both for political and literary discussion, than those he seems to have copied. He has not, indeed, imitated the insufferable verbiage, misty bewilderment, and stilted platitudes which cripple the writings of the powerful and highly cultured William Gladstone, of whom he is such an admirer; but he has evidently read too long and too lovingly the lucubrations of the "Morning Chronicle," and similar scribes of the London press, and should, like other half-trained boys (young or *old*), be remanded to his studies. We had not, we must say, read "Alroy," till our attention was pointed to it by the abuse of this writer. We thank him, with all our soul, for that emasculated and envious attack! It has introduced us to one of the finest of modern prose-poems. There are, indeed, two objections which may be started to it:—one, its form, which is too Frenchified, reminding you, in its short chapters,

abrupt transitions, and glancing hints of thought, of "Candide;" and the second (one which his biographer presses against him with all his might), the peculiar rhythm of the more ambitious passages, which makes parts of it seem hybrids between poetry and prose. But, after deducting these faults, the tale is one of uncommon interest. Some of the situations are thrilling to sublimity, and the language and imagery are intensely oriental, and in general as felicitous as they are bold. Yet this biographer denies that "Alroy" is a poem, that its language is poetical; and even wonders that its author has thought it worth while to republish it! In disproof of these assertions, we simply refer our readers to the picture of Alroy's flight into the wilderness; to the description of the simoom; to the visit of Alroy to the sepulchres of the kings; to his immurement in the dungeon; to the escape of Abidan; and to the closing scene. These passages we consider equal—in interest, in terse description, in rapid power, and in frequent grandeur—to anything in the whole compass of fictitious literature. The book altogether ranks very near "Caliph Vathek," and is incomparably superior to all other modern imitations of the oriental manner, unless we except "Salathiel," that eloquent and powerful product of Dr Croly's genius. The biographer before us—whom again we proclaim, although a sagacious and clever man, to be no judge of poetry or literary merit—tears some of the more extravagant passages from the context, and makes them look ludicrous enough. This is not fair. In proof of this, we can say that one or two of them, which seemed absurd as transferred to his cold and critical page, and contrasted with his occidental and icy spirit, when read by the glowing eastern day shed through Disraeli's genius over the whole of this prose "Thalaba," assumed to us a very different aspect; and if we still call them "*barbaric pearl*," we felt that, nevertheless, *pearl* they were. Few things can be more beautiful, in its own warm, voluptuous, Song-of-Solomon style, than the follow-

ing (which the biographer, had he quoted, would have pronounced ridiculous):—

"It is the tender twilight hour, when maidens, in their lonely bower, sigh softer than the eve. The languid rose her head upraises, and listens to the nightingale, while his wild and thrilling praises from his trembling bosom gush; the languid rose her head upraises, and listens with a blush. In the clear and rosy air, sparkling with a single star, the sharp and spiry cypress-tree rises like a gloomy thought, amid the flow of revelry.

"A singing bird, a single star, a solemn tree, an odorous flower, are dangerous in the tender hour, when maidens, in their twilight bower, sigh softer than the eve! The daughter of the caliph comes forth to breathe the air: her lute her only company. She sits down by a fountain's side, and gazes on the waterfall. Her cheek reclines upon her arm, like fruit upon a graceful bough. Very pensive is the face of that bright and beautiful lady. She starts: a warm voluptuous lip presses her soft and idle hand. It is her own gazelle. With his large and lustrous eyes, more eloquent than many a tongue, the fond attendant asks the cause of all her thoughtfulness."

This we do not call perfect writing; it does not answer to our highest standard of even the prosaic-poetic style; but, separated from its context as it is, will any one say that it is absurd? Will any man connected with literature, unless he be a hired hack-accuser, pretend that it is not poetry?

Still finer and loftier things than what we have quoted abound in this poem; and "Iskander," which is bound up along with it, is worthy of the fellowship; for, if less poetical and brilliant, it is equally interesting, and much more nervous and simple in style. In one thing Disraeli excels all novelists—we mean rapidity of narration. With what breathless speed does he hurry his reader along! Iskander at the bridge reminds you of Macaulay's Horatius in the first of his "Lays of Ancient Rome;" the story is somewhat similar, and is told with the same animation, and the same eager rush of power.

We do not think it necessary to continue the examination of his works individually. We may say, however, that "Tancred" contains much of the same poetic matter with "Alroy;" but is chastened down with severer taste, and displays a vastly more matured intellect. His pictures of Gethsemane—of Bethany—of Sinai, are never to be forgotten. They serve better than a thousand books of travels to bring before our view that land where God did desire to dwell; and every spot in which, from Lebanon to the Dead Sea—from Bashan to Carmel—from the borders of Tyre to Hebron—from the Lake of Galilee to the Brook Kiahon, is surrounded with a halo of profound and unearthly interest. In one point we notice an improvement on "Alroy." There is in "Tancred" a distinct recognition of the mission of Jesus Christ; and the allusions to him and his history are full of fervid admiration and solemn reverence. Disraeli has at last learned that it is the sublimest distinction of his race that from it sprang One whose name has been a Crown to the earth more magnificent than though a brighter ring than Saturn's had been folded around it; whose character has formed the ideal of God, the pattern of man, and the moral spring of society; who has carried Jewish blood with him aloft to the very Throne of God; and in whose steadfast smile, streaming forth from Jerusalem, all nations and all worlds are yet to be blessed.

We pass to analyse, in a general way, Disraeli's intellectual powers. These are exceedingly varied. He has one of the sharpest and clearest of intellects, not, perhaps, of the most philosophical order, but exceedingly penetrating and acute. He has a fine fancy, soaring up at intervals into high imagination, and marking him a genuine child of that nation from whom came forth the loftiest, richest, and most impassioned song which earth has ever witnessed—the nation of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Solomon, and Job. He has little humour, but a vast deal of diamond-pointed wit. The whole world knows his powers of sarcasm. They have never been surpassed in the combination of

savage force, and, shall we say? Satanic coolness, of energy and of point, of the fiercest *animus* within, and the utmost elegance of outward expression. He wields for his weapon a polar icicle—gigantic as a club—glittering as a star—deadly as a scimitar—and cool as eternal frost. His style and language are the faithful index of these varied and brilliant powers. His sentences are almost always short, epigrammatic, conclusive—pointed with wit and starred with imagery—and so rapid in their bickering, sparkling progress! One, while reading the better parts of his novels, seems reading a record of the conversations of Napoleon.

We saw, in a late Edinburgh journal, a comparison of Disraeli to Byron; he seems to us to bear a resemblance, still more striking, to Bonaparte. The same decisive energy; the same quick, meteoric motions; the same sharp, satiric power; the same insulation, even while mingling among men; the same heart of fire, concealed by an outside of frost; the same epigrammatic conciseness of style, alternating with barbaric brilliance; the same decidedly oriental tastes, in manner, language, equipage, everything; the same rapidity of written and spoken style; the same inconsistency, self-will, self-reliance, belief in race and destiny; the same proneness to fatal blunders, and the same power of recovering from their effects, and of drowning the noise of the fall in that of the daring flight which instantly succeeds it, distinguish both the soldier and the statesman. Indeed, the character and history of David Alroy seem a fictitious representation of Napoleon, as well as a faintly-disguised *alias* of the author's own character and anticipated career. Napoleon himself, we have sometimes thought, had more of the Jew in him than of either the Frenchman or the Italian, although he unquestionably combined something of all the three. He had the Frenchman's bustling activity and fiery irritability of temper; the Italian's slow, deep, long-winded subtlety of revenge; and the Jew's superstition (although not his religion), his high-toned purpose, his hot blood, and

his figurative fancy. He was infinitely more of an oriental sultan than of an occidental prince; and had he, instead of seeking in vain to conciliate the Mahometans by a pretended faith in their prophet, given himself out as the Messiah of the Jews, the whole Hebrew race would have flocked to his standard. As it was, he did visit the Holy Land, he "set up his standard on the glorious holy mountain"—gave battle under the shadow of Tabor—and received in Palestine the first whiff of that fell blast which was ultimately to overthrow his empire, and to reduce it to the most magnificent of ruins—the Coliseum of fallen monarchies.

To return to Disraeli, our great plea for him is this—he has fought in his own person the battle of a whole race; baffled oft, he has perpetually returned to the charge; placed at desperate odds, and opposed by strongest prejudices, he has, by energy, intellect, and indomitable perseverance, triumphed over them all. We care not what his enemies may choose to call him—an adventurer, a puppy, a *roué*, a charlatan, are a few of the hard names which have been flung against him, and they may contain in them a degree of truth; but no such shower of hailstones can prevail to hide from our view that Figure sitting down amid the hisses and laughter of a whole House of Commons, with the words, "I will sit down now, but the time will come when *you will listen to me.*" This was not the language of mere petulance and injured conceit. It was that of a man driven, by insult and obloquy, to consult the very depths of his self-consciousness, which sent up an answer in oracle and in prophecy. The proof of anything that professes to be prophetic, lies, of course, in the fulfilment. And his prediction was, need we say, fulfilled. Within seven years, or less, this rejected and despised member of the Commons is speaking to the largest, most attentive, and most amused and thrilled assemblages ever convened within its walls—is castigating Sir Robert Peel, and drawing blood at every blow—is ruling the Conservative party—and is treated with respect even by O'Connell, his erst

most contemptuous and formidable foe. A year or two more, he is the leader of the Commons, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. *This*, we say, is true power, and we cannot but exult, much as we do differ in many important matters from Disraeli, in witnessing the rapid rise of this scion of a despised and proscribed family to the height of reputation and influence; and cannot but compare it to the history of the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem, who passed, by a few strides, from waiting on the ewes with young, to the summit of fame as a poet, and of power as a king.

We like, we must say again, the merit that struggles into success infinitely more than that which attains a quick and easy triumph. Look at the career of Macaulay, and compare it with Disraeli's. The former rose instantly into popularity as a writer; he rose instantly into fame as a parliamentary orator. Till his richly-deserved rejection by Edinburgh, there was not a single "crook" in his "lot." Even that city has since degraded itself by kneeling, "like a tame elephant," to receive once more its imperious rider. Disraeli's motto, on the other hand, like Burke's, was *Vitor in adversum*; and, like him, at every turnpike he had to present his passport. If Macaulay seem more consistent, it has been because he has always run in the rut of a party, and never entertained really bold, broad, and independent views. Macaulay, once exalted, can kick at those who are farther down than himself; but he never could have had the moral heroism to have looked up from the dust of contempt into which he had been hurled by six hundred of his peers, and to have said, "the time will come that you *will* listen to me." We are far from comparing Disraeli to Macaulay, in point of learning, taste, or nervous energy of style; but we are convinced that, in inventiveness, ingenuity, originality, and natural power of genius, he is superior.

At the word "originality," we see some of our readers starting, and recalling to their minds the "plagiarisms" of Disraeli. We have often had occasion to despise popular clamours against public men, especially when swelled by the voices of a

needy, mendacious, and profligate press; but there has been seldom a clamour more utterly contemptible than that raised against Disraeli for plagiarism. There lives not, nor ever perhaps lived, a literary, or clerical, or parliamentary man, who has not now and then, in the strong pressure of haste, been driven to avail himself of the labours of others, whether by the appropriation of thought or of language, of principles or of passages. Think of Milton, Mirabeau, Fox, Chalmers, Hall—all these were guilty of appropriations considerably larger than any charged against Disraeli. Milton has been called the "celestial thief;" Mirabeau got the ablest of his speeches from Dument; Fox was often primed by Burke. Most of the thinking in Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses" is derived from Andrew Fuller's "Gospel its own Witness." Many of Hall's brightest gems of figure are taken from others—from Burke, Grattan, and Warburton—and one or two of them have been retaken by Macaulay from Hall. It is only the habitual thief, the man who *lives* by plunder, and who plunders on a large scale, that deserves the halter. Now Disraeli is not such a man. His works and speeches are before the world; the Argus-eyes of a multitudinous envy have long been fixed upon them; and the result has been, that not above two or three passages have been proved to be copied from other writers, and all his more brilliant and characteristic works—"Alroy," "Iskander," "Coningsby," "Contarini Fleming," "The Young Duke," and "Tancred"—are, *intus et in cute*, his own. Are there ten living writers of whom the same, or anything approaching to the same statement, can be made?

We know not a little of the workings, open or secret, both of the clerical and of the literary worlds; and are certain that there never was a period in which more mean, malignant, and deplorable envy and detraction were working, whether openly or covertly, both among authors and divines—an envy that spares not even the dead, that spits out its venom against names which have long been written as

if in stars on the firmament of reputation, but which wars especially with those living celebrities who are too honest to belong to any party, too progressive to be chained to any formula, too great to be put down, but not too great to be reviled and slandered, and whose very independence and strongly-pronounced individuality become charges against them. Who shall write the dark history of that serpentine stream of slander, which is winding through all our literature at present like one of the arms of Acheron, and which is damaging the public and the private characters, too, of many a man who is entirely unaware of the presence and the progress of the foul and insidious poison? He that would lay bare the shameful secret history of many of our influential journals, and of our church cliques, would be a benefactor to literature, to morality, to religion, and to man.

Since beginning this paper, our attention has been called to the onslaught of the "Times" on Disraeli. It has forcibly recalled to our mind the words of Burns—

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gi'e us,
To see ourselves as ithers see us."

In describing Disraeli as the incarnation of genius without conscience, how faithfully has the "Times" described the general notion in reference to itself, provided the word "intellect" be substituted for "genius." For, with all the talent of the "Times," we doubt if it has ever displayed true genius, or if one paragraph of real inspiration can be quoted from amid its sounding commonplaces and brilliant insincerities. But talent, without even the pretence of principle, is so notoriously its characteristic, that we marvel at the coolness with which it takes off its own sobriquet, and sticks it on the brow of another—marvel, till we remember that the impudence of the leading journal is, like all its other properties—its mendacity, its mystery, its inconsistency, its tergiversation, its circulation, and its advertising—on a colossal scale.

We are not prepared as yet to *predict* the future history or the ultimate place of Benjamin Disraeli. One thing in him is most hopeful. He does not know, any more than Wellington or Byron, what it is to be beaten. His motto is, "Never say die." When newly down he is always most dangerous. Prodigious as is the amount of abuse and detraction he is now enduring, it may be doubted if he were ever so popular, or if there be a single man alive who is exciting such interest, or awakening such expectation. This proves, first, that he is no temporary rage or pet of the public; secondly, that he has something else than a selfish object in view; and, thirdly, that there is a certain inexhaustible stuff in him which men call genius, and which is sure to excite hope in reference to its possessor till the last moment of his earthly existence. Gladstone is a man of high talent; but few expect anything extraordinary from his future exertions. Disraeli is a man of genius, and many look for some grand conclusive display or displays of its power. Let him gird himself for the task. Let him forget the past. Let him pay no heed whatever to his barking, snarling opponents. Let him commit himself to some great new idea, or, at least, to some new and wider phase of his old one. He has been hitherto considerably like Byron in his undulating and uneven course, in the alternate sinking and swelling of the wave of his Destiny. Let him ponder that poet's last noble enterprise, by which he was redeeming at once himself and a whole nation when he died. Let Disraeli address himself to some kindred undertaking in *reference to the children of his people*; and then, as Byron died amid the blessings of the Greeks, may he inherit, in life, in death, and in all after-time, the gratitude and praises of God's ancient and still much-loved children—the Jews. We are hopeful that there is some such brilliant achievement before one of the few men of genius the House of Commons now contains.



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