

**THE
MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS AND
SPEECHES**

VOLUME I.

LORD MACAULAY

PREFACE.

Lord Macaulay always looked forward to a publication of his miscellaneous works, either by himself or by those who should represent him after his death. And latterly he expressly reserved, whenever the arrangements as to copyright made it necessary, the right of such publication.

The collection which is now published comprehends some of the earliest and some of the latest works which he composed. He was born on 25th October, 1800; commenced residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, in October, 1818; was elected Craven University Scholar in 1821; graduated as B.A. in 1822; was elected fellow of the college in October, 1824; was called to the bar in February, 1826, when he joined the Northern Circuit; and was elected member for Calne in 1830. After this last event, he did not long continue to practise at the bar. He went to India in 1834, whence he returned in June, 1838. He was elected member for Edinburgh, in 1839, and lost this seat in July, 1847; and this (though he was afterwards again elected for that city in July, 1852, without being a candidate) may be considered as the last instance of his taking an active part in the contests of public life. These few dates are mentioned for the purpose of enabling the reader to assign the articles, now and previously published, to the principal periods into which the author's life may be divided.

The admirers of his later works will probably be interested by watching the gradual formation of his style, and will notice in his earlier productions, vigorous and clear as their language always was, the occurrence of faults against which he afterwards most anxiously guarded himself. A much greater interest will undoubtedly be felt in tracing the date and development of his opinions.

The articles published in Knight's Quarterly Magazine were composed during the author's residence at college, as B.A. It may be remarked that the first two of these exhibit the earnestness with which he already endeavoured to represent to himself and to others the scenes and persons of past times as in actual existence. Of the Dialogue between Milton and

Cowley he spoke, many years after its publication, as that one of his works which he remembered with most satisfaction. The article on Mitford's Greece he did not himself value so highly as others thought it deserved. This article, at any rate, contains the first distinct enunciation of his views, as to the office of an historian, views afterwards more fully set forth in his Essay, upon History, in the Edinburgh Review. From the protest, in the last mentioned essay, against the conventional notions respecting the majesty of history might perhaps have been anticipated something like the third chapter of the History of England. It may be amusing to notice that in the article on Mitford, appears the first sketch of the New Zealander, afterwards filled up in a passage in the review of Mrs Austin's translation of Ranke, a passage which at one time was the subject of allusion, two or three times a week, in speeches and leading articles. In this, too, appear, perhaps for the first time, the author's views on the representative system. These he retained to the very last; they are brought forward repeatedly in the articles published in this collection and elsewhere, and in his speeches in parliament; and they coincide with the opinions expressed in the letter to an American correspondent, which was so often cited in the late debate on the Reform Bill.

Some explanation appears to be necessary as to the publication of the three articles "Mill on Government," "Westminster Reviewer's Defence of Mill" and "Utilitarian Theory of Government."

In 1828 Mr James Mill, the author of the History of British India, reprinted some essays which he had contributed to the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica; and among these was an Essay on Government. The method of inquiry and reasoning adopted in this essay appeared to Macaulay to be essentially wrong. He entertained a very strong conviction that the only sound foundation for a theory of Government must be laid in careful and copious historical induction; and he believed that Mr Mill's work rested upon a vicious reasoning a priori. Upon this point he felt the more earnestly, owing to his own passion for historical research, and to his devout admiration of Bacon, whose works he was at that time studying with intense attention. There can, however, be little doubt that he was also provoked by the pretensions of some members of a

sect which then commonly went by the name of Benthamites, or Utilitarians. This sect included many of his contemporaries, who had quitted Cambridge at about the same time with him. It had succeeded, in some measure, to the sect of the Byronians, whom he has described in the review of Moore's Life of Lord Byron, who discarded their neckcloths, and fixed little models of skulls on the sand-glasses by which they regulated the boiling of their eggs for breakfast. The members of these sects, and of many others that have succeeded, have probably long ago learned to smile at the temporary humours. But Macaulay, himself a sincere admirer of Bentham, was irritated by what he considered the unwarranted tone assumed by several of the class of Utilitarians. "We apprehend," he said, "that many of them are persons who, having read little or nothing, are delighted to be rescued from the sense of their own inferiority by some teacher who assures them that the studies which they have neglected are of no value, puts five or six phrases into their mouths, lends them an odd number of the Westminster Review, and in a month transforms them into philosophers;" and he spoke of them as "smatterers, whose attainments just suffice to elevate them from the insignificance of dunces to the dignity of bores, and to spread dismay among their pious aunts and grand mothers." The sect, of course, like other sects, comprehended some pretenders, and these the most arrogant and intolerant among its members. He, however, went so far as to apply the following language to the majority:--"As to the greater part of the sect, it is, we apprehend, of little consequence what they study or under whom. It would be more amusing, to be sure, and more reputable, if they would take up the old republican cant and declaim about Brutus and Timoleon, the duty of killing tyrants and the blessedness of dying for liberty. But, on the whole, they might have chosen worse. They may as well be Utilitarians as jockeys or dandies. And, though quibbling about self-interest and motives, and objects of desire, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is but a poor employment for a grown man, it certainly hurts the health less than hard drinking and the fortune less than high play; it is not much more laughable than phrenology, and is immeasurably more humane than cock-fighting."

Macaulay inserted in the Edinburgh Review of March, 1829, an article upon Mr Mill's Essay. He attacked the method with much vehemence; and, to the end of his life, he never saw any ground for believing that in this he had gone too far. But before long he felt that he had not spoken of the author of the Essay with the respect due to so eminent a man. In 1833, he described Mr mill, during the debate on the India Bill of that year, as a "gentleman extremely well acquainted with the affairs of our Eastern Empire, a most valuable servant of the Company, and the author of a history of India, which, though certainly not free from faults, is, I think, on the whole, the greatest historical work which has appeared in our language since that of Gibbon."

Almost immediately upon the appearance of the article in the Edinburgh Review, an answer was published in the Westminster Review. It was untruly attributed, in the newspapers of the day, to Mr Bentham himself. Macaulay's answer to this appeared in the Edinburgh Review, June, 1829. He wrote the answer under the belief that he was answering Mr Bentham, and was undeceived in time only to add the postscript. The author of the article in the Westminster Review had not perceived that the question raised was not as to the truth or falsehood of the result at which Mr Mill had arrived, but as to the soundness or unsoundness of the method which he pursued; a misunderstanding at which Macaulay, while he supposed the article to be the work of Mr Bentham, expressed much surprise. The controversy soon became principally a dispute as to the theory which was commonly known by the name of The Greatest Happiness Principle. Another article in the Westminster Review followed; and a surrejoinder by Macaulay in the Edinburgh Review of October, 1829. Macaulay was irritated at what he conceived to be either extreme dullness or gross unfairness on the part of his unknown antagonist, and struck as hard as he could; and he struck very hard indeed.

The ethical question thus raised was afterwards discussed by Sir James Mackintosh, in the Dissertation contributed by him to the seventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, page 284-313 (Whewell's Edition). Sir James Mackintosh notices the part taken in the controversy by Macaulay, in the following words: "A writer of consummate ability, who has failed

in little but the respect due to the abilities and character of his opponents, has given too much countenance to the abuse and confusion of language exemplified in the well-known verse of Pope,

'Modes of self-love the Passions we may call.'

'We know,' says he, 'no universal proposition respecting human nature which is true but one--that men always act from self-interest.'" "It is manifest from the sequel, that the writer is not the dupe of the confusion; but many of his readers may be so. If, indeed, the word "self-interest" could with propriety be used for the gratification of every prevalent desire, he has clearly shown that this change in the signification of terms would be of no advantage to the doctrine which he controverts. It would make as many sorts of self-interest as there are appetites, and it is irreconcilably at variance with the system of association proposed by Mr Mill." "The admirable writer whose language has occasioned this illustration, who at an early age has mastered every species of composition, will doubtless hold fast to simplicity, which survives all the fashions of deviation from it, and which a man of genius so fertile has few temptations to for sake."

When Macaulay selected for publication certain articles of the Edinburgh Review, he resolved not to publish any of the three essays in question; for which he assigned the following reason:--

"The author has been strongly urged to insert three papers on the Utilitarian Philosophy, which, when they first appeared, attracted some notice, but which are not in the American editions. He has however determined to omit these papers, not because he is disposed to retract a single doctrine which they contain, but because he is unwilling to offer what might be regarded as an affront to the memory of one from whose opinions he still widely dissents, but to whose talents and virtues he admits that he formerly did not do justice. Serious as are the faults of the Essay on Government, a critic, while noticing those faults, should have abstained from using contemptuous language respecting the historian of British India. It ought to be known that Mr Mill had the generosity, not only to forgive, but to forget the unbecoming acrimony with which he had been assailed, and was, when his valuable life closed, on terms of cordial friendship with his assailant."

Under these circumstances, considerable doubt has been felt as to the propriety of republishing the three Essays in the present collection. But it has been determined, not without much hesitation, that they should appear. It is felt that no disrespect is shown to the memory of Mr Mill, when the publication is accompanied by so full an apology for the tone adopted towards him; and Mr Mill himself would have been the last to wish for the suppression of opinions on the ground that they were in express antagonism to his own. The grave has now closed upon the assailant as well as the assailed. On the other hand, it cannot but be desirable that opinions which the author retained to the last, on important questions in politics and morals, should be before the public.

Some of the poems now collected have already appeared in print; others are supplied by the recollection of friends. The first two are published on account of their having been composed in the author's childhood. In the poems, as well as in the prose works, will be occasionally found thoughts and expressions which have afterwards been adopted in later productions.

No alteration whatever has been made from the form in which the author left the several articles, with the exception of some changes in punctuation, and the correction of one or two obvious misprints.

T.F.E. London, June 1860.

FRAGMENTS OF A ROMAN TALE.

(June 1823)

It was an hour after noon. Ligarius was returning from the Campus Martius. He strolled through one of the streets which led to the Forum, settling his gown, and calculating the odds on the gladiators who were to fence at the approaching Saturnalia. While thus occupied, he overtook Flaminius, who, with a heavy step and a melancholy face, was sauntering in the same direction. The light-hearted young man plucked him by the sleeve.

"Good-day, Flaminius. Are you to be of Catiline's party this evening?"

"Not I."

"Why so? Your little Tarentine girl will break her heart."

"No matter. Catiline has the best cooks and the finest wine in Rome. There are charming women at his parties. But the twelve-line board and the dice-box pay for all. The Gods confound me if I did not lose two millions of sesterces last night. My villa at Tibur, and all the statues that my father the praetor brought from Ephesus, must go to the auctioneer. That is a high price, you will acknowledge, even for Phoenicopters, Chian, and Callinice."

"High indeed, by Pollux."

"And that is not the worst. I saw several of the leading senators this morning. Strange things are whispered in the higher political circles."

"The Gods confound the political circles. I have hated the name of politician ever since Sylla's proscription, when I was within a moment of having my throat cut by a politician, who took me for another politician. While there is a cask of Falernian in Campania, or a girl in the Suburra, I shall be too well employed to think on the subject."

"You will do well," said Flaminius gravely, "to bestow some little consideration upon it at present. Otherwise, I fear, you will soon renew

your acquaintance with politicians, in a manner quite as unpleasant as that to which you allude."

"Averting Gods! what do you mean?"

"I will tell you. There are rumours of conspiracy. The order of things established by Lucius Sylla has excited the disgust of the people, and of a large party of the nobles. Some violent convulsion is expected."

"What is that to me? I suppose that they will hardly proscribe the vintners and gladiators, or pass a law compelling every citizen to take a wife."

"You do not understand. Catiline is supposed to be the author of the revolutionary schemes. You must have heard bold opinions at his table repeatedly."

"I never listen to any opinions upon such subjects, bold or timid."

"Look to it. Your name has been mentioned."

"Mine! good Gods! I call Heaven to witness that I never so much as mentioned Senate, Consul, or Comitia, in Catiline's house."

"Nobody suspects you of any participation in the inmost counsels of the party. But our great men surmise that you are among those whom he has bribed so high with beauty, or entangled so deeply in distress, that they are no longer their own masters. I shall never set foot within his threshold again. I have been solemnly warned by men who understand public affairs; and I advise you to be cautious."

The friends had now turned into the Forum, which was thronged with the gay and elegant youth of Rome. "I can tell you more," continued Flaminius; "somebody was remarking to the Consul yesterday how loosely a certain acquaintance of ours tied his girdle. 'Let him look to himself;' said Cicero, 'or the state may find a tighter girdle for his neck.'"

"Good Gods! who is it? You cannot surely mean"--

"There he is."

Flaminius pointed to a man who was pacing up and down the Forum at a little distance from them. He was in the prime of manhood. His personal advantages were extremely striking, and were displayed with an extravagant but not ungraceful foppery. His gown waved in loose folds; his long dark curls were dressed with exquisite art, and shone and steamed

with odours; his step and gesture exhibited an elegant and commanding figure in every posture of polite languor. But his countenance formed a singular contrast to the general appearance of his person. The high and imperial brow, the keen aquiline features, the compressed mouth; the penetrating eye, indicated the highest degree of ability and decision. He seemed absorbed in intense meditation. With eyes fixed on the ground, and lips working in thought, he sauntered round the area, apparently unconscious how many of the young gallants of Rome were envying the taste of his dress, and the ease of his fashionable stagger.

"Good Heaven!" said Ligarius, "Caius Caesar is as unlikely to be in a plot as I am."

"Not at all."

"He does nothing but game; feast, intrigue, read Greek, and write verses."

"You know nothing of Caesar. Though he rarely addresses the Senate, he is considered as the finest speaker there, after the Consul. His influence with the multitude is immense. He will serve his rivals in public life as he served me last night at Catiline's. We were playing at the twelve lines. (Duodecim scripta, a game of mixed chance and skill, which seems to have been very fashionable in the higher circles of Rome. The famous lawyer Mucius was renowned for his skill in it.--("Cic. Orat." i. 50.)--Immense stakes. He laughed all the time, chatted with Valeria over his shoulder, kissed her hand between every two moves, and scarcely looked at the board. I thought that I had him. All at once I found my counters driven into the corner. Not a piece to move, by Hercules. It cost me two millions of sesterces. All the Gods and Goddesses confound him for it!"

"As to Valeria," said Ligarius, "I forgot to ask whether you have heard the news."

"Not a word. What?"

"I was told at the baths to-day that Caesar escorted the lady home. Unfortunately old Quintus Lutatius had come back from his villa in Campania, in a whim of jealousy. He was not expected for three days. There was a fine tumult. The old fool called for his sword and his slaves,

cursed his wife, and swore that he would cut Caesar's throat."

"And Caesar?"

"He laughed, quoted Anacreon, trussed his gown round his left arm, closed with Quintus, flung him down, twisted his sword out of his hand, burst through the attendants, ran a freed-man through the shoulder, and was in the street in an instant."

"Well done! Here he comes. Good-day, Caius."

Caesar lifted his head at the salutation. His air of deep abstraction vanished; and he extended a hand to each of the friends.

"How are you after your last night's exploit?"

"As well as possible," said Caesar, laughing.

"In truth we should rather ask how Quintus Lutatius is."

"He, I understand, is as well as can be expected of a man with a faithless spouse and a broken head. His freed-man is most seriously hurt. Poor fellow! he shall have half of whatever I win to-night. Flaminius, you shall have your revenge at Catiline's."

"You are very kind. I do not intend to be at Catiline's till I wish to part with my town-house. My villa is gone already."

"Not at Catiline's, base spirit! You are not of his mind, my gallant Ligarius. Dice, Chian, and the loveliest Greek singing girl that was ever seen. Think of that, Ligarius. By Venus, she almost made me adore her, by telling me that I talked Greek with the most Attic accent that she had heard in Italy."

"I doubt she will not say the same of me," replied Ligarius. "I am just as able to decipher an obelisk as to read a line of Homer."

"You barbarous Scythian, who had the care of your education?"

"An old fool,--a Greek pedant,--a Stoic. He told me that pain was no evil, and flogged me as if he thought so. At last one day, in the middle of a lecture, I set fire to his enormous filthy beard, singed his face, and sent him roaring out of the house. There ended my studies. From that time to this I have had as little to do with Greece as the wine that your poor old friend Lutatius calls his delicious Samian."

"Well done, Ligarius. I hate a Stoic. I wish Marcus Cato had a beard that you might singe it for him. The fool talked his two hours in

the Senate yesterday, without changing a muscle of his face. He looked as savage and as motionless as the mask in which Roscius acted Alecto. I detest everything connected with him."

"Except his sister, Servilia."

"True. She is a lovely woman."

"They say that you have told her so, Caius"

"So I have."

"And that she was not angry."

"What woman is?"

"Aye--but they say"--

"No matter what they say. Common fame lies like a Greek rhetorician. You might know so much, Ligarius, without reading the philosophers. But come, I will introduce you to little dark-eyed Zoe."

"I tell you I can speak no Greek."

"More shame for you. It is high time that you should begin. You will never have such a charming instructress. Of what was your father thinking when he sent for an old Stoic with a long beard to teach you? There is no language-mistress like a handsome woman. When I was at Athens, I learnt more Greek from a pretty flower-girl in the Peiraeus than from all the Portico and the Academy. She was no Stoic, Heaven knows. But come along to Zoe. I will be your interpreter. Woo her in honest Latin, and I will turn it into elegant Greek between the throws of dice. I can make love and mind my game at once, as Flaminius can tell you.

"Well, then, to be plain, Caesar, Flaminius has been talking to me about plots, and suspicions, and politicians. I never plagued myself with such things since Sylla's and Marius's days; and then I never could see much difference between the parties. All that I am sure of is, that those who meddle with such affairs are generally stabbed or strangled. And, though I like Greek wine and handsome women, I do not wish to risk my neck for them. Now, tell me as a friend, Caius--is there no danger?"

"Danger!" repeated Caesar, with a short, fierce, disdainful laugh: "what danger do you apprehend?"

"That you should best know," said Flaminius; "you are far more intimate with Catiline than I. But I advise you to be cautious. The

leading men entertain strong suspicions."

Caesar drew up his figure from its ordinary state of graceful relaxation into an attitude of commanding dignity, and replied in a voice of which the deep and impassioned melody formed a strange contrast to the humorous and affected tone of his ordinary conversation. "Let them suspect. They suspect because they know what they have deserved. What have they done for Rome?--What for mankind? Ask the citizens--ask the provinces. Have they had any other object than to perpetuate their own exclusive power, and to keep us under the yoke of an oligarchical tyranny, which unites in itself the worst evils of every other system, and combines more than Athenian turbulence with more than Persian despotism?"

"Good Gods! Caesar. It is not safe for you to speak, or for us to listen to, such things, at such a crisis."

"Judge for yourselves what you will hear. I will judge for myself what I will speak. I was not twenty years old when I defied Lucius Sylla, surrounded by the spears of legionaries and the daggers of assassins. Do you suppose that I stand in awe of his paltry successors, who have inherited a power which they never could have acquired; who would imitate his proscriptions, though they have never equalled his conquests?"

"Pompey is almost as little to be trifled with as Sylla. I heard a consular senator say that, in consequence of the present alarming state of affairs, he would probably be recalled from the command assigned to him by the Manilian law."

"Let him come,--the pupil of Sylla's butcheries,--the gleaner of Lucullus's trophies,--the thief-taker of the Senate."

"For Heaven's sake, Caius!--if you knew what the Consul said"--

"Something about himself, no doubt. Pity that such talents should be coupled with such cowardice and coxcombry. He is the finest speaker living,--infinitely superior to what Hortensius was, in his best days;-- a charming companion, except when he tells over for the twentieth time all the jokes that he made at Verres's trial. But he is the despicable tool of a despicable party."

"Your language, Caius, convinces me that the reports which have been circulated are not without foundation. I will venture to prophesy that

within a few months the republic will pass through a whole Odyssey of strange adventures."

"I believe so; an Odyssey, of which Pompey will be the Polyphemus, and Cicero the Siren. I would have the state imitate Ulysses: show no mercy to the former; but contrive, if it can be done, to listen to the enchanting voice of the other, without being seduced by it to destruction."

"But whom can your party produce as rivals to these two famous leaders?"

"Time will show. I would hope that there may arise a man, whose genius to conquer, to conciliate, and to govern, may unite in one cause an oppressed and divided people;--may do all that Sylla should have done, and exhibit the magnificent spectacle of a great nation directed by a great mind."

"And where is such a man to be found?"

"Perhaps where you would least expect to find him. Perhaps he may be one whose powers have hitherto been concealed in domestic or literary retirement. Perhaps he may be one, who, while waiting for some adequate excitement, for some worthy opportunity, squanders on trifles a genius before which may yet be humbled the sword of Pompey and the gown of Cicero. Perhaps he may now be disputing with a sophist; perhaps prattling with a mistress; perhaps" and, as he spoke, he turned away, and resumed his lounge, "strolling in the Forum."

...

It was almost midnight. The party had separated. Catiline and Cethegus were still conferring in the supper-room, which was, as usual, the highest apartment of the house. It formed a cupola, from which windows opened on the flat roof that surrounded it. To this terrace Zoe had retired. With eyes dimmed with fond and melancholy tears, she leaned over the balustrade, to catch the last glimpse of the departing form of Caesar, as it grew more and more indistinct in the moonlight. Had he any thought of her? Any love for her? He, the favourite of the high-born beauties of Rome, the most splendid, the most graceful, the most eloquent of its nobles? It could not be. His voice had, indeed, been touchingly soft whenever he addressed her. There had been a fascinating tenderness

even in the vivacity of his look and conversation. But such were always the manners of Caesar towards women. He had wreathed a sprig of myrtle in her hair as she was singing. She took it from her dark ringlets, and kissed it, and wept over it, and thought of the sweet legends of her own dear Greece,--of youths and girls, who, pining away in hopeless love, had been transformed into flowers by the compassion of the Gods; and she wished to become a flower, which Caesar might sometimes touch, though he should touch it only to weave a crown for some prouder and happier mistress.

She was roused from her musings by the loud step and voice of Cethegus, who was pacing furiously up and down the supper-room.

"May all the Gods confound me, if Caesar be not the deepest traitor, or the most miserable idiot, that ever intermeddled with a plot!"

Zoe shuddered. She drew nearer to the window. She stood concealed from observation by the curtain of fine network which hung over the aperture, to exclude the annoying insects of the climate.

"And you too!" continued Cethegus, turning fiercely on his accomplice; "you to take his part against me!--you, who proposed the scheme yourself!"

"My dear Caius Cethegus, you will not understand me. I proposed the scheme; and I will join in executing it. But policy is as necessary to our plans as boldness. I did not wish to startle Caesar--to lose his co-operation--perhaps to send him off with an information against us to Cicero and Catulus. He was so indignant at your suggestion that all my dissimulation was scarcely sufficient to prevent a total rupture."

"Indignant! The Gods confound him!--He prated about humanity, and generosity, and moderation. By Hercules, I have not heard such a lecture since I was with Xenochares at Rhodes."

"Caesar is made up of inconsistencies. He has boundless ambition, unquestioned courage, admirable sagacity. Yet I have frequently observed in him a womanish weakness at the sight of pain. I remember that once one of his slaves was taken ill while carrying his litter. He alighted, put the fellow in his place and walked home in a fall of snow. I wonder that you could be so ill-advised as to talk to him of massacre, and

pillage, and conflagration. You might have foreseen that such propositions would disgust a man of his temper."

"I do not know. I have not your self-command, Lucius. I hate such conspirators. What is the use of them? We must have blood --blood,--hacking and tearing work--bloody work!"

"Do not grind your teeth, my dear Caius; and lay down the carving-knife. By Hercules, you have cut up all the stuffing of the couch."

"No matter; we shall have couches enough soon,--and down to stuff them with,--and purple to cover them,--and pretty women to loll on them,--unless this fool, and such as he, spoil our plans. I had something else to say. The essenced fop wishes to seduce Zoe from me."

"Impossible! You misconstrue the ordinary gallantries which he is in the habit of paying to every handsome face."

"Curse on his ordinary gallantries, and his verses, and his compliments, and his sprigs of myrtle! If Caesar should dare--by Hercules, I will tear him to pieces in the middle of the Forum."

"Trust his destruction to me. We must use his talents and influence--thrust him upon every danger--make him our instrument while we are contending--our peace-offering to the Senate if we fail--our first victim if we succeed."

"Hark! what noise was that?"

"Somebody in the terrace --lend me your dagger."

Catiline rushed to the window. Zoe was standing in the shade. He stepped out. She darted into the room--passed like a flash of lightning by the startled Cethegus--flew down the stairs--through the court--through the vestibule--through the street. Steps, voices, lights, came fast and confusedly behind her; but with the speed of love and terror she gained upon her pursuers. She fled through the wilderness of unknown and dusky streets, till she found herself, breathless and exhausted, in the midst of a crowd of gallants, who, with chaplets on their heads and torches in their hands, were reeling from the portico of a stately mansion.

The foremost of the throng was a youth whose slender figure and beautiful countenance seemed hardly consistent with his sex. But the feminine delicacy of his features rendered more frightful the mingled

sensuality and ferocity of their expression. The libertine audacity of his stare, and the grotesque foppery of his apparel, seemed to indicate at least a partial insanity. Flinging one arm round Zoe, and tearing away her veil with the other, he disclosed to the gaze of his thronging companions the regular features and large dark eyes which characterise Athenian beauty.

"Clodius has all the luck to-night," cried Ligarius.

"Not so, by Hercules," said Marcus Coelius; "the girl is fairly our common prize: we will fling dice for her. The Venus (Venus was the Roman term for the highest throw of the dice.) throw, as it ought to do, shall decide."

"Let me go--let me go, for Heaven's sake," cried Zoe, struggling with Clodius.

"What a charming Greek accent she has! Come into the house, my little Athenian nightingale."

"Oh! what will become of me? If you have mothers--if you have sisters"--

"Clodius has a sister," muttered Ligarius, "or he is much belied."

"By Heaven, she is weeping," said Clodius.

"If she were not evidently a Greek," said Coelius, "I should take her for a vestal virgin."

"And if she were a vestal virgin," cried Clodius fiercely, "it should not deter me. This way;--no struggling--no screaming."

"Struggling! screaming!" exclaimed a gay and commanding voice; "You are making very ungentle love, Clodius."

The whole party started. Caesar had mingled with them unperceived.

The sound of his voice thrilled through the very heart of Zoe. With a convulsive effort she burst from the grasp of her insolent admirer, flung herself at the feet of Caesar, and clasped his knees. The moon shone full on her agitated and imploring face: her lips moved; but she uttered no sound. He gazed at her for an instant--raised her--clasped her to his bosom. "Fear nothing, my sweet Zoe." Then, with folded arms, and a smile of placid defiance, he placed himself between her and Clodius.

Clodius staggered forward, flushed with wine and rage, and uttering alternately a curse and a hiccup.

"By Pollux, this passes a jest. Caesar, how dare you insult me thus?"

"A jest! I am as serious as a Jew on the Sabbath. Insult you; for such a pair of eyes I would insult the whole consular bench, or I should be as insensible as King Psammis's mummy."

"Good Gods, Caesar!" said Marcus Coelius, interposing; "you cannot think it worth while to get into a brawl for a little Greek girl!"

"Why not? The Greek girls have used me as well as those of Rome. Besides, the whole reputation of my gallantry is at stake. Give up such a lovely woman to that drunken boy! My character would be gone for ever. No more perfumed tablets, full of vows and raptures. No more toying with fingers at the circus. No more evening walks along the Tiber. No more hiding in chests or jumping from windows. I, the favoured suitor of half the white stoles in Rome, could never again aspire above a freed-woman. You a man of gallantry, and think of such a thing! For shame, my dear Coelius! Do not let Clodia hear of it."

While Caesar spoke he had been engaged in keeping Clodius at arm's-length. The rage of the frantic libertine increased as the struggle continued. "Stand back, as you value your life," he cried; "I will pass."

"Not this way, sweet Clodius. I have too much regard for you to suffer you to make love at such disadvantage. You smell too much of Falernian at present. Would you stifle your mistress? By Hercules, you are fit to kiss nobody now, except old Piso, when he is tumbling home in the morning from the vintners."

Clodius plunged his hand into his bosom and drew a little dagger, the faithful companion of many desperate adventures.

"Oh, Gods! he will be murdered!" cried Zoe.

The whole throng of revellers was in agitation. The street fluctuated with torches and lifted hands. It was but for a moment. Caesar watched with a steady eye the descending hand of Clodius, arrested the blow, seized his antagonist by the throat, and flung him against one of the pillars of the portico with such violence, that he rolled, stunned and senseless, on the ground.

"He is killed," cried several voices.

"Fair self-defence, by Hercules!" said Marcus Coelius. "Bear witness,

you all saw him draw his dagger."

He is not dead--he breathes," said Ligarius. " Carry him into the house; he is dreadfully bruised."

The rest of the party retired with Clodius. Coelius turned to Caesar.

"By all the Gods, Caius! you have won your lady fairly. A splendid victory! You deserve a triumph."

"What a madman Clodius has become!"

"Intolerable. But come and sup with me on the Nones. You have no objection to meet the Consul?"

Cicero? None at all. We need not talk politics. Our old dispute about Plato and Epicurus will furnish us with plenty of conversation. So reckon upon me, my dear Marcus, and farewell."

Caesar and Zoe turned away. As soon as they were beyond hearing, she began in great agitation:--

"Caesar, you are in danger. I know all. I overheard Catiline and Cethegus. You are engaged in a project which must lead to certain destruction."

"My beautiful Zoe, I live only for glory and pleasure. For these I have never hesitated to hazard an existence which they alone render valuable to me. In the present case, I can assure you that our scheme presents the fairest hopes of success."

"So much the worse. You do not know--you do not understand me. I speak not of open peril, but of secret treachery. Catiline hates you;--Cethegus hates you;--your destruction is resolved. If you survive the contest, you perish in the first hour of victory. They detest you for your moderation; they are eager for blood and plunder. I have risked my life to bring you this warning; but that is of little moment. Farewell!--Be happy."

Caesar stopped her. "Do you fly from my thanks, dear Zoe?"

"I wish not for your thanks, but for your safety;--I desire not to defraud Valeria or Servilia of one caress, extorted from gratitude or pity. Be my feelings what they may, I have learnt in a fearful school to endure and to suppress them. I have been taught to abase a proud spirit to the claps and hisses of the vulgar;--to smile on suitors who united the insults of a

despicable pride to the endearments of a loathsome fondness;-- to affect sprightliness with an aching head, and eyes from which tears were ready to gush;--to feign love with curses on my lips, and madness in my brain. Who feels for me any esteem,--any tenderness? Who will shed a tear over the nameless grave which will soon shelter from cruelty and scorn the broken heart of the poor Athenian girl? But you, who alone have addressed her in her degradation with a voice of kindness and respect, farewell. Sometimes think of me,--not with sorrow;--no; I could bear your ingratitude, but not your distress. Yet, if it will not pain you too much, in distant days, when your lofty hopes and destinies are accomplished,--on the evening of some mighty victory, --in the chariot of some magnificent triumph,--think on one who loved you with that exceeding love which only the miserable can feel. Think that, wherever her exhausted frame may have sunk beneath the sensibilities of a tortured spirit,--in whatever hovel or whatever vault she may have closed her eyes,--whatever strange scenes of horror and pollution may have surrounded her dying bed, your shape was the last that swam before her sight-- your voice the last sound that was ringing in her ears. Yet turn your face to me, Caesar. Let me carry away one last look of those features, and then "--He turned round. He looked at her. He hid his face on her bosom, and burst into tears. With sobs long and loud, and convulsive as those of a terrified child, he poured forth on her bosom the tribute of impetuous and uncontrollable emotion. He raised his head; but he in vain struggled to restore composure to the brow which had confronted the frown of Sylla, and the lips which had rivalled the eloquence of Cicero. He several times attempted to speak, but in vain; and his voice still faltered with tenderness, when, after a pause of several minutes, he thus addressed her:

"My own dear Zoe, your love has been bestowed on one who, if he cannot merit, can at least appreciate and adore you. Beings of similar loveliness, and similar devotedness of affection, mingled, in all my boyish dreams of greatness, with visions of curule chairs and ivory cars, marshalled legions and laurelled fasces. Such I have endeavoured to find in the world; and, in their stead, I have met with selfishness, with vanity, with frivolity, with falsehood. The life which you have preserved is a

boon less valuable than the affection "--

"Oh! Caesar," interrupted the blushing Zoe, "think only on your own security at present. If you feel as you speak,--but you are only mocking me,--or perhaps your compassion "--

"By Heaven!--by every oath that is binding "--

"Alas! alas! Caesar, were not all the same oaths sworn yesterday to Valeria? But I will trust you, at least so far as to partake your present dangers. Flight may be necessary:--form your plans. Be they what they may, there is one who, in exile, in poverty, in peril, asks only to wander, to beg, to die with you."

"My Zoe, I do not anticipate any such necessity. To renounce the conspiracy without renouncing the principles on which it was originally undertaken,--to elude the vengeance of the Senate without losing the confidence of the people,--is, indeed, an arduous, but not an impossible, task. I owe it to myself and to my country to make the attempt. There is still ample time for consideration. At present I am too happy in love to think of ambition or danger."

They had reached the door of a stately palace. Caesar struck it. It was instantly opened by a slave. Zoe found herself in a magnificent hall, surrounded by pillars of green marble, between which were ranged the statues of the long line of Julian nobles.

"Call Endymion," said Caesar.

The confidential freed-man made his appearance, not without a slight smile, which his patron's good nature emboldened him to hazard, at perceiving the beautiful Athenian.

"Arm my slaves, Endymion; there are reasons for precaution. Let them relieve each other on guard during the night. Zoe, my love, my preserver, why are your cheeks so pale? Let me kiss some bloom into them. How you tremble! Endymion, a flask of Samian and some fruit. Bring them to my apartments. This way, my sweet Zoe."

...

ON THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE.

(June 1823)

This is the age of societies. There is scarcely one Englishman in ten who has not belonged to some association for distributing books, or for prosecuting them; for sending invalids to the hospital, or beggars to the treadmill; for giving plate to the rich, or blankets to the poor. To be the most absurd institution among so many institutions is no small distinction; it seems, however, to belong indisputably to the Royal Society of Literature. At the first establishment of that ridiculous academy, every sensible man predicted that, in spite of regal patronage and episcopal management, it would do nothing, or do harm. And it will scarcely be denied that those expectations have hitherto been fulfilled.

I do not attack the founders of the association. Their characters are respectable; their motives, I am willing to believe, were laudable. But I feel, and it is the duty of every literary man to feel, a strong jealousy of their proceedings. Their society can be innocent only while it continues to be despicable. Should they ever possess the power to encourage merit, they must also possess the power to depress it. Which power will be more frequently exercised, let every one who has studied literary history, let every one who has studied human nature, declare.

Envy and faction insinuate themselves into all communities. They often disturb the peace, and pervert the decisions, of benevolent and scientific associations. But it is in literary academies that they exert the most extensive and pernicious influence. In the first place, the principles of literary criticism, though equally fixed with those on which the chemist and the surgeon proceed, are by no means equally recognised. Men are rarely able to assign a reason for their approbation or dislike on questions of taste; and therefore they willingly submit to any guide who boldly asserts his claim to superior discernment. It is more difficult to ascertain and establish the merits of a poem than the powers of a machine or the

benefits of a new remedy. Hence it is in literature, that quackery is most easily puffed, and excellence most easily decried.

In some degree this argument applies to academies of the fine arts; and it is fully confirmed by all that I have ever heard of that institution which annually disfigures the walls of Somerset House with an acre of spoiled canvas. But a literary tribunal is incomparably more dangerous. Other societies, at least, have no tendency to call forth any opinions on those subjects which most agitate and inflame the minds of men. The sceptic and the zealot, the revolutionist and the placeman, meet on common ground in a gallery of paintings or a laboratory of science. They can praise or censure without reference to the differences which exist between them. In a literary body this can never be the case. Literature is, and always must be, inseparably blended with politics and theology; it is the great engine which moves the feelings of a people on the most momentous questions. It is, therefore, impossible that any society can be formed so impartial as to consider the literary character of an individual abstracted from the opinions which his writings inculcate. It is not to be hoped, perhaps it is not to be wished, that the feelings of the man should be so completely forgotten in the duties of the academician. The consequences are evident. The honours and censures of this Star Chamber of the Muses will be awarded according to the prejudices of the particular sect or faction which may at the time predominate. Whigs would canvass against a Southey, Tories against a Byron. Those who might at first protest against such conduct as unjust would soon adopt it on the plea of retaliation; and the general good of literature, for which the society was professedly instituted, would be forgotten in the stronger claims of political and religious partiality.

Yet even this is not the worst. Should the institution ever acquire any influence, it will afford most pernicious facilities to every malignant coward who may desire to blast a reputation which he envies. It will furnish a secure ambuscade, behind which the Maroons of literature may take a certain and deadly aim. The editorial WE has often been fatal to rising genius; though all the world knows that it is only a form of speech, very often employed by a single needy blockhead. The academic WE

would have a far greater and more ruinous influence. Numbers, while they increase the effect, would diminish the shame, of injustice. The advantages of an open and those of an anonymous attack would be combined; and the authority of avowal would be united to the security of concealment. The serpents in Virgil, after they had destroyed Laocoon, found an asylum from the vengeance of the enraged people behind the shield of the statue of Minerva. And, in the same manner, everything that is grovelling and venomous, everything that can hiss, and everything that can sting, would take sanctuary in the recesses of this new temple of wisdom.

The French academy was, of all such associations, the most widely and the most justly celebrated. It was founded by the greatest of ministers: it was patronised by successive kings; it numbered in its lists most of the eminent French writers. Yet what benefit has literature derived from its labours? What is its history but an uninterrupted record of servile compliances--of paltry artifices--of deadly quarrels--of perfidious friendships? Whether governed by the Court, by the Sorbonne, or by the Philosophers, it was always equally powerful for evil, and equally impotent for good. I might speak of the attacks by which it attempted to depress the rising fame of Corneille; I might speak of the reluctance with which it gave its tardy confirmation to the applauses which the whole civilised world had bestowed on the genius of Voltaire. I might prove by overwhelming evidence that, to the latest period of its existence, even under the superintendence of the all-accomplished D'Alembert, it continued to be a scene of the fiercest animosities and the basest intrigues. I might cite Piron's epigrams, and Marmontel's memoirs, and Montesquieu's letters. But I hasten on to another topic.

One of the modes by which our Society proposes to encourage merit is the distribution of prizes. The munificence of the king has enabled it to offer an annual premium of a hundred guineas for the best essay in prose, and another of fifty guineas for the best poem, which may be transmitted to it. This is very laughable. In the first place the judges may err. Those imperfections of human intellect to which, as the articles of the Church tell us, even general councils are subject, may possibly be found

even in the Royal Society of Literature. The French academy, as I have already said, was the most illustrious assembly of the kind, and numbered among its associates men much more distinguished than ever will assemble at Mr Hatchard's to rummage the box of the English Society. Yet this famous body gave a poetical prize, for which Voltaire was a candidate, to a fellow who wrote some verses about THE FROZEN AND THE BURNING POLE.

Yet, granting that the prizes were always awarded to the best composition, that composition, I say without hesitation, will always be bad. A prize poem is like a prize sheep. The object of the competitor for the agricultural premium is to produce an animal fit, not to be eaten, but to be weighed. Accordingly he pampers his victim into morbid and unnatural fatness; and, when it is in such a state that it would be sent away in disgust from any table, he offers it to the judges. The object of the poetical candidate, in like manner, is to produce, not a good poem, but a poem of that exact degree of frigidity or bombast which may appear to his censors to be correct or sublime. Compositions thus constructed will always be worthless. The few excellences which they may contain will have an exotic aspect and flavour. In general, prize sheep are good for nothing but to make tallow candles, and prize poems are good for nothing but to light them.

The first subject proposed by the Society to the poets of England was Dartmoor. I thought that they intended a covert sarcasm at their own projects. Their institution was a literary Dartmoor scheme;--a plan for forcing into cultivation the waste lands of intellect,--for raising poetical produce, by means of bounties, from soil too meagre to have yielded any returns in the natural course of things. The plan for the cultivation of Dartmoor has, I hear, been abandoned. I hope that this may be an omen of the fate of the Society.

In truth, this seems by no means improbable. They have been offering for several years the rewards which the king placed at their disposal, and have not, as far as I can learn, been able to find in their box one composition which they have deemed worthy of publication. At least no publication has taken place. The associates may perhaps be

astonished at this. But I will attempt to explain it, after the manner of ancient times, by means of an apologue.

About four hundred years after the Deluge, King Gomer Chephoraod reigned in Babylon. He united all the characteristics of an excellent sovereign. He made good laws, won great battles, and white-washed long streets. He was, in consequence, idolised by his people, and panegyrised by many poets and orators. A book was then a sermons undertaking. Neither paper nor any similar material had been invented. Authors were therefore under the necessity of inscribing their compositions on massive bricks. Some of these Babylonian records are still preserved in European museums; but the language in which they are written has never been deciphered. Gomer Chephoraod was so popular that the clay of all the plains round the Euphrates could scarcely furnish brick-kilns enough for his eulogists. It is recorded in particular that Pharonezzar, the Assyrian Pindar, published a bridge and four walls in his praise.

One day the king was going in state from his palace to the temple of Belus. During this procession it was lawful for any Babylonian to offer any petition or suggestion to his sovereign. As the chariot passed before a vintner's shop, a large company, apparently half-drunk, sallied forth into the street, and one of them thus addressed the king:

"Gomer Chephoraod, live for ever! It appears to thy servants that of all the productions of the earth good wine is the best, and bad wine is the worst. Good wine makes the heart cheerful, the eyes bright, the speech ready. Bad wine confuses the head, disorders the stomach, makes us quarrelsome at night, and sick the next morning. Now therefore let my lord the king take order that thy servants may drink good wine.

"And how is this to be done?" said the good-natured prince.

"O King," said his monitor, "this is most easy. Let the king make a decree, and seal it with his royal signet: and let it be proclaimed that the king will give ten she-asses, and ten slaves, and ten changes of raiment, every year, unto the man who shall make ten measures of the best wine. And whosoever wishes for the she-asses, and the slaves, and the raiment, let him send the ten measures of wine to thy servants, and we will drink

thereof and judge. So shall there be much good wine in Assyria."

The project pleased Gomer Chephoraod. "Be it so," said he. The people shouted. The petitioners prostrated themselves in gratitude. The same night heralds were despatched to bear the intelligence to the remotest districts of Assyria.

After a due interval the wines began to come in; and the examiners assembled to adjudge the prize. The first vessel was unsealed. Its odour was such that the judges, without tasting it, pronounced unanimous condemnation. The next was opened: it had a villainous taste of clay. The third was sour and vapid. They proceeded from one cask of execrable liquor to another, till at length, in absolute nausea, they gave up the investigation.

The next morning they all assembled at the gate of the king, with pale faces and aching heads. They owned that they could not recommend any competitor as worthy of the rewards. They swore that the wine was little better than poison, and entreated permission to resign the office of deciding between such detestable potions.

"In the name of Belus, how can this have happened?" said the king.

Merolchazzar, the high-priest, muttered something about the anger of the Gods at the toleration shown to a sect of impious heretics who ate pigeons broiled, "whereas," said he, "our religion commands us to eat them roasted. Now therefore, O King," continued this respectable divine, "give command to thy men of war, and let them smite the disobedient people with the sword, them, and their wives, and their children, and let their houses, and their flocks, and their herds, be given to thy servants the priests. Then shall the land yield its increase, and the fruits of the earth shall be no more blasted by the vengeance of Heaven."

"Nay," said the king, "the ground lies under no general curse from Heaven. The season has been singularly good. The wine which thou didst thyself drink at the banquet a few nights ago, O venerable Merolchazzar, was of this year's vintage. Dost thou not remember how thou didst praise it? It was the same night that thou wast inspired by Belus and didst reel to and fro, and discourse sacred mysteries. These things are too hard for me. I comprehend them not. The only wine

which is bad is that which is sent to my judges. Who can expound this to us?"

The king scratched his head. Upon which all the courtiers scratched their heads.

He then ordered proclamation to be made that a purple robe and a golden chain should be given to the man who could solve this difficulty.

An old philosopher, who had been observed to smile rather disdainfully when the prize had first been instituted, came forward and spoke thus:--

"Gomer Chephoraod, live for ever! Marvel not at that which has happened. It was no miracle, but a natural event. How could it be otherwise? It is true that much good wine has been made this year. But who would send it in for thy rewards? Thou knowest Ascobaruch who hath the great vineyards in the north, and Cohahiroth who sendeth wine every year from the south over the Persian Golf. Their wines are so delicious that ten measures thereof are sold for an hundred talents of silver. Thinkest thou that they will exchange them for thy slaves and thine asses? What would thy prize profit any who have vineyards in rich soils?"

"Who then," said one of the judges, "are the wretches who sent us this poison?"

"Blame them not," said the sage, "seeing that you have been the authors of the evil. They are men whose lands are poor, and have never yielded them any returns equal to the prizes which the king proposed. Wherefore, knowing that the lords of the fruitful vineyards would not enter into competition with them they planted vines, some on rocks, and some in light sandy soil, and some in deep clay. Hence their wines are bad. For no culture or reward will make barren land bear good vines. Know therefore, assuredly, that your prizes have increased the quantity of bad but not of good wine."

There was a long silence. At length the king spoke. "Give him the purple robe and the chain of gold. Throw the wines into the Euphrates; and proclaim that the Royal Society of Wines is dissolved."

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SCENES FROM "ATHENIAN REVELS."

(January 1824)

A DRAMA

I.

SCENE--A Street in Athens.

Enter CALLIDEMUS and SPEUSIPPUS;

CALLIDEMUS. So, you young reprobate! You must be a man of wit, forsooth, and a man of quality! You must spend as if you were as rich as Nicias, and prate as if you were as wise as Pericles! You must dangle after sophists and pretty women! And I must pay for all! I must sup on thyme and onions, while you are swallowing thrushes and hares! I must drink water, that you may play the cottabus (This game consisted in projecting wine out of cups; it was a diversion extremely fashionable at Athenian entertainments.) with Chian wine! I must wander about as ragged as Pauson (Pauson was an Athenian painter, whose name was synonymous with beggary. See Aristophanes; *Plutus*, 602. From his poverty, I am inclined to suppose that he painted historical pictures.), that you may be as fine as Alcibiades! I must lie on bare boards, with a stone (See Aristophanes; *Plutus*, 542.) for my pillow, and a rotten mat for my coverlid, by the light of a wretched winking lamp, while you are marching in state, with as many torches as one sees at the feast of Ceres, to thunder with your hatchet (See Theocritus; *Idyll* ii. 128.) at the doors of half the Ionian ladies in Peiraeus. (This was the most disreputable part of Athens. See Aristophanes: *Pax*, 165.)

SPEUSIPPUS. Why, thou unreasonable old man! Thou most shameless of fathers!- -

CALLIDEMUS. Ungrateful wretch; dare you talk so? Are you not afraid of the thunders of Jupiter?

SPEUSIPPUS. Jupiter thunder! nonsense! Anaxagoras says, that thunder is only an explosion produced by--

CALLIDEMUS. He does! Would that it had fallen on his head for his pains!

SPEUSIPPUS. Nay: talk rationally.

CALLIDEMUS. Rationally! You audacious young sophist! I will talk rationally. Do you know that I am your father? What quibble can you make upon that?

SPEUSIPPUS. Do I know that you are my father? Let us take the question to pieces, as Melesigenes would say. First, then, we must inquire what is knowledge? Secondly, what is a father? Now, knowledge, as Socrates said the other day to Theaetetus (See Plato's Theaetetus.)--

CALLIDEMUS. Socrates! what! the ragged flat-nosed old dotard, who walks about all day barefoot, and filches cloaks, and dissects gnats, and shoes (See Aristophanes; Nubes, 150.) fleas with wax?

SPEUSIPPUS. All fiction! All trumped up by Aristophanes!

CALLIDEMUS. By Pallas, if he is in the habit of putting shoes on his fleas, he is kinder to them than to himself. But listen to me, boy; if you go on in this way, you will be ruined. There is an argument for you. Go to your Socrates and your Melesigenes, and tell them to refute that. Ruined! Do you hear?

SPEUSIPPUS. Ruined!

CALLIDEMUS. Ay, by Jupiter! Is such a show as you make to be supported on nothing? During all the last war, I made not an obol from my farm; the Peloponnesian locusts came almost as regularly as the Pleiades;--corn burnt;--olives stripped;--fruit trees cut down;-- wells stopped up;--and, just when peace came, and I hoped that all would turn out well, you must begin to spend as if you had all the mines of Thasus at command.

SPEUSIPPUS. Now, by Neptune, who delights in horses--

CALLIDEMUS. If Neptune delights in horses, he does not resemble me. You must ride at the Panathenaea on a horse fit for the great king: four acres of my best vines went for that folly. You must retrench, or you

will have nothing to eat. Does not Anaxagoras mention, among his other discoveries, that when a man has nothing to eat he dies?

SPEUSIPPUS. You are deceived. My friends--

CALLIDEMUS. Oh, yes! your friends will notice you, doubtless, when you are squeezing through the crowd, on a winter's day, to warm yourself at the fire of the baths;--or when you are fighting with beggars and beggars' dogs for the scraps of a sacrifice;--or when you are glad to earn three wretched obols (The stipend of an Athenian jurymen.) by listening all day to lying speeches and crying children.

SPEUSIPPUS. There are other means of support.

CALLIDEMUS. What! I suppose you will wander from house to house, like that wretched buffoon Philippus (Xenophon; Convivium.), and beg everybody who has asked a supper-party to be so kind as to feed you and laugh at you; or you will turn sycophant; you will get a bunch of grapes, or a pair of shoes, now and then, by frightening some rich coward with a mock prosecution. Well! that is a task for which your studies under the sophists may have fitted you.

SPEUSIPPUS. You are wide of the mark.

CALLIDEMUS. Then what, in the name of Juno, is your scheme? Do you intend to join Orestes (A celebrated highwayman of Attica. See Aristophanes; Aves, 711; and in several other passages.), and rob on the highway? Take care; beware of the eleven (The police officers of Athens.); beware of the hemlock. It may be very pleasant to live at other people's expense; but not very pleasant, I should think, to hear the pestle give its last bang against the mortar, when the cold dose is ready. Pah!--

SPEUSIPPUS. Hemlock? Orestes! folly!--I aim at nobler objects. What say you to politics,--the general assembly?

CALLIDEMUS. You an orator!--oh no! no! Cleon was worth twenty such fools as you. You have succeeded, I grant, to his impudence, for which, if there be justice in Tartarus, he is now soaking up to the eyes in his own tanpickle. But the Paphlagonian had parts.

SPEUSIPPUS. And you mean to imply--

CALLIDEMUS. Not I. You are a Pericles in embryo, doubtless. Well: and when are you to make your first speech? O Pallas!

SPEUSIPPUS. I thought of speaking, the other day, on the Sicilian expedition; but Nicias (See Thucydides, vi. 8.) got up before me.

CALLIDEMUS. Nicias, poor honest man, might just as well have sate still; his speaking did but little good. The loss of your oration is, doubtless, an irreparable public calamity.

SPEUSIPPUS. Why, not so; I intend to introduce it at the next assembly; it will suit any subject.

CALLIDEMUS. That is to say, it will suit none. But pray, if it be not too presumptuous a request, indulge me with a specimen.

SPEUSIPPUS. Well; suppose the agora crowded;--an important subject under discussion;--an ambassador from Argos, or from the great king;-- the tributes from the islands;--an impeachment;--in short, anything you please. The crier makes proclamation.--"Any citizen above fifty years old may speak--any citizen not disqualified may speak." Then I rise:--a great murmur of curiosity while I am mounting the stand.

CALLIDEMUS. Of curiosity! yes, and of something else too. You will infallibly be dragged down by main force, like poor Glaucon (See Xenophon Memorabilia, iii.) last year.

SPEUSIPPUS. Never fear. I shall begin in this style: "When I consider, Athenians, the importance of our city;--when I consider the extent of its power, the wisdom of its laws, the elegance of its decorations;--when I consider by what names and by what exploits its annals are adorned; when I think on Harmodius and Aristogiton, on Themistocles and Miltiades, on Cimon and Pericles;--when I contemplate our pre-eminence in arts and letters;--when I observe so many flourishing states and islands compelled to own the dominion, and purchase the protection of the City of the Violet Crown" (A favourite epithet of Athens. See Aristophanes; Acharn. 637.)--

CALLIDEMUS. I shall choke with rage. Oh, all ye gods and goddesses, what sacrilege, what perjury have I ever committed, that I should be singled out from among all the citizens of Athens to be the father of this fool?

SPEUSIPPUS. What now? By Bacchus, old man, I would not advise you to give way to such fits of passion in the streets. If Aristophanes

were to see you, you would infallibly be in a comedy next spring.

CALLIDEMUS. You have more reason to fear Aristophanes than any fool living. Oh, that he could but hear you trying to imitate the slang of Straton (See Aristophanes; Equites, 1375.) and the lisp of Alcibiades! (See Aristophanes; Vespae, 44.) You would be an inexhaustible subject. You would console him for the loss of Cleon.

SPEUSIPPUS. No, no. I may perhaps figure at the dramatic representations before long; but in a very different way.

CALLIDEMUS. What do you mean?

SPEUSIPPUS. What say you to a tragedy?

CALLIDEMUS. A tragedy of yours?

SPEUSIPPUS. Even so.

CALLIDEMUS. Oh Hercules! Oh Bacchus! This is too much. Here is an universal genius; sophist,--orator,--poet. To what a three-headed monster have I given birth! a perfect Cerberus of intellect! And pray what may your piece be about? Or will your tragedy, like your speech, serve equally for any subject?

SPEUSIPPUS. I thought of several plots;--Oedipus,--Eteocles and Polynices,-- the war of Troy,--the murder of Agamemnon.

CALLIDEMUS. And what have you chosen?

SPEUSIPPUS. You know there is a law which permits any modern poet to retouch a play of Aeschylus, and bring it forward as his own composition. And, as there is an absurd prejudice, among the vulgar, in favour of his extravagant pieces, I have selected one of them, and altered it.

CALLIDEMUS. Which of them?

SPEUSIPPUS. Oh! that mass of barbarous absurdities, the Prometheus. But I have framed it anew upon the model of Euripides. By Bacchus, I shall make Sophocles and Agathon look about them. You would not know the play again.

CALLIDEMUS. By Jupiter, I believe not.

SPEUSIPPUS. I have omitted the whole of the absurd dialogue between Vulcan and Strength, at the beginning.

CALLIDEMUS. That may be, on the whole, an improvement. The

play will then open with that grand soliloquy of Prometheus, when he is chained to the rock.

"Oh! ye eternal heavens! ye rushing winds! Ye fountains of great streams! Ye ocean waves, That in ten thousand sparkling dimples wreath Your azure smiles! All-generating earth! All-seeing sun! On you, on you, I call." (See Aeschylus; Prometheus, 88.)

Well, I allow that will be striking; I did not think you capable of that idea. Why do you laugh?

SPEUSIPPUS. Do you seriously suppose that one who has studied the plays of that great man, Euripides, would ever begin a tragedy in such a ranting style?

CALLIDEMUS. What, does not your play open with the speech of Prometheus?

SPEUSIPPUS. No doubt.

CALLIDEMUS. Then what, in the name of Bacchus, do you make him say?

SPEUSIPPUS. You shall hear; and, if it be not in the very style of Euripides, call me a fool.

CALLIDEMUS. That is a liberty which I shall venture to take, whether it be or no. But go on.

SPEUSIPPUS. Prometheus begins thus:--

"Coelus begat Saturn and Briareus Cottus and Creius and Iapetus, Gyges and Hyperion, Phoebe, Tethys, Thea and Rhea and Mnemosyne. Then Saturn wedded Rhea, and begat Pluto and Neptune, Jupiter and Juno."

CALLIDEMUS. Very beautiful, and very natural; and, as you say, very like Euripides.

SPEUSIPPUS. You are sneering. Really, father, you do not understand these things. You had not those advantages in your youth--

CALLIDEMUS. Which I have been fool enough to let you have. No; in my early days, lying had not been dignified into a science, nor politics degraded into a trade. I wrestled, and read Homer's battles, instead of dressing my hair, and reciting lectures in verse out of Euripides. But I have some notion of what a play should be; I have seen Phrynichus, and

lived with Aeschylus. I saw the representation of the Persians.

SPEUSIPPUS. A wretched play; it may amuse the fools who row the triremes; but it is utterly unworthy to be read by any man of taste.

CALLIDEMUS. If you had seen it acted;--the whole theatre frantic with joy, stamping, shouting, laughing, crying. There was Cynaegirus, the brother of Aeschylus, who lost both his arms at Marathon, beating the stumps against his sides with rapture. When the crowd remarked him-- But where are you going?

SPEUSIPPUS. To sup with Alcibiades; he sails with the expedition for Sicily in a few days; this is his farewell entertainment.

CALLIDEMUS. So much the better; I should say, so much the worse. That cursed Sicilian expedition! And you were one of the young fools (See Thucydides, vi. 13.) who stood clapping and shouting while he was gulling the rabble, and who drowned poor Nicias's voice with your uproar. Look to it; a day of reckoning will come. As to Alcibiades himself--

SPEUSIPPUS. What can you say against him? His enemies themselves acknowledge his merit.

CALLIDEMUS. They acknowledge that he is clever, and handsome, and that he was crowned at the Olympic games. And what other merits do his friends claim for him? A precious assembly you will meet at his house, no doubt.

SPEUSIPPUS. The first men in Athens, probably.

CALLIDEMUS. Whom do you mean by the first men in Athens?

SPEUSIPPUS. Callicles. (Callicles plays a conspicuous part in the Gorgias of Plato.)

CALLIDEMUS. A sacrilegious, impious, unfeeling ruffian!

SPEUSIPPUS. Hippomachus.

CALLIDEMUS. A fool, who can talk of nothing but his travels through Persia and Egypt. Go, go. The gods forbid that I should detain you from such choice society!

[Exeunt severally.]

II.

SCENE--A Hall in the house of ALCIBIADES.

ALCIBIADES, SPEUSIPPUS, CALLICLES, HIPPOMACHUS, CHARICLEA, and others, seated round a table feasting.

ALCIBIADES. Bring larger cups. This shall be our gayest revel. It is probably the last--for some of us at least.

SPEUSIPPUS. At all events, it will be long before you taste such wine again, Alcibiades.

CALLICLES. Nay, there is excellent wine in Sicily. When I was there with Eurymedon's squadron, I had many a long carouse. You never saw finer grapes than those of Aetna.

HIPPOMACHUS. The Greeks do not understand the art of making wine. Your Persian is the man. So rich, so fragrant, so sparkling! I will tell you what the Satrap of Caria said to me about that when I supped with him.

ALCIBIADES. Nay, sweet Hippomachus; not a word to-night about satraps, or the great king, or the walls of Babylon, or the Pyramids, or the mummies. Chariclea, why do you look so sad?

CHARICLEA. Can I be cheerful when you are going to leave me, Alcibiades?

ALCIBIADES. My life, my sweet soul, it is but for a short time. In a year we conquer Sicily. In another, we humble Carthage. (See Thucydides, vi. 90.) I will bring back such robes, such necklaces, elephants' teeth by thousands, ay, and the elephants themselves, if you wish to see them. Nay, smile, my Chariclea, or I shall talk nonsense to no purpose.

HIPPOMACHUS. The largest elephant that I ever saw was in the grounds of Teribazus, near Susa. I wish that I had measured him.

ALCIBIADES. I wish that he had trod upon you. Come, come, Chariclea, we shall soon return, and then--

CHARICLEA. Yes; then indeed.

ALCIBIADES. Yes, then-- Then for revels; then for dances, Tender whispers, melting glances. Peasants, pluck your richest fruits: Minstrels, sound your sweetest flutes: Come in laughing crowds to greet us, Dark-

eyed daughters of Miletus; Bring the myrtles, bring the dice, Floods of Chian, hills of spice.

SPEUSIPPUS. Whose lines are those, Alcibiades?

ALCIBIADES. My own. Think you, because I do not shut myself up to meditate, and drink water, and eat herbs, that I cannot write verses? By Apollo, if I did not spend my days in politics, and my nights in revelry, I should have made Sophocles tremble. But now I never go beyond a little song like this, and never invoke any Muse but Chariclea. But come, Speusippus, sing. You are a professed poet. Let us have some of your verses.

SPEUSIPPUS. My verses! How can you talk so? I a professed poet!

ALCIBIADES. Oh, content you, sweet Speusippus. We all know your designs upon the tragic honours. Come, sing. A chorus of your new play.

SPEUSIPPUS. Nay, nay--

HIPPOMACHUS. When a guest who is asked to sing at a Persian banquet refuses--

SPEUSIPPUS. In the name of Bacchus--

ALCIBIADES. I am absolute. Sing.

SPEUSIPPUS. Well, then, I will sing you a chorus, which, I think, is a tolerable imitation of Euripides.

CHARICLEA. Of Euripides?--Not a word.

ALCIBIADES. Why so, sweet Chariclea?

CHARICLEA. Would you have me betray my sex? Would you have me forget his Phaedras and Sthenoboeas? No if I ever suffer any lines of that woman-hater, or his imitators, to be sung in my presence, may I sell herbs (The mother of Euripides was a herb-woman. This was a favourite topic of Aristophanes.) like his mother, and wear rags like his Telephus. (The hero of one of the lost plays of Euripides, who appears to have been brought upon the stage in the garb of a beggar. See Aristophanes; Acharn. 430; and in other places.)

ALCIBIADES. Then, sweet Chariclea, since you have silenced Speusippus, you shall sing yourself.

CHARICLEA. What shall I sing?

ALCIBIADES. Nay, choose for yourself.

CHARICLEA. Then I will sing an old Ionian hymn, which is chanted every spring at the feast of Venus, near Miletus. I used to sing it in my own country when I was a child; and--ah, Alcibiades!

ALCIBIADES. Dear Chariclea, you shall sing something else. This distresses you.

CHARICLEA. No hand me the lyre:--no matter. You will hear the song to disadvantage. But if it were sung as I have heard it sung:--if this were a beautiful morning in spring, and if we were standing on a woody promontory, with the sea, and the white sails, and the blue Cyclades beneath us,--and the portico of a temple peeping through the trees on a huge peak above our heads,--and thousands of people, with myrtles in their hands, thronging up the winding path, their gay dresses and garlands disappearing and emerging by turns as they passed round the angles of the rock,--then perhaps- -

ALCIBIADES. Now, by Venus herself, sweet lady, where you are we shall lack neither sun, nor flowers, nor spring, nor temple, nor goddess.

CHARICLEA. (Sings.) Let this sunny hour be given, Venus, unto love and mirth: Smiles like thine are in the heaven; Bloom like thine is on the earth; And the tinkling of the fountains, And the murmurs of the sea, And the echoes from the mountains, Speak of youth, and hope, and thee.

By whate'er of soft expression Thou hast taught to lovers' eyes, Faint denial, slow confession, Glowing cheeks and stifled sighs; By the pleasure and the pain, By the follies and the wiles, Pouting fondness, sweet disdain, Happy tears and mournful smiles;

Come with music floating o'er thee; Come with violets springing round: Let the Graces dance before thee, All their golden zones unbound; Now in sport their faces hiding, Now, with slender fingers fair, From their laughing eyes dividing The long curls of rose-crowned hair.

ALCIBIADES. Sweetly sung; but mournfully, Chariclea; for which I would chide you, but that I am sad myself. More wine there. I wish to all the gods that I had fairly sailed from Athens.

CHARICLEA. And from me, Alcibiades?

ALCIBIADES. Yes, from you, dear lady. The days which immediately precede separation are the most melancholy of our lives.

CHARICLEA. Except those which immediately follow it.

ALCIBIADES. No; when I cease to see you, other objects may compel my attention; but can I be near you without thinking how lovely you are, and how soon I must leave you?

HIPPOMACHUS. Ay; travelling soon puts such thoughts out of men's heads.

CALLICLES. A battle is the best remedy for them.

CHARICLEA. A battle, I should think, might supply their place with others as unpleasant.

CALLICLES. No. The preparations are rather disagreeable to a novice. But as soon as the fighting begins, by Jupiter, it is a noble time;--men trampling,--shields clashing,--spears breaking,--and the poean roaring louder than all.

CHARICLEA. But what if you are killed?

CALLICLES. What indeed? You must ask Speusippus that question. He is a philosopher.

ALCIBIADES. Yes, and the greatest of philosophers, if he can answer it.

SPEUSIPPUS. Pythagoras is of opinion--

HIPPOMACHUS. Pythagoras stole that and all his other opinions from Asia and Egypt. The transmigration of the soul and the vegetable diet are derived from India. I met a Brachman in Sogdiana--

CALLICLES. All nonsense!

CHARICLEA. What think you, Alcibiades?

ALCIBIADES. I think that, if the doctrine be true, your spirit will be transfused into one of the doves who carry (Homer's *Odyssey*, xii. 63.) ambrosia to the gods or verses to the mistresses of poets. Do you remember Anacreon's lines? How should you like such an office?

CHARICLEA. If I were to be your dove, Alcibiades, and you would treat me as Anacreon treated his, and let me nestle in your breast and drink from your cup, I would submit even to carry your love-letters to other ladies.

CALLICLES. What, in the name of Jupiter, is the use of all these speculations about death? Socrates once (See the close of Plato's Gorgias.) lectured me upon it the best part of a day. I have hated the sight of him ever since. Such things may suit an old sophist when he is fasting; but in the midst of wine and music--

HIPPOMACHUS. I differ from you. The enlightened Egyptians bring skeletons into their banquets, in order to remind their guests to make the most of their life while they have it.

CALLICLES. I want neither skeleton nor sophist to teach me that lesson. More wine, I pray you, and less wisdom. If you must believe something which you never can know, why not be contented with the long stories about the other world which are told us when we are initiated at the Eleusinian mysteries? (The scene which follows is founded upon history. Thucydides tells us, in his sixth book, that about this time Alcibiades was suspected of having assisted at a mock celebration of these famous mysteries. It was the opinion of the vulgar among the Athenians that extraordinary privileges were granted in the other world to all who had been initiated.)

CHARICLEA. And what are those stories?

ALCIBIADES. Are not you initiated, Chariclea?

CHARICLEA. No; my mother was a Lydian, a barbarian; and therefore--

ALCIBIADES. I understand. Now the curse of Venus on the fools who made so hateful a law! Speusippus, does not your friend Euripides (The right of Euripides to this line is somewhat disputable. See Aristophanes; Plutus, 1152.) say

"The land where thou art prosperous is thy country?"

Surely we ought to say to every lady

"The land where thou art pretty is thy country."

Besides, to exclude foreign beauties from the chorus of the initiated in the Elysian fields is less cruel to them than to ourselves. Chariclea, you shall be initiated.

CHARICLEA. When?

ALCIBIADES. Now.

CHARICLEA. Where?

ALCIBIADES. Here.

CHARICLEA. Delightful!

SPEUSIPPUS. But there must be an interval of a year between the purification and the initiation.

ALCIBIADES. We will suppose all that.

SPEUSIPPUS. And nine days of rigid mortification of the senses.

ALCIBIADES. We will suppose that too. I am sure it was supposed, with as little reason, when I was initiated.

SPEUSIPPUS. But you are sworn to secrecy.

ALCIBIADES. You a sophist, and talk of oaths! You a pupil of Euripides, and forget his maxims!

"My lips have sworn it; but my mind is free." (See Euripides: Hippolytus, 608. For the jesuitical morality of this line Euripides is bitterly attacked by the comic poet.)

SPEUSIPPUS. But Alcibiades--

ALCIBIADES. What! Are you afraid of Ceres and Proserpine?

SPEUSIPPUS. No--but--but--I--that is I--but it is best to be safe--I mean-- Suppose there should be something in it.

ALCIBIADES. Now, by Mercury, I shall die with laughing. O Speusippus. Speusippus! Go back to your old father. Dig vineyards, and judge causes, and be a respectable citizen. But never, while you live; again dream of being a philosopher.

SPEUSIPPUS. Nay, I was only--

ALCIBIADES. A pupil of Gorgias and Melesigenes afraid of Tartarus! In what region of the infernal world do you expect your domicile to be fixed? Shall you roll a stone like Sisyphus? Hard exercise, Speusippus!

SPEUSIPPUS. In the name of all the gods--

ALCIBIADES. Or shall you sit starved and thirsty in the midst of fruit and wine like Tantalus? Poor fellow? I think I see your face as you are springing up to the branches and missing your aim. Oh Bacchus! Oh Mercury!

SPEUSIPPUS. Alcibiades!

ALCIBIADES. Or perhaps you will be food for a vulture, like the

huge fellow who was rude to Latona.

SPEUSIPPUS. Alcibiades!

ALCIBIADES. Never fear. Minos will not be so cruel. Your eloquence will triumph over all accusations. The Furies will skulk away like disappointed sycophants. Only address the judges of hell in the speech which you were prevented from speaking last assembly. "When I consider"--is not that the beginning of it? Come, man, do not be angry. Why do you pace up and down with such long steps? You are not in Tartarus yet. You seem to think that you are already stalking like poor Achilles,

"With stride Majestic through the plain of Asphodel." (See Homer's *Odyssey*, xi. 538.)

SPEUSIPPUS. How can you talk so, when you know that I believe all that foolery as little as you do?

ALCIBIADES. Then march. You shall be the crier. Callicles, you shall carry the torch. Why do you stare? (The crier and torchbearer were important functionaries at the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries.)

CALLICLES. I do not much like the frolic.

ALCIBIADES. Nay, surely you are not taken with a fit of piety. If all be true that is told of you, you have as little reason to think the gods vindictive as any man breathing. If you be not belied, a certain golden goblet which I have seen at your house was once in the temple of Juno at Corcyra. And men say that there was a priestess at Tarentum--

CALLICLES. A fig for the gods! I was thinking about the Archons. You will have an accusation laid against you to-morrow. It is not very pleasant to be tried before the king. (The name of king was given in the Athenian democracy to the magistrate who exercised those spiritual functions which in the monarchical times had belonged to the sovereign. His court took cognisance of offences against the religion of the state.)

ALCIBIADES. Never fear: there is not a sycophant in Attica who would dare to breathe a word against me, for the golden plane-tree of the great king. (See Herodotus, viii. 28.)

HIPPOMACHUS. That plane-tree--

ALCIBIADES. Never mind the plane-tree. Come, Callicles, you were not so timid when you plundered the merchantman off Cape Malea. Take up the torch and move. Hippomachus, tell one of the slaves to bring a sow. (A sow was sacrificed to Ceres at the admission to the greater mysteries.)

CALLICLES. And what part are you to play?

ALCIBIADES. I shall be hierophant. Herald, to your office. Torchbearer, advance with the lights. Come forward, fair novice. We will celebrate the rite within.

[Exeunt.]

...

CRITICISMS ON THE PRINCIPAL ITALIAN WRITERS.

No. I. DANTE.

(January 1824)

"Fairest of stars, last in the train of night, If better thou belong not to the dawn, Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn With thy bright circlet." Milton.

In a review of Italian literature, Dante has a double claim to precedency. He was the earliest and the greatest writer of his country. He was the first man who fully descried and exhibited the powers of his native dialect. The Latin tongue, which, under the most favourable circumstances, and in the hands of the greatest masters, had still been poor, feeble, and singularly unpoetical, and which had, in the age of Dante, been debased by the admixture of innumerable barbarous words and idioms, was still cultivated with superstitious veneration, and received, in the last stage of corruption, more honours than it had deserved in the period of its life and vigour. It was the language of the cabinet, of the university, of the church. It was employed by all who aspired to distinction in the higher walks of poetry. In compassion to the ignorance of his mistress, a cavalier might now and then proclaim his passion in Tuscan or Provençal rhymes. The vulgar might occasionally be edified by a pious allegory in the popular jargon. But no writer had conceived it possible that the dialect of peasants and market-women should possess sufficient energy and precision for a majestic and durable work. Dante adventured first. He detected the rich treasures of thought and diction which still lay latent in their ore. He refined them into purity. He burnished them into splendour. He fitted them for every purpose of use and magnificence. And he has thus acquired the glory, not only of producing the finest narrative poem of modern times but also of creating a language, distinguished by unrivalled melody, and peculiarly capable of furnishing to lofty and passionate thoughts their appropriate garb of severe and concise expression.

To many this may appear a singular panegyric on the Italian tongue. Indeed the great majority of the young gentlemen and young ladies, who, when they are asked whether they read Italian, answer "yes," never go beyond the stories at the end of their grammar,--The Pastor Fido,--or an act of Artaserse. They could as soon read a Babylonian brick as a canto of Dante. Hence it is a general opinion, among those who know little or nothing of the subject, that this admirable language is adapted only to the effeminate cant of sonnetteers, musicians, and connoisseurs.

The fact is that Dante and Petrarch have been the Oromasdes and Arimanes of Italian literature. I wish not to detract from the merits of Petrarch. No one can doubt that his poems exhibit, amidst some imbecility and more affectation, much elegance, ingenuity, and tenderness. They present us with a mixture which can only be compared to the whimsical concert described by the humorous poet of Modena:

"S'udian gli usignuoli, al primo albore, Egli asini cantar versi d'amore." (Tassoni; Secchia Rapita, canto i. stanza 6.)

I am not, however, at present speaking of the intrinsic excellencies of his writings, which I shall take another opportunity to examine, but of the effect which they produced on the literature of Italy. The florid and luxurious charms of his style enticed the poets and the public from the contemplation of nobler and sterner models. In truth, though a rude state of society is that in which great original works are most frequently produced, it is also that in which they are worst appreciated. This may appear paradoxical; but it is proved by experience, and is consistent with reason. To be without any received canons of taste is good for the few who can create, but bad for the many who can only imitate and judge. Great and active minds cannot remain at rest. In a cultivated age they are too often contented to move on in the beaten path. But where no path exists they will make one. Thus the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Divine Comedy, appeared in dark and half barbarous times: and thus of the few original works which have been produced in more polished ages we owe a large proportion to men in low stations and of uninformed minds. I will instance, in our own language, the Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe. Of all the prose works of fiction which we possess, these are, I

will not say the best, but the most peculiar, the most unprecedented, the most inimitable. Had Bunyan and Defoe been educated gentlemen, they would probably have published translations and imitations of French romances "by a person of quality." I am not sure that we should have had Lear if Shakspeare had been able to read Sophocles.

But these circumstances, while they foster genius, are unfavourable to the science of criticism. Men judge by comparison. They are unable to estimate the grandeur of an object when there is no standard by which they can measure it. One of the French philosophers (I beg Gerard's pardon), who accompanied Napoleon to Egypt, tells us that, when he first visited the great Pyramid, he was surprised to see it so diminutive. It stood alone in a boundless plain. There was nothing near it from which he could calculate its magnitude. But when the camp was pitched beside it, and the tents appeared like diminutive specks around its base, he then perceived the immensity of this mightiest work of man. In the same manner, it is not till a crowd of petty writers has sprung up that the merit of the great masterspirits of literature is understood.

We have indeed ample proof that Dante was highly admired in his own and the following age. I wish that we had equal proof that he was admired for his excellencies. But it is a remarkable corroboration of what has been said, that this great man seems to have been utterly unable to appreciate himself. In his treatise "De Vulgari Eloquentia" he talks with satisfaction of what he has done for Italian literature, of the purity and correctness of his style. "Cependant," says a favourite writer of mine, (Sismondi, *Literature du Midi de l'Europe*.) "il n'est ni pur, ni correct, mais il est createur." Considering the difficulties with which Dante had to struggle, we may perhaps be more inclined than the French critic to allow him this praise. Still it is by no means his highest or most peculiar title to applause. It is scarcely necessary to say that those qualities which escaped the notice of the poet himself were not likely to attract the attention of the commentators. The fact is, that, while the public homage was paid to some absurdities with which his works may be justly charged, and to many more which were falsely imputed to them,-- while lecturers were paid to expound and eulogise his physics, his metaphysics, his

theology, all bad of their kind--while annotators laboured to detect allegorical meanings of which the author never dreamed, the great powers of his imagination, and the incomparable force of his style, were neither admired nor imitated. Arimanes had prevailed. The Divine Comedy was to that age what St. Paul's Cathedral was to Omai. The poor Otaheitean stared listlessly for a moment at the huge cupola, and ran into a toyshop to play with beads. Italy, too, was charmed with literary trinkets, and played with them for four centuries.

From the time of Petrarch to the appearance of Alfieri's tragedies, we may trace in almost every page of Italian literature the influence of those celebrated sonnets which, from the nature both of their beauties and their faults, were peculiarly unfit to be models for general imitation. Almost all the poets of that period, however different in the degree and quality of their talents, are characterised by great exaggeration, and as a necessary consequence, great coldness of sentiment; by a passion for frivolous and tawdry ornament; and, above all, by an extreme feebleness and diffuseness of style. Tasso, Marino, Guarini, Metastasio, and a crowd of writers of inferior merit and celebrity, were spell-bound in the enchanted gardens of a gaudy and meretricious Alcina, who concealed debility and deformity beneath the deceitful semblance of loveliness and health. Ariosto, the great Ariosto himself, like his own Ruggiero, stooped for a time to linger amidst the magic flowers and fountains, and to caress the gay and painted sorceress. But to him, as to his own Ruggiero, had been given the omnipotent ring and the winged courser, which bore him from the paradise of deception to the regions of light and nature.

The evil of which I speak was not confined to the graver poets. It infected satire, comedy, burlesque. No person can admire more than I do the great masterpieces of wit and humour which Italy has produced. Still I cannot but discern and lament a great deficiency, which is common to them all. I find in them abundance of ingenuity, of droll naivete, of profound and just reflection, of happy expression. Manners, characters, opinions, are treated with "a most learned spirit of human dealing." But something is still wanting. We read, and we admire, and we yawn. We look in vain for the bacchanalian fury which inspired the comedy of

Athens, for the fierce and withering scorn which animates the invectives of Juvenal and Dryden, or even for the compact and pointed diction which adds zest to the verses of Pope and Boileau. There is no enthusiasm, no energy, no condensation, nothing which springs from strong feeling, nothing which tends to excite it. Many fine thoughts and fine expressions reward the toil of reading. Still it is a toil. The *Secchia Rapita*, in some points the best poem of its kind, is painfully diffuse and languid. The *Animali Parlanti* of Casti is perfectly intolerable. I admire the dexterity of the plot, and the liberality of the opinions. I admit that it is impossible to turn to a page which does not contain something that deserves to be remembered; but it is at least six times as long as it ought to be. And the garrulous feebleness of the style is a still greater fault than the length of the work.

It may be thought that I have gone too far in attributing these evils to the influence of the works and the fame of Petrarch. It cannot, however, be doubted that they have arisen, in a great measure, from a neglect of the style of Dante. This is not more proved by the decline of Italian poetry than by its resuscitation. After the lapse of four hundred and fifty years, there appeared a man capable of appreciating and imitating the father of Tuscan literature--Vittorio Alfieri. Like the prince in the nursery tale, he sought and found the sleeping beauty within the recesses which had so long concealed her from mankind. The portal was indeed rusted by time;--the dust of ages had accumulated on the hangings;--the furniture was of antique fashion;--and the gorgeous colour of the embroidery had faded. But the living charms which were well worth all the rest remained in the bloom of eternal youth, and well rewarded the bold adventurer who roused them from their long slumber. In every line of the *Philip and the Saul*, the greatest poems, I think, of the eighteenth century, we may trace the influence of that mighty genius which has immortalised the ill-starred love of Francesca, and the paternal agonies of Ugolino. Alfieri bequeathed the sovereignty of Italian literature to the author of the *Aristodemus*--a man of genius scarcely inferior to his own, and a still more devoted disciple of the great Florentine. It must be acknowledged that this eminent writer has sometimes pushed too far his idolatry of Dante. To

borrow a sprightly illustration from Sir John Denham, he has not only imitated his garb, but borrowed his clothes. He often quotes his phrases; and he has, not very judiciously as it appears to me, imitated his versification. Nevertheless, he has displayed many of the higher excellencies of his master; and his works may justly inspire us with a hope that the Italian language will long flourish under a new literary dynasty, or rather under the legitimate line, which has at length been restored to a throne long occupied by specious usurpers.

The man to whom the literature of his country owes its origin and its revival was born in times singularly adapted to call forth his extraordinary powers. Religious zeal, chivalrous love and honour, democratic liberty, are the three most powerful principles that have ever influenced the character of large masses of men. Each of them singly has often excited the greatest enthusiasm, and produced the most important changes. In the time of Dante all the three, often in amalgamation, generally in conflict, agitated the public mind. The preceding generation had witnessed the wrongs and the revenge of the brave, the accomplished, the unfortunate Emperor Frederic the Second,--a poet in an age of schoolmen,--a philosopher in an age of monks,-- a statesman in an age of crusaders. During the whole life of the poet, Italy was experiencing the consequences of the memorable struggle which he had maintained against the Church. The finest works of imagination have always been produced in times of political convulsion, as the richest vineyards and the sweetest flowers always grow on the soil which has been fertilised by the fiery deluge of a volcano. To look no further than the literary history of our own country, can we doubt that Shakspeare was in a great measure produced by the Reformation, and Wordsworth by the French Revolution? Poets often avoid political transactions; they often affect to despise them. But, whether they perceive it or not, they must be influenced by them. As long as their minds have any point of contact with those of their fellow-men, the electric impulse, at whatever distance it may originate, will be circuitously communicated to them.

This will be the case even in large societies, where the division of labour enables many speculative men to observe the face of nature, or to

analyse their own minds, at a distance from the seat of political transactions. In the little republic of which Dante was a member the state of things was very different. These small communities are most unmercifully abused by most of our modern professors of the science of government. In such states, they tell us, factions are always most violent: where both parties are cooped up within a narrow space, political difference necessarily produces personal malignity. Every man must be a soldier; every moment may produce a war. No citizen can lie down secure that he shall not be roused by the alarum-bell, to repel or avenge an injury. In such petty quarrels Greece squandered the blood which might have purchased for her the permanent empire of the world, and Italy wasted the energy and the abilities which would have enabled her to defend her independence against the Pontiffs and the Caesars.

All this is true: yet there is still a compensation. Mankind has not derived so much benefit from the empire of Rome as from the city of Athens, nor from the kingdom of France as from the city of Florence. The violence of party feeling may be an evil; but it calls forth that activity of mind which in some states of society it is desirable to produce at any expense. Universal soldiership may be an evil; but where every man is a soldier there will be no standing army. And is it no evil that one man in every fifty should be bred to the trade of slaughter; should live only by destroying and by exposing himself to be destroyed; should fight without enthusiasm and conquer without glory; be sent to a hospital when wounded, and rot on a dunghill when old? Such, over more than two-thirds of Europe, is the fate of soldiers. It was something that the citizen of Milan or Florence fought, not merely in the vague and rhetorical sense in which the words are often used, but in sober truth, for his parents, his children, his lands, his house, his altars. It was something that he marched forth to battle beneath the Carroccio, which had been the object of his childish veneration: that his aged father looked down from the battlements on his exploits; that his friends and his rivals were the witnesses of his glory. If he fell, he was consigned to no venal or heedless guardians. The same day saw him conveyed within the walls which he had defended. His wounds were dressed by his mother; his

confession was whispered to the friendly priest who had heard and absolved the follies of his youth; his last sigh was breathed upon the lips of the lady of his love. Surely there is no sword like that which is beaten out of a ploughshare. Surely this state of things was not unmixedly bad; its evils were alleviated by enthusiasm and by tenderness; and it will at least be acknowledged that it was well fitted to nurse poetical genius in an imaginative and observant mind.

Nor did the religious spirit of the age tend less to this result than its political circumstances. Fanaticism is an evil, but it is not the greatest of evils. It is good that a people should be roused by any means from a state of utter torpor;--that their minds should be diverted from objects merely sensual, to meditations, however erroneous, on the mysteries of the moral and intellectual world; and from interests which are immediately selfish to those which relate to the past, the future, and the remote. These effects have sometimes been produced by the worst superstitions that ever existed; but the Catholic religion, even in the time of its utmost extravagance and atrocity, never wholly lost the spirit of the Great Teacher, whose precepts form the noblest code, as His conduct furnished the purest example, of moral excellence. It is of all religions the most poetical. The ancient superstitions furnished the fancy with beautiful images, but took no hold on the heart. The doctrines of the Reformed Churches have most powerfully influenced the feelings and the conduct of men, but have not presented them with visions of sensible beauty and grandeur. The Roman Catholic Church has united to the awful doctrines of the one that Mr Coleridge calls the "fair humanities" of the other. It has enriched sculpture and painting with the loveliest and most majestic forms. To the Phidian Jupiter it can oppose the Moses of Michael Angelo; and to the voluptuous beauty of the Queen of Cyprus, the serene and pensive loveliness of the Virgin Mother. The legends of its martyrs and its saints may vie in ingenuity and interest with the mythological fables of Greece; its ceremonies and processions were the delight of the vulgar; the huge fabric of secular power with which it was connected attracted the admiration of the statesman. At the same time, it never lost sight of the most solemn and tremendous doctrines of Christianity,--the incarnate

God,--the judgment,--the retribution,--the eternity of happiness or torment. Thus, while, like the ancient religions, it received incalculable support from policy and ceremony, it never wholly became, like those religions, a merely political and ceremonial institution.

The beginning of the thirteenth century was, as Machiavelli has remarked, the era of a great revival of this extraordinary system. The policy of Innocent,--the growth of the Inquisition and the mendicant orders,--the wars against the Albigenses, the Pagans of the East, and the unfortunate princes of the house of Swabia, agitated Italy during the two following generations. In this point Dante was completely under the influence of his age. He was a man of a turbid and melancholy spirit. In early youth he had entertained a strong and unfortunate passion, which, long after the death of her whom he loved, continued to haunt him. Dissipation, ambition, misfortunes had not effaced it. He was not only a sincere, but a passionate, believer. The crimes and abuses of the Church of Rome were indeed loathsome to him; but to all its doctrines and all its rites he adhered with enthusiastic fondness and veneration; and, at length, driven from his native country, reduced to a situation the most painful to a man of his disposition, condemned to learn by experience that no food is so bitter as the bread of dependence ("Tu proverai si come sa di sale Lo pane altrui, e come e duro calle Lo scendere e'l sa'ir per l'altrui scale." *Paradiso*, canto xvii.),

and no ascent so painful as the staircase of a patron,--his wounded spirit took refuge in visionary devotion. Beatrice, the unforgotten object of his early tenderness, was invested by his imagination with glorious and mysterious attributes; she was enthroned among the highest of the celestial hierarchy: Almighty Wisdom had assigned to her the care of the sinful and unhappy wanderer who had loved her with such a perfect love. ("L'amico mio, e non della ventura." *Inferno*, canto ii.) By a confusion, like that which often takes place in dreams, he has sometimes lost sight of her human nature, and even of her personal existence, and seems to consider her as one of the attributes of the Deity.

But those religious hopes which had released the mind of the sublime enthusiast from the terrors of death had not rendered his speculations on

human life more cheerful. This is an inconsistency which may often be observed in men of a similar temperament. He hoped for happiness beyond the grave: but he felt none on earth. It is from this cause, more than from any other, that his description of Heaven is so far inferior to the Hell or the Purgatory. With the passions and miseries of the suffering spirits he feels a strong sympathy. But among the beatified he appears as one who has nothing in common with them,- -as one who is incapable of comprehending, not only the degree, but the nature of their enjoyment. We think that we see him standing amidst those smiling and radiant spirits with that scowl of unutterable misery on his brow, and that curl of bitter disdain on his lips, which all his portraits have preserved, and which might furnish Chantrey with hints for the head of his projected Satan.

There is no poet whose intellectual and moral character are so closely connected. The great source, as it appears to me, of the power of the Divine Comedy is the strong belief with which the story seems to be told. In this respect, the only books which approach to its excellence are Gulliver's Travels and Robinson Crusoe. The solemnity of his asseverations, the consistency and minuteness of his details, the earnestness with which he labours to make the reader understand the exact shape and size of everything that he describes, give an air of reality to his wildest fictions. I should only weaken this statement by quoting instances of a feeling which pervades the whole work, and to which it owes much of its fascination. This is the real justification of the many passages in his poem which bad critics have condemned as grotesque. I am concerned to see that Mr Cary, to whom Dante owes more than ever poet owed to translator, has sanctioned an accusation utterly unworthy of his abilities. "His solicitude," says that gentleman, "to define all his images in such a manner as to bring them within the circle of our vision, and to subject them to the power of the pencil, renders him little better than grotesque, where Milton has since taught us to expect sublimity." It is true that Dante has never shrunk from embodying his conceptions in determinate words, that he has even given measures and numbers, where Milton would have left his images to float undefined in a gorgeous haze of language. Both were right. Milton did not profess to have been in

heaven or hell. He might therefore reasonably confine himself to magnificent generalities. Far different was the office of the lonely traveller, who had wandered through the nations of the dead. Had he described the abode of the rejected spirits in language resembling the splendid lines of the English Poet,--had he told us of--

"An universe of death, which God by curse Created evil, for evil only good, Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds Perverse all monstrous, all prodigious things, Abominable, unutterable, and worse Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived, Gorgons, and hydras, and chimaeras dire"--

this would doubtless have been noble writing. But where would have been that strong impression of reality, which, in accordance with his plan, it should have been his great object to produce? It was absolutely necessary for him to delineate accurately "all monstrous, all prodigious things,"--to utter what might to others appear "unutterable,"--to relate with the air of truth what fables had never feigned,--to embody what fear had never conceived. And I will frankly confess that the vague sublimity of Milton affects me less than these reviled details of Dante. We read Milton; and we know that we are reading a great poet. When we read Dante, the poet vanishes. We are listening to the man who has returned from "the valley of the dolorous abyss;" ("Lavalle d'abisso doloroso."--*Inferno*, cantoiv.)--we seem to see the dilated eye of horror, to hear the shuddering accents with which he tells his fearful tale. Considered in this light, the narratives are exactly what they should be,--definite in themselves, but suggesting to the mind ideas of awful and indefinite wonder. They are made up of the images of the earth:--they are told in the language of the earth.--Yet the whole effect is, beyond expression, wild and unearthly. The fact is, that supernatural beings, as long as they are considered merely with reference to their own nature, excite our feelings very feebly. It is when the great gulf which separates them from us is passed, when we suspect some strange and undefinable relation between the laws of the visible and the invisible world, that they rouse, perhaps, the strongest emotions of which our nature is capable. How many children, and how many men, are afraid of ghosts, who are not afraid of God! And

this, because, though they entertain a much stronger conviction of the existence of a Deity than of the reality of apparitions, they have no apprehension that he will manifest himself to them in any sensible manner. While this is the case, to describe superhuman beings in the language, and to attribute to them the actions, of humanity may be grotesque, unphilosophical, inconsistent; but it will be the only mode of working upon the feelings of men, and, therefore, the only mode suited for poetry. Shakspeare understood this well, as he understood everything that belonged to his art. Who does not sympathise with the rapture of Ariel, flying after sunset on the wings of the bat, or sucking in the cups of flowers with the bee? Who does not shudder at the caldron of Macbeth? Where is the philosopher who is not moved when he thinks of the strange connection between the infernal spirits and "the sow's blood that hath eaten her nine farrow?" But this difficult task of representing supernatural beings to our minds, in a manner which shall be neither unintelligible to our intellects nor wholly inconsistent with our ideas of their nature, has never been so well performed as by Dante. I will refer to three instances, which are, perhaps, the most striking:--the description of the transformations of the serpents and the robbers, in the twenty-fifth canto of the Inferno,--the passage concerning Nimrod, in the thirty-first canto of the same part,-- and the magnificent procession in the twenty-ninth canto of the Purgatorio.

The metaphors and comparisons of Dante harmonise admirably with that air of strong reality of which I have spoken. They have a very peculiar character. He is perhaps the only poet whose writings would become much less intelligible if all illustrations of this sort were expunged. His similes are frequently rather those of a traveller than of a poet. He employs them not to display his ingenuity by fanciful analogies,--not to delight the reader by affording him a distant and passing glimpse of beautiful images remote from the path in which he is proceeding, but to give an exact idea of the objects which he is describing, by comparing them with others generally known. The boiling pitch in Malebolge was like that in the Venetian arsenal:--the mound on which he travelled along the banks of Phlegethon was like that between Ghent and Bruges, but not

so large:--the cavities where the Simoniacal prelates are confined resemble the Fonts in the Church of John at Florence. Every reader of Dante will recall many other illustrations of this description, which add to the appearance of sincerity and earnestness from which the narrative derives so much of its interest.

Many of his comparisons, again, are intended to give an exact idea of his feelings under particular circumstances. The delicate shades of grief, of fear, of anger, are rarely discriminated with sufficient accuracy in the language of the most refined nations. A rude dialect never abounds in nice distinctions of this kind. Dante therefore employs the most accurate and infinitely the most poetical mode of marking the precise state of his mind. Every person who has experienced the bewildering effect of sudden bad tidings,--the stupefaction,--the vague doubt of the truth of our own perceptions which they produce,--will understand the following simile:--"I was as he is who dreameth his own harm,--who, dreaming, wishes that it may be all a dream, so that he desires that which is as though it were not." This is only one out of a hundred equally striking and expressive similitudes. The comparisons of Homer and Milton are magnificent digressions. It scarcely injures their effect to detach them from the work. Those of Dante are very different. They derive their beauty from the context, and reflect beauty upon it. His embroidery cannot be taken out without spoiling the whole web. I cannot dismiss this part of the subject without advising every person who can muster sufficient Italian to read the simile of the sheep, in the third canto of the *Purgatorio*. I think it the most perfect passage of the kind in the world, the most imaginative, the most picturesque, and the most sweetly expressed.

No person can have attended to the *Divine Comedy* without observing how little impression the forms of the external world appear to have made on the mind of Dante. His temper and his situation had led him to fix his observation almost exclusively on human nature. The exquisite opening of the eighth* canto of the *Purgatorio* affords a strong instance of this. (I cannot help observing that Gray's imitation of that noble line

"Che paia 'lgiorna pianger che si muore,"--

is one of the most striking instances of injudicious plagiarism with which I am acquainted. Dante did not put this strong personification at the beginning of his description. The imagination of the reader is so well prepared for it by the previous lines, that it appears perfectly natural and pathetic. Placed as Gray has placed it, neither preceded nor followed by anything that harmonises with it, it becomes a frigid conceit. Woe to the unskilful rider who ventures on the horses of Achilles!)

He leaves to others the earth, the ocean, and the sky. His business is with man. To other writers, evening may be the season of dews and stars and radiant clouds. To Dante it is the hour of fond recollection and passionate devotion,—the hour which melts the heart of the mariner and kindles the love of the pilgrim,—the hour when the toll of the bell seems to mourn for another day which is gone and will return no more.

The feeling of the present age has taken a direction diametrically opposite. The magnificence of the physical world, and its influence upon the human mind, have been the favourite themes of our most eminent poets. The herd of bluestocking ladies and sonneteering gentlemen seem to consider a strong sensibility to the "splendour of the grass, the glory of the flower," as an ingredient absolutely indispensable in the formation of a poetical mind. They treat with contempt all writers who are unfortunately

nec ponere lucum Artifices, nec rus saturum laudare.

The orthodox poetical creed is more Catholic. The noblest earthly object of the contemplation of man is man himself. The universe, and all its fair and glorious forms, are indeed included in the wide empire of the imagination; but she has placed her home and her sanctuary amidst the inexhaustible varieties and the impenetrable mysteries of the mind.

In tutte parti impera, e quivi regge; Quivi e la sua cittade, e l'alto seggio. (Inferno, canto i.)

Othello is perhaps the greatest work in the world. From what does it derive its power? From the clouds? From the ocean? From the mountains? Or from love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave? What is it that we go forth to see in Hamlet? Is it a reed shaken with the wind? A small celandine? A bed of daffodils? Or is it to contemplate a

mighty and wayward mind laid bare before us to the inmost recesses? It may perhaps be doubted whether the lakes and the hills are better fitted for the education of a poet than the dusky streets of a huge capital. Indeed who is not tired to death with pure description of scenery? Is it not the fact, that external objects never strongly excite our feelings but when they are contemplated in reference to man, as illustrating his destiny, or as influencing his character? The most beautiful object in the world, it will be allowed, is a beautiful woman. But who that can analyse his feelings is not sensible that she owes her fascination less to grace of outline and delicacy of colour, than to a thousand associations which, often unperceived by ourselves, connect those qualities with the source of our existence, with the nourishment of our infancy, with the passions of our youth, with the hopes of our age--with elegance, with vivacity, with tenderness, with the strongest of natural instincts, with the dearest of social ties?

To those who think thus, the insensibility of the Florentine poet to the beauties of nature will not appear an unpardonable deficiency. On mankind no writer, with the exception of Shakspeare, has looked with a more penetrating eye. I have said that his poetical character had derived a tinge from his peculiar temper. It is on the sterner and darker passions that he delights to dwell. All love excepting the half-mystic passion which he still felt for his buried Beatrice, had palled on the fierce and restless exile. The sad story of Rimini is almost a single exception. I know not whether it has been remarked, that, in one point, misanthropy seems to have affected his mind, as it did that of Swift. Nauseous and revolting images seem to have had a fascination for his mind; and he repeatedly places before his readers, with all the energy of his incomparable style, the most loathsome objects of the sewer and the dissecting-room.

There is another peculiarity in the poem of Dante, which, I think, deserves notice. Ancient mythology has hardly ever been successfully interwoven with modern poetry. One class of writers have introduced the fabulous deities merely as allegorical representatives of love, wine, or wisdom. This necessarily renders their works tame and cold. We may

sometimes admire their ingenuity; but with what interest can we read of beings of whose personal existence the writer does not suffer us to entertain, for a moment, even a conventional belief? Even Spenser's allegory is scarcely tolerable, till we contrive to forget that Una signifies innocence, and consider her merely as an oppressed lady under the protection of a generous knight.

Those writers who have, more judiciously, attempted to preserve the personality of the classical divinities have failed from a different cause. They have been imitators, and imitators at a disadvantage. Euripides and Catullus believed in Bacchus and Cybele as little as we do. But they lived among men who did. Their imaginations, if not their opinions, took the colour of the age. Hence the glorious inspiration of the *Bacchae* and the *Atys*. Our minds are formed by circumstances: and I do not believe that it would be in the power of the greatest modern poet to lash himself up to a degree of enthusiasm adequate to the production of such works.

Dante, alone among the poets of later times, has been, in this respect, neither an allegorist nor an imitator; and, consequently, he alone has introduced the ancient fictions with effect. His Minos, his Charon, his Pluto, are absolutely terrific. Nothing can be more beautiful or original than the use which he has made of the River of Lethe. He has never assigned to his mythological characters any functions inconsistent with the creed of the Catholic Church. He has related nothing concerning them which a good Christian of that age might not believe possible. On this account there is nothing in these passages that appears puerile or pedantic. On the contrary, this singular use of classical names suggests to the mind a vague and awful idea of some mysterious revelation, anterior to all recorded history, of which the dispersed fragments might have been retained amidst the impostures and superstitions of later religions. Indeed the mythology of the *Divine Comedy* is of the elder and more colossal mould. It breathes the spirit of Homer and Aeschylus, not of Ovid and Claudian.

This is the more extraordinary, since Dante seems to have been utterly ignorant of the Greek language; and his favourite Latin models could only have served to mislead him. Indeed, it is impossible not to remark his

admiration of writers far inferior to himself; and, in particular, his idolatry of Virgil, who, elegant and splendid as he is, has no pretensions to the depth and originality of mind which characterise his Tuscan worshipper, In truth it may be laid down as an almost universal rule that good poets are bad critics. Their minds are under the tyranny of ten thousand associations imperceptible to others. The worst writer may easily happen to touch a spring which is connected in their minds with a long succession of beautiful images. They are like the gigantic slaves of Aladdin, gifted with matchless power, but bound by spells so mighty that when a child whom they could have crushed touched a talisman, of whose secret he was ignorant, they immediately became his vassals. It has more than once happened to me to see minds, graceful and majestic as the Titania of Shakspeare, bewitched by the charms of an ass's head, bestowing on it the fondest caresses, and crowning it with the sweetest flowers. I need only mention the poems attributed to Ossian. They are utterly worthless, except as an edifying instance of the success of a story without evidence, and of a book without merit. They are a chaos of words which present no image, of images which have no archetype:--they are without form and void; and darkness is upon the face of them. Yet how many men of genius have panegyrised and imitated them!

The style of Dante is, if not his highest, perhaps his most peculiar excellence. I know nothing with which it can be compared. The noblest models of Greek composition must yield to it. His words are the fewest and the best which it is possible to use. The first expression in which he clothes his thoughts is always so energetic and comprehensive that amplification would only injure the effect. There is probably no writer in any language who has presented so many strong pictures to the mind. Yet there is probably no writer equally concise. This perfection of style is the principal merit of the *Paradiso*, which, as I have already remarked, is by no means equal in other respects to the two preceding parts of the poem. The force and felicity of the diction, however, irresistibly attract the reader through the theological lectures and the sketches of ecclesiastical biography, with which this division of the work too much abounds. It may seem almost absurd to quote particular

specimens of an excellence which is diffused over all his hundred cantos. I will, however, instance the third canto of the *Inferno*, and the sixth of the *Purgatorio*, as passages incomparable in their kind. The merit of the latter is, perhaps, rather oratorical than poetical; nor can I recollect anything in the great Athenian speeches which equals it in force of invective and bitterness of sarcasm. I have heard the most eloquent statesman of the age remark that, next to Demosthenes, Dante is the writer who ought to be most attentively studied by every man who desires to attain oratorical eminence.

But it is time to close this feeble and rambling critique. I cannot refrain, however, from saying a few words upon the translations of the *Divine Comedy*. Boyd's is as tedious and languid as the original is rapid and forcible. The strange measure which he has chosen, and, for aught I know, invented, is most unfit for such a work. Translations ought never to be written in a verse which requires much command of rhyme. The stanza becomes a bed of Procrustes; and the thoughts of the unfortunate author are alternately racked and curtailed to fit their new receptacle. The abrupt and yet consecutive style of Dante suffers more than that of any other poet by a version diffuse in style, and divided into paragraphs, for they deserve no other name, of equal length.

Nothing can be said in favour of Hayley's attempt, but that it is better than Boyd's. His mind was a tolerable specimen of filigree work,--rather elegant, and very feeble. All that can be said for his best works is that they are neat. All that can be said against his worst is that they are stupid. He might have translated Metastasio tolerably. But he was utterly unable to do justice to the

"rime e aspre e chioce, "Come si converrebbe al tristo buco." (*Inferno*, canto xxxii.)

I turn with pleasure from these wretched performances to Mr Cary's translation. It is a work which well deserves a separate discussion, and on which, if this article were not already too long, I could dwell with great pleasure. At present I will only say that there is no other version in the world, as far as I know, so faithful, yet that there is no other version which so fully proves that the translator is himself a man of poetical genius.

Those who are ignorant of the Italian language should read it to become acquainted with the Divine Comedy. Those who are most intimate with Italian literature should read it for its original merits: and I believe that they will find it difficult to determine whether the author deserves most praise for his intimacy with the language of Dante, or for his extraordinary mastery over his own.

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CRITICISMS ON THE PRINCIPAL ITALIAN WRITERS.

No. II. PETRARCH.

(April 1824)

Et vos, o lauri, carpam, et te, proxima myrte, Sic positae quoniam suaves miscetis odores. Virgil.

It would not be easy to name a writer whose celebrity, when both its extent and its duration are taken into the account, can be considered as equal to that of Petrarch. Four centuries and a half have elapsed since his death. Yet still the inhabitants of every nation throughout the western world are as familiar with his character and his adventures as with the most illustrious names, and the most recent anecdotes, of their own literary history. This is indeed a rare distinction. His detractors must acknowledge that it could not have been acquired by a poet destitute of merit. His admirers will scarcely maintain that the unassisted merit of Petrarch could have raised him to that eminence which has not yet been attained by Shakspeare, Milton, or Dante,--that eminence, of which perhaps no modern writer, excepting himself and Cervantes, has long retained possession,-- an European reputation.

It is not difficult to discover some of the causes to which this great man has owed a celebrity, which I cannot but think disproportioned to his real claims on the admiration of mankind. In the first place, he is an egotist. Egotism in conversation is universally abhorred. Lovers, and, I believe, lovers alone, pardon it in each other. No services, no talents, no powers of pleasing, render it endurable. Gratitude, admiration, interest, fear,

scarcely prevent those who are condemned to listen to it from indicating their disgust and fatigue. The childless uncle, the powerful patron can scarcely extort this compliance. We leave the inside of the mail in a storm, and mount the box, rather than hear the history of our companion. The chaplain bites his lips in the presence of the archbishop. The midshipman yawns at the table of the First Lord. Yet, from whatever cause, this practice, the pest of conversation, gives to writing a zest which nothing else can impart. Rousseau made the boldest experiment of this kind; and it fully succeeded. In our own time Lord Byron, by a series of attempts of the same nature, made himself the object of general interest and admiration. Wordsworth wrote with egotism more intense, but less obvious; and he has been rewarded with a sect of worshippers, comparatively small in number, but far more enthusiastic in their devotion. It is needless to multiply instances. Even now all the walks of literature are infested with mendicants for fame, who attempt to excite our interest by exhibiting all the distortions of their intellects, and stripping the covering from all the putrid sores of their feelings. Nor are there wanting many who push their imitation of the beggars whom they resemble a step further, and who find it easier to extort a pittance from the spectator, by simulating deformity and debility from which they are exempt, than by such honest labour as their health and strength enable them to perform. In the meantime the credulous public pities and pampers a nuisance which requires only the treadmill and the whip. This art, often successful when employed by dunces, gives irresistible fascination to works which possess intrinsic merit. We are always desirous to know something of the character and situation of those whose writings we have perused with pleasure. The passages in which Milton has alluded to his own circumstances are perhaps read more frequently, and with more interest, than any other lines in his poems. It is amusing to observe with what labour critics have attempted to glean from the poems of Homer, some hints as to his situation and feelings. According to one hypothesis, he intended to describe himself under the name of Demodocus. Others maintain that he was the identical Phemius whose life Ulysses spared. This propensity of the human mind explains, I think, in a great degree, the extensive

popularity of a poet whose works are little else than the expression of his personal feelings.

In the second place, Petrarch was not only an egotist, but an amatory egotist. The hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, which he described, were derived from the passion which of all passions exerts the widest influence, and which of all passions borrows most from the imagination. He had also another immense advantage. He was the first eminent amatory poet who appeared after the great convulsion which had changed, not only the political, but the moral, state of the world. The Greeks, who, in their public institutions and their literary tastes, were diametrically opposed to the oriental nations, bore a considerable resemblance to those nations in their domestic habits. Like them, they despised the intellects and immured the persons of their women; and it was among the least of the frightful evils to which this pernicious system gave birth, that all the accomplishments of mind, and all the fascinations of manner, which, in a highly cultivated age, will generally be necessary to attach men to their female associates, were monopolised by the Phrynes and the Lamais. The indispensable ingredients of honourable and chivalrous love were nowhere to be found united. The matrons and their daughters confined in the harem,--insipid, uneducated, ignorant of all but the mechanical arts, scarcely seen till they were married,--could rarely excite interest; afterwards their brilliant rivals, half Graces, half Harpies, elegant and informed, but fickle and rapacious, could never inspire respect. The state of society in Rome was, in this point, far happier; and the Latin literature partook of the superiority. The Roman poets have decidedly surpassed those of Greece in the delineation of the passion of love. There is no subject which they have treated with so much success. Ovid, Catullus, Tibullus, Horace, and Propertius, in spite of all their faults, must be allowed to rank high in this department of the art. To these I would add my favourite Plautus; who, though he took his plots from Greece, found, I suspect, the originals of his enchanting female characters at Rome.

Still many evils remained: and, in the decline of the great empire, all that was pernicious in its domestic institutions appeared more strongly. Under the influence of governments at once dependent and tyrannical,

which purchased, by cringing to their enemies, the power of trampling on their subjects, the Romans sunk into the lowest state of effeminacy and debasement. Falsehood, cowardice, sloth, conscious and unrepining degradation, formed the national character. Such a character is totally incompatible with the stronger passions. Love, in particular, which, in the modern sense of the word, implies protection and devotion on the one side, confidence on the other, respect and fidelity on both, could not exist among the sluggish and heartless slaves who cringed around the thrones of Honorius and Augustulus. At this period the great renovation commenced. The warriors of the north, destitute as they were of knowledge and humanity, brought with them, from their forests and marshes, those qualities without which humanity is a weakness and knowledge a curse,--energy--independence--the dread of shame--the contempt of danger. It would be most interesting to examine the manner in which the admixture of the savage conquerors and the effeminate slaves, after many generations of darkness and agitation, produced the modern European character;--to trace back, from the first conflict to the final amalgamation, the operation of that mysterious alchemy which, from hostile and worthless elements, has extracted the pure gold of human nature-- to analyse the mass, and to determine the proportion in which the ingredients are mingled. But I will confine myself to the subject to which I have more particularly referred. The nature of the passion of love had undergone a complete change. It still retained, indeed, the fanciful and voluptuous character which it had possessed among the southern nations of antiquity. But it was tinged with the superstitious veneration with which the northern warriors had been accustomed to regard women. Devotion and war had imparted to it their most solemn and animating feelings. It was sanctified by the blessings of the Church, and decorated with the wreaths of the tournament. Venus, as in the ancient fable, was again rising above the dark and tempestuous waves which had so long covered her beauty. But she rose not now, as of old, in exposed and luxurious loveliness. She still wore the cestus of her ancient witchcraft; but the diadem of Juno was on her brow, and the aegis of Pallas in her hand. Love might, in fact, be called a new passion; and it is

not astonishing that the first poet of eminence who wholly devoted his genius to this theme should have excited an extraordinary sensation. He may be compared to an adventurer who accidentally lands in a rich and unknown island; and who, though he may only set up an ill-shaped cross upon the shore, acquires possession of its treasures, and gives it his name. The claim of Petrarch was indeed somewhat like that of Amerigo Vespucci to the continent which should have derived its appellation from Columbus. The Provençal poets were unquestionably the masters of the Florentine. But they wrote in an age which could not appreciate their merits; and their imitator lived at the very period when composition in the vernacular language began to attract general attention. Petrarch was in literature what a Valentine is in love. The public preferred him, not because his merits were of a transcendent order, but because he was the first person whom they saw after they awoke from their long sleep.

Nor did Petrarch gain less by comparison with his immediate successors than with those who had preceded him. Till more than a century after his death Italy produced no poet who could be compared to him. This decay of genius is doubtless to be ascribed, in a great measure, to the influence which his own works had exercised upon the literature of his country. Yet it has conduced much to his fame. Nothing is more favourable to the reputation of a writer than to be succeeded by a race inferior to himself; and it is an advantage, from obvious causes, much more frequently enjoyed by those who corrupt the national taste than by those who improve it.

Another cause has co-operated with those which I have mentioned to spread the renown of Petrarch. I mean the interest which is inspired by the events of his life--an interest which must have been strongly felt by his contemporaries, since, after an interval of five hundred years, no critic can be wholly exempt from its influence. Among the great men to whom we owe the resuscitation of science he deserves the foremost place; and his enthusiastic attachment to this great cause constitutes his most just and splendid title to the gratitude of posterity. He was the votary of literature. He loved it with a perfect love. He worshipped it with an almost fanatical devotion. He was the missionary, who proclaimed its

discoveries to distant countries-- the pilgrim, who travelled far and wide to collect its reliques-- the hermit, who retired to seclusion to meditate on its beauties--the champion, who fought its battles--the conqueror, who, in more than a metaphorical sense, led barbarism and ignorance in triumph, and received in the Capitol the laurel which his magnificent victory had earned.

Nothing can be conceived more noble or affecting than that ceremony. The superb palaces and porticoes, by which had rolled the ivory chariots of Marius and Caesar, had long mouldered into dust. The laurelled fasces--the golden eagles--the shouting legions--the captives and the pictured cities--were indeed wanting to his victorious procession. The sceptre had passed away from Rome. But she still retained the mightier influence of an intellectual empire, and was now to confer the prouder reward of an intellectual triumph. To the man who had extended the dominion of her ancient language--who had erected the trophies of philosophy and imagination in the haunts of ignorance and ferocity--whose captives were the hearts of admiring nations enchained by the influence of his song--whose spoils were the treasures of ancient genius rescued from obscurity and decay--the Eternal City offered the just and glorious tribute of her gratitude. Amidst the ruined monuments of ancient and the infant erections of modern art, he who had restored the broken link between the two ages of human civilisation was crowned with the wreath which he had deserved from the moderns who owed to him their refinement--from the ancients who owed to him their fame. Never was a coronation so august witnessed by Westminster or by Rheims.

When we turn from this glorious spectacle to the private chamber of the poet,--when we contemplate the struggle of passion and virtue,--the eye dimmed, the cheek furrowed, by the tears of sinful and hopeless desire,--when we reflect on the whole history of his attachment, from the gay fantasy of his youth to the lingering despair of his age, pity and affection mingle with our admiration. Even after death had placed the last seal on his misery, we see him devoting to the cause of the human mind all the strength and energy which love and sorrow had spared. He lived the apostle of literature;--he fell its martyr;--he was found dead with

his head reclined on a book.

Those who have studied the life and writings of Petrarch with attention, will perhaps be inclined to make some deductions from this panegyric. It cannot be denied that his merits were disfigured by a most unpleasant affectation. His zeal for literature communicated a tinge of pedantry to all his feelings and opinions. His love was the love of a sonneteer--his patriotism was the patriotism of an antiquarian. The interest with which we contemplate the works, and study the history, of those who, in former ages, have occupied our country, arises from the associations which connect them with the community in which are comprised all the objects of our affection and our hope. In the mind of Petrarch these feelings were reversed. He loved Italy, because it abounded with the monuments of the ancient masters of the world. His native city--the fair and glorious Florence--the modern Athens, then in all the bloom and strength of its youth, could not obtain, from the most distinguished of its citizens, any portion of that passionate homage which he paid to the decrepitude of Rome. These and many other blemishes, though they must in candour be acknowledged, can but in a very slight degree diminish the glory of his career. For my own part, I look upon it with so much fondness and pleasure that I feel reluctant to turn from it to the consideration of his works, which I by no means contemplate with equal admiration.

Nevertheless, I think highly of the poetical powers of Petrarch. He did not possess, indeed, the art of strongly presenting sensible objects to the imagination;--and this is the more remarkable, because the talent of which I speak is that which peculiarly distinguishes the Italian poets. In the Divine Comedy it is displayed in its highest perfection. It characterises almost every celebrated poem in the language. Perhaps this is to be attributed to the circumstance, that painting and sculpture had attained a high degree of excellence in Italy before poetry had been extensively cultivated. Men were debarred from books, but accustomed from childhood to contemplate the admirable works of art, which, even in the thirteenth century, Italy began to produce. Hence their imaginations received so strong a bias that, even in their writings, a taste for graphic delineation is discernible. The progress of things in England has been in

all respects different. The consequence is, that English historical pictures are poems on canvas; while Italian poems are pictures painted to the mind by means of words. Of this national characteristic the writings of Petrarch are almost totally destitute. His sonnets indeed, from their subject and nature, and his Latin Poems, from the restraints which always shackle one who writes in a dead language, cannot fairly be received in evidence. But his Triumphs absolutely required the exercise of this talent, and exhibit no indications of it.

Genius, however, he certainly possessed, and genius of a high order. His ardent, tender, and magnificent turn of thought, his brilliant fancy, his command of expression, at once forcible and elegant, must be acknowledged. Nature meant him for the prince of lyric writers. But by one fatal present she deprived her other gifts of half their value. He would have been a much greater poet had he been a less clever man. His ingenuity was the bane of his mind. He abandoned the noble and natural style, in which he might have excelled, for the conceits which he produced with a facility at once admirable and disgusting. His muse, like the Roman lady in Livy, was tempted by gaudy ornaments to betray the fastnesses of her strength, and, like her, was crushed beneath the glittering bribes which had seduced her.

The paucity of his thoughts is very remarkable. It is impossible to look without amazement on a mind so fertile in combinations, yet so barren of images. His amatory poetry is wholly made up of a very few topics, disposed in so many orders, and exhibited in so many lights, that it reminds us of those arithmetical problems about permutations, which so much astonish the unlearned. The French cook, who boasted that he could make fifteen different dishes out of a nettle-top, was not a greater master of his art. The mind of Petrarch was a kaleidoscope. At every turn it presents us with new forms, always fantastic, occasionally beautiful; and we can scarcely believe that all these varieties have been produced by the same worthless fragments of glass. The sameness of his images is, indeed, in some degree, to be attributed to the sameness of his subject. It would be unreasonable to expect perpetual variety from so many hundred compositions, all of the same length, all in the same measure, and all

addressed to the same insipid and heartless coquette. I cannot but suspect also that the perverted taste, which is the blemish of his amatory verses, was to be attributed to the influence of Laura, who, probably, like most critics of her sex, preferred a gaudy to a majestic style. Be this as it may, he no sooner changes his subject than he changes his manner. When he speaks of the wrongs and degradation of Italy, devastated by foreign invaders, and but feebly defended by her pusillanimous children, the effeminate lisp of the sonneteer is exchanged for a cry, wild, and solemn, and piercing as that which proclaimed "Sleep no more" to the bloody house of Cawdor. "Italy seems not to feel her sufferings," exclaims her impassioned poet; "decrepit, sluggish, and languid, will she sleep forever? Will there be none to awake her? Oh that I had my hands twisted in her hair!"

("Che suoi guai non par che senta; Vecchia, oziosa, e lenta. Dormira sempre, e non fia chi la svegli? Le man l' avess' io avvolte entro e capegli." Canzone xi.)

Nor is it with less energy that he denounces against the Mahometan Babylon the vengeance of Europe and of Christ. His magnificent enumeration of the ancient exploits of the Greeks must always excite admiration, and cannot be perused without the deepest interest, at a time when the wise and good, bitterly disappointed in so many other countries, are looking with breathless anxiety towards the natal land of liberty,--the field of Marathon,--and the deadly pass where the Lion of Lacedaemon turned to bay. ("Maratona, e le mortali strette Che difese il LEON con poca gente." Canzone v.)

His poems on religious subjects also deserve the highest commendation. At the head of these must be placed the Ode to the Virgin. It is, perhaps, the finest hymn in the world. His devout veneration receives an exquisitely poetical character from the delicate perception of the sex and the loveliness of his idol, which we may easily trace throughout the whole composition.

I could dwell with pleasure on these and similar parts of the writings of Petrarch; but I must return to his amatory poetry: to that he entrusted his fame; and to that he has principally owed it.

The prevailing defect of his best compositions on this subject is the universal brilliancy with which they are lighted up. The natural language of the passions is, indeed, often figurative and fantastic; and with none is this more the case than with that of love. Still there is a limit. The feelings should, indeed, have their ornamental garb; but, like an elegant woman, they should be neither muffled nor exposed. The drapery should be so arranged, as at once to answer the purposes of modest concealment and judicious display. The decorations should sometimes be employed to hide a defect, and sometimes to heighten a beauty; but never to conceal, much less to distort, the charms to which they are subsidiary. The love of Petrarch, on the contrary, arrays itself like a foppish savage, whose nose is bored with a golden ring, whose skin is painted with grotesque forms and dazzling colours, and whose ears are drawn down his shoulders by the weight of jewels. It is a rule, without any exception, in all kinds of composition, that the principal idea, the predominant feeling, should never be confounded with the accompanying decorations. It should generally be distinguished from them by greater simplicity of expression; as we recognise Napoleon in the pictures of his battles, amidst a crowd of embroidered coats and plumes, by his grey cloak and his hat without a feather. In the verses of Petrarch it is generally impossible to say what thought is meant to be prominent. All is equally elaborate. The chief wears the same gorgeous and degrading livery with his retinue, and obtains only his share of the indifferent stare which we bestow upon them in common. The poems have no strong lights and shades, no background, no foreground;--they are like the illuminated figures in an oriental manuscript,--plenty of rich tints and no perspective. Such are the faults of the most celebrated of these compositions. Of those which are universally acknowledged to be bad it is scarcely possible to speak with patience. Yet they have much in common with their splendid companions. They differ from them, as a Mayday procession of chimneysweepers differs from the Field of Cloth of Gold. They have the gaudiness but not the wealth. His muse belongs to that numerous class of females who have no objection to be dirty, while they can be tawdry. When his brilliant conceits are exhausted, he supplies their place with

metaphysical quibbles, forced antitheses, bad puns, and execrable charades. In his fifth sonnet he may, I think, be said to have sounded the lowest chasm of the Bathos. Upon the whole, that piece may be safely pronounced to be the worst attempt at poetry, and the worst attempt at wit, in the world.

A strong proof of the truth of these criticisms is, that almost all the sonnets produce exactly the same effect on the mind of the reader. They relate to all the various moods of a lover, from joy to despair:--yet they are perused, as far as my experience and observation have gone, with exactly the same feeling. The fact is, that in none of them are the passion and the ingenuity mixed in just proportions. There is not enough sentiment to dilute the condiments which are employed to season it. The repast which he sets before us resembles the Spanish entertainment in Dryden's "Mock Astrologer", at which the relish of all the dishes and sauces was overpowered by the common flavour of spice. Fish,--flesh,--fowl,--everything at table tasted of nothing but red pepper.

The writings of Petrarch may indeed suffer undeservedly from one cause to which I must allude. His imitators have so much familiarised the ear of Italy and of Europe to the favourite topics of amorous flattery and lamentation, that we can scarcely think them original when we find them in the first author; and, even when our understandings have convinced us that they were new to him, they are still old to us. This has been the fate of many of the finest passages of the most eminent writers. It is melancholy to trace a noble thought from stage to stage of its profanation; to see it transferred from the first illustrious wearer to his lacqueys, turned, and turned again, and at last hung on a scarecrow. Petrarch has really suffered much from this cause. Yet that he should have so suffered is a sufficient proof that his excellences were not of the highest order. A line may be stolen; but the pervading spirit of a great poet is not to be surreptitiously obtained by a plagiarist. The continued imitation of twenty-five centuries has left Homer as it found him. If every simile and every turn of Dante had been copied ten thousand times, the Divine Comedy would have retained all its freshness. It was easy for the porter in Farquhar to pass for Beau Clincher, by borrowing his lace

and his pulvilio. It would have been more difficult to enact Sir Harry Wildair.

Before I quit this subject I must defend Petrarch from one accusation which is in the present day frequently brought against him. His sonnets are pronounced by a large sect of critics not to possess certain qualities which they maintain to be indispensable to sonnets, with as much confidence, and as much reason, as their prototypes of old insisted on the unities of the drama. I am an exoteric--utterly unable to explain the mysteries of this new poetical faith. I only know that it is a faith, which except a man do keep pure and undefiled, without doubt he shall be called a blockhead. I cannot, however, refrain from asking what is the particular virtue which belongs to fourteen as distinguished from all other numbers. Does it arise from its being a multiple of seven? Has this principle any reference to the sabbatical ordinance? Or is it to the order of rhymes that these singular properties are attached? Unhappily the sonnets of Shakspeare differ as much in this respect from those of Petrarch, as from a Spenserian or an octave stanza. Away with this unmeaning jargon! We have pulled down the old regime of criticism. I trust that we shall never tolerate the equally pedantic and irrational despotism, which some of the revolutionary leaders would erect upon its ruins. We have not dethroned Aristotle and Bossu for this.

These sonnet-fanciers would do well to reflect that, though the style of Petrarch may not suit the standard of perfection which they have chosen, they lie under great obligations to these very poems,--that, but for Petrarch the measure, concerning which they legislate so judiciously, would probably never have attracted notice; and that to him they owe the pleasure of admiring, and the glory of composing, pieces, which seem to have been produced by Master Slender, with the assistance of his man Simple.

I cannot conclude these remarks without making a few observations on the Latin writings of Petrarch. It appears that, both by himself and by his contemporaries, these were far more highly valued than his compositions in the vernacular language. Posterity, the supreme court of literary appeal, has not only reversed the judgment, but, according to its general practice,

reversed it with costs, and condemned the unfortunate works to pay, not only for their own inferiority, but also for the injustice of those who had given them an unmerited preference. And it must be owned that, without making large allowances for the circumstances under which they were produced, we cannot pronounce a very favourable judgment. They must be considered as exotics, transplanted to a foreign climate, and reared in an unfavourable situation; and it would be unreasonable to expect from them the health and the vigour which we find in the indigenous plants around them, or which they might themselves have possessed in their native soil. He has but very imperfectly imitated the style of the Latin authors, and has not compensated for the deficiency by enriching the ancient language with the graces of modern poetry. The splendour and ingenuity, which we admire, even when we condemn it, in his Italian works, is almost totally wanting, and only illuminates with rare and occasional glimpses the dreary obscurity of the African. The eclogues have more animation; but they can only be called poems by courtesy. They have nothing in common with his writings in his native language, except the eternal pun about Laura and Daphne. None of these works would have placed him on a level with Vida or Buchanan. Yet, when we compare him with those who preceded him, when we consider that he went on the forlorn hope of literature, that he was the first who perceived, and the first who attempted to revive, the finer elegancies of the ancient language of the world, we shall perhaps think more highly of him than of those who could never have surpassed his beauties if they had not inherited them.

He has aspired to emulate the philosophical eloquence of Cicero, as well as the poetical majesty of Virgil. His essay on the Remedies of Good and Evil Fortune is a singular work in a colloquial form, and a most scholastic style. It seems to be framed upon the model of the Tusculan Questions,--with what success those who have read it may easily determine. It consists of a series of dialogues: in each of these a person is introduced who has experienced some happy or some adverse event: he gravely states his case; and a reasoner, or rather Reason personified, confutes him; a task not very difficult, since the disciple defends his

position only by pertinaciously repeating it, in almost the same words at the end of every argument of his antagonist. In this manner Petrarch solves an immense variety of cases. Indeed, I doubt whether it would be possible to name any pleasure or any calamity which does not find a place in this dissertation. He gives excellent advice to a man who is in expectation of discovering the philosopher's stone;--to another, who has formed a fine aviary;--to a third, who is delighted with the tricks of a favourite monkey. His lectures to the unfortunate are equally singular. He seems to imagine that a precedent in point is a sufficient consolation for every form of suffering. "Our town is taken," says one complainant; "So was Troy," replies his comforter. "My wife has eloped," says another; "If it has happened to you once, it happened to Menelaus twice." One poor fellow is in great distress at having discovered that his wife's son is none of his. "It is hard," says he, "that I should have had the expense of bringing up one who is indifferent to me." "You are a man," returns his monitor, quoting the famous line of Terence; "and nothing that belongs to any other man ought to be indifferent to you." The physical calamities of life are not omitted; and there is in particular a disquisition on the advantages of having the itch, which, if not convincing, is certainly very amusing.

The invectives on an unfortunate physician, or rather upon the medical science, have more spirit. Petrarch was thoroughly in earnest on this subject. And the bitterness of his feelings occasionally produces, in the midst of his classical and scholastic pedantry, a sentence worthy of the second Philippic. Swift himself might have envied the chapter on the causes of the paleness of physicians.

Of his Latin works the Epistles are the most generally known and admired. As compositions they are certainly superior to his essays. But their excellence is only comparative. From so large a collection of letters, written by so eminent a man, during so varied and eventful a life, we should have expected a complete and spirited view of the literature, the manners, and the politics of the age. A traveller--a poet--a scholar--a lover--a courtier--a recluse--he might have perpetuated, in an imperishable record, the form and pressure of the age and body of the time. Those

who read his correspondence, in the hope of finding such information as this, will be utterly disappointed. It contains nothing characteristic of the period or of the individual. It is a series, not of letters, but of themes; and, as it is not generally known, might be very safely employed at public schools as a magazine of commonplaces. Whether he write on politics to the Emperor and the Doge, or send advice and consolation to a private friend, every line is crowded with examples and quotations, and sounds big with Anaxagoras and Scipio. Such was the interest excited by the character of Petrarch, and such the admiration which was felt for his epistolary style, that it was with difficulty that his letters reached the place of their destination. The poet describes, with pretended regret and real complacency, the importunity of the curious, who often opened, and sometimes stole, these favourite compositions. It is a remarkable fact that, of all his epistles, the least affected are those which are addressed to the dead and the unborn. Nothing can be more absurd than his whim of composing grave letters of expostulation and commendation to Cicero and Seneca; yet these strange performances are written in a far more natural manner than his communications to his living correspondents. But of all his Latin works the preference must be given to the Epistle to Posterity; a simple, noble, and pathetic composition, most honourable both to his taste and his heart. If we can make allowance for some of the affected humility of an author, we shall perhaps think that no literary man has left a more pleasing memorial of himself.

In conclusion, we may pronounce that the works of Petrarch were below both his genius and his celebrity; and that the circumstances under which he wrote were as adverse to the development of his powers as they were favourable to the extension of his fame.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT LAWSUIT BETWEEN THE PARISHES OF ST DENNIS AND ST GEORGE IN THE WATER.

(April 1824)

PART I.

The parish of St Dennis is one of the most pleasant parts of the county in which it is situated. It is fertile, well wooded, well watered, and of an excellent air. For many generations the manor had been holden in tail-male by a worshipful family, who have always taken precedence of their neighbours at the races and the sessions.

In ancient times the affairs of this parish were administered by a Court-Baron, in which the freeholders were judges; and the rates were levied by select vestries of the inhabitant householders. But at length these good customs fell into disuse. The Lords of the Manor, indeed, still held courts for form's sake; but they or their stewards had the whole management of affairs. They demanded services, duties, and customs to which they had no just title. Nay, they would often bring actions against their neighbours for their own private advantage, and then send in the bill to the parish. No objection was made, during many years, to these proceedings, so that the rates became heavier and heavier: nor was any person exempted from these demands, except the footmen and gamekeepers of the squire and the rector of the parish. They indeed were never checked in any excess. They would come to an honest labourer's cottage, eat his pancakes, tuck his fowls into their pockets, and cane the poor man himself. If he went up to the great house to complain, it was hard to get the speech of Sir Lewis; and, indeed, his only chance of being righted was to coax the squire's pretty housekeeper, who could do what

she pleased with her master. If he ventured to intrude upon the Lord of the Manor without this precaution, he gained nothing by his pains. Sir Lewis, indeed, would at first receive him with a civil face; for, to give him his due, he could be a fine gentleman when he pleased. "Good day, my friend," he would say, "what situation have you in my family?" "Bless your honour!" says the poor fellow, "I am not one of your honour's servants; I rent a small piece of ground, your honour." "Then, you dog," quoth the squire, "what do you mean by coming here? Has a gentleman nothing to do but to hear the complaints of clowns? Here! Philip, James, Dick, toss this fellow in a blanket; or duck him, and set him in the stocks to dry."

One of these precious Lords of the Manor enclosed a deer-park; and, in order to stock it, he seized all the pretty pet fawns that his tenants had brought up, without paying them a farthing, or asking their leave. It was a sad day for the parish of St Dennis. Indeed, I do not believe that all his oppressive exactions and long bills enraged the poor tenants so much as this cruel measure.

Yet for a long time, in spite of all these inconveniences, St Dennis's was a very pleasant place. The people could not refrain from capering if they heard the sound of a fiddle. And, if they were inclined to be riotous, Sir Lewis had only to send for Punch, or the dancing dogs, and all was quiet again. But this could not last forever; they began to think more and more of their condition; and, at last, a club of foul-mouthed, good-for-nothing rascals was held at the sign of the Devil, for the purpose of abusing the squire and the parson. The doctor, to own the truth, was old and indolent, extremely fat and greedy. He had not preached a tolerable sermon for a long time. The squire was still worse; so that, partly by truth and partly by falsehood, the club set the whole parish against their superiors. The boys scrawled caricatures of the clergyman upon the church-door, and shot at the landlord with pop-guns as he rode a-hunting. It was even whispered about that the Lord of the Manor had no right to his estate, and that, if he were compelled to produce the original title-deeds, it would be found that he only held the estate in trust for the inhabitants of the parish.

In the meantime the squire was pressed more and more for money. The parish could pay no more. The rector refused to lend a farthing. The Jews were clamorous for their money; and the landlord had no other resource than to call together the inhabitants of the parish, and to request their assistance. They now attacked him furiously about their grievances, and insisted that he should relinquish his oppressive powers. They insisted that his footmen should be kept in order, that the parson should pay his share of the rates, that the children of the parish should be allowed to fish in the trout-stream, and to gather blackberries in the hedges. They at last went so far as to demand that he should acknowledge that he held his estate only in trust for them. His distress compelled him to submit. They, in return, agreed to set him free from his pecuniary difficulties, and to suffer him to inhabit the manor-house; and only annoyed him from time to time by singing impudent ballads under his window.

The neighbouring gentlefolks did not look on these proceedings with much complacency. It is true that Sir Lewis and his ancestors had plagued them with law-suits, and affronted them at county meetings. Still they preferred the insolence of a gentleman to that of the rabble, and felt some uneasiness lest the example should infect their own tenants.

A large party of them met at the house of Lord Caesar Germain. Lord Caesar was the proudest man in the county. His family was very ancient and illustrious, though not particularly opulent. He had invited most of his wealthy neighbours. There was Mrs Kitty North, the relict of poor Squire Peter, respecting whom the coroner's jury had found a verdict of accidental death, but whose fate had nevertheless excited strange whispers in the neighbourhood. There was Squire Don, the owner of the great West Indian property, who was not so rich as he had formerly been, but still retained his pride, and kept up his customary pomp; so that he had plenty of plate but no breeches. There was Squire Von Blunderbussen, who had succeeded to the estates of his uncle, old Colonel Frederic Von Blunderbussen, of the hussars. The colonel was a very singular old fellow; he used to learn a page of Chambaud's grammar, and to translate *Telemaque*, every morning, and he kept six French masters to teach him to parleyvoo. Nevertheless he was a shrewd clever man, and improved his

estate with so much care, sometimes by honest and sometimes by dishonest means, that he left a very pretty property to his nephew.

Lord Caesar poured out a glass of Tokay for Mrs Kitty. "Your health, my dear madam, I never saw you look more charming. Pray, what think you of these doings at St Dennis's?"

"Fine doings, indeed!" interrupted Von Blunderbussen; "I wish that we had my old uncle alive, he would have had some of them up to the halberts. He knew how to use a cat-o'-nine-tails. If things go on in this way, a gentleman will not be able to horsewhip an impudent farmer, or to say a civil word to a milk-maid."

"Indeed, it's very true, Sir," said Mrs Kitty; "their insolence is intolerable. Look at me, for instance:--a poor lone woman!-- My dear Peter dead! I loved him:--so I did; and, when he died, I was so hysterical you cannot think. And now I cannot lean on the arm of a decent footman, or take a walk with a tall grenadier behind me, just to protect me from audacious vagabonds, but they must have their nauseous suspicions;--odious creatures!"

"This must be stopped," replied Lord Caesar. "We ought to contribute to support my poor brother-in-law against these rascals. I will write to Squire Guelf on this subject by this night's post. His name is always at the head of our county subscriptions."

If the people of St Dennis's had been angry before, they were well-nigh mad when they heard of this conversation. The whole parish ran to the manor-house. Sir Lewis's Swiss porter shut the door against them; but they broke in and knocked him on the head for his impudence. They then seized the Squire, hooted at him, pelted him, ducked him, and carried him to the watch-house. They turned the rector into the street, burnt his wig and band, and sold the church-plate by auction. They put up a painted Jezebel in the pulpit to preach. They scratched out the texts which were written round the church, and scribbled profane scraps of songs and plays in their place. They set the organ playing to pot-house tunes. Instead of being decently asked in church, they were married over a broomstick. But, of all their whims, the use of the new patent steel-traps was the most remarkable.

This trap was constructed on a completely new principle. It consisted of a cleaver hung in a frame like a window; when any poor wretch got in, down it came with a tremendous din, and took off his head in a twinkling. They got the squire into one of these machines. In order to prevent any of his partisans from getting footing in the parish, they placed traps at every corner. It was impossible to walk through the highway at broad noon without tumbling into one or other of them. No man could go about his business in security. Yet so great was the hatred which the inhabitants entertained for the old family, that a few decent, honest people, who begged them to take down the steel-traps, and to put up humane man-traps in their room, were very roughly handled for their good nature.

In the meantime the neighbouring gentry undertook a suit against the parish on the behalf of Sir Lewis's heir, and applied to Squire Guelf for his assistance.

Everybody knows that Squire Guelf is more closely tied up than any gentleman in the shire. He could, therefore, lend them no help; but he referred them to the Vestry of the Parish of St George in the Water. These good people had long borne a grudge against their neighbours on the other side of the stream; and some mutual trespasses had lately occurred which increased their hostility.

There was an honest Irishman, a great favourite among them, who used to entertain them with raree-shows, and to exhibit a magic lantern to the children on winter evenings. He had gone quite mad upon this subject. Sometimes he would call out in the middle of the street--"Take care of that corner, neighbours; for the love of Heaven, keep clear of that post, there is a patent steel-trap concealed thereabouts." Sometimes he would be disturbed by frightful dreams; then he would get up at dead of night, open his window and cry "fire," till the parish was roused, and the engines sent for. The pulpit of the Parish of St George seemed likely to fall; I believe that the only reason was that the parson had grown too fat and heavy; but nothing would persuade this honest man but that it was a scheme of the people at St Dennis's, and that they had sawed through the pillars in order to break the rector's neck. Once he went about with a knife in his pocket, and told all the persons whom he met that it had been

sharpened by the knife-grinder of the next parish to cut their throats. These extravagancies had a great effect on the people; and the more so because they were espoused by Squire Guelf's steward, who was the most influential person in the parish. He was a very fair-spoken man, very attentive to the main chance, and the idol of the old women, because he never played at skittles or danced with the girls; and, indeed, never took any recreation but that of drinking on Saturday nights with his friend Harry, the Scotch pedlar. His supporters called him Sweet William; his enemies the Bottomless Pit.

The people of St Dennis's, however, had their advocates. There was Frank, the richest farmer in the parish, whose great grandfather had been knocked on the head many years before, in a squabble between the parish and a former landlord. There was Dick, the merry-andrew, rather light-fingered and riotous, but a clever droll fellow. Above all, there was Charley, the publican, a jolly, fat, honest lad, a great favourite with the women, who, if he had not been rather too fond of ale and chuck-farthing, would have been the best fellow in the neighbourhood.

"My boys," said Charley, "this is exceedingly well for Madam North;--not that I would speak uncivilly of her; she put up my picture in her best room, bless her for it! But, I say, this is very well for her, and for Lord Caesar, and Squire Don, and Colonel Von;--but what affair is it of yours or mine? It is not to be wondered at, that gentlemen should wish to keep poor people out of their own. But it is strange indeed that they should expect the poor themselves to combine against their own interests. If the folks at St Dennis's should attack us we have the law and our cudgels to protect us. But why, in the name of wonder, are we to attack them? When old Sir Charles, who was Lord of the Manor formerly, and the parson, who was presented by him to the living, tried to bully the vestry, did not we knock their heads together, and go to meeting to hear Jeremiah Ringletub preach? And did the Squire Don, or the great Sir Lewis, that lived at that time, or the Germains, say a word against us for it? Mind your own business, my lads: law is not to be had for nothing; and we, you may be sure, shall have to pay the whole bill."

Nevertheless the people of St George's were resolved on law. They

cried out most lustily, "Squire Guelf for ever! Sweet William for ever! No steel traps!" Squire Guelf took all the rascally footmen who had worn old Sir Lewis's livery into his service. They were fed in the kitchen on the very best of everything, though they had no settlement. Many people, and the paupers in particular, grumbled at these proceedings. The steward, however, devised a way to keep them quiet.

There had lived in this parish for many years an old gentleman, named Sir Habeas Corpus. He was said by some to be of Saxon, by some of Norman, extraction. Some maintain that he was not born till after the time of Sir Charles, to whom we have before alluded. Others are of opinion that he was a legitimate son of old Lady Magna Charta, although he was long concealed and kept out of his birthright. Certain it is that he was a very benevolent person. Whenever any poor fellow was taken up on grounds which he thought insufficient, he used to attend on his behalf and bail him; and thus he had become so popular, that to take direct measures against him was out of the question.

The steward, accordingly, brought a dozen physicians to examine Sir Habeas. After consultation, they reported that he was in a very bad way, and ought not, on any account, to be allowed to stir out for several months. Fortified with this authority, the parish officers put him to bed, closed his windows, and barred his doors. They paid him every attention, and from time to time issued bulletins of his health. The steward never spoke of him without declaring that he was the best gentleman in the world; but excellent care was taken that he should never stir out of doors.

When this obstacle was removed, the Squire and the steward kept the parish in excellent order; flogged this man, sent that man to the stocks, and pushed forward the law-suit with a noble disregard of expense. They were, however, wanting either in skill or in fortune. And everything went against them after their antagonists had begun to employ Solicitor Nap.

Who does not know the name of Solicitor Nap? At what alehouse is not his behaviour discussed? In what print-shop is not his picture seen? Yet how little truth has been said about him! Some people hold that he used to give laudanum by pints to his six clerks for his amusement. Others, whose number has very much increased since he was killed by the

gaol distemper, conceive that he was the very model of honour and good-nature. I shall try to tell the truth about him.

He was assuredly an excellent solicitor. In his way he never was surpassed. As soon as the parish began to employ him, their cause took a turn. In a very little time they were successful; and Nap became rich. He now set up for a gentleman; took possession of the old manor-house; got into the commission of the peace, and affected to be on a par with the best of the county. He governed the vestries as absolutely as the old family had done. Yet, to give him his due, he managed things with far more discretion than either Sir Lewis or the rioters who had pulled the Lords of the Manor down. He kept his servants in tolerable order. He removed the steel traps from the highways and the corners of the streets. He still left a few indeed in the more exposed parts of his premises; and set up a board announcing that traps and spring guns were set in his grounds. He brought the poor parson back to the parish; and, though he did not enable him to keep a fine house and a coach as formerly, he settled him in a snug little cottage, and allowed him a pleasant pad-nag. He whitewashed the church again; and put the stocks, which had been much wanted of late, into good repair.

With the neighbouring gentry, however, he was no favourite. He was crafty and litigious. He cared nothing for right, if he could raise a point of law against them. He pounded their cattle, broke their hedges, and seduced their tenants from them. He almost ruined Lord Caesar with actions, in every one of which he was successful. Von Blunderbussen went to law with him for an alleged trespass, but was cast, and almost ruined by the costs of suit. He next took a fancy to the seat of Squire Don, who was, to say the truth, little better than an idiot. He asked the poor dupe to dinner, and then threatened to have him tossed in a blanket unless he would make over his estates to him. The poor Squire signed and sealed a deed by which the property was assigned to Joe, a brother of Nap's, in trust for and to the use of Nap himself. The tenants, however, stood out. They maintained that the estate was entailed, and refused to pay rents to the new landlord; and in this refusal they were stoutly supported by the people in St George's.

About the same time Nap took it into his head to match with quality, and nothing would serve him but one of the Miss Germaines. Lord Caesar swore like a trooper; but there was no help for it. Nap had twice put executions in his principal residence, and had refused to discharge the latter of the two till he had extorted a bond from his Lordship which compelled him to comply.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

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**A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
MR ABRAHAM COWLEY AND
MR JOHN MILTON, TOUCHING
THE GREAT CIVIL WAR.**

**SET DOWN BY A GENTLEMAN
OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE**

(August 1824)

"Referre sermones Deorum et Magna modis tenuare parvis."--Horace.

I have thought it good to set down in writing a memorable debate, wherein I was a listener, and two men of pregnant parts and great reputation discoursers; hoping that my friends will not be displeased to have a record both of the strange times through which I have lived, and of the famous men with whom I have conversed. It chanced in the warm and beautiful spring of the year 1665, a little before the saddest summer that ever London saw, that I went to the Bowling Green at Piccadilly, whither, at that time, the best gentry made continual resorts. There I met Mr Cowley, who had lately left Barnelms. There was then a house preparing for him at Chertsey; and till it should be finished, he had come up for a short time to London, that he might urge a suit to his Grace of Buckingham touching certain lands of her Majesty's, whereof he requested a lease. I had the honour to be familiarly acquainted with that worthy gentleman and most excellent poet, whose death hath been deplored with as general a consent of all Powers that delight in the woods, or in verse, or in love, as was of old that of Daphnis or of Callus.

After some talk, which it is not material to set down at large, concerning his suit and his vexations at the court, where indeed his honesty did him more harm than his parts could do him good, I entreated

him to dine with me at my lodging in the Temple, which he most courteously promised. And, that so eminent a guest might not lack a better entertainment than cooks or vintners can provide, I sent to the house of Mr John Milton, in the Artillery Walk, to beg that he would also be my guest. For, though he had been secretary, first to the Council of State, and, after that, to the Protector, and Mr Cowley had held the same post under the Lord St Albans in his banishment, I hoped, notwithstanding that they would think themselves rather united by their common art than divided by their different factions. And so indeed it proved. For, while we sat at table, they talked freely of many men and things, as well ancient as modern, with much civility. Nay, Mr Milton, who seldom tasted wine, both because of his singular temperance and because of his gout, did more than once pledge Mr Cowley, who was indeed no hermit in diet. At last, being heated, Mr Milton begged that I would open the windows. "Nay," said I, "if you desire fresh air and coolness, what should hinder us, as the evening is fair, from sailing for an hour on the river?" To this they both cheerfully consented; and forth we walked, Mr Cowley and I leading Mr Milton between us, to the Temple Stairs. There we took a boat; and thence we were rowed up the river.

The wind was pleasant; the evening fine; the sky, the earth, and the water beautiful to look upon. But Mr Cowley and I held our peace, and said nothing of the gay sights around us, lest we should too feelingly remind Mr Milton of his calamity; whereof, however, he needed no monitor: for soon he said, sadly, "Ah, Mr Cowley, you are a happy man. What would I now give but for one more look at the sun, and the waters, and the gardens of this fair city!"

"I know not," said Mr Cowley, "whether we ought not rather to envy you for that which makes you to envy others: and that specially in this place, where all eyes which are not closed in blindness ought to become fountains of tears. What can we look upon which is not a memorial of change and sorrow, of fair things vanished, and evil things done? When I see the gate of Whitehall, and the stately pillars of the Banqueting House, I cannot choose but think of what I have there seen in former days, masques, and pageants, and dances, and smiles, and the waving of

graceful heads, and the bounding of delicate feet. And then I turn to thoughts of other things, which even to remember makes me to blush and weep;--of the great black scaffold, and the axe and block, which were placed before those very windows; and the voice seems to sound in mine ears, the lawless and terrible voice, which cried out that the head of a king was the head of a traitor. There stands Westminster Hall, which who can look upon, and not tremble to think how time, and change, and death confound the councils of the wise, and beat down the weapons of the mighty? How have I seen it surrounded with tens of thousands of petitioners crying for justice and privilege! How have I heard it shake with fierce and proud words, which made the hearts of the people burn within them! Then it is blockaded by dragoons, and cleared by pikemen. And they who have conquered their master go forth trembling at the word of their servant. And yet a little while, and the usurper comes forth from it, in his robe of ermine, with the golden staff in one hand and the Bible in the other, amidst the roaring of the guns and the shouting of the people. And yet again a little while, and the doors are thronged with multitudes in black, and the hearse and the plumes come forth; and the tyrant is borne, in more than royal pomp, to a royal sepulchre. A few days more, and his head is fixed to rot on the pinnacles of that very hall where he sat on a throne in his life, and lay in state after his death. When I think on all these things, to look round me makes me sad at heart. True it is that God hath restored to us our old laws, and the rightful line of our kings. Yet, how I know not, but it seems to me that something is wanting--that our court hath not the old gravity, nor our people the old loyalty. These evil times, like the great deluge, have overwhelmed and confused all earthly things. And, even as those waters, though at last they abated, yet, as the learned write, destroyed all trace of the garden of Eden, so that its place hath never since been found, so hath this opening of all the flood-gates of political evil effaced all marks of the ancient political paradise."

"Sir, by your favour," said Mr Milton, "though, from many circumstances both of body and of fortune, I might plead fairer excuses for despondency than yourself, I yet look not so sadly either on the past or on the future. That a deluge hath passed over this our nation, I deny not."

But I hold it not to be such a deluge as that of which you speak; but rather a blessed flood, like those of the Nile, which in its overflow doth indeed wash away ancient landmarks, and confound boundaries, and sweep away dwellings, yea, doth give birth to many foul and dangerous reptiles. Yet hence is the fulness of the granary, the beauty of the garden, the nurture of all living things.

"I remember well, Mr Cowley, what you have said concerning these things in your Discourse of the Government of Oliver Cromwell, which my friend Elwood read to me last year. Truly, for elegance and rhetoric, that essay is to be compared with the finest tractates of Isocrates and Cicero. But neither that nor any other book, nor any events, which with most men have, more than any book, weight and authority, have altered my opinion, that, of all assemblies that ever were in this world, the best and the most useful was our Long Parliament. I speak not this as wishing to provoke debate; which neither yet do I decline."

Mr Cowley was, as I could see, a little nettled. Yet, as he was a man of a kind disposition and a most refined courtesy, he put a force upon himself, and answered with more vehemence and quickness indeed than was his wont, yet not uncivilly. "Surely, Mr Milton, you speak not as you think. I am indeed one of those who believe that God hath reserved to himself the censure of kings, and that their crimes and oppressions are not to be resisted by the hands of their subjects. Yet can I easily find excuse for the violence of such as are stung to madness by grievous tyranny. But what shall we say for these men? Which of their just demands was not granted? Which even of their cruel and unreasonable requisitions, so as it were not inconsistent with all law and order, was refused? Had they not sent Strafford to the block and Laud to the Tower? Had they not destroyed the Courts of the High Commission and the Star Chamber? Had they not reversed the proceedings confirmed by the voices of the judges of England, in the matter of ship-money? Had they not taken from the king his ancient and most lawful power touching the order of knighthood? Had they not provided that, after their dissolution, triennial parliaments should be holden, and that their own power should continue till of their great condescension they should be pleased to resign it

themselves? What more could they ask? Was it not enough that they had taken from their king all his oppressive powers, and many that were most salutary? Was it not enough that they had filled his council-board with his enemies, and his prisons with his adherents? Was it not enough that they had raised a furious multitude, to shout and swagger daily under the very windows of his royal palace? Was it not enough that they had taken from him the most blessed prerogative of princely mercy; that, complaining of intolerance themselves, they had denied all toleration to others; that they had urged, against forms, scruples childish as those of any formalist; that they had persecuted the least remnant of the popish rites with the fiercest bitterness of the popish spirit? Must they besides all this have full power to command his armies, and to massacre his friends?

"For military command, it was never known in any monarchy, nay, in any well ordered republic, that it was committed to the debates of a large and unsettled assembly. For their other requisition, that he should give up to their vengeance all who had defended the rights of his crown, his honour must have been ruined if he had complied. Is it not therefore plain that they desired these things only in order that, by refusing, his Majesty might give them a pretence for war?

"Men have often risen up against fraud, against cruelty, against rapine. But when before was it known that concessions were met with importunities, graciousness with insults, the open palm of bounty with the clenched fist of malice? Was it like trusty delegates of the Commons of England, and faithful stewards of their liberty and their wealth, to engage them for such causes in civil war, which both to liberty and to wealth is of all things the most hostile. Evil indeed must be the disease which is not more tolerable than such a medicine. Those who, even to save a nation from tyrants, excite it to civil war do in general but minister to it the same miserable kind of relief wherewith the wizards of Pharaoh mocked the Egyptian. We read that, when Moses had turned their waters into blood, those impious magicians, intending, not benefit to the thirsting people, but vain and emulous ostentation of their own art, did themselves also change into blood the water which the plague had spared. Such sad comfort do those who stir up war minister to the oppressed. But here where was the

oppression? What was the favour which had not been granted? What was the evil which had not been removed? What further could they desire?"

"These questions," said Mr Milton, austerely, "have indeed often deceived the ignorant; but that Mr Cowley should have been so beguiled, I marvel. You ask what more the Parliament could desire? I will answer you in one word, security. What are votes, and statutes, and resolutions? They have no eyes to see, no hands to strike and avenge. They must have some safeguard from without. Many things, therefore, which in themselves were peradventure hurtful, was this Parliament constrained to ask, lest otherwise good laws and precious rights should be without defence. Nor did they want a great and signal example of this danger. I need not remind you that, many years before, the two Houses had presented to the king the Petition of Right, wherein were set down all the most valuable privileges of the people of this realm. Did not Charles accept it? Did he not declare it to be law? Was it not as fully enacted as ever were any of those bills of the Long Parliament concerning which you spoke? And were those privileges therefore enjoyed more fully by the people? No: the king did from that time redouble his oppressions as if to avenge himself for the shame of having been compelled to renounce them. Then were our estates laid under shameful impositions, our houses ransacked, our bodies imprisoned. Then was the steel of the hangman blunted with mangling the ears of harmless men. Then our very minds were fettered, and the iron entered into our souls. Then we were compelled to hide our hatred, our sorrow, and our scorn, to laugh with hidden faces at the mummery of Laud, to curse under our breath the tyranny of Wentworth. Of old time it was well and nobly said, by one of our kings, that an Englishman ought to be as free as his thoughts. Our prince reversed the maxim; he strove to make our thoughts as much slaves as ourselves. To sneer at a Romish pageant, to miscall a lord's crest, were crimes for which there was no mercy. These were all the fruits which we gathered from those excellent laws of the former Parliament, from these solemn promises of the king. Were we to be deceived again? Were we again to give subsidies, and receive nothing but promises?"

Were we again to make wholesome statutes, and then leave them to be broken daily and hourly, until the oppressor should have squandered another supply, and should be ready for another perjury? You ask what they could desire which he had not already granted. Let me ask of you another question. What pledge could he give which he had not already violated? From the first year of his reign, whenever he had need of the purses of his Commons to support the revels of Buckingham or the processions of Laud, he had assured them that, as he was a gentleman and a king, he would sacredly preserve their rights. He had pawned those solemn pledges, and pawned them again and again; but when had he redeemed them? 'Upon my faith,'--'Upon my sacred word,'--'Upon the honour of a prince,'-- came so easily from his lips, and dwelt so short a time on his mind that they were as little to be trusted as the 'By the hilts' of an Alsatian dicer.

"Therefore it is that I praise this Parliament for what else I might have condemned. If what he had granted had been granted graciously and readily, if what he had before promised had been faithfully observed, they could not be defended. It was because he had never yielded the worst abuse without a long struggle, and seldom without a large bribe; it was because he had no sooner disentangled himself from his troubles than he forgot his promises; and, more like a villainous huckster than a great king, kept both the prerogative and the large price which had been paid to him to forego it; it was because of these things that it was necessary and just to bind with forcible restraints one who could be bound neither by law nor honour. Nay, even while he was making those very concessions of which you speak, he betrayed his deadly hatred against the people and their friends. Not only did he, contrary to all that ever was deemed lawful in England, order that members of the Commons House of Parliament should be impeached of high treason at the bar of the Lords; thereby violating both the trial by jury and the privileges of the House; but, not content with breaking the law by his ministers, he went himself armed to assail it. In the birth-place and sanctuary of freedom, in the House itself; nay in the very chair of the speaker, placed for the protection of free speech and privilege, he sat, rolling his eyes round the benches, searching for those

whose blood he desired, and singling out his opposers to the slaughter. This most foul outrage fails. Then again for the old arts. Then come gracious messages. Then come courteous speeches. Then is again mortgaged his often forfeited honour. He will never again violate the laws. He will respect their rights as if they were his own. He pledges the dignity of his crown; that crown which had been committed to him for the weal of his people, and which he never named, but that he might the more easily delude and oppress them.

"The power of the sword, I grant you, was not one to be permanently possessed by Parliament. Neither did that Parliament demand it as a permanent possession. They asked it only for temporary security. Nor can I see on what conditions they could safely make peace with that false and wicked king, save such as would deprive him of all power to injure.

"For civil war, that it is an evil I dispute not. But that it is the greatest of evils, that I stoutly deny. It doth indeed appear to the misjudging to be a worse calamity than bad government, because its miseries are collected together within a short space and time, and may easily at one view be taken in and perceived. But the misfortunes of nations ruled by tyrants, being distributed over many centuries and many places, as they are of greater weight and number, so are they of less display. When the Devil of tyranny hath gone into the body politic he departs not but with struggles, and foaming, and great convulsions. Shall he, therefore, vex it for ever, lest, in going out, he for a moment tear and rend it? Truly this argument touching the evils of war would better become my friend Elwood, or some other of the people called Quakers, than a courtier and a cavalier. It applies no more to this war than to all others, as well foreign as domestic, and, in this war, no more to the Houses than to the king; nay, not so much, since he by a little sincerity and moderation might have rendered that needless which their duty to God and man then enforced them to do."

"Pardon me, Mr Milton," said Mr Cowley; "I grieve to hear you speak thus of that good king. Most unhappy indeed he was, in that he reigned at a time when the spirit of the then living generation was for freedom, and the precedents of former ages for prerogative. His case was like to that of Christopher Columbus, when he sailed forth on an unknown ocean, and

found that the compass, whereby he shaped his course, had shifted from the north pole whereto before it had constantly pointed. So it was with Charles. His compass varied; and therefore he could not tack aright. If he had been an absolute king he would doubtless, like Titus Vespasian, have been called the delight of the human race. If he had been a Doge of Venice, or a Stadtholder of Holland, he would never have outstepped the laws. But he lived when our government had neither clear definitions nor strong sanctions. Let, therefore, his faults be ascribed to the time. Of his virtues the praise is his own.

"Never was there a more gracious prince, or a more proper gentleman. In every pleasure he was temperate, in conversation mild and grave, in friendship constant, to his servants liberal, to his queen faithful and loving, in battle grave, in sorrow and captivity resolved, in death most Christian and forgiving.

"For his oppressions, let us look at the former history of this realm. James was never accounted a tyrant. Elizabeth is esteemed to have been the mother of her people. Were they less arbitrary? Did they never lay hands on the purses of their subjects but by Act of Parliament? Did they never confine insolent and disobedient men but in due course of law? Was the court of Star Chamber less active? Were the ears of libellers more safe? I pray you, let not king Charles be thus dealt with. It was enough that in his life he was tried for an alleged breach of laws which none ever heard named till they were discovered for his destruction. Let not his fame be treated as was his sacred and anointed body. Let not his memory be tried by principles found out *ex post facto*. Let us not judge by the spirit of one generation a man whose disposition had been formed by the temper and fashion of another."

"Nay, but conceive me, Mr Cowley," said Mr Milton; "inasmuch as, at the beginning of his reign, he imitated those who had governed before him, I blame him not. To expect that kings will, of their own free choice, abridge their prerogative, were argument of but slender wisdom. Whatever, therefore, lawless, unjust, or cruel, he either did or permitted during the first years of his reign, I pass by. But for what was done after that he had solemnly given his consent to the Petition of Right, where shall

we find defence? Let it be supposed, which yet I concede not, that the tyranny of his father and of Queen Elizabeth had been no less rigorous than was his. But had his father, had that queen, sworn like him, to abstain from those rigours? Had they, like him, for good and valuable consideration, alienated their hurtful prerogatives? Surely not: from whatever excuse you can plead for him he had wholly excluded himself. The borders of countries, we know, are mostly the seats of perpetual wars and tumults. It was the same with the undefined frontiers, which of old separated privilege and prerogative. They were the debatable land of our polity. It was no marvel if, both on the one side and on the other, inroads were often made. But, when treaties have been concluded, spaces measured, lines drawn, landmarks set up, that which before might pass for innocent error or just reprisal becomes robbery, perjury, deadly sin. He knew not, you say, which of his powers were founded on ancient law, and which only on vicious example. But had he not read the Petition of Right? Had not proclamation been made from his throne, *Soit fait comme il est desire*?

"For his private virtues they are beside the question. Remember you not," and Mr Milton smiled, but somewhat sternly, "what Dr Caus saith in the *Merry Wives of Shakspeare*? 'What shall the honest man do in my closet? There is no honest man that shall come in my closet.' Even so say I. There is no good man who shall make us his slaves. If he break his word to his people, is it a sufficient defence that he keeps it to his companions? If he oppress and extort all day, shall he be held blameless because he prayeth at night and morning? If he be insatiable in plunder and revenge, shall we pass it by because in meat and drink he is temperate? If he have lived like a tyrant, shall all be forgotten because he hath died like a martyr?

"He was a man, as I think, who had so much semblance of virtues as might make his vices most dangerous. He was not a tyrant after our wonted English model. The second Richard, the second and fourth Edwards, and the eighth Harry, were men profuse, gay, boisterous; lovers of women and of wine, of no outward sanctity or gravity. Charles was a ruler after the Italian fashion; grave, demure, of a solemn carriage, and a

sober diet; as constant at prayers as a priest, as heedless of oaths as an atheist."

Mr Cowley answered somewhat sharply: "I am sorry, Sir, to hear you speak thus. I had hoped that the vehemence of spirit which was caused by these violent times had now abated. Yet, sure, Mr Milton, whatever you may think of the character of King Charles, you will not still justify his murder?"

"Sir," said Mr Milton, "I must have been of a hard and strange nature, if the vehemence which was imputed to me in my younger days had not been diminished by the afflictions wherewith it hath pleased Almighty God to chasten my age. I will not now defend all that I may heretofore have written. But this I say, that I perceive not wherefore a king should be exempted from all punishment. Is it just that where most is given least should be required? Or politic that where there is the greatest power to injure there should be no danger to restrain? But, you will say, there is no such law. Such a law there is. There is the law of selfpreservation written by God himself on our hearts. There is the primal compact and bond of society, not graven on stone, or sealed with wax, nor put down on parchment, nor set forth in any express form of words by men when of old they came together; but implied in the very act that they so came together, pre-supposed in all subsequent law, not to be repealed by any authority, nor invalidated by being omitted in any code; inasmuch as from thence are all codes and all authority.

"Neither do I well see wherefore you cavaliers, and, indeed, many of us whom you merrily call Roundheads, distinguish between those who fought against King Charles, and specially after the second commission given to Sir Thomas Fairfax, and those who condemned him to death. Sure, if his person were inviolable, it was as wicked to lift the sword against it at Naseby as the axe at Whitehall. If his life might justly be taken, why not in course of trial as well as by right of war?"

"Thus much in general as touching the right. But, for the execution of King Charles in particular, I will not now undertake to defend it. Death is inflicted, not that the culprit may die, but that the state may be thereby advantaged. And, from all that I know, I think that the death of

King Charles hath more hindered than advanced the liberties of England.

"First, he left an heir. He was in captivity. The heir was in freedom. He was odious to the Scots. The heir was favoured by them. To kill the captive therefore, whereby the heir, in the apprehension of all royalists, became forthwith king--what was it, in truth, but to set their captive free, and to give him besides other great advantages?"

"Next, it was a deed most odious to the people, and not only to your party, but to many among ourselves; and, as it is perilous for any government to outrage the public opinion, so most was it perilous for a government which had from that opinion alone its birth, its nurture, and its defence.

"Yet doth not this properly belong to our dispute; nor can these faults be justly charged upon that most renowned Parliament. For, as you know, the high court of justice was not established until the House had been purged of such members as were adverse to the army, and brought wholly under the control of the chief officers."

"And who," said Mr Cowley, "levied that army? Who commissioned those officers? Was not the fate of the Commons as justly deserved as was that of Diomedes, who was devoured by those horses whom he had himself taught to feed on the flesh and blood of men? How could they hope that others would respect laws which they had themselves insulted; that swords which had been drawn against the prerogatives of the king would be put up at an ordinance of the Commons? It was believed, of old, that there were some devils easily raised but never to be laid; insomuch that, if a magician called them up, he should be forced to find them always some employment; for, though they would do all his bidding, yet, if he left them but for one moment without some work of evil to perform, they would turn their claws against himself. Such a fiend is an army. They who evoke it cannot dismiss it. They are at once its masters and its slaves. Let them not fail to find for it task after task of blood and rapine. Let them not leave it for a moment in repose, lest it tear them in pieces.

"Thus was it with that famous assembly. They formed a force which they could neither govern nor resist. They made it powerful. They

made it fanatical. As if military insolence were not of itself sufficiently dangerous, they heightened it with spiritual pride,--they encouraged their soldiers to rave from the tops of tubs against the men of Belial, till every trooper thought himself a prophet. They taught them to abuse popery, till every drummer fancied that he was as infallible as a pope.

"Then it was that religion changed her nature. She was no longer the parent of arts and letters, of wholesome knowledge, of innocent pleasures, of blessed household smiles. In their place came sour faces, whining voices, the chattering of fools, the yells of madmen. Then men fasted from meat and drink, who fasted not from bribes and blood. Then men frowned at stage-plays, who smiled at massacres. Then men preached against painted faces, who felt no remorse for their own most painted lives. Religion had been a pole-star to light and to guide. It was now more like to that ominous star in the book of the Apocalypse, which fell from heaven upon the fountains and rivers and changed them into wormwood; for even so did it descend from its high and celestial dwelling-place to plague this earth, and to turn into bitterness all that was sweet, and into poison all that was nourishing.

"Therefore it was not strange that such things should follow. They who had closed the barriers of London against the king could not defend them against their own creatures. They who had so stoutly cried for privilege, when that prince, most unadvisedly no doubt, came among them to demand their members, durst not wag their fingers when Oliver filled their hall with soldiers, gave their mace to a corporal, put their keys in his pocket, and drove them forth with base terms, borrowed half from the conventicle and half from the ale-house. Then were we, like the trees of the forest in holy writ, given over to the rule of the bramble; then from the basest of the shrubs came forth the fire which devoured the cedars of Lebanon. We bowed down before a man of mean birth, of ungraceful demeanour, of stammering and most vulgar utterance, of scandalous and notorious hypocrisy. Our laws were made and unmade at his pleasure; the constitution of our Parliaments changed by his writ and proclamation; our persons imprisoned; our property plundered; our lands and houses overrun with soldiers; and the great charter itself was but argument for a

scurrilous jest; and for all this we may thank that Parliament; for never, unless they had so violently shaken the vessel, could such foul dregs have risen to the top."

Then answered Mr Milton: "What you have now said comprehends so great a number of subjects, that it would require, not an evening's sail on the Thames, but rather a voyage to the Indies, accurately to treat of all: yet, in as few words as I may, I will explain my sense of these matters.

"First, as to the army. An army, as you have well set forth, is always a weapon dangerous to those who use it; yet he who falls among thieves spares not to fire his musquetoen, because he may be slain if it burst in his hand. Nor must states refrain from defending themselves, lest their defenders should at last turn against them. Nevertheless, against this danger statesmen should carefully provide; and, that they may do so, they should take especial care that neither the officers nor the soldiers do forget that they are also citizens. I do believe that the English army would have continued to obey the parliament with all duty, but for one act, which, as it was in intention, in seeming, and in immediate effect, worthy to be compared with the most famous in history, so was it, in its final consequence, most injurious. I speak of that ordinance called the "self-denying", and of the new model of the army. By those measures the Commons gave up the command of their forces into the hands of men who were not of themselves. Hence, doubtless, derived no small honour to that noble assembly, which sacrificed to the hope of public good the assurance of private advantage. And, as to the conduct of the war, the scheme prospered. Witness the battle of Naseby, and the memorable exploits of Fairfax in the west. But thereby the Parliament lost that hold on the soldiers and that power to control them, which they retained while every regiment was commanded by their own members. Politicians there be, who would wholly divide the legislative from the executive power. In the golden age this may have succeeded; in the millennium it may succeed again. But, where great armies and great taxes are required, there the executive government must always hold a great authority, which authority, that it may not oppress and destroy the legislature, must be in some manner blended with it. The leaders of foreign mercenaries have

always been most dangerous to a country. The officers of native armies, deprived of the civil privileges of other men, are as much to be feared. This was the great error of that Parliament: and, though an error it were, it was an error generous, virtuous, and more to be deplored than censured.

"Hence came the power of the army and its leaders, and especially of that most famous leader, whom both in our conversation to-day, and in that discourse whereon I before touched, you have, in my poor opinion, far too roughly handled. Wherefore you speak contemptibly of his parts I know not; but I suspect that you are not free from the error common to studious and speculative men. Because Oliver was an ungraceful orator, and never said, either in public or private, anything memorable, you will have it that he was of a mean capacity. Sure this is unjust. Many men have there been ignorant of letters, without wit, without eloquence, who yet had the wisdom to devise, and the courage to perform, that which they lacked language to explain. Such men often, in troubled times, have worked out the deliverance of nations and their own greatness, not by logic, not by rhetoric, but by wariness in success, by calmness in danger, by fierce and stubborn resolution in all adversity. The hearts of men are their books; events are their tutors; great actions are their eloquence: and such an one, in my judgment, was his late Highness, who, if none were to treat his name scornfully now shook not at the sound of it while he lived, would, by very few, be mentioned otherwise than with reverence. His own deeds shall avouch him for a great statesman, a great soldier, a true lover of his country, a merciful and generous conqueror.

"For his faults, let us reflect that they who seem to lead are oftentimes most constrained to follow. They who will mix with men, and especially they who will govern them, must in many things obey them. They who will yield to no such conditions may be hermits, but cannot be generals and statesmen. If a man will walk straight forward without turning to the right or the left, he must walk in a desert, and not in Cheapside. Thus was he enforced to do many things which jumped not with his inclination nor made for his honour; because the army, on which alone he could depend for power and life, might not otherwise be contented. And I, for mine own part, marvel less that he sometimes was fain to indulge their

violence than that he could so often restrain it.

"In that he dissolved the Parliament, I praise him. It then was so diminished in numbers, as well by the death as by the exclusion of members, that it was no longer the same assembly; and, if at that time it had made itself perpetual, we should have been governed, not by an English House of Commons, but by a Venetian Council.

"If in his following rule he overstepped the laws, I pity rather than condemn him. He may be compared to that Maeandrius of Samos, of whom Herodotus saith, in his Thalia, that, wishing to be of all men the most just, he was not able; for after the death of Polycrates he offered freedom to the people; and not till certain of them threatened to call him to a reckoning for what he had formerly done, did he change his purpose, and make himself a tyrant, lest he should be treated as a criminal.

"Such was the case of Oliver. He gave to his country a form of government so free and admirable that, in near six thousand years, human wisdom hath never devised any more excellent contrivance for human happiness. To himself he reserved so little power that it would scarcely have sufficed for his safety, and it is a marvel that it could suffice for his ambition. When, after that, he found that the members of his Parliament disputed his right even to that small authority which he had kept, when he might have kept all, then indeed I own that he began to govern by the sword those who would not suffer him to govern by the law.

"But, for the rest, what sovereign was ever more princely in pardoning injuries, in conquering enemies, in extending the dominions and the renown of his people? What sea, what shore did he not mark with imperishable memorials of his friendship or his vengeance? The gold of Spain, the steel of Sweden, the ten thousand sails of Holland, availed nothing against him. While every foreign state trembled at our arms, we sat secure from all assault. War, which often so strangely troubles both husbandry and commerce, never silenced the song of our reapers, or the sound of our looms. Justice was equally administered; God was freely worshipped.

"Now look at that which we have taken in exchange. With the restored king have come over to us vices of every sort, and most the basest

and most shameful,--lust without love--servitude without loyalty--foulness of speech--dishonesty of dealing-- grinning contempt of all things good and generous. The throne is surrounded by men whom the former Charles would have spurned from his footstool. The altar is served by slaves whose knees are supple to every being but God. Rhymers, whose books the hangman should burn, pandars, actors, and buffoons, these drink a health and throw a main with the King; these have stars on their breasts and gold sticks in their hands; these shut out from his presence the best and bravest of those who bled for his house. Even so doth God visit those who know not how to value freedom. He gives them over to the tyranny which they have desired, *Ina pantes epaurontai basileos.*"

"I will not," said Mr Cowley, "dispute with you on this argument. But, if it be as you say, how can you maintain that England hath been so greatly advantaged by the rebellion?"

"Understand me rightly, Sir," said Mr Milton. "This nation is not given over to slavery and vice. We tasted indeed the fruits of liberty before they had well ripened. Their flavour was harsh and bitter; and we turned from them with loathing to the sweeter poisons of servitude. This is but for a time. England is sleeping on the lap of Dalilah, traitorously chained, but not yet shorn of strength. Let the cry be once heard--the Philistines be upon thee; and at once that sleep will be broken, and those chains will be as flax in the fire. The great Parliament hath left behind it in our hearts and minds a hatred of tyrants, a just knowledge of our rights, a scorn of vain and deluding names; and that the revellers of Whitehall shall surely find. The sun is darkened; but it is only for a moment: it is but an eclipse; though all birds of evil omen have begun to scream, and all ravenous beasts have gone forth to prey, thinking it to be midnight. Woe to them if they be abroad when the rays again shine forth!

"The king hath judged ill. Had he been wise he would have remembered that he owed his restoration only to confusions which had wearied us out, and made us eager for repose. He would have known that the folly and perfidy of a prince would restore to the good old cause many hearts which had been alienated thence by the turbulence of factions; for, if I know aught of history, or of the heart of man, he will soon learn

that the last champion of the people was not destroyed when he murdered Vane, nor seduced when he beguiled Fairfax."

Mr Cowley seemed to me not to take much amiss what Mr Milton had said touching that thankless court, which had indeed but poorly requited his own good service. He only said, therefore, "Another rebellion! Alas! alas! Mr Milton! If there be no choice but between despotism and anarchy, I prefer despotism."

"Many men," said Mr Milton, "have floridly and ingeniously compared anarchy and despotism; but they who so amuse themselves do but look at separate parts of that which is truly one great whole. Each is the cause and the effect of the other; the evils of either are the evils of both. Thus do states move on in the same eternal cycle, which, from the remotest point, brings them back again to the same sad starting-post: and, till both those who govern and those who obey shall learn and mark this great truth, men can expect little through the future, as they have known little through the past, save vicissitudes of extreme evils, alternately producing and produced.

"When will rulers learn that, where liberty is not, security and order can never be? We talk of absolute power; but all power hath limits, which, if not fixed by the moderation of the governors, will be fixed by the force of the governed. Sovereigns may send their opposers to dungeons; they may clear out a senate-house with soldiers; they may enlist armies of spies; they may hang scores of the disaffected in chains at every cross road; but what power shall stand in that frightful time when rebellion hath become a less evil than endurance? Who shall dissolve that terrible tribunal, which, in the hearts of the oppressed, denounces against the oppressor the doom of its wild justice? Who shall repeal the law of selfdefence? What arms or discipline shall resist the strength of famine and despair? How often were the ancient Caesars dragged from their golden palaces, stripped of their purple robes, mangled, stoned, defiled with filth, pierced with hooks, hurled into Tiber? How often have the Eastern Sultans perished by the sabres of their own janissaries, or the bow-strings of their own mutes! For no power which is not limited by laws can ever be protected by them. Small, therefore, is the wisdom of those

who would fly to servitude as if it were a refuge from commotion; for anarchy is the sure consequence of tyranny. That governments may be safe, nations must be free. Their passions must have an outlet provided, lest they make one.

"When I was at Naples, I went with Signor Manso, a gentleman of excellent parts and breeding, who had been the familiar friend of that famous poet Torquato Tasso, to see the burning mountain Vesuvius. I wondered how the peasants could venture to dwell so fearlessly and cheerfully on its sides, when the lava was flowing from its summit; but Manso smiled, and told me that when the fire descends freely they retreat before it without haste or fear. They can tell how fast it will move, and how far; and they know, moreover, that, though it may work some little damage, it will soon cover the fields over which it hath passed with rich vineyards and sweet flowers. But, when the flames are pent up in the mountain, then it is that they have reason to fear; then it is that the earth sinks and the sea swells; then cities are swallowed up; and their place knoweth them no more. So it is in politics: where the people is most closely restrained, there it gives the greatest shocks to peace and order; therefore would I say to all kings, let your demagogues lead crowds, lest they lead armies; let them bluster, lest they massacre; a little turbulence is, as it were, the rainbow of the state; it shows indeed that there is a passing shower; but it is a pledge that there shall be no deluge."

"This is true," said Mr Cowley; "yet these admonitions are not less needful to subjects than to sovereigns."

"Surely," said Mr Milton; "and, that I may end this long debate with a few words in which we shall both agree, I hold that, as freedom is the only safeguard of governments, so are order and moderation generally necessary to preserve freedom. Even the vainest opinions of men are not to be outraged by those who propose to themselves the happiness of men for their end, and who must work with the passions of men for their means. The blind reverence for things ancient is indeed so foolish that it might make a wise man laugh, if it were not also sometimes so mischievous that it would rather make a good man weep. Yet, since it may not be wholly cured it must be discreetly indulged; and therefore those who would

amend evil laws should consider rather how much it may be safe to spare, than how much it may be possible to change. Have you not heard that men who have been shut up for many years in dungeons shrink if they see the light, and fall down if their irons be struck off? And so, when nations have long been in the house of bondage, the chains which have crippled them are necessary to support them, the darkness which hath weakened their sight is necessary to preserve it. Therefore release them not too rashly, lest they curse their freedom and pine for their prison.

"I think indeed that the renowned Parliament, of which we have talked so much, did show, until it became subject to the soldiers, a singular and admirable moderation, in such times scarcely to be hoped, and most worthy to be an example to all that shall come after. But on this argument I have said enough: and I will therefore only pray to Almighty God that those who shall, in future times stand forth in defence of our liberties, as well civil as religious, may adorn the good cause by mercy, prudence, and soberness, to the glory of his name and the happiness and honour of the English people."

And so ended that discourse; and not long after we were set on shore again at the Temple Gardens, and there parted company: and the same evening I took notes of what had been said, which I have here more fully set down, from regard both to the fame of the men, and the importance of the subject-matter.

...

ON THE ATHENIAN ORATORS.

(August 1824)

"To the famous orators repair, Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence Wielded at will that fierce democratic, Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne."--Milton.

The celebrity of the great classical writers is confined within no limits, except those which separate civilised from savage man. Their works are the common property of every polished nation. They have furnished subjects for the painter, and models for the poet. In the minds of the educated classes throughout Europe, their names are indissolubly associated with the endearing recollections of childhood,--the old school-room,--the dog-eared grammar,--the first prize,--the tears so often shed and so quickly dried. So great is the veneration with which they are regarded, that even the editors and commentators who perform the lowest menial offices to their memory, are considered, like the equerries and chamberlains of sovereign princes, as entitled to a high rank in the table of literary precedence. It is, therefore, somewhat singular that their productions should so rarely have been examined on just and philosophical principles of criticism.

The ancient writers themselves afford us but little assistance. When they particularise, they are commonly trivial: when they would generalise, they become indistinct. An exception must, indeed, be made in favour of Aristotle. Both in analysis and in combination, that great man was without a rival. No philosopher has ever possessed, in an equal degree, the talent either of separating established systems into their primary elements, or of connecting detached phenomena in harmonious systems. He was the great fashioner of the intellectual chaos; he changed its darkness into light, and its discord into order. He brought to literary researches the same vigour and amplitude of mind to which both physical and metaphysical science are so greatly indebted. His fundamental principles of criticism are excellent. To cite only a single instance:--the doctrine which he established, that poetry is an imitative art, when justly

understood, is to the critic what the compass is to the navigator. With it he may venture upon the most extensive excursions. Without it he must creep cautiously along the coast, or lose himself in a trackless expanse, and trust, at best, to the guidance of an occasional star. It is a discovery which changes a caprice into a science.

The general propositions of Aristotle are valuable. But the merit of the superstructure bears no proportion to that of the foundation. This is partly to be ascribed to the character of the philosopher, who, though qualified to do all that could be done by the resolving and combining powers of the understanding, seems not to have possessed much of sensibility or imagination. Partly, also, it may be attributed to the deficiency of materials. The great works of genius which then existed were not either sufficiently numerous or sufficiently varied to enable any man to form a perfect code of literature. To require that a critic should conceive classes of composition which had never existed, and then investigate their principles, would be as unreasonable as the demand of Nebuchadnezzar, who expected his magicians first to tell him his dream and then to interpret it.

With all his deficiencies, Aristotle was the most enlightened and profound critic of antiquity. Dionysius was far from possessing the same exquisite subtilty, or the same vast comprehension. But he had access to a much greater number of specimens; and he had devoted himself, as it appears, more exclusively to the study of elegant literature. His peculiar judgments are of more value than his general principles. He is only the historian of literature. Aristotle is its philosopher.

Quintilian applied to general literature the same principles by which he had been accustomed to judge of the declamations of his pupils. He looks for nothing but rhetoric, and rhetoric not of the highest order. He speaks coldly of the incomparable works of Aeschylus. He admires, beyond expression, those inexhaustible mines of common-places, the plays of Euripides. He bestows a few vague words on the poetical character of Homer. He then proceeds to consider him merely as an orator. An orator Homer doubtless was, and a great orator. But surely nothing is more remarkable, in his admirable works, than the art with

which his oratorical powers are made subservient to the purposes of poetry. Nor can I think Quintilian a great critic in his own province. Just as are many of his remarks, beautiful as are many of his illustrations, we can perpetually detect in his thoughts that flavour which the soil of despotism generally communicates to all the fruits of genius. Eloquence was, in his time, little more than a condiment which served to stimulate in a despot the jaded appetite for panegyric, an amusement for the travelled nobles and the blue-stocking matrons of Rome. It is, therefore, with him, rather a sport than a war; it is a contest of foils, not of swords. He appears to think more of the grace of the attitude than of the direction and vigour of the thrust. It must be acknowledged, in justice to Quintilian, that this is an error to which Cicero has too often given the sanction, both of his precept and of his example.

Longinus seems to have had great sensibility, but little discrimination. He gives us eloquent sentences, but no principles. It was happily said that Montesquieu ought to have changed the name of his book from "L'Esprit des Lois" to "L'Esprit sur les Lois". In the same manner the philosopher of Palmyra ought to have entitled his famous work, not "Longinus on the Sublime," but "The Sublimities of Longinus." The origin of the sublime is one of the most curious and interesting subjects of inquiry that can occupy the attention of a critic. In our own country it has been discussed, with great ability, and, I think, with very little success, by Burke and Dugald Stuart. Longinus dispenses himself from all investigations of this nature, by telling his friend Terentianus that he already knows everything that can be said upon the question. It is to be regretted that Terentianus did not impart some of his knowledge to his instructor: for from Longinus we learn only that sublimity means height-or elevation. (Akrotes kai exoche tis logon esti ta uoe.) This name, so commodiously vague, is applied indifferently to the noble prayer of Ajax in the Iliad, and to a passage of Plato about the human body, as full of conceits as an ode of Cowley. Having no fixed standard, Longinus is right only by accident. He is rather a fancier than a critic.

Modern writers have been prevented by many causes from supplying the deficiencies of their classical predecessors. At the time of the revival

of literature, no man could, without great and painful labour, acquire an accurate and elegant knowledge of the ancient languages. And, unfortunately, those grammatical and philological studies, without which it was impossible to understand the great works of Athenian and Roman genius, have a tendency to contract the views and deaden the sensibility of those who follow them with extreme assiduity. A powerful mind, which has been long employed in such studies, may be compared to the gigantic spirit in the Arabian tale, who was persuaded to contract himself to small dimensions in order to enter within the enchanted vessel, and, when his prison had been closed upon him, found himself unable to escape from the narrow boundaries to the measure of which he had reduced his stature. When the means have long been the objects of application, they are naturally substituted for the end. It was said, by Eugene of Savoy, that the greatest generals have commonly been those who have been at once raised to command, and introduced to the great operations of war, without being employed in the petty calculations and manoeuvres which employ the time of an inferior officer. In literature the principle is equally sound. The great tactics of criticism will, in general, be best understood by those who have not had much practice in drilling syllables and particles.

I remember to have observed among the French Anas a ludicrous instance of this. A scholar, doubtless of great learning, recommends the study of some long Latin treatise, of which I now forget the name, on the religion, manners, government, and language of the early Greeks. "For there," says he, "you will learn everything of importance that is contained in the Iliad and Odyssey, without the trouble of reading two such tedious books." Alas! it had not occurred to the poor gentleman that all the knowledge to which he attached so much value was useful only as it illustrated the great poems which he despised, and would be as worthless for any other purpose as the mythology of Caffraria, or the vocabulary of Otaheite.

Of those scholars who have disdained to confine themselves to verbal criticism few have been successful. The ancient languages have, generally, a magical influence on their faculties. They were "fools called into a circle by Greek invocations." The Iliad and Aeneid were to them

not books but curiosities, or rather reliques. They no more admired those works for their merits than a good Catholic venerates the house of the Virgin at Loretto for its architecture. Whatever was classical was good. Homer was a great poet, and so was Callimachus. The epistles of Cicero were fine, and so were those of Phalaris. Even with respect to questions of evidence they fell into the same error. The authority of all narrations, written in Greek or Latin, was the same with them. It never crossed their minds that the lapse of five hundred years, or the distance of five hundred leagues, could affect the accuracy of a narration;--that Livy could be a less veracious historian than Polybius;--or that Plutarch could know less about the friends of Xenophon than Xenophon himself. Deceived by the distance of time, they seem to consider all the Classics as contemporaries; just as I have known people in England, deceived by the distance of place, take it for granted that all persons who live in India are neighbours, and ask an inhabitant of Bombay about the health of an acquaintance at Calcutta. It is to be hoped that no barbarian deluge will ever again pass over Europe. But should such a calamity happen, it seems not improbable that some future Rollin or Gillies will compile a history of England from Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*, Miss Lee's *Recess*, and Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's *Memoirs*.

It is surely time that ancient literature should be examined in a different manner, without pedantical prepossessions, but with a just allowance, at the same time, for the difference of circumstances and manners. I am far from pretending to the knowledge or ability which such a task would require. All that I mean to offer is a collection of desultory remarks upon a most interesting portion of Greek literature.

It may be doubted whether any compositions which have ever been produced in the world are equally perfect in their kind with the great Athenian orations. Genius is subject to the same laws which regulate the production of cotton and molasses. The supply adjusts itself to the demand. The quantity may be diminished by restrictions, and multiplied by bounties. The singular excellence to which eloquence attained at Athens is to be mainly attributed to the influence which it exerted there. In turbulent times, under a constitution purely democratic, among a people

educated exactly to that point at which men are most susceptible of strong and sudden impressions, acute, but not sound reasoners, warm in their feelings, unfixed in their principles, and passionate admirers of fine composition, oratory received such encouragement as it has never since obtained.

The taste and knowledge of the Athenian people was a favourite object of the contemptuous derision of Samuel Johnson; a man who knew nothing of Greek literature beyond the common school-books, and who seems to have brought to what he had read scarcely more than the discernment of a common school-boy. He used to assert, with that arrogant absurdity which, in spite of his great abilities and virtues, renders him, perhaps the most ridiculous character in literary history, that Demosthenes spoke to a people of brutes;--to a barbarous people;--that there could have been no civilisation before the invention of printing. Johnson was a keen but a very narrow-minded observer of mankind. He perpetually confounded their general nature with their particular circumstances. He knew London intimately. The sagacity of his remarks on its society is perfectly astonishing. But Fleet Street was the world to him. He saw that Londoners who did not read were profoundly ignorant; and he inferred that a Greek, who had few or no books, must have been as uninformed as one of Mr Thrale's draymen.

There seems to be, on the contrary, every reason to believe, that, in general intelligence, the Athenian populace far surpassed the lower orders of any community that has ever existed. It must be considered, that to be a citizen was to be a legislator,--a soldier,--a judge,--one upon whose voice might depend the fate of the wealthiest tributary state, of the most eminent public man. The lowest offices, both of agriculture and of trade, were, in common, performed by slaves. The commonwealth supplied its meanest members with the support of life, the opportunity of leisure, and the means of amusement. Books were indeed few: but they were excellent; and they were accurately known. It is not by turning over libraries, but by repeatedly perusing and intently contemplating a few great models, that the mind is best disciplined. A man of letters must now read much that he soon forgets, and much from which he learns nothing worthy to be

remembered. The best works employ, in general, but a small portion of his time. Demosthenes is said to have transcribed six times the history of Thucydides. If he had been a young politician of the present age, he might in the same space of time have skimmed innumerable newspapers and pamphlets. I do not condemn that desultory mode of study which the state of things, in our day, renders a matter of necessity. But I may be allowed to doubt whether the changes on which the admirers of modern institutions delight to dwell have improved our condition so much in reality as in appearance. Rumford, it is said, proposed to the Elector of Bavaria a scheme for feeding his soldiers at a much cheaper rate than formerly. His plan was simply to compel them to masticate their food thoroughly. A small quantity, thus eaten, would, according to that famous projector, afford more sustenance than a large meal hastily devoured. I do not know how Rumford's proposition was received; but to the mind, I believe, it will be found more nutritious to digest a page than to devour a volume.

Books, however, were the least part of the education of an Athenian citizen. Let us, for a moment, transport ourselves in thought, to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are entering its gates, in the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature; for Phidias is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street; a rhapsodist is reciting there: men, women, children are thronging round him: the tears are running down their cheeks: their eyes are fixed: their very breath is still; for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles, and kissed those hands,--the terrible--the murderous,--which had slain so many of his sons. (--kai kuse cheiras, deinas, anorophonous, ai oi poleas ktanon uias.)

We enter the public place; there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward, with sparkling eyes, and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous atheist, from Ionia, and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying--"Room for the Prytanes." The general assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation is made--"Who wishes to speak?" There is a shout, and a clapping of hands: Pericles is mounting the stand. Then

for a play of Sophocles; and away to sup with Aspasia. I know of no modern university which has so excellent a system of education.

Knowledge thus acquired and opinions thus formed were, indeed, likely to be, in some respects, defective. Propositions which are advanced in discourse generally result from a partial view of the question, and cannot be kept under examination long enough to be corrected. Men of great conversational powers almost universally practise a sort of lively sophistry and exaggeration, which deceives, for the moment, both themselves and their auditors. Thus we see doctrines, which cannot bear a close inspection, triumph perpetually in drawing-rooms, in debating societies, and even in legislative or judicial assemblies. To the conversational education of the Athenians I am inclined to attribute the great looseness of reasoning which is remarkable in most of their scientific writings. Even the most illogical of modern writers would stand perfectly aghast at the puerile fallacies which seem to have deluded some of the greatest men of antiquity. Sir Thomas Lethbridge would stare at the political economy of Xenophon; and the author of "Soirees de Petersbourg" would be ashamed of some of the metaphysical arguments of Plato. But the very circumstances which retarded the growth of science were peculiarly favourable to the cultivation of eloquence. From the early habit of taking a share in animated discussion the intelligent student would derive that readiness of resource, that copiousness of language, and that knowledge of the temper and understanding of an audience, which are far more valuable to an orator than the greatest logical powers.

Horace has prettily compared poems to those paintings of which the effect varies as the spectator changes his stand. The same remark applies with at least equal justice to speeches. They must be read with the temper of those to whom they were addressed, or they must necessarily appear to offend against the laws of taste and reason; as the finest picture, seen in a light different from that for which it was designed, will appear fit only for a sign. This is perpetually forgotten by those who criticise oratory. Because they are reading at leisure, pausing at every line, reconsidering every argument, they forget that the hearers were hurried from point to point too rapidly to detect the fallacies through which they

were conducted; that they had no time to disentangle sophisms, or to notice slight inaccuracies of expression; that elaborate excellence, either of reasoning or of language, would have been absolutely thrown away. To recur to the analogy of the sister art, these connoisseurs examine a panorama through a microscope, and quarrel with a scene-painter because he does not give to his work the exquisite finish of Gerard Dow.

Oratory is to be estimated on principles different from those which are applied to other productions. Truth is the object of philosophy and history. Truth is the object even of those works which are peculiarly called works of fiction, but which, in fact, bear the same relation to history which algebra bears to arithmetic. The merit of poetry, in its wildest forms, still consists in its truth,—truth conveyed to the understanding, not directly by the words, but circuitously by means of imaginative associations, which serve as its conductors. The object of oratory alone is not truth, but persuasion. The admiration of the multitude does not make Moore a greater poet than Coleridge, or Beattie a greater philosopher than Berkeley. But the criterion of eloquence is different. A speaker who exhausts the whole philosophy of a question, who displays every grace of style, yet produces no effect on his audience, may be a great essayist, a great statesman, a great master of composition; but he is not an orator. If he miss the mark, it makes no difference whether he have taken aim too high or too low.

The effect of the great freedom of the press in England has been, in a great measure, to destroy this distinction, and to leave among us little of what I call Oratory Proper. Our legislators, our candidates, on great occasions even our advocates, address themselves less to the audience than to the reporters. They think less of the few hearers than of the innumerable readers. At Athens the case was different; there the only object of the speaker was immediate conviction and persuasion. He, therefore, who would justly appreciate the merit of the Grecian orators should place himself, as nearly as possible, in the situation of their auditors: he should divest himself of his modern feelings and acquirements, and make the prejudices and interests of the Athenian citizen his own. He who studies their works in this spirit will find that

many of those things which, to an English reader, appear to be blemishes,--the frequent violation of those excellent rules of evidence by which our courts of law are regulated,--the introduction of extraneous matter,--the reference to considerations of political expediency in judicial investigations,--the assertions, without proof,--the passionate entreaties,--the furious invectives,--are really proofs of the prudence and address of the speakers. He must not dwell maliciously on arguments or phrases, but acquiesce in his first impressions. It requires repeated perusal and reflection to decide rightly on any other portion of literature. But with respect to works of which the merit depends on their instantaneous effect the most hasty judgment is likely to be best.

The history of eloquence at Athens is remarkable. From a very early period great speakers had flourished there. Pisistratus and Themistocles are said to have owed much of their influence to their talents for debate. We learn, with more certainty, that Pericles was distinguished by extraordinary oratorical powers. The substance of some of his speeches is transmitted to us by Thucydides; and that excellent writer has doubtless faithfully reported the general line of his arguments. But the manner, which in oratory is of at least as much consequence as the matter, was of no importance to his narration. It is evident that he has not attempted to preserve it. Throughout his work, every speech on every subject, whatever may have been the character of the dialect of the speaker, is in exactly the same form. The grave king of Sparta, the furious demagogue of Athens, the general encouraging his army, the captive supplicating for his life, all are represented as speakers in one unvaried style,--a style moreover wholly unfit for oratorical purposes. His mode of reasoning is singularly elliptical,--in reality most consecutive,--yet in appearance often incoherent. His meaning, in itself sufficiently perplexing, is compressed into the fewest possible words. His great fondness for antithetical expression has not a little conduced to this effect. Every one must have observed how much more the sense is condensed in the verses of Pope and his imitators, who never ventured to continue the same clause from couplet to couplet, than in those of poets who allow themselves that license. Every artificial division, which is strongly marked, and which

frequently recurs, has the same tendency. The natural and perspicuous expression which spontaneously rises to the mind will often refuse to accommodate itself to such a form. It is necessary either to expand it into weakness, or to compress it into almost impenetrable density. The latter is generally the choice of an able man, and was assuredly the choice of Thucydides.

It is scarcely necessary to say that such speeches could never have been delivered. They are perhaps among the most difficult passages in the Greek language, and would probably have been scarcely more intelligible to an Athenian auditor than to a modern reader. Their obscurity was acknowledged by Cicero, who was as intimate with the literature and language of Greece as the most accomplished of its natives, and who seems to have held a respectable rank among the Greek authors. Their difficulty to a modern reader lies, not in the words, but in the reasoning. A dictionary is of far less use in studying them than a clear head and a close attention to the context. They are valuable to the scholar as displaying, beyond almost any other compositions, the powers of the finest of languages: they are valuable to the philosopher as illustrating the morals and manners of a most interesting age: they abound in just thought and energetic expression. But they do not enable us to form any accurate opinion on the merits of the early Greek orators.

Though it cannot be doubted that, before the Persian wars, Athens had produced eminent speakers, yet the period during which eloquence most flourished among her citizens was by no means that of her greatest power and glory. It commenced at the close of the Peloponnesian war. In fact, the steps by which Athenian oratory approached to its finished excellence seem to have been almost contemporaneous with those by which the Athenian character and the Athenian empire sunk to degradation. At the time when the little commonwealth achieved those victories which twenty-five eventful centuries have left unequalled, eloquence was in its infancy. The deliverers of Greece became its plunderers and oppressors. Unmeasured exaction, atrocious vengeance, the madness of the multitude, the tyranny of the great, filled the Cyclades with tears, and blood, and mourning. The sword unpeopled whole islands in a day. The plough

passed over the ruins of famous cities. The imperial republic sent forth her children by thousands to pine in the quarries of Syracuse, or to feed the vultures of Aegospotami. She was at length reduced by famine and slaughter to humble herself before her enemies, and to purchase existence by the sacrifice of her empire and her laws. During these disastrous and gloomy years, oratory was advancing towards its highest excellence. And it was when the moral, the political, and the military character of the people was most utterly degraded, it was when the viceroy of a Macedonian sovereign gave law to Greece, that the courts of Athens witnessed the most splendid contest of eloquence that the world has ever known.

The causes of this phenomenon it is not, I think, difficult to assign. The division of labour operates on the productions of the orator as it does on those of the mechanic. It was remarked by the ancients that the Pentathlete, who divided his attention between several exercises, though he could not vie with a boxer in the use of the cestus, or with one who had confined his attention to running in the contest of the stadium, yet enjoyed far greater general vigour and health than either. It is the same with the mind. The superiority in technical skill is often more than compensated by the inferiority in general intelligence. And this is peculiarly the case in politics. States have always been best governed by men who have taken a wide view of public affairs, and who have rather a general acquaintance with many sciences than a perfect mastery of one. The union of the political and military departments in Greece contributed not a little to the splendour of its early history. After their separation more skilful generals and greater speakers appeared; but the breed of statesmen dwindled and became almost extinct. Themistocles or Pericles would have been no match for Demosthenes in the assembly, or for Iphicrates in the field. But surely they were incomparably better fitted than either for the supreme direction of affairs.

There is indeed a remarkable coincidence between the progress of the art of war, and that of the art of oratory, among the Greeks. They both advanced to perfection by contemporaneous steps, and from similar causes. The early speakers, like the early warriors of Greece, were merely a militia.

It was found that in both employments practice and discipline gave superiority. (It has often occurred to me, that to the circumstances mentioned in the text is to be referred one of the most remarkable events in Grecian history; I mean the silent but rapid downfall of the Lacedaemonian power. Soon after the termination of the Peloponnesian war, the strength of Lacedaemon began to decline. Its military discipline, its social institutions, were the same. Agesilaus, during whose reign the change took place, was the ablest of its kings. Yet the Spartan armies were frequently defeated in pitched battles,--an occurrence considered impossible in the earlier ages of Greece. They are allowed to have fought most bravely; yet they were no longer attended by the success to which they had formerly been accustomed. No solution of these circumstances is offered, as far as I know, by any ancient author. The real cause, I conceive, was this. The Lacedaemonians, alone among the Greeks, formed a permanent standing army. While the citizens of other commonwealths were engaged in agriculture and trade, they had no employment whatever but the study of military discipline. Hence, during the Persian and Peloponnesian wars, they had that advantage over their neighbours which regular troops always possess over militia. This advantage they lost, when other states began, at a later period, to employ mercenary forces, who were probably as superior to them in the art of war as they had hitherto been to their antagonists.) Each pursuit therefore became first an art, and then a trade. In proportion as the professors of each became more expert in their particular craft, they became less respectable in their general character. Their skill had been obtained at too great expense to be employed only from disinterested views. Thus, the soldiers forgot that they were citizens, and the orators that they were statesmen. I know not to what Demosthenes and his famous contemporaries can be so justly compared as to those mercenary troops who, in their time, overran Greece; or those who, from similar causes, were some centuries ago the scourge of the Italian republics,--perfectly acquainted with every part of their profession, irresistible in the field, powerful to defend or to destroy, but defending without love, and destroying without hatred. We may despise the characters of these

political Condottieri; but is impossible to examine the system of their tactics without being amazed at its perfection.

I had intended to proceed to this examination, and to consider separately the remains of Lysias, of Aeschines, of Demosthenes, and of Isocrates, who, though strictly speaking he was rather a pamphleteer than an orator, deserves, on many accounts, a place in such a disquisition. The length of my prolegomena and digressions compels me to postpone this part of the subject to another occasion. A Magazine is certainly a delightful invention for a very idle or a very busy man. He is not compelled to complete his plan or to adhere to his subject. He may ramble as far as he is inclined, and stop as soon as he is tired. No one takes the trouble to recollect his contradictory opinions or his unredeemed pledges. He may be as superficial, as inconsistent, and as careless as he chooses. Magazines resemble those little angels, who, according to the pretty Rabbinical tradition, are generated every morning by the brook which rolls over the flowers of Paradise,--whose life is a song,--who warble till sunset, and then sink back without regret into nothingness. Such spirits have nothing to do with the detecting spear of Ithuriel or the victorious sword of Michael. It is enough for them to please and be forgotten.

...

A PROPHETIC ACCOUNT OF A GRAND NATIONAL EPIC POEM, TO BE ENTITLED "THE WELLINGTONIAD," AND TO BE PUBLISHED A.D. 2824.

(November 1824.)

How I became a prophet it is not very important to the reader to know. Nevertheless I feel all the anxiety which, under similar circumstances, troubled the sensitive mind of Sidrophel; and, like him, am eager to vindicate myself from the suspicion of having practised forbidden arts, or held intercourse with beings of another world. I solemnly declare, therefore, that I never saw a ghost, like Lord Lyttleton; consulted a gipsy, like Josephine; or heard my name pronounced by an absent person, like Dr Johnson. Though it is now almost as usual for gentlemen to appear at the moment of their death to their friends as to call on them during their life,

none of my acquaintance have been so polite as to pay me that customary attention. I have derived my knowledge neither from the dead nor from the living; neither from the lines of a hand, nor from the grounds of a tea-cup; neither from the stars of the firmament, nor from the fiends of the abyss. I have never, like the Wesley family, heard "that mighty leading angel," who "drew after him the third part of heaven's sons," scratching in my cupboard. I have never been enticed to sign any of those delusive bonds which have been the ruin of so many poor creatures; and, having always been an indifferent horse man, I have been careful not to venture myself on a broomstick.

My insight into futurity, like that of George Fox the quaker, and that of our great and philosophic poet, Lord Byron, is derived from simple presentiment. This is a far less artificial process than those which are employed by some others. Yet my predictions will, I believe, be found more correct than theirs, or, at all events, as Sir Benjamin Back bite says in the play, "more circumstantial."

I prophesy then, that, in the year 2824, according to our present reckoning, a grand national Epic Poem, worthy to be compared with the Iliad, the Aeneid, or the Jerusalem, will be published in London.

Men naturally take an interest in the adventures of every eminent writer. I will, therefore, gratify the laudable curiosity, which, on this occasion, will doubtless be universal, by pre fixing to my account of the poem a concise memoir of the poet.

Richard Quongti will be born at Westminster on the 1st of July, 2786. He will be the younger son of the younger branch of one of the most respectable families in England. He will be linearly descended from Quongti, the famous Chinese liberal, who, after the failure of the heroic attempt of his party to obtain a constitution from the Emperor Fim Fam, will take refuge in England, in the twenty-third century. Here his descendants will obtain considerable note; and one branch of the family will be raised to the peerage.

Richard, however, though destined to exalt his family to distinction far nobler than any which wealth or titles can bestow, will be born to a very scanty fortune. He will display in his early youth such striking talents as

will attract the notice of Viscount Quongti, his third cousin, then secretary of state for the Steam Department. At the expense of this eminent nobleman, he will be sent to prosecute his studies at the university of Tombuctoo. To that illustrious seat of the muses all the ingenuous youth of every country will then be attracted by the high scientific character of Professor Quashaboo, and the eminent literary attainments of Professor Kiskey Kickey. In spite of this formidable competition, however, Quongti will acquire the highest honours in every department of knowledge, and will obtain the esteem of his associates by his amiable and unaffected manners. The guardians of the young Duke of Carrington, premier peer of England, and the last remaining scion of the ancient and illustrious house of Smith, will be desirous to secure so able an instructor for their ward. With the Duke, Quongti will perform the grand tour, and visit the polished courts of Sydney and Capetown. After prevailing on his pupil, with great difficulty, to subdue a violent and imprudent passion which he had conceived for a Hottentot lady, of great beauty and accomplishments indeed, but of dubious character, he will travel with him to the United States of America. But that tremendous war which will be fatal to American liberty will, at that time, be raging through the whole federation. At New York the travellers will hear of the final defeat and death of the illustrious champion of freedom, Jonathon Higginbottom, and of the elevation of Ebenezer Hogsflesh to the perpetual Presidency. They will not choose to proceed in a journey which would expose them to the insults of that brutal soldiery, whose cruelty and rapacity will have devastated Mexico and Colombia, and now, at length, enslaved their own country.

On their return to England, A.D. 2810, the death of the Duke will compel his preceptor to seek for a subsistence by literary labours. His fame will be raised by many small productions of considerable merit; and he will at last obtain a permanent place in the highest class of writers by his great epic poem.

The celebrated work will become, with unexampled rapidity, a popular favourite. The sale will be so beneficial to the author that, instead of going about the dirty streets on his velocipede, he will be enabled to set up

his balloon.

The character of this noble poem will be so finely and justly given in the *Tombuctoo Review* for April 2825, that I cannot refrain from translating the passage. The author will be our poet's old preceptor, Professor Kiskey Kickey.

"In pathos, in splendour of language, in sweetness of versification, Mr Quongti has long been considered as unrivalled. In his exquisite poem on the *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus* all these qualities are displayed in their greatest perfection. How exquisitely does that work arrest and embody the undefined and vague shadows which flit over an imaginative mind. The cold worldling may not comprehend it; but it will find a response in the bosom of every youthful poet, of every enthusiastic lover, who has seen an *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus* by moonlight. But we were yet to learn that he possessed the comprehension, the judgment, and the fertility of mind indispensable to the epic poet.

"It is difficult to conceive a plot more perfect than that of the '*Wellingtoniad*.' It is most faithful to the manners of the age to which it relates. It preserves exactly all the historical circumstances, and interweaves them most artfully with all the speciosa miracula of supernatural agency."

Thus far the learned Professor of Humanity in the university of Tombuctoo. I fear that the critics of our time will form an opinion diametrically opposite as to these every points. Some will, I fear, be disgusted by the machinery, which is derived from the mythology of ancient Greece. I can only say that, in the twenty-ninth century, that machinery will be universally in use among poets; and that Quongti will use it, partly in conformity with the general practice, and partly from a veneration, perhaps excessive, for the great remains of classical antiquity, which will then, as now, be assiduously read by every man of education; though Tom Moore's songs will be forgotten, and only three copies of Lord Byron's works will exist: one in the possession of King George the Nineteenth, one in the Duke of Carrington's collection, and one in the library of the British Museum. Finally, should any good people be concerned to hear that Pagan fictions will so long retain their influence

over literature, let them reflect that, as the Bishop of St David's says, in his "Proofs of the Inspiration of the Sibylline Verses," read at the last meeting of the Royal Society of Literature, "at all events, a Pagan is not a Papist."

Some readers of the present day may think that Quongti is by no means entitled to the compliments which his Negro critic pays him on his adherence to the historical circumstances of the time in which he has chosen his subject; that, where he introduces any trait of our manners, it is in the wrong place, and that he confounds the customs of our age with those of much more remote periods. I can only say that the charge is infinitely more applicable to Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. If, therefore, the reader should detect, in the following abstract of the plot, any little deviation from strict historical accuracy, let him reflect, for a moment, whether Agamemnon would not have found as much to censure in the Iliad,--Dido in the Aeneid,--or Godfrey in the Jerusalem. Let him not suffer his opinions to depend on circumstances which cannot possibly affect the truth or falsehood of the representation. If it be impossible for a single man to kill hundreds in battle, the impossibility is not diminished by distance of time. If it be as certain that Rinaldo never disenchanted a forest in Palestine as it is that the Duke of Wellington never disenchanted the forest of Soignies, can we, as rational men, tolerate the one story and ridicule the other? Of this, at least, I am certain, that whatever excuse we have for admiring the plots of those famous poems our children will have for extolling that of the "Wellingtoniad."

I shall proceed to give a sketch of the narrative. The subject is "The Reign of the Hundred Days."

BOOK I.

The poem commences, in form, with a solemn proposition of the subject. Then the muse is invoked to give the poet accurate information as to the causes of so terrible a commotion. The answer to this question, being, it is to be supposed, the joint production of the poet and the muse, ascribes the event to circumstances which have hitherto eluded all the research of political writers, namely, the influence of the god Mars, who, we are told, had some forty years before usurped the conjugal rights of old Carlo Buonaparte, and given birth to Napoleon. By his incitement it was that the emperor with his devoted companions was now on the sea, returning to his ancient dominions. The gods were at present, fortunately for the adventurer, feasting with the Ethiopians, whose entertainments, according to the ancient custom described by Homer, they annually attended, with the same sort of condescending gluttony which now carries the cabinet to Guildhall on the 9th of November. Neptune was, in consequence, absent, and unable to prevent the enemy of his favourite island from crossing his element. Boreas, however, who had his abode on the banks of the Russian ocean, and who, like Thetis in the Iliad, was not of sufficient quality to have an invitation to Ethiopia, resolves to destroy the armament which brings war and danger to his beloved Alexander. He accordingly raises a storm which is most powerfully described. Napoleon bewails the inglorious fate for which he seems to be reserved. "Oh! thrice happy," says he, "those who were frozen to death at Krasnoi, or slaughtered at Leipsic. Oh, Kutusoff, bravest of the Russians, wherefore was I not permitted to fall by thy victorious sword?" He then offers a prayer to Aeolus, and vows to him a sacrifice of a black ram. In consequence, the god recalls his turbulent subject; the sea is calmed; and the ship anchors in the port of Frejus. Napoleon and Bertrand, who is always called the faithful Bertrand, land to explore the country; Mars meets them disguised as a lancer of the guard, wearing the cross of the legion of honour. He advises them to apply for necessaries of all kinds to the governor, shows them the way, and disappears with a strong smell of gunpowder. Napoleon makes a pathetic speech, and

enters the governor's house. Here he sees hanging up a fine print of the battle of Austerlitz, himself in the foreground giving his orders. This puts him in high spirits; he advances and salutes the governor, who receives him most loyally, gives him an entertainment, and, according to the usage of all epic hosts, insists after dinner on a full narration of all that has happened to him since the battle of Leipsic.

BOOK II.

Napoleon carries his narrative from the battle of Leipsic to his abdication. But, as we shall have a great quantity of fighting on our hands, I think it best to omit the details.

BOOK III. Napoleon describes his sojourn at Elba, and his return; how he was driven by stress of weather to Sardinia, and fought with the harpies there; how he was then carried southward to Sicily, where he generously took on board an English sailor, whom a man-of-war had unhappily left there, and who was in imminent danger of being devoured by the Cyclops; how he landed in the bay of Naples, saw the Sibyl, and descended to Tartarus; how he held a long and pathetic conversation with Poniatowski, whom he found wandering unburied on the banks of Styx; how he swore to give him a splendid funeral; how he had also an affectionate interview with Desaix; how Moreau and Sir Ralph Abercrombie fled at the sight of him. He relates that he then re-embarked, and met with nothing of importance till the commencement of the storm with which the poem opens.

BOOK IV.

The scene changes to Paris. Fame, in the garb of an express, brings intelligence of the landing of Napoleon. The king performs a sacrifice: but the entrails are unfavourable; and the victim is without a heart. He prepares to encounter the invader. A young captain of the guard,--the son of Maria Antoinette by Apollo,--in the shape of a fiddler, rushes in to tell him that Napoleon is approaching with a vast army. The royal forces are drawn out for battle. Full catalogues are given of the regiments on both sides; their colonels, lieutenant-colonels, and uniform.

BOOK V.

The king comes forward and defies Napoleon to single combat. Napoleon accepts it. Sacrifices are offered. The ground is measured by Ney and Macdonald. The combatants advance. Louis snaps his pistol in vain. The bullet of Napoleon, on the contrary, carries off the tip of the king's ear. Napoleon then rushes on him sword in hand. But Louis snatches up a stone, such as ten men of those degenerate days will be unable to move, and hurls it at his antagonist. Mars averts it. Napoleon then seizes Louis, and is about to strike a fatal blow, when Bacchus intervenes, like Venus in the third book of the Iliad, bears off the king in a thick cloud, and seats him in an hotel at Lille, with a bottle of Maraschino and a basin of soup before him. Both armies instantly proclaim Napoleon emperor.

BOOK VI.

Neptune, returned from his Ethiopian revels, sees with rage the events which have taken place in Europe. He flies to the cave of Alecto, and drags out the fiend, commanding her to excite universal hostility against Napoleon. The Fury repairs to Lord Castlereagh; and, as, when she visited Turnus, she assumed the form of an old woman, she here appears in the kindred shape of Mr Vansittart, and in an impassioned address exhorts his lordship to war. His lordship, like Turnus, treats this unwonted monitor with great disrespect, tells him that he is an old doting fool, and advises him to look after the ways and means, and leave questions of peace and war to his betters. The Fury then displays all her terrors. The neat powdered hair bristles up into snakes; the black stockings appear clotted with blood; and, brandishing a torch, she announces her name and mission. Lord Castlereagh, seized with fury, flies instantly to the Parliament, and recommends war with a torrent of eloquent invective. All the members instantly clamour for vengeance, seize their arms which are hanging round the walls of the house, and rush forth to prepare for instant hostilities.

BOOK VII.

In this book intelligence arrives at London of the flight of the Duchess d'Angouleme from France. It is stated that this heroine, armed from head to foot, defended Bordeaux against the adherents of Napoleon, and that she fought hand to hand with Clausel, and beat him down with an enormous stone. Deserted by her followers, she at last, like Turnus, plunged, armed as she was, into the Garonne, and swam to an English ship which lay off the coast. This intelligence yet more inflames the English to war.

A yet bolder flight than any which has been mentioned follows. The Duke of Wellington goes to take leave of the duchess; and a scene passes quite equal to the famous interview of Hector and Andromache. Lord Douro is frightened at his father's feather, but begs for his epaulette.

BOOK VIII.

Neptune, trembling for the event of the war, implores Venus, who, as the offspring of his element, naturally venerates him, to procure from Vulcan a deadly sword and a pair of unerring pistols for the Duke. They are accordingly made, and superbly decorated. The sheath of the sword, like the shield of Achilles, is carved, in exquisitely fine miniature, with scenes from the common life of the period; a dance at Almack's a boxing match at the Fives- court, a lord mayor's procession, and a man hanging. All these are fully and elegantly described. The Duke thus armed hastens to Brussels.

BOOK IX.

The Duke is received at Brussels by the King of the Netherlands with great magnificence. He is informed of the approach of the armies of all the confederate kings. The poet, however, with a laudable zeal for the glory of his country, completely passes over the exploits of the Austrians in Italy, and the discussions of the congress. England and France, Wellington and Napoleon, almost exclusively occupy his attention. Several days are spent at Brussels in revelry. The English heroes astonish their allies by exhibiting splendid games, similar to those which draw the flower of the British aristocracy to Newmarket and Moulsey Hurst, and which will be considered by our descendants with as much veneration as the Olympian and Isthmian contests by classical students of the present time. In the combat of the cestus, Shaw, the lifeguardsman, vanquishes the Prince of Orange, and obtains a bull as a prize. In the horse-race, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Uxbridge ride against each other; the Duke is victorious, and is rewarded with twelve opera-girls. On the last day of the festivities, a splendid dance takes place, at which all the heroes attend.

BOOK X.

Mars, seeing the English army thus inactive, hastens to rouse Napoleon, who, conducted by Night and Silence, unexpectedly attacks the Prussians. The slaughter is immense. Napoleon kills many whose histories and families are happily particularised. He slays Herman, the craniologist, who dwelt by the linden-shadowed Elbe, and measured with his eye the skulls of all who walked through the streets of Berlin. Alas! his own skull is now cleft by the Corsican sword. Four pupils of the University of Jena advance together to encounter the Emperor; at four blows he destroys them all. Blucher rushes to arrest the devastation; Napoleon strikes him to the ground, and is on the point of killing him, but Gneisenau, Ziethen, Bulow, and all the other heroes of the Prussian army, gather round him, and bear the venerable chief to a distance from the field. The slaughter is continued till night. In the meantime Neptune has despatched Fame to bear the intelligence to the Duke, who is dancing at Brussels. The whole army is put in motion. The Duke of Brunswick's horse speaks to admonish him of his danger, but in vain.

BOOK VI.

Picton, the Duke of Brunswick, and the Prince of Orange, engage Ney at Quatre Bras. Ney kills the Duke of Brunswick, and strips him, sending his belt to Napoleon. The English fall back on Waterloo. Jupiter calls a council of the gods, and commands that none shall interfere on either side. Mars and Neptune make very eloquent speeches. The battle of Waterloo commences. Napoleon kills Picton and Delancy. Ney engages Ponsonby and kills him. The Prince of Orange is wounded by Soult. Lord Uxbridge flies to check the carnage. He is severely wounded by Napoleon, and only saved by the assistance of Lord Hill. In the meantime the Duke makes a tremendous carnage among the French. He encounters General Duhesme and vanquishes him, but spares his life. He kills Toubert, who kept the gaming-house in the Palais Royal, and Maronet, who loved to spend whole nights in drinking champagne. Clerval, who had been hooted from the stage, and had then become a captain in the Imperial Guard, wished that he had still continued to face the more harmless enmity of the Parisian pit. But Larrey, the son of Esculapius, whom his father had instructed in all the secrets of his art, and who was surgeon-general of the French army, embraced the knees of the destroyer, and conjured him not to give death to one whose office it was to give life. The Duke raised him, and bade him live.

But we must hasten to the close. Napoleon rushes to encounter Wellington. Both armies stand in mute amaze. The heroes fire their pistols; that of Napoleon misses, but that of Wellington, formed by the hand of Vulcan, and primed by the Cyclops, wounds the Emperor in the thigh. He flies, and takes refuge among his troops. The flight becomes promiscuous. The arrival of the Prussians, from a motive of patriotism, the poet completely passes over.

BOOK XII.

Things are now hastening to the catastrophe. Napoleon flies to London, and, seating himself on the hearth of the Regent, embraces the household gods and conjures him, by the venerable age of George III., and by the opening perfections of the Princess Charlotte, to spare him. The Prince is inclined to do so; when, looking on his breast, he sees there the belt of the Duke of Brunswick. He instantly draws his sword, and is about to stab the destroyer of his kinsman. Piety and hospitality, however, restrain his hand. He takes a middle course, and condemns Napoleon to be exposed on a desert island. The King of France re-enters Paris; and the poem concludes.

...

ON MITFORD'S HISTORY OF GREECE.

(November 1824.)

This is a book which enjoys a great and increasing popularity: but, while it has attracted a considerable share of the public attention, it has been little noticed by the critics. Mr Mitford has almost succeeded in mounting, unperceived by those whose office it is to watch such aspirants, to a high place among historians. He has taken a seat on the dais without being challenged by a single seneschal. To oppose the progress of his fame is now almost a hopeless enterprise. Had he been reviewed with candid severity, when he had published only his first volume, his work would either have deserved its reputation, or would never have obtained it. "Then," as Indra says of Kehama, "then was the time to strike." The time was neglected; and the consequence is that Mr Mitford like Kehama, has laid his victorious hand on the literary Amreeta, and seems about to taste the precious elixir of immortality. I shall venture to emulate the courage of the honest Glendoveer-- "When now He saw the Amreeta in Kehama's hand, An impulse that defied all self-command, In that extremity, Stung him, and he resolved to seize the cup, And dare the Rajah's force in Seeva's sight, Forward he sprung to tempt the unequal fray."

In plain words, I shall offer a few considerations, which may tend to reduce an overpraised writer to his proper level.

The principal characteristic of this historian, the origin of his excellencies and his defects, is a love of singularity. He has no notion of going with a multitude to do either good or evil. An exploded opinion, or an unpopular person, has an irresistible charm for him. The same perverseness may be traced in his diction. His style would never have been elegant; but it might at least have been manly and perspicuous; and nothing but the most elaborate care could possibly have made it so bad as it is. It is distinguished by harsh phrases, strange collocations, occasional solecisms, frequent obscurity, and, above all, by a peculiar oddity, which can no more be described than it can be overlooked. Nor is this all. Mr

Mitford piques himself on spelling better than any of his neighbours; and this not only in ancient names, which he mangles in defiance both of custom and of reason, but in the most ordinary words of the English language. It is, in itself, a matter perfectly indifferent whether we call a foreigner by the name which he bears in his own language, or by that which corresponds to it in ours; whether we say Lorenzo de Medici, or Lawrence de Medici, Jean Chauvin, or John Calvin. In such cases established usage is considered as law by all writers except Mr Mitford. If he were always consistent with himself, he might be excused for sometimes disagreeing with his neighbours; but he proceeds on no principle but that of being unlike the rest of the world. Every child has heard of Linnaeus; therefore Mr Mitford calls him Linne: Rousseau is known all over Europe as Jean Jacques; therefore Mr Mitford bestows on him the strange appellation of John James.

Had Mr Mitford undertaken a History of any other country than Greece, this propensity would have rendered his work useless and absurd. His occasional remarks on the affairs of ancient Rome and of modern Europe are full of errors: but he writes of times with respect to which almost every other writer has been in the wrong; and, therefore, by resolutely deviating from his predecessors, he is often in the right.

Almost all the modern historians of Greece have shown the grossest ignorance of the most obvious phenomena of human nature. In their representations the generals and statesmen of antiquity are absolutely divested of all individuality. They are personifications; they are passions, talents, opinions, virtues, vices, but not men. Inconsistency is a thing of which these writers have no notion. That a man may have been liberal in his youth and avaricious in his age, cruel to one enemy and merciful to another, is to them utterly inconceivable. If the facts be undeniable, they suppose some strange and deep design, in order to explain what, as every one who has observed his own mind knows, needs no explanation at all. This is a mode of writing very acceptable to the multitude who have always been accustomed to make gods and daemons out of men very little better or worse than themselves; but it appears contemptible to all who have watched the changes of human character--to all who have observed

the influence of time, of circumstances, and of associates, on mankind--to all who have seen a hero in the gout, a democrat in the church, a pedant in love, or a philosopher in liquor. This practice of painting in nothing but black and white is unpardonable even in the drama. It is the great fault of Alfieri; and how much it injures the effect of his compositions will be obvious to every one who will compare his Rosmunda with the Lady Macbeth of Shakspeare. The one is a wicked woman; the other is a fiend. Her only feeling is hatred; all her words are curses. We are at once shocked and fatigued by the spectacle of such raving cruelty, excited by no provocation, repeatedly changing its object, and constant in nothing but in its in-extinguishable thirst for blood.

In history this error is far more disgraceful. Indeed, there is no fault which so completely ruins a narrative in the opinion of a judicious reader. We know that the line of demarcation between good and bad men is so faintly marked as often to elude the most careful investigation of those who have the best opportunities for judging. Public men, above all, are surrounded with so many temptations and difficulties that some doubt must almost always hang over their real dispositions and intentions. The lives of Pym, Cromwell, Monk, Clarendon, Marlborough, Burnet, Walpole, are well known to us. We are acquainted with their actions, their speeches, their writings; we have abundance of letters and well-authenticated anecdotes relating to them: yet what candid man will venture very positively to say which of them were honest and which of them were dishonest men? It appears easier to pronounce decidedly upon the great characters of antiquity, not because we have greater means of discovering truth, but simply because we have less means of detecting error. The modern historians of Greece have forgotten this. Their heroes and villains are as consistent in all their sayings and doings as the cardinal virtues and the deadly sins in an allegory. We should as soon expect a good action from giant Slay-good in Bunyan as from Dionysius; and a crime of Epaminondas would seem as incongruous as a faux-pas of the grave and comely damsel called Discretion, who answered the bell at the door of the house Beautiful.

This error was partly the cause and partly the effect of the high

estimation in which the later ancient writers have been held by modern scholars. Those French and English authors who have treated of the affairs of Greece have generally turned with contempt from the simple and natural narrations of Thucydides and Xenophon to the extravagant representations of Plutarch, Diodorus, Curtius, and other romancers of the same class,--men who described military operations without ever having handled a sword, and applied to the seditions of little republics speculations formed by observation on an empire which covered half the known world. Of liberty they knew nothing. It was to them a great mystery--a superhuman enjoyment. They ranted about liberty and patriotism, from the same cause which leads monks to talk more ardently than other men about love and women. A wise man values political liberty, because it secures the persons and the possessions of citizens; because it tends to prevent the extravagance of rulers, and the corruption of judges; because it gives birth to useful sciences and elegant arts; because it excites the industry and increases the comforts of all classes of society. These theorists imagined that it possessed something eternally and intrinsically good, distinct from the blessings which it generally produced. They considered it not as a means but as an end; an end to be attained at any cost. Their favourite heroes are those who have sacrificed, for the mere name of freedom, the prosperity--the security--the justice--from which freedom derives its value.

There is another remarkable characteristic of these writers, in which their modern worshippers have carefully imitated them--a great fondness for good stories. The most established facts, dates, and characters are never suffered to come into competition with a splendid saying, or a romantic exploit. The early historians have left us natural and simple descriptions of the great events which they witnessed, and the great men with whom they associated. When we read the account which Plutarch and Rollin have given of the same period, we scarcely know our old acquaintance again; we are utterly confounded by the melo-dramatic effect of the narration, and the sublime coxcombray of the characters.

These are the principal errors into which the predecessors of Mr Mitford have fallen; and from most of these he is free. His faults are of a

completely different description. It is to be hoped that the students of history may now be saved, like Dorax in Dryden's play, by swallowing two conflicting poisons, each of which may serve as an antidote to the other.

The first and most important difference between Mr Mitford and those who have preceded him is in his narration. Here the advantage lies, for the most part, on his side. His principle is to follow the contemporary historians, to look with doubt on all statements which are not in some degree confirmed by them, and absolutely to reject all which are contradicted by them. While he retains the guidance of some writer in whom he can place confidence, he goes on excellently. When he loses it, he falls to the level, or perhaps below the level, of the writers whom he so much despises: he is as absurd as they, and very much duller. It is really amusing to observe how he proceeds with his narration when he has no better authority than poor Diodorus. He is compelled to relate something; yet he believes nothing. He accompanies every fact with a long statement of objections. His account of the administration of Dionysius is in no sense a history. It ought to be entitled--"Historic doubts as to certain events, alleged to have taken place in Sicily."

This scepticism, however, like that of some great legal characters almost as sceptical as himself; vanishes whenever his political partialities interfere. He is a vehement admirer of tyranny and oligarchy, and considers no evidence as feeble which can be brought forward in favour of those forms of government. Democracy he hates with a perfect hatred, a hatred which, in the first volume of his history, appears only in his episodes and reflections, but which, in those parts where he has less reverence for his guides, and can venture to take his own way, completely distorts even his narration.

In taking up these opinions, I have no doubt that Mr Mitford was influenced by the same love of singularity which led him to spell "island" without an "s," and to place two dots over the last letter of "idea." In truth, preceding historians have erred so monstrously on the other side that even the worst parts of Mr Mitford's book may be useful as a corrective. For a young gentleman who talks much about his country, tyrannicide, and

Epaminondas, this work, diluted in a sufficient quantity of Rollin and Berthelemi, may be a very useful remedy.

The errors of both parties arise from an ignorance or a neglect of the fundamental principles of political science. The writers on one side imagine popular government to be always a blessing; Mr Mitford omits no opportunity of assuring us that it is always a curse. The fact is, that a good government, like a good coat, is that which fits the body for which it is designed. A man who, upon abstract principles, pronounces a constitution to be good, without an exact knowledge of the people who are to be governed by it, judges as absurdly as a tailor who should measure the Belvidere Apollo for the clothes of all his customers. The demagogues who wished to see Portugal a republic, and the wise critics who revile the Virginians for not having instituted a peerage, appear equally ridiculous to all men of sense and candour.

That is the best government which desires to make the people happy, and knows how to make them happy. Neither the inclination nor the knowledge will suffice alone; and it is difficult to find them together.

Pure democracy, and pure democracy alone, satisfies the former condition of this great problem. That the governors may be solicitous only for the interests of the governed, it is necessary that the interests of the governors and the governed should be the same. This cannot be often the case where power is intrusted to one or to a few. The privileged part of the community will doubtless derive a certain degree of advantage from the general prosperity of the state; but they will derive a greater from oppression and exaction. The king will desire an useless war for his glory, or a *parc-aux-cerfs* for his pleasure. The nobles will demand monopolies and *lettres-de-cachet*. In proportion as the number of governors is increased the evil is diminished. There are fewer to contribute, and more to receive. The dividend which each can obtain of the public plunder becomes less and less tempting. But the interests of the subjects and the rulers never absolutely coincide till the subjects themselves become the rulers, that is, till the government be either immediately or mediately democratical.

But this is not enough. "Will without power," said the sagacious

Casimir to Milor Beefington, "is like children playing at soldiers." The people will always be desirous to promote their own interests; but it may be doubted, whether, in any community, they were ever sufficiently educated to understand them. Even in this island, where the multitude have long been better informed than in any other part of Europe, the rights of the many have generally been asserted against themselves by the patriotism of the few. Free trade, one of the greatest blessings which a government can confer on a people, is in almost every country unpopular. It may be well doubted, whether a liberal policy with regard to our commercial relations would find any support from a parliament elected by universal suffrage. The republicans on the other side of the Atlantic have recently adopted regulations of which the consequences will, before long, show us,

"How nations sink, by darling schemes oppressed, When vengeance listens to the fool's request."

The people are to be governed for their own good; and, that they may be governed for their own good, they must not be governed by their own ignorance. There are countries in which it would be as absurd to establish popular government as to abolish all the restraints in a school, or to untie all the strait-waistcoats in a madhouse.

Hence it may be concluded that the happiest state of society is that in which supreme power resides in the whole body of a well-informed people. This is an imaginary, perhaps an unattainable, state of things. Yet, in some measure, we may approximate to it; and he alone deserves the name of a great statesman, whose principle it is to extend the power of the people in proportion to the extent of their knowledge, and to give them every facility for obtaining such a degree of knowledge as may render it safe to trust them with absolute power. In the mean time, it is dangerous to praise or condemn constitutions in the abstract; since, from the despotism of St Petersburg to the democracy of Washington, there is scarcely a form of government which might not, at least in some hypothetical case, be the best possible.

If, however, there be any form of government which in all ages and all nations has always been, and must always be, pernicious, it is certainly

that which Mr Mitford, on his usual principle of being wiser than all the rest of the world, has taken under his especial patronage--pure oligarchy. This is closely, and indeed inseparably, connected with another of his eccentric tastes, a marked partiality for Lacedaemon, and a dislike of Athens. Mr Mitford's book has, I suspect, rendered these sentiments in some degree popular; and I shall, therefore, examine them at some length.

The shades in the Athenian character strike the eye more rapidly than those in the Lacedaemonian: not because they are darker, but because they are on a brighter ground. The law of ostracism is an instance of this. Nothing can be conceived more odious than the practice of punishing a citizen, simply and professedly, for his eminence;--and nothing in the institutions of Athens is more frequently or more justly censured. Lacedaemon was free from this. And why? Lacedaemon did not need it. Oligarchy is an ostracism of itself,--an ostracism not occasional, but permanent, --not dubious, but certain. Her laws prevented the development of merit instead of attacking its maturity. They did not cut down the plant in its high and palmy state, but cursed the soil with eternal sterility. In spite of the law of ostracism, Athens produced, within a hundred and fifty years, the greatest public men that ever existed. Whom had Sparta to ostracise? She produced, at most, four eminent men, Brasidas, Gylippus, Lysander, and Agesilaus. Of these, not one rose to distinction within her jurisdiction. It was only when they escaped from the region within which the influence of aristocracy withered everything good and noble, it was only when they ceased to be Lacedaemonians, that they became great men. Brasidas, among the cities of Thrace, was strictly a democratical leader, the favourite minister and general of the people. The same may be said of Gylippus, at Syracuse. Lysander, in the Hellespont, and Agesilaus, in Asia, were liberated for a time from the hateful restraints imposed by the constitution of Lycurgus. Both acquired fame abroad; and both returned to be watched and depressed at home. This is not peculiar to Sparta. Oligarchy, wherever it has existed, has always stunted the growth of genius. Thus it was at Rome, till about a century before the Christian era: we read of abundance of consuls and dictators who won battles, and enjoyed triumphs; but we look in vain for a

single man of the first order of intellect,—for a Pericles, a Demosthenes, or a Hannibal. The Gracchi formed a strong democratical party; Marius revived it; the foundations of the old aristocracy were shaken; and two generations fertile in really great men appeared.

Venice is a still more remarkable instance: in her history we see nothing but the state; aristocracy had destroyed every seed of genius and virtue. Her dominion was like herself, lofty and magnificent, but founded on filth and weeds. God forbid that there should ever again exist a powerful and civilised state, which, after existing through thirteen hundred eventful years, should not bequeath to mankind the memory of one great name or one generous action.

Many writers, and Mr Mitford among the number, have admired the stability of the Spartan institutions; in fact, there is little to admire, and less to approve. Oligarchy is the weakest and the most stable of governments; and it is stable because it is weak. It has a sort of valetudinarian longevity; it lives in the balance of Sanctorius; it takes no exercise; it exposes itself to no accident; it is seized with an hypochondriac alarm at every new sensation; it trembles at every breath; it lets blood for every inflammation: and thus, without ever enjoying a day of health or pleasure, drags on its existence to a dotting and debilitated old age.

The Spartans purchased for their government a prolongation of its existence by the sacrifice of happiness at home and dignity abroad. They cringed to the powerful; they trampled on the weak; they massacred their helots; they betrayed their allies; they contrived to be a day too late for the battle of Marathon; they attempted to avoid the battle of Salamis; they suffered the Athenians, to whom they owed their lives and liberties, to be a second time driven from their country by the Persians, that they might finish their own fortifications on the Isthmus; they attempted to take advantage of the distress to which exertions in their cause had reduced their preservers, in order to make them their slaves; they strove to prevent those who had abandoned their walls to defend them, from rebuilding them to defend themselves; they commenced the Peloponnesian war in violation of their engagements with Athens; they abandoned it in violation

of their engagements with their allies; they gave up to the sword whole cities which had placed themselves under their protection; they bartered, for advantages confined to themselves, the interest, the freedom, and the lives of those who had served them most faithfully; they took with equal complacency, and equal infamy, the stripes of Elis and the bribes of Persia; they never showed either resentment or gratitude; they abstained from no injury, and they revenged none. Above all, they looked on a citizen who served them well as their deadliest enemy. These are the arts which protract the existence of government.

Nor were the domestic institutions of Lacedaemon less hateful or less contemptible than her foreign policy. A perpetual interference with every part of the system of human life, a constant struggle against nature and reason, characterised all her laws. To violate even prejudices which have taken deep root in the minds of a people is scarcely expedient; to think of extirpating natural appetites and passions is frantic: the external symptoms may be occasionally repressed; but the feeling still exists, and, debarred from its natural objects, preys on the disordered mind and body of its victim. Thus it is in convents---thus it is among ascetic sects--thus it was among the Lacedaemonians. Hence arose that madness, or violence approaching to madness, which, in spite of every external restraint, often appeared among the most distinguished citizens of Sparta. Cleomenes terminated his career of raving cruelty by cutting himself to pieces. Pausanias seems to have been absolutely insane; he formed a hopeless and profligate scheme; he betrayed it by the ostentation of his behaviour, and the imprudence of his measures; and he alienated, by his insolence, all who might have served or protected him. Xenophon, a warm admirer of Lacedaemon, furnishes us with the strongest evidence to this effect. It is impossible not to observe the brutal and senseless fury which characterises almost every Spartan with whom he was connected. Clearchus nearly lost his life by his cruelty. Chirisophus deprived his army of the services of a faithful guide by his unreasonable and ferocious severity. But it is needless to multiply instances. Lycurgus, Mr Mitford's favourite legislator, founded his whole system on a mistaken principle. He never considered that governments were made for men,

and not men for governments. Instead of adapting the constitution to the people, he distorted the minds of the people to suit the constitution, a scheme worthy of the Laputan Academy of Projectors. And this appears to Mr Mitford to constitute his peculiar title to admiration. Hear himself: "What to modern eyes most strikingly sets that extraordinary man above all other legislators is, that in so many circumstances, apparently out of the reach of law, he controlled and formed to his own mind the wills and habits of his people." I should suppose that this gentleman had the advantage of receiving his education under the ferula of Dr Pangloss; for his metaphysics are clearly those of the castle of Thunder-ten-tronckh: "Remarquez bien que les nez ont ete faits pour porter des lunettes, aussi avons nous des lunettes. Les jambes sont visiblement institues pour etre chaussees, et nous avons des chausses. Les cochons etant faits pour etre manges, nous mangeons du porc toute l'annee."

At Athens the laws did not constantly interfere with the tastes of the people. The children were not taken from their parents by that universal step-mother, the state. They were not starved into thieves, or tortured into bullies; there was no established table at which every one must dine, no established style in which every one must converse. An Athenian might eat whatever he could afford to buy, and talk as long as he could find people to listen. The government did not tell the people what opinions they were to hold, or what songs they were to sing. Freedom produced excellence. Thus philosophy took its origin. Thus were produced those models of poetry, of oratory, and of the arts, which scarcely fall short of the standard of ideal excellence. Nothing is more conducive to happiness than the free exercise of the mind in pursuits congenial to it. This happiness, assuredly, was enjoyed far more at Athens than at Sparta. The Athenians are acknowledged even by their enemies to have been distinguished, in private life, by their courteous and amiable demeanour. Their levity, at least, was better than Spartan sullenness and their impertinence than Spartan insolence. Even in courage it may be questioned whether they were inferior to the Lacedaemonians. The great Athenian historian has reported a remarkable observation of the great Athenian minister. Pericles maintained that his

countrymen, without submitting to the hardships of a Spartan education, rivalled all the achievements of Spartan valour, and that therefore the pleasures and amusements which they enjoyed were to be considered as so much clear gain. The infantry of Athens was certainly not equal to that of Lacedaemon; but this seems to have been caused merely by want of practice: the attention of the Athenians was diverted from the discipline of the phalanx to that of the trireme. The Lacedaemonians, in spite of all their boasted valour, were, from the same cause, timid and disorderly in naval action.

But we are told that crimes of great enormity were perpetrated by the Athenian government, and the democracies under its protection. It is true that Athens too often acted up to the full extent of the laws of war in an age when those laws had not been mitigated by causes which have operated in later times. This accusation is, in fact, common to Athens, to Lacedaemon, to all the states of Greece, and to all states similarly situated. Where communities are very large, the heavier evils of war are felt but by few. The ploughboy sings, the spinning-wheel turns round, the wedding-day is fixed, whether the last battle were lost or won. In little states it cannot be thus; every man feels in his own property and person the effect of a war. Every man is a soldier, and a soldier fighting for his nearest interests. His own trees have been cut down--his own corn has been burnt--his own house has been pillaged--his own relations have been killed. How can he entertain towards the enemies of his country the same feelings with one who has suffered nothing from them, except perhaps the addition of a small sum to the taxes which he pays? Men in such circumstances cannot be generous. They have too much at stake. It is when they are, if I may so express myself, playing for love, it is when war is a mere game at chess, it is when they are contending for a remote colony, a frontier town, the honours of a flag, a salute, or a title, that they can make fine speeches, and do good offices to their enemies. The Black Prince waited behind the chair of his captive; Villars interchanged repartees with Eugene; George II. sent congratulations to Louis XV., during a war, upon occasion of his escape from the attempt of Damien: and these things are fine and generous, and very gratifying to the author of the Broad Stone of Honour,

and all the other wise men who think, like him, that God made the world only for the use of gentlemen. But they spring in general from utter heartlessness. No war ought ever to be undertaken but under circumstances which render all interchange of courtesy between the combatants impossible. It is a bad thing that men should hate each other; but it is far worse that they should contract the habit of cutting one another's throats without hatred. War is never lenient, but where it is wanton; when men are compelled to fight in selfdefence, they must hate and avenge: this may be bad; but it is human nature; it is the clay as it came from the hand of the potter.

It is true that among the dependencies of Athens seditions assumed a character more ferocious than even in France, during the reign of terror--the accursed Saturnalia of an accursed bondage. It is true that in Athens itself, where such convulsions were scarcely known, the condition of the higher orders was disagreeable; that they were compelled to contribute large sums for the service or the amusement of the public; and that they were sometimes harassed by vexatious informers. Whenever such cases occur, Mr Mitford's scepticism vanishes. The "if," the "but," the "it is said," the "if we may believe," with which he qualifies every charge against a tyrant or an aristocracy, are at once abandoned. The blacker the story, the firmer is his belief, and he never fails to inveigh with hearty bitterness against democracy as the source of every species of crime.

The Athenians, I believe, possessed more liberty than was good for them. Yet I will venture to assert that, while the splendour, the intelligence, and the energy of that great people were peculiar to themselves, the crimes with which they are charged arose from causes which were common to them with every other state which then existed. The violence of faction in that age sprung from a cause which has always been fertile in every political and moral evil, domestic slavery.

The effect of slavery is completely to dissolve the connection which naturally exists between the higher and lower classes of free citizens. The rich spend their wealth in purchasing and maintaining slaves. There is no demand for the labour of the poor; the fable of Menenius ceases to be applicable; the belly communicates no nutriment to the members; there is

an atrophy in the body politic. The two parties, therefore, proceed to extremities utterly unknown in countries where they have mutually need of each other. In Rome the oligarchy was too powerful to be subverted by force; and neither the tribunes nor the popular assemblies, though constitutionally omnipotent, could maintain a successful contest against men who possessed the whole property of the state. Hence the necessity for measures tending to unsettle the whole frame of society, and to take away every motive of industry; the abolition of debts, and the agrarian laws--propositions absurdly condemned by men who do not consider the circumstances from which they sprung. They were the desperate remedies of a desperate disease. In Greece the oligarchical interest was not in general so deeply rooted as at Rome. The multitude, therefore, often redressed by force grievances which, at Rome, were commonly attacked under the forms of the constitution. They drove out or massacred the rich, and divided their property. If the superior union or military skill of the rich rendered them victorious, they took measures equally violent, disarmed all in whom they could not confide, often slaughtered great numbers, and occasionally expelled the whole commonalty from the city, and remained, with their slaves, the sole inhabitants.

From such calamities Athens and Lacedaemon alone were almost completely free. At Athens the purses of the rich were laid under regular contribution for the support of the poor; and this, rightly considered, was as much a favour to the givers as to the receivers, since no other measure could possibly have saved their houses from pillage and their persons from violence. It is singular that Mr Mitford should perpetually reprobate a policy which was the best that could be pursued in such a state of things, and which alone saved Athens from the frightful outrages which were perpetrated at Corcyra.

Lacedaemon, cursed with a system of slavery more odious than has ever existed in any other country, avoided this evil by almost totally annihilating private property. Lycurgus began by an agrarian law. He abolished all professions except that of arms; he made the whole of his community a standing army, every member of which had a common right

to the services of a crowd of miserable bondmen; he secured the state from sedition at the expense of the Helots. Of all the parts of his system this is the most creditable to his head, and the most disgraceful to his heart.

These considerations, and many others of equal importance, Mr Mitford has neglected; but he has yet a heavier charge to answer. He has made not only illogical inferences, but false statements. While he never states, without qualifications and objections, the charges which the earliest and best historians have brought against his favourite tyrants, Pisistratus, Hippias, and Gelon, he transcribes, without any hesitation, the grossest abuse of the least authoritative writers against every democracy and every demagogue. Such an accusation should not be made without being supported; and I will therefore select one out of many passages which will fully substantiate the charge, and convict Mr Mitford of wilful misrepresentation, or of negligence scarcely less culpable. Mr Mitford is speaking of one of the greatest men that ever lived, Demosthenes, and comparing him with his rival, Aeschines. Let him speak for himself.

"In earliest youth Demosthenes earned an opprobrious nickname by the effeminacy of his dress and manner." Does Mr Mitford know that Demosthenes denied this charge, and explained the nickname in a perfectly different manner? (See the speech of Aeschines against Timarchus.) And, if he knew it, should he not have stated it? He proceeds thus: "On emerging from minority, by the Athenian law, at five-and-twenty, he earned another opprobrious nickname by a prosecution of his guardians, which was considered as a dishonourable attempt to extort money from them." In the first place Demosthenes was not five-and-twenty years of age. Mr Mitford might have learned, from so common a book as the *Archaeologia* of Archbishop Potter, that at twenty Athenian citizens were freed from the control of their guardians, and began to manage their own property. The very speech of Demosthenes against his guardians proves most satisfactorily that he was under twenty. In his speech against Midias, he says that when he undertook that prosecution he was quite a boy. (*Meirakullion on komide.*) His youth might, therefore, excuse the step, even if it had been considered, as Mr Mitford says, a dishonourable attempt to extort money. But who

considered it as such? Not the judges who condemned the guardians. The Athenian courts of justice were not the purest in the world; but their decisions were at least as likely to be just as the abuse of a deadly enemy. Mr Mitford refers for confirmation of his statement to Aeschines and Plutarch. Aeschines by no means bears him out; and Plutarch directly contradicts him. "Not long after," says Mr Mitford, "he took blows publicly in the theater" (I preserve the orthography, if it can be so called, of this historian) "from a petulant youth of rank, named Meidias." Here are two disgraceful mistakes. In the first place, it was long after; eight years at the very least, probably much more. In the next place the petulant youth, of whom Mr Mitford speaks, was fifty years old. (Whoever will read the speech of Demosthenes against Midias will find the statements in the text confirmed, and will have, moreover, the pleasure of becoming acquainted with one of the finest compositions in the world.) Really Mr Mitford has less reason to censure the carelessness of his predecessors than to reform his own. After this monstrous inaccuracy, with regard to facts, we may be able to judge what degree of credit ought to be given to the vague abuse of such a writer. "The cowardice of Demosthenes in the field afterwards became notorious." Demosthenes was a civil character; war was not his business. In his time the division between military and political offices was beginning to be strongly marked; yet the recollection of the days when every citizen was a soldier was still recent. In such states of society a certain degree of disrepute always attaches to sedentary men; but that any leader of the Athenian democracy could have been, as Mr Mitford says of Demosthenes, a few lines before, remarkable for "an extraordinary deficiency of personal courage," is absolutely impossible. What mercenary warrior of the time exposed his life to greater or more constant perils? Was there a single soldier at Chaeronea who had more cause to tremble for his safety than the orator, who, in case of defeat, could scarcely hope for mercy from the people whom he had misled or the prince whom he had opposed? Were not the ordinary fluctuations of popular feeling enough to deter any coward from engaging in political conflicts? Isocrates, whom Mr Mitford extols, because he constantly employed all the flowers of his school-boy rhetoric

to decorate oligarchy and tyranny, avoided the judicial and political meetings of Athens from mere timidity, and seems to have hated democracy only because he durst not look a popular assembly in the face. Demosthenes was a man of a feeble constitution: his nerves were weak, but his spirit was high; and the energy and enthusiasm of his feelings supported him through life and in death.

So much for Demosthenes. Now for the orator of aristocracy. I do not wish to abuse Aeschines. He may have been an honest man. He was certainly a great man; and I feel a reverence, of which Mr Mitford seems to have no notion, for great men of every party. But, when Mr Mitford says that the private character of Aeschines was without stain, does he remember what Aeschines has himself confessed in his speech against Timarchus? I can make allowances, as well as Mr Mitford, for persons who lived under a different system of laws and morals; but let them be made impartially. If Demosthenes is to be attacked on account of some childish improprieties, proved only by the assertion of an antagonist, what shall we say of those maturer vices which that antagonist has himself acknowledged? "Against the private character of Aeschines," says Mr Mitford, "Demosthenes seems not to have had an insinuation to oppose." Has Mr Mitford ever read the speech of Demosthenes on the Embassy? Or can he have forgotten, what was never forgotten by anyone else who ever read it, the story which Demosthenes relates with such terrible energy of language concerning the drunken brutality of his rival? True or false, here is something more than an insinuation; and nothing can vindicate the historian, who has overlooked it, from the charge of negligence or of partiality. But Aeschines denied the story. And did not Demosthenes also deny the story respecting his childish nickname, which Mr Mitford has nevertheless told without any qualification? But the judges, or some part of them, showed, by their clamour, their disbelief of the relation of Demosthenes. And did not the judges, who tried the cause between Demosthenes and his guardians, indicate, in a much clearer manner, their approbation of the prosecution? But Demosthenes was a demagogue, and is to be slandered. Aeschines was an aristocrat, and is to be panegyrised. Is this a history, or a party-pamphlet?

These passages, all selected from a single page of Mr Mitford's work, may give some notion to those readers, who have not the means of comparing his statements with the original authorities, of his extreme partiality and carelessness. Indeed, whenever this historian mentions Demosthenes, he violates all the laws of candour and even of decency; he weighs no authorities; he makes no allowances; he forgets the best authenticated facts in the history of the times, and the most generally recognised principles of human nature. The opposition of the great orator to the policy of Philip he represents as neither more nor less than deliberate villany. I hold almost the same opinion with Mr Mitford respecting the character and the views of that great and accomplished prince. But am I, therefore, to pronounce Demosthenes profligate and insincere? Surely not. Do we not perpetually see men of the greatest talents and the purest intentions misled by national or factious prejudices? The most respectable people in England were, little more than forty years ago, in the habit of uttering the bitterest abuse against Washington and Franklin. It is certainly to be regretted that men should err so grossly in their estimate of character. But no person who knows anything of human nature will impute such errors to depravity.

Mr Mitford is not more consistent with himself than with reason. Though he is the advocate of all oligarchies, he is also a warm admirer of all kings, and of all citizens who raised themselves to that species of sovereignty which the Greeks denominated tyranny. If monarchy, as Mr Mitford holds, be in itself a blessing, democracy must be a better form of government than aristocracy, which is always opposed to the supremacy, and even to the eminence, of individuals. On the other hand, it is but one step that separates the demagogue and the sovereign.

If this article had not extended itself to so great a length, I should offer a few observations on some other peculiarities of this writer,--his general preference of the Barbarians to the Greeks,--his predilection for Persians, Carthaginians, Thracians, for all nations, in short, except that great and enlightened nation of which he is the historian. But I will confine myself to a single topic.

Mr Mitford has remarked, with truth and spirit, that "any history

perfectly written, but especially a Grecian history perfectly written should be a political institute for all nations." It has not occurred to him that a Grecian history, perfectly written, should also be a complete record of the rise and progress of poetry, philosophy, and the arts. Here his work is extremely deficient. Indeed, though it may seem a strange thing to say of a gentleman who has published so many quartos, Mr Mitford seems to entertain a feeling, bordering on contempt, for literary and speculative pursuits. The talents of action almost exclusively attract his notice; and he talks with very complacent disdain of "the idle learned." Homer, indeed, he admires; but principally, I am afraid, because he is convinced that Homer could neither read nor write. He could not avoid speaking of Socrates; but he has been far more solicitous to trace his death to political causes, and to deduce from it consequences unfavourable to Athens, and to popular governments, than to throw light on the character and doctrines of the wonderful man,

"From whose mouth issued forth Mellifluous streams that watered all the schools Of Academics, old and new, with those Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect Epicurean, and the Stoic severe."

He does not seem to be aware that Demosthenes was a great orator; he represents him sometimes as an aspirant demagogue, sometimes as an adroit negotiator, and always as a great rogue. But that in which the Athenian excelled all men of all ages, that irresistible eloquence, which at the distance of more than two thousand years stirs our blood, and brings tears into our eyes, he passes by with a few phrases of commonplace commendation. The origin of the drama, the doctrines of the sophists, the course of Athenian education, the state of the arts and sciences, the whole domestic system of the Greeks, he has almost completely neglected. Yet these things will appear, to a reflecting man, scarcely less worthy of attention than the taking of Sphacteria or the discipline of the targeteers of Iphicrates.

This, indeed, is a deficiency by no means peculiar to Mr Mitford. Most people seem to imagine that a detail of public occurrences-- the operations of sieges---the changes of administrations--the treaties--the conspiracies--the rebellions--is a complete history. Differences of definition are

logically unimportant; but practically they sometimes produce the most momentous effects. Thus it has been in the present case. Historians have, almost without exception, confined themselves to the public transactions of states, and have left to the negligent administration of writers of fiction a province at least equally extensive and valuable.

All wise statesmen have agreed to consider the prosperity or adversity of nations as made up of the happiness or misery of individuals, and to reject as chimerical all notions of a public interest of the community, distinct from the interest of the component parts. It is therefore strange that those whose office it is to supply statesmen with examples and warnings should omit, as too mean for the dignity of history, circumstances which exert the most extensive influence on the state of society. In general, the under current of human life flows steadily on, unruffled by the storms which agitate the surface. The happiness of the many commonly depends on causes independent of victories or defeats, of revolutions or restorations,--causes which can be regulated by no laws, and which are recorded in no archives. These causes are the things which it is of main importance to us to know, not how the Lacedaemonian phalanx was broken at Leuctra,--not whether Alexander died of poison or by disease. History, without these, is a shell without a kernel; and such is almost all the history which is extant in the world. Paltry skirmishes and plots are reported with absurd and useless minuteness; but improvements the most essential to the comfort of human life extend themselves over the world, and introduce themselves into every cottage, before any annalist can condescend, from the dignity of writing about generals and ambassadors, to take the least notice of them. Thus the progress of the most salutary inventions and discoveries is buried in impenetrable mystery; mankind are deprived of a most useful species of knowledge, and their benefactors of their honest fame. In the meantime every child knows by heart the dates and adventures of a long line of barbarian kings. The history of nations, in the sense in which I use the word, is often best studied in works not professedly historical. Thucydides, as far as he goes, is an excellent writer; yet he affords us far less knowledge of the most important particulars relating to Athens than Plato or Aristophanes. The

little treatise of Xenophon on Domestic Economy contains more historical information than all the seven books of his Hellenics. The same may be said of the Satires of Horace, of the Letters of Cicero, of the novels of Le Sage, of the memoirs of Marmontel. Many others might be mentioned; but these sufficiently illustrate my meaning.

I would hope that there may yet appear a writer who may despise the present narrow limits, and assert the rights of history over every part of her natural domain. Should such a writer engage in that enterprise, in which I cannot but consider Mr Mitford as having failed, he will record, indeed, all that is interesting and important in military and political transactions; but he will not think anything too trivial for the gravity of history which is not too trivial to promote or diminish the happiness of man. He will portray in vivid colours the domestic society, the manners, the amusements, the conversation of the Greeks. He will not disdain to discuss the state of agriculture, of the mechanical arts, and of the conveniences of life. The progress of painting, of sculpture, and of architecture, will form an important part of his plan. But, above all, his attention will be given to the history of that splendid literature from which has sprung all the strength, the wisdom, the freedom, and the glory, of the western world.

Of the indifference which Mr Mitford shows on this subject I will not speak; for I cannot speak with fairness. It is a subject on which I love to forget the accuracy of a judge, in the veneration of a worshipper and the gratitude of a child. If we consider merely the subtlety of disquisition, the force of imagination, the perfect energy and elegance of expression which characterise the great works of Athenian genius, we must pronounce them intrinsically most valuable; but what shall we say when we reflect that from hence have sprung directly or indirectly, all the noblest creations of the human intellect; that from hence were the vast accomplishments and the brilliant fancy of Cicero; the withering fire of Juvenal; the plastic imagination of Dante; the humour of Cervantes; the comprehension of Bacon; the wit of Butler; the supreme and universal excellence of Shakspeare? All the triumphs of truth and genius over prejudice and power, in every country and in every age, have been the

triumphs of Athens. Wherever a few great minds have made a stand against violence and fraud, in the cause of liberty and reason, there has been her spirit in the midst of them; inspiring, encouraging, consoling;-- by the lonely lamp of Erasmus; by the restless bed of Pascal; in the tribune of Mirabeau; in the cell of Galileo; on the scaffold of Sidney. But who shall estimate her influence on private happiness? Who shall say how many thousands have been made wiser, happier, and better, by those pursuits in which she has taught mankind to engage: to how many the studies which took their rise from her have been wealth in poverty,--liberty in bondage,--health in sickness,--society in solitude? Her power is indeed manifested at the bar, in the senate, in the field of battle, in the schools of philosophy. But these are not her glory. Wherever literature consoles sorrow, or assuages pain,-- wherever it brings gladness to eyes which fail with wakefulness and tears, and ache for the dark house and the long sleep,--there is exhibited, in its noblest form, the immortal influence of Athens.

The dervise, in the Arabian tale, did not hesitate to abandon to his comrade the camels with their load of jewels and gold, while he retained the casket of that mysterious juice which enabled him to behold at one glance all the hidden riches of the universe. Surely it is no exaggeration to say that no external advantage is to be compared with that purification of the intellectual eye which gives us to contemplate the infinite wealth of the mental world, all the hoarded treasures of its primeval dynasties, all the shapeless ore of its yet unexplored mines. This is the gift of Athens to man. Her freedom and her power have for more than twenty centuries been annihilated; her people have degenerated into timid slaves; her language into a barbarous jargon; her temples have been given up to the successive depredations of Romans, Turks, and Scotchmen; but her intellectual empire is imperishable. And when those who have rivalled her greatness shall have shared her fate; when civilisation and knowledge shall have fixed their abode in distant continents; when the sceptre shall have passed away from England; when, perhaps, travellers from distant regions shall in vain labour to decipher on some mouldering pedestal the name of our proudest chief; shall hear savage hymns chaunted to some

misshapen idol over the ruined dome of our proudest temple; and shall see a single naked fisherman wash his nets in the river of the ten thousand masts;--her influence and her glory will still survive,--fresh in eternal youth, exempt from mutability and decay, immortal as the intellectual principle from which they derived their origin, and over which they exercise their control.