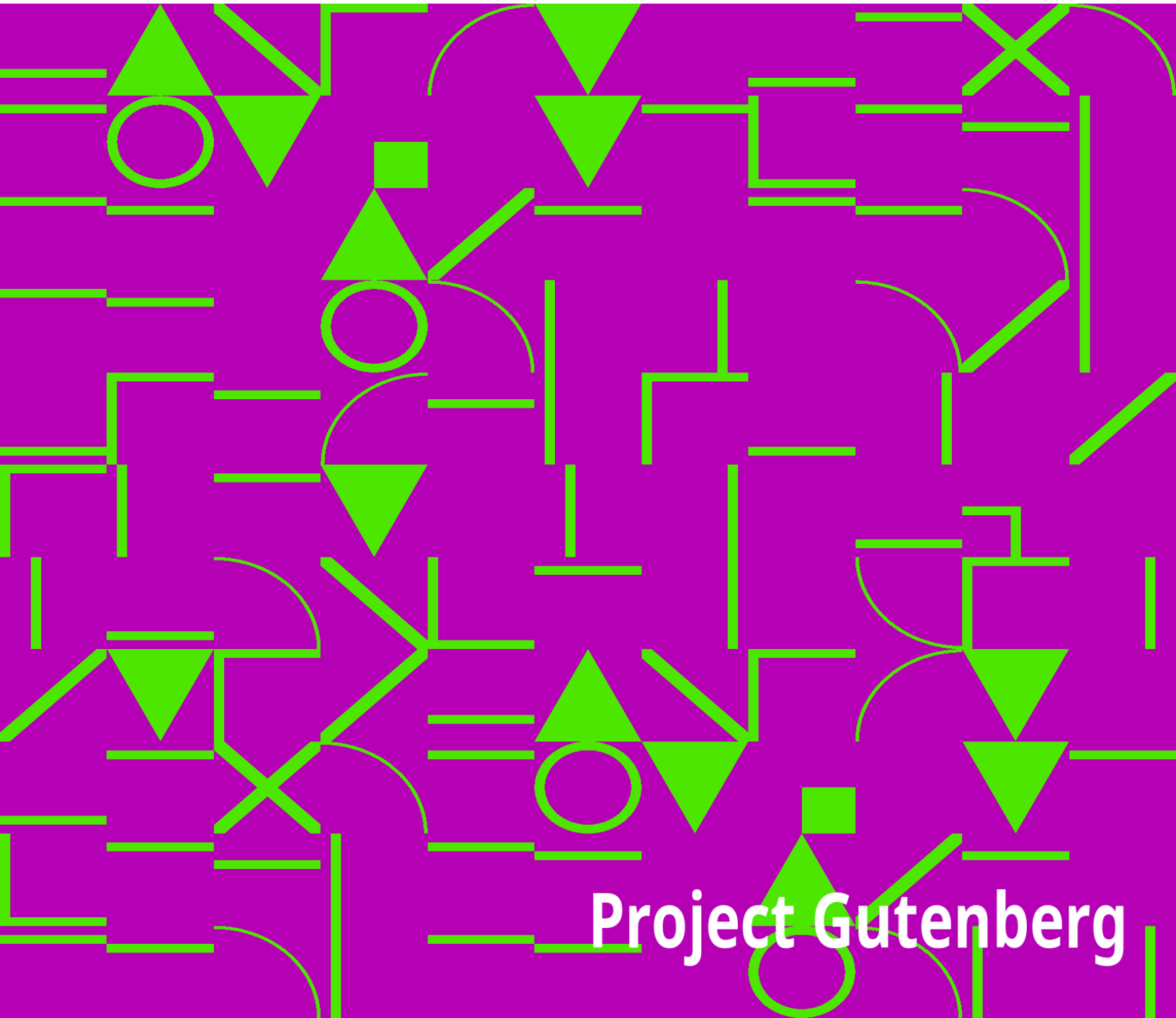
Famous Reviews, Selected and Edited with Introductory Notes by R. Brimley Johnson

R. Brimley Johnson



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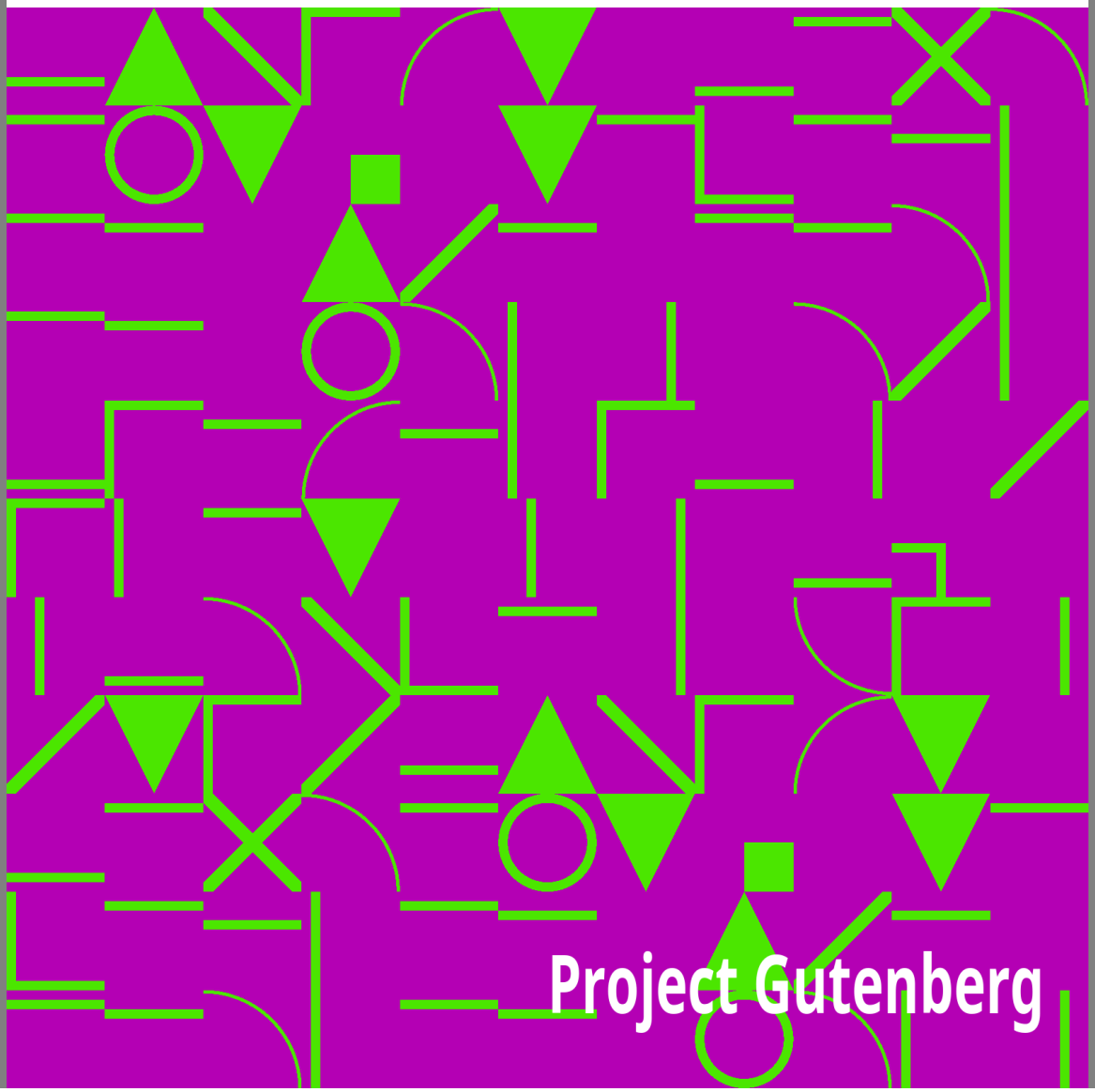

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FAMOUS REVIEWS

SELECTED AND EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTES

BY

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true, But are not critics to their judgment too? *Pope*.

LONDON

1914

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PREFACE

Although regular literary organs, and the critical columns of the press, are both of comparatively recent origin, we find that almost from the beginning our journalists aspired to be critics as well as newsmongers. Under Charles II, Sir Roger L'Estrange issued his *Observator* (1681), which was a weekly review, not a chronicle; and John Dunton's *The Athenian Mercury* (1690), is best described as a sort of early "Notes and Queries." Here, as elsewhere, Defoe developed this branch of journalism, particularly in his *Review* (1704), and in *Mist's Journal* (1714). And, again, as in all other departments, his methods were not materially improved upon until Leigh Hunt, and his brother John, started *The Examiner* in 1808, soon after the rise of the Reviews. Addison and Steele, of course, had treated literary topics in *The Spectator* or *The Tatler*; but the serious discussion of contemporary writers began with the Whig *Edinburgh* of 1802 and the Tory *Quarterly* of 1809.

By the end of George III's reign every daily paper had its column of book-notices; while 1817 marks an epoch in the weekly press; when William Jerdan started *The Observator* (parent of our *Athenaeum*) in order to furnish (for one shilling weekly) "a clear and instructive picture of the moral and literary improvement of the time, and a complete and authentic chronological literary record for reference."

Though probably there is no form of literature more widely practised, and less organised, than the review, it would be safe to say that every example stands somewhere between a critical essay and a publisher's advertisement. We need not, however, consider here the many influences which may corrupt newspaper criticism to-day, nor concern ourselves with those legitimate "notices of books" which only aim at "telling the story" or otherwise offering guidance for an "order from the library."

The question remains, on which we do not propose to dogmatise, whether the ideal of a reviewer should be critical or explanatory: whether, in other words, he should attempt final judgment or offer comment and analysis from which we may each form our own opinion. Probably no hard and fast line can be drawn between the review and the essay; yet a good volume of criticism can seldom be gleaned from periodicals. For one thing all journalism, whether consciously or unconsciously, must contain an appeal to the moment. The reviewer is introducing new work to his reader, the essayist, or critic proper, may nearly always assume some familiarity with his subject. The one hazards prophecy; the other discusses, and illumines, a judgment already formed, if not established. It is obvious that such reviews as Macaulay's in the *Edinburgh* were often permanent contributions to critical history; while, on the other hand, many ponderous effusions of the *Quarterly* are only interesting as a sign of the times.

The fame of a review, however, does not always depend on merit. The scandalous attacks on the Cockney school, for example, were neither good literature nor honest criticism. We still pause in wonder before the streams of virulent personal abuse and unbridled licence in temper which disgrace the early pages of volumes we now associate with sound and dignified, if somewhat conventional, utterances on the art of Literature as viewed from the table-land of authority. And, as inevitably the most famous reviews are those which attend the birth of genius, we must include more respectable

errors of judgment, if we find also several remarkable appreciations which prove singular insight.

Following the "early" reviews, whether distinguished for culpable blindness, private hostility, or rare sympathy, we must depend for our second main source of material upon that fortunate combination of circumstances when one of the mighty has been invited to pass judgment upon his peers. When Scott notices Jane Austen, Macaulay James Boswell, Gladstone and John Stuart Mill Lord Tennyson, the article acquires a double value from author and subject. Curiously enough, as it would seem to us in these days of advertisement, many such treasures of criticism were published anonymously; and accident has often aided research in the discovery of their authorship. It is only too probable that more were written than we have yet on record.

In reviewing, as elsewhere, the growth of professionalism has tended to level the quality of work. The mass of thoroughly competent criticism issued to-day has raised enormously the general tone of the press; but genuine men of letters are seldom employed to welcome, or stifle, a newcomer; though Meredith, and more frequently Swinburne, have on occasion elected to pronounce judgment upon the passing generation; as Mrs. Meynell or Mr. G.K. Chesterton have sometimes said the right thing about their contemporaries. The days when postcard notices from Gladstone secured a record in sales are over; and, from whatever combination of causes, we hear no more of famous reviews.

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.

It is with regret that I have found it impossible to print more than a few of the following reviews complete. The writing of those days was, in almost every case, extremely prolix, and often irrelevant. It nearly always makes

heavy reading in the originals. The *principle* of selection adopted is to retain the most pithy, and attractive, portion of each article: omitting quotations and the discussion of particular passages. It therefore becomes necessary to remark—in justice to the writers—that most of the criticisms here quoted were accompanied by references to what was regarded by the reviewer as evidence supporting them. Most of the authors, or books, noticed however, are sufficiently well known for the reader to have no difficulty in judging for himself.

R. B. J.

OF CRITICISM AND CRITIC

DR. JOHNSON

There is a certain race of men, that either imagine it their duty, or make it their amusement, to hinder the reception of every work of learning or genius, who stand as sentinels in the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon giving ignorance and envy the first notice of a prey.

To these men, who distinguish themselves by the appellation of Critics, it is necessary for a new author to find some means of recommendation. It is probable, that the most malignant of these persecutors might be somewhat softened, and prevailed on, for a short time, to remit their fury. Having for this purpose considered many expedients, I find in the records of ancient times, that Argus was lulled by music, and Cerberus quieted with a sop; and am, therefore, inclined to believe that modern critics, who, if they have not the eyes, have the watchfulness of Argus, and can bark as loud as Cerberus, though, perhaps, they cannot bite with equal force, might be subdued by methods of the same kind. I have heard that some have been pacified with claret and a supper, and others laid asleep with the soft notes of flattery.—*The Rambler*.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

I care not one single curse for all the criticism that ever was canted or decanted, or recanted. Neither does the world. The world takes a poet as it finds him, and seats him above or below the salt. The world is as obstinate as a million mules, and will not turn its head on one side or another for all the shouting of the critical population that ever was shouted. It is very possible that the world is a bad judge. Well, then— appeal to posterity, and be hanged to you—and posterity will affirm the judgment, with costs.—*Noctes Ambrosianae, Sept*., 1825.

Our current literature teems with thought and feeling,—with passion and imagination. There was Gifford, and there are Jeffrey, and Southey … and twenty—forty—fifty—other crack contributors to the Reviews, Magazines and Gazettes, who have said more tender, and true, and fine, and deep things in the way of criticism, than ever was said before since the reign of Cadmus, ten thousand times over,—not in long, dull, heavy, formal, prosy theories—but flung off-hand, out of the glowing mint—a coinage of the purest ore—and stamped with the ineffaceable impress of genius.—*Noctes Ambrosianae*, April, 1829.

The cause of a wrong taste is a defect of judgment.
EDMUND BURKE.

We must not underrate him who uses wit for subsistence, and flies from the ingratitude of the age even to a bookseller for redress. OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

The critical faculty is a *rara avis*; almost as rare, indeed, as the phoenix, which appears only once in five hundred years. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER.

The Supreme Critic … is … that Unity, that Oversoul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other. R. W. EMERSON.

Criticism's best spiritual work which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The whole history of criticism has been a triumph of authors over critics.
R. G. MOULTON.

Our criticism is disabled by the unwillingness of the critic to learn from an author, and his readiness to mistrust him. D. H. HOWELLS.

We have too many small schoolmasters; yet not only do I not question in literature the high utility of criticism, but I should be tempted to say that the part it plays may be the supremely beneficent one when it proceeds from deep sources, from the efficient combination of experience and perception. In this light one sees the critic as the real helper of mankind, a torch-bearing outrider, the interpreter *par excellence*. HENRY JAMES.

FAMOUS REVIEWS

* * * * *

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW

"A confederacy (the word *conspiracy* may be libellous) to defend the worst atrocities of the French, and to cry down every author to whom England was dear and venerable. A better spirit now prevails in the *Edinburgh Review* from the generosity and genius of Macaulay. But in the days when Brougham and his confederates were writers in it, more falsehood and more malignity marked its pages than any other journal in the language."

W.S. LANDOR.

Landor is speaking, of course, with his usual impetuosity, particularly moved by antipathy to Lord Brougham. A fairer estimate of the "bluff and blue" exponent of Whig principles may be obtained from our brief estimate of Jeffrey below. His was the informing spirit, at least in its earliest days, and that spirit would brook no divided sway.

FRANCIS LORD JEFFREY (1773-1850)

Jeffrey was editor of the *Edinburgh Review* from its foundation in October 10th, 1802, till June, 1829; and continued to write for it until June, 1848. He was more patronising in his abuse than either *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly*, and on the whole fairer and more dignified; though he was considerably influenced by political bias. In fact, his judgments—though versatile—were narrow, his most marked limitations arising from blindness to the imaginative.

The short, vivacious figure (so low that he might pass under your chin without ever catching the eye even for a moment, says Lockhart), was far more impressive when familiar than at first sight. Lord Cockburn praises his legal abilities (whether as judge or advocate) almost without qualification; but Wilson derides his appearance in the House:—"A cold thin voice, doling out little, quaint, metaphysical sentences with the air of a provincial lecturer on logic and *belles-lettres*. A few good Whigs of the old school adjourned upstairs, the Tories began to converse *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, the Radicals were either snoring or grinning, and the great gun of the north ceased firing amidst such a hubbub of inattention, that even I was not aware of the fact for several minutes."

He has been called "almost a lecturer in society," and it is clear that his difficulty always was to cease talking. Men as different as Macaulay and Charles Dickens have spoken with deep personal affection of his memory.

In one of Carlyle's inimitable "pen-portraits" he is described as "a delicate, attractive, dainty little figure, as he merely walked about, much more if he were speaking: uncommonly bright, black eyes, instinct with vivacity, intelligence and kindly fire; roundish brow, delicate oval face, full, rapid expression; figure light, nimble, pretty, though so small, perhaps hardly five feet four in height…. His voice clear, harmonious, and sonorous, had something of metallic in it, something almost plangent … a strange,

swift, sharp-sounding, fitful modulation, part of it pungent, *quasi latrant*, other parts of it cooing, bantery, lovingly quizzical, which no charm of his fine ringing voice (*metallic* tenor, of sweet tone), and of his vivacious rapid looks and pretty little attitudes and gestures, could altogether reconcile you to, but in which he persisted through good report and bad."

* * * * *

Perhaps Jeffrey's most famous criticism was the "This will never do" on Wordsworth; of which Southey wrote to Scott, "Jeffrey, I hear, has written what his friends call a *crushing* review of the Excursion. He might as well seat himself on Skiddaw, and fancy that he crushed the mountain."

It is obvious, indeed, that the Lake poets had little respect for their "superior" reviewers; whose opinions, on the other hand, were not subject to influences from high places. It will be noticed that Jefferey is even more severe on Southey's Laureate "Lays" than on his "Thalaba."

The review on Moore, quoted below, was followed by formal arrangements for a duel at Chalk Farm on 11th August, 1806; but the police had orders to interrupt, and pistols were loaded with paper. Even the semblance of animosity was not maintained, as we find Moore contributing to the *Edinburgh* before the end of the same year.

We fear that the appreciation of Keats was partly influenced by political considerations; since Leigh Hunt had so emphatically welcomed him into the camp. It remains, however, a pleasing contrast to the ferocious onslaught on *Endymion* of Gifford printed below.

HENRY LORD BROUGHAM (1779-1868)

Brougham was intimately associated with Jeffrey in the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review*: he is said to have written eighty articles in the first twenty numbers, though like all his work, the criticism was spoilt by egotism and vanity. The fact is that an over-brilliant versatility injured his work. Combining "in his own person the characters of Solon, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, Archimedes, Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Chesterfield, and a great many more," his restless genius accomplished nothing substantial or sound. His writing was far less careful than his oratory. A man from whom almost everything was expected, and who was always before the eye of the public; he has been described as "the God of Whiggish idolatry," and as "impossible" in society. Harriet Martineau is unsparing in her criticism of his manners and language; and evidently he was an inveterate swearer. His enthusiasm for noble causes was infectious; only, as Coleridge happily expressed it, "because his heart was placed in what should have been his head, you were never sure of him—you always doubted his sincerity."

In the Opposition and at the Bar this eloquent energy had full scope, "but as Lord Chancellor his selfish disloyalty offended his colleagues while," as O'Connell remarked, "If Brougham knew a little of Law, he would know a little of everything." Unquestionably his obvious failings obscured his real eminence, and even hinder us, to-day, from doing full justice to his memory.

* * * * *

It was the following, somewhat heavy-handed, review which inspired the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, with all its "extraordinary powers of malicious statement"—truly a Roland for his Oliver.

SYDNEY SMITH (1771-1845)

The third founder of the *Edinburgh* and one of its most aggressive reviewers, until March, 1827, Sydney Smith has been described as "most provokingly and audaciously personal in his strictures…. He was too complacent, too aboundingly self-satisfied, too buoyantly full of spirits, to hate anybody; but he burlesques them, derides them, and abuses them with the most exasperating effrontery—in a way that is great fun to the reader, but exquisite torture to the victim." At the same time, his wit was always governed by commonsense (its most prevailing distinction); and, though almost unique among humorists for his personal gaiety, "his best work was done in promoting practical ends, and his wit in its airiest gambols never escaped his control." There was, in fact, considerable independence—and even courage—in his seriously inspired attacks on various abuses, and on every form of affectation and cant. Though his manners and conversation were not precisely those we generally associate with the Cloth, Sydney Smith published several volumes of sermons, and always accepted the responsibilities of his position as a clergyman with becoming industry. Croker's veiled sarcasm in the *Quarterly* (printed below) was no more bitter, or truthful, than similar utterances on any Whig.

* * * * *

We know little to-day of—

The sacred dramas of Miss Hannah More
Where Moses and the little muses snore,

but, in her own day, she was flattered in society and a real influence among the serious-minded. She understood the poor and gave them practical advice. Sydney Smith, of course, would be in sympathy with her "good works," but could not resist his joke.

THOMAS BABINGTON LORD MACAULAY (1800-1859)

To quote one of his own favourite expressions, "every schoolboy knows" the outlines of Macaulay's life and work. We have recited the Lays, probably read some of the History, possibly even heard of his eloquent and unmeasured attacks on those whose literary work incurred his displeasure. We know that his memory was phenomenal, if his statements were not always accurate. The biographers tell us further that no one could be more simple in private life, or more devoted to his own family: his nephews and nieces having no idea that their favourite "Uncle Tom" was a great man. Criticism, of course, is by no means so unanimous. Mr. Augustine Birrell has wittily remarked that his "style is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything"; and James Thomson epitomised his political bias in a biting paragraph:—"Macaulay, historiographer in chief to the Whigs, and the great prophet of Whiggery which never had or will have a prophet, vehemently judged that a man who could pass over from the celestial Whigs to the infernal Tories must be a traitor false as Judas, an apostate black as the Devil." Always a boy at heart, and singularly careless of his appearance, Macaulay was so phenomenally successful in every direction that envy may account for most personal criticism not inspired by recognised opponents. Those who called him a bore were most probably over-sensitive about their own inability to hold up against arguments, or opinions, they longed to combat.

He was a student at Lincoln's Inn when the brilliant article on the translation of a newly-found treatise by Milton on *Christian Doctrine* appeared in the *Edinburgh* (1825), and inaugurated a new power in English prose. Macaulay himself declared that it was "overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful argument"; but it secured his literary reputation and determined much of his career. He became an influence on the *Edinburgh*, probably somewhat modifying its whole tone, and generally identified with its

reputation. "The son of a Saint," says Christopher North, "who seems himself to be something of a reviewer, is insidious as the serpent, but fangless, as the glow worm"; and the Tory press were, naturally, up in arms against the champion critic of their pet prodigies.

* * * * *

Southey received, as we must now admit, more than his fair share of abuse from the Liberal press, for the comfortable conservatism of his maturity; and Macaulay did not love the Laureate. We note that *Blackwood's* defended him with spirit, and Wilson's protracted, and furious, attack on Macaulay for this particular review may be found in the *Nodes Ambrosianae*, April, 1830.

Croker, in all probability, deserved much of the scorn here poured upon his editorial labour (though it *had* merits which his critic deliberately ignores); Wilson, again *(Noctes Ambrosianae,* November, 1831), examines, and professes to confute, almost every criticism in the review. Croker himself found a convenient occasion for revenge in his review of Macaulay's History printed below.

The interesting recognition of *Gladstone* awakes pleasanter sentiments; especially when we notice the return compliment (in the same *Quarterly*, but twenty-seven years later than Croker's attack) of the statesman's generous tribute. "Macaulay," says Gladstone, "was singularly free of vices … one point only we reserve, a certain tinge of occasional vindictiveness. Was he envious? Never. Was he servile? No. Was he insolent? No…. Was he idle? The question is ridiculous. Was he false? No; but true as steel and transparent as crystal. Was he vain? We hold that he was not. At every point in the ugly list he stands the trial."

* * * * *

ANONYMOUS

This earlier notice of Wordsworth is certainly in exact sympathy with Jeffrey on the Excursion, and may very well have come from the same pen. At any rate, it introduces the Edinburgh attitude towards the Lakers.

The criticism of Maturin has all the tone of moral authority which provoked many readers of the Review, and was, probably, in part responsible for the less "measured" attitude adopted by the *Quarterly*.

LORD JEFFREY ON SOUTHEY'S "THALABA"

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, October, 1802]

Thalaba, the Destroyer: A Metrical Romance. By ROBERT SOUTHEY. 2 vols. 12 mo. London.

Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question; and that many profess to be entirely devoted to it, who have no *good works* to produce in support of their pretensions. The catholic poetical church, too, has worked but few miracles since the first ages of its establishment; and has been more prolific, for a long time, of Doctors, than of Saints: it has had its corruptions and reformation also, and has given birth to an infinite variety of heresies and errors, the followers of which have hated and persecuted each other as cordially as other bigots.

The author who is now before us, belongs to a *sect* of poets, that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years, and is looked upon, we believe, as one of its chief champions and apostles. The peculiar doctrines of this sect, it would not, perhaps, be very easy to explain; but, that they are *dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism, is admitted, and proved indeed, by the whole tenor of their

compositions. Though they lay claim, we believe, to a creed and a revelation of their own, there can be little doubt, that their doctrines are of *German* origin, and have been derived from some of the great modern reformers in that country. Some of their leading principles, indeed, are probably of an earlier date, and seem to have been borrowed from the great apostle of Geneva. As Mr. Southey is the first author, of this persuasion, that has yet been brought before us for judgment, we cannot discharge our inquisitorial office conscientiously, without premising a few words upon the nature and tendency of the tenets he has helped to promulgate.

The disciples of this school boast much of its originality, and seem to value themselves very highly, for having broken loose from the bondage of ancient authority, and re-asserted the independence of genius. Originality, however, we are persuaded, is rarer than mere alteration; and a man may change a good master for a bad one, without finding himself at all nearer to independence. That our new poets have abandoned the old models, may certainly be admitted; but we have not been able to discover that they have yet created any models of their own; and are very much inclined to call in question the worthiness of those to which they have transferred their admiration. The productions of this school, we conceive, are so far from being entitled to the praise of originality, that they cannot be better characterised, than by an enumeration of the sources from which their materials have been derived. The greater part of them, we apprehend, will be found to be composed of the following elements: (1) The antisocial principles, and distempered sensibility of Rousseau—his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankerings after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection. (2) The simplicity and energy (*horresco referens*) of Kotzebue and Schiller. (3) The homeliness and harshness of some of Cowper's language and versification, interchanged occasionally with the *innocence* of Ambrose Philips, or the quaintness of Quarles and Dr. Donne. From the

diligent study of these few originals, we have no doubt that an entire art of poetry may be collected, by the assistance of which, the very *gentlest* of our readers may soon be qualified to compose a poem as correctly versified as Thalaba, and to deal out sentiment and description, with all the sweetness of Lamb, and all the magnificence of Coleridge.

The authors, of whom we are now speaking, have, among them, unquestionably, a very considerable portion of poetical talent, and have, consequently, been enabled to seduce many into an admiration of the false taste (as it appears to us) in which most of their productions are composed. They constitute, at present, the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical; and are entitled to a larger share of our censorial notice, than could be spared for an individual delinquent. We shall hope for the indulgence of our readers, therefore, in taking this opportunity to inquire a little more particularly into their merits, and to make a few remarks upon those peculiarities which seem to be regarded by their admirers as the surest proofs of their excellence.

Their most distinguishing symbol, is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language. They disdain to make use of the common poetical phraseology, or to ennoble their diction by a selection of fine or dignified expressions. There would be too much *art* in this, for that great love of nature with which they are all of them inspired; and their sentiments, they are determined shall be indebted, for their effect, to nothing but their intrinsic tenderness or elevation. There is something very noble and conscientious, we will confess, in this plan of composition; but the misfortune is, that there are passages in all poems, that can neither be pathetic nor sublime; and that, on these occasions, a neglect of the embellishments of language is very apt to produce absolute meanness and insipidity. The language of passion, indeed, can scarcely be deficient in elevation; and when an author is wanting in that particular, he may

commonly be presumed to have failed in the truth, as well as in the dignity of his expression. The case, however, is extremely different with the subordinate parts of a composition; with the narrative and description, that are necessary to preserve its connection; and the explanation, that must frequently prepare us for the great scenes and splendid passages. In these, all the requisite ideas may be conveyed, with sufficient clearness, by the meanest and most negligent expressions; and if magnificence or beauty is ever to be observed in them, it must have been introduced from some other motive than that of adapting the style to the subject. It is in such passages, accordingly, that we are most frequently offended with low and inelegant expressions; and that the language, which was intended to be simple and natural, is found oftenest to degenerate into mere slovenliness and vulgarity. It is in vain, too, to expect that the meanness of those parts may be redeemed by the excellence of others. A poet, who aims at all at sublimity or pathos, is like an actor in a high tragic character, and must sustain his dignity throughout, or become altogether ridiculous. We are apt enough to laugh at the mock-majesty of those whom we know to be but common mortals in private; and cannot permit Hamlet to make use of a single provincial intonation, although it should only be in his conversation with the grave-diggers.

The followers of simplicity are, therefore, at all times in danger of occasional degradation; but the simplicity of this new school seems intended to ensure it. *Their* simplicity does not consist, by any means, in the rejection of glaring or superfluous ornament—in the substitution of elegance to splendour, or in that refinement of art which seeks concealment in its own perfection. It consists, on the contrary, in a very great degree, in the positive and *bonâ fide* rejection of art altogether, and in the bold use of those rude and negligent expressions, which would be banished by a little discrimination. One of their own authors, indeed, has very ingeniously set forth (in a kind of manifesto that preceded one of their most flagrant acts of

hostility), that it was their capital object "to adapt to the uses of poetry, the ordinary language of conversation among the middling and lower orders of the people." What advantages are to be gained by the success of this project, we confess ourselves unable to conjecture. The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may fairly be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors: at any rate, it has all those associations in its favour, by means of which, a style can ever appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry, by having been long consecrated to its use. The language of the vulgar, on the other hand, has all the opposite associations to contend with; and must seem unfit for poetry (if there were no other reason), merely because it has scarcely ever been employed in it. A great genius may indeed overcome these disadvantages; but we can scarcely conceive that he should court them. We may excuse a certain homeliness of language in the productions of a ploughman or a milkwoman; but we cannot bring ourselves to admire it in an author, who has had occasion to indite odes to his college bell, and inscribe hymns to the Penates.

But the mischief of this new system is not confined to the depravation of language only; it extends to the sentiments and emotions, and leads to the debasement of all those feelings which poetry is designed to communicate. It is absurd to suppose, that an author should make use of the language of the vulgar, to express the sentiments of the refined. His professed object, in employing that language, is to bring his compositions nearer to the true standard of nature; and his intention to copy the sentiments of the lower orders, is implied in his resolution to make use of their style. Now, the different classes of society have each of them a distinct character, as well as a separate idiom; and the names of the various passions to which they are subject respectively, have a signification that varies essentially according to the condition of the persons to whom they are applied. The love, or grief, or indignation of an enlightened and refined character, is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or

grief, or anger, of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench. The things themselves are radically and obviously distinct; and the representation of them is calculated to convey a very different train of sympathies and sensations to the mind. The question, therefore, comes simply to be—which of them is the most proper object for poetical imitation? It is needless for us to answer a question, which the practice of all the world has long ago decided irrevocably. The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by their *situation*; but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is characteristic of it. The truth is, that it is impossible to copy their diction or their sentiments correctly, in a serious composition; and this, not merely because poverty makes men ridiculous, but because just taste and refined sentiment are rarely to be met with among the uncultivated part of mankind; and a language, fitted for their expression, can still more rarely form any part of their "ordinary conversation."

The low-bred heroes, and interesting rustics of poetry, have no sort of affinity to the real vulgar of this world; they are imaginary beings, whose characters and language are in contrast with their situation; and please those who can be pleased with them, by the marvellous, and not by the nature of such a combination. In serious poetry, a man of the middling or lower order *must necessarily* lay aside a great deal of his ordinary language; he must avoid errors in grammar and orthography; and steer clear of the cant of particular professions, and of every impropriety that is ludicrous or disgusting: nay, he must speak in good verse, and observe all the graces in prosody and collocation. After all this, it may not be very easy to say how we are to find him out to be a low man, or what marks can remain of the ordinary language of conversation in the inferior orders of society. If there be any phrases that are not used in good society, they will appear as blemishes in the composition, no less palpably, than errors in syntax or quality; and, if there be no such phrases, the style cannot be characteristic of

that condition of life, the language of which it professes to have adopted. All approximation to that language, in the same manner, implies a deviation from that purity and precision, which no one, we believe, ever violated spontaneously.

It has been argued, indeed (for men will argue in support of what they do not venture to practise), that as the middling and lower orders of society constitute by far the greater part of mankind, so, their feelings and expressions should interest more extensively, and may be taken, more fairly than any other, for the standards of what is natural and true. To this it seems obvious to answer, that the arts that aim at exciting admiration and delight, do not take their models from what is ordinary, but from what is excellent; and that our interest in the representation of any event, does not depend upon our familiarity with the original, but on its intrinsic importance, and the celebrity of the parties it concerns. The sculptor employs his art in delineating the graces of Antinous or Apollo, and not in the representation of those ordinary forms that belong to the crowd of his admirers. When a chieftain perishes in battle, his followers mourn more for him, than for thousands of their equals that may have fallen around him.

After all, it must be admitted, that there is a class of persons (we are afraid they cannot be called *readers*), to whom the representation of vulgar manners, in vulgar language, will afford much entertainment. We are afraid, however, that the ingenious writers who supply the hawkers and ballad-singers, have very nearly monopolised that department, and are probably better qualified to hit the taste of their customers, than Mr. Southey, or any of his brethren, can yet pretend to be. To fit them for the higher task of original composition, it would not be amiss if they were to undertake a translation of Pope or Milton into the vulgar tongue, for the benefit of those children of nature.

There is another disagreeable effect of this affected simplicity, which, though of less importance than those which have been already noticed, it may yet be worth while to mention: This is, the extreme difficulty of supporting the same low tone of expression throughout, and the inequality that is consequently introduced into the texture of the composition. To an author of reading and education, it is a style that must always be assumed and unnatural, and one from which he will be perpetually tempted to deviate. He will rise, therefore, every now and then, above the level to which he has professedly degraded himself; and make amends for that transgression, by a fresh effort of descension. His composition, in short, will be like that of a person who is attempting to speak in an obsolete or provincial dialect; he will betray himself by expressions of occasional purity and elegance, and exert himself to efface that impression, by passages of unnatural meanness or absurdity.

In making these strictures on the perverted taste for simplicity, that seems to distinguish our modern school of poetry, we have no particular allusion to Mr. Southey, or the production now before us: On the contrary, he appears to us, to be less addicted to this fault than most of his fraternity; and if we were in want of examples to illustrate the preceding observations, we should certainly look for them in the effusions of that poet who commemorates, with so much effect, the chattering of Harry Gill's teeth, tells the tale of the one-eyed huntsman "who had a cheek like a cherry," and beautifully warns his studious friend of the risk he ran of "growing double."

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The *style* of our modern poets, is that, no doubt, by which they are most easily distinguished: but their genius has also an internal character; and the peculiarities of their taste may be discovered, without the assistance of their diction. Next after great familiarity of language, there is nothing that

appears to them so meritorious as perpetual exaggeration of thought. There must be nothing moderate, natural, or easy, about their sentiments. There must be a "qu'il mourut," and a "let there be light," in every line; and all their characters must be in agonies and ecstasies, from their entrance to their exit. To those who are acquainted with their productions, it is needless to speak of the fatigue that is produced by this unceasing summons to admiration, or of the compassion which is excited by the spectacle of these eternal strainings and distortions. Those authors appear to forget, that a whole poem cannot be made up of striking passages; and that the sensations produced by sublimity, are never so powerful and entire, as when they are allowed to subside and revive, in a slow and spontaneous succession. It is delightful, now and then, to meet with a rugged mountain, or a roaring stream; but where there is no funny slope, nor shaded plain, to relieve them —where all is beetling cliff and yawning abyss, and the landscape presents nothing on every side but prodigies and terrors—the head is apt to gow giddy, and the heart to languish for the repose and security of a less elevated region.

The effect even of genuine sublimity, therefore, is impaired by the injudicious frequency of its exhibition, and the omission of those intervals and breathing-places, at which the mind should be permitted to recover from its perturbation or astonishment: but, where it has been summoned upon a false alarm, and disturbed in the orderly course of its attention, by an impotent attempt at elevation, the consequences are still more disastrous. There is nothing so ridiculous (at least for a poet) as to fail in great attempts. If the reader foresaw the failure, he may receive some degree of mischievous satisfaction from its punctual occurrence; if he did not, he will be vexed and disappointed; and, in both cases, he will very speedily be disgusted and fatigued. It would be going too far, certainly, to maintain, that our modern poets have never succeeded in their persevering endeavours at elevation and emphasis; but it is a melancholy fact, that their successes bear

but a small proportion to their miscarriages; and that the reader who has been promised an energetic sentiment, or sublime allusion, must often be contented with a very miserable substitute. Of the many contrivances they employ to give the appearance of uncommon force and animation to a very ordinary conception, the most usual is, to wrap it up in a veil of mysterious and unintelligible language, which flows past with so much solemnity, that it is difficult to believe it conveys nothing of any value. Another device for improving the effect of a cold idea, is, to embody it in a verse of unusual harshness and asperity. Compound words, too, of a portentous sound and conformation, are very useful in giving an air of energy and originality; and a few lines of scripture, written out into verse from the original prose, have been found to have a very happy effect upon those readers to whom they have the recommendation of novelty.

The qualities of style and imagery, however, form but a small part of the characteristics by which a literary faction is to be distinguished. The subject and object of their compositions, and the principles and opinions they are calculated to support, constitute a far more important criterion, and one to which it is usually altogether as easy to refer. Some poets are sufficiently described as the flatterers of greatness and power, and others as the champions of independence. One set of writers is known by its antipathy to decency and religion; another, by its methodistical cant and intolerance. Our new school of poetry has a moral character also; though it may not be possible, perhaps, to delineate it quite so concisely.

A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society, seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of

princes, and brutifying their sublime capabilities in the drudgery of unremitting labour. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror, and the same tender compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit themselves to feel the smallest indignation or dislike towards the offenders. The present vicious constitution of society alone is responsible for all these enormities: the poor sinners are but the helpless victims or instruments of its disorders, and could not possibly have avoided the errors into which they have been betrayed. Though they can bear with crimes, therefore, they cannot reconcile themselves to punishments; and have an unconquerable antipathy to prisons, gibbets, and houses of correction, as engines of oppression, and instruments of atrocious injustice. While the plea of moral necessity is thus artfully brought forward to convert all the excesses of the poor into innocent misfortunes, no sort of indulgence is shown to the offences of the powerful and rich. Their oppressions, and seductions, and debaucheries, are the theme of many an angry verse; and the indignation and abhorrence of the reader is relentlessly conjured up against those perturbators of society, and scourges of mankind.

It is not easy to say, whether the fundamental absurdity of this doctrine, or the partiality of its application, be entitled to the severest reprehension. If men are driven to commit crimes, through a certain moral necessity; other men are compelled, by a similar necessity, to hate and despise them for their commission. The indignation of the sufferer is at least as natural as the guilt of him who makes him suffer; and the good order of society would probably be as well preserved, if our sympathies were sometimes called forth in behalf of the former. At all events, the same apology ought certainly to be admitted for the wealthy, as for the needy offender. They are subject alike to the overruling influence of necessity, and equally affected by the miserable condition of society. If it be natural for a poor man to murder and

rob, in order to make himself comfortable, it is no less natural for a rich man to gormandise and domineer, in order to have the full use of his riches. Wealth is just as valid an excuse for the one class of vices, as indigence is for the other. There are many other peculiarities of false sentiment in the productions of this class of writers, that are sufficiently deserving of commemoration; but we have already exceeded our limits in giving these general indications of their character, and must now hasten back to the consideration of the singular performance which has given occasion to all this discussion.

The first thing that strikes the reader of Thalaba, is the singular structure of the versification, which is a jumble of all the measures that are known in English poetry (and a few more), without rhyme, and without any sort of regularity in their arrangement. Blank odes have been known in this country about as long as English sapphics and dactylics; and both have been considered, we believe, as a species of monsters, or exotics, that were not very likely to propagate, or thrive, in so unpropitious a climate. Mr. Southey, however, has made a vigorous effort for their naturalisation, and generously endangered his own reputation in their behalf. The melancholy fate of his English sapphics, we believe, is but too generally known; and we can scarcely predict a more favourable issue to the present experiment. Every combination of different measures is apt to perplex and disturb the reader who is not familiar with it; and we are never reconciled to a stanza of a new structure, till we have accustomed our ear to it by two or three repetitions. This is the case, even where we have the assistance of rhyme to direct us in our search after regularity, and where the definite form and appearance of a stanza assures us that regularity is to be found. Where both of these are wanting, it may be imagined that our condition will be still more deplorable; and a compassionate author might even excuse us, if we were unable to distinguish this kind of verse from prose. In reading verse, in general, we are guided to the discovery of its melody, by a sort of

preconception of its cadence and compass; without which, it might often fail to be suggested by the mere articulation of the syllables. If there be any one, whose recollection does not furnish him with evidence of this fact, he may put it to the test of experiment, by desiring any of his illiterate acquaintances to read off some of Mr. Southey's dactylics, or Sir Philip Sidney's hexameters. It is the same thing with the more unusual measures of the ancient authors. We have never known any one who fell in, at the first trial, with the proper rhyme and cadence of the *pervigilium Veneris*, or the choral lyrics of the Greek dramatists. The difficulty, however, is virtually the same, as to every new combination; and it is an unsurmountable difficulty, where such new combinations are not repeated with any degree of uniformity, but are multiplied, through the whole composition, with an unbounded licence of variation. Such, however, is confessedly the case with the work before us; and it really seems unnecessary to make any other remark on its versification.

The author, however, entertains a different opinion of it. So far from apprehending that it may cost his readers some trouble to convince themselves that the greater part of the book is not mere prose, written out into the form of verse, he is persuaded that its melody is more obvious and perceptible than that of our vulgar measures. "One advantage," says Mr. Southey, "this metre *assuredly* possesses; the dullest reader cannot distort it into discord: he may read it with a *prose mouth*, but its flow and fall will still be perceptible." We are afraid, there are duller readers in the world than Mr. Southey is aware of.

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The subject of this poem is almost as ill chosen as the diction; and the conduct of the fable as disorderly as the versification. The corporation of magicians, that inhabit "the Domdaniel caverns, under the roots of the

ocean," had discovered, that a terrible *destroyer* was likely to rise up against them from the seed of Hodeirah, a worthy Arab, with eight fine children. Immediately the murder of all those innocents is resolved on; and a sturdy assassin sent with instructions to destroy the whole family (as Mr. Southey has it) "root and branch." The good man, accordingly, and seven of his children, are dispatched; but a cloud comes over the mother and the remaining child; and the poem opens with the picture of the widow and her orphan wandering, by night, over the desarts of Arabia. The old lady, indeed, might as well have fallen under the dagger of the Domdanielite; for she dies, without doing anything for her child, in the end of the first book; and little Thalaba is left crying in the wilderness. Here he is picked up by a good old Arab, who takes him home, and educates him like a pious mussulman; and he and the old man's daughter fall in love with each other, according to the invariable custom in all such cases. The magicians, in the meantime, are hunting him over the face of the whole earth; and one of them gets near enough to draw his dagger to stab him, when a providential *simoom* lays him dead on the sand. From the dead sorcerer's finger, Thalaba takes a ring, inscribed with some unintelligible characters, which he is enabled to interpret by the help of some other unintelligible characters that he finds on the forehead of a locust; and soon after takes advantage of an eclipse of the sun, to set out on his expedition against his father's murderers, whom he understands (we do not very well know how) he has been commissioned to exterminate. Though they are thus seeking him, and he seeking them, it is amazing what difficulty they find in meeting: they do meet, however, every now and then, and many sore evils does the Destroyer suffer at their hands. By faith and fortitude, however, and the occasional assistance of the magic implements he strips them of, he is enabled to baffle and elude their malice, till he is conducted, at last, to the Domdaniel cavern, where he finds them assembled, and pulls down the roof of it upon their

heads and his own; perishing, like Samson, in the final destruction of his enemies.

From this little sketch of the story, our readers will easily perceive, that it consists altogether of the most wild and extravagant fictions, and openly sets nature and probability at defiance. In its action, it is not an imitation of anything; and excludes all rational criticism, as to the choice and succession of its incidents. Tales of this sort may amuse children, and interest, for a moment, by the prodigies they exhibit, and the multitude of events they bring together: but the interest expires with the novelty; and attention is frequently exhausted, even before curiosity has been gratified. The pleasure afforded by performances of this sort, is very much akin to that which may be derived from the exhibition of a harlequin farce; where, instead of just imitations of nature and human character, we are entertained with the transformation of cauliflowers and beer-barrels, the apparition of ghosts and devils, and all the other magic of the wooden sword. Those who can prefer this eternal sorcery, to the just and modest representation of human actions and passions, will probably take more delight in walking among the holly griffins, and yew sphinxes of the city gardener, than in ranging among the groves and lawns which have been laid out by a hand that feared to violate nature, as much as it aspired to embellish her; and disdained the easy art of startling by novelties, and surprising by impropriety.

Supernatural beings, though easily enough raised, are known to be very troublesome in the management, and have frequently occasioned much perplexity to poets and other persons who have been rash enough to call for their assistance. It is no very easy matter to preserve consistency in the disposal of powers, with the limits of which we are so far from being familiar; and when it is necessary to represent our spiritual persons as ignorant, or suffering, we are very apt to forget the knowledge and the powers with which we had formerly invested them. The ancient poets had

several unlucky rencounters of this sort with Destiny and the other deities; and Milton himself is not a little hampered with the material and immaterial qualities of his angels. Enchanters and witches may, at first sight, appear more manageable; but Mr. Southey has had difficulty enough with them; and cannot be said, after all, to have kept his fable quite clear and intelligible. The stars had said, that the Destroyer might be cut off in that hour when his father and brethren were assassinated; yet he is saved by a special interposition of heaven. Heaven itself, however, had destined him to extirpate the votaries of Eblis; and yet, long before this work is done, a special message is sent to him, declaring, that, if he chooses, the death-angel is ready to take him away instead of the sorcerer's daughter. In the beginning of the story, too, the magicians are quite at a loss where to look for him; and Abdaldar only discovers him by accident, after a long search; yet, no sooner does he leave the old Arab's tent, than Lobaba comes up to him, disguised and prepared for his destruction. The witches have also a decoy ready for him in the desart; yet he sups with Okba's daughter, without any of the sorcerers being aware of it; and afterwards proceeds to consult the simorg, without meeting with any obstacle or molestation. The simoom kills Abdaldar, too, in spite of that ring which afterwards protects Thalaba from lightning, and violence, and magic. The Destroyer's arrow then falls blunted from Lobaba's breast, who is knocked down, however, by a shower of sand of his own raising; and this same arrow, which could make no impression on the sorcerer, kills the magic bird of Aloadin, and pierces the rebellious *spirit* that guarded the Domdaniel door. The whole infernal band, indeed, is very feebly and heavily pourtrayed. They are a set of stupid, undignified, miserable wretches, quarrelling with each other, and trembling in the prospect of inevitable destruction. None of them even appears to have obtained the price of their self-sacrifice in worldly honours and advancement, except Mohareb; and he, though assured by destiny that there was one death-blow appointed for him and Thalaba, is yet represented, in

the concluding scene, as engaged with him in furious combat, and aiming many a deadly blow at that life on which his own was dependent. If the innocent characters in this poem were not delineated with more truth and feeling, the notoriety of the author would scarcely have induced us to bestow so much time on its examination.

Though the tissue of adventures through which Thalaba is conducted in the course of this production, be sufficiently various and extraordinary, we must not set down any part of the incidents to the credit of the author's invention. He has taken great pains, indeed, to guard against such a supposition; and has been as scrupulously correct in the citation of his authorities, as if he were the compiler of a true history, and thought his reputation would be ruined by the imputation of a single fiction. There is not a prodigy, accordingly, or a description, for which he does not fairly produce his vouchers, and generally lays before his readers the whole original passage from which his imitation has been taken. In this way, it turns out, that the book is entirely composed of scraps, borrowed from the oriental tale books, and travels into the Mahometan countries, seasoned up for the English reader with some fragments of our own ballads, and shreds of our older sermons. The composition and harmony of the work, accordingly, is much like the pattern of that patch-work drapery that is sometimes to be met with in the mansions of the industrious, where a blue tree overshadows a shell-fish, and a gigantic butterfly seems ready to swallow up Palemon and Lavinia. The author has the merit merely of cutting out each of his figures from the piece where its inventor had placed it, and stitching them down together in these judicious combinations.

It is impossible to peruse this poem, with the notes, without feeling that it is the fruit of much reading, undertaken for the express purpose of fabricating some such performance. The author has set out with a resolution to make an oriental story, and a determination to find the materials of it in

the books to which he had access. Every incident, therefore, and description —every superstitious usage, or singular tradition, that appeared to him susceptible of poetical embellishment, or capable of picturesque representation, he has set down for this purpose, and adopted such a fable and plan of composition, as might enable him to work up all his materials, and interweave every one of his quotations, without any *extraordinary* violation of unity or order. When he had filled his common-place book, he began to write; and his poem is little else than his common-place book versified.

It may easily be imagined, that a poem constructed upon such a plan, must be full of cumbrous and misplaced description, and overloaded with a crowd of incidents equally unmeaning and ill assorted. The tedious account of the palace of Shedad, in the first book—the description of the Summer and Winter occupations of the Arabs, in the third—the ill-told story of Haruth and Maruth—the greater part of the occurrences in the island of Mohareb—the paradise of Aloadin, etc., etc.—are all instances of disproportioned and injudicious ornaments, which never could have presented themselves to an author who wrote from the suggestions of his own fancy; and have evidently been introduced, from the author's unwillingness to relinquish the corresponding passages in D'Herbelot, Sale, Volney, etc., which appeared to him to have great capabilities for poetry.

This imitation, or admiration of Oriental imagery, however, does not bring so much suspicion on his taste, as the affection he betrays for some of his domestic models. The former has, for the most part, the recommendation of novelty; and there is always a certain pleasure in contemplating the *costume* of a distant nation, and the luxuriant landscape of an Asiatic climate. We cannot find the same apology, however, for Mr. Southey's partiality to the drawling vulgarity of some of our old English ditties.

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From the extracts and observations which we have hitherto presented to our readers, it will be natural for them to conclude, that our opinion of this poem is very decidedly unfavourable; and that we are not disposed to allow it any sort of merit. This, however, is by no means the case. We think it written, indeed, in a very vicious taste, and liable, upon the whole, to very formidable objections: But it would not be doing justice to the genius of the author, if we were not to add, that, it contains passages of very singular beauty and force, and displays a richness of poetical conception, that would do honour to more faultless compositions. There is little of human character in the poem, indeed; because Thalaba is a solitary wanderer from the solitary tent of his protector: But the home group, in which his infancy was spent, is pleasingly delineated; and there is something irresistibly interesting in the innocent love, and misfortunes, and fate of his Oneiza. The catastrophe of her story is given, it appears to us, with great spirit and effect, though the beauties are of that questionable kind, that trespass on the border of impropriety, and partake more of the character of dramatic, than of narrative poetry. After delivering her from the polluted paradise of Aloadin, he prevails on her to marry him before his mission is accomplished. She consents with great reluctance; and the marriage feast, with its processions, songs, and ceremonies, is described in some joyous stanzas. The book ends with these verses—

And now the marriage feast is spread,
And from the finished banquet now
The wedding guests are gone.
* * * * *
Who comes from the bridal chamber?
It is Azrael, the Angel of Death.

The next book opens with Thalaba lying distracted upon her grave, in the neighbourhood of which he had wandered, till "the sun, and the wind, and the rain, had rusted his raven locks"; and there he is found by the father of his bride, and visited by her ghost, and soothed and encouraged to proceed upon his holy enterprise. He sets out on his lonely way, and is entertained the first night by a venerable dervise: As they are sitting at meal, a *bridal procession* passes by, with dance, and song, and merriment. The old dervise blessed them as they passed; but Thalaba looked on, "and breathed a low deep groan, and hid his face." These incidents are skilfully imagined, and are narrated in a very impressive manner.

Though the *witchery* scenes are in general but poorly executed, and possess little novelty to those who have read the Arabian Nights Entertainments, there is, occasionally, some fine description, and striking combination. We do not remember any poem, indeed, that presents, throughout, a greater number of lively images, or could afford so many subjects for the pencil.

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All the productions of this author, it appears to us, bear very distinctly the impression of an amiable mind, a cultivated fancy, and a perverted taste. His genius seems naturally to delight in the representation of domestic virtues and pleasures, and the brilliant delineation of external nature. In both these departments, he is frequently very successful; but he seems to want vigour for the loftier flights of poetry. He is often puerile, diffuse, and artificial, and seems to have but little acquaintance with those chaster and severer graces, by whom the epic muse would be most suitably attended. His faults are always aggravated, and often created, by his partiality for the peculiar manner of that new school of poetry, of which he is a faithful

disciple, and to the glory of which he has sacrificed greater talents and acquisitions, than can be boasted of by any of his associates.

ON SOUTHEY'S LAUREATE LAYS

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, June, 1816]

The Lay of the Laureate. Carmen Nuptiale. By ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq., Poet Laureate, &c., &c. 12mo. pp. 78. London, 1816.

A poet laureate, we take it, is naturally a ridiculous person: and has scarcely any safe course to follow, in times like the present, but to bear his faculties with exceeding meekness, and to keep as much as possible in the shade. A stipendiary officer of the Royal household, bound to produce two lyrical compositions ever year, in praise of his Majesty's person and government, is undoubtedly an object which it is difficult to contemplate with gravity; and which can only have been retained in existence, from that love of antique pomp and establishment which has embellished our Court with so many gold-sticks and white rods, and such trains of beef-eaters and grooms of the stole—though it has submitted to the suppression of the more sprightly appendages of a king's fool, or a court jester. That the household poet should have survived the other wits of the establishment, can only be explained by the circumstance of his office being more easily converted into one of mere pomp and ceremony, and coming thus to afford an antient and well-sounding name for a moderate sinecure. For more than a century, accordingly, it has existed on this footing; and its duties, like those of the other personages to whom we have just alluded, have been discharged with a decorous gravity and unobtrusive quietness, which has provoked no derision, merely because it has attracted no notice.

The present possessor, however, appears to have other notions on the subject; and has very distinctly manifested his resolution not to rest satisfied with the salary, sherry, and safe obscurity of his predecessors, but to claim a real power and prerogative in the world of letters, in virtue of his title and appointment. Now, in this, we conceive, with all due humility, that there is a little mistake of fact, and a little error of judgment. The laurel which the King gives, we are credibly informed, has nothing at all in common with that which is bestowed by the Muses; and the Prince Regent's warrant is absolutely of no authority in the court of Apollo. If this be the case, however, it follows, that a poet laureate has no sort of precedency among poets,— whatever may be his place among pages and clerks of the kitchen; —and that he has no more pretensions as an author, than if his appointment had been to the mastership of the stag-hounds. When he takes state upon him with the public, therefore, in consequence of his office, he really is guilty of as ludicrous a blunder as the worthy American *Consul*, in one of the Hanse towns, who painted the Roman *fasces* on the pannel of his buggy, and insisted upon calling his foot-boy and clerk his *lictors*. Except when he is in his official duty, therefore, the King's house-poet would do well to keep the nature of his office out of sight; and, when he is compelled to appear in it in public, should try to get through with the business as quickly and quietly as possible. The brawny drayman who enacts the Champion of England in the Lord Mayor's show, is in some danger of being sneered at by the spectators, even when he paces along with the timidity and sobriety that becomes his condition; but if he were to take it into his head to make serious boast of his prowess, and to call upon the city bards to celebrate his heroic acts, the very apprentices could not restrain their laughter,—and "the humorous man" would have but small chance of finishing his part in peace.

Mr. Southey could not be ignorant of all this; and yet it appears that he could not have known it all. He must have been conscious, we think, of the ridicule attached to his office, and might have known that there were only

two ways of counteracting it,—either by sinking the office altogether in his public appearances, or by writing such very good verses in the discharge of it, as might defy ridicule, and render neglect impossible. Instead of this, however, he has allowed himself to write rather worse than any Laureate before him, and has betaken himself to the luckless and vulgar expedient of endeavouring to face out the thing by an air of prodigious confidence and assumption:—and has had the usual fortune of such undertakers, by becoming only more conspicuously ridiculous. The badness of his official productions indeed is something really wonderful,—though not more so than the amazing self-complacency and self-praise with which they are given to the world. With the finest themes in the world for that sort of writing, they are the dullest, tamest, and most tedious things ever poor critic was condemned, or other people vainly invited, to read. They are a great deal more wearisome, and rather more unmeaning and unnatural, than the effusions of his predecessors, Messrs. Pye and Whitehead; and are moreover disfigured with the most abominable egotism, conceit and dogmatism, than we ever met with in any thing intended for the public eye. They are filled, indeed, with praises of the author himself, and his works, and his laurel, and his dispositions; notices of his various virtues and studies; puffs of the productions he is preparing for the press, and anticipations of the fame which he is to reap by their means, from a less ungrateful age; and all this delivered with such an oracular seriousness and assurance, that it is easy to see the worthy Laureate thinks himself entitled to share in the prerogatives of that royalty which he is bound to extol, and has resolved to make it

—his great example as it is his theme.

For, as sovereign Princes are permitted, in their manifestoes and proclamations, to speak of their own gracious pleasure and royal wisdom, without imputation of arrogance, so, our Laureate has persuaded himself

that he may address the subject world in the same lofty strains, and that they will listen with as dutiful an awe to the authoritative exposition of his own genius and glory. What might have been the success of the experiment, if the execution had been as masterly as the design is bold, we shall not trouble ourselves to conjecture; but the contrast between the greatness of the praise and the badness of the poetry in which it is conveyed, and to which it is partly applied, is abundantly decisive of its result in the present instance, as well as in all the others in which the ingenious author has adopted the same style. We took some notice of the *Carmen Triumphale*, which stood at the head of the series. But of the Odes which afterwards followed to the Prince Regent, and the Sovereigns and Generals who came to visit him, we had the charity to say nothing; and were willing indeed to hope, that the lamentable failure of that attempt might admonish the author, at least as effectually as any intimations of ours. Here, however, we have him again, with a *Lay of the Laureate*, and a *Carmen Nuptiale*, if possible still more boastful and more dull than any of his other celebrations. It is necessary, therefore, to bring the case once more before the Public, for the sake both of correction and example; and as the work is not likely to find many readers, and is of a tenor which would not be readily believed upon any general representation, we must now beg leave to give a faithful analysis of its different parts, with a few specimens of the taste and manner of its execution.

Its object is to commemorate the late auspicious marriage of the presumptive Heiress of the English crown with the young Prince of Saxe-Cobourg; and consists of a Proem, a Dream, and an Epilogue—with a L'envoy, and various annotations. The Proem, as was most fitting, is entirely devoted to the praise of the Laureate himself; and contains an account, which cannot fail to be very interesting, both to his Royal auditors and to the world at large, of his early studies and attainments—the excellence of his genius—the nobleness of his views— and the happiness

that has been the result of these precious gifts. Then there is mention made of his pleasure in being appointed Poet Laureate, and of the rage and envy which that event excited in all the habitations of the malignant. This is naturally followed up by a full account of all his official productions, and some modest doubts whether his genius is not too heroic and pathetic for the composition of an *Epithalamium,*— which doubts, however, are speedily and pleasingly resolved by the recollection, that as Spenser made a hymn on his own marriage, so, there can be nothing improper in Mr. Southey doing as much on that of the Princess Charlotte. This is the general argument of the Proem. But the reader must know a little more of the details. In his early youth, the ingenious author says he aspired to the fame of a poet; and then Fancy came to him, and showed him the glories of his future career, addressing him in these encouraging words—

Thou whom rich Nature at thy happy birth
Blest in her bounty with the largest dower
That Heaven indulges to a child of earth!

Being fully persuaded of the truth of her statements, we have then the satisfaction of learning that he has lived a very happy life; and that, though time has made his hair a little grey, it has only matured his understanding; and that he is still as habitually cheerful as when he was a boy. He then proceeds to inform us, that he sometimes does a little in poetry still; but that, of late years, he spends most of his time in writing histories—from which he has no doubt that he will one day or another acquire great reputation.

Thus in the ages which are past I live,
And those which are to come my sure reward will give….

We come next, of course, to the Dream; and nothing more stupid or heavy, we will venture to say, ever arose out of sleep, or tended to sleep

again. The unhappy Laureate, it seems, just saw, upon shutting his eyes, what he might have seen as well if he had been able to keep them open—a great crowd of people and coaches in the street, with marriage favours in their bosoms; church bells ringing merrily, and *feux-de-joie* firing in all directions. Eftsoons, says the dreaming poet, I came to a great door, where there were guards placed to keep off the mob; but when they saw my Laurel crown, they made way for me, and let me in!—

But I had entrance through that guarded door,
In honour to the Laureate crown I wore.

When he gets in, he finds himself in a large hall, decorated with trophies, and pictures, and statues, commemorating the triumphs of British valour, from Aboukir to Waterloo. The room, moreover, was filled with a great number of ladies and gentlemen very finely dressed; and in two chairs, near the top, were seated the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold. Hitherto, certainly, all is sufficiently plain and probable;— nor can the Muse who dictated this to the slumbering Laureate be accused of any very extravagant or profuse invention. We come, now, however, to allegory and learning in abundance. In the first place, we are told, with infinite regard to the probability as well as the novelty of the fiction, that in this drawing-room there were two great lions couching at the feet of the Royal Pair;—the Prince's being very lean and in poor condition, with the hair rubbed off his neck as if from a heavy collar— and the Princess's in full vigour, with a bushy mane, and littered with torn French flags. Then there were two heavenly figures stationed on each side of the throne, one called Honour, and the other Faith;—so very like each other, that it was impossible not to suppose them brother and sister. It turns out, however, that they were only second cousins; or so at least we interpret the following precious piece of theogony.

Akin they were,—yet not as thus it seemed,
For he of VALOUR was the eldest son,
From Areté in happy union sprung.
But her to Phronis Eusebeia bore,
She whom her mother Dicé sent to earth;
What marvel then if thus their features wore
Resemblant lineaments of kindred birth?
Dicé being child of Him who rules above,
VALOUR his earth-born son; so both derived from Jove.

p. 29.

This, we think, is delicious; but there is still more goodly stuff toward. The two heavenly cousins stand still without doing any thing; but then there is a sound of sweet music, and a whole "heavenly company" appear, led on by a majestic female, whom we discover, by the emblems on our halfpence, to be no less a person than Britannia, who advances and addresses a long discourse of flattery and admonition to the Royal bride; which, for the most part, is as dull and commonplace as might be expected from the occasion; though there are some passages in which the author has reconciled his gratitude to his Patron, and his monitory duty to his Daughter, with singular spirit and delicacy. After enjoining to her the observance of all public duties, and the cultivation of all domestic virtues, Britannia is made to sum up the whole sermon in this emphatic precept—

Look to thy Sire, and in his steady way —learn thou to tread.

Now, considering that Mr. Southey was at all events incapable of sacrificing truth to Court favour, it cannot but be regarded as a rare felicity in his subject, that he could thus select a pattern of private purity and public honour in the person of the actual Sovereign, without incurring the least suspicion either of base adulation or lax morality….

It is impossible to feel any serious or general contempt for a person of Mr. Southey's genius;—and, in reviewing his other works, we hope we have shown a proper sense of his many merits and accomplishments. But his Laureate odes are utterly and intolerably bad; and, if he had never written any thing else, must have ranked him below Colley Cibber in genius, and above him in conceit and presumption. We have no toleration for this sort of perversity, or prostitution of great gifts; and do not think it necessary to qualify the expression of opinions which we have formed with as much positiveness as deliberation.—We earnestly wish he would resign his livery laurel to Lord Thurlow, and write no more odes on Court galas. We can assure him too, most sincerely, that this wish is not dictated in any degree by envy, or any other hostile or selfish feeling. We are ourselves, it is but too well known, altogether without pretensions to that high office—and really see no great charms either in the salary or the connexion—and, for the glory of writing such verses as we have now been reviewing, we do not believe that there is a scribbler in the kingdom so vile as to think it a thing to be coveted.

ON THOMAS MOORE

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, July, 1806]

Epistles, Odes, and other Poems. By THOMAS MOORE, Esq. 4to. pp. 350. London, 1806.

A singular sweetness and melody of versification,—smooth, copious, and familiar diction,—with some brilliancy of fancy, and some show of classical erudition, might have raised Mr. Moore to an innocent distinction among the song-writers and occasional poets of his day: But he is indebted, we fear, for the celebrity he actually enjoys to accomplishments of a different description; and may boast, if the boast can please him, of being the most licentious of modern versifiers, and the most poetical of those who, in our times, have devoted their talents to the propagation of immorality. We regard his book, indeed, as a public nuisance; and would willingly trample it down by one short movement of contempt and indignation, had we not reason to apprehend, that it was abetted by patrons who are entitled to a more respectful remonstrance, and by admirers who may require a more extended exposition of their dangers.

There is nothing, it will be allowed, more indefensible than a cold-blooded attempt to corrupt the purity of an innocent heart; and we can scarcely conceive any being more truly despicable, than he who, without

the apology of unruly passion or tumultuous desires, sits down to ransack the impure places of his memory for inflammatory images and expressions, and commits them laboriously to writing, for the purpose of insinuating pollution into the minds of unknown and unsuspecting readers.

This is almost a new crime among us. While France has to blush for so many tomes of "Poesies Erotiques," we have little to answer for, but the coarse indecencies of Rochester and Dryden; and these, though sufficiently offensive to delicacy and good taste, can scarcely be regarded as dangerous. There is an antidote to the poison they contain, in the open and undisguised profligacy with which it is presented. If they are wicked, they have the honesty at least to profess wickedness. The mark of the beast is set visibly on their foreheads; and though they have the boldness to recommend vice, they want the effrontery to make her pass for virtue. In their grossest immoralities, too, they scarcely ever seem to be perfectly in earnest; and appear neither to wish nor to hope to make proselytes. They indulge their own vein of gross riot and debauchery; but they do not seek to corrupt the principles of their readers; and are contented to be reprobated as profligate, if they are admired at the same time for wit and originality.

The immorality of Mr. Moore is infinitely more insidious and malignant. It seems to be his aim to impose corruption upon his readers, by concealing it under the mask of refinement; to reconcile them imperceptibly to the most vile and vulgar sensuality, by blending its language with that of exalted feeling and tender emotion; and to steal impurity into their hearts, by gently perverting the most simple and generous of their affections. In the execution of this unworthy task, he labours with a perseverance at once ludicrous and detestable. He may be seen in every page running round the paltry circle of his seductions with incredible zeal and anxiety, and stimulating his jaded fancy for new images of impurity, with as much

melancholy industry as ever outcast of the muses hunted for epithets or metre.

It is needless, we hope, to go deep into the inquiry, why certain compositions have been reprobated as licentious, and their authors ranked among the worst enemies of morality. The criterion by which their delinquency may be determined, is fortunately very obvious: no scene can be tolerated in description, which could not be contemplated in reality, without a gross violation of propriety: no expression can be pardoned in poetry to which delicacy could not listen in the prose of real life.

No writer can transgress those limits, and be held guiltless; but there are degrees of guiltiness, and circumstances of aggravation or apology, which ought not to be disregarded. A poet of a luxuriant imagination may give too warm a colouring to the representation of innocent endearments, or be betrayed into indelicacies in delineating the allurements of some fair seducer, while it is obviously his general intention to give attraction to the picture of virtue, and to put the reader on his guard against the assault of temptation. Mr. Moore has no such apology;—he takes care to intimate to us, in every page that the raptures which he celebrates do not spring from the excesses of an innocent love, or the extravagance of a romantic attachment; but are the unhallowed fruits of cheap and vulgar prostitution, the inspiration of casual amours, and the chorus of habitual debauchery. He is at pains to let the world know that he is still fonder of roving, than of loving; and that all the Caras and the Fannys, with whom he holds dalliance in these pages, have had each a long series of preceding lovers, as highly favoured as their present poetical paramour: that they meet without any purpose of constancy, and do not think it necessary to grace their connexion with any professions of esteem or permanent attachment. The greater part of the book is filled with serious and elaborate description of the ecstasies of

such an intercourse, and with passionate exhortations to snatch the joys, which are thus abundantly poured forth from "the fertile fount of sense."

To us, indeed, the perpetual kissing, and twining, and panting of these amorous persons, is rather ludicrous than seductive; and their eternal sobbing and whining, raises no emotion in our bosoms, but those of disgust and contempt. Even to younger men, we believe, the book will not be very dangerous: nor is it upon their account that we feel the indignation and alarm which we have already endeavoured to express. The life and conversation of our sex, we are afraid is seldom so pure as to leave them much to learn from publications of this description; and they commonly know enough of the reality, to be aware of the absurd illusions and exaggerations of such poetical voluptuaries. In them, therefore, such a composition can work neither corruption nor deception; and it will, in general, be despised and thrown aside, as a tissue of sickly and fantastical conceits, equally remote from truth and respectability. It is upon the other sex, that we conceive its effects may be most pernicious; and it is chiefly as an insult upon their delicacy, and an attack upon their purity, that we are disposed to resent its publication.

The reserve in which women are educated; the natural vivacity of their imaginations; and the warmth of their sensibility, renders them peculiarly liable to be captivated by the appearance of violent emotions, and to be misled by the affectation of tenderness or generosity. They easily receive any impression that is made under the apparent sanction of these feelings; and allow themselves to be seduced into any thing, which they can be persuaded is dictated by disinterested attachment, and sincere and excessive love. It is easy to perceive how dangerous it must be for such beings to hang over the pages of a book, in which supernatural raptures, and transcendent passion, are counterfeited in every page; in which, images of voluptuousness are artfully blended with expressions of refined sentiment,

and delicate emotion; and the grossest sensuality is exhibited in conjunction with the most gentle and generous affections. They who have not learned from experience, the impossibility of such an union, are apt to be captivated by its alluring exterior. They are seduced by their own ignorance and sensibility; and become familiar with the demon, for the sake of the radiant angel to whom he has been linked by the malignant artifice of the poet.

We have been induced to enter this strong protest, and to express ourselves thus warmly against this and the former publications of this author, both from what we hear of the circulation which they have already obtained, and from our conviction that they are calculated, if not strongly denounced to the public, to produce, at this moment, peculiar and irremediable mischief. The style of composition, as we have already hinted, is almost new in this country: it is less offensive than the old fashion of obscenity; and for these reasons, perhaps, is less likely to excite the suspicion of the moralist, or to become the object of precaution to those who watch over the morals of the young and inexperienced. We certainly have known it a permitted study, where performances, infinitely less pernicious, were rigidly interdicted.

There can be no time in which the purity of the female character can fail to be of the first importance to every community; but it appears to us, that it requires at this moment to be more carefully watched over than at any other; and that the constitution of society has arrived among us to a sort of crisis, the issue of which may be powerfully influenced by our present neglect or solicitude. From the increasing diffusion of opulence, enlightened or polite society is greatly enlarged, and necessarily becomes more promiscuous and corruptible; and women are now beginning to receive a more extended education, to venture more freely and largely into the fields of literature, and to become more of intellectual and independent creatures, than they have yet been in these islands. In these circumstances, it

seems to be of incalculable importance, that no attaint should be given to the delicacy and purity of their expanding minds; that their increasing knowledge should be of good chiefly, and not of evil; that they should not consider modesty as one of the prejudices from which they are now to be emancipated; nor found any part of their new influence upon the licentiousness of which Mr. Moore invites them to be partakers. The character and the morality of women exercises already a mighty influence upon the happiness and the respectability of the nation; and it is destined, we believe, to exercise a still higher one: But if they should ever cease to be the pure, the delicate, and timid creatures that they now are—if they should cease to overawe profligacy, and to win and to shame men into decency, fidelity, and love of unsullied virtue—it is easy to see that this influence, which has hitherto been exerted to strengthen and refine our society, will operate entirely to its corruption and debasement; that domestic happiness and private honour will be extinguished, and public spirit and national industry most probably annihilated along with them.

There is one other consideration which has helped to excite our apprehension on occasion of this particular performance. Many of the pieces are dedicated to persons of the first consideration in the country, both for rank and accomplishments; and the author appears to consider the greater part of them as his intimate friends, and undoubted patrons and admirers. Now, this we will confess is to us a very alarming consideration. By these channels, the book will easily pass into circulation in those classes of society, which it is of most consequence to keep free of contamination; and from which its reputation and its influence will descend with the greatest effect to the great body of the community. In this reading and opulent country, there are no fashions which diffuse themselves so fast, as those of literature and immorality: there is no palpable boundary between the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*, as in old France, by which the corruption and intelligence of the former can be prevented from spreading to the latter.

All the parts of the mass, act and react upon each other with a powerful and unintermitted agency; and if the head be once infected, the corruption will spread irresistibly through the whole body. It is doubly necessary, therefore, to put the law in force against this delinquent, since he has not only indicated a disposition to do mischief, but seems unfortunately to have found an opportunity.

ON WORDSWORTH'S "THE EXCURSION"

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, November, 1814]

The Excursion, being a portion of the Recluse, a Poem. By WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. 4to. pp. 447. London, 1814.

This will never do. It bears no doubt the stamp of the author's heart and fancy; but unfortunately not half so visibly as that of his peculiar system. His former poems were intended to recommend that system, and to bespeak favour for it by their individual merit;—but this, we suspect, must be recommended by the system—and can only expect to succeed where it has been previously established. It is longer, weaker, and tamer, than any of Mr. Wordsworth's other productions; with less boldness of originality, and less even of that extreme simplicity and lowliness of tone which wavered so prettily, in the Lyrical Ballads, between silliness and pathos. We have imitations of Cowper, and even of Milton here, engrafted on the natural drawl of the Lakers—and all diluted into harmony by that profuse and irrepressible wordiness which deluges all the blank verse of this school of poetry, and lubricates and weakens the whole structure of their style.

Though it fairly fills four hundred and twenty good quarto pages, without note, vignette, or any sort of extraneous assistance, it is stated in the title—with something of an imprudent candour—to be but "a portion" of a larger

work; and in the preface, where an attempt is rather unsuccessfully made to explain the whole design, it is still more rashly disclosed, that it is but "a part of the second part of a *long* and laborious work"—which is to consist of three parts.

What Mr. Wordsworth's ideas of length are, we have no means of accurately judging; but we cannot help suspecting that they are liberal, to a degree that will alarm the weakness of most modern readers. As far as we can gather from the preface, the entire poem—or one of them, for we really are not sure whether there is to be one or two—is of a biographical nature; and is to contain the history of the author's mind, and of the origin and progress of his poetical powers, up to the period when they were sufficiently matured to qualify him for the great work on which he has been so long employed. Now, the quarto before us contains an account of one of his youthful rambles in the vales of Cumberland, and occupies precisely the period of three days; so that, by the use of a very powerful *calculus*, some estimate may be formed of the probable extent of the entire biography.

This small specimen, however, and the statements with which it is prefaced, have been sufficient to set our minds at rest in one particular. The case of Mr. Wordsworth, we perceive, is now manifestly hopeless; and we give him up as altogether incurable, and beyond the power of criticism. We cannot indeed altogether omit taking precautions now and then against the spreading of the malady;—but for himself, though we shall watch the progress of his symptoms as a matter of professional curiosity and instruction, we really think it right not to harass him any longer with nauseous remedies,—but rather to throw in cordials and lenitives, and wait in patience for the natural termination of the disorder. In order to justify this desertion of our patient, however, it is proper to state why we despair of the success of a more active practice.

A man who has been for twenty years at work on such matter as is now before us, and who comes complacently forward with a whole quarto of it after all the admonitions he has received, cannot reasonably be expected to "change his hand, or check his pride," upon the suggestion of far weightier monitors than we can pretend to be. Inveterate habit must now have given a kind of sanctity to the errors of early taste; and the very powers of which we lament the perversion, have probably become incapable of any other application. The very quantity, too, that he has written, and is at this moment working up for publication upon the old pattern, makes it almost hopeless to look for any change of it. All this is so much capital already sunk in the concern; which must be sacrificed if it be abandoned: and no man likes to give up for lost the time and talent and labour which he has embodied in any permanent production. We were not previously aware of these obstacles to Mr. Wordsworth's conversion; and, considering the peculiarities of his former writings merely as the result of certain wanton and capricious experiments on public taste and indulgence, conceived it to be our duty to discourage their repetition by all the means in our power. We now see clearly, however, how the case stands;—and, making up our minds, though with the most sincere pain and reluctance, to consider him as finally lost to the good cause of poetry, shall endeavour to be thankful for the occasional gleams of tenderness and beauty which the natural force of his imagination and affections must still shed over all his productions,—and to which we shall ever turn with delight, in spite of the affectation and mysticism and prolixity, with which they are so abundantly contrasted.

Long habits of seclusion, and an excessive ambition of originality, can alone account for the disproportion which seems to exist between this author's taste and his genius; or for the devotion with which he has sacrificed so many precious gifts at the shrine of those paltry idols which he has set up for himself among his lakes and his mountains. Solitary musings, amidst such scenes, might no doubt be expected to nurse up the mind to the

majesty of poetical conception,—(though it is remarkable, that all the greater poets lived or had lived, in the full current of society):—But the collision of equal minds,—the admonition of prevailing impressions—seems necessary to reduce its redundancies, and repress that tendency to extravagance or puerility, into which the self-indulgence and self-admiration of genius is so apt to be betrayed, when it is allowed to wanton, without awe or restraint, in the triumph and delight of its own intoxication. That its flights should be graceful and glorious in the eyes of men, it seems almost to be necessary that they should be made in the consciousness that men's eyes are to behold them,—and that the inward transport and vigour by which they are inspired, should be tempered by an occasional reference to what will be thought of them by those-ultimate dispensers of glory. An habitual and general knowledge of the few settled and permanent maxims, which form the canon of general taste in all large and polished societies—a certain tact, which informs us at once that many things, which we still love and are moved by in secret, must necessarily be despised as childish, or derided as absurd, in all such societies—though it will not stand in the place of genius, seems necessary to the success of its exertions; and though it will never enable any one to produce the higher beauties of art, can alone secure the talent which does produce them, from errors that must render it useless. Those who have most of the talent, however, commonly acquire this knowledge with the greatest facility;—and if Mr. Wordsworth, instead of confining himself almost entirely to the society of the dalesmen and cottagers, and little children, who form the subjects of his book, had condescended to mingle a little more with the people that were to read and judge of it, we cannot help thinking, that its texture would have been considerably improved: At least it appears to us to be absolutely impossible, that any one who had lived or mixed familiarly with men of literature and ordinary judgment in poetry (of course we exclude the coadjutors and disciples of his own school), could ever have fallen into such gross faults,

or so long mistaken them for beauties. His first essays we looked upon in a good degree as poetical paradoxes,—maintained experimentally, in order to display talent, and court notoriety;—and so maintained, with no more serious belief in their truth, than is usually generated by an ingenious and animated defence of other paradoxes. But when we find, that he has been for twenty years exclusively employed upon articles of this very fabric, and that he has still enough of raw material on hand to keep him so employed for twenty years to come, we cannot refuse him the justice of believing that he is a sincere convert to his own system, and must ascribe the peculiarities of his composition, not to any transient affectation, or accidental caprice of imagination, but to a settled perversity of taste or understanding, which has been fostered, if not altogether created, by the circumstances to which we have already alluded.

The volume before us, if we were to describe it very shortly, we should characterize as a tissue of moral and devotional ravings, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few very simple and familiar ideas:—but with such an accompaniment of long words, long sentences, and unwieldy phrases—such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastical sublimities, that it is often extremely difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning—and altogether impossible for an ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about. Moral and religious enthusiasm, though undoubtedly poetical emotions, are at the same time but dangerous inspirers of poetry; nothing being so apt to run into interminable dulness or mellifluous extravagance, without giving the unfortunate author the slightest intimation of his danger. His laudable zeal for the efficacy of his preachments, he very naturally mistakes for the ardour of poetical inspiration;—and, while dealing out the high words and glowing phrases which are so readily supplied by themes of this description, can scarcely avoid believing that he is eminently original and impressive:— All sorts of commonplace notions and expressions are

sanctified in his eyes, by the sublime ends for which they are employed; and the mystical verbiage of the methodist pulpit is repeated, till the speaker entertains no doubt that he is the elected organ of divine truth and persuasion. But if such be the common hazards of seeking inspiration from those potent fountains, it may easily be conceived what chance Mr. Wordsworth had of escaping their enchantment,—with his natural propensities to wordiness, and his unlucky habit of debasing pathos with vulgarity. The fact accordingly is, that in this production he is more obscure than a Pindaric poet of the seventeenth century; and more verbose "than even himself of yore"; while the wilfulness with which he persists in choosing his examples of intellectual dignity and tenderness exclusively from the lowest ranks of society, will be sufficiently apparent, from the circumstance of his having thought fit to make his chief prolocutor in this poetical dialogue, and chief advocate of Providence and Virtue, *an old Scotch Pedlar*—retired indeed from business—but still rambling about in his former haunts, and gossiping among his old customers, without his pack on his shoulders. The other persons of the drama are, a retired military chaplain, who has grown half an atheist and half a misanthrope—the wife of an unprosperous weaver—a servant girl with her infant—a parish pauper, and one or two other personages of equal rank and dignity.

The character of the work is decidedly didactic; and more than nine-tenths of it are occupied with a species of dialogue, or rather a series of long sermons or harangues which pass between the pedlar, the author, the old chaplain, and a worthy vicar, who entertains the whole party at dinner on the last day of their excursion. The incidents which occur in the course of it are as few and trifling as can be imagined;—and those which the different speakers narrate in the course of their discourses, are introduced rather to illustrate their arguments or opinions, than for any interest they are supposed to possess of their own.—The doctrine which the work is intended to enforce, we are by no means certain that we have discovered. In

so far as we can collect, however, it seems to be neither more nor less than the old familiar one, that a firm belief in the providence of a wise and beneficent Being must be our great stay and support under all afflictions and perplexities upon earth—and that there are indications of his power and goodness in all the aspects of the visible universe, whether living or inanimate—every part of which should therefore be regarded with love and reverence, as exponents of those great attributes. We can testify, at least, that these salutary and important truths are inculcated at far greater length, and with more repetitions, than in any ten volumes of sermons that we ever perused. It is also maintained, with equal conciseness and originality, that there is frequently much good sense, as well as much enjoyment, in the humbler conditions of life; and that, in spite of great vices and abuses, there is a reasonable allowance both of happiness and goodness in society at large. If there be any deeper or more recondite doctrines in Mr. Wordsworth's book, we must confess that they have escaped us;—and, convinced as we are of the truth and soundness of those to which we have alluded, we cannot help thinking that they might have been better enforced with less parade and prolixity. His effusions on what may be called the physiognomy of external nature, or its moral and theological expression, are eminently fantastic, obscure, and affected.—It is quite time, however, that we should give the reader a more particular account of this singular performance.

It opens with a picture of the author toiling across a bare common in a hot summer day, and reaching at last a ruined hut surrounded with tall trees, where he meets by appointment with a hale old man, with an iron-pointed staff lying beside him. Then follows a retrospective account of their first acquaintance—formed, it seems, when the author was at a village school; and his aged friend occupied "one room,—the fifth part of a house" in the neighbourhood. After this, we have the history of this reverend person at no small length. He was born, we are happy to find, in Scotland—among the

hills of Athol; and his mother, after his father's death, married the parish schoolmaster—so that he was taught his letters betimes: But then, as it is here set forth with much solemnity,

From his sixth year, the boy, of whom I speak,
In summer, tended cattle on the hills.

And again, a few pages after, that there may be no risk of mistake as to a point of such essential importance—

From early childhood, even, as hath been said, From his *sixth year*, he had been sent abroad, *In summer*, to tend herds: Such was his task!

In the course of this occupation, it is next recorded, that he acquired such a taste for rural scenery and open air, that when he was sent to teach a school in a neighbouring village, he found it "a misery to him," and determined to embrace the more romantic occupation of a Pedlar—or, as Mr. Wordsworth more musically expresses it,

A vagrant merchant bent beneath his load;

—and in the course of his peregrinations had acquired a very large acquaintance, which, after he had given up dealing, he frequently took a summer ramble to visit. The author, on coming up to this interesting personage, finds him sitting with his eyes half shut;—and, not being quite sure whether he's asleep or awake, stands "some minutes space" in silence beside him. "At length," says he, with his own delightful simplicity—

At length I hailed him—*seeing that his hat*
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim
Had newly scooped a running stream!—
—"'Tis," said I, "a burning day;

My lips are parched with thirst;—but you, I guess,
Have somewhere found relief."

Upon this, the benevolent old man points him out a well in a corner, to which the author repairs; and, after minutely describing its situation, beyond a broken wall, and between two alders that "grew in a cold damp nook," he thus faithfully chronicles the process of his return—

My thirst I slaked—and from the cheerless spot
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned,
Where sate the old man on the cottage bench.

The Pedlar then gives an account of the last inhabitants of the deserted cottage beside them. These were, a good industrious weaver and his wife and children. They were very happy for a while; till sickness and want of work came upon them; and then the father enlisted as a soldier, and the wife pined in the lonely cottage—growing every year more careless and desponding, as her anxiety and fears for her absent husband, of whom no tidings ever reached her, accumulated. Her children died, and left her cheerless and alone; and at last she died also; and the cottage fell to decay. We must say, that there is very considerable pathos in the telling of this simple story; and that they who can get over the repugnance excited by the triteness of its incidents, and the lowness of its objects, will not fail to be struck with the author's knowledge of the human heart, and the power he possesses of stirring up its deepest and gentlest sympathies. His prolixity, indeed, it is not so easy to get over. This little story fills about twenty-five quarto pages; and abounds, of course, with mawkish sentiment, and details of preposterous minuteness. When the tale is told, the travellers take their staffs, and end their first day's journey, without further adventure, at a little inn.

The Second book sets them forward betimes in the morning. They pass by a Village Wake; and as they approach a more solitary part of the mountains, the old man tells the author that he is taking him to see an old friend of his, who had formerly been chaplain to a Highland regiment—had lost a beloved wife—been roused from his dejection by the first euthusiasm [Transcriber's note: sic] of the French Revolution—had emigrated on its miscarriage to America—and returned disgusted to hide himself in the retreat to which they were now ascending. That retreat is then most tediously described—a smooth green valley in the heart of the mountain, without trees, and with only one dwelling. Just as they get sight of it from the ridge above, they see a funeral train proceeding from the solitary abode, and hurry on with some apprehension for the fate of the misanthrope—whom they find, however, in very tolerable condition at the door, and learn that the funeral was that of an aged pauper who had been boarded out by the parish in that cheap farm-house, and had died in consequence of long exposure to heavy rain. The old chaplain, or, as Mr. Wordsworth is pleased to call him, the Solitary, tells this dull story at prodigious length; and after giving an inflated description of an effect of mountain-mists in the evening sun, treats his visitors with a rustic dinner—and they walk out to the fields at the close of the second book.

The Third makes no progress in the excursion. It is entirely filled with moral and religious conversation and debate, and with a more ample detail of the Solitary's past life, than had been given in the sketch of his friend. The conversation is exceedingly dull and mystical; and the Solitary's confessions insufferably diffuse. Yet there is very considerable force of writing and tenderness of sentiment in this part of the work.

The Fourth book is also filled with dialogues ethical and theological; and, with the exception of some brilliant and forcible expressions here and there,

consists of an exposition of truisms, more cloudy, wordy, and inconceivably prolix, than any thing we ever met with.

In the beginning of the Fifth book, they leave the solitary valley, taking its pensive inhabitant along with them, and stray on to where the landscape sinks down into milder features, till they arrive at a church, which stands on a moderate elevation in the centre of a wide and fertile vale. Here they meditate for a while among the monuments, till the vicar comes out and joins them;—and recognizing the pedlar for an old acquaintance, mixes graciously in the conversation, which proceeds in a very edifying manner till the close of the book.

The Sixth contains a choice obituary, or characteristic account of several of the persons who lie buried before this groupe of moralizers; —an unsuccessful lover, who finds consolation in natural history—a miner, who worked on for twenty years, in despite of universal ridicule, and at last found the vein he had expected—two political enemies reconciled in old age to each other—an old female miser—a seduced damsel—and two widowers, one who devoted himself to the education of his daughters, and one who married a prudent middle-aged woman to take care of them.

In the beginning of the Eighth Book, the worthy vicar expresses, in the words of Mr. Wordsworth's own epitome, "his apprehensions that he had detained his auditors too long—invites them to his house—Solitary, disinclined to comply, rallies the Wanderer, and somewhat playfully draws a comparison between his itinerant profession and that of a knight-errant—which leads to the Wanderer giving an account of changes in the country, from the manufacturing spirit—Its favourable effects— The other side of the picture," etc., etc. After these very poetical themes are exhausted, they all go into the house, where they are introduced to the Vicar's wife and daughter; and while they sit chatting in the parlour over a family dinner, his

son and one of his companions come in with a fine dish of trouts piled on a blue slate; and, after being caressed by the company, are sent to dinner in the nursery.—This ends the eighth book.

The Ninth and last is chiefly occupied with the mystical discourses of the Pedlar; who maintains, that the whole universe is animated by an active principle, the noblest seat of which is in the human soul; and moreover, that the final end of old age is to train and enable us

> To hear the mighty stream of *Tendency*
> Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
> A clear sonorous voice, inaudible
> To the vast multitude whose doom it is
> To run the giddy round of vain delight—

with other matters as luminous and emphatic. The hostess at length breaks off the harangue, by proposing that they should all make a little excursion on the lake,—and they embark accordingly; and, after navigating for some time along its shores, and drinking tea on a little island, land at last on a remote promontory, from which they see the sun go down,—and listen to a solemn and pious, but rather long prayer from the Vicar. They then walk back to the parsonage door, where the author and his friend propose to spend the evening;—but the Solitary prefers walking back in the moonshine to his own valley, after promising to take another ramble with them—

> If time, with free consent, be yours to give,
> And season favours.

—And here the publication somewhat abruptly closes.

Our abstract of the story has been so extremely concise, that it is more than usually necessary for us to lay some specimens of the work itself

before our readers. Its grand staple, as we have already said, consists of a kind of mystical morality: and the chief characteristics of the style are, that it is prolix and very frequently unintelligible: and though we are very sensible that no great gratification is to be expected from the exhibition of those qualities, yet it is necessary to give our readers a taste of them, both to justify the sentence we have passed, and to satisfy them that it was really beyond our power to present them with any abstract or intelligible account of those long conversations which we have had so much occasion to notice in our brief sketch of its contents.

* * * * *

There is no beauty, we think, it must be admitted, in such passages; and so little either of interest or curiosity in the incidents they disclose, that we can scarcely conceive that any man to whom they had actually occurred, should take the trouble to recount them to his wife and children by his idle fireside—but, that man or child should think them worth writing down in blank verse, and printing in magnificent quarto, we should certainly have supposed altogether impossible, had it not been for the ample proofs which Mr. Wordsworth has afforded to the contrary.

Sometimes their silliness is enhanced by a paltry attempt at effect and emphasis:—as in the following account of that very touching and extraordinary occurrence of a lamb bleating among the mountains. The poet would actually persuade us that he thought the mountains themselves were bleating;—and that nothing could be so grand or impressive. "List!" cries the old Pedlar, suddenly breaking off in the middle of one of his daintiest ravings—

> —"List!—I heard,
> From yon huge breast of rock, a solemn bleat;
> Sent forth as if it were the Mountain's voice!

As if the visible Mountain made the cry!
Again!"—The effect upon the soul was such
As he expressed; for, from the Mountain's heart
The solemn bleat appeared to come; there was
No other—and the region all around
Stood silent, empty of all shape of life.
—It was a lamb—left somewhere to itself!

What we have now quoted will give the reader a notion of the taste and spirit in which this volume is composed; and yet, if it had not contained something a good deal better, we do not know how we should have been justified in troubling him with any account of it. But the truth is, that Mr. Wordsworth, with all his perversities, is a person of great powers; and has frequently a force in his moral declamations, and a tenderness in his pathetic narratives, which neither his prolixity nor his affectation can altogether deprive of their effect.

* * * * *

Besides those more extended passages of interest or beauty, which we have quoted, and omitted to quote, there are scattered up and down the book, and in the midst of its most repulsive portions, a very great number of single lines and images, that sparkle like gems in the desart, and startle us with an intimation of the great poetic powers that lie buried in the rubbish that has been heaped around them. It is difficult to pick up these, after we have once passed them by; but we shall endeavour to light upon one or two. The beneficial effect of intervals of relaxation and pastime on youthful minds, is finely expressed, we think, in a single line, when it is said to be—

Like vernal ground to Sabbath sunshine left.

The following image of the bursting forth of a mountain-spring, seems to us also to be conceived with great elegance and beauty.

And a few steps may bring us to the spot,
Where haply crown'd with flowrets and green herbs;
The Mountain Infant to the Sun comes forth
Like human life from darkness.—

The ameliorating effects of song and music on the minds which most delight in them, are likewise very poetically expressed.

—And when the stream
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,
A consciousness remained that it had left,
Deposited upon the silent shore
Of Memory, images and precious thoughts,
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.

Nor is any thing more elegant than the representation of the graceful tranquillity occasionally put on by one of the author's favourites; who, though gay and airy, in general—

Was graceful, when it pleased him, smooth and still
As the mute Swan that floats adown the stream,
Or on the waters of th' unruffled lake
Anchored her placid beauty. Not a leaf
That flutters on the bough more light than he,
And not a flower that droops in the green shade,
More winningly reserved.—

Nor are there wanting morsels of a sterner and more majestic beauty; as when, assuming the weightier diction of Cowper, he says, in language

which the hearts of all readers of modern history must have responded—

> —Earth is sick,
> And Heaven is weary of the hollow words
> Which States and Kingdoms utter when they speak
> Of Truth and Justice.

These examples, we perceive, are not very well chosen—but we have not leisure to improve the selection; and, such as they are, they may serve to give the reader a notion of the sort of merit which we meant to illustrate by their citation.—When we look back to them, indeed, and to the other passages which we have now extracted, we feel half inclined to rescind the severe sentence which we passed on the work at the beginning:—But when we look into the work itself, we perceive that it cannot be rescinded. Nobody can be more disposed to do justice to the great powers of Mr. Wordsworth than we are; and, from the first time that he came before us, down to the present moment, we have uniformly testified in their favour, and assigned indeed our high sense of their value as the chief ground of the bitterness with which we resented their perversion. That perversion, however, is now far more visible than their original dignity; and while we collect the fragments, it is impossible not to lament the ruins from which we are condemned to pick them. If any one should doubt of the existence of such a perversion, or be disposed to dispute about the instances we have hastily brought forward, we would just beg leave to refer him to the general plan and the characters of the poem now before us.—Why should Mr. Wordsworth have made his hero a superannuated Pedlar? What but the most wretched and provoking perversity of taste and judgment, could induce any one to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr. Wordsworth really imagine, that he favourite doctrines were likely to gain any thing in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape, or

brass sleeve-buttons? Or is it not plain that, independent of the ridicule and disgust which such a personification must give to many of his readers, its adoption exposes his work throughout to the charge of revolting incongruity, and utter disregard of probability or nature? For, after he has thus wilfully debased his moral teacher by a low occupation, is there one word that he puts into his mouth, or one sentiment of which he makes him the organ, that has the most remote reference to that occupation? Is there any thing in his learned, abstracted, and logical harangues, that savours of the calling that is ascribed to him? Are any of their materials such as a pedlar could possibly have dealt in? Are the manners, the diction, the sentiments, in any, the very smallest degree, accommodated to a person in that condition? or are they not eminently and conspicuously such as could not by possibility belong to it? A man who went about selling flannel and pocket-handkerchiefs in this lofty diction, would soon frighten away all his customers; and would infallibly pass either for a madman, or for some learned and affected gentleman, who, in a frolic, had taken up a character which he was peculiarly ill qualified for supporting.

The absurdity in this case, we think, is palpable and glaring; but it is exactly of the same nature with that which infects the whole substance of the work—a puerile ambition of singularity engrafted on an unlucky predilection for truisms; and an affected passion for simplicity and humble life, most awkwardly combined with a taste for mystical refinements, and all the gorgeousness of obscure phraseology. His taste for simplicity is evinced, by sprinkling up and down his interminable declamations, a few descriptions of baby-houses, and of old hats with wet brims; and his amiable partiality for humble life, by assuring us, that a wordy rhetorician, who talks about Thebes, and allegorizes all the heathen mythology, was once a pedlar—and making him break in upon his magnificent orations with two or three awkward notices of something that he had seen when selling

winter raiment about the country—or of the changes in the state of society, which had almost annihilated his former calling.

ON KEATS

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, August, 1820]

1. *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*. By JOHN KEATS. 8vo. pp. 207. London, 1818.

2. *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems.* By JOHN KEATS, Author of *Endymion*. 12mo. pp. 200. London, 1820.

We had never happened to see either of these volumes till very lately—and have been exceedingly struck with the genius they display, and the spirit of poetry which breathes through all their extravagance. That imitation of our older writers, and especially of our older dramatists, to which we cannot help flattering ourselves that we have somewhat contributed, has brought on, as it were, a second spring in our poetry; —and few of its blossoms are either more profuse of sweetness or richer in promise, than this which is now before us. Mr. Keats, we understand, is still a very young man; and his whole works, indeed, bear evidence enough of the fact. They are full of extravagance and irregularity, rash attempts at originality, interminable wanderings, and excessive obscurity. They manifestly require, therefore, all the indulgence that can be claimed for a first attempt:—but we think it no less plain that they deserve it; for they are flushed all over with the rich lights of fancy, and so coloured and bestrewn with the flowers of poetry, that even while perplexed and bewildered in

their labyrinths, it is impossible to resist the intoxication of their sweetness, or to shut our hearts to the enchantments they so lavishly present. The models upon which he has formed himself, in the Endymion, the earliest and by much the most considerable of his poems, are obviously the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher, and the Sad Shepherd of Ben Jonson;—the exquisite metres and inspired diction of which he has copied with great boldness and fidelity—and, like his great originals, has also contrived to impart to the whole piece that true rural and poetical air which breathes only in them and in Theocritus—which is at once homely and majestic, luxurious and rude, and sets before us the genuine sights and sounds and smells of the country, with all the magic and grace of Elysium. His subject has the disadvantage of being mythological; and in this respect, as well as on account of the raised and rapturous tone it consequently assumes, his poetry may be better compared perhaps to the Comus and the Arcades of Milton, of which, also, there are many traces of imitation. The great distinction, however, between him and these divine authors, is, that imagination in them is subordinate to reason and judgment, while, with him, it is paramount and supreme—that their ornaments and images are employed to embellish and recommend just sentiments, engaging incidents, and natural characters, while his are poured out without measure or restraint, and with no apparent design but to unburden the breast of the author, and give vent to the overflowing vein of his fancy. The thin and scanty tissue of his story is merely the light framework on which his florid wreaths are suspended; and while his imaginations go rambling and entangling themselves everywhere, like wild honeysuckles, all idea of sober reason, and plan, and consistency, is utterly forgotten, and is "strangled in their waste fertility." A great part of the work, indeed, is written in the strangest and most fantastical manner that can be imagined. It seems as if the author had ventured everything that occurred to him in the shape of a glittering image or striking expression—taken the first word that presented

itself to make up a rhyme, and then made that word the germ of a new cluster of images—a hint for a new excursion of the fancy—and so wandered on, equally forgetful whence he came, and heedless whither he was going, till he had covered his pages with an interminable arabesque of connected and incongruous figures, that multiplied as they extended, and were only harmonized by the brightness of their tints, and the graces of their forms. In this rash and headlong career he has of course many lapses and failures. There is no work, accordingly, from which a malicious critic could cull more matter for ridicule, or select more obscure, unnatural, or absurd passages. But we do not take *that* to be our office;—and just beg leave, on the contrary, to say, that any one who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despicable, must either have no notion of poetry, or no regard to truth.

It is, in truth, at least as full of genius as of absurdity; and he who does not find a great deal in it to admire and to give delight, cannot in his heart see much beauty in the two exquisite dramas to which we have already alluded, or find any great pleasure in some of the finest creations of Milton and Shakespeare. There are very many such persons, we verily believe, even among the reading and judicious part of the community—correct scholars we have no doubt many of them, and, it may be, very classical composers in prose and in verse—but utterly ignorant of the true genius of English poetry, and incapable of estimating its appropriate and most exquisite beauties. With that spirit we have no hesitation in saying that Mr. K. is deeply imbued—and of those beauties he has presented us with many striking examples. We are very much inclined indeed to add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm. The greater and more distinguished poets of our country have so much else in them to gratify other tastes and propensities, that they are pretty sure to captivate and amuse those to whom

their poetry is but an hindrance and obstruction, as well as those to whom it constitutes their chief attraction. The interest of the stories they tell—the vivacity of the characters they delineate—the weight and force of the maxims and sentiments in which they abound—the very pathos and wit and humour they display, which may all and each of them exist apart from their poetry and independent of it, are quite sufficient to account for their popularity, without referring much to that still higher gift, by which they subdue to their enchantments those whose souls are attuned to the finer impulses of poetry. It is only where those other recommendations are wanting, or exist in a weaker degree, that the true force of the attraction, exercised by the pure poetry with which they are so often combined, can be fairly appreciated—where, without much incident or many characters, and with little wit, wisdom, or arrangement, a number of bright pictures are presented to the imagination, and a fine feeling expressed of those mysterious relations by which visible external things are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions, and become the images and exponents of all passions and affections. To an unpoetical reader such passages always appear mere raving and absurdity—and to this censure a very great part of the volume before us will certainly be exposed, with this class of readers. Even in the judgment of a fitter audience, however, it must, we fear, be admitted, that, besides the riot and extravagance of his fancy, the scope and substance of Mr. K.'s poetry is rather too dreary and abstracted to excite the strongest interest, or to sustain the attention through a work of any great compass or extent. He deals too much with shadowy and incomprehensible beings, and is too constantly rapt into an extramundane Elysium, to command a lasting interest with ordinary mortals—and must employ the agency of more varied and coarser emotions, if he wishes to take rank with the seducing poets of this or of former generations. There is something very curious too, we think, in the way in which he, and Mr. Barry Cornwall also, have dealt with the Pagan mythology, of which they have made so much

use in their poetry. Instead of presenting its imaginary persons under the trite and vulgar traits that belong to them in the ordinary systems, little more is borrowed from these than the general conception of their conditions and relations; and an original character and distinct individuality is bestowed upon them, which has all the merit of invention, and all the grace and attraction of the fictions on which it is engrafted. The antients, though they probably did not stand in any great awe of their deities, have yet abstained very much from any minute or dramatic representation of their feelings and affections. In Hesiod and Homer, they are coarsely delineated by some of their actions and adventures, and introduced to us merely as the agents in those particular transactions; while in the Hymns, from those ascribed to Orpheus and Homer, down to those of Callimachus, we have little but pompous epithets and invocations, with a flattering commemoration of their most famous exploits—and are never allowed to enter into their bosoms, or follow out the train of their feelings, with the presumption of our human sympathy. Except the love-song of the Cyclops to his Sea Nymph in Theocritus—the Lamentation of Venus for Adonis in Moschus—and the more recent Legend of Apuleius, we scarcely recollect a passage in all the writings of antiquity in which the passions of an immortal are fairly disclosed to the scrutiny and observation of men. The author before us, however, and some of his contemporaries, have dealt differently with the subject;—and, sheltering the violence of the fiction under the ancient traditionary fable, have created and imagined an entire new set of characters, and brought closely and minutely before us the loves and sorrows and perplexities of beings, with whose names and supernatural attributes we had long been familiar, without any sense or feeling of their personal character. We have more than doubts of the fitness of such personages to maintain a permanent interest with the modern public;—but the way in which they are here managed, certainly gives them the best

chance that now remains for them; and, at all events, it cannot be denied that the effect is striking and graceful.

* * * * *

There is a fragment of a projected Epic, entitled "Hyperion," on the expulsion of Saturn and the Titanian deities by Jupiter and his younger adherents, of which we cannot advise the completion: For, though there are passages of some force and grandeur, it is sufficiently obvious, from the specimen before us, that the subject is too far removed from all the sources of human interest, to be successfully treated by any modern author. Mr. Keats has unquestionably a very beautiful imagination, and a great familiarity with the finest diction of English poetry; but he must learn not to misuse or misapply these advantages; and neither to waste the good gifts of nature and study on intractable themes, nor to luxuriate too recklessly on such as are more suitable.

LORD BROUGHAM ON BYRON

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, January, 1808]

Hours of Idleness: A series of Poems, Original and Translated. By GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON, a minor. Newark, 1807.

The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his *style*. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case, by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written. Now, the law upon the point of morality, we hold to be perfectly clear. It is a plea available only to the defendant; no plaintiff can offer it as a supplementary ground of action. Thus, if any suit could be brought against Lord Byron, for the purpose of compelling him to put into court a certain quantity of poetry; and if judgment were given against him, it is highly probable that an exception would be taken, were he to deliver *for poetry*, the contents of this volume. To this he might plead *minority;* but as he now makes voluntary tender of the article, he hath no right to sue, on

that ground, for the price is in good current praise, should the goods be unmarketable. This is our view of the law on the point, and we dare to say, so will it be ruled. Perhaps, however, in reality, all that he tells us about his youth, is rather with a view to increase our wonder, than to soften our censures. He possibly means to say, "See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen, and this by one of only sixteen!" But, alas, we all remember the poetry of Cowley at ten, and Pope at twelve; and so far from hearing, with any surprise, that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college, inclusive, we really believe this to be the most common of all occurrences; that it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

His other plea of privilege, our author rather brings forward to wave it. He certainly, however, does allude frequently to his family and ancestors— sometimes in poetry, sometimes in notes; and while giving up his claim on the score of rank, he takes care to remember us of Dr. Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only, that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our review, besides our desire to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.

With this view, we must beg leave seriously to assure him, that the mere rhyming of the final syllable, even when accompanied by a certain number of feet; nay, although (which does not always happen) those feet should scan regularly, and have been all counted accurately upon the fingers— is not the whole art of poetry. We would entreat him to believe, that a certain portion of liveliness, somewhat of fancy, is necessary to constitute a poem; and that a poem in the present day, to be read, must contain at least one thought, either in a little degree different from the ideas of former writers,

or differently expressed. We put it to his candour, whether there is anything so deserving the name of poetry in verses like the following, written in 1806, and whether, if a youth of eighteen could say anything so uninteresting to his ancestors, a youth of nineteen should publish it.

Shades of heroes farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you, adieu! etc., etc.

Lord Byron should also have a care of attempting what the greatest poets have done before him, for comparisons (as he must have had occasion to see at his writing-master's) are odious. Gray's ode on Eton College, should really have kept out the ten hobbling stanzas "on a distant view of the village and school of Harrow." …

However, be this as it may, we fear his translations and imitations are great favourites with Lord Byron. We have them of all kinds, from Anacreon to Ossian; and, viewing them as school exercises, they may pass. Only why print them after they have had their day and served their turn?…

It is a sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should "use it as not abusing it"; and particularly one who piques himself (though indeed at the ripe age of nineteen) of being "an infant bard"—("The artless Helicon I boast is youth";)—should either not know, or not seem to know, so much about his own ancestry. Besides a poem on the family seat of the Byrons, we have another on the self same subject, introduced with an apology, "he certainly had no intention of inserting it"; but really, "the particular request of some friends," etc., etc. It concludes with five stanzas on himself, "the last and youngest of a noble line." There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin-y-gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learnt that a *pibroch* is not a bagpipe, any more than a duet means a fiddle….

But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble junior, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thorough-bred poets; and "though he once roved a careless mountaineer in the Highlands of Scotland," he has not of late enjoyed this advantage. Moreover, he expects no profit from his publication; and whether it succeeds or not, "it is highly improbable, from his situation and pursuits hereafter," that he should again condescend to become an author. Therefore, let us take what we can get and be thankful. What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but "has the sway" of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, let us be thankful; and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth.

SYDNEY SMITH ON HANNAH MOORE

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, April, 1809]

Caelebs in Search of a Wife; comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals. 2 vols. London, 1809.

This book is written, or supposed to be written (for we would speak timidly of the mysteries of superior beings), by the celebrated Mrs. Hannah Moore! We shall probably give great offence by such indiscretion; but still we must be excused for treating it as a book merely human,—an uninspired production,—the result of mortality left to itself, and depending on its own limited resources. In taking up the subject in this point of view, we solemnly disclaim the slightest intention of indulging in any indecorous levity, or of wounding the religious feelings of a large class of very respectable persons. It is the only method in which we can possibly make this work a proper object of criticism. We have the strongest possible doubts of the attributes usually ascribed to this authoress; and we think it more simple and manly to say so at once, than to admit nominally superlunary claims, which, in the progress of our remarks, we should virtually deny.

Caelebs wants a wife; and, after the death of his father, quits his estate in Northumberland to see the world, and to seek for one of its best productions, a woman, who may add materially to the happiness of his

future life. His first journey is to London, where, in the midst of the gay society of the metropolis, of course, he does not find a wife; and his next journey is to the family of Mr. Stanley, the head of the Methodists, a serious people, where, of course, he does find a wife. The exaltation, therefore, of what the authoress deems to be the religious, and the depretiation of what she considers to be the worldly character, and the influence of both upon matrimonial happiness, form the subject of this novel—rather of this *dramatic sermon*.

The machinery upon which the discourse is suspended, is of the slightest and most inartificial texture, bearing every mark of haste, and possessing not the slightest claim to merit. Events there are none; and scarcely a character of any interest. The book is intended to convey religious advice; and no more labour appears to have been bestowed upon the story, than was merely sufficient to throw it out of the dry, didactic form. Lucilla is totally uninteresting; so is Mr. Stanley; Dr. Barlow still worse; and Caelebs a mere clod or dolt. Sir John and Lady Belfield are rather more interesting—and for a very obvious reason, they have some faults;—they put us in mind of men and women;—they seem to belong to one common nature with ourselves. As we read, we seem to think we might act as such people act, and therefore we attend; whereas imitation is hopeless in the more perfect characters which Mrs. Moore has set before us; and therefore, they inspire us with very little interest.

There are books however of all kinds; and those may not be unwisely planned which set before us very pure models. They are less probable, and therefore less amusing than ordinary stories; but they are more amusing than plain, unfabled precept. Sir Charles Grandison is less agreeable than Tom Jones; but it is more agreeable than Sherlock and Tillotson; and teaches religion and morality to many who would not seek it in the productions of these professional writers.

But, making every allowance for the difficulty of the task which Mrs. Moore has prescribed to herself, the book abounds with marks of negligence and want of skill; with representations of life and manners which are either false or trite.

Temples to friendship and virtue must be totally laid aside, for many years to come, in novels. Mr. Lane, of the Minerva Press, has given them up long since; and we were quite surprised to find such a writer as Mrs. Moore busied in moral brick and mortar. Such an idea, at first, was merely juvenile; the second time a little nauseous; but the ten thousandth time, it is quite intolerable. Caelebs, upon his first arrival in London, dines out,—meets with a bad dinner,—supposes the cause of that bad dinner to be the erudition of the ladies of the house,—talks to them upon learned subjects, and finds them as dull and ignorant as if they had piqued themselves upon all the mysteries of housewifery. We humbly submit to Mrs. Moore, that this is not humorous, but strained and unnatural. Philippics against frugivorous children after dinner, are too common. Lady Melbury has been introduced into every novel for these four years last past. Peace to her ashes!…

The great object kept in view throughout the whole of this introduction, is the enforcement of religious principle, and the condemnation of a life lavished in dissipation and fashionable amusement. In the pursuit of this object, it appears to us, that Mrs. Moore is much too severe upon the ordinary amusements of mankind, many of which she does not object to in this, or that degree; but altogether. Caelebs and Lucilla, her *optimus* and *optima*, never dance, and never go to the play. They not only stay away from the comedies of Congreve and Farquhar, for which they may easily enough be forgiven; but they never go to see Mrs. Siddons in the Gamester, or in Jane Shore. The finest exhibition of talent, and the most beautiful moral lessons, are interdicted, at the theatre. There is something in the word

Playhouse, which seems so closely connected, in the minds of these people, with sin, and Satan,— that it stands in their vocabulary for every species of abomination. And yet why? Where is every feeling more roused in favour of virtue, than at a good play? Where is goodness so feelingly, so enthusiastically learnt? What so solemn as to see the excellent passions of the human heart called forth by a great actor, animated by a great poet? To hear Siddons repeat what Shakespeare wrote! To behold the child, and his mother—the noble, and the poor artisan,—the monarch, and his subjects—all ages and all ranks convulsed with one common passion—wrung with one common anguish, and, with loud sobs and cries, doing involuntary homage to the God that made their hearts! What wretched infatuation to interdict such amusements as these! What a blessing that mankind can be allured from sensual gratification, and find relaxation and pleasure in such pursuits! But the excellent Mr. Stanley is uniformly paltry and narrow, — always trembling at the idea of being entertained, and thinking no Christian safe who is not dull. As to the spectacles of impropriety which are sometimes witnessed in parts of the theatre; such reasons apply, in much stronger degree, to not driving along the Strand, or any of the great public streets of London, after dark; and if the virtue of well educated young persons is made of such very frail materials, their best resource is a nunnery at once. It is a very bad rule, however, never to quit the house for fear of catching cold.

Mrs. Moore practically extends the same doctrine to cards and assemblies. No cards—because cards are employed in gaming; no assemblies—because many dissipated persons pass their lives in assemblies. Carry this but a little further, and we must say,—no wine, because of drunkenness; no meat, because of gluttony; no use, that there may be no abuse! The fact is, that Mr. Stanley wants not only to be religious, but to be at the head of the religious. These little abstinences are the cockades by which the party are known,—the rallying points for the

evangelical faction. So natural is the love of power, that it sometimes becomes the influencing motive with the sincere advocates of that blessed religion, whose very characteristic excellence is the humility which it inculcates.

We observe that Mrs. Moore, in one part of her work, falls into the common error about dress. She first blames ladies for exposing their persons in the present style of dress; and then says, if they knew their own interest,—if they were aware how much more alluring they were to men when their charms are less displayed, they would make the desired alteration from motives merely selfish.

> "Oh! if women in general knew what was their real interest! if they could guess with what a charm even the *appearance* of modesty invests its possessor, they would dress decorously from mere self-love, if not from principle. The designing would assume modesty as an artifice; the coquet would adopt it as an allurement; the pure as her appropriate attraction; and the voluptuous as the most infallible art of seduction." I. 189.

If there is any truth in this passage, nudity becomes a virtue; and no decent woman, for the future, can be seen in garments.

We have a few more of Mrs. Moore's opinions to notice.—It is not fair to attack the religion of the times, because, in large and indiscriminate parties, religion does not become the subject of conversation. Conversation must and ought to grow out of materials on which men can agree, not upon subjects which try the passions. But this good lady wants to see men chatting together upon the Pelagian heresy— to hear, in the afternoon, the theological rumours of the day—and to glean polemical tittle-tattle at a tea-table rout. All the disciples of this school uniformly fall into the same mistake. They are perpetually calling upon their votaries for religious

thoughts and religious conversation in every thing; inviting them to ride, walk, row, wrestle, and dine out religiously;—forgetting that the being to whom this impossible purity is recommended, is a being compelled to scramble for his existence and support for ten hours out of the sixteen he is awake; —forgetting that he must dig, beg, read, think, move, pay, receive, praise, scold, command and obey;—forgetting, also, that if men conversed as often upon religious subjects as they do upon the ordinary occurrences of the world, that they would converse upon them with the same familiarity, and want of respect,—that religion would then produce feelings not more solemn or exalted than any other topics which constitute at present the common furniture of human understandings.

We are glad to find in this work, some strong compliments to the efficacy of works,—some distinct admissions that it is necessary to be honest and just, before we can be considered as religious. Such sort of concessions are very gratifying to us; but how will they be received by the children of the Tabernacle? It is quite clear, indeed, throughout the whole of the work, that an apologetical explanation of certain religious opinions is intended; and there is a considerable abatement of that tone of insolence with which the improved Christians are apt to treat the bungling specimens of piety to be met with in the more antient churches.

So much for the extravagances of this lady.—With equal sincerity, and with greater pleasure, we bear testimony to her talents, her good sense, and her real piety. There occurs every now and then in her productions, very original, and very profound observations. Her advice is very often characterised by the most amiable good sense, and conveyed in the most brilliant and inviting style. If, instead of belonging to a trumpery gospel faction, she had only watched over those great points of religion in which the hearts of every sect of Christians are interested, she would have been one of the most useful and valuable writers of her day. As it is, every man

would wish his wife and his children to read *Caelebs*;—watching himself its effects;—separating the piety from the puerility;—and showing that it is very possible to be a good Christian, without degrading the human understanding to the trash and folly of Methodism.

MACAULAY ON SOUTHEY

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, January, 1830]

SOUTHEY'S "COLLOQUIES"

Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society. By ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq., LL.D., Poet Laureate. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1829.

It would be scarcely possible for a man of Mr. Southey's talents and acquirements to write two volumes so large as those before us, which should be wholly destitute of information and amusement. Yet we do not remember to have read with so little satisfaction any equal quantity of matter, written by any man of real abilities. We have, for some time past, observed with great regret the strange infatuation which leads the Poet Laureate to abandon those departments of literature in which he might excel, and to lecture the public on sciences of which he has still the very alphabet to learn. He has now, we think, done his worst. The subject which he has at last undertaken to treat is one which demands all the highest intellectual and moral qualities of a philosophical statesman, an understanding at once comprehensive and acute, a heart at once upright and charitable. Mr. Southey brings to the task two faculties which were never, we believe, vouchsafed in measure so copious to any human being, the

faculty of believing without a reason, and the faculty of hating without a provocation.

It is, indeed, most extraordinary, that a mind like Mr. Southey's, a mind richly endowed in many respects by nature, and highly cultivated by study, a mind which has exercised considerable influence on the most enlightened generation of the most enlightened people that ever existed, should be utterly destitute of the power of discerning truth from falsehood. Yet such is the fact. Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts. He judges of a theory, of a public measure, of a religion or a political party, of a peace or a war, as men judge of a picture or a statue, by the effect produced on his imagination. A chain of associations is to him what a chain of reasoning is to other men; and what he calls his opinions are in fact merely his tastes….

Now in the mind of Mr. Southey reason has no place at all, as either leader or follower, as either sovereign or slave. He does not seem to know what an argument is. He never uses arguments himself. He never troubles himself to answer the arguments of his opponents. It has never occurred to him, that a man ought to be able to give some better account of the way in which he has arrived at his opinions than merely that it is his will and pleasure to hold them. It has never occurred to him that there is a difference between assertion and demonstration, that a rumour does not always prove a fact, that a single fact, when proved, is hardly foundation enough for a theory, that two contradictory propositions cannot be undeniable truths, that to beg the question is not the way to settle it, or that when an objection is raised, it ought to be met with something more convincing than "scoundrel" and "blockhead."

It would be absurd to read the works of such a writer for political instruction. The utmost that can be expected from any system promulgated by him is that it may be splendid and affecting, that it may suggest sublime

and pleasing images. His scheme of philosophy is a mere day-dream, a poetical creation, like the Domdaniel cavern, the Swerga, or Padalon; and indeed it bears no inconsiderable resemblance to those gorgeous visions. Like them, it has something of invention, grandeur, and brilliancy. But, like them, it is grotesque and extravagant, and perpetually violates even that conventional probability which is essential to the effect of works of art.

The warmest admirers of Mr. Southey will scarcely, we think, deny that his success has almost always borne an inverse proportion to the degree in which his undertakings have required a logical head. His poems, taken in the mass, stand far higher than his prose works. His official Odes, indeed, among which the Vision of Judgement must be classed, are, for the most part, worse than Pye's and as bad as Cibber's; nor do we think him generally happy in short pieces. But his longer poems, though full of faults, are nevertheless very extraordinary productions. We doubt greatly whether they will be read fifty years hence; but that, if they are read, they will be admired, we have no doubt whatever….

The extraordinary bitterness of spirit which Mr. Southey manifests towards his opponents is, no doubt, in a great measure to be attributed to the manner in which he forms his opinions. Differences of taste, it has often been remarked, produce greater exasperation than differences on points of science. But this is not all. A peculiar austerity marks almost all Mr. Southey's judgments of men and actions. We are far from blaming him for fixing on a high standard of morals and for applying that standard to every case. But rigour ought to be accompanied by discernment; and of discernment Mr. Southey seems to be utterly destitute. His mode of judging is monkish. It is exactly what we should expect from a stern old Benedictine, who had been preserved from many ordinary frailties by the restraints of his situation. No man out of a cloister ever wrote about love, for example, so coldly and at the same time so grossly. His descriptions of it

are just what we should hear from a recluse who knew the passion only from the details of the confessional. Almost all his heroes make love either like Seraphim or like cattle. He seems to have no notion of any thing between the Platonic passion of the Glendoveer who gazes with rapture on his mistress's leprosy, and the brutal appetite of Arvalan and Roderick. In Roderick, indeed, the two characters are united. He is first all clay, and then all spirit. He goes forth a Tarquin, and comes back too ethereal to be married. The only love scene, as far as we can recollect, in Madoc, consists of the delicate attentions which a savage, who has drunk too much of the Prince's excellent metheglin, offers to Goervyl. It would be the labour of a week to find, in all the vast mass of Mr. Southey's poetry, a single passage indicating any sympathy with those feelings which have consecrated the shades of Vaucluse and the rocks of Meillerie.

Indeed, if we except some very pleasing images of paternal tenderness and filial duty, there is scarcely any thing soft or humane in Mr. Southey's poetry. What theologians call the spiritual sins are his cardinal virtues, hatred, pride, and the insatiable thirst of vengeance. These passions he disguises under the name of duties; he purifies them from the alloy of vulgar interests; he ennobles them by uniting them with energy, fortitude, and a severe sanctity of manners; and he then holds them up to the admiration of mankind. This is the spirit of Thalaba, of Ladurlad, of Adosinda, of Roderick after his conversion. It is the spirit which, in all his writings, Mr. Southey appears to affect. "I do well to be angry," seems to be the predominant feeling of his mind. Almost the only mark of charity which he vouchsafes to his opponents is to pray for their reformation; and this he does in terms not unlike those in which we can imagine a Portuguese priest interceding with Heaven for a Jew, delivered over to the secular arm after a relapse.

We have always heard, and fully believe, that Mr. Southey is a very amiable and humane man; nor do we intend to apply to him personally any of the remarks which we have made on the spirit of his writings. Such are the caprices of human nature. Even Uncle Toby troubled himself very little about the French grenadiers who fell on the glacis of Namur. And Mr. Southey, when he takes up his pen, changes his nature as much as Captain Shandy, when he girt on his sword. The only opponents to whom the Laureate gives quarter are those in whom he finds something of his own character reflected. He seems to have an instinctive antipathy for calm, moderate men, for men who shun extremes, and who render reasons. He treated Mr. Owen of Lanark, for example, with infinitely more respect than he has shown to Mr. Hallam or to Dr. Lingard; and this for no reason that we can discover, except that Mr. Owen is more unreasonably and hopelessly in the wrong than any speculator of our time.

Mr. Southey's political system is just what we might expect from a man who regards politics, not as matter of science, but as matter of taste and feeling. All his schemes of government have been inconsistent with themselves. In his youth he was a republican; yet, as he tells us in his preface to these Colloquies, he was even then opposed to the Catholic Claims. He is now a violent Ultra-Tory. Yet, while he maintains, with vehemence approaching to ferocity, all the sterner and harsher parts of the Ultra-Tory theory of government, the baser and dirtier part of that theory disgusts him. Exclusion, persecution, severe punishments for libellers and demagogues, proscriptions, massacres, civil war, if necessary, rather than any concession to a discontented people; these are the measures which he seems inclined to recommend. A severe and gloomy tyranny, crushing opposition, silencing remonstrance, drilling the minds of the people into unreasoning obedience, has in it something of grandeur which delights his imagination. But there is nothing fine in the shabby tricks and jobs of office; and Mr. Southey, accordingly, has no toleration for them. When a

Jacobin, he did not perceive that his system led logically, and would have led practically, to the removal of religious distinctions. He now commits a similar error. He renounces the abject and paltry part of the creed of his party, without perceiving that it is also an essential part of that creed. He would have tyranny and purity together; though the most superficial observation might have shown him that there can be no tyranny without corruption.

It is high time, however, that we should proceed to the consideration of the work which is our more immediate subject, and which, indeed, illustrates in almost every page our general remarks on Mr. Southey's writings. In the preface, we are informed that the author, notwithstanding some statements to the contrary, was always opposed to the Catholic Claims. We fully believe this; both because we are sure that Mr. Southey is incapable of publishing a deliberate falsehood, and because his assertion is in itself probable. We should have expected that, even in his wildest paroxysms of democratic enthusiasm, Mr. Southey would have felt no wish to see a simple remedy applied to a great practical evil. We should have expected that the only measure which all the great statesmen of two generations have agreed with each other in supporting would be the only measure which Mr. Southey would have agreed with himself in opposing. He has passed from one extreme of political opinion to another, as Satan in Milton went round the globe, contriving constantly to "ride with darkness." Wherever the thickest shadow of the night may at any moment chance to fall, there is Mr. Southey. It is not every body who could have so dexterously avoided blundering on the daylight in the course of a journey to the antipodes.

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It is not by the intermeddling of Mr. Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilisation; and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope. Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the Government do this: the People will assuredly do the rest.

ON CROKER'S "BOSWELL"

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, September, 1831]

The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Including a Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, by James Boswell, Esq. A new Edition, with numerous Additions and Notes. By JOHN WILSON CROKER, LL.D., F.R.S. 5 vols., 8vo. London, 1831.

This work has greatly disappointed us. Whatever faults we may have been prepared to find in it, we fully expected that it would be a valuable addition to English literature; that it would contain many curious facts, and many judicious remarks; that the style of the notes would be neat, clear, and precise; and that the typographical execution would be, as in new editions of classical works it ought to be, almost faultless. We are sorry to be obliged to say that the merits of Mr. Croker's performance are on a par with those of a certain leg of mutton on which Dr. Johnson dined, while travelling from London to Oxford, and which he, with characteristic energy, pronounced to be "as bad as bad could be, ill fed, ill killed, ill kept, and ill dressed." This edition is ill compiled, ill arranged, ill written, and ill printed.

Nothing in the work has astonished us so much as the ignorance or carelessness of Mr. Croker with respect to facts and dates. Many of his blunders are such as we should be surprised to hear any well educated gentleman commit, even in conversation. The notes absolutely swarm with

misstatements, into which the editor never would have fallen, if he had taken the slightest pains to investigate the truth of his assertions, or if he had even been well acquainted with the book on which he undertook to comment.

We will give a few instances—

* * * * *

We will not multiply instances of this scandalous inaccuracy. It is clear that a writer who, even when warned by the text on which he is commenting, falls into such mistakes as these, is entitled to no confidence whatever. Mr. Croker has committed an error of five years with respect to the publication of Goldsmith's novel, an error of twelve years with respect to the publication of part of Gibbon's History, an error of twenty-one years with respect to an event in Johnson's life so important as the taking of the doctoral degree. Two of these three errors he has committed, while ostentatiously displaying his own accuracy, and correcting what he represents as the loose assertions of others. How can his readers take on trust his statements concerning the births, marriages, divorces, and deaths of a crowd of people, whose names are scarcely known to this generation? It is not likely that a person who is ignorant of what almost everybody knows can know that of which almost everybody is ignorant. We did not open this book with any wish to find blemishes in it. We have made no curious researches. The work itself, and a very common knowledge of literary and political history, have enabled us to detect the mistakes which we have pointed out, and many other mistakes of the same kind. We must say, and we say it with regret, that we do not consider the authority of Mr. Croker, unsupported by other evidence, as sufficient to justify any writer who may follow him in relating a single anecdote or in assigning a date to a single event.

Mr. Croker shows almost as much ignorance and heedlessness in his criticisms as in his statements concerning facts. Dr. Johnson said, very reasonably as it appears to us, that some of the satires of Juvenal are too gross for imitation. Mr. Croker, who, by the way, is angry with Johnson for defending Prior's tales against the charge of indecency, resents this aspersion on Juvenal, and indeed refuses to believe that the doctor can have said anything so absurd. "He probably said—some *passages* of them—for there are none of Juvenal's satires to which the same objection may be made as to one of Horace's, that it is *altogether* gross and licentious."[1] Surely Mr. Croker can never have read the second and ninth satires of Juvenal.

[1] I. 167.

Indeed the decisions of this editor on points of classical learning, though pronounced in a very authoritative tone, are generally such that, if a schoolboy under our care were to utter them, our soul assuredly should not spare for his crying. It is no disgrace to a gentleman who has been engaged during near thirty years in political life that he has forgotten his Greek and Latin. But he becomes justly ridiculous if, when no longer able to construe a plain sentence, he affects to sit in judgment on the most delicate questions of style and metre. From one blunder, a blunder which no good scholar would have made, Mr. Croker was saved, as he informs us, by Sir Robert Peel, who quoted a passage exactly in point from Horace. We heartily wish that Sir Robert, whose classical attainments are well known, had been more frequently consulted. Unhappily he was not always at his friend's elbow; and we have therefore a rich abundance of the strangest errors. Boswell has preserved a poor epigram by Johnson, inscribed "Ad Lauram parituram." Mr. Croker censures the poet for applying the word puella to a lady in Laura's situation, and for talking of the beauty of Lucina. "Lucina," he says, "was never famed for her beauty."[1] If Sir Robert Peel had seen this note, he probably would have again refuted Mr. Croker's criticisms by an Appeal

to Horace. In the secular ode, Lucina is used as one of the names of Diana, and the beauty of Diana is extolled by all the most orthodox doctors of the ancient mythology, from Homer in his Odyssey, to Claudian in his Rape of Proserpine. In another ode, Horace describes Diana as the goddess who assists the "laborantes utero puellas." But we are ashamed to detain our readers with this fourth-form learning.

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A very large proportion of the two thousand five hundred notes which the editor boasts of having added to those of Boswell and Malone consists of the flattest and poorest reflections, reflections such as the least intelligent reader is quite competent to make for himself, and such as no intelligent reader would think it worth while to utter aloud. They remind us of nothing so much as of those profound and interesting annotations which are penciled by sempstresses and apothecaries' boys on the dog-eared margins of novels borrowed from circulating libraries; "How beautiful!" "Cursed Prosy!" "I don't like Sir Reginald Malcolm at all." "I think Pelham is a sad dandy." Mr. Croker is perpetually stopping us in our progress through the most delightful narrative in the language, to observe that really Dr. Johnson was very rude, that he talked more for victory than for truth, that his taste for port wine with capillaire in it was very odd, that Boswell was impertinent, that it was foolish in Mrs. Thrale to marry the music-master; and so forth.

We cannot speak more favourably of the manner in which the notes are written than of the matter of which they consist. We find in every page words used in wrong senses, and constructions which violate the plainest rules of grammar. We have the vulgarism of "mutual friend," for "common friend." We have "fallacy" used as synonymous with "falsehood." We have many such inextricable labyrinths of pronouns as that which follows: "Lord

Erskine was fond of this anecdote; he told it to the editor the first time that he had the honour of being in his company." Lastly, we have a plentiful supply of sentences resembling those which we subjoin. "Markland, *who*, with Jortin and Thirlby, Johnson calls three contemporaries of great eminence."[2] "Warburton himself did not feel, as Mr. Boswell was disposed to think he did, kindly or gratefully *of* Johnson."[3] "It was *him* that Horace Walpole called a man who never made a bad figure but as an author."[4] One or two of these solecisms should perhaps be attributed to the printer, who has certainly done his best to fill both the text and the notes with all sorts of blunders. In truth, he and the editor have between them made the book so bad, that we do not well see how it could have been worse.

[2] IV. 377. [3] IV. 415. [4] II. 461.

When we turn from the commentary of Mr. Croker to the work of our old friend Boswell, we find it not only worse printed than in any other edition with which we are acquainted, but mangled in the most wanton manner. Much that Boswell inserted in his narrative is, without the shadow of a reason, degraded to the appendix. The editor has also taken upon himself to alter or omit passages which he considers as indecorous. This prudery is quite unintelligible to us. There is nothing immoral in Boswell's book, nothing which tends to inflame the passions. He sometimes uses plain words. But if this be a taint which requires expurgation, it would be desirable to begin by expurgating the morning and evening lessons. The delicate office which Mr. Croker has undertaken he has performed in the most capricious manner. One strong, old-fashioned, English word, familiar to all who read their Bibles, is changed for a softer synonyme in some passages, and suffered to stand unaltered in others. In one place a faint allusion made by Johnson to an indelicate subject, an allusion so faint that, till Mr. Croker's note pointed it out to us, we had never noticed it, and of

which we are quite sure that the meaning would never be discovered by any of those for whose sake books are expurgated, is altogether omitted. In another place, a coarse and stupid jest of Dr. Taylor on the subject, expressed in the broadest language, almost the only passage, as far as we remember, in all Boswell's book, which we should have been inclined to leave out, is suffered to remain.

We complain, however, much more of the additions than of the omissions. We have half of Mrs. Thrale's book, scraps of Mr. Tyers, scraps of Mr. Murphy, scraps of Mr. Cradock, long prosings of Sir John Hawkins, and connecting observations by Mr. Croker himself, inserted into the midst of Boswell's text.

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The *Life of Johnson* is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakspeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere.

We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so strange a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the *Dunciad* was written. Beauclerk used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying

himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. He was always earning some ridiculous nickname, and then "binding it as a crown unto him," not merely in metaphor, but literally. He exhibited himself, at the Shakespeare Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard round his hat bearing the inscription of Corsica Boswell. In his Tour, he proclaimed to all the world that at Edinburgh he was known by the appellation of Paoli Boswell. Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a talebearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody who was talked about, that, Tory and High Churchman as he was, he manoeuvred, we have been told, for an introduction to *Tom Paine*, so vain of the most childish distinctions, that when he had been to court he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be. Everything which another man would have hidden, everything the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing, how at another place, on waking from a drunken doze, he read the prayerbook and took a hair of the dog that had bitten him, how he went to see men hanged and came away maudlin, how he added five hundred pounds to the fortune of one of his babies because she was not scared at Johnson's ugly face, how he was frightened out of his wits at sea, and how the sailors quieted him as they would have quieted a child, how tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies, how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence, how Colonel Macleod

sneered to his face at his impudent obtrusiveness, how his father and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries; all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. All the caprices of his temper, all the illusions of his vanity, all his hypochondriac whimsies, all his castles in the air, he displayed with a cool self-complacency, a perfect unconsciousness that he was making a fool of himself, to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the whole history of mankind. He has used many people ill; but assuredly he has used nobody so ill as himself.

That such a man should have written one of the best books in the world is strange enough. But this is not all. Many persons who have conducted themselves foolishly in active life, and whose conversation has indicated no superior powers of mind, have left us valuable works. Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot, and by another as a being

Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll.

La Fontaine was in society a mere simpleton. His blunders would not come in amiss among the stories of Hierocles. But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, the toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book. He was a slave, proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry, convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he

was hurting the feelings of others or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this, he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus, Clarendon, Alfieri, and his own idol Johnson.

Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none. There is not in all his books a single remark of his own on literature, politics, religion, or society, which is not either common-place or absurd. His dissertations on hereditary gentility, on the slave-trade, and on the entailing of landed estates, may serve as examples. To say that these passages are sophistical would be to pay them an extravagant compliment. They have no pretence to argument, or even to meaning. He has reported innumerable observations made by himself in the course of conversation.

Of those observations we do not remember one which is above the intellectual capacity of a boy of fifteen. He has printed many of his own letters, and in these letters he is always ranting or twaddling. Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable, were utterly wanting to him. He had, indeed, a quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities, if he had been a man of sense and virtue, would scarcely of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal.

Those parts of his book which, considered abstractedly, are most utterly worthless, are delightful when we read them as illustrations of the character of the writer. Bad in themselves, they are good dramatically, like the nonsense of Justice Shallow, the clipped English of Dr. Caius, or the misplaced consonants of Fluellen. Of all confessors, Boswell is the most candid.

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Johnson came among [the distinguished writers of his age] the solitary specimen of a past age, the last survivor of the genuine race of Grub Street hacks; the last of that generation of authors whose abject misery and whose dissolute manners had furnished inexhaustible matter to the satirical genius of Pope. From nature he had received an uncouth figure, a diseased constitution, and an irritable temper. The manner in which the earlier years of his manhood had been passed had given to his demeanour, and even to his moral character, some peculiarities appalling to the civilised beings who were the companions of his old age. The perverse irregularity of his hours, the slovenliness of his person, his fits of strenuous exertion, interrupted by long intervals of sluggishness, his strange abstinence, and his equally strange voracity, his active benevolence, contrasted with the constant rudeness and the occasional ferocity of his manners in society, made him, in the opinion of those with whom he lived during the last twenty years of his life, a complete original. An original he was, undoubtedly, in some respects. But if we possessed full information concerning those who shared his early hardships, we should probably find that what we call his singularities of manner were, for the most part, failings which he had in common with the class to which he belonged. He ate at Streatham Park as he had been used to eat behind the screen at St. John's Gate, when he was ashamed to show his ragged clothes. He ate as it was natural that a man should eat, who, during a great part of his life, had passed the morning in doubt whether he should have food for the afternoon. The habits of his early life had accustomed him to bear privation with fortitude, but not to taste pleasure with moderation. He could fast; but, when he did not fast, he tore his dinner like a famished wolf, with the veins swelling on his forehead, and the perspiration running down his cheeks. He scarcely ever took wine. But when he drank it, he drank it greedily and in large tumblers. These were, in fact, mitigated symptoms of that same moral disease which raged with such deadly malignity in his friends Savage and Boyse. The roughness and violence

which he showed in society were to be expected from a man whose temper, not naturally gentle, had been long tried by the bitterest calamities, by the want of meat, of fire, and of clothes, by the importunity of creditors, by the insolence of booksellers, by the derision of fools, by the insincerity of patrons, by that bread which is the bitterest of all food, by those stairs which are the most toilsome of all paths, by that deferred hope which makes the heart sick. Through all these things the ill-dressed, coarse, ungainly pedant had struggled manfully up to eminence and command. It was natural that, in the exercise of his power, he should be "eo immitior, quia toleraverat," that, though his heart was undoubtedly generous and humane, his demeanour in society should be harsh and despotic. For severe distress he had sympathy, and not only sympathy, but munificent relief. But for the suffering which a harsh word inflicts upon a delicate mind he had no pity; for it was a kind of suffering which he could scarcely conceive. He would carry home on his shoulders a sick and starving girl from the streets. He turned his house into a place of refuge for a crowd of wretched old creatures who could find no other asylum; nor could all their peevishness and ingratitude weary out his benevolence. But the pangs of wounded vanity seemed to him ridiculous; and he scarcely felt sufficient compassion even for the pangs of wounded affection. He had seen and felt so much of sharp misery, that he was not affected by paltry vexations; and he seemed to think that everybody ought to be as much hardened to those vexations as himself. He was angry with Boswell for complaining of a head-ache, with Mrs. Thrale for grumbling about the dust on the road, or the smell of the kitchen. These were, in his phrase, "foppish lamentations," which people ought to be ashamed to utter in a world so full of sin and sorrow. Goldsmith crying because the Good-natured Man had failed, inspired him with no pity. Though his own health was not good, he detested and despised valetudinarians. Pecuniary losses, unless they reduced the loser absolutely to beggary, moved him very little. People whose hearts had been softened

by prosperity might weep, he said, for such events; but all that could be expected of a plain man was not to laugh. He was not much moved even by the spectacle of Lady Tavistock dying of a broken heart for the loss of her lord. Such grief he considered as a luxury reserved for the idle and the wealthy. A washer-woman, left a widow with nine small children, would not have sobbed herself to death.

A person who troubled himself so little about small or sentimental grievances was not likely to be very attentive to the feelings of others in the ordinary intercourse of society. He could not understand how a sarcasm or a reprimand could make any man really unhappy. "My dear doctor," said he to Goldsmith, "what harm does it do to a man to call him Holofernes?" "Pooh, ma'am," he exclaimed to Mrs. Carter, "who is the worse for being talked of uncharitably?" Politeness has been well defined as benevolence in small things. Johnson was impolite, not because he wanted benevolence, but because small things appeared smaller to him than to people who had never known what it was to live for fourpence halfpenny a day.

The characteristic peculiarity of his intellect was the union of great powers with low prejudices. If we judged of him by the best parts of his mind, we should place him almost as high as he was placed by the idolatry of Boswell; if by the worst parts of his mind, we should place him even below Boswell himself. Where he was not under the influence of some strange scruple, or some domineering passion, which prevented him from boldly and fairly investigating a subject, he was a wary and acute reasoner, a little too much inclined to scepticism, and a little too fond of paradox. No man was less likely to be imposed upon by fallacies in argument, or by exaggerated statements of facts. But, if while he was beating down sophisms and exposing false testimony, some childish prejudices, such as would excite laughter in a well managed nursery, came across him, he was smitten as if by enchantment. His mind dwindled away under the spell from

gigantic elevation to dwarfish littleness. Those who had lately been admiring its amplitude and its force were now as much astonished at its strange narrowness and feebleness as the fisherman in the Arabian tale, when he saw the Genie, whose stature had overshadowed the whole sea-coast, and whose might seemed equal to a contest with armies, contract himself to the dimensions of his small prison, and lie there the helpless slave of the charm of Solomon.

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The characteristic faults of his style are so familiar to all our readers, and have been so often burlesqued, that it is almost superfluous to point them out. It is well-known that he made less use than any other eminent writer of those strong plain words, Anglo-Saxon or Norman-French, of which the roots lie in the inmost depths of our language; and that he felt a vicious partiality for terms which, long after our own speech had been fixed, were borrowed from the Greek and Latin, and which, therefore, even when lawfully naturalised must be considered as born aliens, not entitled to rank with the king's English. His constant practice of padding out a sentence with useless epithets, till it became as stiff as the best of an exquisite, his antithetical forms of expression, constantly employed even where there is no opposition in the ideas expressed, his big words wasted on little things, his harsh inversions, so widely different from those graceful and easy inversions which give variety, spirit, and sweetness to the expression of our great old writers, all these peculiarities have been imitated by his admirers and parodied by his assailants, till the public has become sick of the subject.

Goldsmith said to him, very wittily, and very justly, "If you were to write a fable about little fishes, doctor, you would make the little fishes talk like whales." No man surely ever had so little talent for personation as Johnson. Whether he wrote in the character of a disappointed legacy-hunter or an

empty town fop, of a crazy virtuoso or a flippant coquette, he wrote in the same pompous and unbending style. His speech, like Sir Piercy Shafton's Euphuistic eloquence, bewrayed him under every disguise. Euphelia and Rhodoclea talk as finely as Imlac the poet, or Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia. The gay Cornelia describes her reception at the country-house of her relations, in such terms as these: "I was surprised, after the civilities of my first reception, to find, instead of the leisure and tranquillity which a rural life always promises, and, if well conducted, might always afford, a confused wildness of care, and a tumultuous hurry of diligence, by which every face was clouded, and every motion agitated." The gentle Tranquilla informs us, that she "had not passed the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship, and the joys of triumph; but had danced the round of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of applause, had been attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly, and the vain, and had seen her regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love." Surely Sir John Falstaff himself did not wear his petticoats with a worse grace. The reader may well cry out, with honest Sir Hugh Evans, "I like not when a 'oman has a great peard: I spy a great peard under her muffler."[5]

[5] It is proper to observe that this passage bears a very close resemblance to a passage in the *Rambler* (No. 20). The resemblance may possibly be the effect of unconscious plagiarism.

We had something more to say. But our article is already too long; and we must close it. We would fain part in good humour from the hero, from the biographer, and even from the editor, who, ill as he has performed his task, has at least this claim to our gratitude, that he has induced us to read Boswell's book again. As we close it, the club-room is before us, and the table on which stands the omelet for Nugent, and the lemons for Johnson. There are assembled those heads which live for ever on the canvas of

Reynolds. There are the spectacles of Burke and the tall thin form of Langton, the courtly sneer of Beauclerk and the beaming smile of Garrick, Gibbon tapping his snuff-box and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is that strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up, the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig with the scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and paired to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches; we see the heavy form rolling; we hear it puffing; and then comes the "Why, sir!" and the "What then, sir?" and the "No, Sir!" and the "You don't see your way through the question, sir!"

What a singular destiny has been that of this remarkable man! To be regarded in his own age as a classic, and in ours as a companion. To receive from his contemporaries that full homage which men of genius have in general received from posterity! To be more intimately known to posterity than other men are known to their contemporaries! That kind of fame which is commonly the most transient is, in his case, the most durable. The reputation of those writings, which he probably expected to be immortal, is every day fading; while those peculiarities of manner and that careless table-talk the memory of which, he probably thought, would die with him, are likely to be remembered as long as the English language is spoken in any quarter of the globe.

ON W. E. GLADSTONE

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, April, 1839]

The State in its Relations with the Church. By W. E. GLADSTONE, Esq., Student of Christ Church, and M.P. for Newark. 8vo. Second Edition. London, 1839.

The author of this volume is a young man of unblemished character, and of distinguished parliamentary talents, the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories who follow, reluctantly and mutinously, a leader whose experience and eloquence are indispensable to them, but whose cautious temper and moderate opinions they abhor. It would not be at all strange if Mr. Gladstone were one of the most unpopular men in England. But we believe that we do him no more than justice when we say that his abilities and his demeanour have obtained for him the respect and good will of all parties. His first appearance in the character of an author is therefore an interesting event; and it is natural that the gentle wishes of the public should go with him to his trial.

We are much pleased, without any reference to the soundness or unsoundness of Mr. Gladstone's theories, to see a grave and elaborate treatise on an important part of the Philosophy of Government proceed from the pen of a young man who is rising to eminence in the House of Commons. There is little danger that people engaged in the conflicts of

active life will be too much addicted to general speculation. The opposite vice is that which most easily besets them. The times and tides of business and debate tarry for no man. A politician must often talk and act before he has thought and read. He may be very ill informed respecting a question; all his notions about it may be vague and inaccurate; but speak he must; and if he is a man of ability, of tact, and of intrepidity, he soon finds that, even under such circumstances, it is possible to speak successfully. He finds that there is a great difference between the effect of written words, which are perused and reperused in the stillness of the closet, and the effect of spoken words which, set off by the graces of utterance and gesture, vibrate for a single moment on the ear. He finds that he may blunder without much chance of being detected, that he may reason sophistically, and escape unrefuted. He finds that, even on knotty questions of trade and legislation, he can, without reading ten pages, or thinking ten minutes, draw forth loud plaudits, and sit down with the credit of having made an excellent speech…. The tendency of institutions like those of England is to encourage readiness in public men, at the expense both of fulness and of exactness. The keenest and most vigorous minds of every generation, minds often admirably fitted for the investigation of truth, are habitually employed in producing arguments such as no man of sense would ever put into a treatise intended for publication, arguments which are just good enough to be used once, when aided by fluent delivery and pointed language. The habit of discussing questions in this way necessarily reacts on the intellects of our ablest men, particularly of those who are introduced into parliament at a very early age, before their minds have expanded to full maturity. The talent for debate is developed in such men to a degree which, to the multitude, seems as marvellous as the performance of an Italian *Improvisatore.*

But they are fortunate indeed if they retain unimpaired the faculties which are required for close reasoning or for enlarged speculation. Indeed we should sooner expect a great original work on political science, such a

work, for example, as the Wealth of Nations, from an apothecary in a country town, or from a minister in the Hebrides, than from a statesman who, ever since he was one-and-twenty, had been a distinguished debater in the House of Commons.

We therefore hail with pleasure, though assuredly not with unmixed pleasure, the appearance of this work. That a young politician should, in the intervals afforded by his parliamentary avocations, have constructed and propounded, with much study and mental toil, an original theory on a great problem in politics, is a circumstance which, abstracted from all consideration of the soundness or unsoundness of his opinions, must be considered as highly creditable to him. We certainly cannot wish that Mr. Gladstone's doctrines may become fashionable among public men. But we heartily wish that his laudable desire to penetrate beneath the surface of questions, and to arrive, by long and intent meditation, at the knowledge of great general laws, were much more fashionable than we at all expect it to become.

Mr. Gladstone seems to us to be, in many respects, exceedingly well qualified for philosophical investigation. His mind is of large grasp; nor is he deficient in dialectical skill. But he does not give his intellect fair play. There is no want of light, but a great want of what Bacon would have called dry light. Whatever Mr. Gladstone sees is refracted and distorted by a false medium of passions and prejudices. His style bears a remarkable analogy to his mode of thinking, and indeed exercises great influence on his mode of thinking. His rhetoric, though often good of its kind, darkens and perplexes the logic which it should illustrate. Half his acuteness and diligence, with a barren imagination and a scanty vocabulary, would have saved him from almost all his mistakes. He has one gift most dangerous to a speculator, a vast command of a kind of language, grave and majestic, but of vague and uncertain import; of a kind of language which affects us much in the same

way in which the lofty diction of the Chorus of Clouds affected the simple-hearted Athenian.

[Greek: o gae tou phthegmatos, os hieron, kai semnon, kai teratodes.]

When propositions have been established, and nothing remains but to amplify and decorate them, this dim magnificence may be in place. But if it is admitted into a demonstration, it is very much worse than absolute nonsense; just as that transparent haze, through which the sailor sees capes and mountains of false sizes and in false bearings, is more dangerous than utter darkness. Now, Mr. Gladstone is fond of employing the phraseology of which we speak in those parts of his works which require the utmost perspicuity and precision of which human language is capable; and in this way he deludes first himself, and then his readers. The foundations of his theory which ought to be buttresses of adamant, are made out of the flimsy materials which are fit only for perorations. This fault is one which no subsequent care or industry can correct. The more strictly Mr. Gladstone reasons on his premises, the more absurd are the conclusions which he brings out; and, when at last his good sense and good nature recoil from the horrible practical inferences to which this theory leads, he is reduced sometimes to take refuge in arguments inconsistent with his fundamental doctrines, and sometimes to escape from the legitimate consequences of his false principles, under cover of equally false history.

It would be unjust not to say that this book, though not a good book, shows more talent than many good books. It abounds with eloquent and ingenious passages. It bears the signs of much patient thought. It is written throughout with excellent taste and excellent temper; nor does it, so far as we have observed, contain one expression unworthy of a gentleman, a scholar, or a Christian. But the doctrines which are put forth in it appear to us, after full and calm consideration, to be false, to be in the highest degree

pernicious, and to be such as, if followed out in practice to their legitimate consequences, would inevitably produce the dissolution of society; and for this opinion we shall proceed to give our reasons with that freedom which the importance of the subject requires, and which Mr. Gladstone, both by precept and by example, invites us to use, but, we hope, without rudeness, and, we are sure, without malevolence.

Before we enter on an examination of this theory, we wish to guard ourselves against one misconception. It is possible that some persons who have read Mr. Gladstone's book carelessly, and others who have merely heard in conversation, or seen in a newspaper, that the member for Newark has written in defence of the Church of England against the supporters of the voluntary system, may imagine that we are writing in defence of the voluntary system, and that we desire the abolition of the Established Church. This is not the case. It would be as unjust to accuse us of attacking the Church, because we attack Mr. Gladstone's doctrines, as it would be to accuse Locke of wishing for anarchy, because he refuted Filmer's patriarchal theory of government, or to accuse Blackstone of recommending the confiscation of ecclesiastical property, because he denied that the right of the rector to tithe was derived from the Levitical law. It is to be observed, that Mr. Gladstone rests his case on entirely new grounds, and does not differ more widely from us than from some of those who have hitherto been considered as the most illustrious champions of the Church. He is not content with the Ecclesiastical Polity, and rejoices that the latter part of that celebrated work "does not carry with it the weight of Hooker's plenary authority." He is not content with Bishop Warburton's Alliance of Church and State. "The propositions of that work generally," he says, "are to be received with qualification"; and he agrees with Bolingbroke in thinking that Warburton's whole theory rests on a fiction. He is still less satisfied with Paley's defence of the Church, which he pronounces to be "tainted by the original vice of false ethical principles," and "full of the seeds of evil."

He conceives that Dr. Chalmers has taken a partial view of the subject, and "put forth much questionable matter." In truth, on almost every point on which we are opposed to Mr. Gladstone, we have on our side the authority of some divine, eminent as a defender of existing establishments.

Mr. Gladstone's whole theory rests on this great fundamental proposition, that the propagation of religious truth is one of the principal ends of government, as government. If Mr. Gladstone has not proved this proposition, his system vanishes at once.

We are desirous, before we enter on the discussion of this important question, to point out clearly a distinction which, though very obvious, seems to be overlooked by many excellent people. In their opinion, to say that the ends of government are temporal and not spiritual is tantamount to saying that the temporal welfare of man is of more importance than his spiritual welfare. But this is an entire mistake. The question is not whether spiritual interests be or be not superior in importance to temporal interests; but whether the machinery which happens at any moment to be employed for the purpose of protecting certain temporal interests of a society be necessarily such a machinery as is fitted to promote the spiritual interests of that society. Without a division of labour the world could not go on. It is of very much more importance that men should have food than that they should have pianofortes. Yet it by no means follows that every pianoforte-maker ought to add the business of a baker to his own; for, if he did so, we should have both much worse music and much worse bread. It is of much more importance that the knowledge of religious truth should be wisely diffused than that the art of sculpture should flourish among us. Yet it by no means follows that the Royal Academy ought to unite with its present functions those of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to distribute theological tracts, to send forth missionaries, to turn out Nollekens for being a Catholic, Bacon for being a methodist, and Flaxman

for being a Swedenborgian. For the effect of such folly would be that we should have the worst possible Academy of Arts, and the worst possible Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. The community, it is plain, would be thrown into universal confusion, if it were supposed to be the duty of every association which is formed for one good object to promote every other good object.

As to some of the ends of civil government, all people are agreed. That it is designed to protect our persons and our property; that it is designed to compel us to satisfy our wants, not by rapine, but by industry; that it is designed to compel us to decide our differences, not by the strong hand, but by arbitration; that it is designed to direct our whole force, as that of one man, against any other society which may offer us injury; these are propositions which will hardly be disputed.

Now these are matters in which man, without any reference to any higher being, or to any future state, is very deeply interested. Every human being, be he idolater, Mahometan, Jew, Papist, Socinian, Deist, or Atheist, naturally loves life, shrinks from pain, desires comforts which can be enjoyed only in communities where property is secure. To be murdered, to be tortured, to be robbed, to be sold into slavery, these are evidently evils from which men of every religion, and men of no religion, wish to be protected; and therefore it will hardly be disputed that men of every religion, and of no religion, have thus far a common interest in being well governed.

But the hopes and fears of man are not limited to this short life and to this visible world. He finds himself surrounded by the signs of a power and wisdom higher than his own; and, in all ages and nations, men of all orders of intellect, from Bacon and Newton, down to the rudest tribes of cannibals, have believed in the existence of some superior mind. Thus far the voice of

mankind is almost unanimous. But whether there be one God, or many, what may be God's natural and what His mortal attributes, in what relation His creatures stand to Him, whether He have ever disclosed Himself to us by any other revelation than that which is written in all the parts of the glorious and well ordered world which He has made, whether His revelation be contained in any permanent record, how that record should be interpreted, and whether it have pleased Him to appoint any unerring interpreter on earth, these are questions respecting which there exists the widest diversity of opinion, and respecting some of which a large part of our race has, ever since the dawn of regular history, been deplorably in error.

Now here are two great objects: one is the protection of the persons and estates of citizens from injury; the other is the propagation of religious truth. No two objects more entirely distinct can well be imagined. The former belongs wholly to the visible and tangible world in which we live; the latter belongs to that higher world which is beyond the reach of our senses. The former belongs to this life; the latter to that which is to come. Men who are perfectly agreed as to the importance of the former object, and as to the way of obtaining it, differ as widely as possible respecting the latter object. We must, therefore, pause before we admit that the persons, be they who they may, who are trusted with power for promotion of the former object, ought always to use that power for the promotion of the latter object.

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The truth is, that Mr. Gladstone has fallen into an error very common among men of less talents than his own. It is not unusual for a person who is eager to prove a particular proposition to assume a *major* of huge extent, which includes that particular proposition, without ever reflecting that it includes a great deal more. The fatal facility with which Mr. Gladstone

multiplies expressions stately and sonorous, but of indeterminate meaning, eminently qualifies him to practise this sleight on himself and on his readers. He lays down broad general doctrines about power, when the only power of which he is thinking is the power of governments, and about conjoint action when the only conjoint action of which he is thinking is the conjoint action of citizens in a state. He first resolves on his conclusion. He then makes a *major* of most comprehensive dimensions, and having satisfied himself that it contains his conclusion, never troubles himself about what else it may contain: and as soon as we examine it we find that it contains an infinite number of conclusions, every one of which is a monstrous absurdity.

It is perfectly true that it would be a very good thing if all the members of all the associations in the world were men of sound religious views. We have no doubt that a good Christian will be under the guidance of Christian principles, in his conduct as director of a canal company or steward of a charity dinner. If he were, to recur to a case which we have before put, a member of a stage-coach company, he would, in that capacity, remember that "a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." But it does not follow that every association of men must, therefore, as such association, profess a religion. It is evident that many great and useful objects can be attained in this world only by co-operation. It is equally evident that there cannot be efficient co-operation, if men proceed on the principle that they must not co-operate for one object unless they agree about other objects. Nothing seems to us more beautiful or admirable in our social system than the facility with which thousands of people, who perhaps agree only on a single point, can combine their energies for the purpose of carrying that single point. We see daily instances of this. Two men, one of them obstinately prejudiced against missions, the other president of a missionary society, sit together at the board of a hospital, and heartily concur in measures for the health and comfort of the patients. Two men, one of whom is a zealous

supporter and the other a zealous opponent of the system pursued in Lancaster's schools, meet at the Mendicity Society, and act together with the utmost cordiality. The general rule we take to be undoubtedly this, that it is lawful and expedient for men to unite in an association for the promotion of a good object, though they may differ with respect to other objects of still higher importance.

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If, indeed, the magistrate would content himself with laying his opinions and reasons before the people, and would leave the people, uncorrupted by hope or fear, to judge for themselves, we should see little reason to apprehend that his interference in favour of error would be seriously prejudicial to the interests of truth. Nor do we, as will hereafter be seen, object to his taking this course, when it is compatible with the efficient discharge of his more especial duties. But this will not satisfy Mr. Gladstone. He would have the magistrate resort to means which have a great tendency to make malcontents, to make hypocrites, to make careless nominal conformists, but no tendency whatever to produce honest and rational conviction. It seems to us quite clear that an inquirer who has no wish except to know the truth is more likely to arrive at the truth than an inquirer who knows that, if he decides one way, he shall be rewarded, and that, if he decides the other way, he shall be punished. Now, Mr. Gladstone would have governments propagate their opinions by excluding all dissenters from all civil offices. That is to say, he would have governments propagate their opinions by a process which has no reference whatever to the truth or falsehood of those opinions, by arbitrarily uniting certain worldly advantages with one set of doctrines, and certain worldly inconveniences with another set. It is of the very nature of argument to serve the interests of truth; but if rewards and punishments serve the interests of truth, it is by mere accident. It is very much easier to find

arguments for the divine authority of the Gospel than for the divine authority of the Koran. But it is just as easy to bribe or rack a Jew into Mahometanism as into Christianity.

From racks, indeed, and from all penalties directed against the persons, the property, and the liberty of heretics, the humane spirit of Mr. Gladstone shrinks with horror. He only maintains that conformity to the religion of the state ought to be an indispensable qualification for office; and he would, unless we have greatly misunderstood him, think it his duty, if he had the power, to revive the Test Act, to enforce it rigorously, and to extend it to important classes who were formerly exempt from its operation.

This is indeed a legitimate consequence of his principles. But why stop here? Why not roast dissenters at slow fires? All the general reasonings on which this theory rests evidently leads to sanguinary persecution. If the propagation of religious truth be a principal end of government, as government; if it be the duty of government to employ for that end its constitutional power; if the constitutional power of governments extends, as it most unquestionably does, to the making of laws for the burning of heretics; if burning be, as it most assuredly is, in many cases, a most effectual mode of suppressing opinions; why should we not burn? If the relation in which government ought to stand to the people be, as Mr. Gladstone tells us, a paternal relation, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that persecution is justifiable. For the right of propagating opinions by punishment is one which belongs to parents as clearly as the right to give instruction. A boy is compelled to attend family worship: he is forbidden to read irreligious books: if he will not learn his catechism, he is sent to bed without his supper: if he plays truant at church-time a task is set him. If he should display the precocity of his talents by expressing impious opinions before his brothers and sisters, we should not much blame his father for cutting short the controversy with a horse-whip. All the reasons

which lead us to think that parents are peculiarly fitted to conduct the education of their children, and that education is the principal end of a parental relation, lead us also to think that parents ought to be allowed to use punishment, if necessary, for the purpose of forcing children, who are incapable of judging for themselves, to receive religious instruction and to attend religious worship. Why, then, is this prerogative of punishment, so eminently paternal, to be withheld from a paternal government? It seems to us, also, to be the height of absurdity to employ civil disabilities for the propagation of an opinion, and then to shrink from employing other punishments for the same purpose. For nothing can be clearer than that, if you punish at all, you ought to punish enough. The pain caused by punishment is pure unmixed evil, and never ought to be inflicted, except for the sake of some good. It is mere foolish cruelty to provide penalties which torment the criminal without preventing the crime. Now it is possible, by sanguinary persecution unrelentingly inflicted, to suppress opinions. In this way the Albigenses were put down. In this way the Lollards were put down. In this way the fair promise of the Reformation was blighted in Italy and Spain. But we may safely defy Mr. Gladstone to point out a single instance in which the system which he recommends has succeeded.

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But we must proceed in our examination of his theory. Having, as he conceives, proved that it is the duty of every government to profess some religion or other, right or wrong, and to establish that religion, he then comes to the question what religion a government ought to prefer; and he decides this question in favour of the form of Christianity established in England. The Church of England is, according to him, the pure Catholic Church of Christ, which possesses the apostolical succession of ministers, and within whose pale is to be found that unity which is essential to truth. For her decisions he claims a degree of reverence far beyond what she has

ever, in any of her formularies, claimed for herself; far beyond what the moderate school of Bossuet demands for the Pope; and scarcely short of what that school would ascribe to Pope and General Council together. To separate from her communion is schism. To reject her traditions or interpretations of Scripture is sinful presumption.

Mr. Gladstone pronounces the right of private judgment, as it is generally understood throughout Protestant Europe, to be a monstrous abuse. He declares himself favourable, indeed, to the exercise of private judgment, after a fashion of his own. We have, according to him, a right to judge all the doctrines of the Church of England to be sound, but not to judge any of them to be unsound. He has no objection, he assures us, to active inquiry into religious questions. On the contrary, he thinks such inquiry highly desirable, as long as it does not lead to diversity of opinion; which is much the same thing as if he were to recommend the use of fire that will not burn down houses, or of brandy that will not make men drunk. He conceives it to be perfectly possible for mankind to exercise their intellects vigorously and freely on theological subjects, and yet to come to exactly the same conclusions with each other and with the Church of England. And for this opinion he gives, as far as we have been able to discover, no reason whatever, except that everybody who vigorously and freely exercises his understanding on Euclid's Theorems assents to them. "The activity of private judgment," he truly observes, "and the unity and strength of conviction in mathematics vary directly as each other." On this unquestionable fact he constructs a somewhat questionable argument. Everybody who freely inquires agrees, he says, with Euclid. But the Church is as much in the right as Euclid. Why, then, should not every free inquirer agree with the Church? We could put many similar questions. Either the affirmative or the negative of the proposition that King Charles wrote the *Icon Basilike* is as true as that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third side. Why, then, do Dr. Wordsworth and Mr. Hallam agree in thinking

two sides of a triangle greater than the third side, and yet differ about the genuineness of the *Icon Basilike?* The state of the exact sciences proves, says Mr. Gladstone, that, as respects religion, "the association of these two ideas, activity of inquiry, and variety of conclusion, is a fallacious one." We might just as well turn the argument the other way, and infer from the variety of religious opinions that there must necessarily be hostile mathematical sects, some affirming, and some denying, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the squares of the sides. But we do not think either the one analogy or the other of the smallest value. Our way of ascertaining the tendency of free inquiry is simply to open our eyes and look at the world in which we live; and there we see that free inquiry on mathematical subjects produces unity, and that free inquiry on moral subjects produces discrepancy. There would undoubtedly be less discrepancy if inquirers were more diligent and candid. But discrepancy there will be among the most diligent and candid, as long as the constitution of the human mind, and the nature of moral evidence, continue unchanged. That we have not freedom and unity together is a very sad thing; and so it is that we have not wings. But we are just as likely to see the one defect removed as the other. It is not only in religion that this discrepancy is found. It is the same with all matters which depend on moral evidence, with judicial questions, for example, and with political questions. All the judges will work a sum in the rule of three on the same principle, and bring out the same conclusion. But it does not follow that, however honest and laborious they may be, they will all be of one mind on the Douglas case. So it is vain to hope that there may be a free constitution under which every representative will be unanimously elected, and every law unanimously passed; and it would be ridiculous for a statesman to stand wondering and bemoaning himself because people who agree in thinking that two and two make four cannot agree about the new poor law, or the administration of Canada.

There are two intelligible and consistent courses which may be followed with respect to the exercise of private judgment; the course of the Romanist, who interdicts private judgment because of its inevitable inconveniences; and the course of the Protestant, who permits private judgment in spite of its inevitable inconveniences. Both are more reasonable than Mr. Gladstone, who would have private judgment without its inevitable inconveniences. The Romanist produces repose by means of stupefaction. The Protestant encourages activity, though he knows that where there is much activity there will be some aberration. Mr. Gladstone wishes for the unity of the fifteenth century with the active and searching spirit of the sixteenth. He might as well wish to be in two places at once.

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We have done; and nothing remains but that we part from Mr. Gladstone with the courtesy of antagonists who bear no malice. We dissent from his opinions, but we admire his talents; we respect his integrity and benevolence; and we hope that he will not suffer political avocations so entirely to engross him, as to leave him no leisure for literature and philosophy.

ON MADAME D'ARBLAY

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, January, 1843]

ART. IX.—*Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*. 5 vols. 8vo. London, 1842.

Though the world saw and heard little of Madame D'Arblay during the last forty years of her life, and though that little did not add to her fame, there were thousands, we believe, who felt a singular emotion when they learned that she was no longer among us. The news of her death carried the minds of men back at one leap, clear over two generations, to the time when her first literary triumphs were won. All those whom we have been accustomed to revere as intellectual patriarchs, seemed children when compared with her; for Burke had sate up all night to read her writings, and Johnson had pronounced her superior to Fielding, when Rogers was still a schoolboy, and Southey still in petticoats. Yet more strange did it seem that we should just have lost one whose name had been widely celebrated before any body had heard of some illustrious men who, twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, were, after a long and splendid career, borne with honour to the grave. Yet so it was. Frances Burney was at the height of fame and popularity before Cowper had published his first volume, before Person had gone up to college, before Pitt had taken his seat in the House of Commons, before the voice of Erskine had been once heard in Westminster Hall. Since the appearance of her first work, sixty-two years had passed; and this

interval had been crowded, not only with political, but also with intellectual revolutions. Thousands of reputations had, during that period, sprung up, bloomed, withered, and disappeared. New kinds of composition had come into fashion, had gone out of fashion, had been derided, had been forgotten. The fooleries of Della Crusca, and the fooleries of Kotzebue, had for a time bewitched the multitude, but had left no trace behind them; nor had misdirected genius been able to save from decay the once flourishing school of Godwin, of Darwin, and of Radcliffe. Many books, written for temporary effect, had run through six or seven editions, and had then been gathered to the novels of Afra Behn, and the epic poems of Sir Richard Blackmore. Yet the early works of Madame D'Arblay, in spite of the lapse of years, in spite of the change of manners, in spite of the popularity deservedly obtained by some of her rivals, continued to hold a high place in the public esteem. She lived to be a classic. Time set on her fame, before she went hence, that seal which is seldom set except on the fame of the departed. Like Sir Condy Rackrent in the tale, she survived her own wake, and overheard the judgment of posterity.

Having always felt a warm and sincere, though not a blind admiration for her talents, we rejoiced to learn that her Diary was about to be made public. Our hopes, it is true, were not unmixed with fears. We could not forget the fate of the Memoirs of Dr. Burney, which were published ten years ago. The unfortunate book contained much that was curious and interesting. Yet it was received with a cry of disgust, and was speedily consigned to oblivion. The truth is, that it deserved its doom. It was written in Madame D'Arblay's later style—the worst style that has ever been known among men. No genius, no information, could have saved from proscription a book so written. We, therefore, open the Diary with no small anxiety, trembling lest we should light upon some of that peculiar rhetoric which deforms almost every page of the Memoirs, and which it is impossible to read without a sensation made up of mirth, shame and loathing. We soon, however,

discovered to our great delight that this Diary was kept before Madame D'Arblay became eloquent. It is, for the most part, written in her earliest and best manner; in true woman's English, clear, natural, and lively. The two works are lying side by side before us, and we never turn from the Memoirs to the Diary without a sense of relief. The difference is as great as the difference between the atmosphere of a perfumer's shop, fetid with lavender water and jasmine soap, and the air of a heath on a fine morning in May. Both works ought to be consulted by every person who wishes to be well acquainted with the history of our literature and our manners. But to read the Diary is a pleasure; to read the Memoirs will always be a task.

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The progress of the mind of Frances Burney, from her ninth to her twenty-fifth year, well deserves to be recorded. When her education had proceeded no further than the horn-book, she lost her mother, and thenceforward she educated herself. Her father appears to have been as bad a father as a very honest, affectionate, and sweet-tempered man can well be. He loved his daughter dearly; but it never seems to have occurred to him that a parent has other duties to perform to children than that of fondling them. It would indeed have been impossible for him to superintend their education himself. His professional engagements occupied him all day. At seven in the morning he began to attend his pupils, and, when London was full, was sometimes employed in teaching till eleven at night. He was often forced to carry in his pocket a tin box of sandwiches, and a bottle of wine and water, on which he dined in a hackney-coach while hurrying from one scholar to another. Two of his daughters he sent to a seminary at Paris; but he imagined that Frances would run some risk of being perverted from the Protestant faith if she were educated in a Catholic country, and he therefore kept her at home. No governess, no teacher of any art or of any language,

was provided for her. But one of her sisters showed her how to write; and, before she was fourteen, she began to find pleasure in reading.

It was not, however, by reading that her intellect was formed. Indeed, when her best novels were produced, her knowledge of books was very small. When at the height of her fame, she was unacquainted with the most celebrated works of Voltaire and Molière; and, what seems still more extraordinary, had never heard or seen a line of Churchill, who, when she was a girl, was the most popular of living poets. It is particularly deserving of observation, that she appears to have been by no means a novel-reader. Her father's library was large; and he had admitted into it so many books which rigid moralists generally exclude, that he felt uneasy, as he afterwards owned, when Johnson began to examine the shelves. But in the whole collection there was only a single novel, Fielding's Amelia.

An education, however, which to most girls would have been useless, but which suited Fanny's mind better than elaborate culture, was in constant progress during her passage from childhood to womanhood. The great book of human nature was turned over before her. Her father's social position was very peculiar. He belonged in fortune and station to the middle class. His daughters seem to have been suffered to mix freely with those whom butlers and waiting-maids call vulgar. We are told that they were in the habit of playing with the children of a wig-maker who lived in the adjoining house. Yet few nobles could assemble in the most stately mansions of Grosvenor Square or St. James's Square, a society so various and so brilliant as was sometimes to be found in Dr. Burney's cabin. His mind, though not very powerful or capacious, was restlessly active; and, in the intervals of his professional pursuits, he had contrived to lay up much miscellaneous information. His attainments, the suavity of his temper, and the gentle simplicity of his manners, had obtained for him ready admission to the first literary circles. While he was still at Lynn, he had won Johnson's heart by

sounding with honest zeal the praises of the English Dictionary. In London the two friends met frequently, and agreed most harmoniously. One tie, indeed, was wanting to their mutual attachment. Burney loved his own art passionately; and Johnson just knew the bell of St. Clement's church from the organ. They had, however, many topics in common; and on winter nights their conversations were sometimes prolonged till the fire had gone out, and the candles had burned away to the wicks. Burney's admiration of the powers which had produced Rasselas and The Rambler, bordered on idolatry. He gave a singular proof of this at his first visit to Johnson's ill-furnished garret. The master of the apartment was not at home. The enthusiastic visitor looked about for some relique which he might carry away; but he could see nothing lighter than the chairs and the fire-irons. At last he discovered an old broom, tore some bristles from the stump, wrapped them in silver paper, and departed as happy as Louis IX when the holy nail of St. Denis was found. Johnson, on the other hand, condescended to growl out that Burney was an honest fellow, a man whom it was impossible not to like.

Garrick, too, was a frequent visitor in Poland Street and St. Martin's Lane. That wonderful actor loved the society of children, partly from good-nature, and partly from vanity. The ecstasies of mirth and terror which his gestures and play of countenance never failed to produce in a nursery, flattered him quite as much as the applause of mature critics. He often exhibited all his powers of mimicry for the amusement of the little Burneys, awed them by shuddering and crouching as if he saw a ghost, scared them by raving like a maniac in St. Lukes', and then at once became an auctioneer, a chimney-sweeper, or an old woman, and made them laugh till the tears ran down their cheeks.

But it would be tedious to recount the names of all the men of letters and artists whom Frances Burney had an opportunity of seeing and hearing.

Colman, Twining, Harris, Baretti, Hawkesworth, Reynolds, Barry, were among those who occasionally surrounded the tea-table and supper-tray at her father's modest dwelling. This was not all. The distinction which Dr. Burney had acquired as a musician, and as the historian of music, attracted to his house the most eminent musical performers of that age. The greatest Italian singers who visited England regarded him as the dispenser of fame in their art, and exerted themselves to obtain his suffrage. Pachierotti became his intimate friend. The rapacious Agujari, who sang for nobody else under fifty pounds an air, sang her best for Dr. Burney without a fee; and in the company of Dr. Burney even the haughty and eccentric Gabrielli constrained herself to behave with civility. It was thus in his power to give, with scarcely any expense, concerts equal to those of the aristocracy. On such occasions the quiet street in which he lived was blocked up by coroneted chariots, and his little drawing-room was crowded with peers, peeresses, ministers, and ambassadors. On one evening, of which we happen to have a full account, there were present Lord Mulgrave, Lord Bruce, Lord and Lady Edgecumbe, Lord Barrington from the War-Office, Lord Sandwich from the Admiralty, Lord Ashburnham, with his gold key dangling from his pocket, and the French Ambassador, M. De Guignes, renowned for his fine person and for his success in gallantry. But the great show of the night was the Russian Ambassador, Count Orloff, whose gigantic figure was all in a blaze with jewels, and in whose demeanour the untamed ferocity of the Scythian might be discerned through a thin varnish of French politeness. As he stalked about the small parlour, brushing the ceiling with his toupee, the girls whispered to each other, with mingled admiration and horror, that he was the favoured lover of his august mistress; that he had borne the chief part in the revolution to which she owed her throne; and that his huge hands, now glittering with diamond rings, had given the last squeeze to the windpipe of her unfortunate husband.

With such illustrious guests as these were mingled all the most remarkable specimens of the race of lions—a kind of game which is hunted in London every spring with more than Meltonian ardour and perseverance. Bruce, who had washed down steaks cut from living oxen with water from the fountains of the Nile, came to swagger and talk about his travels. Omai lisped broken English, and made all the assembled musicians hold their ears by howling Otaheitean love-songs, such as those with which Oberea charmed her Opano.

With the literary and fashionable society which occasionally met under Dr. Burney's roof, Frances can scarcely be said to have mingled. She was not a musician, and could therefore bear no part in the concerts. She was shy almost to awkwardness, and scarcely ever joined in the conversation. The slightest remark from a stranger disconcerted her; and even the old friends of her father who tried to draw her out could seldom extract more than a Yes or a No. Her figure was small, her face not distinguished by beauty. She was therefore suffered to withdraw quietly to the background, and, unobserved herself, to observe all that passed. Her nearest relations were aware that she had good sense, but seem not to have suspected, that under her demure and bashful deportment were concealed a fertile invention and a keen sense of the ridiculous. She had not, it is true, an eye for the fine shades of character. But every marked peculiarity instantly caught her notice and remained engraven on her imagination. Thus, while still a girl, she had laid up such a store of materials for fiction as few of those who mix much in the world are able to accumulate during a long life. She had watched and listened to people of every class, from princes and great officers of state down to artists living in garrets, and poets familiar with subterranean cook-shops. Hundreds of remarkable persons had passed in review before her, English, French, German, Italian, lords and fiddlers, deans of cathedrals and managers of theatres, travellers leading about newly caught savages, and singing women escorted by deputy-husbands.

So strong was the impression made on the mind of Frances by the society which she was in the habit of seeing and hearing, that she began to write little fictitious narratives as soon as she could use her pen with ease, which, as we have said, was not very early. Her sisters were amused by her stories. But Dr. Burney knew nothing of their existence; and in another quarter her literary propensities met with serious discouragement. When she was fifteen, her father took a second wife. The new Mrs. Burney soon found out that her daughter-in-law was fond of scribbling, and delivered several good-natured lectures on the subject. The advice no doubt was well-meant, and might have been given by the most judicious friend; for at that time, from causes to which we may hereafter advert, nothing could be more disadvantageous to a young lady than to be known as a novel-writer. Frances yielded, relinquished her favourite pursuit, and made a bonfire of all her manuscripts.[1]

[1] There is some difficulty here as to the chronology. "This sacrifice," says the editor of the Diary, "was made in the young authoress's fifteenth year." This could not be; for the sacrifice was the effect, according to the editor's own showing, of the remonstrances of the second Mrs. Burney; and Frances was in her sixteenth year when her father's second marriage took place.

She now hemmed and stitched from breakfast to dinner with scrupulous regularity. But the dinners of that time were early; and the afternoon was her own. Though she had given up novel-writing, she was still fond of using her pen. She began to keep a diary, and she corresponded largely with a person who seems to have had the chief share in the formation of her mind. This was Samuel Crisp, an old friend of her father. His name, well known, near a century ago, in the most splendid circles of London, has long been forgotten.

Crisp was an old and very intimate friend of the Burneys. To them alone was confided the name of the desolate old hall in which he hid himself like a wild beast in a den. For them were reserved such remains of his humanity as had survived the failure of his play. Frances Burney he regarded as his daughter. He called her his Fannikin, and she in return called him her dear Daddy. In truth, he seems to have done much more than her real father for the development of her intellect; for though he was a bad poet, he was a scholar, a thinker, and an excellent counsellor. He was particularly fond of Dr. Burney's concerts. They had, indeed, been commenced at his suggestion, and when he visited London he constantly attended them. But when he grew old, and when gout, brought on partly by mental irritation, confined him to his retreat, he was desirous of having a glimpse of that gay and brilliant world from which he was exiled, and he pressed Fannikin to send him full accounts of her father's evening parties. A few of her letters to him have been published; and it is impossible to read them without discerning in them all the powers which afterwards produced Evelina and Cecilia, the quickness in catching every odd peculiarity of character and manner, the skill in grouping, the humour, often richly comic, sometimes even farcical.

Fanny's propensity to novel-writing had for a time been kept down. It now rose up stronger than ever. The heroes and heroines of the tales which had perished in the flames, were still present to the eye of her mind. One favourite story, in particular, haunted her imagination. It was about a certain Caroline Evelyn, a beautiful damsel who made an unfortunate love match, and died, leaving an infant daughter. Frances began to imagine to herself the various scenes, tragic and comic, through which the poor motherless girl, highly connected on one side, meanly connected on the other, might have to pass. A crowd of unreal beings, good and bad, grave and ludicrous, surrounded the pretty, timid, young orphan; a coarse sea-captain; an ugly insolent fop, blazing in a superb court-dress; another fop, as ugly and as

insolent, but lodged on Snow Hill, and tricked out in second-hand finery for the Hampstead ball; an old woman, all wrinkles and rouge, flirting her fan with the air of a Miss of seventeen, and screaming in a dialect made up of vulgar French and vulgar English; a poet lean and ragged, with a broad Scotch accent. By degrees these shadows acquired stronger and stronger consistence: the impulse which urged Frances to write became irresistible; and the result was the history of Evelina.

Then came, naturally enough, a wish, mingled with many fears, to appear before the public; for, timid as Frances was, and bashful, and altogether unaccustomed to hear her own praises, it is clear that she wanted neither a strong passion for distinction, nor a just confidence in her own powers. Her scheme was to become, if possible, a candidate for fame without running any risk of disgrace. She had no money to bear the expense of printing. It was therefore necessary that some bookseller should be induced to take the risk; and such a bookseller was not readily found. Dodsley refused even to look at the manuscript unless he were trusted with the name of the author. A publisher in Fleet Street, named Lowndes, was more complaisant. Some correspondence took place between this person and Miss Burney, who took the name of Grafton, and desired that the letters addressed to her might be left at the Orange Coffee-House. But, before the bargain was finally struck, Fanny thought it her duty to obtain her father's consent. She told him that she had written a book, that she wished to have his permission to publish [Transcriber's note: "published" in original] it anonymously, but that she hoped that he would not insist upon seeing it. What followed may serve to illustrate what we meant when we said that Dr. Burney was as bad a father as so good-hearted a man could possibly be. It never seems to have crossed his mind that Fanny was about to take a step on which the whole happiness of her life might depend, a step which might raise her to an honourable eminence, or cover her with ridicule and contempt. Several people had already been trusted, and strict concealment was therefore not to be

expected. On so grave an occasion, it was surely his duty to give his best counsel to his daughter, to win her confidence, to prevent her from exposing herself if her book were a bad one, and, if it were a good one, to see that the terms which she made with the publisher were likely to be beneficial to her. Instead of this, he only stared, burst out a laughing, kissed her, gave her leave to do as she liked, and never even asked the name of her work. The contract with Lowndes was speedily concluded. Twenty pounds were given for the copyright, and were accepted by Fanny with delight. Her father's inexcusable neglect of his duty, happily caused her no worse evil than the loss of twelve or fifteen hundred pounds.

After many delays Evelina appeared in January 1778. Poor Fanny was sick with terror, and durst hardly stir out of doors. Some days passed before any thing was heard of the book. It had, indeed, nothing but its own merits to push it into public favour. Its author was unknown. The house by which it was published, was not, we believe, held in high estimation. No body of partisans had been engaged to applaud. The better class of readers expected little from a novel about a young lady's entrance into the world. There was, indeed, at that time a disposition among the most respectable people to condemn novels generally; nor was this disposition by any means without excuse; for works of that sort were then almost always silly, and very frequently wicked.

Soon, however, the first faint accents of praise began to be heard. The keepers of the circulating libraries reported that every body was asking for Evelina, and that some person had guessed Anstey to be the Author. Then came a favourable notice in the London Review; then another still more favourable in the Monthly. And now the book found its way to tables which had seldom been polluted by marble-covered volumes. Scholars and statesmen who contemptuously abandoned the crowd of romances to Miss Lydia Languish and Miss Sukey Saunter, were not ashamed to own that

they could not tear themselves away from Evelina. Fine carriages and rich liveries, not often seen east of Temple Bar, were attracted to the publisher's shop in Fleet Street. Lowndes was daily questioned about the author; but was himself as much in the dark as any of the questioners. The mystery, however, could not remain a mystery long. It was known to brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins: and they were far too proud and too happy to be discreet. Dr. Burney wept over the book in rapture. Daddy Crisp shook his fist at his Fannikin in affectionate anger at not having been admitted to her confidence. The truth was whispered to Mrs. Thrale; and then it began to spread fast.

The book had been admired while it was ascribed to men of letters long conversant with the world, and accustomed to composition. But when it was known that a reserved, silent young woman had produced the best work of fiction that had appeared since the death of Smollett, the acclamations were redoubled. What she had done was, indeed, extraordinary. But, as usual, various reports improved the story till it became miraculous. Evelina, it was said, was the work of a girl of seventeen. Incredible as this tale was, it continued to be repeated down to our own time. Frances was too honest to confirm it. Probably she was too much a woman to contradict it; and it was long before any of her detractors thought of this mode of annoyance. Yet there was no want of low minds and bad hearts in the generation which witnessed her first appearance. There was the envious Kenrick and the savage Wolcot, the asp George Steevens and the polecat John Williams. It did not, however, occur to them to search the parish-register of Lynn, in order that they might be able to twit a lady with having concealed her age. That truly chivalrous exploit was reserved for a bad writer of our own time, whose spite she had provoked by not furnishing him with materials for a worthless edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, some sheets of which our readers have doubtless seen round parcels of better books.

But we must return to our story. The triumph was complete. The timid and obscure girl found herself on the highest pinnacle of fame. Great men, on whom she had gazed at a distance with humble reverence, addressed her with admiration, tempered by the tenderness due to her sex and age. Burke, Windham, Gibbon, Reynolds, Sheridan, were among her most ardent eulogists. Cumberland acknowledged her merit, after his fashion, by biting his lips and wriggling in his chair whenever her name was mentioned. But it was at Streatham that she tasted, in the highest perfection, the sweets of flattery, mingled with the sweets of friendship. Mrs. Thrale, then at the height of prosperity and popularity—with gay spirits, quick wit, showy though superficial acquirements, pleasing though not refined manners, a singularly amiable temper, and a loving heart—felt towards Fanny as towards a younger sister. With the Thrales Johnson was domesticated. He was an old friend of Dr. Burney; but he had probably taken little notice of Dr. Burney's daughters, and Fanny, we imagine, had never in her life dared to speak to him, unless to ask whether he wanted a nineteenth or a twentieth cup of tea. He was charmed by her tale, and preferred it to the novels of Fielding, to whom, indeed, he had always been grossly unjust. He did not, indeed, carry his partiality so far as to place Evelina by the side of Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison; yet he said that his favourite had done enough to have made even Richardson feel uneasy. With Johnson's cordial approbation of the book was mingled a fondness, half gallant half paternal, for the writer; and his fondness his age and character entitled him to show without restraint. He began by putting her hand to his lips. But soon he clasped her in his huge arms, and implored her to be a good girl. She was his pet, his dear love, his dear little Burney, his little character-monger. At one time, he broke forth in praise of the good taste of her caps. At another time, he insisted on teaching her Latin. That, with all his coarseness and irritability, he was a man of sterling benevolence, has long been

acknowledged. But how gentle and endearing his deportment could be, was not known till the Recollections of Madame D'Arblay were published.

We have mentioned a few of the most eminent of those who paid their homage to the author of Evelina. The crowd of inferior admirers would require a catalogue as long as that in the second book of the Iliad. In that catalogue would be Mrs. Cholmondeley, the sayer of odd things, and Seward, much given to yawning, and Baretti, who slew the man in the Haymarket, and Paoli, talking broken English, and Langton, taller by the head than any other member of the club, and Lady Millar, who kept a vase wherein fools were wont to put bad verses, and Jerningham, who wrote verses fit to be put into the vase of Lady Millar, and Dr. Franklin— not, as some have dreamed, the great Pennsylvanian Dr. Franklin, who could not then have paid his respects to Miss Burney without much risk of being hanged, drawn, and quartered, but Dr. Franklin the less—

[Greek: *Aias meion, outi tosos ge osos Telamonios Aias, alla polu meion.*]

It would not have been surprising if such success had turned even a strong head, and corrupted even a generous and affectionate nature. But, in the Diary, we can find no trace of any feeling inconsistent with a truly modest and amiable disposition. There is, indeed, abundant proof that Frances enjoyed, with an intense, though a troubled, joy, the honours which her genius had won; but it is equally clear that her happiness sprang from the happiness of her father, her sister, and her dear Daddy Crisp. While flattered by the great, the opulent, and the learned, while followed along the Steyne at Brighton and the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells by the gaze of admiring crowds, her heart seems to have been still with the little domestic circle in St. Martin's Street. If she recorded with minute diligence all the compliments, delicate and coarse, which she heard wherever she turned, she

recorded them for the eyes of two or three persons who had loved her from infancy, who had loved her in obscurity, and to whom her fame gave the purest and most exquisite delight. Nothing can be more unjust than to confound these outpourings of a kind heart, sure of perfect sympathy, with the egotism of a blue-stocking, who prates to all who come near her about her own novel or her own volume of sonnets.

It was natural that the triumphant issue of Miss Burney's first venture should tempt her to try a second. Evelina, though it had raised her fame, had added nothing to her fortune. Some of her friends urged her to write for the stage. Johnson promised to give her his advice as to the composition. Murphy, who was supposed to understand the temper of the pit as well as any man of his time, undertook to instruct her as to stage-effect. Sheridan declared that he would accept a play from her without even reading it. Thus encouraged she wrote a comedy named The Witlings. Fortunately it was never acted or printed. We can, we think, easily perceive from the little which is said on the subject in the Diary, that The Witlings would have been damned, and that Murphy and Sheridan thought so, though they were too polite to say so. Happily Frances had a friend who was not afraid to give her pain. Crisp, wiser for her than he had been for himself, read the manuscript in his lonely retreat, and manfully told her that she had failed, that to remove blemishes here and there would be useless, that the piece had abundance of wit but no interest, that it was bad as a whole, that it would remind every reader of the *Femmes Savantes*, which, strange to say, she had never read, and that she could not sustain so close a comparison with Molière. This opinion, in which Dr. Burney concurred, was sent to Frances in what she called a "hissing, groaning, cat-calling epistle." But she had too much sense not to know that it was better to be hissed and cat-called by her Daddy than by a whole sea of heads in the pit of Drury-Lane Theatre; and she had too good a heart not to be grateful for so rare an act of friendship. She returned an answer which shows how well she deserved to have a

judicious, faithful, and affectionate adviser. "I intend," she wrote, "to console myself for your censure by this greatest proof I have ever received of the sincerity, candour, and, let me add, esteem, of my dear daddy. And as I happen to love myself rather more than my play, this consolation is not a very trifling one. This, however, seriously I do believe, that when my two daddies put their heads together to concert that hissing, groaning, cat-calling epistle they sent me, they felt as sorry for poor little Miss Bayes as she could possibly do for herself. You see I do not attempt to repay your frankness with the air of pretended carelessness. But, though somewhat disconcerted just now, I will promise not to let my vexation live out another day. Adieu, my dear daddy! I won't be mortified, and I won't be *downed*; but I will be proud to find I have, out of my own family, as well as in it, a friend who loves me well enough to speak plain truth to me."

Frances now turned from her dramatic schemes to an undertaking far better suited to her talents. She determined to write a new tale, on a plan excellently contrived for the display of the powers in which her superiority to other writers lay. It was in truth a grand and various picture-gallery, which presented to the eye a long series of men and women, each marked by some strong peculiar feature. There were avarice and prodigality, the pride of blood and the pride of money, morbid restlessness and morbid apathy, frivolous garrulity, supercilious silence, a Democritus to laugh at every thing, and a Heraclitus to lament over every thing. The work proceeded fast, and in twelve months was completed. It wanted something of the simplicity which had been among the most attractive charms of Evelina; but it furnished ample proof that the four years which had elapsed since Evelina appeared, had not been unprofitably spent. Those who saw Cecilia in manuscript pronounced it the best novel of the age. Mrs. Thrale laughed and wept over it. Crisp was even vehement in applause, and offered to insure the rapid and complete success of the book for half a crown. What Miss Burney received for the copyright is not mentioned in the Diary; but

we have observed several expressions from which we infer that the sum was considerable. That the sale would be great nobody could doubt; and Frances now had shrewd and experienced advisers, who would not suffer her to wrong herself. We have been told that the publishers gave her two thousand pounds, and we have no doubt that they might have given a still larger sum without being losers.

Cecilia was published in the summer of 1782. The curiosity of the town was intense. We have been informed by persons who remember those days, that no romance of Sir Walter Scott was more impatiently awaited, or more eagerly snatched from the counters of the booksellers. High as public expectation was, it was amply satisfied; and Cecilia was placed, by general acclamation, among the classical novels of England.

Miss Burney was now thirty. Her youth had been singularly prosperous; but clouds soon began to gather over that clear and radiant dawn. Events deeply painful to a heart so kind as that of Frances, followed each other in rapid succession. She was first called upon to attend the death-bed of her best friend, Samuel Crisp. When she returned to St. Martin's Street, after performing this melancholy duty, she was appalled by hearing that Johnson had been struck with paralysis; and, not many months later, she parted from him for the last time with solemn tenderness. He wished to look on her once more; and on the day before his death she long remained in tears on the stairs leading to his bedroom, in the hope that she might be called in to receive his blessing. But he was then sinking fast, and, though he sent her an affectionate message, was unable to see her. But this was not the worst. There are separations far more cruel than those which are made by death. Frances might weep with proud affection for Crisp and Johnson. She had to blush as well as to weep for Mrs. Thrale.

Life, however, still smiled upon her. Domestic happiness, friendship, independence, leisure, letters, all these things were hers; and she flung them all away.

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Then the prison was opened, and Frances was free once more. Johnson, as
Burke observed, might have added a striking page to his poem on the
Vanity of Human Wishes, if he had lived to see his little Burney as she
went into the palace and as she came out of it.

The pleasures, so long untasted, of liberty, of friendship, of domestic affection, were almost too acute for her shattered frame. But happy days and tranquil nights soon restored the health which the Queen's toilette and Madame Schwellenberg's card-table had impaired. Kind and anxious faces surrounded the invalid. Conversation the most polished and brilliant revived her spirits. Travelling was recommended to her; and she rambled by easy journeys from cathedral to cathedral, and from watering-place to watering-place. She crossed the New Forest, and visited Stonehenge and Wilton, the cliffs of Lyme, and the beautiful valley of Sidmouth. Thence she journeyed by Powderham Castle, and by the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, to Bath, and from Bath, when the winter was approaching, returned well and cheerful to London. There she visited her old dungeon, and found her successor already far on the way to the grave, and kept to strict duty, from morning till midnight, with a sprained ankle and a nervous fever.

At this time England swarmed with French exiles driven from their country by the Revolution. A colony of these refugees settled at Juniper Hall in Surrey, not far from Norbury Park, where Mr. Lock, an intimate friend of the Burney family, resided. Frances visited Norbury, and was introduced to the strangers. She had strong prejudices against them; for her

Toryism was far beyond, we do not say that of Mr. Pitt, but that of Mr. Reeves; and the inmates of Juniper Hall were all attached to the constitution of 1791, and were therefore more detested by the Royalists of the first emigration than Petion or Marat. But such a woman as Miss Burney could no longer resist the fascination of that remarkable society. She had lived with Johnson and Windham, with Mrs. Montague and Mrs. Thrale. Yet she was forced to own that she had never heard conversation before. The most animated eloquence, the keenest observation, the most sparkling wit, the most courtly grace, were united to charm her. For Madame de Staël was there, and M. de Talleyrand. There too was M. de Narbonne, a noble representative of French aristocracy; and with M. de Narbonne was his friend and follower General D'Arblay, an honourable and amiable man, with a handsome person, frank soldier-like manners, and some taste for letters.

The prejudices which Frances had conceived against the constitutional royalists of France rapidly vanished. She listened with rapture to Talleyrand and Madame de Staël, joining with M. D'Arblay in execrating the Jacobins, and in weeping for the unhappy Bourbons, took French lessons from him, fell in love with him, and married him on no better provision [Transcriber's note: "pro-provision" in original] than a precarious annuity of one hundred pounds.

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We now turn from the life of Madame D'Arblay to her writings. There can, we apprehend, be little difference of opinion as to the nature of her merit, whatever differences may exist as to its degree. She was emphatically what Johnson called her, a character-monger. It was in the exhibition of human passions and whims that her strength lay; and in this department of art she had, we think, very distinguished skill.

Highest among those who have exhibited human nature by means of dialogue, stands Shakespeare. His variety is like the variety of nature, endless diversity, scarcely any monstrosity. The characters of which he has given us an impression, as vivid as that which we receive from the characters of our own associates, are to be reckoned by scores. Yet in all these scores hardly one character is to be found which deviates widely from the common standard, and which we should call very eccentric if we met it in real life. The silly notion that every man has one ruling passion, and that this clue, once known, unravels all the mysteries of his conduct, finds no countenance in the plays of Shakespeare. There man appears as he is, made up of a crowd of passions, which contend for the mastery over him, and govern him in turn. What is Hamlet's ruling passion? Or Othello's? Or Harry the Fifth's? Or Wolsey's? Or Lear's? Or Shylock's? Or Benedick's? Or Macbeth's? Or that of Cassius? Or that of Falconbridge? But we might go on for ever. Take a single example—Shylock. Is he so eager for money as to be indifferent to revenge? Or so eager for revenge as to be indifferent to money? Or so bent on both together as to be indifferent to the honour of his nation and the law of Moses? All his propensities are mingled with each other; so that, in trying to apportion to each its proper part, we find the same difficulty which constantly meets us in real life. A superficial critic may say, that hatred is Shylock's ruling passion. But how many passions have amalgamated to form that hatred? It is partly the result of wounded pride: Antonio has called him dog. It is partly the result of covetousness: Antonio has hindered him of half a million; and, when Antonio is gone, there will be no limit to the gains of usury. It is partly the result of national and religious feeling: Antonio has spit on the Jewish gaberdine; and the oath of revenge has been sworn by the Jewish Sabbath. We might go through all the characters which we have mentioned, and through fifty more in the same way; for it is the constant manner of Shakespeare to represent the human mind as lying, not under the absolute dominion of one despotic propensity,

but under a mixed government, in which a hundred powers balance each other. Admirable as he was in all parts of his art, we most admire him for this, that, while he has left us a greater number of striking portraits than all other dramatists put together, he has scarcely left us a single caricature.

Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. There are, for example, four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom, Mr. Edward Ferrars, Mr. Henry Tilney, Mr. Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class. They have all been liberally educated. They all lie under the restraints of the same sacred profession. They are all young. They are all in love. Not one of them has any hobbyhorse, to use the phrase of Sterne. Not one has a ruling passion, such as we read of in Pope. Who would not have expected them to be insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Harpagon is not more unlike to Jourdain, Joseph Surface is not more unlike to Sir Lucius O'Trigger, than every one of Miss Austen's young divines to all his reverend brethren. And almost all this is done by touches so delicate, that they elude analysis, that they defy the powers of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed.

A line must be drawn, we conceive, between artists of this class, and those poets and novelists whose skill lies in the exhibiting of what Ben Jonson called humours. The words of Ben are so much to the purpose, that we will quote them—

When some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
In their confluxions all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.

There are undoubtedly persons, in whom humours such as Ben describes have attained a complete ascendency. The avarice of Elwes, the insane desire of Sir Egerton Brydges for a barony to which he had no more right than to the crown of Spain, the malevolence which long meditation on imaginary wrongs generated in the gloomy mind of Bellingham, are instances. The feeling which animated Clarkson and other virtuous men against the slave-trade and slavery, is an instance of a more honourable kind.

Seeing that such humours exist, we cannot deny that they are proper subjects for the imitations of art. But we conceive that the imitation of such humours, however skilful and amusing, is not an achievement of the highest order; and, as such humours are rare in real life, they ought, we conceive, to be sparingly introduced into works which profess to be pictures of real life. Nevertheless, a writer may show so much genius in the exhibition of these humours, as to be fairly entitled to a distinguished and permanent rank among classics. The chief seats of all, however, the places on the dais and under the canopy, are reserved for the few who have excelled in the difficult art of portraying characters in which no single feature is extravagantly overcharged.

If we have expounded the law soundly, we can have no difficulty in applying it to the particular case before us. Madame D'Arblay has left us scarcely any thing but humours. Almost every one of her men and women has some one propensity developed to a morbid degree. In Cecilia, for

example, Mr. Delvile never opens his lips without some allusion to his own birth and station; or Mr. Briggs, without some allusion to the hoarding of money; or Mr. Hobson, without betraying the self-indulgence and self-importance of a purse-proud upstart; or Mr. Simkins, without uttering some sneaking remark for the purpose of currying favour with his customers; or Mr. Meadows, without expressing apathy and weariness of life; or Mr. Albany, without declaiming about the vices of the rich and the misery of the poor; or Mrs. Belfield, without some indelicate eulogy on her son; or Lady Margaret, without indicating jealousy of her husband. Morrice is all skipping, officious impertinence, Mr. Gosport all sarcasm, Lady Honoria all lively prattle, Miss Larolles all silly prattle. If ever Madame D'Arblay aimed at more, as in the character of Monckton, we do not think that she succeeded well.

We are, therefore, forced to refuse to Madame D'Arblay a place in the highest rank of art; but we cannot deny that, in the rank to which she belonged, she had few equals, and scarcely any superior. The variety of humours which is to be found in her novels is immense; and though the talk of each person separately is monotonous, the general effect is not monotony, but a very lively and agreeable diversity. Her plots are rudely constructed and improbable, if we consider them in themselves. But they are admirably framed for the purpose of exhibiting striking groups of eccentric characters, each governed by his own peculiar whim, each talking his own peculiar jargon, and each bringing out by opposition the oddities of all the rest. We will give one example out of many which occur to us. All probability is violated in order to bring Mr. Delvile, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Hobson, and Mr. Albany into a room together. But when we have them there, we soon forget probability in the exquisitely ludicrous effect which is produced by the conflict of four old fools, each raging with a monomania of his own, each talking a dialect of his own, and each inflaming all the others anew every time he opens his mouth.

Yet one word more. It is not only on account of the intrinsic merit of Madame D'Arblay's early works that she is entitled to honourable mention. Her appearance is an important epoch in our literary history. Evelina was the first tale written by a woman, and purporting to be a picture of life and manners, that lived or deserved to live. The Female Quixote is no exception. That work has undoubtedly great merit, when considered as a wild satirical harlequinade; but, if we consider it as a picture of life and manners, we must pronounce it more absurd than any of the romances which it was designed to ridicule.

Indeed, most of the popular novels which preceded Evelina, were such as no lady would have written; and many of them were such as no lady could without confusion own that she had read. The very name of novel was held in horror among religious people. In decent families which did not profess extraordinary sanctity, there was a strong feeling against all such works. Sir Anthony Absolute, two or three years before Evelina appeared, spoke the sense of the great body of sober fathers and husbands, when he pronounced the circulating library an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge. This feeling, on the part of the grave and reflecting, increased the evil from which it had sprung. The novelist, having little character to lose, and having few readers among serious people, took without scruple liberties which in our generation seem almost incredible.

Miss Burney did for the English novel what Jeremy Collier did for the English drama; and she did it in a better way. She first showed that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and the vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force, and with broad comic humour, and which yet should not contain a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy. She took away the reproach which lay on a most useful and delightful species of composition. She vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters.

Several accomplished women have followed in her track. At present, the novels which we owe to English ladies form no small part of the literary glory of our country. No class of works is more honourably distinguished by fine observation, by grace, by delicate wit, by pure moral feeling. Several among the successors of Madame D'Arblay have equalled her; two, we think, have surpassed her. But the fact that she has been surpassed, gives her an additional claim to our respect and gratitude; for in truth we owe to her, not only Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla, but also Mansfield Park and the Absentee.

ANONYMOUS ON WORDSWORTH

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, October, 1807]

Poems, in Two Volumes. By W. WORDSWORTH. London, 1807.

This author is known to belong to a certain brotherhood of poets, who have haunted for some years about the lakes of Cumberland; and is generally looked upon, we believe, as the purest model of the excellences and peculiarities of the school which they have been labouring to establish. Of the general merits of that school, we have had occasion to express our opinion pretty fully, in more places than one, and even to make some allusion to the former publications of the writer now before us. We are glad, however, to have found an opportunity of attending somewhat more particularly to his pretentions.

The Lyrical Ballads were unquestionably popular; and, we have no hesitation in saying, deservedly popular: for in spite of their occasional vulgarity, affectation, and silliness, they were undoubtedly characterised by a strong spirit of originality, of pathos, and natural feeling; and recommended to all good minds by the clear impression which they bore of the amiable disposition and virtuous principles of the author. By the help of these qualities, they were enabled, not only to recommend themselves to the indulgence of many judicious readers, but even to beget among a pretty numerous class of persons, a sort of admiration of the very defects by which

they were attended. It was on this account chiefly, that we thought it necessary to set ourselves against the alarming innovation. Childishness, conceit, and affectation, are not of themselves very popular or attractive; and though mere novelty has sometimes been found sufficient to give them a temporary currency, we should have had no fear of their prevailing to any dangerous extent, if they had been graced with no more seductive accompaniments. It was precisely because the perverseness and bad taste of this new school was combined with a great deal of genius and of laudable feeling, that we were afraid of their spreading and gaining ground among us, and that we entered into the discussion with a degree of zeal and animosity which some might think unreasonable towards authors, to whom so much merit had been conceded. There were times and moods, indeed, in which we were led to suspect ourselves of unjustifiable severity, and to doubt, whether a sense of public duty had not carried us rather too far in reprobation of errors, that seemed to be atoned for, by excellences of no vulgar description. At other times the magnitude of these errors—the disgusting absurdities into which they led their feebler admirers, and the derision and contempt which they drew from the more fastidious, even upon the merits with which they were associated, made us wonder more than ever at the perversity by which they were retained, and regret that we had not declared ourselves against them with still more formidable and decided hostility.

In this temper of mind, we read the *annonce* of Mr. Wordsworth's publication with a good deal of interest and expectation, and opened his volumes with greater anxiety, than he or his admirers will probably give us credit for. We have been greatly disappointed certainly as to the quality of the poetry; but we doubt whether the publication has afforded so much satisfaction to any other of his readers:—it has freed us from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of our former censures, and has brought the

matter to a test, which we cannot help hoping may be convincing to the author himself.

Mr. Wordsworth, we think, has now brought the question, as to the merit of his new school of poetry, to a very fair and decisive issue. The volumes before us are much more strongly marked by its peculiarities than any former publication of the fraternity. In our apprehension, they are, on this very account, infinitely less interesting or meritorious; but it belongs to the public, and not to us, to decide upon their merit, and we will confess, that so strong is our conviction of their obvious inferiority, and the grounds of it, that we are willing for once to waive our right of appealing to posterity, and to take the judgment of the present generation of readers, and even of Mr. Wordsworth's former admirers, as conclusive on this occasion. If these volumes, which have all the benefit of the author's former popularity, turn out to be nearly as popular as the lyrical ballads—if they sell nearly to the same extent—or are quoted and imitated among half as many individuals, we shall admit that Mr. Wordsworth has come much nearer the truth in his judgment of what constitutes the charm of poetry, than we had previously imagined—and shall institute a more serious and respectful inquiry into his principles of composition than we have yet thought necessary. On the other hand,—if this little work, selected from the compositions of five maturer years, and written avowedly for the purpose of exalting a system, which has already excited a good deal of attention, should be generally rejected by those whose prepossessions were in its favour, there is room to hope, not only that the system itself will meet with no more encouragement, but even that the author will be persuaded to abandon a plan of writing, which defrauds his industry and talents of their natural reward.

Putting ourselves thus upon our country, we certainly look for a verdict against this publication; and have little doubt indeed of the result, upon a fair consideration of the evidence contained in these volumes. To accelerate

that result, and to give a general view of the evidence, to those into whose hands the record may not have already fallen, we must now make a few observations and extracts.

We shall not resume any of the particular discussions by which we formerly attempted to ascertain the value of the improvements which this new school has effected in poetry: but shall lay the grounds of our opposition, for this time, a little more broadly. The end of poetry, we take it, is to please—and the same, we think, is strictly applicable to every metrical composition from which we receive pleasure, without any laborious exercise of the understanding. Their pleasure may, in general, be analysed into three parts—that which we receive from the excitement of Passion or emotion—that which is derived from the play of Imagination, or the easy exercise of Reason—and that which depends on the character and qualities of the Diction. The two first are the vital and primary springs of poetical delight, and can scarcely require explanation to anyone. The last has been alternately over-rated and undervalued by the possessors of the poetical art, and is in such low estimation with the author now before us and his associates, that it is necessary to say a few words in explanation of it.

One great beauty of diction exists only for those who have some degree of scholarship or critical skill. This is what depends on the exquisite *propriety* of the words employed, and the delicacy with which they are adapted to the meaning which is to be expressed. Many of the finest passages in Virgil and Pope derive their principal charm from the fine propriety of their diction. Another source of beauty, which extends only to the more instructed class of readers, is that which consists in the judicious or happy application of expressions which have been sanctified by the use of famous writers, or which bear the stamp of a simple or venerable antiquity. There are other beauties of diction, however, which are perceptible by all—the beauties of sweet sounds and pleasant associations.

The melody of words and verses is indifferent to no reader of poetry; but the chief recommendation of poetical language is certainly derived from those general associations, which give it a character of dignity or elegance, sublimity or tenderness. Everyone knows that there are low and mean expressions, as well as lofty and grave ones; and that some words bear the impression of coarseness and vulgarity, as clearly as others do of refinement and affection. We do not mean, of course, to say anything in defiance of the hackneyed commonplace of ordinary versemen. Whatever might have been the original character of these unlucky phrases, they are now associated with nothing but ideas of schoolboy imbecility and vulgar affectation. But what we do maintain is, that much of the most popular poetry in the world owes its celebrity chiefly to the beauty of its diction; and that no poetry can be long or generally acceptable, the language of which is coarse, inelegant, or infantine.

From this great source of pleasure, we think the readers of Mr. Wordsworth are in great measure cut off. His diction has nowhere any pretensions to elegance or dignity; and he has scarcely ever condescended to give the grace of correctness or melody to his versification. If it were merely slovenly or neglected, however, all this might be endured. Strong sense and powerful feeling will ennoble any expressions; or, at least, no one who is capable of estimating these higher merits, will be disposed to mark these little defects. But, in good truth, no man, now-a-days, composes verses for publication, with a slovenly neglect of their language. It is a fine and laborious manufacture, which can scarcely ever be made in a hurry; and the faults which it has, may, for the most part, be set down to bad taste or incapacity, rather than to carelessness or oversight. With Mr. Wordsworth and his friends it is plain that their peculiarities of diction are things of choice, and not of accident. They write as they do, upon principle and system; and it evidently costs them much pains to keep *down* to the standard which they have proffered themselves. They are to the full as

much mannerists, too, as the poetasters who ring changes on the commonplaces of magazine versification; and all the difference between them is that they borrow their phrases from a different and a scantier *gradus ad Parnassum*. If they were, indeed, to discard all imitation and set phraseology, and bring in no words merely for show or for metre,—as much, perhaps, might be gained in freedom and originality, as would infallibly be lost in allusion and authority; but, in point of fact, the new poets are just as much borrowers as the old; only that, instead of borrowing from the more popular passages of their illustrious predecessors, they have preferred furnishing themselves from vulgar ballads and plebian nurseries.

Their peculiarities of diction alone, are enough, perhaps, to render them ridiculous; but the author before us really seems anxious to court this literary martyrdom by a device still more infallible,—we mean that of connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions, with objects and incidents which the greater part of his readers will probably persist in thinking low, silly, or uninteresting. Whether this is done from affectation and conceit alone, or whether it may not arise, in some measure, from the self-illusion of a mind of extraordinary sensibility, habituated to solitary meditation, we cannot undertake to determine. It is possible enough, we allow, that the sights of a friend's garden-spade, of a sparrow's-nest, or a man gathering leeches, might really have suggested to such a mind a train of powerful impressions and interesting reflections; but it is certain, that, to most minds, such associations will always appear forced, strained, and unnatural; and that the composition in which it is attempted to exhibit them, will always have the air of parody, or ludicrous and affected singularity. All the world laughs at Eligiac stanzas to a sucking pig—a Hymn on Washing-day, Sonnets to one's grandmother—or Pindarics on gooseberry-pie; and yet, we are afraid, it will not be quite easy to persuade Mr. Wordsworth, that the same ridicule must infallibly attach to most of the pathetic pieces in these volumes. To satisfy our readers, however, as to the justice of this and

our other anticipations, we shall proceed without further preface, to lay before them a short view of their contents.

The first is a kind of ode "to the Daisy,—" very flat, feeble, and affected; and in diction as artificial, and as much encumbered with heavy expletives as the theme of an unpractised schoolboy….

The scope of the piece is to say, that the flower is found everywhere; and that it has suggested many pleasant thoughts to the author—some chime of fancy, "*wrong or right*"—some feeling of devotion *more or less*—and other elegancies of the same stamp….

The next is called "Louisa," and begins in this dashing and affected manner.

> I met Louisa in the shade; And, having seen that lovely maid, *Why should I fear to say* That she is ruddy, fleet and strong; *And down the rocks can leap along*, Like rivulets in May? I. 7.

Does Mr. Wordsworth really imagine that this is more natural or engaging than the ditties of our common song-writers?…

By and by, we have a piece of namby-pamby "to the Small Celandine," which we should almost have taken for a professed imitation of one of Mr. Phillips's prettyisms….

Further on, we find an "Ode to Duty," in which the lofty vein is very unsuccessfully attempted. This is the concluding stanza.

> Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;

Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong. I. 73.

The two last lines seem to be utterly without meaning; at least we have no sort of conception in what sense *Duty* can be said to keep the old skies *fresh*, and the stars from wrong.

The next piece, entitled "The Beggars," may be taken, in fancy, as a touchstone of Mr. Wordsworth's merit. There is something about it that convinces us it is a favourite of the author's; though to us, we will confess, it appears to be a very paragon of silliness and affectation…. "Alice Fell" is a performance of the same order…. If the printing of such trash as this be not felt as an insult on the public taste, we are afraid it cannot be insulted.

After this follows the longest and most elaborate poem in the volume, under the title of "Resolution and Independence." The poet roving about on a common one fine morning, falls into pensive musings on the fate of the sons of song, which he sums up in this fine distich.

We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness. I, p. 92.

In the midst of his meditations—

I saw a man before me unawares,
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs….

The very interesting account, which he is lucky enough at last to comprehend, fills the poet with comfort and admiration; and, quite glad to

find the old man so cheerful, he resolves to take a lesson of contentedness from him; and the poem ends with this pious ejaculation—

"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor." I, p. 97.

We defy the bitterest enemy of Mr. Wordsworth to produce anything at all parallel to this from any collection of English poetry, or even from the specimens of his friend Mr. Southey….

The first poems in the second volume were written during a tour in Scotland. The first is a very dull one about Rob Roy, but the title that attracted us most was "An Address to the Sons of Burns," after visiting their father's grave. Never was anything, however, more miserable…. The next is a very tedious, affected performance, called "The Yarrow Unvisited." … After this we come to some ineffable compositions, which the poet has entitled, "Moods of my own Mind." … We have then a rapturous mystical ode to the Cuckoo; in which the author, striving after force and originality, produces nothing but absurdity … after this there is an address to a butterfly…. We come next to a long story of a "Blind Highland Boy," who lived near an arm of the sea, and had taken a most unnatural desire to venture on that perilous element. His mother did all she could to prevent him; but one morning, when the good woman was out of the way, he got into a vessel of his own, and pushed out from the shore.

In such a vessel ne'er before
Did human creature leave the shore. II, p. 72.

And then we are told, that if the sea should get rough, "a beehive would be ship as safe." "But say, what was it?" a poetical interlocutor is made to exclaim most naturally; and here followeth the answer, upon which all the pathos and interest of the story depend.

A HOUSEHOLD TUB, like one of those
Which women use to wash their clothes!! II, p. 72.

This, it will be admitted, is carrying the matter as far as it will go; nor is there anything,—down to the wiping of shoes or the evisceration of chickens, which may not be introduced in poetry, if this is tolerated….

Afterwards come some stanzas about an echo repeating a cuckoo's voice…. Then we have Elegiac stanzas "to the spade of a friend," beginning —

Spade! with which Wilkinson hath till'd his lands.

But too dull to be quoted any further.

After this there is a minstrel's song, on the Restoration of Lord Clifford the Shepherd, which is in a very different strain of poetry; and then the volume is wound up with an "Ode," with no other title but the motto *Paulo majora canamus*. This is, beyond all doubt, the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication. We can pretend to no analysis or explanation of it….

We have thus gone through this publication, with a view to enable our readers to determine, whether the author of these verses which have now been exhibited, is entitled to claim the honours of an improver or restorer of our poetry, and to found a new school to supersede or new-model all our maxims on the subject. If we were to stop here, we do not think that Mr. Wordsworth, or his admirers, would have any reason to complain; for what we have now quoted is undeniably the most peculiar and characteristic part of his publication, and must be defended and applauded if the merit or originality of his system is to be seriously maintained. In our opinion, however, the demerit of that system cannot be fairly appreciated, until it be

shown, that the author of the bad verses which we have already extracted, can write good verses when he pleases; and that, in point of fact, he does always write good verses, when, by any account, he is led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that school which he would fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority.

The length to which our extracts and observations have already extended, necessarily restrains us within more narrow limits in this part of our citations; but it will not require much labour to find a pretty decided contrast to some of the passages we have already detailed. The song on the restoration of Lord Clifford is put into the mouth of an ancient minstrel of the family; and in composing it, the author was led, therefore, almost irresistibly to adopt the manner and phraseology that is understood to be connected with that sort of composition, and to throw aside his own babyish incidents and fantastical sensibilities….

All English writers of sonnets have imitated Milton; and, in this way, Mr. Wordsworth, when he writes sonnets, escapes again from the trammels of his own unfortunate system; and the consequence is, that his sonnets are as much superior to the greater part of his other poems, as Milton's sonnets are superior to his….

When we look at these, and many still finer passages, in the writings of this author, it is impossible not to feel a mixture of indignation and compassion, at that strange infatuation which has bound him up from the fair exercise of his talents, and withheld from the public the many excellent productions that would otherwise have taken the place of the trash now before us. Even in the worst of these productions, there are, no doubt, occasional little traits of delicate feeling and original fancy; but these are quite lost and obscured in the mass of childishness and insipidity with which they are incorporated, nor can anything give us a more melancholy

view of the debasing effects of this miserable theory, than that it has given ordinary men a right to wonder at the folly and presumption of a man gifted like Mr. Wordsworth, and made him appear, in his second avowed publication, like a bad imitator of the worst of his former productions.

We venture to hope, that there is now an end of this folly; and that, like other follies, it will be found to have cured itself by the extravagances resulting from its unbridled indulgence. In this point of view, the publication of the volumes before us may ultimately be of service to the good cause of literature. Many a generous rebel, it is said, has been reclaimed to his allegiance by the spectacle of lawless outrage and excess presented in the conduct of the insurgents; and we think there is every reason to hope, that the lamentable consequences which have resulted from Mr. Wordsworth's open violation of the established laws of poetry, will operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example, and be the means of restoring to that antient and venerable code its due honour and authority.

ON MATURIN'S "MELMOTH"

[From *The Edinburgh Review*, July, 1821]

Melmoth, the Wanderer. 4 vols. By the Author of *Bertram*. Constable & Co. Edinburgh, 1820.

It was said, we remember, of Dr. Darwin's Botanic Garden—that it was the sacrifice of Genius in the Temple of False Taste; and the remark may be applied to the work before us, with the qualifying clause, that in this instance the Genius is less obvious, and the false taste more glaring. No writer of good judgment would have attempted to revive the defunct horrors of Mrs. Radcliffe's School of Romance, or the demoniacal incarnations of Mr. Lewis: But, as if he were determined not to be arraigned for a single error only, Mr. Maturin has contrived to render his production almost as objectionable in the manner as it is in the matter. The construction of his story, which is singularly clumsy and inartificial, we have no intention to analyze:—many will probably have perused the work, before our review reaches them; and to those who have not, it may be sufficient to announce, that the imagination of the author runs riot, even beyond the usual license of romance;—that his hero is a modern Faustus, who has bartered his soul with the powers of darkness for protracted life, and unlimited worldly enjoyment;—his heroine, a species of insular goddess, a virgin Calypso of the Indian ocean, who, amid flowers and foliage, lives upon figs and tamarinds; associates with peacocks, loxias and monkeys; is worshipped by

the occasional visitants of her island; finds her way to Spain, where she is married to the aforesaid hero by the hand of a dead hermit, the ghost of a murdered domestic being the witness of their nuptials; and finally dies in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Madrid!—To complete this phantasmagoric exhibition, we are presented with sybils and misers; parricides; maniacs in abundance; monks with scourges pursuing a naked youth streaming with blood; subterranean Jews surrounded by the skeletons of their wives and children; lovers blasted by lightning; Irish hags, Spanish grandees, shipwrecks, caverns, Donna Claras and Donna Isidoras, all opposed to each other in glaring and violent contrast, and all their adventures narrated with the same undeviating display of turgid, vehement, and painfully elaborated language. Such are the materials, and the style of this expanded nightmare: And as we can plainly perceive, among a certain class of writers, a disposition to haunt us with similar apparitions, and to describe them with a corresponding tumor of words, we conceive it high time to step forward and abate a nuisance which threatens to become a besetting evil, unless checked in its outset.

Political changes were not the sole cause of the rapid degeneracy in letters that followed the Augustan era of Rome. Similar corruptions and decay have succeeded to the intellectual eminence of other nations; and we might be almost led to conclude, that mental as well as physical power, after attaining a certain perfection, became weakened by expansion, and sunk into a state of comparative imbecility, until time and circumstance gave it a new progressive impetus. One great cause of this deterioration is the insatiable thirst for novelty, which, becoming weary even of excellence, will "sate itself in a celestial bed, and prey on garbage." In the torpidity produced by an utter exhaustion of sensual enjoyment, the Arreoi Club of Otaheite is recorded to have found a miserable excitement, by swallowing the most revolting filth; and the jaded intellectual appetites of more civilized communities will sometimes seek a new stimulus in changes

almost as startling. Some adventurous writer, unable to obtain distinction among a host of competitors, all better qualified than himself to win legitimate applause, strikes out a fantastic or monstrous innovation; and arrests the attention of many who would fall asleep over monotonous excellence. Imitators are soon found;—fashion adopts the new folly;—the old standard of perfection is deemed stale and obsolete;—and thus, by degrees, the whole literature of a country becomes changed and deteriorated. It appears to us, that we are now labouring in a crisis of this nature. In our last Number, we noticed the revolution in our poetry; the transition from the lucid terseness and exquisite polish of Pope and Goldsmith, to the rambling, diffuse, irregular, and imaginative style of composition by which the present era is characterized; and we might have added, that a change equally complete, though diametrically opposite in its tendency, has been silently introduced into our prose. In this we have oscillated from freedom to restraint;—from the easy, natural, and colloquial style of Swift, Addison and Steele, to the perpetually strained, ambitious, and overwrought stiffness, of which the author we are now considering affords a striking exemplification. "He's knight o' the shire, and represents them all." There is not the smallest keeping in his composition:—less solicitous what he shall say, than how he shall say it, he exhausts himself in a continual struggle to produce effect by dazzling, terrifying, or surprising. Annibal Caracci was accused of an affectation of muscularity, and an undue parade of anatomical knowledge, even upon quiescent figures: But the artist whom we are now considering has no quiescent figures:—even his repose is a state of rigid tension, if not extravagant distortion. He is the Fuseli of novelists. Does he deem it necessary to be energetic, he forthwith begins foaming at the mouth, and falling into convulsions; and this orgasm is so often repeated, and upon such inadequate occasions, that we are perpetually reminded of the tremendous puerilities of the Della Cruscan versifiers, or the ludicrous grand eloquence of the Spaniard, who tore a certain portion of

his attire, "as if heaven and earth were coming together." In straining to reach the sublime, he perpetually takes that single unfortunate step which conducts him to the ridiculous —a failure which, in a less gifted author, might afford a wicked amusement to the critic, but which, when united with such undoubted genius as the present work exhibits, must excite a sincere and painful regret in every admirer of talent.

Whatever be the cause, the fact, we think, cannot be disputed, that a peculiar tendency to this gaudy and ornate style, exists among the writers of Ireland. Their genius runs riot in the wantonness of its own uncontrolled exuberance;—their imagination, disdaining the restraint of judgment, imparts to their literature the characteristics of a nation in one of the earlier stages of civilization and refinement. The florid imagery, gorgeous diction, and Oriental hyperboles, which possess a sort of wild propriety in the vehement sallies of Antar the Bedoween chieftain of the twelfth century, become cold extravagance and floundering fustian in the mouth of a barrister of the present age; and we question whether any but a native of the sister island would have ventured upon the experiment of their adoption. Even in the productions of Mr. Moore, the sweetest lyric poet of this or perhaps any age, this national peculiarity is not infrequently perceptible; and we were compelled, in our review of his Lalla Rookh, a subject which justified the introduction of much Eastern splendour and elaboration, to point out the excessive finery, the incessant sparkle and efflorescence by which the attention of the reader was fatigued, and his senses overcome. He rouged his roses, and poured perfume upon his jessamines, until we fainted under the oppression of beauty and odour, and were ready to "die of a rose in aromatic pain."

Dryden, in alluding to the metaphysical poets, exclaims "rather than all things wit, let none be there":—though we would not literally adopt this dictum, we can safely confirm the truth of the succeeding lines—

Men doubt, because so thick they lie,
If those be stars that paint the Galaxy:—

And we scruple not to avow, whatever contempt may be expressed for our taste by the advocates of the toiling and turgid style, both in and out of Ireland, that the prose works which we have lately perused with the greatest pleasure, so far as their composition was concerned, have been Belzoni's Travels, and Salame's Account of the Attack upon Algiers. Unable, from their insufficient mastery of our tongue, to rival the native manufacture of stiff and laborious verbosity, these foreigners have contented themselves with the plainest and most colloquial language that was consistent with a clear exposition of their meaning;—a practice to which Swift was indebted for the lucid and perspicuous character of his writings, and which alone has enabled a great living purveyor of "twopenny trash" to retain a certain portion of popularity, in spite of his utter abandonment of all consistency and public principle. If the writers to whom we are alluding will not condescend to this unstudied and familiar mode of communing with the public, let them at least have the art to conceal their art, and not obtrude the conviction that they are more anxious to display themselves than inform their readers; and let them, above all things, consent to be intelligible to the plainest capacity; for though speech, according to the averment of a wily Frenchman, was given to us to conceal our thoughts, no one has yet ventured to extend the same mystifying definition to the art of writing …

After this, let us no longer smile at the furious hyperboles of Della Crusca upon Mrs. Robinson's eyes. In the same strain we are told of a convent whose "walls sweat, and its floors quiver," when a contumacious brother treads them;—and when the parents of the same personage are torn from his room by the Director of the convent, we are informed that "the rushing of their robes as he dragged them out, seemed like the whirlwind that attends the presence of the destroying angel." In a similar spirit, of

pushing every thing to extremes when he means to be impressive, the author is sometimes offensively minute; as when he makes the aforesaid persecuted monk declare, that "the cook had learned the secret of the convent (that of tormenting those whom they had no longer hopes of commanding), and mixed the fragments he threw to me with ashes, hair, and dust;"—and sometimes the extravagance of his phrases becomes simply ludicrous. Two persons are trying to turn a key—"It grated, resisted; the lock seemed invincible. Again we tried with cranched teeth, indrawn breath, and fingers stripped almost to the bone—in vain." And yet, after they had almost stripped their fingers to the bone, they succeed in turning that which they could not move when their hands were entire.

We have said that Mr. Maturin had contrived to render his work as objectionable in the matter as in the manner; and we proceed to the confirmation of our assertion. We do not arraign him solely for the occasional indecorousness of his conceptions, or the more offensive tone of some of his colloquies, attempted to be palliated by the flimsy plea, that they are, appropriate in the mouths that utter them. Dr. Johnson, as a proof of the total suppression of the reasoning faculty in dreams, used to cite one of his own, wherein he imagined himself to be holding an argument with an adversary, whose superior powers filled him with a mortification which a moment's reflection would have dissipated, by reminding him that he himself supplied the repartees of his opponent as well as his own. In his waking dreams, Mr. Maturin is equally the parent of all the parties who figure in his Romance; and, though not personally responsible for their sentiments, he is amenable to the bar of criticism for every phrase or thought which transgresses the bounds of decorum, or violates the laws that regulate the habitual intercourse of polished society. It is no defence to say, that profane or gross language is natural to the characters whom he embodies. Why does he select such? It may be proper in them; but what can make it proper to us? There are wretches who never open their lips but to

blaspheme; but would any author think himself justified in filling his page with their abominations? It betrays a lamentable deficiency of tact and judgment, to imagine, as the author of Melmoth appears to do, that he may seize upon nature in her most unhallowed or disgusting moods, and dangle her in the eyes of a decorous and civilized community. We shall not stop to stigmatize, as it deserves, the wild and flagrant calumnies which he insinuates against three-fourths of his countrymen, by raking in the long-forgotten rubbish of Popery for extinct enormities, which he exaggerates as the inevitable result, rather than the casual abuse of the system, and brands with an intolerant zeal, quite as uncharitable as that which he condemns. These faults are either so peculiar to the individual, or in their nature so obviously indefensible, as to repel rather than invite imitation. But there is another peculiarity in the productions of this gentleman which claims a more detailed notice, because it seems likely to have extensive effects in corrupting others: —we mean his taste for horrible and revolting subjects. We thought we had supped full of this commodity; but it seems as if the most ghastly and disgusting portion of the meal was reserved for the present day, and its most hideous concoction for the writer before us,—who is never so much in his favourite element as when he can "on horror's head horrors accumulate." He assimilates the sluggish sympathies of his readers to those of sailors and vulgar ballad readers, who cannot be excited to an interest in the battle of the Arethusa, unless they learn that "her sails smoaked with brains, and her scuppers ran blood;"—a line which threatens him with formidable competitors from before the mast. Mere physical horror, unalleviated by an intense mental interest, or redeeming charities of the heart, may possess a certain air of originality, not from the want of ability in former writers to delineate such scenes, but from then-deference to the "*multaque tolles ex oculis*" of Horace; from the conviction of their utter unfitness for public exhibition. There is, however, a numerous class of inferior caterers to the public, ready to minister to any appetite, however

foul and depraved, if they be once furnished with a precedent; and we foresee an inundation of blood and abomination if they be not awed or ridiculed into silence. We have quietly submitted to these inflictions from two or three distinguished writers, whose talents may extenuate, though they cannot justify, such outrages upon feeling. When regular artists and professors conduct us into their dissecting room, the skill with which they anatomise may reconcile us to the offensiveness of the operation; but if butchers and resurrection-men are to drag us into their shambles, while they mangle human carcases with their clumsy and unhallowed hands, the stoutest spectators must turn from the exhibition with sickness and disgust.

Were any proof wanting that this Golgotha style of writing is likely to become contagious, and to be pushed to a more harrowing extravagance at each successive imitation, Mr. Maturin would himself supply it….

We have omitted this miscreant's flippant allusion to Madame de Sevigné and his own damnation, uttered in a spirit which (to use the author's own words upon another occasion), "mingled ridicule with horror, and seemed like a Harlequin in the infernal regions flirting with the furies:"—But we must not forget to mention, as little characteristic touches in this scene of preposterous horrors, that the monster who describes it was also a parricide, and that the female, on whose dying agonies he had feasted, was his only sister! After this appalling extract, we need not pursue our quotations from pages which, as more than one of the personages say of themselves, seem to swim in blood and fire; and we shall conclude with the following passage from a dream—

> The next moment I was chained to my chair again,—the fires were lit, the bells rang out, the litanies were sung;—my feet were scorched to a cinder,—my muscles cracked, my blood and marrow hissed, my flesh consumed like shrinking leather,—the bones of my leg hung two black

> withering and moveless sticks in the ascending blaze;—it ascended, caught my hair,—I was crowned with fire,—my head was a ball of molten metal, my eyes flashed and melted in their sockets:—I opened my mouth, it drank fire,—I closed it, the fire was within,—and still the bells rang on, and the crowd shouted, and the king and queen, and all the nobility and priesthood looked on, and we burned and burned! I was a cinder, body and soul, in my dream. II. 301.

These, and other scenes equally wild and abominable, luckily counteract themselves;—they present such a Fee-fa-fum for grown up people, such a burlesque upon tragic horrors, that a sense of the ludicrous irresistibly predominates over the terrific; and, to avoid disgust, our feelings gladly take refuge in contemptuous laughter. Pathos like this may affect women, and people of weak nerves, with sickness at the stomach;—it may move those of stouter fibre to scornful derision; but we doubt whether, in the whole extensive circle of novel readers, it has ever drawn a single tear. The Society for the Suppression of Mendicity has fortunately cleared our streets of the offensive vagrants who used to thrust their mangled limbs and putrid sores into our faces to extort from our disgust what they could not wring from our compassion:—Be it *our* care to suppress those greater nuisances who, infesting the high ways of literature, would attempt, by a still more revolting exhibition, to terrify or nauseate us out of those sympathies which they might not have the power to awaken by any legitimate appeal.

Let it not be imagined, from any thing we have now said, that we think meanly of Mr. Maturin's genius and abilities. It is precisely because we hold both in respect that we are sincerely anxious to point out their misapplication; and we have extended our observations to a greater length than we contemplated, partly because we fear that his strong though unregulated imagination, and unlimited command of glowing language, may inflict upon us a herd of imitators who, "possessing the contortions of

the Sybil without her inspiration," will deluge us with dull, turgid, and disgusting enormities;—and partly because we are not without hopes that our animadversions, offered in a spirit of sincerity, may induce the Author himself to abandon this new Apotheosis of the old Raw-head-and-bloody-bones, and assume a station in literature more consonant to his high endowments, and to that sacred profession to which, we understand, he does honour by the virtues of his private life.

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW

If Macaulay represents a new *Edinburgh* from the days of Jeffrey, Brougham, and Sydney Smith, the variety of criticism embraced by the *Quarterly* is even more startling. There was more malice, and far coarser personalities in the early days, and almost continuously while Gifford, Croker, and Lockhart held the reins: it is—almost certainly— among these three that the responsibility for our "anonymous" group of onslaughts may be distributed. The two earliest appreciations of Jane Austen (from Scott and Whately) offer an interlude—actually in the same period—which positively startles us by the honesty of its attempt at fair criticism and the entire freedom from personality.

Gladstone's interesting recognition of Tennyson, and the "Church in Arms" against Darwin (so ably pleaded by Wilberforce), belong to yet another school of criticism which comes much nearer to our day, though retaining the solemnity, the prolixity, and the *ex cathedra* assumption of authority with which all the Reviews began their career; and is singularly cautious in its independence.

WILLIAM GIFFORD

(1757-1826)

Gifford was the editor of the *Quarterly* from its foundation in February, 1809, until September, 1824, and undoubtedly established its reputation for scurrility. It is probable that more reviews were written, or directly inspired, by him than have been actually traced to his pen; and, in any case, as Leigh Hunt puts it, he made it his business to

> See that others
> Misdeem and miscontrue, like miscreant brothers;
> Misquote, and misplace, and mislead, and misstate,
> Misapply, misinterpret, misreckon, misdate,
> Missinform, misconjecture, misargue, in short
> Miss all that is good, that ye miss not the court.

Gifford was hated even more than his associates; not only, we fear, for his venal sycophancy, but because he had been apprenticed to a shoemaker and never concealed the lowness of his origin. Moreover, "the little man, dumpled up together and so ill-made as to seem almost deformed," received from Fortune—

> One eye not overgood,
> Two sides that to their cost have stood
> A ten years' hectic cough,
> Aches, stitches, all the various ills
> That swell the devilish doctor's bills,
> And sweep poor mortals off.

Scott is almost alone in his generosity towards the learning and industry of an editor who helped to make infamous the title of critic. His original poems (*The Baviad* and *The Moeviad*) have a certain sledge-hammer merit; and he did yeoman service by suppressing the *Della Cruscans*.

It was Gifford also "who did the butchering business in the Anti-Jacobin." He was far heavier, in bludgeoning, than Jeffrey; while Hazlitt epitomized his principles of criticism with his accustomed vigour:—"He believes that modern literature should wear the fetters of classical antiquity; that truth is to be weighed in the scales of opinion and prejudice; that power is equivalent to right; that genius is dependent on rules; that taste and refinement of language consist in *word-catching*."

* * * * *

Gifford's review of *Ford's Weber* is, perhaps, no more than can be expected of the man who had edited *Massinger* six years before he wrote it; and produced a *Ben Jonson* in 1816 and a *Ford* in 1827. Of these works Thomas Moore exclaimed "What a canker'd carle it is! Strange that a man should be able to lash himself up into such a spiteful fury, not only against the living but the dead, with whom he engages in a sort of *sciomachy* in every page. Poor dull and dead Malone is the shadow at which he thrusts his 'Jonson,' as he did at poor Monck Mason, still duller and deader, in his *Massinger*." Mr. A.H. Bullen, again, remarks of his Ford, "Gifford was so intent on denouncing the inaccuracy of others that he frequently failed to secure accuracy himself…. In reading the old dramatists we do not want to be distracted by editorial invectives and diatribes."

The review of *Endymion* called forth Byron's famous apostrophe to—

John Keats, who was killed off by one critique
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
Contrived to talk about the gods of late
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! his was an untoward fate;

'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuff'd out by one article.

It is but just to say, however, that the *Blackwood* review of the same poem, printed below, was scarcely less virulent; and later critics have scouted the notion of the poet not having more strength of mind than he is credited with by Byron. It is strange to notice that De Quincey found in *Endymion* "the very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy"; while one is ashamed for the timidity of the publisher who chose to return all unsold copies to George Keats because of "the ridicule which has, time after time, been showered upon it."

JOHN WILSON CROKER

(1780-1857)

Croker was certainly unfortunate in his enemies, though they have given him immortality. The contemptible Rigby in Disraeli's *Coningsby* (admittedly drawn from him) is scarcely more damaging to his reputation than the sound, if prejudiced, onslaught of Macaulay's review, of which we find echoes, after twelve years, in the same essayist's Madame D'Arblay. Dr. Hill tells us that he "added considerably to our knowledge of Johnson," yet he was a thoroughly bad editor and had no real sympathy with either the subject or the author of that incomparable "Life": through his essentially low mind. He was not a scholar, and he was inaccurate.

Croker was intimately associated with the *Quarterly* from its foundation until 1857, retaining his bitterness and spite to the year of his death. But he was a born fighter, and never happier than in the heat of controversy. That he secured the friendship of Scott, Peel, and Wellington must go to prove

that his political, and literary prejudices, had not destroyed altogether his private character. He is credited with being the first writer to use the word "conservatives" in the *Quarterly*, January, 1830. He was a member of the Irish Bar, M.P. for Dublin, Acting Chief Secretary for Ireland, Secretary of the Admiralty (where his best work was accomplished), and a Privy Councillor.

* * * * *

The veiled sarcasm of his attack on *Sydney Smith* was only to be expected from a Tory reviewer, and was probably inflamed by that heated loyalty to the Church which characterised his paper.

Macaulay had certainly provoked his retaliation, and we may notice here the same eager partisanship of Church and State, pervading even his personal malice.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART

(1794-1854)

It is to be regretted that Lockhart, who is so honourably remembered by his great *Life of Scott*, his "fine and animated translation" of Spanish Ballads, and his neglected—but powerful—*Adam Blair*, should be so intimately associated with the black record of the *Quarterly*. He was also a contributor to *Blackwood* from October, 1817, succeeding Gifford in the editorial chair of Mr. Murray's Review in 1825 until 1853.

But Lockhart was "more than a satirist and a snarler." His polished jibes were more mischievous than brutal. "This reticent, sensitive, attractive, yet dangerous youth … slew his victims mostly by the midnight oil, not by any blaze of gaiety, or in the accumulative fervour of social sarcasm. From him

came most of those sharp things which the victims could not forget…. Lockhart put in his sting in a moment, inveterate, instantaneous, with the effect of a barbed dart, yet almost, as it seemed, with the mere intention of giving point to his sentences, and no particular feeling at all."

Carlyle describes him as "a precise, brief, active person of considerable faculty, which however, had shaped itself *gigmanically* only. Fond of quizzing, yet not *very* maliciously. Has a broad, black brow, indicating force and penetration, but the lower half of the face diminishing into the character at best of distinctness, almost of triviality."

* * * * *

There is certainly a good deal of perversity about the *abuse* of Vathek, so startlingly combined with almost immoderate eulogy: to which the discriminating enthusiasm of his Coleridge affords a pleasing contrast.

It should be noticed that Lockhart has also been credited with the bitter critical part of the *Jane Eyre* review, printed below—of which any man ought to have been ashamed—as Miss Rigby (afterwards Lady Eastlake) is believed to have written "the part about the governess." He probably had a hand in the Blackwood series on "The Cockney School of Poetry" (see below); and, in some ways, those reviews are more characteristic.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

(1771-1832)

It would be out of place here to enter upon any biography or criticism of the author of *Waverley*, or for that matter of Jane Austen. It is sufficient to notice that Scott has found something generous to say (in diaries, letters, or

formal criticism) on every writer he had occasion to mention, and that in his somewhat neglected, but frequently quoted, *Lives of the Novelists*, a striking pre-eminence was given to women; particularly Mrs. Radcliffe and Clara Reeve. Indeed, the essay on Mrs. Radcliffe, a "very novel and rather heretical revelation" is "probably the best in the whole set."

We remember, too, the famous passage in his *General Preface to the Waverley Novels*:—"without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness and admirable tact of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland";—an ambition of which the modesty only equals the success achieved.

In "appreciating" Jane Austen, indeed, Scott is far more cautious, if not apologetic, than any critic of to-day would dream of being; but, when we remember the prejudices then existing against women writers (despite the popularity of Madame D'Arblay) and the well-nigh universal neglect accorded the author of *Pride and Prejudice*, we should perhaps rather marvel at the independent sincerity of his pronounced praise. The article, at any rate, has historic significance, as the first serious recognition of her immortal work.

RICHARD WHATELY

(1787-1863)

The "dogmatical and crotchety" Archbishop of Dublin was looked at askance by the extreme Evangelicals of his day (though Thomas Arnold has eulogised his holiness), and there is no doubt that his theology, however able and sincere, was mainly inspired by the "daylight of ordinary reason

and of historical fact," opposed to the dogmas of tradition. He combated sceptical criticism by an ingenious parody entitled "Historical Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte," and his epigram on the majority of preachers—that "they aim at nothing and they hit it," proves his freedom from any touch of sacerdotalism. His "Rhetoric," his "Logic," and his "Political Economy" were praised by so eminent a judge as John Stuart Mill, though criticised by Hamilton; and Lecky remarks on the "admirable lucidity of his style."

His work, however, was as a whole too fragmentary to become standard, and he regarded it himself as "the mission of his life to make up cartridges for others to fire."

* * * * *

We may notice that in writing of *Jane Austen*, only six years after Scott, though still measured and judicial, he permits himself a much more assured attitude of applause; and the article affords most valuable indication of the steady progress by which her masterpieces achieved the supremacy now acknowledged by all.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

(1809-1898)

It would be no less impertinent, and unnecessary, to dwell in these pages upon the political, or literary, work of the greatest of modern premiers. It is sufficient to recall the certainty which used to follow a notice by Gladstone of a large and immediate rise in sales. Mr. John Morley remarking that Gladstone's "place is not in literary or critical history, but elsewhere," reminds us that his style was sometimes called Johnsonian, though without

good ground…. Some critics charged him in 1840 with "prolix clearness." "The old charge," says Mr. Gladstone upon this, was obscure compression. I do not doubt that both may be true, and the former may have been the result of a well-meant effort to escape from the latter.

* * * * *

Mr. Morley, again, selects the essay on Tennyson for especial praise. Though one is apt to forget it, the Laureate did not meet with anything like immediate recognition; and, though coming twenty-eight years after the appreciation by J.S. Mill, this article does not assume the supremacy afterwards accorded the poet by common consent.

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE

(1805-1873)

"One of the most conspicuous and remarkable figures" of his generation the versatile Bishop of Oxford is said to have come "next to Gladstone as a man of inexhaustible powers of work." Known from his Oxford days as Soapy Sam, he was involved through no fault of his own, in some of the odium attached to the "Essays and Reviews" and "Colenso" cases: his private life was embittered by the secession to Rome of his two brothers, his brother-in-law, his only daughter, and his son-in-law. "He was an unwearied ecclesiastical politician, always involved in discussions and controversies, sometimes, it was thought, in intrigues; without whom nothing was done in convocation, nor, where Church interests were involved, in the House of Lords." The energy with which he governed his diocese for twenty-four years earned for him the title of "Romodeller [Transcriber's note: sic] of the Episcopate."

* * * * *

The attempt, by a man whose "relaxations" were botany and ornithology, but who had no claims to be called an expert, to defeat Darwin on his own ground—and the dignified horror of a Churchman at some deductions from evolution—is eminently characteristic of the period.

The earnest criticism of Newman's conversion to Rome concerns one of the most striking events of his generation, and illustrates the "church" attitude on such questions.

ANONYMOUS

We have hinted already that the responsibility for this group of ill-mannered recriminations may probably be distributed between Gifford, Croker, and Lockhart. It is curious to notice that the second attack on Scott appeared after his admission to the ranks of contributors; and the author of *Waverley* is perhaps the one man said to have friends both on the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. That on Leigh Hunt, always the pet topic of Toryism, from whom he certainly provoked some retaliation, is only paralleled in *Blackwood*. We have included the *Shakespeare* and the *Moxon* as attractively brief samples on the approved model of savage banter, and the *Jane Eyre* as perhaps the most flagrant example of bad taste to be found in these merciless pages. It was George Henry Lewis, by the way, who so much offended Charlotte Brontë by the greeting, "There ought to be a bond between us, for we have both written naughty books."

It is interesting to find Thackeray among those it was permitted to praise: though the "moral" objection to his "realism" reveals a strange attitude.

We may notice, with some surprise, that the attitude towards George Eliot is nearly as hostile as towards Charlotte Brontë.

GIFFORD ON WEBER'S "FORD"

[From *The Quarterly Review*, December, 1811]

… When it is determined to reprint the writings of an ancient author, it is usual, we believe, to bestow a little labour in gratifying the natural desire of the reader to know something of his domestic circumstances. Ford had declared in the title-pages of his several plays, that he was of the Inner Temple; and, from his entry there, Mr. Malone, following up the inquiry, discovered that he was the second son of Thomas Ford, Esq., and that he was baptized at Ilsington, in Devonshire, the 17th of April, 1586. To this information Mr. Weber has added nothing; and he hopes that the meagreness of his biographical account will be readily excused by the reader who has examined the lives of his (Ford's) dramatical contemporaries, in which we are continually "led to lament that our knowledge respecting them amounts to little better than nothing." It would surely be unjust to appear dissatisfied at the imperfect account of an ancient author, when all the sources of information have been industriously explored. But, in the present case, we doubt whether Mr. Weber can safely "lay this flattering unction to his soul"; and we shall therefore give such a sketch of the poet's life, as an attentive examination of his writings has enabled us to compile….

Reversing the observation of Dryden on Shakespeare, it may be said of Ford that "he wrote laboriously, not luckily": always elegant, often elevated, never sublime, he accomplished by patient and careful industry what Shakespeare and Fletcher produced by the spontaneous exuberance of native genius. He seems to have acquired early in life, and to have retained to the last a softness of versification peculiar to himself. Without the majestic march of verse which distinguishes the poetry of Massinger, and with none of that playful gaiety which characterises the dialogue of Fletcher, he is still easy and harmonious. There is, however, a monotony in his poetry, which those who have perused his scenes long together must have inevitably perceived. His dialogue is declamatory and formal, and wants that quick chace of replication and rejoinder so necessary to effect in representation. If we could put out of our remembrance the singular merits of "The Lady's Trial," we should consider the genius of Ford as altogether inclined to tragedy; and even there so large a proportion of the pathetic pervades the drama, that it requires the "humours" of Guzman and Fulgoso, in addition to a happy catastrophe, to warrant the name of comedy. In the plots of his tragedies Ford is far from judicious; they are for the most part too full of the horrible, and he seems to have had recourse to an accumulation of terrific incidents, to obtain that effect which he despairs of producing by pathos of language. Another defect in Ford's poetry, proceeding from the same source, is the alloy of pedantry which pervades his scenes, at one time exhibited in the composition of uncouth phrases, at another in perplexity of language; and he frequently labours with a remote idea, which, rather than throw it away, he obtrudes upon his reader, involved in inextricable obscurity. We cannot agree with the editor in praising his delineation of the female character: less than women in their passions, they are more than masculine in their exploits and sufferings; but, excepting Spinella in "The Lady's Trial," and perhaps Penthea, we do not

remember in Ford's plays, any example of that meekness and modesty which compose the charm of the female character….

Mr. Weber is known to the admirers of our antient literature by two publications which, although they may not be deemed of great importance in themselves, have yet a fair claim to notice. We speak of the battle of Flodden Field, and the Romances of the fourteenth century: which, as far as we have looked into them, appear very creditable to his industry and accuracy: his good genius, we sincerely regret to say, appears in a great measure to have forsaken him from the moment that he entered upon the task of editing a dramatic poet.

In the mechanical construction of his work Mr. Weber has followed the last edition of Massinger, with a servility which appears, in his mind, to have obviated all necessity of acknowledging the obligation: we will not stop to enquire whether he might not have found a better model; but proceed to the body of the work. As we feel a warm interest in everything which regards our ancient literature, on the sober cultivation of which the purity, copiousness, and even harmony of the English language must, in no small degree, depend, we shall notice some of the peculiarities of the volumes before us, in the earnest hope that while we relieve Ford from a few of the errors and misrepresentations with which he is here encumbered, we may convince Mr. Weber that something more is necessary to a faithful editor than the copying of printers' blunders, and to a judicious commentator, than a blind confidence in the notes of every collection of old plays.

Mr. Weber's attempts at explanation (for explanations it seems, there must be) are sometimes sufficiently humble. "Carriage," he tells us, "is behaviour." It is so; we remember it in our spelling-book, among the words of three syllables, we have therefore no doubt of it. But you must have,

rejoins the editor; and accordingly, in every third or fourth page, he persists in affirming that "carriage is behaviour." In the same strain of thankless kindness, he assures us that "fond is foolish," "but, except," "content, contentment," and *vice versa*, "period [Transcriber's note: 'peroid' in original], end," "demur, delay," "ever, always," "sudden, quickly," "quick, suddenly," and so on through a long vocabulary of words of which a girl of six years old would blush to ask the meaning….

The confidence which Mr. Weber reposes in Steevens, not only on one but on every occasion, is quite exemplary: the name alone operates as a charm, and supersedes all necessity of examining into the truth of his assertions; and he gently reminds those who occasionally venture to question it, that "they are ignorant and superficial critics." Vol. ii, p. 256. —"I have seen Summer go up and down with *hot codlings!* Mr. Steevens observes that a codling *antiently* meant an immature apple, and the present passage *plainly* proves it, as none but immature apples could be had in summer," all this wisdom is thrown away. We can assure Mr. Weber, on the authority of Ford himself, that "hot codlings" are *not* apples, either mature or immature. Steevens is a dangerous guide for such as do not look well about them. His errors are specious: for he was a man of ingenuity: but he was often wantonly mischievous, and delighted to stumble for the mere gratification of dragging unsuspecting innocents into the mire with him. He was, in short, the very Puck of commentators….

No writer, in our remembrance, meets with so many "singular words" as the present editor. He conjectures, however, that *unvamp'd* means *disclosed*. It means not stale, not patched up. We should have supposed it impossible to miss the sense of so trite an expression…. Mr. Weber's acquaintance with our dramatic writers extends, as the reader must have observed, very little beyond the indexes of Steevens and Reed. If he cannot find the word of

which he is in quest, in them, he sets it down as an uncommon expression, or a coinage of his author….

These inadvertences, and many others which might be noticed, being chiefly confined to the notes, do not, perhaps, detract much from the value of the text: we now turn to some of a different kind, which bear hard on the editor, and prove that his want of knowledge is not compensated by any extraordinary degree of attention. It is not sufficient for Mr. Weber to say that many of the errors which we shall point out are found in the old copy. It was his duty to reform them. A facsimile of blunders no one requires. Modern editions of our old poets are purchased upon the faith of a corrected text: this is their only claim to notice; and, if defective here, they become at once little better than waste-paper….

There is something extremely capricious in Mr. Weber's mode of proceeding: words are tampered with which are necessary to the right understanding of the text, while others, which reduce it to absolute jargon, are left unmolested….

We might carry this part of our examination to an immense extent; but we forbear. Enough, and more than enough, is done to show that a strict revision of the text is indispensible; and, if it should fall to the lot of the present editor to undertake it, we trust that he will evince somewhat more care than he manifests in the conclusion of the work before us. It will scarcely be credited that Mr. Weber should travel through such a volume as we have just passed, in quest of errata, and find only one. "Vol. ii (he says), p. 321, line 12, for satiromastrix read satiromastix!"

We could be well content to rest here; but we have a more serious charge to bring against the editor, than the omission of points, or the misapprehension of words. He has polluted his pages with the blasphemies of a poor maniac, who, it seems, once published some detached scenes of

the "Broken Heart." For this unfortunate creature, every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation; but—for Mr. Weber, we know not where the warmest of his friends will seek either palliation or excuse.

ON KEATS

[From *The Quarterly Review*, April, 1818]

Reviewers have sometimes been accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty—far from it—indeed, we have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it; but with the fullest stretch of our perseverence, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books[1] of which this Poetic Romance consists. We should extremely lament this want of energy, or whatever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of that book through which we have so painfully toiled than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into.

[1] *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*. By John Keats. London, 1818.

It is not that Mr. Keats (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius—he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry; which may

be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language.

Of this school Mr. Leigh Hunt, as we observed in a former number, aspires to be the hierophant. Our readers will recollect the pleasant recipes for harmonious and sublime poetry which he gave us in his preface to *Rimini*, and the still more facetious instances of his harmony and sublimity in the verses themselves; and they will recollect above all the contempt of Pope, Johnson, and such like poetasters and pseudo-critics, which so forcibly contrasted itself with Mr. Leigh Hunt's approbation of

> —All the things itself had wrote,
> Of special merit though of little note.

The author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt, but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype, who, though he impudently presumed to seat himself in the chair of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet generally had a meaning. But Mr. Keats had advanced no dogmas which he was bound to support by examples, his nonsense therefore is quite gratuitous; he writes it for its own sake, and being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry.

Mr. Keats's preface hints that his poem was produced under peculiar circumstances….

> The two first books, and indeed the two last, are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press. p. vii.

Thus, "the two first books" are, even in his own judgment, unfit to appear, and "the two last" are, it seems, in the same condition—and as two

and two make four, and as that is the whole number of books, we have a clear and, we believe, a very just estimate of the entire work.

Mr. Keats, however, deprecates criticism on this "immature and feverish" work in terms which are themselves sufficiently feverish; and we confess that we should have abstained from inflicting upon him any of the tortures of the "*fierce hell*" of criticism, which terrify his imagination, if he had not begged to be spared in order that he might write more; if we had not observed in him a certain degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way, or which, at least, ought to be warned of the wrong; and if, finally, he had not told us that he is of an age and temper which imperiously require mental discipline.

Of the story we have been able to make out but little; it seems to be mythological, and probably relates to the loves of Diana and Endymion; but of this, as the scope of the work has altogether escaped us, we cannot speak with any degree of certainty: and must therefore content ourselves with giving some instances of its diction and versification.— And here again we are perplexed and puzzled.—At first it appeared to us, that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game at *bouts rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at this play, that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning. He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of ideas, but of sounds, and the work is composed of hemistichs which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn….

Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth. p. 17.

Lodge, dodge—heaven, leaven—earth, birth; such, in six words, is the sum and substance of six lines.

We come now to the author's taste in versification. He cannot indeed write a sentence, but perhaps he may be able to spin a line. Let us see. The following are specimens of his prosodial notions of our English heroic metre.

Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite, p. 4.

So plenteously all weed-hidden roots, p. 6.

… By this time our readers must be pretty well satisfied as to the meaning of his sentences and the structures of his lines: we now present them with some of the new words with which, in imitation of Mr. Leigh Hunt, he adorns our language.

We are told that "turtles *passion* their voices" (p. 15); that "an arbour was *nested*" (p. 23); and a lady's locks "*gordian'd*" up (p. 32); and to supply the place of nouns thus verbalised Mr. Keats, with great fecundity, spawns new ones; such as "men-slugs and human *serpentry*" (p. 14); "*honey-feel* of bliss" (p. 45); "wives prepare *needments*" (p. 13)—and so forth.

Then he has formed new verbs by the process of cutting off their tails, the adverbs, and affixing them to their foreheads; thus "the wine out-sparkled" (p. 10); the "multitude up-follow'd" (p. 11); and "night up-took" (p. 29). "The wind up-blows" (p. 32); and the "hours are down-sunken" (p. 36).

But if he sinks some adverbs in the verbs he compensates the language with adverbs and adjectives which he separates from the parent stock. Thus, a lady "whispers *pantingly* and close," makes "*hushing* signs," and steers her skiff into a "*ripply* cove" (p. 23); a shower falls "*refreshfully*" (p. 45); and a vulture has a "*spreaded* tail" (p. 44).

But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophite.—If anyone should be bold enough to purchase this "Poetic Romance," and so much more patient than ourselves, as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers.

CROKER ON SYDNEY SMITH

[From *The Quarterly Review*, February, 1810]

This sermon[1] is written on the characters and duties of the clergy. Perhaps it would have produced more effect upon the Yorkshire divines had it come from one who had lived longer among them, and of the correspondence of whose life with his doctrines, they had better opportunities of judging; one whom, from long experience, they knew to be neither sullied by the little "affectations," nor "agitated by the little vanities of the world," whose strict observance of "those decencies and proprieties," which persons in their profession "owe to their situation in society," they had remarked through a long course of years. Whether the life of Mr. Smith would form an illustration of his own precepts remains to be proved. But, if we rightly recollect dates, he is still to his neighbours a sort of unknown person, and hardly yet tried in his new situation of a parish priest. We therefore think, in spite of all the apologies with which he has prefaced his advice, that a more judicious topic might easily have been selected.

[1] A sermon preached before His Grace the Archbishop of York, and the clergy, at Malton, at the Visitation, Aug., 1809. By the Rev. Sydney Smith, A.M., Rector of Foston, in Yorkshire, and late Fellow of New College, Oxford. Carpenter, 1809.

In the execution of this sermon there is little to commend. As a system of duties for any body of clergy, it is wretchedly deficient:—and really, when we call to mind the rich, the full, the vigorous, eloquent, and impassioned manner in which these duties are recommended and inforced in the writings of our old divines, we are mortified beyond measure at the absolute poverty, crudeness, and meanness of the present attempt to mimic them. As a composition, it is very imperfect: it has nearly the same merits, and rather more than the same defects, which characterise his former publications. Mr. Smith never writes but in a loose declamatory way. He is careless of connection, and not very anxious about argument. His sole object is to produce an effect at the moment, a strong first impression upon an audience, and if that can be done he is very indifferent as to what may be the result of examination and reflection….

If Mr. Smith is not only not a Socinian, but if in his heart he doubts as to the least important point of the most abstruce and controverted subject on which our articles have decided, if, in short, he is not one of the most rigorously orthodox divines that exists, he has been guilty of the grossest and most disgusting hypocrisy—he has pronounced in the face of the public to which he appeals, and of the church to which he belongs, in the most solemn manner, and on the most solemn subject, a direct, intentional, and scandalous falsehood—he has acted in a way utterly subversive of all confidence among men; and the greater part of the wretches who retire from a course of justice degraded for perjury rank higher in the scale of morality, than an educated man holding a respectable place in society, who could thus trifle with the most sacred obligations. He could be induced to this base action only by a base motive, that of obviating any difficulties which a suspicion of his holding opinions different from those avowed by the establishment, might throw in the way of his preferment: and of rendering himself a possible object of the bounty of "his worthy masters and mistresses," whenever the golden days arrive, in which they shall again

dispense the favours of the crown. Such must be the case, if Mr. Smith is not sincere. There is no alternative. Now this is scarcely to be believed of any gentleman of tolerably fair character, still less of a teacher of morality and religion, who holds forth in all his writings the most refined sentiments of honour and disinterestedness.

The style of his profession of faith, however, partakes very much of the most offensive peculiarities of his manner. It is abrupt and violent to a degree which not only shocks good taste, but detracts considerably from the appearance of sincerity. It seems as if he considered his creed as a sort of nauseous medicine which could only be taken off at a draught, and he looks round for applause at the heroic effort by which he has drained the cup to its very dregs.

But the passage about the verse in St. John is yet more extraordinary. Has Mr. Smith really gone through the controversy upon this subject? And even if he has, is this the light way in which a man wholly unknown in the learned world, is entitled to contradict the opinion of some of the greatest scholars of Europe? We have, however, the mere word of the facetious rector of Foston, opposite to the authority and the arguments of a Porson and a Griesbach. It is at his command, unsupported by the smallest attempt at reasoning, that we are to set aside the opinion of men whose lives have been spent in the study of the Greek language, and of biblical criticism, and which has been acquiesced in by many of the most competent judges both here and abroad. Such audacity (to call it by no coarser name) is in itself only calculated to excite laughter and contempt: coupled as it is with a most unprovoked and unwarrantable mention of the name of the Bishop of Lincoln, it excites indignation. We feel no morbid sensibility for the character of a mitred divine: but we cannot see a blow aimed at the head of one of the chiefs of the church, a pious, learned, and laborious man, by the hand of ignorance and presumption, without interposing, not to heal the

wound, for no wound has been made, but to chastise the assailant. The Bishop of Lincoln gives up these verses, not carelessly, and unadvisedly, but doubtless because he is persuaded that the cause of true Religion can never be so much injured as by resting its defence upon passages liable to so much suspicion; and because he knows, that the doctrine of the Trinity by no means depends upon that particular passage, but may be satisfactorily deduced from various other expressions, and from the general tenor of holy writ. Indeed, if we were not prevented from harbouring any such suspicion by Mr. Smith's flaming profession of the *iotal* accuracy of his creed; and if we could doubt the orthodoxy of the divine, without impugning the honesty of the man, we should be inclined to suspect that his defence of the verses proceeded from a concealed enemy. We are not unaware that the question cannot even yet be regarded as finally and incontrovertibly settled, but we apprehend the truth to be that Mr. Smith, not having read one syllable upon the subject, but having accidentally heard that there was a disputed verse in St. John relative to the doctrine of the Trinity, and that it had been given up by the Bishop of Lincoln, thought he could not do better than by one dash of the pen, to show his knowledge of controversy, and the orthodoxy of his belief, at the expense of that prelate's character for discretion and zeal….

The next note is mere political, an ebullition of party rage, in which Mr. Smith abuses the present ministry with great bitterness, talks of "wickedness," "weakness," "ignorance," "temerity," after the usual fashion of opposition pamphlets, and clamours loudly against what, with an obstinacy of misrepresentation hardly to be credited, he persists in terming the "persecuting laws" against the Roman Catholics…. He is very anxious that his political friends should not desist from urging the question—an act of tergiversation and unconsistency which, he thinks, would ruin them in the estimation of the public. Yet, if we mistake not, these gentlemen, at least that portion of them with which Mr. Smith (as we are told) is most closely connected, gave up, without a blush, India, Reform, and Peace, all of which

they taught us to believe were vital questions in which the honour or the security of the country was involved. But Catholic emancipation has some peculiar recommendations. It is odious to the people, and painful to the King, and therefore it cannot be delayed, without an utter sacrifice of character….

Now we are by no means so eager on Mr. Smith in what he would term the cause of *religious freedom*. We belong to that vulgar school of timid churchmen, to whom the elevation of a vast body of sectaries to a level with the establishment, is a matter of very grave consideration, if not of alarm. We think that something is due to the prejudices (supposing them to be no more than prejudices) of nine-tenths of the people of England; and we are even so childish (for which we crave Mr. Smith's pardon) as to pay some regard to the feelings of the King, in whose personal mortification, we fairly own, we should not take the smallest pleasure….

We now take leave of the sermon and its notes. But, before we conclude, we are desirous … to convey to Mr. Smith a little salutary advice … to remind him that unmeasured severity of invective against others, will naturally produce, at the first favourable opportunity, a retort of similar harshness upon himself; and that unless he feels himself completely invulnerable, the conduct which he has hitherto pursued, is not only uncharitable and violent, but foolish. He should be told that, although he possesses some talents, they are by no means, as he supposes, of the first order. He writes in a tone of superiority which would hardly be justifiable at the close of a long and successful literary career. His acquirements are very moderate, though he wants neither boldness nor dexterity in displaying them to the best advantage; and he is far, very far indeed, from being endowed with that powerful, disciplined, and comprehensive mind, which should entitle him to decide authoritatively and at once upon the most difficult parts of subjects so far removed from one another as biblical

criticism and legislation. His style is rapid and lively, but hasty and inaccurate; and he either despises or is incapable of regular and finished composition.

Humour, indeed (we speak now generally, of all these performances which have been ascribed to him by common consent), is his strong point; and here he is often successful; but even from this praise many deductions must be made. His jokes are broad and coarse; he is altogether a mannerist, and never knows where to stop. The [Greek: *Paedenagan*] seems quite unknown to him. His pleasantry does not proceed from keen and well-supported irony; just, but unexpected comparisons; but depends, for effect, chiefly upon strange polysyllabic epithets, and the endless enumeration of minute circumstances. In this he, no doubt, displays considerable ingenuity, and a strong sense of what is ludicrous; but his good things are almost all prepared after one receipt. There is some talent, but more trick, in their composition. The thing is well done, but it is of a low order; we meet with nothing graceful, nothing exquisite, nothing that pleases upon repetition and reflection. In everything that Mr. Smith attempts, in all his "bravura" passages, serious or comic, one is always shocked by some affectation or absurdity; something in direct defiance of all those principles which have been established by the authority of the best critics, and the example of the best writers: indeed, bad taste seems to be Mr. Smith's evil genius, both as to sentiment and expression. It is always hovering near him, and, like one of the harpies, is sure to pounce down before the end of the feast, and spoil the banquet, and disgust the guests.

The present publication is by far the worst of all his performances, avowed or imputed. Literary merit it has none; but in arrogance, presumption, and absurdity, it far outdoes all his former outdoings. Indeed, we regard it as one of the most deplorable mistakes that has ever been committed by a man of supposed talents….

ON MACAULAY

[From *The Quarterly Review*, March, 1849]

The History of England from the Accession of James II. By THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY. 2 vols. 8vo. 1849.

The reading world will not need our testimony, though we willingly give it, that Mr. Macaulay possesses great talents and extraordinary acquirements. He unites powers and has achieved successes, not only various, but different in their character, and seldom indeed conjoined in one individual. He was while in Parliament, though not quite an orator, and still less a debater, the most brilliant rhetorician of the House. His Roman ballads (as we said in an article on their first appearance) exhibit a novel idea worked out with a rare felicity, so as to combine the spirit of the ancient minstrels with the regularity of construction and sweetness of versification which modern taste requires; and his critical Essays exhibit a wide variety of knowledge with a great fertility of illustration, and enough of the salt of pleasantry and sarcasm to flavour and in some degree disguise a somewhat declamatory and pretentious dogmatism. It may seem too epigrammatic, but it is, in our serious judgment, strictly true, to say that his History seems to be a kind of combination and exaggeration of the peculiarities of all his former efforts. It is as full of political prejudice and partisan advocacy as any of his parliamentary speeches. It makes the facts of English History as fabulous as his Lays do those of Roman tradition; and

it is written with as captious, as dogmatical, and as cynical a spirit as the bitterest of his Reviews. That upon so serious an undertaking he has lavished uncommon exertion, is not to be doubted; nor can any one during the first reading escape the *entraînement* of his picturesque, vivid, and pregnant execution: but we have fairly stated the impression left on ourselves by a more calm and leisurely perusal. We have been so long the opponents of the political party to which Mr. Macaulay belongs that we welcomed the prospect of again meeting him on the neutral ground of literature. We are of that class of Tories—Protestant Tories, as they were called—that have no sympathy with the Jacobites. We are as strongly convinced as Mr. Macaulay can be of the necessity of the Revolution of 1688—of the general prudence and expediency of the steps taken by our Whig and Tory ancestors of the Convention Parliament, and of the happiness, for a century and a half, of the constitutional results. We were, therefore, not without hope that at least in these two volumes, almost entirely occupied with the progress and accomplishment of that Revolution, we might without any sacrifice of our political feelings enjoy unalloyed the pleasures reasonably to be expected from Mr. Macaulay's high powers both of research and illustration. That hope has been deceived: Mr. Macaulay's historical narrative is poisoned with a rancour more violent than even the passions of the time; and the literary qualities of the work, though in some respects very remarkable, are far from redeeming its substantial defects. There is hardly a page— we speak literally, hardly a page—that does not contain something objectionable either in substance or in colour: and the whole of the brilliant and at first captivating narrative is perceived on examination to be impregnated to a really marvellous degree with bad taste, bad feeling, and, we are under the painful necessity of adding—bad faith.

These are grave charges: but we make them in sincerity, and we think that we shall be able to prove them; and if, here or hereafter, we should seem to our readers to use harsher terms than good taste might approve, we

beg in excuse to plead that it is impossible to fix one's attention on, and to transcribe large portions of a work, without being in some degree infected with its spirit; and Mr. Macaulay's pages, whatever may be their other characteristics, are as copious a repertorium of vituperative eloquence as, we believe, our language can produce, and especially against everything in which he chooses (whether right or wrong) to recognise the shibboleth of Toryism. We shall endeavour, however, in the expression of our opinions, to remember the respect we owe to our readers and to Mr. Macaulay's general character and standing in the world of letters, rather than the provocations and examples of the volumes immediately before us.

Mr. Macaulay announces his intention of bringing down the history of England almost to our own times; but these two volumes are complete in themselves, and we may fairly consider them as a history of the Revolution; and in that light the first question that presents itself to us is why Mr. Macaulay has been induced to re-write what had already been so often and even so recently written—among others, by Dalrymple, a strenuous but honest Whig, and by Mr. Macaulay's own oracles, Fox and Mackintosh? It may be answered that both Fox and Mackintosh left their works imperfect. Fox got no farther than Monmouth's death; but Mackintosh came down to the Orange invasion, and covered full nine-tenths of the period as yet occupied by Mr. Macaulay. Why then did Mr. Macaulay not content himself with beginning where Mackintosh left off— that is, with the Revolution? and it would have been the more natural, because, as our readers know, it is there that Hume's history terminates.

What reason does he give for this work of supererogation? None. He does not (as we shall see more fully by and by) take the slightest notice of Mackintosh's history, no more than if it had never existed. Has he produced a new fact? Not one. Has he discovered any new materials? None, as far as we can judge, but the collections of Fox and Mackintosh, confided to him

by their families.[1] It seems to us a novelty in literary practice that a writer raised far by fame and fortune above the vulgar temptations of the craft should undertake to tell a story already frequently and recently told by masters of the highest authority and most extensive information, without having, or even professing to have, any additional means or special motive to account for the attempt.

[1] It appears from two notes of acknowledgments to M. Guizot and the keepers of the archives at The Hague, that Mr. Macaulay obtained some additions to the copies which Mackintosh already had of the letters of Ronquillo the Spanish and Citters the Dutch minister at the court of James. We may conjecture that these additions were insignificant, since Mr. Macaulay has nowhere, that we have observed, specially noticed them; but except these, whatever they may be, we find no trace of anything that Fox and Mackintosh had not already examined and classed.

We suspect, however, that we can trace Mr. Macaulay's design to its true source—the example and success of the author of Waverley. The historical novel, if not invented, at least first developed and illustrated by the happy genius of Scott, took a sudden and extensive hold of the public taste; he himself, in most of his subsequent novels, availed himself largely of the historical element which had contributed so much to the popularity of Waverley. The press has since that time groaned with his imitators. We have had historical novels of all classes and grades. We have had served up in this form the Norman Conquest and the Wars of the Roses, the Gunpowder Plot and the Fire of London, Darnley and Richelieu—and almost at the same moment with Mr. Macaulay's appeared a professed romance of Mr. Ainsworth's on the same subject— James II. Nay, on a novelist of this popular order has been conferred the office of *Historiographer* to the Queen.

Mr. Macaulay, too mature not to have well measured his own peculiar capacities, not rich in invention but ingenious in application, saw the use that might be made of this principle, and that history itself would be much more popular with a large embroidery of personal, social, and even topographical anecdote and illustration, instead of the sober garb in which we had been in the habit of seeing it. Few histories indeed ever were or could be written without some admixture of this sort. The father of the art himself, old Herodotus, vivified his text with a greater share of what we may call personal anecdote than any of his classical followers. Modern historians, as they happened to have more or less of what we may call *artistic* feeling, admitted more or less of this decoration into their text, but always with an eye (which Mr. Macaulay never exercises) to the appropriateness and value of the illustration. Generally, however, such matters have been thrown into notes, or, in a few instances—as by Dr. Henry and in Mr. Knight's interesting and instructive "Pictorial History"—into separate chapters. The large class of memoir-writers may also be fairly considered as anecdotical historians—and they are in fact the sources from which the novelists of the new school extract their principal characters and main incidents.

Mr. Macaulay deals with history, evidently, as we think, in imitation of the novelists—his first object being always picturesque effect—his constant endeavour to give from all the repositories of gossip that have reached us a kind of circumstantial reality to his incidents, and a sort of dramatic life to his personages. For this purpose he would not be very solicitous about contributing any substantial addition to history, strictly so called; on the contrary, indeed, he seems to have willingly taken it as he found it, adding to it such lace and trimmings as he could collect from the Monmouth-street of literature, seldom it may be safely presumed of very delicate quality. It is, as Johnson drolly said, "an old coat with a new facing—the old dog in a new doublet." The conception was bold, and—so far as availing himself,

like other novelists, of the fashion of the day to produce a popular and profitable effect—the experiment has been eminently successful.

But besides the obvious incentives just noticed, Mr. Macaulay had also the stimulus of what we may compendiously call a strong party spirit. One would have thought that the Whigs might have been satisfied with their share in the historical library of the Revolution:—besides Rapin, Echard, and Jones, who, though of moderate politics in general, were stout friends to the Revolution, they have had of professed and zealous Whigs, Burnet, the foundation of all, Kennett, Oldmixon, Dalrymple, Laing, Brodie, Fox, and finally Mackintosh and his continuator, besides innumerable writers of less note, who naturally adopted the successful side; and we should not have supposed that the reader of any of those historians, and particularly the later ones, could complain that they had been too sparing of imputation, or even vituperation, to the opposite party. But not so Mr. Macaulay. The most distinctive feature on the face of his pages is personal virulence—if he has at all succeeded in throwing an air of fresh life into his characters, it is mainly due, as any impartial and collected reader will soon discover, to the simple circumstance of his hating the individuals of the opposite party as bitterly, as passionately, as if they were his own personal enemies— more so, indeed, we hope than he would a mere political antagonist of his own day. When some one suggested to the angry O'Neil that one of the Anglo-Irish families whom he was reviling as strangers had been four hundred years settled in Ireland, the Milesian replied, "*I hate the churls as if they had come but yesterday*." Mr. Macaulay seems largely endowed with this (as with a more enviable) species of memory, and he hates, for example, King Charles I as if he had been murdered only yesterday. Let us not be understood as wishing to abridge an historian's full liberty of censure—but he should not be a satirist, still less a libeller. We do not say nor think that Mr. Macaulay's censures were always unmerited—far from it—but they are always, we think without exception, immoderate. Nay, it would scarcely be

too much to say that this massacre of character is the point on which Mr. Macaulay must chiefly rest any claims he can advance to the praise of impartiality, for while he paints everything that looks like a Tory in the blackest colours, he does not altogether spare any of the Whigs against whom he takes a spite, though he always visits them with a gentler correction. In fact, except Oliver Cromwell, King William, a few gentlemen who had the misfortune to be executed or exiled for high treason, and every dissenting minister that he has or can find occasion to notice, there are hardly any persons mentioned who are not stigmatized as knaves or fools, differing only in degrees of "turpitude" and "imbecility". Mr. Macaulay has almost realized the work that Alexander Chalmers's playful imagination had fancied, a *Biographia Flagitiosa*, or *The Lives of Eminent Scoundrels*. This is also an imitation of the Historical Novel, though rather in the track of Eugene Aram and Jack Sheppard than of Waverley or Woodstock; but what would you have? To attain the picturesque—the chief object of our artist—he adopts the ready process of dark colours and a rough brush. Nature, even at the worst, is never gloomy enough for a Spagnoletto, and Judge Jeffries himself, for the first time, excites a kind of pity when we find him (like one to whom he was nearly akin) not so black as he is painted.

From this first general view of Mr. Macaulay's Historical Novel, we now proceed to exhibit in detail some grounds for the opinion which we have ventured to express.

We premise that we are about to enter into details, because there is in fact little to question or debate about but details. We have already hinted that there is absolutely no new fact of any consequence, and, we think we can safely add, hardly a new view of any historical fact, in the whole book. Whatever there may remain questionable or debatable in the history of the period, we should have to argue with Burnet, Dalrymple, or Mackintosh, and not with Mr. Macaulay. It would, we know, have a grander air if we

were to make his book the occasion of disquisitions on the rise and progress of the constitution—on the causes by which the monarchy of the Tudors passed, through the murder of Charles, to the despotism of Cromwell—how again that produced a restoration which settled none of the great moral or political questions which had generated all those agitations, and which, in return, those agitations had complicated and inflamed—and how, at last, the undefined, discordant, and antagonistic pretensions of the royal and democratical elements were reconciled by the Revolution and the Bill of Rights—and finally, whether with too much or too little violence to the principles of the ancient constitution—all these topics, we say, would, if we were so inclined, supply us, as they have supplied Mr. Macaulay, with abundant opportunities of grave tautology and commonplace; but we decline to raise sham debates on points where there is no contest. We can have little historic difference, properly so called, with one who has no historical difference on the main facts with anybody else: instead, then, of pretending to treat any great questions, either of constitutional learning or political philosophy, we shall confine ourselves to the humbler but more practical and more useful task above stated.

Our first complaint is of a comparatively small and almost mechanical, and yet very real, defect—the paucity and irregularity of his dates, and the mode in which the few that he does give are overlaid, as it were, by the text. This, though it may be very convenient to the writer, and quite indifferent to the reader, of an historical romance, is perplexing to any one who might wish to read and weigh the book as a serious history, of which dates are the guides and landmarks; and when they are visibly neglected we cannot but suspect that the historian will be found not very solicitous about strict accuracy. This negligence is carried to such an extent that, in what looks like a very copious table of contents, one of the most important events of the whole history— that, indeed, on which the Revolution finally turned—the marriage of Princess Mary to the Prince of Orange, is not noticed; nor is

any date affixed to the very cursory mention of it in the text. It is rather hard to force the reader who buys this last new model history, in general so profuse of details, to recur to one of the old-fashioned ones to discover that this important event happened in the year 1675, and on the 4th of November—a day thrice over remarkable in William's history—for his birth, his marriage, and his arrival with his invading army on the coast of Devon.

Our second complaint is of one of the least important, perhaps, but most prominent defects of Mr. Macaulay's book—his Style—not merely the choice and order of words, commonly called style, but the turn of mind which prompts the choice of expressions as well as of topics. We need not repeat that Mr. Macaulay has a great facility of language, a prodigal *copia verborum*—that he narrates rapidly and clearly—that he paints very forcibly,—and that his readers throughout the tale are carried on, or away, by something of the sorcery which a brilliant orator exercises over his auditory. But he has also in a great degree the faults of the oratorical style. He deals much too largely in epithets—a habit exceedingly dangerous to historical truth. He habitually constructs a piece of what should be calm, dispassionate narrative, upon the model of the most passionate peroration—adhering in numberless instances to precisely the same specific formula of artifice. His diction is often inflated into fustian, and he indulges in exaggeration till it sometimes, unconsciously no doubt, amounts to falsehood. It is a common fault of those who strive at producing oratorical effects, to oscillate between commonplace and extravagance; and while studying Mr. Macaulay, one feels as if vibrating between facts that every one knows and consequences which nobody can believe. We are satisfied that whoever will take, as we have been obliged to do, the pains of sifting what Mr. Macaulay has produced from his own mind with what he has borrowed from others, will be entirely of our opinion. In truth, when, after reading a page or two of this book, we have occasion to turn to the same

transaction in Burnet, Dalrymple, or Hume, we feel as if we were exchanging the glittering agility of a rope-dancer for gentlemen in the attire and attitude of society. And we must say that there is not one of those writers that does not give a clearer and more trustworthy account of all that is really historical in the period than can be collected from Mr. Macaulay's more decorated pages. We invite our readers to try Mr. Macaulay's merits as an historian by the test of comparison with his predecessors.

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Every great painter is supposed to make a larger use of one particular colour. What a monstrous bladderful of *infamy* Mr. Macaulay must have squeezed on his palette when he took to portrait-painting! We have no concern, except as friends to historical justice, for the characters of any of the parties thus stigmatized, nor have we room or time to discuss these, or the hundred other somewhat similar cases which the volumes present; but we have looked at the authorities cited by Mr. Macaulay, and we do not hesitate to say that, "as is his wont," he has, with the exception of Jeffries, outrageously exaggerated them.

We must next notice the way in which Mr. Macaulay refers to and uses his authorities—no trivial points in the execution of a historical work—though we shall begin with comparatively small matters. In his chapter on manners, which we may call the most remarkable in his book, one of his most frequent references is to "Chamberlayne's State of England, 1684." It is referred to at least a dozen or fourteen times in that chapter alone; but we really have some doubt whether Mr. Macaulay knew the nature of the book he so frequently quoted. Chamberlayne's work, of which the real title is "*Angliae* [or, after the Scotch Union, *Magnae Britanniae*] *Notitia, or the Present State of England*" [or *Great Britain*], was a kind of periodical publication, half history and half court-calendar. It was first published in

1669, and new editions or reprints, with new dates, were issued, not annually, we believe, but so frequently that there are between thirty and forty of them in the Museum, ending with 1755. From the way and for the purposes for which Mr. Macaulay quotes Chamberlayne, we should almost suspect that he had lighted on the volume for 1684, and, knowing of no other, considered it as a substantive work published in that year. *Once* indeed he cites the date of 1686, but there was, it seems, no edition of that year, and this may be an accidental error; but however that may be, our readers will smile when they hear that the two first and several following passages which Mr. Macaulay cites from Chamberlayne (i. 290 and 291), as *characteristic* of the *days of Charles II*, distinctively from more modern times, are to be found *literatim* in every succeeding "Chamberlayne" down to 1755—the last we have seen—were thus continually reproduced because the proprietors and editors of the table book knew they were *not* particularly characteristical of one year or reign more than another—and now, in 1849, might be as well quoted as characteristics of the reign of George II as of Charles II. We must add that there are references to Chamberlayne and to several weightier books (some of which we shall notice more particularly hereafter), as justifying assertions for which, on examining the said books with our best diligence, we have not been able to find a shadow of authority.

Our readers know that there was a Dr. John Eachard who wrote a celebrated work on the "Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy." They also know that there was a Dr. Lawrence Echard who wrote both a History of England, and a History of the Revolution. Both of these were remarkable men; but we almost doubt whether Mr. Macaulay, who quotes the works of each, does not confound their persons, for he refers to them both by the common (as it may once have been) name of _Each_ard, and at least twenty times by the wrong name. This, we admit, is a small matter; but what will some Edinburgh Reviewer (*temp*. Albert V) say if he

finds a writer confounding *Catherine* and *Thomas* Macaulay as "the celebrated author of the great Whig History of England"—a confusion hardly worse than that of the two Eachards—for Catherine, though now forgotten by an ungrateful public, made quite as much noise in her day as Thomas does in ours.

But we are sorry to say we have a heavier complaint against Mr. Macaulay. We accuse him of a habitual and really injurious perversion of his authorities. This unfortunate indulgence, in whatever juvenile levity it may have originated, and through whatever steps it may have grown into an unconscious habit, seems to us to pervade the whole work— from Alpha to Omega—from Procopius to Mackintosh—and it is on that very account the more difficult to bring to the distinct conception of our readers. Individual instances can be, and shall be, produced; but how can we extract and exhibit the minute particles that colour every thread of the texture?—how extract the impalpable atoms that have fermented the whole brewing? We must do as Dr. Faraday does at the Institution when he exhibits in miniature the larger processes of Nature. We will suppose, then—taking a simple phrase as the fairest for the experiment—that Mr. Macaulay found Barillon saying in French, "*le drôle m'a fait peur*," or Burnet saying in English, "*the fellow frightened me*." We should be pretty sure not to find the same words in Mr. Macaulay. He would pause—he would first consider whether "the fellow" spoken of was a *Whig* or a *Tory*. If a Whig, the thing would be treated as a joke, and Mr. Macaulay would transmute it playfully into "*the rogue startled me*"; but if a *Tory*, it would take a deeper dye, and we should find "*the villain assaulted me*"; and in either case we should have a grave reference to

Jan. 31,
"Barillon,———— 1686"; or, "Burnet, i. 907."
Feb. 1,

If our reader will keep this formula in his mind, he will find it a fair exponent of Mr. Macaulay's *modus operandi*….

We shall now proceed to more general topics. We decline, as we set out by saying, to treat this "New Atalantis" as a serious history, and therefore we shall not trouble our readers with matters of such remote interest as the errors and anachronisms with which the chapter that affects to tell our earlier history abounds. Our readers would take no great interest in a discussion whether Hengist was as fabulous as Hercules, Alaric a Christian born, and "the fair chapels of New College and St. George" at Windsor of the same date. But there is one subject in that chapter on which we cannot refrain from saying a few words—THE CHURCH.

We decline to draw any inferences from this work as to Mr. Macaulay's own religious opinions; but it is our duty to say—and we trust we may do so without offence—that Mr. Macaulay's mode of dealing with the general principle of Church government, and the doctrine, discipline, and influence of the Church of England, cannot fail to give serious pain, and sometimes to excite a stronger feeling than pain, in the mind of every friend to that Church, whether in its spiritual or corporate character.

He starts with a notion that the fittest engine to redeem England from the mischiefs and mistakes of oligarchical feudalism was to be found in the imposing machinery and deception of the Roman Church; overlooking the great truth that it was not the Romish Church, but the genius of Christianity, working its vast but silent change, which was really guiding on the chariot of civilization; but in this broad principle there was not enough of the picturesqueness of detail to captivate his mind. It would not suit him to distinguish between the Church of Christ and the web of corruptions that had grown about her, but could not effectually arrest the benignant influence inherent in her mainspring. He therefore leads his readers to infer

that Christianity came first to Britain with St. Austin, and for aught that Mr. Macaulay condescends to inform us, the existence of a prior Anglo-Saxon Church was a monkish fiction. The many unhappy circumstances of the position taken up by the Romish Church in its struggles for power—some of them unavoidable, it may be, if such a battle were to be fought—are actually displayed as so many blessings, attainable only by a system which the historian himself condemns elsewhere as baneful and untrue. He maintains these strange paradoxes and contradictions with a pertinacity quite surprising. He doubts whether a true form of Christianity would have answered the purposes of liberty and civilization half so well as the acknowledged duplicities of the Church of Rome.

> It may perhaps be doubted whether a purer religion might not have been found a less efficient agent.—i. 23.

> There is a point in the life both of an individual and a society at which submission and faith, such as at a later period would be justly called servility and credulity, are useful qualities.—i. 47.

These are specimens of the often exposed fallacies in which he delights to indulge. Place right and wrong in a state of uncertainty by reflected lights, and you may fill up your picture as you like. And such for ever is Mr. Macaulay's principle of art. It is not the elimination of error that he seeks for, but an artistic balance of conflicting forces. And this he pursues throughout: deposing the dignity of the historian for the clever antithesis of the pamphleteer. At last, on this great and important point of religious history—a point which more than any other influences every epoch of English progress, he arrives at this pregnant and illustrative conclusion—

> It is difficult to say whether England owes more to the Roman Catholic religion or to the Reformation.—i. 49.

England owes nothing to "the Roman Catholic religion." She owes everything to CHRISTIANITY, which Romanism injured and hampered but could not destroy, and which the Reformation freed at least from the worst of those impure and impeding excrescences.

With regard to his treatment of the Reformation, and especially of the Church of England, it is very difficult to give our readers an adequate idea. Throughout a system of depreciation—we had almost said insult—is carried on: sneers, sarcasms, injurious comparisons, sly misrepresentations, are all adroitly mingled throughout the narrative, so as to produce an unfavourable impression, which the author has not the frankness to attempt directly. Even when obliged to approach the subject openly, it is curious to observe how, under a slight veil of impartiality, imputations are raised and calumnies accredited. For instance, early in the first volume he gives us his view of the English Reformation, as a kind of middle term, emerging out of the antagonist struggles of the Catholics and Calvinists: and it is impossible not to see that, between the three parties, he awards to the Catholics the merit of unity and consistency; to the Calvinists, of reason and independence; to the Anglicans, the lowest motives of expediency and compromise. To enforce this last topic he relies on the inconsistencies, some real and some imaginary, imputed to Cranmer, whose notions of worldly expedience he chooses to represent as the source of the Anglican Church….

Every one of the circumstances on which we may presume that Mr. Macaulay would rely as justifying these charges has been long since, to more candid judgments, either disproved, explained, or excused, and in truth whatever blame can be justly attributed to any of them, belongs mainly, if not exclusively, to those whose violence and injustice drove a naturally upright and most conscientious man into the shifts and stratagems of self-defence. With the greatest fault and the only crime that Charles in his whole life committed Mr. Macaulay does not reproach him—the consent

to the execution of Lord Strafford—that indeed, as he himself penitentially confessed, was a deadly weight on his conscience, and is an indelible stain on his character; but even that guilt and shame belongs in a still greater degree to Mr. Macaulay's patriot heroes.

This leads us to the conclusive plea which we enter to Mr. Macaulay's indictment, namely—that all those acts alleged as the excuses of rebellion and regicide occurred after the rebellion had broken out, and were at worst only devices of the unhappy King to escape from the regicide which he early foresaw. It was really the old story of the wolf and the lamb. It was far down the stream of rebellion that these acts of supposed perfidy on the part of Charles could be said to have troubled it.

But while he thus deals with the lamb, let us see how he treats the wolf. We have neither space nor taste for groping through the long and dark labyrinth of Cromwell's proverbial duplicity and audacious apostacy: we shall content ourselves with two facts, which, though stated in the gentlest way by Mr. Macaulay, will abundantly justify the opinion which all mankind, except a few republican zealots, hold of that man's sincerity, of whose abilities, wonderful as they were, the most remarkable, and perhaps the most serviceable to his fortunes, was his hypocrisy; so much so, that South—a most acute observer of mankind, and who had been educated under the Commonwealth and Protectorate—in his sermon on "Worldly Wisdom," adduces Cromwell as an instance of "habitual dissimulation and imposture." Oliver, Mr. Macaulay tells us, modelled his army on the principle of composing it of men fearing God, and zealous for *public liberty*, and in the very next page he is forced to confess that

> thirteen years followed in which for the first and the last time the civil power of our country was subjected to military dictation.—i. 120.

Again,

Oliver had made his choice. He had kept the hearts of his soldiers, but he had *broken* with every other class of his fellow citizens.—i. 129.

That is, he had broken through all the promises, pledges, and specious pretences by which he had deceived and enslaved the nation, which Mr. Macaulay calls with such opportune *naïveté, his fellow citizens*! Then follows, not a censure of this faithless usurpation, but many laboured apologies, and even defences of it, and a long series of laudatory epithets, some of which are worth collecting as a rare contrast to Mr. Macaulay's usual style, and particularly to the abuse of Charles, which we have just exhibited.

His *genius and resolution* made him more *absolute master of his country* than any of her legitimate Kings had been.—i. 129.

He having cut off the legitimate King's head on a pretence that Charles had wished to make himself *absolutely master of the country*.

Everything yielded to the *vigour and ability* of Cromwell.—i. 130.

The Government, though in the form of a Republic, was in truth a despotism, moderated only by the *wisdom, the sober-mindedness, and the magnanimity* of the despot.—i. 137.

With a vast deal more of the same tone.

But Mr. Macaulay particularly expatiates on the influence that Cromwell exercised over foreign states: and there is hardly any topic to which he recurs with more pleasure, or, as we think, with less sagacity, than the terror with which Cromwell and the contempt with which the Stuarts inspired the nations of Europe. He somewhat exaggerates the extent of this feeling, and greatly misstates or mistakes the cause; and as this subject is in the present

state of the world of more importance than any others in the work, we hope we may be excused for some observations tending to a sounder opinion on that subject.

It was not, as Mr. Macaulay everywhere insists, the personal abilities and genius of Cromwell that exclusively, or even in the first degree, carried his foreign influence higher than that of the Stuarts. The internal struggles that distracted and consumed the strength of these islands throughout their reigns necessarily rendered us little formidable to our neighbours; and it is with no good grace that a Whig historian stigmatises that result as shameful; for, without discussing whether it was justifiable or not, the fact is certain, that it was opposition of the Whigs—often in rebellion and always in faction against the Government—which disturbed all progress at home and paralysed every effort abroad. We are not, we say, now discussing whether that opposition was not justifiable and may not have been ultimately advantageous in several constitutional points; we think it decidedly was: but at present all we mean to do is to show that it had a great share in producing on our foreign influence the lowering effects of which Mr. Macaulay complains.

And there is still another consideration which escapes Mr. Macaulay in his estimate of such usurpers as Cromwell and Buonaparte. A usurper is always more terrible both at home and abroad than a legitimate sovereign: first, the usurper is likely to be (and in these two cases was) a man of superior genius and military glory, wielding the irresistible power of the sword; but there is still stronger contrast— legitimate Governments are bound—at home by laws—abroad by treaties, family ties, and international interests; they acknowledge the law of nations, and are limited, even in hostilities, by many restraints and bounds. The despotic usurpers had no fetters of either sort—they had no opposition at home, and no scruples abroad. Law, treaties, rights, and the like, had been already broken through

like cobwebs, and kings naturally humbled themselves before a vigour that had dethroned and murdered kings, and foreign nations trembled at a power that had subdued in their own fields and cities the pride of England and the gallantry of France! To contrast Cromwell and Charles II, Napoleon and Louis XVIII, is sheer nonsense and mere verbiage—it is as if one should compare the house-dog and the wolf, and argue that the terror inspired by the latter was very much to his honour. All this is such a mystery to Mr. Macaulay that he wanders into two theories so whimsical, that we hesitate between passing them by as absurdities, or producing them for amusement; we adopt the latter. One is that Cromwell could have no interest and therefore no personal share in the death of Charles. "Whatever Cromwell was," says Mr. Macaulay, "he was no fool; and he must have known that Charles I was obviously a less difficulty in his way than Charles II." Cromwell, we retain the phrase, "was no fool," and he thought and *found* that Charles II, was, as far as he was concerned, no difficulty at all. The real truth was, that the revolutionary party in England in 1648, like that in France in 1792, was but a rope of sand which nothing could cement and consolidate but the *blood of the Kings—that* was a common crime and a common and indissoluble tie which gave all their consistency and force to both revolutions—a stroke of original sagacity in Cromwell and of imitative dexterity in Robespierre. If Mr. Macaulay admits, as he subsequently does (i. 129), that the regicide was "a sacrament of blood," by which the party became irrevocably bound to each other and separated from the rest of the nation, how can he pretend that Cromwell derived no advantage from it? In fact, his admiration—we had almost said fanaticism—for Cromwell betrays him throughout into the blindest inconsistencies.

The second vision of Mr. Macaulay is, if possible, still more absurd. He imagines a Cromwell dynasty! If it had not been for Monk and his army, the rest of the nation would have been loyal to the son of the illustrious Oliver.

> Had the Protector and the Parliament been suffered to proceed undisturbed, there can be little doubt that an order of things similar to that which was afterwards established under the House of Hanover, would have been established under the house of Cromwell.—i. 142.

And yet in a page or two Mr. Macaulay is found making an admission—made, indeed, with the object of disparaging Monk and the royalists—but which gives to his theory of a Cromwellian dynasty the most conclusive refutation.

> It was probably not till Monk had been some days in the capital that he made up his mind. The cry of the whole people was for a free parliament; and there could *be no doubt that a parliament really free would instantly restore the exiled family*.—i. 147.

All this hypothesis of a Cromwellian dynasty *looks* like sheer nonsense; but we have no doubt it has a meaning, and we request our readers not to be diverted by the almost ludicrous partiality and absurdity of Mr. Macaulay's speculations from an appreciation of the deep hostility to the monarchy from which they arise. They are like bubbles on the surface of a dark pool, which indicate there is something rotten below.

We should if we had time have many other complaints to make of the details of this chapter, which are deeply coloured with all Mr. Macaulay's prejudices and passions. He is, we may almost say of course, violent and unjust against Strafford and Clarendon; and the most prominent touch of candour that we can find in this period of his history is, that he slurs over the murder of Laud in an abscure half-line (i. 119) as if he were—as we hope he really is—ashamed of it.

We now arrive at what we have heard called the celebrated third chapter—celebrated it deserves to be, and we hope our humble observations may

add something to its celebrity. There is no feature of Mr. Macaulay's book on which, we believe, he more prides himself, and which has been in truth more popular with his readers, than the descriptions which he introduces of the residences, habits, and manners of our ancestors. They are, provided you do not look below the surface, as entertaining as Pepys or Pennant, or any of the many scrap-book histories which have been recently fabricated from those old materials; but when we come to examine them, we find that in these cases, as everywhere else, Mr. Macaulay's propensity to caricature and exaggerate leads him not merely to disfigure circumstances, but totally to forget the principle on which such episodes are admissible into regular history—namely, the illustration of the story. They should be, as it were, woven into the narrative, and not, as Mr. Macaulay generally treats them, stitched on like patches. This latter observation does not of course apply to the collecting a body of miscellaneous facts into a separate chapter, as Hume and others have done; but Mr. Macaulay's chapter, besides, as we shall show, the prevailing inaccuracy of its details, has one general and essential defect specially its own.

The moment Mr. Macaulay has selected for suspending his narrative to take a view of the surface and society of England is the death of Charles II. Now we think no worse point of time could have been chosen for tracing the obscure but very certain connection between political events and the manners of a people. The restoration, for instance, was an era in manners as well as in politics—so was in a fainter degree the Revolution—either, or both, of those periods would have afforded a natural position for contemplating a going and a coming order of things; but we believe that there are no two periods in our annals which were so identical in morals and politics—so undistinguishable, in short, in any national view—as the latter years of Charles and the earlier years of James. Here then is an objection *in limine* to this famous chapter—and not *in limine* only, but in substance; for in fact the period he has chosen would not have furnished out the chapter,

four-fifths of which belong to a date later than that which he professes to treat of. In short, the chapter is like an old curiosity-shop, into which—no matter whether it happens to stand in Charles Street, William Street, or George Street—the knick-knacks of a couple of centuries are promiscuously jumbled. What does it signify, in a history of the reign of Charles II, that a writer, "*sixty years after the Revolution*" (i. 347), says that in the lodging-houses at Bath "the hearth-slabs" were "freestone, not marble"—that "the best apartments were hung with coarse woollen stuff, and furnished with rush-bottomed chairs"?—nay, that he should have the personal good taste to lament that in those Boeotian days "*not a wainscot was painted*" (348); and yet this twaddle of the reign of George II, patched into the times of Charles II, is the appropriate occasion which he takes to panegyrise this new mode of elucidating history?—…

It is a curious and, to persons of our opinions, not unsatisfactory circumstance, that, though Mr. Macaulay almost invariably applies the term *Tory* in an opprobrious or contemptuous sense, yet so great is the power of truth in surmounting the fantastical forms and colours laid over it by this brilliant *badigeonneur*, that on the whole no one, we believe, can rise from the work without a conviction that the Tories (whatever may be said of their prejudices) were the honestest and most conscientious of the whole *dramatis personae*; and it is this fact that in several instances and circumstances imprints, as it were by force, upon Mr. Macaulay's pages an air of impartiality and candour very discordant from their general spirit.

We are now arrived at the fourth chapter—really the first, strictly speaking, of Mr. Macaulay's history—the accession of James II, where also Sir James Mackintosh's history commences. And here we have to open to our readers the most extraordinary instance of *parallelism* between two writers, unacknowledged by the later one, which we have ever seen. Sir James Mackintosh left behind him a history of the Revolution, which was

published in 1834, three years after his death, in quarto: it comes down to the Orange invasion, and, though it apparently had not received the author's last corrections, and was clumsily edited, and tagged with a continuation by a less able hand, the work is altogether (bating not a little ultra-Whiggery) very creditable to Mackintosh's diligence, taste, and power of writing; it is indeed, we think, his best and most important work, and that by which he will be most favourably known to posterity. From that work Mr. Macaulay has borrowed largely—prodigally— helped himself with both hands—not merely without acknowledging his obligation, but without so much as alluding to the existence of any such work. Nay—though this we are sure was never designed—he inserts a note full of kindness and respect to Sir James Mackintosh, which would naturally lead an uninformed reader to conclude that Sir James Mackintosh, though he had *meditated* such a work, had never even begun writing it. On the 391st page of Mr. Macaulay's first volume, at the mention of the old news-letters which preceded our modern newspapers, Mr. Macaulay says, that "they form a valuable part of the literary treasures collected by the late Sir James Mackintosh"; and to this he adds the following foot-note:

> I take this opportunity of expressing my warm gratitude to the family of my dear and honoured friend Sir James Mackintosh, for confiding to me the materials collected by him *at a time when he meditated a work similar to that which I have undertaken.* I have never seen, and I do not believe that there anywhere exists, within the same compass, so noble a *collection of extracts* from public and private archives. The judgment with which Sir James, in great masses of the rudest ore of history, selected what was valuable and rejected what was worthless, can be fully appreciated only by one who has toiled after him in the same mine.—i. 391.

Could any one imagine from this that Mackintosh had not only *meditated* a work, but actually written, and that his friends had published, a large closely printed quarto volume, on the same subject, from the same materials, and sometimes in the very same words as Mr. Macaulay's?

The coincidence—the identity, we might almost say—of the two works is so great, that, while we have been comparing them, we have often been hardly able to distinguish which was which. We rest little on the similiarity of facts, for the facts were ready made for both; and Mr. Macaulay tells us that he worked from Mackintosh's materials; there would, therefore, even if he had never seen Mackintosh's work, be a community of topics and authorities; but, seeing as we do in every page that he was writing with Mackintosh's volume before his eyes, we cannot account for his utter silence about it….

Having thus shown Mr. Macaulay's mode of dealing with what forms the chief and most characteristic feature of his book—its anecdotical gossip—we shall now endeavour to exhibit the deceptive style in which he treats the larger historical facts: in truth the style is the same—a general and unhesitating sacrifice of accuracy and reality to picturesque effect and party prejudices. He treats historical personages as the painter does his *layman*—a supple figure which he models into what he thinks the most striking attitude, and dresses up with the gaudiest colours and most fantastical draperies.

It is very difficult to condense into any manageable space the proofs of a general system of accumulating and aggravating all that was ever, whether truly or falsely, reproached to the Tories, and alleviating towards the Whigs the charges which he cannot venture to deny or even to question. The mode in which this is managed so as to keep up some show of impartiality is very dexterous. The reproach, well or ill founded, which he thinks most likely to

damage the character of any one he dislikes, is repeated over and over again in hope that the iteration will at last be taken for proof, such as the perfidy of Charles I, the profligacy and selfishness of Charles II, the cold and cruel stupidity of James, the baseness of Churchill, the indecent violence of Rochester, the contemptible subserviency of his brother, Clarendon, and so on through a whole dictionary of abuse on every one whom he takes or mistakes for a Tory, and on a few Whigs whom for some special reasons of his own he treats like Tories. On the other hand, when he finds himself reluctantly forced to acknowledge even the greatest enormity of the Whigs —corruption—treason—murder he finds much gentler terms for the facts; selects a scapegoat, some subaltern villain, or some one whom history has already gibbeted, "to bear upon him all their iniquities," and that painful sacrifice once made, he avoids with tender care a recurrence to so disagreeable a subject….

After so much political detail it will be some kind of diversion to our readers to examine Mr. Macaulay's most elaborate strategic and topographical effort, worked up with all the combined zeal and skill of an ex-Secretary-at-War and a pictorial historian—a copious description of the battle of Sedgemoor. Mr. Macaulay seems to have visited Bridgwater with a zeal worthy of a better result: for it has produced a description of the surrounding country as pompous and detailed as if it had been the scene of some grand strategic operations—a parade not merely unnecessary, but absurd, for the so-called battle was but a bungling skirmish. Monmouth had intended to surprise the King's troops in their quarters by a midnight attack, but was stopped by a wide and deep trench, of which he was not apprised, called Bussex Rhine, behind which the King's army lay. "The trenches which drain the moor are," Mr. Macaulay adds, "in that country called *rhines*." On each side of this ditch the parties stood firing at each other in the dark. Lord Grey and the cavalry ran away without striking a blow; Monmouth followed them, too, soon; for some time the foot stood with a

degree of courage and steadiness surprising in such raw and half-armed levies; at last the King's cavalry got round their flank, and they too ran: the King's foot then crossed the ditch with little or no resistance, and slaughtered, with small loss on their own side, a considerable number of the fugitives, the rest escaping back to Bridgwater. Our readers will judge whether such a skirmish required a long preliminary description of the surrounding country. Mr. Macaulay might just as usefully have described the plain of Troy. Indeed at the close of his long topographical and etymological narrative Mr. Macaulay has the tardy candour to confess that —

> little is now to be learned by visiting the field of battle, for the face of the country has been greatly changed, and the old *Bussex Rhine*, on the banks of which the great struggle took place, has long disappeared.

This is droll. After spending a deal of space and fine writing in describing the present prospect, he concludes by telling us candidly it is all of no use, for the whole scene has changed. This is like Walpole's story of the French lady who asked for her lover's picture; and when he demurred observing that, if her husband were to see it, it might betray their secret—"O dear, no," she said—just like Mr. Macaulay—"I *will have the picture*, but it *need not be like*!"

But even as to the change, we again doubt Mr. Macaulay's accuracy. The word *Rhine* in Somersetshire, as perhaps—*parva componere magnis*—in the great German river, means *running* water, and we therefore think it very unlikely that a running stream should have disappeared; but we also find in the Ordnance Survey of Somersetshire, made in our own time, the course and name of *Bussck's Rhine* distinctly laid down in front of Weston, where it probably ran in Monmouth's day; and we are further informed, in return

to some inquiries that we have caused to be made, that the *Rhine* is now, in 1849, as visible and well known as ever it was.

But this grand piece of the military topography of a battlefield where there was no battle must have its picturesque and pathetic episode, and Mr. Macaulay finds one well suited to such a novel. When Monmouth had made up his mind to attempt to *surprise* the royal army, Mr. Macaulay is willing (for a purpose which we shall see presently) to persuade himself that the Duke let the whole town into his secret:—

> That an attack was to be made under cover of the night was no secret in Bridgwater. The town was full of women, who had repaired thither by hundreds from the surrounding region to see their husbands, sons, lovers, and brothers once more. There were many sad partings that day; and many parted never to meet again. The report of the intended attack came to the ears of a young girl who was zealous for the king. Though of modest character, she had the courage to resolve that she would herself bear the intelligence to Feversham. She stole out of Bridgwater, and made her way to the royal camp. But that camp was not a place where female innocence could be safe. Even the officers, despising alike the irregular force to which they were opposed, and the negligent general who commanded them, had indulged largely in wine, and were ready for any excess of licentiousness and cruelty. One of them seized the unhappy maiden, refused to listen to her errand, and brutally outraged her. She fled in agonies of rage and shame, leaving the wicked army to its doom.—i. 606, 7.

—the *doom of the wicked army*, be it noted *en passant*, being a complete victory. Mr. Macaulay cites Kennett for this story, and adds that he is "*forced* to believe the story to be true, because Kennett declares that it was communicated to him in the year 1718 by a brave officer who had fought at

Sedgemoor, and had himself seen the poor girl depart in an agony of distress,"—*ib*.

We shall not dwell on the value of an anonymous story told *three-and-thirty years* after the Battle of Sedgemoor. The tale is sufficiently refuted by notorious facts and dates, and indeed by its internal absurdity. We know from the clear and indisputable evidence of Wade, who commanded Monmouth's infantry, all the proceedings of that day. Monmouth no doubt intended to move that night, and made open preparation for it, and the partings so pathetically described may have, therefore, taken place, and the rather because the intended movement was to leave that part of the country altogether—*not* to meet the King's troops, but to endeavour to escape them by a forced march across the Avon and into Gloucestershire. So far might have been known. But about *three* o'clock that afternoon Monmouth received intelligence by a spy that the King's troops had advanced to Sedgemoor, but had taken their positions so injudiciously, that there seemed a possibility of surprising them in a night attack. On this Monmouth assembled a council of war, which agreed that, instead of retreating that night towards the Avon as they had intended, they should advance and attack, provided the spy, who was to be sent out to a new reconnoissance, should report that the troops were not intrenched. We may be sure that—as the news only arrived at three in the afternoon—the assembling the council of war—the deliberation— the sending back the spy—his return and another deliberation—must have protracted the final decision to so late an hour that evening, that it is utterly impossible that the change of the design of a march northward to that of an "*attack to be made under cover of the night*," could have been that *morning* no secret in Bridgwater. But our readers see it was necessary for Mr. Macaulay to raise this fable, in order to account for the poor girl's knowing so important a secret. So far we have argued the case on Mr. Macaulay's own showing, which, we confess, was

very incautious on our part; but on turning to his authority we find, as usual, a story essentially different. Kennett says—

> A brave Captain in the Horse Guards, now living (1718), was in the action at Sedgemoor, and gave me the account of it:—That on *Sunday morning, July 5*, a young woman came from Monmouth's quarters to give notice of his design to surprise the King's camp *that night*; but this young woman being carried to a chief officer in a neighbouring village, she was led upstairs and debauched by him, and, coming down in a great fright and disorder (as he himself saw her), she went back, and her message was not told.—*Kennett*, in. 432.

This knocks the whole story on the head. Kennett was not aware (Wade's narrative not being published when he wrote) that the King's troops did not come in sight of Sedgemoor till about three o'clock P.M. of that Sunday on the early morning of which he places the girl's visit to the camp, and it was not till late that same evening that Monmouth changed his original determination, and formed the sudden resolution with which, to support Kennett's story, the whole town must have been acquainted at least twelve hours before. These are considerations which ought not to have escaped a philosophical historian who had the advantage, which Kennett had not, of knowing the exact time when these details occurred….

We must here conclude. We have exhausted our time and our space, but not our topics. We have selected such of the more prominent defects and errors of Mr. Macaulay as were manageable within our limits; but numerous as they are, we beg that they may be considered as specimens only of the infinitely larger assortment that the volumes would afford, and be read not merely as individual instances, but as indications of the general style of the work, and the prevailing *animus* of the writer. We have chiefly directed our attention to points of mere historical inaccuracy and infidelity; but they are

combined with a greater admixture of other—we know not whether to call them literary or moral—defects, than the insulated passages sufficiently exhibit. These faults, as we think them, but which may to some readers be the prime fascinations of the work, abound on its surface. And their very number and their superficial prominence constitute a main charge against the author, and prove, we think, his mind to be unfitted for the severity of historical inquiry. He takes much pains to parade—perhaps he really believes in—his impartiality, with what justice we appeal to the foregoing pages; but he is guilty of a prejudice as injurious in its consequences to truth as any political bias. He abhors whatever is not in itself picturesque, while he clings with the tenacity of a Novelist to the *piquant* and the startling. Whether it be the boudoir of a strumpet or the death-bed of a monarch—the strong character of a statesman-warrior abounding in contrasts and rich in mystery, or the personal history of a judge trained in the Old Bailey to vulgarize and ensanguine the King's Bench—he luxuriates with a vigour and variety of language and illustration which renders his "History" an attractive and absorbing story-book. And so spontaneously redundant are these errors— so inwoven in the very texture of Mr. Macaulay's mind—that he seems never able to escape from them. Even after the reader is led to believe that all that can be said either of praise or vituperation as to character, of voluptuous description and minute delineation as to fact and circumstance, has been passed in review before him—when a new subject, indeed, seems to have been started—all at once the old theme is renewed, and the old ideas are redressed in all the affluent imagery and profuse eloquence of which Mr. Macaulay is so eminent a master. Now of the fancy and fashion of this we should not complain—quite the contrary—in a professed novel: there is a theatre in which it would be exquisitely appropriate and attractive; but the Temple of History is not the floor for a morris-dance—the Muse Clio is not to be worshipped in the halls of Terpsichore. We protest against this species of *carnival* history; no

more like the reality than the Eglintoun Tournament or the Costume Quadrilles of Buckingham Palace; and we deplore the squandering of so much melodramatic talent on a subject which we have hitherto reverenced as the figure of Truth arrayed in the simple argments [Transcriber's note: sic] of Philosophy. We are ready to admit an hundred times over Mr. Macaulay's literary powers—brilliant even under the affectation with which he too frequently disfigures them. He is a great painter, but a suspicious narrator; a grand proficient in the picturesque, but a very poor professor of the historic. These volumes have been, and his future volumes as they appear will be, devoured with the same eagerness that *Oliver Twist* or *Vanity Fair* excite—with the same quality of zest, though perhaps with a higher degree of it;—but his pages will seldom, we think, receive a second perusal—and the work, we apprehend, will hardly find a permanent place on the historic shelf— nor ever assuredly, if continued in the spirit of the first two volumes, be quoted as authority on any question or point of the History of England.

LOCKHART ON THE AUTHOR OF "VATHEK" [1]

[From *The Quarterly Review*, June, 1834]

[1] "Italy: with sketches of Spain and Portugal. In a series of letters written during a residence in these Countries." By William Beckford, Esq., author of *Vathek*. London, 1834.

Vathek is, indeed, without reference to the time of life [before he had closed his twentieth year] when the author penned it, a very remarkable performance; but, like most of the works of the great poet (Byron) who has eloquently praised it, it is stained with poison-spots—its inspiration is too often such as might have been inhaled in the "Hall of Eblis." We do not allude so much to its audacious licentiousness, as to the diabolical levity of its contempt for mankind. The boy-author appears to have already rubbed all the bloom off his heart; and, in the midst of his dazzling genius, one trembles to think that a stripling of years so tender should have attained the cool cynicism of a *Candide*. How different is the effect of that Eastern tale of our own days, which Lord Byron ought not to have forgotten when he was criticising his favourite romance. How perfectly does *Thalaba* realize the ideal demanded in the Welsh Triad, of "fulness of erudition, simplicity of language, and purity of manners." But the critic was repelled by the

purity of that delicious creation, more than attracted by the erudition which he must have respected, and the diction which he could not but admire—

The low sweet voice so musical,
That with such deep and undefined delight
Fills the surrender'd soul.

It has long been known that Mr. Beckford prepared, shortly after the publication of his *Vathek*, some other tales in the same vein—the histories, it is supposed, of the princes in his "Hall of Eblis." A rumour had also prevailed, that the author drew up, early in life, some account of his travels in various parts of the world; nay, that he had printed a few copies of this account, and that its private perusal had been eminently serviceable to more than one of the most popular poets of the present age. But these were only vague reports; and Mr. Beckford, after achieving, on the verge of manhood, a literary reputation, which, however brilliant, could not satisfy the natural ambition of such an intellect—seemed, for more than fifty years, to have wholly withdrawn himself from the only field of his permanent distinction. The world heard enough of his gorgeous palace at Cintra (described in *Childe Harold*), afterwards of the unsubstantial pageant of his splendour at Fonthill, and latterly of his architectural caprices at Bath. But his literary name seemed to have belonged to another age; and, perhaps, in this point of view, it may not have been unnatural for Lord Byron, when comparing *Vathek* with other Eastern tales, to think rather of *Zadig* and *Rasselas*, than

Of Thalaba—the wild and wondrous song.

The preface to the present volumes informs us that they include a reprint of the book of travels, of which a small private edition passed through the press forty years ago, and of the existence of which—though many of our readers must have heard some hints—few could have had any *knowledge*. Mr. Beckford has at length been induced to publish his letters, in order to

vindicate his own original claim to certain thoughts, images, and expressions, which had been adopted by other authors whom he had from time to time received beneath his roof, and indulged with a perusal of his secret lucubrations. The mere fact that such a work has lain for near half-a-century, printed but unpublished, would be enough to stamp the author's personal character as not less extraordinary than his genius. It is, indeed, sufficiently obvious that Mr. Rogers had read it before he wrote his "Italy "—a poem, however, which possesses so many exquisite beauties entirely its own, that it may easily afford to drop the honour of some, perhaps unconsciously, appropriated ones; and we are also satisfied that this book had passed through Mr. Moore's hands before he gave us his light and graceful "Rhymes on the Road," though the traces of his imitation are rarer than those which must strike everyone who is familiar with the "Italy." We are not so sure as to Lord Byron; but, although we have not been able to lay our finger on any one passage in which he has evidently followed Mr. Beckford's vein, it will certainly rather surprise us should it hereafter be made manifest that he had not seen, or at least heard an account of, this performance, before he conceived the general plan of his "Childe Harold." Mr. Beckford's book is entirely unlike any book of travel *in prose* that exists in any European language; and if we could fancy Lord Byron to have written the "Harold" in the measure of "Don Juan," and to have availed himself of the facilities which the *ottima rima* affords for intermingling high poetry with merriment of all sorts, and especially with sarcastic sketches of living manners, we believe the result would have been a work more nearly akin to that now before us than any other in the library.

Mr. Beckford, like "Harold," passes through various regions of the world, and, disdaining to follow the guide-book, presents his reader with a series of detached, or very slenderly connected sketches of *the scenes that had made the deepest impression upon himself*. He, when it suits him, puts the passage of the Alps into a parenthesis. On one occasion, he really treats

Rome as if it had been nothing more than a post station on the road from Florence to Naples; but, again, if the scenery and people take his fancy, "he has a royal reluctance to move on, as his own hero showed when his eye glanced on the grands caractères rouges, tracés par la main de Carathis?… *Qui me donnera des loix*?— s'écria le Caliphe."

"England's wealthiest son" performs his travels, of course, in a style of great external splendour.

Conspictuus longé cunctisque notabilis intrat—

Courts and palaces, as well as convents and churches, and galleries of all sorts, fly open at his approach: he is caressed in every capital—he is *fêté* in every château. But though he appears amidst such accompaniments with all the airiness of a Juan, he has a thread of the blackest of Harold in his texture; and every now and then seems willing to draw a veil between him and the world of vanities. He is a poet, and a great one too, though we know not that he ever wrote a line of verse. His rapture amidst the sublime scenery of mountains and forests—in the Tyrol especially, and in Spain—is that of a spirit cast originally in one of nature's finest moulds; and he fixes it in language which can scarcely be praised beyond its deserts—simple, massive, nervous, apparently little laboured, yet revealing, in its effect, the perfection of art. Some immortal passages in Gray's letters and Byron's diaries, are the only things, in our tongue, that seem to us to come near the profound melancholy, blended with a picturesqueness of description at once true and startling, of many of these extraordinary pages. Nor is his sense for the *highest* beauty of art less exquisite. He seems to describe classical architecture, and the pictures of the great Italian schools, with a most passionate feeling of the grand, and with an inimitable grace of expression. On the other hand, he betrays, in a thousand places, a settled voluptuousness of temperament, and a capricious recklessness of self-

indulgence, which will lead the world to identify him henceforth with his *Vathek*, as inextricably as it has long since connected Harold with the poet that drew him; and then, that there may be no limit to the inconsistencies of such a strange genius, this spirit, at once so capable of the noblest enthusiasm, and so dashed with the gloom of over-pampered luxury, can stoop to chairs and china, ever and anon, with the zeal of an auctioneer—revel in the design of a clock or a candlestick, and be as ecstatic about a fiddler or a soprano as the fools in Hogarth's *concert*. On such occasions he reminds us, and will, we think, remind everyone, of the Lord of Strawberry Hill. But even here all we have is on a grander scale. The oriental prodigality of his magnificence shines out even in trifles. He buys a library where the other would have cheapened a missal. He is at least a male Horace Walpole; as superior to the "silken Baron," as Fonthill, with its York-like tower embosomed among hoary forests, was to that silly band-box which may still be admired on the road to Twickenham …

We have no discussions of any consequence in these volumes: even the ultra-aristocratical opinions and feelings of the author—who is, we presume, a Whig—are rather hinted than avowed. From a thousand passing sneers, we may doubt whether he has any religion at all; but still he *may* be only thinking of the outward and visible absurdities of popery—therefore we have hardly a pretext for treating these matters seriously. In short, this is meant to be, as he says in his preface, nothing but a "book of light reading"; and though no one can read it without having many grave enough feelings roused and agitated within him, there are really no passages to provoke or justify any detailed criticism either as to morals or politics …

We risk nothing in predicting that Mr. Beckford's *Travels* will henceforth be classed among the most elegant productions of modern literature: they will be forthwith translated into every language of the Continent—and will

keep his name alive, centuries after all the brass and marble he ever piled together have ceased to vibrate with the echoes of *Modenhas*.

ON COLERIDGE

[From *The Quarterly Review*, August, 1834]

The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge. 3 vols. 12mo. London, 1834.

Let us be indulged, in the mean time, in this opportunity of making a few remarks on the genius of the extraordinary man whose poems, now for the first time completely collected, are named at the head of this article. The larger part of this publication is, of course, of old date, and the author still lives; yet, besides the considerable amount of new matter in this edition, which might of itself, in the present dearth of anything eminently original in verse, justify our notice, we think the great, and yet somewhat hazy, celebrity of Coleridge, and the ill-understood character of his poetry, will be, in the opinion of a majority of our readers, more than an excuse for a few elucidatory remarks upon the subject. Idolized by many, and used without scruple by more, the poet of "Christabel" and the "Ancient Mariner" is but little truly known in that common literary world, which, without the prerogative of conferring fame hereafter, can most surely give or prevent popularity for the present. In that circle he commonly passes for a man of genius, who has written some very beautiful verses, but whose original powers, whatever they were, have been long since lost or confounded in the pursuit of metaphysic dreams. We ourselves venture to think very differently of Mr. Coleridge, both as a poet and a philosopher,

although we are well enough aware that nothing which we can say will, as matters now stand, much advance his chance of becoming a fashionable author. Indeed, as we rather believe, we should earn small thanks from him for our happiest exertions in such a cause; for certainly, of all the men of letters whom it has been our fortune to know, we never met any one who was so utterly regardless of the reputation of the mere author as Mr. Coleridge—one so lavish and indiscriminate in the exhibition of his own intellectual wealth before any and every person, no matter who—one so reckless who might reap where he had most prodigally sown and watered. "God knows,"—as we once heard him exclaim upon the subject of his unpublished system of philosophy,—"God knows, I have no author's vanity about it. I should be absolutely glad if I could hear that the *thing* had been done before me." It is somewhere told of Virgil, that he took more pleasure in the good verses of Varius and Horace than in his own. We would not answer for that; but the story has always occurred to us, when we have seen Mr. Coleridge criticising and amending the work of a contemporary author with much more zeal and hilarity than we ever perceived him to display about anything of his own.

Perhaps our readers may have heard repeated a saying of Mr. Wordsworth, that many men of this age had done wonderful *things*, as Davy, Scott, Cuvier, &c.; but that Coleridge was the only wonderful *man* he ever knew. Something, of course, must be allowed in this as in all other such cases for the antithesis; but we believe the fact really to be, that the greater part of those who have occasionally visited Mr. Coleridge have left him with a feeling akin to the judgment indicated in the above remark. They admire the man more than his works, or they forget the works in the absorbing impression made by the living author. And no wonder. Those who remember him in his more vigorous days can bear witness to the peculiarity and transcendant power of his conversational eloquence. It was unlike anything that could be heard elsewhere; the kind was different, the

degree was different, the manner was different. The boundless range of scientific knowledge, the brilliancy and exquisite nicety of illustration, the deep and ready reasoning, the strangeness and immensity of bookish lore—were not all; the dramatic story, the joke, the pun, the festivity, must be added—and with these the clerical-looking dress, the thick waving silver hair, the youthful-coloured cheek, the indefinable mouth and lips, the quick yet steady and penetrating greenish grey eye, the slow and continuous enunciation, and the everlasting music of his tones,—all went to make up the image and constitute the living presence of the man. He is now no longer young, and bodily infirmities, we regret to know, have pressed heavily upon him. His natural force is indeed abated; but his eye is not dim, neither is his mind yet enfeebled. "O youth!" he says in one of the most exquisitely finished of his later poems—

O youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known that thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that thou art gone!
Thy vesper bell hath not yet tolled:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size;—
But springtide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Mr. Coleridge's conversation, it is true, has not now all the brilliant versatility of his former years; yet we know not whether the contrast

between his bodily weakness and his mental power does not leave a deeper and more solemnly affecting impression, than his most triumphant displays in youth could ever have done. To see the pain-stricken countenance relax, and the contracted frame dilate under the kindling of intellectual fire alone —to watch the infirmities of the flesh shrinking out of sight, or glorified and transfigured in the brightness of the awakening spirit—is an awful object of contemplation; and in no other person did we ever witness such a distinction,—nay, alienation of mind from body,—such a mastery of the purely intellectual over the purely corporeal, as in the instance of this remarkable man. Even now his conversation is characterized by all the essentials of its former excellence; there is the same individuality, the same *unexpectedness*, the same universal grasp; nothing is too high, nothing too low for it: it glances from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, with a speed and a splendour, an ease and a power, which almost seem inspired: yet its universality is not of the same kind with the superficial ranging of the clever talkers whose criticism and whose information are called forth by, and spent upon, the particular topics in hand. No; in this more, perhaps, than in anything else is Mr. Coleridge's discourse distinguished: that it springs from an inner centre, and illustrates by light from the soul. His thoughts are, if we may so say, as the radii of a circle, the centre of which may be in the petals of a rose, and the circumference as wide as the boundary of things visible and invisible. In this it was that we always thought another eminent light of our time, recently lost to us, an exact contrast to Mr. Coleridge as to quality and style of conversation. You could not in all London or England hear a more fluent, a more brilliant, a more exquisitely elegant converser than Sir James Mackintosh; nor could you ever find him unprovided. But, somehow or other, it always seemed as if all the sharp and brilliant things he said were poured out of so many vials filled and labelled for the particular occasion; it struck us, to use a figure, as if his mind were an ample and well-arranged *hortus siccus*, from which you

might have specimens of every kind of plant, but all of them cut and dried for store. You rarely saw nature working at the very moment in him. With Coleridge it was and still is otherwise. He may be slower, more rambling, less pertinent; he may not strike at the instant as so eloquent; but then, what he brings forth is fresh coined; his flowers are newly gathered, they are wet with dew, and, if you please, you may almost see them growing in the rich garden of his mind. The projection is visible; the enchantment is done before your eyes. To listen to Mackintosh was to inhale perfume; it pleased, but did not satisfy. The effect of an hour with Coleridge is to set you thinking; his words haunt you for a week afterwards; they are spells, brightenings, revelations. In short, it is, if we may venture to draw so bold a line, the whole difference between talent and genius.

A very experienced short-hand writer was employed to take down Mr. Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare, but the manuscript was almost entirely unintelligible. Yet the lecturer was, as he always is, slow and measured. The writer—we have some notion it was no worse an artist than Mr. Gurney himself—gave this account of the difficulty: that with regard to every other speaker whom he had ever heard, however rapid or involved, he could almost always, by long experience in his art, guess the form of the latter part, or apodosis, of the sentence by the form of the beginning; but that the conclusion of every one of Coleridge's sentences was a *surprise* upon him. He was obliged to listen to the last word. Yet this unexpectedness, as we termed it before, is not the effect of quaintness or confusion of construction; so far from it, that we believe foreigners of different nations, especially Germans and Italians, have often borne very remarkable testimony to the grammatical purity and simplicity of his language, and have declared that they generally understood what he said much better than the sustained conversation of any other Englishman whom they had met. It is the uncommonness of the thoughts or the image which prevents your anticipating the end.

We owe, perhaps, an apology to our readers for the length of the preceding remarks; but the fact is, so very much of the intellectual life and influence of Mr. Coleridge has consisted in the oral communication of his opinions, that no sketch could be reasonably complete without a distinct notice of the peculiar character of his powers in this particular. We believe it has not been the lot of any other literary man in England, since Dr. Johnson, to command the devoted admiration and steady zeal of so many and such widely differing disciples—some of them having become, and others being likely to become, fresh and independent sources of light and moral action in themselves upon the principles of their common master. One half of these affectionate disciples have learned their lessons of philosophy from the teacher's mouth. He has been to them as an old oracle of the Academy or Lyceum. The fulness, the inwardness, the ultimate scope of his doctrines has never yet been published in print, and if disclosed, it has been from time to time in the higher moments of conversation, when occasion, and mood, and person begot an exalted crisis. More than once has Mr. Coleridge said, that with pen in hand, he felt a thousand checks and difficulties in the expression of his meaning; but that—authorship aside—he never found the smallest hitch or impediment in the fullest utterance of his most subtle fancies by word of mouth. His abstrusest thoughts became rhythmical and clear when chaunted to their own music. But let us proceed now to the publication before us.

This is the first complete collection of the poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The addition to the last edition is not less than a fourth of the whole, and the greatest part of this matter has never been printed before. It consists of many juvenile pieces, a few of the productions of the poet's middle life, and more of his later years. With regard to the additions of the first class, we should not be surprised to hear friendly doubts expressed as to the judgment shown in their publication. We ourselves think otherwise; and we are very glad to have had an opportunity of perusing them. There

may be nothing in these earlier pieces upon which a poet's reputation could be built; yet they are interesting now as measuring the boyish powers of a great author. We never read any juvenile poems that so distinctly foretokened the character of all that the poet has since done; in particular, the very earliest and loosest of these little pieces indicate that unintermitting thoughtfulness, and that fine ear for verbal harmony in which we must venture to think that not one of our modern poets approaches to Coleridge.

* * * * *

We, of course, cite these lines for little besides their luxurious smoothness; and it is very observable, that although the indications of the more strictly intellectual qualities of a great poet are very often extremely faint, as in Byron's case, in early youth,—it is universally otherwise with regard to high excellence in *versification* considered apart and by itself. Like the ear for music, the sense of metrical melody is always a natural gift; both indeed are evidently connected with the physical arrangement of the organs, and never to be acquired by any effort of art. When possessed, they by no means necessarily lead on to the achievement of consummate harmony in music or in verse; and yet consummate harmony in either has never been found where the natural gift has not made itself conspicuous long before. Spenser's Hymns, and Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," and "Rape of Lucrece," are striking instances of the overbalance of mere sweetness of sound. Even "Comus" is what we should, in this sense, call luxurious; and all four gratify the outward ear much more than that inner and severer sense which is associated with the reason, and requires a meaning even in the very music for its full satisfaction. Compare the versification of the youthful pieces mentioned above with that of the maturer works of those great poets, and you will recognize how possible it is for verses to be exquisitely melodious, and yet to fall far short of that exalted excellence of numbers of which language is in itself capable. You

will feel the simple truth, that melody is a part only of harmony. Those early flashes were indeed auspicious tokens of the coming glory, and involved some of the conditions and elements of its existence; but the rhythm of the "Faerie Queene" and of "Paradise Lost" was also the fruit of a distinct effort of uncommon care and skill. The endless variety of the pauses in the versification of these poems could not have been the work of chance, and the adaptation of words with reference to their asperity, or smoothness, or strength, is equally refined and scientific. Unless we make a partial exception of the "Castle of Indolence," we do not remember a single instance of the reproduction of the exact rhythm of the Spenserian stanza, especially of the concluding line. The precise Miltonic movement in blank verse has never, to our knowledge, been caught by any later poet. It is Mr. Coleridge's own strong remark, that you might as well think of pushing a brick out of a wall with your forefinger, as attempt to remove a word out of the finished passages in Shakespeare or Milton. The motion or transposition will alter the thought, or the feeling, or at least the tone. They are as pieces of Mosaic work, from which you cannot strike the smallest block without making a hole in the picture.

And so it is—in due proportion—with Coleridge's best poems. They are distinguished in a remarkable degree by the perfection of their rhythm and metrical arrangement. The labour bestowed upon this point must have been very great; the tone and quantity of words seem weighed in scales of gold. It will, no doubt, be considered ridiculous by the Fannii and Fanniae of our day to talk of varying the trochee with the iambus, or of resolving either into the tribrach. Yet it is evident to us that these, and even minuter points of accentual scansion, have been regarded by Mr. Coleridge as worthy of study and observation. We do not, of course, mean that rules of this kind were always in his mind while composing, any more than that an expert disputant is always thinking of the distinctions of mood and figure, whilst arguing; but we certainly believe that Mr. Coleridge has almost from the

commencement of his poetic life looked upon versification as constituting in and by itself a much more important branch of the art poetic than most of his eminent contemporaries appear to have done. And this more careful study shows itself in him in no technical peculiarities or fantastic whims, against which the genius of our language revolts; but in a more exact adaptation of the movement to the feeling, and in a finer selection of particular words with reference to their local fitness for sense and sound. Some of his poems are complete models of versification, exquisitely easy to all appearance, and subservient to the meaning, and yet so subtle in the links and transitions of the parts as to make it impossible to produce the same effect merely by imitating the syllabic metre as it stands on the surface. The secret of the sweetness lies within, and is involved in the feeling. It is this remarkable power of making his verse musical that gives a peculiar character to Mr. Coleridge's lyric poems. In some of the smaller pieces, as the conclusion of the "Kubla Khan," for example, not only the lines by themselves are musical, but the whole passage sounds all at once as an outburst or crash of harps in the still air of autumn. The verses seem as if *played* to the ear upon some unseen instrument. And the poet's manner of reciting verse is similar. It is not rhetorical, but musical: so very near recitative, that for any one else to attempt it would be ridiculous; and yet it is perfectly miraculous with what exquisite searching he elicits and makes sensible every particle of the meaning, not leaving a shadow of a shade of the feeling, the mood, the degree, untouched. We doubt if a finer rhapsode ever recited at the Panathenaic festival; and the yet unforgotten Doric of his native Devon is not altogether without a mellowing effect in his utterance of Greek. He would repeat the

[Greek: autar Achilleus dakrusas, etaron aphar ezeto. k. t. l.]

with such an interpreting accompaniment of look, and tone and gesture, that we believe any commonly-educated person might understand the

import of the passage without knowing alpha from omega. A chapter of Isaiah from his mouth involves the listener in an act of exalted devotion. We have mentioned this, to show how the whole man is made up of music; and yet Mr. Coleridge has no *ear* for music, as it is technically called. Master as he is of the intellectual recitative, he could not *sing* an air to save his life. But his delight in music is intense and unwearable, and he can detect good from bad with unerring discrimination. Poor Naldi, whom most of us remember, and all who remember must respect, said to our poet once at a concert—"That he did not seem much interested with a piece of Rossini's which had just been performed." Coleridge answered, "It sounded to me exactly like *nonsense verses*. But this thing of Beethoven's that they have begun—stop, let us listen to this, I beg!" …

The minute study of the laws and properties of metre is observable in almost every piece in these volumes. Every kind of lyric measure, rhymed and unrhymed, is attempted with success; and we doubt whether, upon the whole, there are many specimens of the heroic couplet or blank verse superior in construction to what Mr. Coleridge has given us. We mention this the rather, because it was at one time, although that time is past, the fashion to say that the Lake school—as two or three poets, essentially unlike to each other, were foolishly called—had abandoned the old and established measures of the English poetry for new conceits of their own. There was no truth in that charge; but we will say this, that, notwithstanding the prevalent opinion to the contrary, we are not sure, after perusing *some passages* in Mr. Southey's "Vision of Judgment," and the entire "Hymn to the Earth," in hexameters, in the second of the volumes now before us, that the question of the total inadmissibility of that measure in English verse can be considered as finally settled; the true point not being whether such lines are as good as, or even like, the Homeric or Virgilian models, but whether they are not in themselves a pleasing variety, and on that account alone, if for nothing else, not to be rejected as wholly barbarous …

We should not have dwelt so long upon this point of versification, unless we had conceived it to be one distinguishing excellence of Mr. Coleridge's poetry, and very closely connected with another, namely, fulness and individuality of thought. It seems to be a fact, although we do not pretend to explain it, that condensation of meaning is generally found in poetry of a high import in proportion to perfection in metrical harmony. Petrarch, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton are obvious instances. Goethe and Coleridge are almost equally so. Indeed, whether in verse, or prose, or conversation, Mr. Coleridge's mind may be fitly characterized as an energetic mind—a mind always at work, always in a course of reasoning. He cares little for anything, merely because it was or is; it must be referred, or be capable of being referred, to some law or principle, in order to attract his attention. This is not from ignorance of the facts of natural history or science. His written and published works alone sufficiently show how constantly and accurately he has been in the habit of noting all the phenomena of the material world around us; and the great philosophical system now at length in preparation for the press demonstrates, we are told, his masterly acquaintance with almost all the sciences, and with not a few of the higher and more genial of the arts. Yet his vast acquirements of this sort are never put forward by or for themselves; it is in his apt and novel illustrations, his indications of analogies, his explanation of anomalies, that he enables the hearer or reader to get a glimpse of the extent of his practical knowledge. He is always reasoning out from an inner point, and it is the inner point, the principle, the law which he labours to bring forward into light. If he can convince you or himself of the principle *à priori*, he generally leaves the facts to take care of themselves. He leads us into the laboratories of art or nature as a showman guides you through a caravan crusted with spar and stalactites, all cold, and dim, and motionless, till he lifts his torch aloft, and on a sudden you gaze in admiration on walls and roof of flaming crystals and stars of eternal diamond.

All this, whether for praise or for blame, is perceptible enough in Mr. Coleridge's verse, but perceptible, of course, in such degree and mode as the law of poetry in general, and the nature of the specific poem in particular, may require. But the main result from this frame and habit of his mind is very distinctly traceable in the uniform subjectivity of almost all his works. He does not belong to that grand division of poetry and poets which corresponds with painting and painters; or which Pindar and Dante are the chief;—those masters of the picturesque, who, by a felicity inborn, view and present everything in the completeness of actual objectivity—and who have a class derived from and congenial with them, presenting few pictures indeed, but always full of picturesque matter; of which secondary class Spenser and Southey may be mentioned as eminent instances. To neither of these does Mr. Coleridge belong; in his "Christabel," there certainly are several *distinct pictures* of great beauty; but he, as a poet, clearly comes within the other division which answers to music and the musician, in which you have a magnificent mirage of words with the subjective associations of the poet curling, and twisting, and creeping round, and through, and above every part of it. This is the class to which Milton belongs, in whose poems we have heard Mr. Coleridge say that he remembered but two proper pictures—Adam bending over the sleeping Eve at the beginning of the fifth book of the "Paradise Lost," and Delilah approaching Samson towards the end of the "Agonistes." But when we point out the intense personal feeling, the self-projection, as it were, which characterizes Mr. Coleridge's poems, we mean that such feeling is the soul and spirit, not the whole body and form, of his poetry. For surely no one has ever more earnestly and constantly borne in mind the maxim of Milton, that poetry ought to be *simple, sensuous, and impassioned*. The poems in these volumes are no authority for that dreamy, half-swooning style of verse which was criticized by Lord Byron (in language too strong for print) as the fatal sin of Mr. John Keats, and which, unless abjured betimes, must prove

fatal to several younger aspirants—male and female— who for the moment enjoy some popularity. The poetry before us is distinct and clear, and accurate in its imagery; but the imagery is rarely or never exhibited for description's sake alone; it is rarely or never exclusively objective; that is to say, put forward as a spectacle, a picture on which the mind's eye is to rest and terminate. You may if your sight is short, or your imagination cold, regard the imagery in itself and go no farther; but the poet's intention is that you should feel and imagine a great deal more than you see. His aim is to awaken in the reader the same mood of mind, the same cast of imagination and fancy whence issued the associations which animate and enlighten his pictures. You must think with him, must sympathize with him, must suffer yourself to be lifted out of your own school of opinion or faith, and fall back upon your own consciousness, an unsophisticated man. If you decline this, *non tibi spirat*. From his earliest youth to this day, Mr. Coleridge's poetry has been a faithful mirror reflecting the images of his mind. Hence he is so original, so individual. With a little trouble, the zealous reader of the "Biographia Literaria" may trace in these volumes the whole course of mental struggle and self-evolvement narrated in that odd but interesting work; but he will see the track marked in light; the notions become images, the images glorified, and not unfrequently the abstruse position stamped clearer by the poet than by the psychologist. No student of Coleridge's philosophy can fully understand it without a perusal of the illumining, and if we may so say, *popularizing* commentary of his poetry. It is the Greek put into the vulgar tongue. And we must say, it is somewhat strange to hear any one condemn those philosophical principles as altogether unintelligible, which are inextricably interwoven in every page of a volume of poetry which he professes to admire….

To this habit of intellectual introversion we are very much inclined to attribute Mr. Coleridge's never having seriously undertaken a great heroic poem. The "Paradise Lost" may be thought to stand in the way of our laying

down any general rule on the subject; yet that poem is as peculiar as Milton himself, and does not materially affect our opinion, that the pure epic can hardly be achieved by the poet in whose mind the reflecting turn *greatly* predominates. The extent of the action in such a poem requires a free and fluent stream of narrative verse; description, purely objective, must fill a large space in it, and its permanent success depends on a rapidity, or at least a liveliness, of movement which is scarcely compatible with much of what Bacon calls *inwardness* of meaning. The reader's attention could not be preserved; his journey being long, he expects his road to be smooth and unembarrassed. The condensed passion of the ode is out of place in heroic song. Few persons will dispute that the two great Homeric poems are the most delightful of epics; they may not have the sublimity of the "Paradise Lost," nor the picturesqueness of the "Divine Comedy," nor the etherial brilliancy of the "Orlando"; but, dead as they are in language, metre, accent, —obsolete in religion, manners, costume, and country,— they nevertheless even now *please* all those who can read them beyond all other narrative poems. There is a salt in them which keeps them sweet and incorruptible throughout every change. They are the most popular of all the remains of ancient genius, and translations of them for the twentieth time are amongst the very latest productions of our contemporary literature. From beginning to end, these marvellous poems are exclusively objective; everything is in them, except the poet himself. It is not to Vico or Wolfe that we refer, when we say that *Homer* is *vox et praeterea nihil*; as musical as the nightingale, and as invisible….

The "Remorse" and "Zapolya" strikingly illustrate the predominance of the meditative, pausing habit of Mr. Coleridge's mind. The first of these beautiful dramas was acted with success, although worse acting was never seen. Indeed, Kelly's sweet music was the only part of the theatrical apparatus in any respect worthy of the play. The late Mr. Kean made some progress in the study of Ordonio, with a view of reproducing the piece; and

we think that Mr. Macready, either as Ordonio or Alvar, might, with some attention to music, costume, and scenery, make the representation attractive even in the present day. But in truth, taken absolutely and in itself, the "Remorse" is more fitted for the study than the stage; its character is romantic and pastoral in a high degree, and there is a profusion of poetry in the minor parts, the effect of which could never be preserved in the common routine of representation. What this play wants is dramatic movement; there is energetic dialogue and a crisis of great interest, but the action does not sufficiently grow on the stage itself. Perhaps, also, the purpose of Alvar to waken remorse in Ordonio's mind is put forward too prominently, and has too much the look of a mere moral experiment to be probable under the circumstances in which the brothers stand to each other. Nevertheless, there is a calmness as well as superiority of intellect in Alvar which seem to justify, in some measure, the sort of attempt on his part, which, in fact, constitutes the theme of the play; and it must be admitted that the whole underplot of Isidore and Alhadra is lively and affecting in the highest degree. We particularly refer to the last scene between Ordonio and Isidore in the cavern, which we think genuine Shakespeare; and Alhadra's narrative of her discovery of her husband's murder is not surpassed in truth and force by anything of the kind that we know….

We have not yet referred to the "Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," the "Odes on France," and the "Departing Year," or the "Love Poems." All these are well known by those who know no other parts of Coleridge's poetry, and the length of our preceding remarks compels us to be brief in our notice. Mrs. Barbauld, meaning to be complimentary, told our poet, that she thought the "Ancient Mariner" very beautiful, but that it had the fault of containing no moral. "Nay, madam," replied the poet, "if I may be permitted to say so, the only fault in the poem is that there is *too much* In a work of such pure imagination I ought not to have stopped to give reasons for things, or inculcate humanity to beasts. 'The Arabian Nights' might have

taught me better." They might— the tale of the merchant's son who puts out the eyes of a genii by flinging his date-shells down a well, and is therefore ordered to prepare for death—might have taught this law of imagination; but the fault is small indeed; and the "Ancient Mariner" is, and will ever be, one of the most perfect pieces of imaginative poetry, not only in our language, but in the literature of all Europe. We have, certainly, sometimes doubted whether the miraculous destruction of the vessel in the presence of the pilot and hermit, was not an error, in respect of its bringing the purely preternatural into too close contact with the actual frame-work of the poem. The only link between those scenes of out-of-the-world wonders, and the wedding guest, should, we rather suspect, have been the blasted, unknown being himself who described them. There should have been no other witnesses of the truth of any part of the tale, but the "Ancient Mariner" himself. This is by the way: but take the work altogether, there is nothing else like it; it is a poem by itself; between it and other compositions, in *pari materia*, there is a chasm which you cannot overpass; the sensitive reader feels himself insulated, and a sea of wonder and mystery flows round him as round the spell-stricken ship itself. It was a sad mistake in the ablest artist— Mr. Scott, we believe—who in his engravings has made the ancient mariner an old decrepit man. That is not the true image; no! he should have been a growthless, decayless being, impassive to time or season, a silent cloud—the wandering Jew. The curse of the dead men's eyes should not have passed away. But this was, perhaps, too much for any pencil, even if the artist had fully entered into the poet's idea. Indeed, it is no subject for painting. The "Ancient Mariner" displays Mr. Coleridge's peculiar mastery over the wild and preternatural in a brilliant manner; but in his next poem, "Christabel," the exercise of his power in this line is still more skilful and singular. The thing attempted in "Christabel" is the most difficult of execution in the whole field of romance—witchery by daylight; and the success is complete. Geraldine, so far as she goes, is perfect. She is *sui*

generis. The reader feels the same terror and perplexity that Christabel in vain struggles to express, and the same spell that fascinates her eyes. Who and what is Geraldine—whence come, whither going, and what designing? What did the poet mean to make of her? What could he have made of her? Could he have gone on much farther without having had recourse to some of the ordinary shifts of witch tales? Was she really the daughter of Roland de Vaux, and would the friends have met again and embraced?…

We are not amongst those who wish to have "Christabel" finished. It cannot be finished. The poet has spun all he could without snapping. The theme is too fine and subtle to bear much extension. It is better as it is, imperfect as a story, but complete as an exquisite production of the imagination, differing in form and colour from the "Ancient Mariner," yet differing in effect from it only so as the same powerful faculty is directed to the feudal or the mundane phases of the preternatural….

It has been impossible to express, in the few pages to which we are necessarily limited, even a brief opinion upon all those pieces which might seem to call for notice in an estimate of this author's poetical genius. We know no writer of modern times whom it would not be easier to characterize in one page than Coleridge in two. The volumes before us contain so many integral efforts of imagination, that a distinct notice of each is indispensable, if we would form a just conclusion upon the total powers of the man. Wordsworth, Scott, Moore, Byron, Southey, are incomparably more uniform in the direction of their poetic mind. But if you look over these volumes for indications of their author's poetic powers, you find him appearing in at least half a dozen shapes, so different from each other, that it is in vain to attempt to mass them together. It cannot indeed be said, that he has ever composed what is popularly termed a *great* poem; but he is great in several lines, and the union of such powers is an essential term in a fair estimate of his genius. The romantic witchery of the "Christabel,"

and "Ancient Mariner," the subtle passion of the love-strains, the lyrical splendour of the three great odes, the affectionate dignity, thoughtfulness, and delicacy of the blank verse poems—especially the "Lover's Resolution," "Frost at Midnight," and that most noble and interesting "Address to Mr. Wordsworth"—the dramas, the satires, the epigrams—these are so distinct and so whole in themselves, that they might seem to proceed from different authors, were it not for that same individualizing power, that "shaping spirit of imagination" which more or less sensibly runs through them all. It is the *predominance* of this power, which, in our judgment, constitutes the essential difference between Coleridge and any other of his great contemporaries. He is the most imaginative of the English poets since Milton. Whatever he writes, be it on the most trivial subject, be it in the most simple strain, his imagination, *in spite of himself*, affects it. There never was a better illustrator of the dogma of the Schoolmen—*in omnem actum intellectualem imaginatio influit*. We believe we might affirm, that throughout all the mature original poems in these volumes, there is not one image, the *expression* of which does not, in a greater or less degree, individualize it and appropriate it to the poet's feelings. Tear the passage out of its place, and nail it down at the head of a chapter of a modern novel, and it will be like hanging up in a London exhibition-room a picture painted for the dim light of a cathedral. Sometimes a single word—an epithet—has the effect to the reader of a Claude Lorraine glass; it tints without obscuring or disguising the object. The poet has the same power in conversation. We remember him once settling an elaborate discussion carried on in his presence, upon the respective sublimity of Shakespeare and Schiller in Othello and the Robbers, by saying, "Both are sublime; only Schiller's is the *material* sublime— that's all!" *All* to be sure; but more than enough to show the whole difference. And upon another occasion, where the doctrine of the Sacramentaries and the Roman Catholics on the subject of the Eucharist was in question, the poet said, "They are both equally wrong; the first have

volatilized the Eucharist into a metaphor—the last have condensed it into an idol." Such utterance as this flashes light; it supersedes all argument—it abolishes proof by proving itself.

We speak of Coleridge, then, as the poet of imagination; and we add, that he is likewise the poet of thought and verbal harmony. That his thoughts are sometimes hard and sometimes even obscure, we think must be admitted; it is an obscurity of which all very subtle thinkers are occasionally guilty, either by attempting to express evanescent feelings for which human language is an inadequate vehicle, or by expressing, however adequately, thoughts and distinctions to which the common reader is unused. As to the first kind of obscurity, the words serving only as hieroglyphics to denote a once existing state of mind in the poet, but not logically inferring what that state was, the reader can only guess for himself by the context, whether he ever has or not experienced in himself a corresponding feeling; and, therefore, undoubtedly this is an obscurity which strict criticism cannot but condemn. But, if an author be obscure, merely because this or that reader is unaccustomed to the mode or direction of thinking in which such author's genius makes him take delight—such a writer must indeed bear the consequence as to immediate popularity; but he cannot help the consequence, and if he be worth anything for posterity, he will disregard it. In this sense almost every great writer, whose natural bent has been to turn the mind upon itself, is—must be—obscure; for no writer, with such a direction of intellect, will be great, unless he is individual and original; and if he is individual and original, then he must, in most cases, himself make the readers who shall be competent to sympathize with him.

The English flatter themselves by a pretence that Shakespeare and Milton are popular in England. It is good taste, indeed, to wish to have it believed that those poets are popular. Their names are so; but if it be said that the works of Shakespeare and Milton are popular—that is, liked and studied—

amongst the wide circle whom it is now the fashion to talk of as enlightened, we are obliged to express our doubts whether a grosser delusion was ever promulgated. Not a play of Shakespeare's can be ventured on the London stage without mutilation—and without the most revolting balderdash foisted into the rents made by managers in his divine dramas; nay, it is only some three or four of his pieces that can be borne at all by our all-intelligent public, unless the burthen be lightened by dancing, singing, or processioning. This for the stage. But is it otherwise with "the *reading* public"? We believe it is worse; we think, verily, that the apprentice or his master who sits out Othello or Richard at the theatres, does get a sort of glimpse, a touch, an atmosphere of intellectual grandeur; but he could not keep himself awake during the perusal of that which he admires—or fancies he admires—in scenic representation. As to understanding Shakespeare—as to entering into all Shakespeare's thoughts and feelings—as to seeing the idea of Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, as Shakespeare saw it—this we believe falls, and can only fall, to the lot of the really cultivated few, and of those who may have so much of the temperament of genius in themselves, as to comprehend and sympathize with the criticism of men of genius. Shakespeare is now popular by name, because, in the first place, great men, more on a level with the rest of mankind, have said that he is admirable, and also because, in the absolute universality of his genius, he has presented points to all. Every man, woman, and child, may pick at least one flower from his garden, the name and scent of which are familiar. To all which must of course be added, the effect of theatrical representation, be that representation what it may. There are tens of thousands of persons in this country whose only acquaintance with Shakespeare, such as it is, is through the stage.

We have been talking of the contemporary mass; but this is not all; a great original writer *of a philosophic turn*—especially a poet—will almost always have the fashionable world also against him at first, because he does

not give the sort of pleasure expected of him at the time, and because, not contented with that, he is sure, by precept or example, to show a contempt for the taste and judgment of the expectants. He is always, and by the law of his being, an idoloclast. By and by, after years of abuse or neglect, the aggregate of the single minds who think for themselves, and have seen the truth and force of his genius, becomes important; the merits of the poet by degrees constitute a question for discussion; his works are one by one read; men recognize a superiority in the abstract, and learn to be modest where before they had been scornful; the coterie becomes a sect; the sect dilates into a party; and lo! after a season, no one knows how, the poet's fame is universal. All this, to the very life, has taken place in this country within the last twenty years. The noblest philosophical poem since the time of Lucretius was, within time of short memory, declared to be intolerable, by one of the most brilliant writers in one of the most brilliant publications of the day. It always puts us in mind of Waller— no mean parallel—who, upon the coming out of the "Paradise Lost," wrote to the duke of Buckingham, amongst other pretty things, as follows:— "Milton, the old blind schoolmaster, has lately written a poem on the Fall of Man—*remarkable for nothing but its extreme length!*" Our divine poet asked a fit audience, although it should be but few. His prayer was heard; a fit audience for the "Paradise Lost" has ever been, and at this moment must be, a small one, and we cannot affect to believe that it is destined to be much increased by what is called the march of intellect.

Can we lay down the pen without remembering that Coleridge the poet is but half the name of Coleridge? This, however, is not the place, nor the time, to discuss in detail his qualities or his exertions as a psychologist, moralist, and general philosopher. That time may come, when his system, as a whole, shall be fairly placed before the world, as we have reason to hope it will soon be; and when the preliminary works— the "Friend," the "Lay Sermons," the "Aids to Reflection," and the "Church and State,"—

especially the last two—shall be seen in their proper relations as preparatory exercises for the reader. His "Church and State, according to the Idea of Each"—a little book—we cannot help recommending as a storehouse of grand and immovable principles, bearing upon some of the most vehemently disputed topics of constitutional interest in these momentous times. Assuredly this period has not produced a profounder and more luminous essay. We have heard it asked, what was the proposed object of Mr. Coleridge's labours as a metaphysical philosopher? He once answered that question himself, in language never to be forgotten by those who heard it, and which, whatever may be conjectured of the probability or even possibility of its being fully realized, must be allowed to express the completest idea of a system of philosophy ever yet made public.

"My system," said he, "if I may venture to give it so fine a name, is the only attempt that I know, ever made, to reduce all knowledge into harmony. It opposes no other system, but shows what was true in each; and how that which was true in the particular in each of them, became error, *because* it was only half the truth. I have endeavoured to unite the insulated fragments of truth, and therewith to frame a perfect mirror. I show to each system that I fully understand and rightfully appreciate what that system means; but then I lift up that system to a higher point of view, from which I enable it to see its former position, where it was indeed, but under another light and with different relations,—so that the fragment of truth is not only acknowledged, but explained. So the old astronomers discovered and maintained much that was true; but because they were placed on a false ground, and looked from a wrong point of view, they never did—they never could—discover the truth—that is, the whole truth. As soon as they left the earth, their false centre, and took their stand in the sun, immediately they saw the whole system in its true light, and the former station remaining—but remaining *as a part* of the prospect. I wish, in short, to connect a moral copula, natural history with political history; or, in other words, to make

history scientific, and science historical:—to take from history its accidentality, and from science its fatalism."

Whether we shall ever, hereafter, have occasion to advert to any new poetical efforts of Mr. Coleridge, or not, we cannot say. We wish we had a reasonable cause to expect it. If not, then this hail and farewell will have been well made. We conclude with, we believe, the last verses he has written—

My Baptismal Birth-Day.

God's child in Christ adopted,—Christ my all,—
What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather
Than forfeit the blest name, by which I call
The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father?
Father! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee;
Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.
The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death:
In Christ I live: in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life:—Let then earth, sea, and sky
Make war against me! On my heart I show
Their mighty Master's seal. In vain they try
To end my life, that can but end its woe.
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?
Yes! but not his—'tis Death itself there dies.—Vol. ii, p. 151.

SIR WALTER SCOTT ON JANE AUSTEN

[From. *The Quarterly Review*, October, 1815]

Emma; a Novel. By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice*, etc. 3 vols. 12mo. London. 1815.

There are some vices in civilized society so common that they are hardly acknowledged as stains upon the moral character, the propensity to which is nevertheless carefully concealed, even by those who most frequently give way to them; since no man of pleasure would willingly assume the gross epithet of a debauchee or a drunkard. One would almost think that novel-reading fell under this class of frailties, since among the crowds who read little else, it is not common to find an individual of hardihood sufficient to avow his taste for these frivolous studies. A novel, therefore, is frequently "bread eaten in secret"; and it is not upon Lydia Languish's toilet alone that Tom Jones and Peregrine Pickle are to be found ambushed behind works of a more grave and instructive character. And hence it has happened, that in no branch of composition, not even in poetry itself, have so many writers, and of such varied talents, exerted their powers. It may perhaps be added, that although the composition of these works admits of being exalted and decorated by the higher exertions of genius; yet such is the universal charm of narrative, that the worst novel ever written will find some gentle reader content to yawn over it, rather than to open the page of the historian, moralist, or poet. We have heard, indeed, of one work of fiction so

unutterably stupid, that the proprietor, diverted by the rarity of the incident, offered the book, which consisted of two volumes in duodecimo, handsomely bound, to any person who would declare, upon his honour, that he had read the whole from beginning to end. But although this offer was made to the passengers on board an Indiaman, during a tedious outward-bound voyage, the *Memoirs of Clegg the Clergyman* (such was the title of this unhappy composition) completely baffled the most dull and determined student on board, and bid fair for an exception to the general rule above-mentioned,—when the love of glory prevailed with the boatswain, a man of strong and solid parts, to hazard the attempt, and he actually conquered and carried off the prize!

The judicious reader will see at once that we have been pleading our own cause while stating the universal practice, and preparing him for a display of more general acquaintance with this fascinating department of literature, than at first sight may seem consistent with the graver studies to which we are compelled by duty: but in truth, when we consider how many hours of languor and anxiety, of deserted age and solitary celibacy, of pain even and poverty, are beguiled by the perusal of these light volumes, we cannot austerely condemn the source from which is drawn the alleviation of such a portion of human misery, or consider the regulation of this department as beneath the sober consideration of the critic.

If such apologies may be admitted in judging the labours of ordinary novelists, it becomes doubly the duty of the critic to treat with kindness as well as candour works which, like this before us, proclaim a knowledge of the human heart, with the power and resolution to bring that knowledge to the service of honour and virtue. The author is already known to the public by the two novels announced in her title-page, and both, the last especially, attracted, with justice, an attention from the public far superior to what is granted to the ephemeral productions which supply the regular demand of

watering-places and circulating libraries. They belong to a class of fictions which has arisen almost in our own times, and which draws the characters and incidents introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel. In its first appearance, the novel was the legitimate child of the romance; and though the manners and general turn of the composition were altered so as to suit modern times, the author remained fettered by many peculiarities derived from the original style of romantic fiction. These may be chiefly traced in the conduct of the narrative, and the tone of sentiment attributed to the fictitious personages. On the first point, although

> The talisman and magic wand were broke,
> Knights, dwarfs, and genii vanish'd into smoke,

still the reader expected to peruse a course of adventures of a nature more interesting and extraordinary than those which occur in his own life, or that of his next-door neighbours.

The hero no longer defeated armies by his single sword, clove giants to the chine, or gained kingdoms. But he was expected to go through perils by sea and land, to be steeped in poverty, to be tried by temptation, to be exposed to the alternate vicissitudes of adversity and prosperity, and his life was a troubled scene of suffering and achievement. Few novelists, indeed, adventured to deny to the hero his final hour of tranquillity and happiness, though it was the prevailing fashion never to relieve him out of his last and most dreadful distress until the finishing chapters of his history; so that although his prosperity in the record of his life was short, we were bound to believe it was long and uninterrupted when the author had done with him. The heroine was usually condemned to equal hardships and hazards. She was regularly exposed to being forcibly carried off like a Sabine virgin by some frantic admirer. And even if she escaped the terrors of masked

ruffians, an insidious ravisher, a cloak wrapped forcibly around her head, and a coach with the blinds up driving she could not conjecture whither, she had still her share of wandering, of poverty, of obloquy, of seclusion, and of imprisonment, and was frequently extended upon a bed of sickness, and reduced to her last shilling before the author condescended to shield her from persecution. In all these dread contingencies the mind of the reader was expected to sympathize, since by incidents so much beyond the bounds of his ordinary experience, his wonder and interest ought at once to be excited. But gradually he became familiar with the land of fiction, the adventures of which he assimilated not with those of real life, but with each other. Let the distress of the hero or heroine be ever so great, the reader reposed an imperturbable confidence in the talents of the author, who, as he had plunged them into distress, would in his own good time, and when things, as Tony Lumkin says, were in a concatenation accordingly, bring his favourites out of all their troubles. Mr. Crabbe has expressed his own and our feelings excellently on this subject.

For should we grant these beauties all endure
Severest pangs, they've still the speediest cure;
Before one charm be withered from the face,
Except the bloom which shall again have place,
In wedlock ends each wish, in triumph all disgrace.
And life to come, we fairly may suppose,
One light bright contrast to these wild dark woes.

In short, the author of novels was, in former times, expected to tread pretty much in the limits between the concentric circles of probability and possibility; and as he was not permitted to transgress the latter, his narrative, to make amends, almost always went beyond the bounds of the former. Now, although it may be urged that the vicissitudes of human life have occasionally led an individual through as many scenes of singular

fortune as are represented in the most extravagant of these fictions, still the causes and personages acting on these changes have varied with the progress of the adventurer's fortune, and do not present that combined plot, (the object of every skilful novelist), in which all the more interesting individuals of the dramatis personae have their appropriate share in the action and in bringing about the catastrophe. Here, even more than in its various and violent changes of fortune, rests the improbability of the novel. The life of man rolls forth like a stream from the fountain, or it spreads out into tranquillity like a placid or stagnant lake. In the latter case, the individual grows old among the characters with whom he was born, and is contemporary,—shares precisely the sort of weal and woe to which his birth destined him,— moves in the same circle,—and, allowing for the change of seasons, is influenced by, and influences the same class of persons by which he was originally surrounded. The man of mark and of adventure, on the contrary, resembles, in the course of his life, the river whose mid-current and discharge into the ocean are widely removed from each other, as well as from the rocks and wild flowers which its fountains first reflected; violent changes of time, of place, and of circumstances, hurry him forward from one scene to another, and his adventures will usually be found only connected with each other because they have happened to the same individual. Such a history resembles an ingenious, fictitious narrative, exactly in the degree in which an old dramatic chronicle of the life and death of some distinguished character, where all the various agents appear and disappear as in the page of history, approaches a regular drama, in which every person introduced plays an appropriate part, and every point of the action tends to one common catastrophe.

We return to the second broad line of distinction between the novel, as formerly composed, and real life,—the difference, namely, of the sentiments. The novelist professed to give an imitation of nature, but it was, as the French say, *la belle nature*. Human beings, indeed, were presented,

but in the most sentimental mood, and with minds purified by a sensibility which often verged on extravagance. In the serious class of novels, the hero was usually

A knight of love, who never broke a vow.

And although, in those of a more humorous cast, he was permitted a licence, borrowed either from real life or from the libertinism of the drama, still a distinction was demanded even from Peregrine Pickle, or Tom Jones; and the hero, in every folly of which he might be guilty, was studiously vindicated from the charge of infidelity of the heart. The heroine was, of course, still more immaculate; and to have conferred her affections upon any other than the lover to whom the reader had destined her from their first meeting, would have been a crime against sentiment which no author, of moderate prudence, would have hazarded, under the old *régime*.

Here, therefore, we have two essentials and important circumstances, in which the earlier novels differed from those now in fashion, and were more nearly assimilated to the old romances. And there can be no doubt that, by the studied involution and extrication of the story, by the combination of incidents new, striking and wonderful beyond the course of ordinary life, the former authors opened that obvious and strong sense of interest which arises from curiosity; as by the pure, elevated, and romantic cast of the sentiment, they conciliated those better propensities of our nature which loves to contemplate the picture of virtue, even when confessedly unable to imitate its excellences.

But strong and powerful as these sources of emotion and interest may be, they are, like all others, capable of being exhausted by habit. The imitators who rushed in crowds upon each path in which the great masters of the art had successively led the way, produced upon the public mind the usual effect of satiety. The first writer of a new class is, as it were, placed on a

pinnacle of excellence, to which, at the earliest glance of a surprised admirer, his ascent seems little less than miraculous. Time and imitation speedily diminish the wonder, and each successive attempt establishes a kind of progressive scale of ascent between the lately deified author, and the reader, who had deemed his excellence inaccessible. The stupidity, the mediocrity, the merit of his imitators, are alike fatal to the first inventor, by showing how possible it is to exaggerate his faults and to come within a certain point of his beauties.

Materials also (and the man of genius as well as his wretched imitator must work with the same) become stale and familiar. Social life, in our civilized days, affords few instances capable of being painted in the strong dark colours which excite surprise and horror; and robbers, smugglers, bailiffs, caverns, dungeons, and mad-houses, have been all introduced until they ceased to interest. And thus in the novel, as in every style of composition which appeals to the public taste, the more rich and easily worked mines being exhausted, the adventurous author must, if he is desirous of success, have recourse to those which were disdained by his predecessors as unproductive, or avoided as only capable of being turned to profit by great skill and labour.

Accordingly a style of novel has arisen, within the last fifteen or twenty years, differing from the former in the points upon which the interest hinges; neither alarming our credulity nor amusing our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die. The substitute for these excitements, which had lost much of their poignancy by the repeated and injudicious use of them, was the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the

reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him.

In adventuring upon this task, the author makes obvious sacrifices, and encounters peculiar difficulty. He who paints from *le beau idéal*, if his scenes and sentiments are striking and interesting, is in a great measure exempted from the difficult task of reconciling them with the ordinary probabilities of life: but he who paints a scene of common occurrence, places his composition within that extensive range of criticism which general experience offers to every reader. The resemblance of a statue of Hercules we must take on the artist's judgment; but every one can criticize that which is presented as the portrait of a friend, or neighbour. Something more than a mere sign-post likeness is also demanded. The portrait must have spirit and character, as well as resemblance; and being deprived of all that, according to Bayes, goes "to elevate and surprize," it must make amends by displaying depth of knowledge and dexterity of execution. We, therefore, bestow no mean compliment upon the author of *Emma*, when we say that, keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events, arising from the consideration of minds, manners and sentiments, greatly above our own. In this class she stands almost alone; for the scenes of Miss Edgeworth are laid in higher life, varied by more romantic incident, and by her remarkable power of embodying and illustrating national character. But the author of *Emma* confines herself chiefly to the middling classes of society; her most distinguished characters do not rise greatly above well-bred country gentlemen and ladies; and those which are sketched with most originality and precision, belong to a class rather below that standard. The narrative of all her novels is composed of such common occurrences as may have fallen under the observation of most folks; and her dramatis personae conduct

themselves upon the motives and principles which the readers may recognize as ruling their own and that of most of their acquaintances. The kind of moral, also, which these novels inculcate, applies equally to the paths of common life, as will best appear from a short notice of the author's former works, with a more full abstract of that which we at present have under consideration.

Sense and Sensibility, the first of these compositions, contains the history of two sisters. The elder, a young lady of prudence and regulated feelings, becomes gradually attached to a man of an excellent heart and limited talents, who happens unfortunately to be fettered by a rash and ill-assorted engagement. In the younger sister, the influence of sensibility and imagination predominates; and she, as was to be expected, also falls in love, but with more unbridled and wilful passion. Her lover, gifted with all the qualities of exterior polish and vivacity, proves faithless, and marries a woman of large fortune. The interest and merit of the piece depend altogether upon the behaviour of the elder sister, while obliged at once to sustain her own disappointment with fortitude, and to support her sister, who abandons herself, with unsuppressed feelings, to the indulgence of grief. The marriage of the unworthy rival at length relieves her own lover from his imprudent engagement, while her sister, turned wise by precept, example, and experience, transfers her affection to a very respectable and somewhat too serious admirer, who had nourished an unsuccessful passion through the three volumes.

In *Pride and Prejudice* the author presents us with a family of young women, bred up under a foolish and vulgar mother, and a father whose good abilities lay hid under such a load of indolence and insensibility, that he had become contented to make the foibles and follies of his wife and daughters the subject of dry and humorous sarcasm, rather than of admonition, or restraint. This is one of the portraits from ordinary life which shews our

author's talents in a very strong point of view. A friend of ours, whom the author never saw or heard of, was at once recognized by his own family as the original of Mr. Bennet, and we do not know if he has yet got rid of the nickname. A Mr. Collins, too, a formal, conceited, yet servile young sprig of divinity, is drawn with the same force and precision. The story of the piece consists chiefly in the fates of the second sister, to whom a man of high birth, large fortune, but haughty and reserved manners, becomes attached, in spite of the discredit thrown upon the object of his affection by the vulgarity and ill-conduct of her relations. The lady, on the contrary, hurt at the contempt of her connections, which the lover does not even attempt to suppress, and prejudiced against him on other accounts, refuses the hand which he ungraciously offers, and does not perceive that she has done a foolish thing until she accidentally visits a very handsome seat and grounds belonging to her admirer. They chance to meet exactly as her prudence had begun to subdue her prejudice; and after some essential services rendered to her family, the lover becomes encouraged to renew his addresses, and the novel ends happily.

Emma has even less story than either of the preceding novels. Miss Emma Woodhouse, from whom the book takes its name, is the daughter of a gentleman of wealth and consequence residing at his seat in the immediate vicinage of a country village called Highbury. The father, a good-natured, silly valetudinary, abandons the management of his household to Emma, he himself being only occupied by his summer and winter walk, his apothecary, his gruel, and his whist table. The latter is supplied from the neighbouring village of Highbury with precisely the sort of persons who occupy the vacant corners of a regular whist table, when a village is in the neighbourhood, and better cannot be found within the family. We have the smiling and courteous vicar, who nourishes the ambitious hope of obtaining Miss Woodhouse's hand. We have Mrs. Bates, the wife of a former rector, past everything but tea and whist; her daughter, Miss Bates, a good-natured,

vulgar, and foolish old maid; Mr. Weston, a gentleman of a frank disposition and moderate fortune, in the vicinity, and his wife an amiable and accomplished person, who had been Emma's governess, and is devotedly attached to her. Amongst all these personages, Miss Woodhouse walks forth, the princess paramount, superior to all her companions in wit, beauty, fortune, and accomplishments, doated upon by her father and the Westons, admired, and almost worshipped by the more humble companions of the whist table. The object of most young ladies is, or at least is usually supposed to be, a desirable connection in marriage. But Emma Woodhouse, either anticipating the taste of a later period of life, or, like a good sovereign, preferring the weal of her subjects of Highbury to her own private interest, sets generously about making matches for her friends without thinking of matrimony on her own account. We are informed that she had been eminently successful in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Weston; and when the novel commences she is exerting her influence in favour of Miss Harriet Smith, a boarding-school girl without family or fortune, very good humoured, very pretty, very silly, and, what suited Miss Woodhouse's purpose best of all, very much disposed to be married.

In these conjugal machinations Emma is frequently interrupted, not only by the cautions of her father, who had a particular objection to any body committing the rash act of matrimony, but also by the sturdy reproof and remonstrances of Mr. Knightley, the elder brother of her sister's husband, a sensible country gentleman of thirty-five, who had known Emma from her cradle, and was the only person who ventured to find fault with her. In spite, however, of his censure and warning, Emma lays a plan of marrying Harriet Smith to the vicar; and though she succeeds perfectly in diverting her simple friend's thoughts from an honest farmer who had made her a very suitable offer, and in flattering her into a passion for Mr. Elton, yet, on the other hand, that conceited divine totally mistakes the nature of the encouragement held out to him, and attributes the favour which he found in

Miss Woodhouse's eyes to a lurking affection on her own part. This at length encourages him to a presumptuous declaration of his sentiments; upon receiving a repulse, he looks abroad elsewhere, and enriches the Highbury society by uniting himself to a dashing young woman with as many thousands as are usually called ten, and a corresponding quantity of presumption and ill breeding.

While Emma is thus vainly engaged in forging wedlock-fetters for others, her friends have views of the same kind upon her, in favour of a son of Mr. Weston by a former marriage, who bears the name, lives under the patronage, and is to inherit the fortune of a rich uncle. Unfortunately Mr. Frank Churchill had already settled his affections on Miss Jane Fairfax, a young lady of reduced fortune; but as this was a concealed affair, Emma, when Mr. Churchill first appears on the stage, has some thoughts of being in love with him herself; speedily, however, recovering from that dangerous propensity, she is disposed to confer him upon her deserted friend Harriet Smith. Harriet has in the interim, fallen desperately in love with Mr. Knightley, the sturdy, advice-giving bachelor; and, as all the village supposes Frank Churchill and Emma to be attached to each other, there are cross purposes enough (were the novel of a more romantic cast) for cutting half the men's throats and breaking all the women's hearts. But at Highbury Cupid walks decorously, and with good discretion, bearing his torch under a lanthorn, instead of flourishing it around to set the house on fire. All these entanglements bring on only a train of mistakes and embarrassing situations, and dialogues at balls and parties of pleasure, in which the author displays her peculiar powers of humour and knowledge of human life. The plot is extricated with great simplicity. The aunt of Frank Churchill dies; his uncle, no longer under her baneful influence, consents to his marriage with Jane Fairfax. Mr. Knightley and Emma are led, by this unexpected incident, to discover that they had been in love with each other all along. Mr. Woodhouse's objections to the marriage of his daughter are overpowered by

the fears of house-breakers, and the comfort which he hopes to derive from having a stout son-in-law resident in the family; and the facile affections of Harriet Smith are transferred, like a bank bill by indorsation, to her former suitor, the honest farmer, who had obtained a favourable opportunity of renewing his addresses. Such is the simple plan of a story which we peruse with pleasure, if not with deep interest, and which perhaps we might more willingly resume than one of those narratives where the attention is strongly riveted, during the first perusal, by the powerful excitement of curiosity.

The author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting. The subjects are not often elegant, and certainly never grand; but they are finished up to nature, and with a precision which delights the reader. This is a merit which it is very difficult to illustrate by extracts, because it pervades the whole work, and is not to be comprehended from a single passage. The following is a dialogue between Mr. Woodhouse, and his elder daughter Isabella, who shares his anxiety about health, and has, like her father, a favourite apothecary. The reader must be informed that this lady, with her husband, a sensible, peremptory sort of person, had come to spend a week with her father.

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Perhaps the reader may collect from the preceding specimen both the merits and faults of the author. The former consists much in the force of a narrative conducted with much neatness and point, and a quiet yet comic dialogue, in which the characters of the speakers evolve themselves with dramatic effect. The faults, on the contrary, arise from the minute detail which the author's plan comprehends. Characters of folly or simplicity, such as those of old Woodhouse and Miss Bates, are ridiculous when first

presented, but if too often brought forward or too long dwelt upon, their prosing is apt to become as tiresome in fiction as in real society. Upon the whole, the turn of this author's novels bears the same relation to that of the sentimental and romantic cast, that cornfields and cottages and meadows bear to the highly adorned grounds of a show mansion, or the rugged sublimities of a mountain landscape. It is neither so captivating as the one, nor so grand as the other, but it affords to those who frequent it a pleasure nearly allied with the experience of their own social habits; and what is of some importance, the youthful wanderer may return from his promenade to the ordinary business of life, without any chance of having his head turned by the recollection of the scene through which he has been wandering.

One word, however, we must say in behalf of that once powerful divinity, Cupid, king of gods and men, who in these times of revolution, has been assailed, even in his own kingdom of romance, by the authors who were formerly his devoted priests. We are quite aware that there are few instances of first attachment being brought to a happy conclusion, and that it seldom can be so in a state of society so highly advanced as to render early marriages among the better class, acts, generally speaking, of imprudence. But the youth of this realm need not at present be taught the doctrine of selfishness. It is by no means their error to give the world or the good things of the world all for love; and before the authors of moral fiction couple Cupid indivisibly with calculating prudence, we would have them reflect, that they may sometimes lend their aid to substitute more mean, more sordid, and more selfish motives of conduct, for the romantic feelings which their predecessors perhaps fanned into too powerful a flame. Who is it, that in his youth has felt a virtuous attachment, however romantic or however unfortunate, but can trace back to its influence much that his character may possess of what is honourable, dignified, and disinterested? If he recollects hours wasted in unavailing hope, or saddened by doubt and disappointment; he may also dwell on many which have been snatched

from folly or libertinism, and dedicated to studies which might render him worthy of the object of his affection, or pave the way perhaps to that distinction necessary to raise him to an equality with her. Even the habitual indulgence of feelings totally unconnected with ourself and our own immediate interest, softens, graces, and amends the human mind; and after the pain of disappointment is past, those who survive (and by good fortune those are the greater number) are neither less wise nor less worthy members of society for having felt, for a time, the influence of a passion which has been well qualified as the "tenderest, noblest and best."

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY ON JANE AUSTEN

[From *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1821]

Northanger Abbey, and Persuasion. By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*. 4 vols. New Edition.

The times seem to be past when an apology was requisite from reviewers for condescending to notice a novel; when they felt themselves bound in dignity to deprecate the suspicion of paying much regard to such trifles, and pleaded the necessity of occasionally stooping to humour the taste of their fair readers. The delights of fiction, if not more keenly or more generally relished, are at least more readily acknowledged by men of sense and taste; and we have lived to hear the merits of the best of this class of writings earnestly discussed by some of the ablest scholars and soundest reasoners of the present day.

We are inclined to attribute this change, not so much to an alteration in the public taste, as in the character of the productions in question. Novels may not, perhaps, display more genius now than formerly, but they contain more solid sense; they may not afford higher gratification, but it is of a nature which men are less disposed to be ashamed of avowing. We remarked, in a former Number, in reviewing a work of the author now before us, that "a new style of novel has arisen, within the last fifteen or

twenty years, differing from the former in the points upon which the interest hinges; neither alarming our credulity nor amusing our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die. The substitute for these excitements, which had lost much of their poignancy by the repeated and injudicious use of them, was the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him."

Now, though the origin of this new school of fiction may probably be traced, as we there suggested, to the exhaustion of the mines from which materials for entertainment had been hitherto extracted, and the necessity of gratifying the natural craving of the reader for variety, by striking into an untrodden path; the consequences resulting from this change have been far greater than the mere supply of this demand. When this Flemish painting, as it were, is introduced—this accurate and unexaggerated delineation of events and characters—it necessarily follows, that a novel, which makes good its pretensions of giving a perfectly correct picture of common life, becomes a far more *instructive* work than one of equal or superior merit of the other class; it guides the judgment, and supplies a kind of artificial experience. It is a remark of the great father of criticism, that poetry (*i.e.*, narrative, and dramatic poetry) is of a more philosophical character than history; inasmuch as the latter details what has actually happened, of which many parts may chance to be exceptions to the general rules of probability, and consequently illustrate no general principles; whereas the former shews us what must naturally, or would probably, happen under given circumstances; and thus displays to us a comprehensive view of human nature, and furnishes general rules of practical wisdom. It is evident, that this will apply only to such fictions as are quite *perfect* in respect of the

probability of their story; and that he, therefore, who resorts to the fabulist rather than the historian, for instruction in human character and conduct, must throw himself entirely on the judgment and skill of his teacher, and give him credit for talents much more rare than the accuracy and veracity which are the chief requisites in history. We fear, therefore, that the exultation which we can conceive some of our gentle readers to feel, at having Aristotle's warrant for (what probably they had never dreamed of) the *philosophical character* of their studies, must, in practice, be somewhat qualified, by those sundry little violations of probability which are to be met with in most novels; and which so far lower their value, as models of real life, that a person who had no other preparation for the world than is afforded by them, would form, probably, a less accurate idea of things as they are, than he would of a lion from studying merely the representations on China tea-pots.

Accordingly, a heavy complaint has long lain against works of fiction, as giving a false picture of what they profess to imitate, and disqualifying their readers for the ordinary scenes and everyday duties of life. And this charge applies, we apprehend, to the generality of what are strictly called novels, with even more justice than to romances. When all the characters and events are very far removed from what we see around us,—when, perhaps, even supernatural agents are introduced, the reader may indulge, indeed, in occasional day-dreams, but will be so little reminded by what he has been reading, of anything that occurs in actual life, that though he may perhaps feel some disrelish for the tameness of the scene before him, compared with the fairy-land he has been visiting, yet at least his judgment will not be depraved, nor his expectations misled; he will not apprehend a meeting with Algerine banditti on English shores, nor regard the old woman who shews him about an antique country seat, as either an enchantress or the keeper of an imprisoned damsel. But it is otherwise with those fictions which differ from common life in little or nothing but the improbability of the

occurrences: the reader is insensibly led to calculate upon some of those lucky incidents and opportune coincidences of which he has been so much accustomed to read, and which, it is undeniable, *may* take place in real life; and to feel a sort of confidence, that however romantic his conduct may be, and in whatever difficulties it may involve him, all will be sure to come right at last, as is invariably the case with the hero of a novel.

On the other hand, so far as these pernicious effects fail to be produced, so far does the example lose its influence, and the exercise of poetical justice is rendered vain. The reward of virtuous conduct being brought about by fortunate accidents, he who abstains (taught, perhaps, by bitter disappointments) from reckoning on such accidents, wants that encouragement to virtue, which alone has been held out to him. "If I were *a man in a novel*," we remember to have heard an ingenious friend observe, "I should certainly act so and so, because I should be sure of being no loser by the most heroic self-devotion and of ultimately succeeding in the most daring enterprises."

It may be said, in answer, that these objections apply only to the *unskilful* novelist, who, from ignorance of the world, gives an unnatural representation of what he professes to delineate. This is partly true, and partly not; for there is a distinction to be made between the *unnatural* and the merely *improbable*: a fiction is unnatural when there is some assignable reason against the events taking place as described,—when men are represented as acting contrary to the character assigned them, or to human nature in general; as when a young lady of seventeen, brought up in ease, luxury and retirement, with no companions but the narrow-minded and illiterate, displays (as a heroine usually does) under the most trying circumstances, such wisdom, fortitude, and knowledge of the world, as the best instructors and the best examples can rarely produce without the aid of more mature age and longer experience.—On the other hand, a fiction is

still *improbable*, though *not unnatural*, when there is no reason to be assigned why things should not take place as represented, except that the *overbalance of chances is* against it; the hero meets, in his utmost distress, most opportunely, with the very person to whom he had formerly done a signal service, and who happens to communicate to him a piece of intelligence which sets all to rights. Why should he not meet him as well as any one else? all that can be said is, that there is no reason why he should. The infant who is saved from a wreck, and who afterwards becomes such a constellation of virtues and accomplishments, turns out to be no other than the nephew of the very gentleman, on whose estate the waves had cast him, and whose lovely daughter he had so long sighed for in vain: there is no reason to be given, except from the calculation of chances, why he should not have been thrown on one part of the coast as well as another. Nay, it would be nothing unnatural, though the most determined novel-reader would be shocked at its improbability, if all the hero's enemies, while they were conspiring his ruin were to be struck dead together by a lucky flash of lightning: yet many denouements which *are* decidedly unnatural, are better tolerated than this would be. We shall, perhaps, best explain our meaning by examples, taken from a novel of great merit in many respects. When Lord Glenthorn, in whom a most unfavourable education has acted on a most unfavourable disposition, after a life of torpor, broken only by short sallies of forced exertion, on a sudden reverse of fortune, displays at once the most persevering diligence in the most repulsive studies, and in middle life, without any previous habits of exertion, any hope of early business, or the example of friends, or the stimulus of actual want, to urge him, outstrips every competitor, though every competitor has every advantage against him; this is unnatural.—When Lord Glenthorn, the instant he is stripped of his estates, meets, falls in love with, and is conditionally accepted by the very lady who is remotely intitled to those estates; when, the instant he has fulfilled the conditions of their marriage, the family of the person possessed

of the estates becomes extinct, and by the concurrence of circumstances, against every one of which the chances were enormous, the hero is re-instated in all his old domains; this is merely improbable. The distinction which we have been pointing out may be plainly perceived in the events of real life; when any thing takes place of such a nature as we should call, in a fiction, merely improbable, because there are many chances against it, we call it a lucky or unlucky accident, a singular coincidence, something very extraordinary, odd, curious, etc.; whereas any thing which, in a fiction, would be called unnatural, when it actually occurs (and such things do occur), is still called unnatural, inexplicable, unaccountable, inconceivable, etc., epithets which are not applied to events that have merely the balance of chances against them.

Now, though an author who understands human nature is not likely to introduce into his fictions any thing that is unnatural, he will often have much that is improbable: he may place his personages, by the intervention of accident, in striking situations, and lead them through a course of extraordinary adventures; and yet, in the midst of all this, he will keep up the most perfect consistency of character, and make them act as it would be natural for men to act in such situations and circumstances. Fielding's novels are a good illustration of this: they display great knowledge of mankind; the characters are well preserved; the persons introduced all act as one would naturally expect they should, in the circumstances in which they are placed; but these circumstances are such as it is incalculably improbable should ever exist: several of the events, taken singly, are much against the chances of probability; but the combination of the whole in a connected series, is next to impossible. Even the romances which admit a mixture of supernatural agency, are not more unfit to prepare men for real life, than such novels as these; since one might just as reasonably calculate on the intervention of a fairy, as on the train of lucky chances which combine first to involve Tom Jones in his difficulties, and afterwards to extricate him.

Perhaps, indeed, the supernatural fable is of the two not only (as we before remarked) the less mischievous in its moral effects, but also the more correct kind of composition in point of taste: the author lays down a kind of hypothesis of the existence of ghosts, witches, or fairies, and professes to describe what would take place under that hypothesis; the novelist, on the contrary, makes no demand of extraordinary machinery, but professes to describe what may actually take place, according to the existing laws of human affairs: if he therefore present us with a series of events quite unlike any which ever do take place, we have reason to complain that he has not made good his professions.

When, therefore, the generality, even of the most approved novels, were of this character (to say nothing of the heavier charges brought, of inflaming the passions of young persons by warm descriptions, weakening their abhorrence of profligacy by exhibiting it in combination with the most engaging qualities, and presenting vice in all its allurements, while setting forth the triumphs of "virtue rewarded") it is not to be wondered that the grave guardians of youth should have generally stigmatized the whole class, as "serving only to fill young people's heads with romantic love-stories, and rendering them unfit to mind anything else." That this censure and caution should in many instances be indiscriminate, can surprize no one, who recollects how rare a quality discrimination is; and how much better it suits indolence, as well as ignorance, to lay down a rule, than to ascertain the exceptions to it: we are acquainted with a careful mother whose daughters while they never in their lives read a *novel* of any kind, are permitted to peruse, without reserve, any *plays* that happen to fall in their way; and with another, from whom no lessons, however excellent, of wisdom and piety, contained in a *prose-fiction,* can obtain quarter; but who, on the other hand, is no less indiscriminately indulgent to her children in the article of tales in *verse*, of whatever character.

The change, however, which we have already noticed, as having taken place in the character of several modern novels, has operated in a considerable degree to do away this prejudice; and has elevated this species of composition, in some respects at least, into a much higher class. For most of that instruction which used to be presented to the world in the shape of formal dissertations, or shorter and more desultory moral essays, such as those of the *Spectator* and *Rambler*, we may now resort to the pages of the acute and judicious, but not less amusing, novelists who have lately appeared. If their views of men and manners are no less just than those of the essayists who preceded them, are they to be rated lower because they present to us these views, not in the language of general description, but in the form of well-constructed fictitious narrative? If the practical lessons they inculcate are no less sound and useful, it is surely no diminution of their merit that they are conveyed by example instead of precept: nor, if their remarks are neither less wise nor less important, are they the less valuable for being represented as thrown out in the course of conversations suggested by the circumstances of the speakers, and perfectly in character. The praise and blame of the moralist are surely not the less effectual for being bestowed, not in general declamation, on classes of men, but on individuals representing those classes, who are so clearly delineated and brought into action before us, that we seem to be acquainted with them, and feel an interest in their fate.

Biography is allowed, on all hands, to be one of the most attractive and profitable kinds of reading: now such novels as we have been speaking of, being a kind of fictitious biography, bear the same relation to the real, that epic and tragic poetry, according to Aristotle, bear to history: they present us (supposing, of course, each perfect in its kind) with the general, instead of the particular,—the probable, instead of the true; and, by leaving out those accidental irregularities, and exceptions to general rules, which constitute the many improbabilities of real narrative, present us with a clear

and *abstracted* view of the general rules themselves; and thus concentrate, as it were, into a small compass, the net result of wide experience.

Among the authors of this school there is no one superior, if equal, to the lady whose last production is now before us, and whom we have much regret in finally taking leave of: her death (in the prime of life, considered as a writer) being announced in this the first publication to which her name is prefixed. We regret the failure not only of a source of innocent amusement, but also of that supply of practical good sense and instructive example, which she would probably have continued to furnish better than any of her contemporaries:—Miss Edgeworth, indeed, draws characters and details conversations, such as they occur in real life, with a spirit and fidelity not to be surpassed; but her stories are most romantically improbable (in the sense above explained), almost all the important events of them being brought about by most *providential* coincidences; and this, as we have already remarked, is not merely faulty, inasmuch as it evinces a want of skill in the writer, and gives an air of clumsiness to the fiction, but is a very considerable drawback on its practical utility: the personages either of fiction or history being then only profitable examples, when their good or ill conduct meets its appropriate reward, not from a sort of independent machinery of accidents, but as a necessary or probable result, according to the ordinary course of affairs. Miss Edgeworth also is somewhat too avowedly didactic: that seems to be true of her, which the French critics, in the extravagance of their conceits, attributed to Homer and Virgil; viz., that they first thought of a moral, and then framed a fable to illustrate it; she would, we think, instruct more successfully, and she would, we are sure, please more frequently, if she kept the design of teaching more out of sight, and did not so glaringly press every circumstance of her story, principal or subordinate, into the service of a principle to be inculcated, or information to be given. A certain portion of moral instruction must accompany every well-invented narrative. Virtue must be represented as

producing, at the long run, happiness; and vice, misery; and the accidental events, that in real life interrupt this tendency, are anomalies which, though true individually, are as false generally as the accidental deformities which vary the average outline of the human figure. They would be as much out of place in a fictitious narrative, as a wen in an academic model. But any *direct* attempt at moral teaching, and any attempt whatever to give scientific information will, we fear, unless managed with the utmost discretion, interfere with what, after all, is the immediate and peculiar object of the novelist, as of the poet, *to please*. If instruction do not join as a volunteer, she will do no good service. Miss Edgeworth's novels put us in mind of those clocks and watches which are condemned "a double or a treble debt to pay": which, besides their legitimate object, to show the hour, tell you the day of the month or the week, give you a landscape for a dial-plate, with the second hand forming the sails of a windmill, or have a barrel to play a tune, or an alarum to remind you of an engagement: all very good things in their way; but so it is that these watches never tell the time so well as those in which that is the exclusive object of the maker. Every additional movement is an obstacle to the original design. We do not deny that we have learned much physic, and much law, from *Patronage*, particularly the latter, for Miss Edgeworth's law is of a very original kind; but it was not to learn law and physic that we took up the book, and we suspect we should have been more pleased if we had been less taught. With regard to the influence of religion, which is scarcely, if at all, alluded to in Miss Edgeworth's novels, we would abstain from pronouncing any decision which should apply to her personally. She may, for aught we know, entertain opinions which would not permit her, with consistency, to attribute more to it than she has done; in that case she stands acquitted, in *foro conscientiae*, of wilfully suppressing any thing which she acknowledges to be true and important; but, as a writer, it must still be considered as a blemish, in the eyes at least of those who think differently, that virtue should be studiously inculcated with scarcely

any reference to what they regard as the main spring of it; that vice should be traced to every other source except the want of religious principle; that the most radical change from worthlessness to excellence should be represented as wholly independent of that agent which they consider as the only one that can accomplish it; and that consolation under affliction should be represented as derived from every source except the one which they look to as the only true and sure one: "is it not because there is no God in Israel that ye have sent to inquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron?"

Miss Austin has the merit (in our judgment most essential) of being evidently a Christian writer: a merit which is much enhanced, both on the score of good taste, and of practical utility, by her religion being not at all obtrusive. She might defy the most fastidious critic to call any of her novels (as *Caelebs* was designated, we will not say altogether without reason), a "dramatic sermon." The subject is rather alluded to, and that incidentally, than studiously brought forward and dwelt upon. In fact she is more sparing of it than would be thought desirable by some persons; perhaps even by herself, had she consulted merely her own sentiments; but she probably introduced it as far as she thought would be generally acceptable and profitable: for when the purpose of inculcating a religious principle is made too palpably prominent, many readers, if they do not throw aside the book with disgust, are apt to fortify themselves with that respectful kind of apathy with which they undergo a regular sermon, and prepare themselves as they do to swallow a dose of medicine, endeavouring to *get it down* in large gulps, without tasting it more than is necessary.

The moral lessons also of this lady's novels, though clearly and impressively conveyed, are not offensively put forward, but spring incidentally from the circumstances of the story; they are not forced upon the reader, but he is left to collect them (though without any difficulty) for himself: hers is that unpretending kind of instruction which is furnished by

real life; and certainly no author has ever conformed more closely to real life, as well in the incidents, as in the characters and descriptions. Her fables appear to us to be, in their own way, nearly faultless; they do not consist (like those of some of the writers who have attempted this kind of common-life novel writing) of a string of unconnected events which have little or no bearing on one main plot, and are introduced evidently for the sole purpose of bringing in characters and conversations; but have all that compactness of plan and unity of action which is generally produced by a sacrifice of probability: yet they have little or nothing that is not probable; the story proceeds without the aid of extraordinary accidents; the events which take place are the necessary or natural consequences of what has preceded; and yet (which is a very rare merit indeed) the final catastrophe is scarcely ever clearly foreseen from the beginning, and very often comes, upon the generality of readers at least, quite unexpected. We know not whether Miss Austin ever had access to the precepts of Aristotle; but there are few, if any, writers of fiction who have illustrated them more successfully.

The vivid distinctness of description, the minute fidelity of detail, and air of unstudied ease in the scenes represented, which are no less necessary than probability of incident, to carry the reader's imagination along with the story, and give fiction the perfect appearance of reality, she possesses in a high degree; and the object is accomplished without resorting to those deviations from the ordinary plan of narrative in the third person, which have been patronized by some eminent masters. We allude to the two other methods of conducting a fictitious story, viz., either by narrative in the first person, when the hero is made to tell his own tale, or by a series of letters; both of which we conceive have been adopted with a view of heightening the resemblance of the fiction to reality. At first sight, indeed, there might appear no reason why a story told in the first person should have more the air of a real history than in the third; especially as the majority of real

histories actually are in the third person; nevertheless, experience seems to show that such is the case: provided there be no want of skill in the writer, the resemblance to real life, of a fiction thus conducted, will approach much the nearest (other points being equal) to a deception, and the interest felt in it, to that which we feel in real transactions. We need only instance Defoe's Novels, which, in spite of much improbability, we believe have been oftener mistaken for true narratives, than any fictions that ever were composed. Colonel Newport is well known to have been cited as an historical authority; and we have ourselves found great difficulty in convincing many of our friends that Defoe was not himself the citizen, who relates the plague of London. The reason probably is, that in the ordinary form of narrative, the writer is not content to exhibit, like a real historian, a bare detail of such circumstances as might actually have come under his knowledge; but presents us with a description of what is passing in the minds of the parties, and gives an account of their feelings and motives, as well as their most private conversations in various places at once. All this is very amusing, but perfectly unnatural: the merest simpleton could hardly mistake a fiction of *this* kind for a true history, unless he believed the writer to be endued with omniscience and omnipresence, or to be aided by familiar spirits, doing the office of Homer's Muses, whom he invokes to tell him all that could not otherwise be known;

[Greek: *Umeis gar theoi eote pareote te, iote te panta.*]

Let the events, therefore, which are detailed, and the characters described, be ever so natural, the way in which they are presented to us is of a kind of supernatural cast, perfectly unlike any real history that ever was or can be written, and thus requiring a greater stretch of imagination in the reader. On the other hand, the supposed narrator of his own history never pretends to dive into the thoughts and feelings of the other parties; he merely describes his own, and gives his conjectures as to those of the rest,

just as a real autobiographer might do; and thus an author is enabled to assimilate his fiction to reality, without withholding that delineation of the inward workings of the human heart, which is so much coveted. Nevertheless novels in the first person have not succeeded so well as to make that mode of writing become very general. It is objected to them, not without reason, that they want a *hero*: the person intended to occupy that post being the narrator himself, who of course cannot so describe his own conduct and character as to make the reader thoroughly acquainted with him; though the attempt frequently produces an offensive appearance of egotism.

The plan of a fictitious correspondence seems calculated in some measure to combine the advantages of the other two; since, by allowing each personage to be the speaker in turn, the feelings of each may be described by himself, and his character and conduct by another. But these novels are apt to become excessively tedious; since, to give the letters the appearance of reality (without which the main object proposed would be defeated), they must contain a very large proportion of matter which has no bearing at all upon the story. There is also generally a sort of awkward disjointed appearance in a novel which proceeds entirely in letters, and holds together, as it were, by continual splicing.

Miss Austin, though she has in a few places introduced letters with great effect, has on the whole conducted her novels on the ordinary plan, describing, without scruple, private conversations and uncommunicated feelings: but she has not been forgetful of the important maxim, so long ago illustrated by Homer, and afterwards enforced by Aristotle,[1] of saying as little as possible in her own person, and giving a dramatic air to the narrative, by introducing frequent conversations; which she conducts with a regard to character hardly exceeded even by Shakespeare himself. Like him, she shows as admirable a discrimination in the characters of fools as of

people of sense; a merit which is far from common. To invent, indeed, a conversation full of wisdom or of wit, requires that the writer should himself possess ability; but the converse does not hold good: it is no fool that can describe fools well; and many who have succeeded pretty well in painting superior characters, have failed in giving individuality to those weaker ones, which it is necessary to introduce in order to give a faithful representation of real life: they exhibit to us mere folly in the abstract, forgetting that to the eye of a skilful naturalist the insects on a leaf present as wide differences as exist between the elephant and the lion. Slender, and Shallow, and Aguecheek, as Shakespeare has painted them, though equally fools, resemble one another no more than "Richard," and "Macbeth," and "Julius Caesar"; and Miss Austin's "Mrs. Bennet," "Mr. Rushworth," and "Miss Bates," are no more alike than her "Darcy," "Knightley," and "Edmund Bertram." Some have complained, indeed, of finding her fools too much like nature, and consequently tiresome; there is no disputing about tastes; all we can say is, that such critics must (whatever deference they may outwardly pay to received opinions) find the "Merry Wives of Windsor" and "Twelfth Night" very tiresome; and that those who look with pleasure at Wilkie's pictures, or those of the Dutch school, must admit that excellence of imitation may confer attraction on that which would be insipid or disagreeable in the reality.

[1] [Greek: *ouden anthes*] Arist. Poet.

Her minuteness of detail has also been found fault with; but even where it produces, at the time, a degree of tediousness, we know not whether that can justly be reckoned a blemish, which is absolutely essential to a very high excellence. Now, it is absolutely impossible, without this, to produce that thorough acquaintance with the characters, which is necessary to make the reader heartily interested in them. Let any one cut out from the *Iliad* or from Shakespeare's plays every thing (we are far from saying that either

might not lose some parts with advantage, but let him reject every thing) which is absolutely devoid of importance and of interest *in itself*; and he will find that what is left will have lost more than half its charms. We are convinced that some writers have diminished the effect of their works by being scrupulous to admit nothing into them which had not some absolute, intrinsic, and independent merit. They have acted like those who strip off the leaves of a fruit tree, as being of themselves good for nothing, with the view of securing more nourishment to the fruit, which in fact cannot attain its full maturity and flavour without them.

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To say the truth, we suspect one of Miss Austin's great merits in our eyes to be, the insight she gives us into the peculiarities of female character. Authoresses can scarcely ever forget the *esprit de corps*— can scarcely ever forget that they *are authoresses*. They seem to feel a sympathetic shudder at exposing naked a female mind. *Elles se peignent en buste*, and leave the mysteries of womanhood to be described by some interloping male, like Richardson or Marivaux, who is turned out before he has seen half the rites, and is forced to spin from his own conjectures the rest. Now from this fault Miss Austin is free. Her heroines are what one knows women must be, though one never can get them to acknowledge it. As liable to "fall in love first," as anxious to attract the attention of agreeable men, as much taken with a striking manner, or a handsome face, as unequally gifted with constancy and firmness, as liable to have their affections biassed by convenience or fashion, as we, on our part, will admit men to be. As some illustration of what we mean, we refer our readers to the conversation between Miss Crawford and Fanny, vol. iii, p. 102. Fanny's meeting with her father, p. 199; her reflections after reading Edmund's letter, 246; her happiness (good, and heroine though she be) in the midst of the misery of all her friends, when she finds that Edmund has decidedly broken with her

rival; feelings, all of them, which, under the influence of strong passion, must alloy the purest mind, but with which scarcely any *authoress* but Miss Austin would have ventured to temper the aetherial materials of a heroine.

But we must proceed to the publication of which the title is prefixed to this article. It contains, it seems, the earliest and the latest productions of the author; the first of them having been purchased, we are told, many years back by a bookseller, who, for some reason unexplained, thought proper to alter his mind and withhold it. We do not much applaud his taste; for though it is decidedly inferior to her other works, having less plot, and what there is, less artificially wrought up, and also less exquisite nicety of moral painting; yet the same kind of excellences which characterise the other novels may be perceived in this, in a degree which would have been highly creditable to most other writers of the same school, and which would have entitled the author to considerable praise, had she written nothing better.

We already begin to fear, that we have indulged too much in extracts, and we must save some room for *Persuasion*, or we could not resist giving a specimen of John Thorpe, with his horse that *cannot* go less than 10 miles an hour, his refusal to drive his sister "because she has such thick ankles," and his sober consumption of five pints of port a day; altogether the best portrait of a species, which, though almost extinct, cannot yet be quite classed among the Palaeotheria, the Bang-up Oxonian. Miss Thorpe, the jilt of middling life, is, in her way, quite as good, though she has not the advantage of being the representative of a rare or a diminishing species. We fear few of our readers, however they may admire the naïveté, will admit the truth of poor John Morland's postscript, "I can never expect to know such another woman."

The latter of these novels, however, *Persuasion*, which is more strictly to be considered as a posthumous work, possesses that superiority which

might be expected from the more mature age at which it was written, and is second, we think, to none of the former ones, if not superior to all. In the humorous delineation of character it does not abound quite so much as some of the others, though it has great merit even on that score; but it has more of that tender and yet elevated kind of interest which is aimed at by the generality of novels, and in pursuit of which they seldom fail of running into romantic extravagance: on the whole, it is one of the most elegant fictions of common life we ever remember to have met with.

Sir Walter Elliot, a silly and conceited baronet, has three daughters, the eldest two, unmarried, and the third, Mary, the wife of a neighbouring gentleman, Mr. Charles Musgrove, heir to a considerable fortune, and living in a genteel cottage in the neighbourhood of the Great house which he is hereafter to inherit. The second daughter, Anne, who is the heroine, and the only one of the family possessed of good sense (a quality which Miss Austin is as sparing of in her novels, as we fear her great mistress, Nature, has been in real life), when on a visit to her sister, is, by that sort of instinct which generally points out to all parties the person on whose judgment and temper they may rely, appealed to in all the little family differences which arise, and which are described with infinite spirit and detail.

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We ventured, in a former article, to remonstrate against the dethronement of the once powerful God of Love, in his own most especial domain, the novel; and to suggest that, in shunning the ordinary fault of recommending by examples a romantic and uncalculating extravagance of passion, Miss Austin had rather fallen into the opposite extreme of exclusively patronizing what are called prudent matches, and too much disparaging sentimental enthusiasm. We urged, that, mischievous as is the extreme on this side, it is not the one into which the young folks of the present day are

the most likely to run: the prevailing fault is not now, whatever it may have been, to sacrifice all for love:

Venit enim magnum donandi parca juventus,
Nec tantum Veneris quantum studiosa culinae.

We may now, without retracting our opinion, bestow unqualified approbation; for the distresses of the present heroine all arise from her prudent refusal to listen to the suggestions of her heart. The catastrophe, however, is happy, and we are left in doubt whether it would have been better for her or not, to accept the first proposal; and this we conceive is precisely the proper medium; for, though we would not have prudential calculations the sole principle to be regarded in marriage, we are far from advocating their exclusion. To disregard the advice of sober-minded friends on an important point of conduct, is an imprudence we would by no means recommend; indeed, it is a species of selfishness, if, in listening only to the dictates of passion, a man sacrifices to its gratification the happiness of those most dear to him as well as his own; though it is not now-a-days the most prevalent form of selfishness. But it is no condemnation of a sentiment to say, that it becomes blameable when it interferes with duty, and is uncontrolled by conscience: the desire of riches, power, or distinction—the taste for ease and comfort—are to be condemned when they transgress these bounds; and love, if it keep within them, even though it be somewhat tinged with enthusiasm, and a little at variance with what the worldly call prudence, *i.e.*, regard for pecuniary advantage, may afford a better moral discipline to the mind than most other passions. It will not at least be denied, that it has often proved a powerful stimulus to exertion where others have failed, and has called forth talents unknown before even to the possessor. What, though the pursuit may be fruitless, and the hopes visionary? The result may be a real and substantial benefit, though of another kind; the vineyard may have been cultivated by digging in it for the

treasure which is never to be found. What though the perfections with which imagination has decorated the beloved object, may, in fact, exist but in a slender degree? still they are believed in and admired as real; if not, the love is such as does not merit the name; and it is proverbially true that men become assimilated to the character (*i.e.*, what they *think* the character) of the being they fervently adore: thus, as in the noblest exhibitions of the stage, though that which is contemplated be but a fiction, it may be realized in the mind of the beholder; and, though grasping at a cloud, he may become worthy of possessing a real goddess. Many a generous sentiment, and many a virtuous resolution, have been called forth and matured by admiration of one, who may herself perhaps have been incapable of either. It matters not what the object is that a man aspires to be worthy of, and proposes as a model for imitation, if he does but *believe* it to be excellent. Moreover, all doubts of success (and they are seldom, if ever, entirely wanting) must either produce or exercise humility; and the endeavour to study another's interests and inclinations, and prefer them to one's own, may promote a habit of general benevolence which may outlast the present occasion. Every thing, in short, which tends to abstract a man in any degree, or in any way, from self,—from self-admiration and self-interest, has, so far at least, a beneficial influence in forming the character.

On the whole, Miss Austin's works may safely be recommended, not only as among the most unexceptionable of their class, but as combining, in an eminent degree, instruction with amusement, though without the direct effort at the former, of which we have complained, as sometimes defeating its object. For those who cannot, or will not, *learn* anything from productions of this kind, she has provided entertainment which entitles her to thanks; for mere innocent amusement is in itself a good, when it interferes with no greater: especially as it may occupy the place of some other that may *not* be innocent. The Eastern monarch who proclaimed a reward to him who should discover a new pleasure, would have deserved

well of mankind had he stipulated that it should be blameless. Those, again, who delight in the study of human nature, may improve in the knowledge of it, and in the profitable application of that knowledge, by the perusal of such fictions as those before us.

W. E. GLADSTONE ON TENNYSON

[From *The Quarterly Review*, October, 1859]

1. *Tennyson's Poems*. In Two Volumes. London, 1842. 2. *The Princess: a Medley*. London, 1847. 3. *In Memoriam*. London, 1850. 4. *Maud, and other Poems*. London, 1855. 5. *Idylls of the King*. London, 1859.

Mr. Tennyson published his first volume, under the title of "Poems Chiefly Lyrical," in 1830, and his second, with the name simply of "Poems," in 1833. In 1842 he reappeared before the world in two volumes, partly made up from the *débris* of his earlier pieces; and from this time forward he came into the enjoyment of a popularity at once great, growing, and select. With a manly resolution, which gave promise of the rare excellence he was progressively to attain, he had at this time amputated altogether from the collection about one-half of the contents of his earliest work, with some considerable portion of the second; he had almost rewritten or carefully corrected other important pieces, and had added a volume of new compositions.

The latter handiwork showed a great advance upon the earlier; as, indeed, 1833 had shown upon 1830. From the very first, however, he had been noteworthy in performance as well as in promise, and it was plain that, whatever else might happen, at least neglect was not to be his lot. But, in the natural heat of youth he had at the outset certainly mixed up some trivial

with a greater number of worthy productions, and had shown an impatience of criticism by which, however excusable, he was sure to be himself the chief sufferer. His higher gifts, too, were of the quality which, by the changeless law of nature, cannot ripen fast; and there was, accordingly, some portion both of obscurity and of crudity in the results of his youthful labours. Men of slighter materials would have come more quickly to their maturity, and might have given less occasion not only for cavil but for animadversion. It was yet more creditable to him, than it could be even to the just among his critics, that he should, and while yet young, have applied himself with so resolute a hand to the work of castigation. He thus gave a remarkable proof alike of his reverence for his art, of his insight into its powers, of the superiority he had acquired to all the more commonplace illusions of self-love, and perhaps of his presaging consciousness that the great, if they mean to fulfil the measure of their greatness, should always be fastidious against themselves.

It would be superfluous to enter upon any general criticism of this collection, which was examined when still recent in this Review, and a large portion of which is established in the familiar recollection and favour of the public. We may, however, say that what may be termed at large the classical idea (though it is not that of Troas nor of the Homeric period) has, perhaps, never been grasped with greater force and justice than in "Oenone," nor exhibited in a form of more consummate polish. "Ulysses" is likewise a highly finished poem; but it is open to the remark that it exhibits (so to speak) a corner-view of a character which was in itself a *cosmos*. Never has political philosophy been wedded to the poetic form more happily than in the three short pieces on England and her institutions, unhappily without title, and only to be cited, like writs of law and papal bulls, by their first words. Even among the rejected pieces there are specimens of a deep metaphysical insight; and this power reappears with an increasing growth of ethical and social wisdom in "Locksley Hall" and elsewhere. The

Wordsworthian poem of "Dora" is admirable in its kind. From the firmness of its drawing, and the depth and singular purity of its colour, "Godiva" stood, if we judge aright, as at once a great performance and a great pledge. But, above all, the fragmentary piece on the Death of Arthur was a fit prelude to that lordly music which is now sounding in our ears. If we pass onward from these volumes, it is only because space forbids a further enumeration.

The "Princess" was published in 1847. The author has termed it "a medley": why, we know not. It approaches more nearly to the character of a regular drama, with the stage directions written into verse, than any other of his works, and it is composed consecutively throughout on the basis of one idea. It exhibits an effort to amalgamate the place and function of woman with that of man, and the failure of that effort, which duly winds up with the surrender and marriage of the fairest and chief enthusiast. It may be doubted whether the idea is one well suited to exhibition in a quasi-dramatic form. Certainly the mode of embodying it, so far as it is dramatic, is not successful; for here again the persons are little better than mere *personae*. They are *media*, and weak *media*, for the conveyance of the ideas. The poem is, nevertheless, one of high interest, on account of the force, purity and nobleness of the main streams of thought, which are clothed in language full of all Mr. Tennyson's excellences; and also because it marks the earliest effort of his mind in the direction of his latest and greatest achievements.

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With passages like these still upon the mind and ear, and likewise having in view many others in the "Princess" and elsewhere, we may confidently assert it as one of Mr. Tennyson's brightest distinctions that he is now what from the very first he strove to be, and what when he wrote "Godiva" he

gave ample promise of becoming—the poet of woman. We do not mean, nor do we know, that his hold over women as his readers is greater than his command or influence over men; but that he has studied, sounded, painted woman in form, in motion, in character, in office, in capability, with rare devotion, power, and skill; and the poet who best achieves this end does also most and best for man.

In 1850 Mr. Tennyson gave to the world, under the title of "In Memoriam," perhaps the richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed. The memory of Arthur Henry Hallam, who died suddenly in 1833, at the age of twenty-two, will doubtless live chiefly in connection with this volume; but he is well known to have been one who, if the term of his days had been prolonged, would have needed no aid from a friendly hand, would have built for himself an enduring monument, and would have bequeathed to his country a name in all likelihood greater than that of his very distinguished father. There was no one among those who were blessed with his friendship, nay, as we see, not even Mr. Tennyson,[1] who did not feel at once bound closely to him by commanding affection, and left far behind by the rapid, full, and rich development of his ever-searching mind; by his

> All comprehensive tenderness,
> All subtilising intellect.

[1] See "In Memoriam," pp. 64, 84.

It would be easy to show what, in the varied forms of human excellence, he might, had life been granted him, have accomplished; much more difficult to point the finger and to say, "This he never could have done." Enough remains from among his early efforts to accredit whatever mournful witness may now be borne of him. But what can be a nobler tribute than this, that for seventeen years after his death a poet, fast rising towards the

lofty summits of his art, found that young fading image the richest source of his inspiration, and of thoughts that gave him buoyancy for a flight such as he had not hitherto attained?

It would be very difficult to convey a just idea of this volume either by narrative or by quotation. In the series of monodies or meditations which compose it, and which follow in long series without weariness or sameness, the poet never moves away a step from the grave of his friend, but, while circling round it, has always a new point of view. Strength of love, depth of grief, aching sense of loss, have driven him forth as it were on a quest of consolation, and he asks it of nature, thought, religion, in a hundred forms which a rich and varied imagination continually suggests, but all of them connected by one central point, the recollection of the dead. This work he prosecutes, not in vain effeminate complaint, but in a manly recognition of the fruit and profit even of baffled love, in noble suggestions of the future, in heart-soothing and heart-chastening thoughts of what the dead was and of what he is, and of what one who has been, and therefore still is, in near contact with him is bound to be. The whole movement of the poem is between the mourner and the mourned: it may be called one long soliloquy; but it has this mark of greatness, that, though the singer is himself a large part of the subject, it never degenerates into egotism— for he speaks typically on behalf of humanity at large, and in his own name, like Dante on his mystic journey, teaches deep lessons of life and conscience to us all.

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By the time "In Memoriam" had sunk into the public mind, Mr. Tennyson had taken his rank as our first then living poet. Over the fresh hearts and understandings of the young, notwithstanding his obscurities, his metaphysics, his contempt of gewgaws, he had established an extraordinary sway. We ourselves, with some thousands of other spectators, saw him

receive in that noble structure of Wren, the theatre of Oxford, the decoration of D.C.L., which we perceive he always wears on his title-page. Among his colleagues in the honour were Sir De Lacy Evans and Sir John Burgoyne, fresh from the stirring exploits of the Crimea; but even patriotism, at the fever heat of war, could not command a more fervent enthusiasm for the old and gallant warriors than was evoked by the presence of Mr. Tennyson.

In the year 1855 Mr. Tennyson proceeded to publish his "Maud," the least popular, and probably the least worthy of popularity, among his more considerable works. A somewhat heavy dreaminess, and a great deal of obscurity, hang about this poem; and the effort required to dispel the darkness of the general scheme is not repaid when we discover what it hides. The main thread of "Maud" seems to be this:—A love once accepted, then disappointed, leads to blood-shedding, and onward to madness with lucid alternations. The insanity expresses itself in the ravings of the homicide lover, who even imagines himself among the dead, in a clamour and confusion closely resembling an ill-regulated Bedlam, but which, if the description be a faithful one, would for ever deprive the grave of its title to the epithet of silent. It may be good frenzy, but we doubt its being as good poetry. Of all this there may, we admit, be an esoteric view: but we speak of the work as it offers itself to the common eye. Both Maud and the lover are too nebulous by far; and they remind us of the boneless and pulpy personages by whom, as Dr. Whewell assures us, the planet Jupiter is inhabited, if inhabited at all. But the most doubtful part of the poem is its climax. A vision of the beloved image (p. 97) "spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars," righteous wars, of course, and the madman begins to receive light and comfort; but, strangely enough, it seems to be the wars, and not the image, in which the source of consolation lies (p. 98).

No more shall Commerce be all in all, and Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,

And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase.
… a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told …
For the long long canker of peace is over and done:
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful grinning mouths of the fortress, names
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire!

What interpretation are we meant to give to all this sound and fury? We would fain have put it down as intended to be the finishing-stroke in the picture of a mania which has reached its zenith. We might call in aid of this construction more happy and refreshing passages from other poems, as when Mr. Tennyson is

Certain, if knowledge brings the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away.[1]

[1] "Poems," p. 182, ed. 1853. See also "Locksley Hall," p. 278.

And again in "The Golden Dream,"—

When shall all men's good
Be each man's rule, and universal peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land?

And yet once more in a noble piece of "In Memoriam,"—

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

But on the other hand we must recollect that very long ago, when the apparition of invasion from across the Channel had as yet spoiled no man's slumbers, Mr. Tennyson's blood was already up:[2]—

For the French, the Pope may shrive them …
And the merry devil drive them
Through the water and the fire.

[2] "Poems chiefly Lyrical," 1830, p. 142.

And unhappily in the beginning of "Maud," when still in the best use of such wits as he possesses, its hero deals largely in kindred extravagances (p. 7):—

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
Is it peace or war? better war! loud war by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.

He then anticipates that, upon an enemy's attacking this country, "the smooth-faced, snub-nosed rogue," who typifies the bulk of the British people, "the nation of shopkeepers," as it has been emasculated and corrupted by excess of peace, will leap from his counter and till to charge the enemy; and thus it is to be reasonably hoped that we shall attain to the effectual renovation of society.

We frankly own that our divining rod does not enable us to say whether the poet intends to be in any and what degree sponsor to these sentiments, or whether he has put them forth in the exercise of his undoubted right to make vivid and suggestive representations of even the partial and narrow aspects of some endangered truth. This is at best, indeed, a perilous business, for out of such fervid partial representations nearly all grave

human error springs; and it should only be pursued with caution and in season. But we do not recollect that 1855 was a season of serious danger from a mania for peace and its pursuits; and even if it had been so, we fear that the passages we have quoted far overpass all the bounds of moderation and good sense. It is, indeed, true that peace has its moral perils and temptations for degenerate man, as has every other blessing, without exception, that he can receive from the hand of God. It is moreover not less true that, amidst the clash of arms, the noblest forms of character may be reared, and the highest acts of duty done; that these great and precious results may be due to war as their cause; and that one high form of sentiment in particular, the love of country, receives a powerful and general stimulus from the bloody strife. But this is as the furious cruelty of Pharaoh made place for the benign virtue of his daughter; as the butchering sentence of Herod raised without doubt many a mother's love into heroic sublimity; as plague, as famine, as fire, as flood, as every curse and every scourge that is wielded by an angry Providence for the chastisement of man, is an appointed instrument for tempering human souls in the seven-times heated furnace of affliction, up to the standard of angelic and archangelic virtue. War, indeed, has the property of exciting much generous and noble feeling on a large scale; but with this special recommendation it has, in its modern forms especially, peculiar and unequalled evils. As it has a wider sweep of desolating power than the rest, so it has the peculiar quality that it is more susceptible of being decked in gaudy trappings, and of fascinating the imagination of those whose passions it inflames. But it is on this very account a perilous delusion to teach that war is a cure for moral evil in any other sense than as the sister tribulations are. The eulogies of the frantic hero in "Maud," however, deviate into grosser folly. It is natural that such vagaries should overlook the fixed laws of Providence; and under these laws the mass of mankind is composed of men, women, and children who can but just ward off hunger, cold, and nakedness; whose whole ideas of

Mammon-worship are comprised in the search for their daily food, clothing, shelter, fuel; whom any casualty reduces to positive want; and whose already low estimate is yet further lowered and ground down when "the blood-red blossom of war flames with its heart of fire." But what is a little strange is, that war should be recommended as a specific for the particular evil of Mammon-worship. Such it never was, even in the days when the Greek heroes longed for the booty of Troy, and anticipated lying by the wives of its princes and its citizens. Still it had, in times now gone by, ennobling elements and tendencies of the less sordid kind. But one inevitable characteristic of modern war is, that it is associated throughout, in all its particulars, with a vast and most irregular formation of commercial enterprise. There is no incentive to Mammon-worship so remarkable as that which it affords. The political economy of war is now one of its most commanding aspects. Every farthing, with the smallest exceptions conceivable, of the scores or hundreds of millions which a war may cost, goes directly to stimulate production, though it is intended ultimately for waste or for destruction. Apart from the fact that war destroys every rule of public thrift, and saps honesty itself in the use of the public treasure for which it makes such unbounded calls, it therefore is the greatest feeder of that lust of gold which we are told is the essence of commerce, though we had hoped it was only its occasional besetting sin. It is, however, more than this; for the regular commerce of peace is tameness itself compared with the gambling spirit which war, through the rapid shiftings and high prices which it brings, always introduces into trade. In its moral operation it more resembles, perhaps, the finding of a new gold-field, than anything else. Meantime, as the most wicked mothers do not kill their offspring from a taste for the practice in the abstract, but under the pressure of want, and as war always brings home want to a larger circle of the people than feel it in peace, we ask the hero of "Maud" to let us know whether war is more likely to reduce or to multiply the horrors which he denounces? Will more babies

be poisoned amidst comparative ease and plenty, or when, as before the fall of Napoleon, provisions were twice as dear as they now are, and wages not much more than half as high? Romans and Carthaginians were pretty much given to war: but no nations were more sedulous in the cult of Mammon. Again, the Scriptures are pretty strong against Mammon-worship, but they do not recommend this original and peculiar cure. Nay, once more: what sad errors must have crept into the text of the prophet Isaiah when he is made to desire that our swords shall be converted into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks! But we have this solid consolation after all, that Mr. Tennyson's war poetry is not comparable to his poetry of peace. Indeed he is not here successful at all: the work, of a lower order than his, demands the abrupt force and the lyric fire which do not seem to be among his varied and brilliant gifts. We say more. Mr. Tennyson is too intimately and essentially the poet of the nineteenth century to separate himself from its leading characteristics, the progress of physical science and a vast commercial, mechanical, and industrial development. Whatever he may say or do in an occasional fit, he cannot long either cross or lose its sympathies; for while he elevates as well as adorns it, he is flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone. We fondly believe it is his business to do much towards the solution of that problem, so fearful from its magnitude, how to harmonise this new draught of external power and activity with the old and more mellow wine of faith, self devotion, loyalty, reverence, and discipline. And all that we have said is aimed, not at Mr. Tennyson, but at a lay-figure which he has set up, and into the mouth of which he has put words that cannot be his words.

We return to our proper task, "Maud," if an unintelligible or even, for Mr. Tennyson, an inferior work, is still a work which no inferior man could have produced; nor would it be difficult to extract abundance of lines, and even passages, obviously worthy of their author. And if this poem would have made while alone a volume too light for his fame, the defect is

supplied by the minor pieces, some of which are admirable. "The Brook," with its charming interstitial soliloquy, and the "Letters" will, we are persuaded, always rank among Mr. Tennyson's happy efforts; while the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," written from the heart and sealed by the conscience of the poet, is worthy of that great and genuine piece of manhood, its immortal subject.

We must touch for a moment upon what has already been mentioned as a separate subject of interest in the "Princess." We venture to describe it as in substance a drama, with a plot imperfectly worked and with characters insufficiently chiselled and relieved. Its author began by presenting, and for many years continued to present, personal as well as natural pictures of individual attitude or movement; and, as in "Oenone" and "Godiva," he carried them to a very high pitch of perfection. But he scarcely attempted, unless in his more homely narrations, anything like grouping or combination. It now appears that for the higher effort he has been gradually accumulating and preparing his resources. In the sections of the prolonged soliloquy of "Maud" we see a crude attempt at representing combined interests and characters with heroic elevation, under the special difficulty of appearing, like Mathews, in one person only; in the "Princess" we had a happier effort, though one that still left more to be desired. Each, however, in its own stage was a preparation for an enterprise at once bolder and more mature.

We now come to the recent work of the poet—the "Idylls of the King." The field, which Mr. Tennyson has chosen for this his recent and far greatest exploit, is one of so deep and wide-reaching an interest as to demand some previous notice of a special kind.

Lofty example in comprehensive forms is, without doubt, one of the great standing needs of our race. To this want it has been from the first one main

purpose of the highest poetry to answer. The quest of Beauty leads all those who engage in it to the ideal or normal man as the summit of attainable excellence. By no arbitrary choice, but in obedience to unchanging laws, the painter and the sculptor must found their art upon the study of the human form, and must reckon its successful reproduction as their noblest and most consummate exploit. The concern of Poetry with corporal beauty is, though important, yet secondary: this art uses form as an auxiliary, as a subordinate though proper part in the delineation of mind and character, of which it is appointed to be a visible organ. But with mind and character themselves lies the highest occupation of the Muse. Homer, the patriarch of poets, has founded his two immortal works upon two of these ideal developments in Achilles and Ulysses; and has adorned them with others, such as Penelope and Helen, Hector and Diomed, every one an immortal product, though as compared with the others either less consummate or less conspicuous. Though deformed by the mire of after-tradition, all the great characters of Homer have become models and standards, each in its own kind, for what was, or was supposed to be, its distinguishing gift.

At length, after many generations and great revolutions of mind and of events, another age arrived, like, if not equal, in creative power to that of Homer. The Gospel had given to the whole life of man a real resurrection, and its second birth was followed by its second youth. This rejuvenescence was allotted to those wonderful centuries which popular ignorance confounds with the dark ages properly so called—an identification about as rational as if we were to compare the life within the womb to the life of intelligent though early childhood. Awakened to aspirations at once fresh and ancient, the mind of man took hold of the venerable ideals bequeathed to us by the Greeks as a precious part of its inheritance, and gave them again to the light, appropriated but also renewed. The old materials came forth, but not alone; for the types which human genius had formerly conceived were now submitted to the transfiguring action of a law from on

high. Nature herself prompted the effort to bring the old patterns of worldly excellence and greatness—or rather the copies of those patterns still legible, though depraved, and still rich with living suggestion—into harmony with that higher Pattern, once seen by the eyes and handled by the hands of men, and faithfully delineated in the Gospels for the profit of all generations. The life of our Saviour, in its external aspect, was that of a teacher. It was in principle a model for all, but it left space and scope for adaptations to the lay life of Christians in general, such as those by whom the every-day business of the world is to be carried on. It remained for man to make his best endeavour to exhibit the great model on its terrestrial side, in its contact with the world. Here is the true source of that new and noble cycle which the middle ages have handed down to us in duality of form, but with a nearly identical substance, under the royal sceptres of Arthur in England and of Charlemagne in France.

Of the two great systems of Romance, one has Lancelot, the other has Orlando for its culminating point; these heroes being exhibited as the respective specimens in whose characters the fullest development of man, such as he was then conceived, was to be recognised. The one put forward Arthur for the visible head of Christendom, signifying and asserting its social unity; the other had Charlemagne. Each arrays about the Sovereign a fellowship of knights. In them Valour is the servant of Honour; in an age of which violence is the besetting danger, the protection of the weak is elevated into a first principle of action; and they betoken an order of things in which Force should be only known as allied with Virtue, while they historically foreshadow the magnificent aristocracy of mediaeval Europe. The one had Guinevere for the rarest gem of beauty, the other had Angelica. Each of them contained figures of approximation to the knightly model, and in each these figures, though on the whole secondary, yet in certain aspects surpassed it: such were Sir Tristram, Sir Galahad, Sir Lamoracke, Sir Gawain, Sir Geraint, in the Arthurian cycle; Rinaldo and Ruggiero, with

others, in the Carlovingian. They were not twin systems, but they were rather twin investitures of the same scheme of ideals and feelings. Their consanguinity to the primitive Homeric types is proved by a multitude of analogies of character and by the commanding place which they assign to Hector as the flower of human excellence. Without doubt, this preference was founded on his supposed moral superiority to all his fellows in Homer; and the secondary prizes of strength, valour, and the like, were naturally allowed to group themselves around what, under the Christian scheme, had become the primary ornament of man. The near relation of the two cycles to one another may be sufficiently seen in the leading references we have made, and it runs into a multitude of details both great and small, of which we can only note a few. In both the chief hero passes through a prolonged term of madness. Judas, in the College of Apostles, is represented under Charlemagne in Gano di Maganza and his house, who appear, without any development in action, in the Arthurian romance as "the traitours of Magouns," and who are likewise reflected in Sir Modred, Sir Agravain, and others; while the Mahometan element, which has a natural place ready made in a history that acknowledges Charlemagne and France, for its centres, finds its way sympathetically into one which is bound for the most part by the shores of Albion. Both schemes cling to the tradition of the unity of the Empire as well as of Christendom; and accordingly, what was historical in Charlemagne is represented in the case of Arthur by an imaginary conquest reaching as far as Rome, the capital of the West: even the sword *Durindana* has its counterpart in the sword *Excalibur*.

The moral systems of the two cycles are essentially allied: and perhaps the differences between them may be due in greater or in less part to the fact that they come to us through different *media*. We of the nineteenth century read the Carlovingian romance in the pages of Ariosto and Bojardo, who gave to their materials the colour of their times, and of a civilization rank in some respects, while still unripe in some others. The genius of

poetry was not at the same period applying its transmuting force to the Romance of the Round Table. The date of Sir Thomas Mallory, who lived under Edward IV, is something earlier than that of the great Italian romances; he appears, too, to have been on the whole content with the humble offices of a compiler and a chronicler, and we may conceive that his spirit and diction are still older than his date. The consequence is, that we are brought into more immediate and fresher contact with the original forms of this romance. So that, as they present themselves to us, the Carlovingian cycle is the child of the latest middle age, while the Arthurian represents the earlier. Much might be said on the differences which have thus arisen, and on those which may be due to a more northern and more southern extraction respectively. Suffice it to say that the Romance of the Round Table, far less vivid and brilliant, far ruder as a work of skill and art, has more of the innocence, the emotion, the transparency, the inconsistency of childhood. Its political action is less specifically Christian than that of the rival scheme, its individual more so. It is more directly and seriously aimed at the perfection of man. It is more free from gloss and varnish; it tells its own tale with more entire simplicity. The ascetic element is more strongly, and at the same time more quaintly, developed. It has a higher conception of the nature of woman; and like the Homeric poems, appears to eschew exhibiting her perfections in alliance with warlike force and exploits. So also love, while largely infused into the story, is more subordinate to the exhibition of other qualities. Again, the Romance of the Round Table bears witness to a more distinct and keener sense of sin: and on the whole, a deeper, broader, and more manly view of human character, life, and duty. It is in effect more like what the Carlovingian cycle might have been had Dante moulded it. It hardly needs to be added that it is more mythical, inasmuch as Arthur of the Round Table is a personage, we fear, wholly doubtful, though not impossible; while the broad back of the historic Charlemagne, like another Atlas, may well sustain a world of mythical

accretions. This slight comparison, be it remarked, refers exclusively to what may be termed the latest "redactions" of the two cycles of romance. Their early forms, in the lays of troubadours, and in the pages of the oldest chroniclers, offer a subject of profound interest, and one still unexhausted, although it has been examined by Mr. Panizzi and M. Fauriel,[1] but one which is quite beyond the scope of our present subject.

[1] Essay on the Romantic Narrative Poetry of the Italians: London, 1830. Histoire de la Poésie Provençale: Paris, 1846.

It is to this rich repository that Mr. Tennyson has resorted for his material. He has shown, as we think, rare judgment in the choice. The Arthurian Romance has every recommendation that should win its way to the homage of a great poet. It is national: it is Christian. It is also human in the largest and deepest sense; and, therefore, though highly national, it is universal; for it rests upon those depths and breadths of our nature to which all its truly great developments in all nations are alike essentially and closely related. The distance is enough for atmosphere, not too much for detail; enough for romance, not too much for sympathy. A poet of the nineteenth century, the Laureate has adopted characters, incidents, and even language in the main, instead of attempting to project them on a basis of his own in the region of illimitable fancy. But he has done much more than this. Evidently by reading and by deep meditation, as well as by sheer force of genius, he has penetrated himself down to the very core of his being, with all that is deepest and best in the spirit of the time, or the representation, with which he deals; and as others, using old materials, have been free to alter them in the sense of vulgarity or licence, so he has claimed and used the right to sever and recombine, to enlarge, retrench, and modify, for the purposes at once of a more powerful and elaborate art than his original presents, and of a yet more elevated, or at least of a far more sustained, ethical and Christian strain.

We are rather disposed to quarrel with the title of Idylls: for no diminutive ([Greek: *eidullion*]) can be adequate to the breadth, vigour, and majesty which belong to the subjects, as well as to the execution, of the volume. The poet used the name once before; but he then applied it to pieces generally small in the scale of their delineations, whereas these, even if broken away one from the other, are yet like the disjoined figures from the pediment of the Parthenon in their dignity and force. One indeed among Mr. Tennyson's merits is, that he does not think it necessary to keep himself aloft by artificial effort, but undulates with his matter, and flies high or low as it requires. But even in the humblest parts of these poems—as where the little Novice describes the miniature sorrows and discipline of childhood—the whole receives its tone from an atmosphere which is heroic, and which, even in its extremest simplicity, by no means parts company with grandeur, or ceases to shine in the reflected light of the surrounding objects. Following the example which the poet has set us in a former volume, we would fain have been permitted, at least provisionally, to call these Idylls by the name of Books. Term them what we may, there are four of them—arranged, as we think, in an ascending scale.

The simplicity and grace of the principal character in Enid, with which the volume opens, touches, but does not too strongly agitate, the deeper springs of feeling. She is the beautiful daughter of Earl Yniol, who, by his refusal of a turbulent neighbour as a suitor, has drawn upon himself the ruin of his fortunes, and is visited in his depressed condition by (p. 1)—

> The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
> A tributary prince of Devon, one
> Of that great order of the Table Round….

Geraint wins her against the detested cousin. They wed, and she becomes the purest gem of the court of Guinevere, her place in which is described in

the beautiful exordium of the poem. An accident, slight perhaps for the weight it is made to carry, arouses his jealousy, and he tries her severely by isolation and rude offices on one of his tours; but her gentleness, purity, and patience are proof against all, and we part from the pair in a full and happy reconciliation, which is described in lines of a beauty that leaves nothing to be desired.

The treatment of Enid by her husband has appeared to some of Mr. Tennyson's readers to be unnatural. It is no doubt both in itself repulsive, and foreign to our age and country. But the brutal element in man, which now only invades the conjugal relation in cases where it is highly concentrated, was then far more widely diffused, and not yet dissociated from alternations and even habits of attachment. Something of what we now call Eastern manners at one time marked the treatment even of the women of the West. Unnatural means contrary to nature, irrespectively of time or place; but time and place explain and warrant the treatment of Enid by Geraint.

Vivien, which follows Enid, is perhaps the least popular of the four Books. No pleasure, we grant, can be felt from the character either of the wily woman, between elf and fiend, or of the aged magician, whose love is allowed to travel whither none of his esteem or regard can follow it: and in reading this poem we miss the pleasure of those profound moral harmonies, with which the rest are charged. But we must not on these grounds proceed to the conclusion that the poet has in this case been untrue to his aims. For he has neither failed in power, nor has he led our sympathies astray; and if we ask why he should introduce us to those we cannot love, there is something in the reply that Poetry, the mirror of the world, cannot deal with its attractions only, but must present some of its repulsions also, and avail herself of the powerful assistance of its contrasts. The example of Homer, who allows Thersites to thrust himself upon the scene in the debates of

heroes, gives a sanction to what reason and all experience teach, namely, the actual force of negatives in heightening effect; and the gentle and noble characters and beautiful combinations, which largely predominate in the other poems, stand in far clearer and bolder relief when we perceive the dark and baleful shadow of Vivien lowering from between them.

Vivien exhibits a well-sustained conflict between the wizard and, in another sense, the witch; on one side is the wit of woman, on the other are the endowments of the prophet and magician, at once more and less than those of nature. She has heard from him of a charm, a charm of "woven paces, and of waving hands," which paralyses its victim for ever and without deliverance, and her object is to extract from him the knowledge of it as a proof of some return for the fervid and boundless love that she pretends. We cannot but estimate very highly the skill with which Mr. Tennyson has secured to what seemed the weaker vessel the ultimate mastery in the fight. Out of the eater comes forth meat. When she seems to lose ground with him by her slander against the Round Table which he loved, she recovers it by making him believe that she saw all other men, "the knights, the Court, the King, dark in his light": and when in answer to her imprecation on herself a fearful thunderbolt descends and storm rages, then, nestling in his bosom, part in fear but more in craft, she overcomes the last remnant of his resolution, wins the secret she has so indefatigably wooed, and that instant uses it to close in gloom the famous career of the over-mastered sage.

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Nowhere could we more opportunely than at this point call attention to Mr. Tennyson's extraordinary felicity and force in the use of metaphor and simile. This gift appears to have grown with his years, alike in abundance, truth, and grace. As the showers descend from heaven to return to it in

vapour, so Mr. Tennyson's loving observation of Nature, and his Muse, seem to have had a compact of reciprocity well kept on both sides. When he was young, and when "Oenone" was first published, he almost boasted of putting a particular kind of grasshopper into Troas, which, as he told us in a note, was probably not to be found there. It is a small but yet an interesting and significant indication that, when some years after he retouched the poem, he omitted the note, and generalised the grasshopper. Whether we are right or not in taking this for a sign of the movement of his mind, there can be no doubt that his present use of figures is both the sign and the result of a reverence for Nature alike active, intelligent, and refined. Sometimes applying the metaphors of Art to Nature, he more frequently draws the materials of his analogies from her unexhausted book, and, however often he may call for some new and beautiful vehicle of illustration, she seems never to withhold an answer. With regard to this particular and very critical gift, it seems to us that he may challenge comparison with almost any poet either of ancient or modern times. We have always been accustomed to look upon Ariosto as one of the greatest among the masters of the art of metaphor and simile; and it would be easy to quote from him instances which in tenderness, grace, force, or all combined, can never be surpassed. But we have rarely seen the power subjected to a greater trial than in the passages just quoted from Mr. Tennyson, where metaphor lies by metaphor as thick as shells upon their bed; yet each individually with its outline as well drawn, its separateness as clear, its form as true to nature, and with the most full and harmonious contribution to the general effect.

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Mr. Tennyson practises largely, and with an extraordinary skill and power, the art of designed and limited repetitions. They bear a considerable resemblance to those Homeric *formulae* which have been so usefully remarked by Colonel Mure—not the formulae of constant recurrence,

which tells us who spoke and who answered, but those which are connected with pointing moral effects, and with ulterior purpose. These repetitions tend at once to give more definite impressions of character, and to make firmer and closer the whole tissue of the poem. Thus, in the last speech of Guinevere, she echoes back, with other ideas and expressions, the sentiment of Arthur's affection, which becomes in her mouth sublime:—

I must not scorn myself: he loves me still:
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.

She prays admission among the nuns, that she may follow the pious and peaceful tenor of their life (p. 260):—

And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.

And it is but a debt of justice to the Guinevere of the romancers to observe, that she loses considerably by the marked transposition which Mr. Tennyson has effected in the order of greatness between Lancelot and Arthur. With him there is an original error in her estimate, independently of the breach of a positive and sacred obligation. She prefers the inferior man; and this preference implies a rooted ethical defect in her nature. In the romance of Sir T. Mallory the preference she gives to Lancelot would have been signally just, had she been free to choose. For Lancelot is of an indescribable grandeur; but the limit of Arthur's character is thus shown in certain words that he uses, and that Lancelot never could have spoken. "Much more I am sorrier for my good knight's loss than for the loss of my queen; for queens might I have enough, but, such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in company."

We began with the exordium of this great work: we must not withhold the conclusion. We left her praying admission to the convent—

> She said. They took her to themselves; and she,
> Still hoping, fearing, "is it yet too late?"
> Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
> Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
> And for the power of ministration in her,
> And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
> Was chosen Abbess: there, an Abbess, lived
> For three brief years; and there, an Abbess, pass'd
> To where beyond these voices there is peace.

No one, we are persuaded, can read this poem without feeling, when it ends, what may be termed the pangs of vacancy—of that void in heart and mind for want of its continuance of which we are conscious when some noble strain of music ceases, when some great work of Raphael passes from the view, when we lose sight of some spot connected with high associations, or when some transcendent character upon the page of history disappears, and the withdrawal of it is like the withdrawal of the vital air. We have followed the Guinevere of Mr. Tennyson through its detail, and have extracted largely from its pages, and yet have not a hope of having conveyed an idea of what it really is; still we have thought that in this way we should do it the least injustice, and we are also convinced that even what we have shown will tend to rouse an appetite, and that any of our readers, who may not yet have been also Mr. Tennyson's, will become more eager to learn and admire it at first hand.

We have no doubt that Mr. Tennyson has carefully considered how far his subject is capable of fulfilling the conditions of an epic structure. The history of Arthur is not an epic as it stands, but neither was the Cyclic song,

of which the greatest of all epics, the "Iliad," handles a part. The poem of Ariosto is scarcely an epic, nor is that of Bojardo; but it is not this because each is too promiscuous and crowded in its brilliant phantasmagoria to conform to the severe laws of that lofty and inexorable class of poem? Though the Arthurian romance be no epic, it does not follow that no epic can be made from out of it. It is grounded in certain leading characters, men and women, conceived upon models of extraordinary grandeur; and as the Laureate has evidently grasped the genuine law which makes man and not the acts of man the base of epic song, we should not be surprised were he hereafter to realize the great achievement towards which he seems to be feeling his way. There is a moral unity and a living relationship between the four poems before us, and the first effort of 1842 as a fifth, which, though some considerable part of their contents would necessarily rank as episode, establishes the first and most essential condition of their cohesion. The achievement of Vivien bears directly on the state of Arthur by withdrawing his chief councillor—the brain, as Lancelot was the right arm, of his court; the love of Elaine is directly associated with the final catastrophe of the passion of Lancelot for Guinevere. Enid lies somewhat further off the path, nor is it for profane feet to intrude into the sanctuary, for reviewers to advise poets in these high matters; but while we presume nothing, we do not despair of seeing Mr. Tennyson achieve on the basis he has chosen the structure of a full-formed epic.

In any case we have a cheerful hope that, if he continues to advance upon himself as he has advanced heretofore, nay, if he can keep the level he has gained, such a work will be the greatest, and by far the greatest poetical creation, that, whether in our own or in foreign poetry, the nineteenth century has produced. In the face of all critics, the Laureate of England has now reached a position which at once imposes and instils respect. They are self-constituted; but he has won his way through the long dedication of his manful energies, accepted and crowned by deliberate, and, we rejoice to

think, by continually growing, public favour. He has after all, and it is not the least nor lowest item in his praise, been the severest of his own critics, and has not been too proud either to learn or to unlearn in the work of maturing his genius and building up his fame.

From his very first appearance he has had the form and fashion of a true poet: the insight into beauty, the perception of harmony, the faculty of suggestion, the eye both in the physical and moral world for motion, light, and colour, the sympathetic and close observation of nature, the dominance of the constructive faculty, and that rare gift the thorough mastery and loving use of his native tongue. Many of us, the common crowd, made of the common clay, may be lovers of Nature, some as sincere or even as ardent as Mr. Tennyson; but it does not follow that even these favoured few possess the privilege that he enjoys. To them she speaks through vague and indeterminate impressions: for him she has a voice of the most delicate articulation; all her images to him are clear and definite, and he translates them for us into that language of suggestion, emphasis, and refined analogy which links the manifold to the simple and the infinite to the finite. He accomplishes for us what we should in vain attempt for ourselves, enables the puny hand to lay hold on what is vast, and brings even coarseness of grasp into a real contact with what is subtle and ethereal. His turn for metaphysical analysis is closely associated with a deep ethical insight: and many of his verses form sayings of so high a class that we trust they are destined to form a permanent part of the household-words of England.

Considering the quantity of power that Mr. Tennyson can make available, it is a great proof of self-discipline that he is not given to a wanton or tyrannous use of it. An extraordinary master of diction, he has confined himself to its severe and simple forms. In establishing this rule of practice his natural gift has evidently been aided by the fine English of the old romances, and we might count upon the fingers the cases in which he has

lately deviated into the employment of any stilted phrase, or given sanction to a word not of the best fabric. Profuse in the power of graphic[1] representation, he has chastened some of his earlier groups of imagery, which were occasionally overloaded with particulars; and in his later works, as has been well remarked, he has shown himself thoroughly aware that in poetry half is greater than the whole. That the chastity of style he has attained is not from exhaustion of power may easily be shown. No poet has evinced a more despotic mastery over intractable materials, or has been more successful in clothing what is common with the dignity of his art. The Downs are not the best subjects in the world for verse; but they will be remembered with and by his descriptive line in the "Idylls"—

Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs.

[1] We use the word in what we conceive to be its only legitimate meaning; namely, after the manner and with the effect of painting. It signifies the *quid*, not the *quale*.

How becoming is the appearance of what we familiarly term the "clod" in the "Princess"! (p. 37)—

Nor those horn-handled breakers of the glebe.

Of all imaginable subjects, mathematics might seem the most hopeless to make mention of in verse; but they are with him

The hard-grained Muses of the cube and square.

Thus at a single stroke he gives an image alike simple, true, and poetical to boot, because suited to its place and object in his verse, like the heavy Caryatides well placed in architecture. After this, we may less esteem the feat by which in "Godiva" he describes the clock striking mid-day:—

All at once,
With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless noon
Was clashed and hammered from a hundred towers.

But even the contents of a pigeon-pie are not beneath his notice, nor yet beyond his powers of embellishment, in "Audley Court":—

A pasty, costly made,
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
Imbedded and injellied.

What excites more surprise is that he can, without any offence against good taste, venture to deal with these contents even after they have entered the mouth of the eater ("Enid," p. 79):—

The brawny spearman let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallowed piece, and turning, stared.

The delicate insight of fine taste appears to show him with wonderful precision up to what point his art can control and compel his materials, and from what point the materials are in hopeless rebellion and must be let alone. So in the "Princess" (p. 89) we are introduced to—

Eight daughters of the plough, stronger than men,
Huge women *blowzed* with health, and wind, and rain,
And labour.

It was absolutely necessary for him to heighten, nay, to coarsen, the description of these masses of animated beef, who formed the standing army of the woman-commonwealth. Few would have obeyed this law

without violating another; but Mr. Tennyson saw that the verb was admissible, while the adjective would have been intolerable.

In 1842 his purging process made it evident that he did not mean to allow his faults or weaknesses to stint the growth and mar the exhibition of his genius. When he published "In Memoriam" in 1850, all readers were conscious of the progressive widening and strengthening, but, above all, deepening of his mind. We cannot hesitate to mark the present volume as exhibiting another forward and upward stride, and that by perhaps the greatest of all, in his career. If we are required to show cause for this opinion under any special head, we would at once point to that which is, after all, the first among the poet's gifts—the gift of conceiving and representing human character.

Mr. Tennyson's Arthurian essays continually suggest to us comparisons not so much with any one poet as a whole, but rather with many or most of the highest poets. The music and the just and pure modulation of his verse carry us back not only to the fine ear of Shelley, but to Milton and to Shakespeare: and his powers of fancy and of expression have produced passages which, if they are excelled by that one transcendent and ethereal poet of our nation whom we have last named, yet could have been produced by no other English minstrel. Our author has a right to regard his own blank verse as highly characteristic and original: but yet Milton has contributed to its formation, and occasionally there is a striking resemblance in turn and diction, while Mr. Tennyson is the more idiomatic of the two. The chastity and moral elevation of this volume, its essential and profound though not didactic Christianity, are such as perhaps cannot be matched throughout the circle of English literature in conjunction with an equal power: and such as to recall a pattern which we know not whether Mr. Tennyson has studied, the celestial strain of Dante.[1] This is the more remarkable, because he has had to tread upon the ground which must have been slippery for any foot

but his. We are far from knowing that either Lancelot or Guinevere would have been safe even for mature readers, were it not for the instinctive purity of his mind and the high skill of his management. We do not know that in other times they have had their noble victims, whose names have become immortal as their own.

Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto
Di Lancilotto, e come amor lo strinse.
* * * * *
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.[2]

[1] It is no reproach to say that neither Dante nor Homer could have been studied by Mr. Tennyson at the time—a very early period of his life—when he wrote the lines which are allotted to them respectively in "The Palace of Art."

[2] "Inferno," c. V, v. 127.

How difficult it is to sustain the elevation of such a subject, may be seen in the well-meant and long popular "Jane Shore" of Rowe. How easily this very theme may be vulgarised, is shown in the *"Chevaliers de la Table Ronde"* of M. Creuzé de Lesser, who nevertheless has aimed at a peculiar delicacy of treatment.

But the grand poetical quality in which this volume gives to its author a new rank and standing is the dramatic power: the power of drawing character and of representing action. These faculties have not been precocious in Mr. Tennyson: but what is more material, they have come out in great force. He has always been fond of personal delineations, from Claribel and Lilian down to his Ida, his Psyche, and his Maud; but they have been of shadowy quality, doubtful as to flesh and blood, and with eyes having little or no speculation in them. But he is far greater and far better when he has, as he now has, a good raw material ready to his hand, than

when he draws only on the airy or chaotic regions of what Carlyle calls unconditioned possibility. He is made not so much to convert the moor into the field, as the field into the rich and gorgeous garden. The imperfect *nisus* which might be remarked in some former works has at length reached the fulness of dramatic energy: in the Idylls we have nothing vague or dreamy to complain of: everything lives and moves, in the royal strength of nature: the fire of Prometheus has fairly caught the clay: every figure stands clear, broad, and sharp before us, as if it had sky for its background: and this of small as well as great, for even the "little novice" is projected on the canvas with the utmost truth and vigour, and with that admirable effect in heightening the great figure of Guinevere, which Patroclus produces for the character of Achilles, and (as some will have it) the modest structure of Saint Margaret's for the giant proportions of Westminster Abbey. And this, we repeat, is the crowning gift of the poet: the power of conceiving and representing man.

We do not believe that a Milton—or, in other words, the writer of a "Paradise Lost"—could ever be so great as a Shakespeare or a Homer, because (setting aside all other questions) his chief characters are neither human, nor can they be legitimately founded upon humanity; and, moreover, what he has to represent of man is, by the very law of its being, limited in scale and development. Here at least the saying is a true one: *Antiquitas saeculi, juventus mundi;* rendered by our poet in "The Day-dream,"

> For we are ancients of the earth,
> And in the morning of the times.

The Adam and Eve of Paradise exhibit to us the first inception of our race; and neither then, nor after their first sad lesson, could they furnish those materials for representation, which their descendants have

accumulated in the school of their incessant and many-coloured, but on the whole too gloomy, experience. To the long chapters of that experience every generation of man makes its own addition. Again we ask the aid of Mr. Tennyson in "Locksley Hall":—

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

The substitution of law for force has indeed altered the relations of the strong and the weak; the hardening or cooling down of political institutions and social traditions, the fixed and legal track instead of the open pathless field, have removed or neutralised many of those occasions and passages of life, which were formerly the schools of individual character. The genius of mechanism has vied, in the arts of both peace and war, with the strong hand, and has well-nigh robbed it of its place. But let us not be deceived by that smoothness of superficies, which the social prospect offers to the distant eye. Nearness dispels the illusion; life is still as full of deep, of ecstatic, of harrowing interests as it ever was. The heart of man still beats and bounds, exults and suffers, from causes which are only less salient and conspicuous because they are more mixed and diversified. It still undergoes every phase of emotion, and even, as seems probable, with a susceptibility which has increased and is increasing, and which has its index and outer form in the growing delicacy and complexities of the nervous system. Does any one believe that ever at any time there was a greater number of deaths referable to that comprehensive cause a broken heart? Let none fear that this age, or any coming one, will extinguish the material of poetry. The more reasonable apprehension might be lest it should sap the vital force necessary to handle that material, and mould it into appropriate forms. To those especially, who cherish any such apprehension, we recommend the perusal of this volume. Of it we will say without fear, what we would not dare to say of any other recent work; that of itself it raises the character and the

hopes of the age and the country which have produced it, and that its author, by his own single strength, has made a sensible addition to the permanent wealth of mankind.

CANON WILBERFORCE ON DARWIN

[From *The Quarterly Review*, July, 1860]

On the Origin of Species, by means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A., F.R.S. London, 1860.

Any contribution to our Natural History literature from the pen of Mr. C. Darwin is certain to command attention. His scientific attainments, his insight and carefulness as an observer, blended with no scanty measure of imaginative sagacity, and his clear and lively style, make all his writings unusually attractive. His present volume on the *Origin of Species* is the result of many years of observation, thought, and speculation; and is manifestly regarded by him as the "opus" upon which his future fame is to rest. It is true that he announces it modestly enough as the mere precursor of a mightier volume. But that volume is only intended to supply the facts which are to support the completed argument of the present essay. In this we have a specimen-collection of the vast accumulation; and, working from these as the high analytical mathematician may work from the admitted results of his conic sections, he proceeds to deduce all the conclusions to which he wishes to conduct his readers.

The essay is full of Mr. Darwin's characteristic excellences. It is a most readable book; full of facts in natural history, old and new, of his collecting and of his observing; and all of these are told in his own perspicuous

language, and all thrown into picturesque combinations, and all sparkle with the colours of fancy and the lights of imagination. It assumes, too, the grave proportions of a sustained argument upon a matter of the deepest interest, not to naturalists only, or even to men of science exclusively, but to every one who is interested in the history of man and of the relations of nature around him to the history and plan of creation.

With Mr. Darwin's "argument" we may say in the outset that we shall have much and grave fault to find. But this does not make us the less disposed to admire the singular excellences of his work; and we will seek *in limine* to give our readers a few examples of these. Here, for instance, is a beautiful illustration of the wonderful interdependence of nature—of the golden chain of unsuspected relations which bind together all the mighty web which stretches from end to end of this full and most diversified earth. Who, as he listened to the musical hum of the great humble-bees, or marked their ponderous flight from flower to flower, and watched the unpacking of their trunks for their work of suction, would have supposed that the multiplication or diminution of their race, or the fruitfulness and sterility of the red clover, depend as directly on the vigilance of our cats as do those of our well-guarded game-preserves on the watching of our keepers? Yet this Mr. Darwin has discovered to be literally the case:—

> From experiments which I have lately tried, I have found that the visits of bees are necessary for the fertilisation of some kinds of clover; but humble-bees alone visit the red clover (Trifolium pratense), as other bees cannot reach the nectar. Hence I have very little doubt, that if the whole genus of humble-bees became extinct or very rare in England, the heartsease and red clover would become very rare or wholly disappear. The number of humble-bees in any district depends in a great degree on the number of field-mice, which destroy their combs and nests; and Mr. H. Newman, who has long attended to the habits of humble-bees,

> believes that "more than two-thirds of them are thus destroyed all over England." Now the number of mice is largely dependent, as every one knows, on the number of cats; and Mr. Newman says, "near villages and small towns I have found the nests of humble-bees more numerous than elsewhere, which I attribute to the number of cats that destroy the mice." Hence, it is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention, first of mice, and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district.—p. 74.

* * * * *

Now, all this is, we think, really charming writing. We feel as we walk abroad with Mr. Darwin very much as the favoured object of the attention of the dervise must have felt when he had rubbed the ointment around his eye, and had it opened to see all the jewels, and diamonds, and emeralds, and topazes, and rubies, which were sparkling unregarded beneath the earth, hidden as yet from all eyes save those which the dervise had enlightened. But here we are bound to say our pleasure terminates; for, when we turn with Mr. Darwin to his "argument," we are almost immediately at variance with him. It is as an "argument" that the essay is put forward; as an argument we will test it.

We can perhaps best convey to our readers a clear view of Mr. Darwin's chain of reasoning, and of our objections to it, if we set before them, first, the conclusion to which he seeks to bring them; next, the leading propositions which he must establish in order to make good his final inference; and then the mode by which he endeavours to support his propositions.

The conclusion, then, to which Mr. Darwin would bring us is, that all the various forms of vegetable and animal life with which the globe is now

peopled, or of which we find the remains preserved in a fossil state in the great Earth-Museum around us, which the science of geology unlocks for our instruction, have come down by natural succession of descent from father to son,—"animals from at most four or five progenitors, and plants from an equal or less number" (p. 484), as Mr. Darwin at first somewhat diffidently suggests; or rather, as, growing bolder when he has once pronounced his theory, he goes on to suggest to us, from one single head:—

> Analogy would lead me one step further, namely, to the belief that ALL ANIMALS and PLANTS have descended from some one prototype. But analogy may be a deceitful guide. Nevertheless, all living things have much in common in their chemical composition, their germinal vesicles, their cellular structure, and their laws of growth and reproduction….
>
> Therefore I shall infer from analogy that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth (man therefore of course included) have descended from some one primordial form into which life was first breathed by the Creator.—p. 484.

This is the theory which really pervades the whole volume. Man, beast, creeping thing, and plant of the earth, are all the lineal and direct descendants of some one individual *ens*, whose various progeny have been simply modified by the action of natural and ascertainable conditions into the multiform aspect of life which we see around us. This is undoubtedly at first sight a somewhat startling conclusion to arrive at. To find that mosses, grasses, turnips, oaks, worms, and flies, mites and elephants, infusoria and whales, tadpoles of to-day and venerable saurians, truffles and men, are all equally the lineal descendants of the same aboriginal common ancestor, perhaps of the nucleated cell of some primaeval fungus, which alone possessed the distinguishing honour of being the "one primordial form into

which life was first breathed by the Creator "—this, to say the least of it, is no common discovery—no very expected conclusion. But we are too loyal pupils of inductive philosophy to start back from any conclusion by reason of its strangeness. Newton's patient philosophy taught him to find in the falling apple the law which governs the silent movements of the stars in their courses; and if Mr. Darwin can with the same correctness of reasoning demonstrate to us our fungular descent, we shall dismiss our pride, and avow, with the characteristic humility of philosophy, our unsuspected cousinship with the mushrooms,—

Claim kindred there, and have our claim allowed,

—only we shall ask leave to scrutinise carefully every step of the argument which has such an ending, and demur if at any point of it we are invited to substitute unlimited hypothesis for patient observation, or the spasmodic fluttering flight of fancy for the severe conclusions to which logical accuracy of reasoning has led the way.

Now, the main propositions by which Mr. Darwin's conclusion is attained are these:—

1. That observed and admitted variations spring up in the course of descents from a common progenitor.

2. That many of these variations tend to an improvement upon the parent stock.

3. That, by a continued selection of these improved specimens as the progenitors of future stock, its powers may be unlimitedly increased.

4. And, lastly, that there is in nature a power continually and universally working out this selection, and so fixing and augmenting these

improvements.

Mr. Darwin's whole theory rests upon the truth of these propositions and crumbles utterly away if only one of them fail him. These, therefore, we must closely scrutinise. We will begin with the last in our series, both because we think it the newest and the most ingenious part of Mr. Darwin's whole argument, and also because, whilst we absolutely deny the mode in which he seeks to apply the existence of the power to help him in his argument, yet we think that he throws great and very interesting light upon the fact that such self-acting power does actively and continuously work in all creation around us.

Mr. Darwin finds then the disseminating and improving power, which he needs to account for the development of new forms in nature, in the principle of "Natural Selection," which is evolved in the strife for room to live and flourish which is evermore maintained between themselves by all living things. One of the most interesting parts of Mr. Darwin's volume is that in which he establishes this law of natural selection; we say establishes, because—repeating that we differ from him totally in the limits which he would assign to its action—we have no doubt of the existence or of the importance of the law itself.

* * * * *

We come then to these conclusions. All the facts presented to us in the natural world tend to show that none of the variations produced in the fixed forms of animal life, when seen in its most plastic condition under domestication, give any promise of a true transmutation of species; first, from the difficulty of accumulating and fixing variations within the same species; secondly, from the fact that these variations, though most serviceable for man, have no tendency to improve the individual beyond the standard of his own specific type, and so to afford matter, even if they were

infinitely produced, for the supposed power of natural selection on which to work; whilst all variations from the mixture of species are barred by the inexorable law of hybrid sterility. Further, the embalmed records of 3,000 years show that there has been no beginning of transmutation in the species of our most familiar domesticated animals; and beyond this, that in the countless tribes of animal life around us, down to its lowest and most variable species, no one has ever discovered a single instance of such transmutation being now in prospect; no new organ has ever been known to be developed—no new natural instinct to be formed—whilst, finally, in the vast museum of departed animal life which the strata of the earth imbed for our examination, whilst they contain far too complete a representation of the past to be set aside as a mere imperfect record, yet afford no one instance of any such change as having ever been in progress, or give us anywhere the missing links of the assumed chain, or the remains which would enable now existing variations, by gradual approximations, to shade off into unity. On what then is the new theory based? We say it with unfeigned regret, in dealing with such a man as Mr. Darwin, on the merest hypothesis, supported by the most unbounded assumptions. These are strong words, but we will give a few instances to prove their truth:—

> All physiologists admit that the swim-bladder is homologous or "ideally similar" in position and structure with the lungs of the higher vertebrate animals; hence there *seems to me to be no great difficulty in believing* that natural selection has actually converted a swim-bladder into a lung, or organ used exclusively for respiration.—p. 191.

> *I can indeed hardly doubt* that all vertebrate animals having true lungs have descended by ordinary generation from the ancient prototype, of which we know nothing, furnished with a floating apparatus or swim-bladder—p. 191.

We must be cautious

In concluding that the most different habits of all *could not* graduate into each other; that a bat, for instance, *could not* have been formed by natural selection from an animal which at first could only glide through the air.—p. 204.

Again:—

I see no difficulty in supposing that such links formerly existed, and that each had been formed by the same steps as in the case of the less perfectly gliding squirrels, and that each grade of structure was useful to its possessor. Nor *can I see any insuperable difficulty in further believing* it possible that the membrane-connected fingers and forearm of the galeopithecus might be greatly lengthened by natural selection, and this, as far as the organs of flight are concerned, would convert it into a bat.—p. 181.

For instance, a swim-bladder has *apparently* been converted into an air-breathing lung.—p. 181.

And again:—

The electric organs of fishes offer another case of special difficulty: It is impossible to conceive by what steps these wondrous organs have been produced; but, as Owen and others have remarked, their intimate structure closely resembles that of common muscle; and as it has lately been shown that rays have an organ closely analogous to the electric apparatus, and yet do not, as Matteucci asserts, discharge any electricity, we must own that we are far too ignorant to argue that *no transition of any kind is possible.*—pp. 192-3.

Sometimes Mr. Darwin seems for a moment to recoil himself from this extravagant liberty of speculation, as when he says, concerning the eye,—

> To suppose that the eye, with its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree.—p. 186.

But he soon returns to his new wantonness of conjecture, and, without the shadow of a fact, contents himself with saying that—

> he *suspects* that any sensitive nerve may be rendered sensitive to light, and likewise to those coarser vibrations of the air which produce sound. —p-187.

And in the following passage he carries this extravagance to the highest pitch, requiring a licence for advancing as true any theory which cannot be demonstrated to be actually impossible:—

> If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, *which could not possibly* have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find no such case.—p. 189.

Another of these assumptions is not a little remarkable. It suits his argument to deduce all our known varieties of pigeons from the rock-pigeon (the Columba livia), and this parentage is traced out, though not, we think, to demonstration, yet with great ingenuity and patience. But another branch of the argument would be greatly strengthened by establishing the descent of our various breeds of dogs with their perfect power of fertile inter-breeding from different natural species. And accordingly, though every fact

as to the canine race is parallel to the facts which have been used before to establish the common parentage of the pigeons in Columba livia, all these are thrown over in a moment, and Mr. Darwin, first assuming, without the shadow of proof, that our domestic breeds are descended from different species, proceeds calmly to argue from this, as though it were a demonstrated certainty.

> It *seems to me unlikely* in the case of the dog-genus, which is distributed in a wild state throughout the world, that since man first appeared one species alone should have been domesticated.—p. 18.

> In some cases *I do not doubt* that the intercrossing of species aboriginally distinct has played an important part in the origin of our domestic productions.—p. 43.

What new words are these for a loyal disciple of the true Baconian philosophy?—"I can conceive"—"It is not incredible"—"I do not doubt"—"It is conceivable."

> For myself, *I venture confidently* to look back thousands on thousands of generations, and I see an animal striped like a zebra, but perhaps otherwise very differently constructed, the common parent of our domestic horse, whether or not it be descended from one or more wild stocks of the ass, hemionous, quagga, or zebra.—p. 167.

In the name of all true philosophy we protest against such a mode of dealing with nature, as utterly dishonourable to all natural science, as reducing it from its present lofty level of being one of the noblest trainers of man's intellect and instructors of his mind, to being a mere idle play of the fancy, without the basis of fact or the discipline of observation. In the "Arabian Nights" we are not offended as at an impossibility when Amina sprinkles her husband with water and transforms him into a dog, but we

cannot open the august doors of the venerable temple of scientific truth to the genii and magicians of romance. We plead guilty to Mr. Darwin's imputation that

> the chief cause of our natural unwillingness to admit that one species has given birth to other and distinct species is that we are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps.—p. 481.

In this tardiness to admit great changes suggested by the imagination, but the steps of which we cannot see, is the true spirit of philosophy.

> Analysis, says Professor Sedgwick, consists in making experiments and observations, and in drawing general conclusions from them by induction, and admitting of no objections against the conclusions but such as are taken from experiments or other certain truths; for *hypotheses are not to be regarded in experimental philosophy.*[1]

[1] "A Discourse on the Studies of the University," by A. Sedgwick, p. 102.

The other solvent which Mr. Darwin most freely and, we think, unphilosophically employs to get rid of difficulties, is his use of time. This he shortens or prolongs at will by the mere wave of his magician's rod. Thus the duration of whole epochs, during which certain forms of animal life prevailed, is gathered up into a point, whilst an unlimited expanse of years, "impressing his mind with a sense of eternity," is suddenly interposed between that and the next series, though geology proclaims the transition to have been one of gentle and, it may be, swift accomplishment. All this too is made the more startling because it is used to meet the objections drawn from facts. "We see none of your works," says the observer of nature; "we see no beginnings of the portentous change; we see plainly beings of

another order in creation, but we find amongst them no tendencies to these altered organisms." "True," says the great magician, with a calmness no difficulty derived from the obstinacy of facts can disturb; "true, but remember the effect of time. Throw in a few hundreds of millions of years more or less, and why should not all these changes be possible, and, if possible, why may I not assume them to be real?"

Together with this large licence of assumption we notice in this book several instances of receiving as facts whatever seems to bear out the theory upon the slightest evidence, and rejecting summarily others, merely because they are fatal to it. We grieve to charge upon Mr. Darwin this freedom in handling facts, but truth extorts it from us. That the loose statements and unfounded speculations of this book should come from the author of the monograms on Cirripedes, and the writer, in the natural history of the Voyage of the "Beagle," of the paper on the Coral Reefs, is indeed a sad warning how far the love of a theory may seduce even a first-rate naturalist from the very articles of his creed.

This treatment of facts is followed up by another favourite line of argument, namely, that by this hypothesis difficulties otherwise inextricable are solved. Such passages abound. Take a few, selected almost at random, to illustrate what we mean:—

> How inexplicable are these facts on the ordinary view of creation!—p. 436.

> Such facts as the presence of peculiar species of bats and the absence of other mammals on oceanic islands are utterly inexplicable on the theory of independent acts of creation.—pp. 477-8.

> It must be admitted that these facts receive no explanation on the theory of creation.—p. 478.

> The inhabitants of the Cape de Verde Islands are related to those of Africa, like those of the Galapagos to America. I believe this grand fact can receive no sort of explanation on the ordinary view of independent creation.—pp. 398-9.

Now what can be more simply reconcilable with that theory than Mr. Darwin's own account of the mode in which the migration of animal life from one distant region to another is continually accomplished?

Take another of these suggestions:—

> It is inexplicable, on the theory of creation, why a part developed in a very unusual manner in any one species of a genus, and therefore, as we may naturally infer, of great importance to the species, should be eminently liable to variation.—p. 474.

Why "inexplicable"? Such a liability to variation might most naturally be expected in the part "unusually developed," because such unusual development is of the nature of a monstrosity, and monsters are always tending to relapse into likeness to the normal type. Yet this argument is one on which he mainly relies to establish his theory, for he sums all up in this triumphant inference:—

> I cannot believe that a false theory would explain, as it seems to me that the theory of natural selection does explain, the several large classes of facts above specified.—p. 480.

Now, as to all this, we deny, first, that many of these difficulties are "inexplicable on any other supposition." Of the greatest of them (128, 194) we shall have to speak before we conclude. We will here touch only on one of those which are continually reappearing in Mr. Darwin's pages, in order to illustrate his mode of dealing with them. He finds, then, one of these

"inexplicable difficulties" in the fact, that the young of the blackbird, instead of resembling the adult in the colour of its plumage, is like the young of many other birds spotted, and triumphantly declaring that—

> No one will suppose that the stripes on the whelp of a lion, or the spots on the young blackbird, are of any use to these animals, or are related to the conditions to which they are exposed.—pp. 439-40—

he draws from them one of his strongest arguments for this alleged community of descent. Yet what is more certain to every observant field-naturalist than that this alleged uselessness of colouring is one of the greatest protections to the young bird, imperfect in its flight, perching on every spray, sitting unwarily on every bush through which the rays of sunshine dapple every bough to the colour of its own plumage, and so give it a facility of escape which it would utterly want if it bore the marked and prominent colours, the beauty of which the adult bird needs to recommend him to his mate, and can safely bear with his increased habits of vigilance and power of wing?

But, secondly, as to many of these difficulties, the alleged solving of which is one great proof of the truth of Mr. Darwin's theory, we are compelled to join issue with him on another ground, and deny that he gives us any solution at all. Thus, for instance, Mr. Darwin builds a most ingenious argument on the tendency of the young of the horse, ass, zebra, and quagga, to bear on their shoulders and on their legs certain barred stripes. Up these bars (bars sinister, as we think, as to any true descent of existing animals from their fancied prototype) he mounts through his "thousands and thousands of generations," to the existence of his "common parent, otherwise perhaps very differently constructed, but striped like a zebra."—(p. 67.) "How inexplicable," he exclaims, "on the theory of creation, is the occasional appearance of stripes on the shoulder and legs of

several species of the horse genus and in their hybrids!"—(p. 473.) He tells us that to suppose that each species was created with a tendency "like this, is to make the works of God a mere mockery and deception"; and he satisfies himself that all difficulty is gone when he refers the stripes to his hypothetical thousands on thousands of years removed progenitor. But how is his difficulty really affected? for why is the striping of one species a less real difficulty than the striping of many?

Another instance of this mode of dealing with his subject, to which we must call the attention of our readers, because it too often recurs, is contained in the following question:—

> Were all the infinitely numerous kinds of animals and plants created as eggs, or seed, or as full grown? and, in the case of mammals, were they created bearing the false marks of nourishment from the mother's womb?—p. 483.

The difficulty here glanced at is extreme, but it is one for the solution of which the transmutation-theory gives no clue. It is inherent in the idea of the creation of beings, which are to reproduce their like by natural succession; for, in such a world, place the first beginning where you will, that beginning *must* contain the apparent history of a *past*, which existed only in the mind of the Creator. If, with Mr. Darwin, to escape the difficulty of supposing the first man at his creation to possess in that framework of his body "false marks of nourishment from his mother's womb," with Mr. Darwin you consider him to have been an improved ape, you only carry the difficulty up from the first man to the first ape; if, with Mr. Darwin, in violation of all observation, you break the barrier between the classes of vegetable and animal life, and suppose every animal to be an "improved" vegetable, you do but carry your difficulty with you into the vegetable world; for, how could there be seeds if there had been no plants to seed

them? and if you carry up your thoughts through the vista of the Darwinian eternity up to the primaeval fungus, still the primaeval fungus must have had a humus, from which to draw into its venerable vessels the nourishment of its archetypal existence, and that humus must itself be a "false mark" of a pre-existing vegetation.

We have dwelt a little upon this, because it is by such seeming solutions of difficulties as that which this passage supplies that the transmutationist endeavours to prop up his utterly rotten fabric of guess and speculation.

There are no parts of Mr. Darwin's ingenious book in which he gives the reins more completely to his fancy than where he deals with the improvement of instinct by his principle of natural selection. We need but instance his assumption, without a fact on which to build it, that the marvellous skill of the honey-bee in constructing its cells is thus obtained, and the slave-making habits of the Formica Polyerges thus formed. There seems to be no limit here to the exuberance of his fancy, and we cannot but think that we detect one of those hints by which Mr. Darwin indicates the application of his system from the lower animals to man himself, when he dwells so pointedly upon the fact that it is always the *black* ant which is enslaved by his other coloured and more fortunate brethren. "The slaves are black!" We believe that, if we had Mr. Darwin in the witness-box, and could subject him to a moderate cross-examination, we should find that he believed that the tendency of the lighter-coloured races of mankind to prosecute the negro slave-trade was really a remains, in their more favoured condition, of the "extraordinary and odious instinct" which had possessed them before they had been "improved by natural selection" from Formica Polyerges into Homo. This at least is very much the way in which (p. 479) he slips in quite incidentally the true identity of man with the horse, the bat, and the porpoise:—

> The framework of bones being the same in the hand of a man, wing of a bat, fin of a porpoise, and leg of the horse, the same number of vertebrae forming the neck of the giraffe and of the elephant, and innumerable other such facts, at once explain themselves on the theory of descent with slow and slight successive modifications.—p. 479.

Such assumptions as these, we once more repeat, are most dishonourable and injurious to science; and though, out of respect to Mr. Darwin's high character and to the tone of his work, we have felt it right to weigh the "argument" again set by him before us in the simple scales of logical examination, yet we must remind him that the view is not a new one, and that it has already been treated with admirable humour when propounded by another of his name and of his lineage. We do not think that, with all his matchless ingenuity, Mr. Darwin has found any instance which so well illustrates his own theory of the improved descendant under the elevating influences of natural selection exterminating the progenitor whose specialities he has exaggerated as he himself affords us in this work. For if we go back two generations we find the ingenious grandsire of the author of the *Origin of Species* speculating on the same subject, and almost in the same manner with his more daring descendant.

* * * * *

Our readers will not have failed to notice that we have objected to the views with which we have been dealing solely on scientific grounds. We have done so from our fixed conviction that it is thus that the truth or falsehood of such arguments should be tried. We have no sympathy with those who object to any facts or alleged facts in nature, or to any inference logically deduced from them, because they believe them to contradict what it appears to them is taught by Revelation. We think that all such objections

savour of a timidity which is really inconsistent with a firm and well-instructed faith:—

> "Let us for a moment," profoundly remarks Professor Sedgwick, "suppose that there are some religious difficulties in the conclusions of geology. How, then, are we to solve them? Not by making a world after a pattern of our own—not by shifting and shuffling the solid strata of the earth, and then dealing them out in such a way as to play the game of an ignorant or dishonest hypothesis—not by shutting our eyes to facts, or denying the evidence of our senses—but by patient investigation, carried on in the sincere love of truth, and by learning to reject every consequence not warranted by physical evidence."[1]

He who is as sure as he is of his own existence that the God of Truth is at once the God of Nature and the God of Revelation, cannot believe it to be possible that His voice in either, rightly understood, can differ, or deceive His creatures. To oppose facts in the natural world because they seem to oppose Revelation, or to humour them so as to compel them to speak its voice, is, he knows, but another form of the ever-ready feebleminded dishonesty of lying for God, and trying by fraud or falsehood to do the work of the God of truth. It is with another and a nobler spirit that the true believer walks amongst the works of nature. The words graven on the everlasting rocks are the words of God, and they are graven by His hand. No more can they contradict His Word written in His book, than could the words of the old covenant graven by His hand on the stony tables contradict the writings of His hand in the volume of the new dispensation. There may be to man difficulty in reconciling all the utterances of the two voices. But what of that? He has learned already that here he knows only in part, and that the day of reconciling all apparent contradictions between what must agree is nigh at hand. He rests his mind in perfect quietness on this

assurance, and rejoices in the gift of light without a misgiving as to what it may discover:—

> "A man of deep thought and great practical wisdom," says Sedgwick, [2] "one whose piety and benevolence have for many years been shining before the world, and of whose sincerity no scoffer (of whatever school) will dare to start a doubt, recorded his opinion in the great assembly of the men of science who during the past year were gathered from every corner of the Empire within the walls of this University, 'that Christianity had everything to hope and nothing to fear from the advancement of philosophy.'"[3]

[1] "A Discourse on the Studies of the University," p. 149. [2] Ibid., p. 153. [3] Speech of Dr. Chalmers at the Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, June, 1833.

This is as truly the spirit of Christianity as it is that of philosophy. Few things have more deeply injured the cause of religion than the busy fussy energy with which men, narrow and feeble alike in faith and in science, have bustled forth to reconcile all new discoveries in physics with the word of inspiration. For it continually happens that some larger collection of facts, or some wider view of the phenomena of nature, alter the whole philosophic scheme; whilst Revelation has been committed to declare an absolute agreement with what turns out after all to have been a misconception or an error. We cannot, therefore, consent to test the truth of natural science by the Word of Revelation. But this does not make it the less important to point out on scientific grounds scientific errors, when those errors tend to limit God's glory in creation, or to gainsay the revealed relations of that creation to Himself. To both these classes of error, though, we doubt not, quite unintentionally on his part, we think that Mr. Darwin's speculations directly tend.

Mr. Darwin writes as a Christian, and we doubt not that he is one. We do not for a moment believe him to be one of those who retain in some corner of their hearts a secret unbelief which they dare not vent; and we therefore pray him to consider well the grounds on which we brand his speculations with the charge of such a tendency. First, then, he not obscurely declares that he applies his scheme of the action of the principle of natural selection to MAN himself, as well as to the animals around him. Now, we must say at once, and openly, that such a notion is absolutely incompatible not only with single expressions in the word of God on that subject of natural science with which it is not immediately concerned, but, which in our judgment is of far more importance, with the whole representation of that moral and spiritual condition of man which is its proper subject-matter. Man's derived supremacy over the earth; man's power of articulate speech; man's gift of reason; man's free-will and responsibility; man's fall and man's redemption; the incarnation of the Eternal Son; the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit,— all are equally and utterly irreconcilable with the degrading notion of the brute origin of him who was created in the image of God, and redeemed by the Eternal Son assuming to himself his nature. Equally inconsistent, too, not with any passing expressions, but with the whole scheme of God's dealings with man as recorded in His word, is Mr. Darwin's daring notion of man's further development into some unknown extent of powers, and shape, and size, through natural selection acting through that long vista of ages which he casts mistily over the earth upon the most favoured individuals of his species. We care not in these pages to push the argument further. We have done enough for our purpose in thus succinctly intimating its course. If any of our readers doubt what must be the result of such speculations carried to their logical and legitimate conclusion, let them turn to the pages of *Oken*, and see for themselves the end of that path the opening of which is decked out in these pages with the bright hues and seemingly innocent deductions of the transmutation-theory.

Nor can we doubt, secondly, that this view, which thus contradicts the revealed relation of creation to its Creator, is equally inconsistent with the fullness of His glory. It is, in truth, an ingenious theory for diffusing throughout creation the working and so the personality of the Creator. And thus, however unconsciously to him who holds them, such views really tend inevitably to banish from the mind most of the peculiar attributes of the Almighty.

How, asks Mr. Darwin, can we possibly account for the manifest plan, order, and arrangement which pervade creation, except we allow to it this self-developing power through modified descent?

> As Milne-Edwards has well expressed it, Nature is prodigal in variety, but niggard in innovation. Why, on the theory of creation, should this be so? Why should all the parts and organs of many independent beings, each supposed to have been separately created for its proper place in nature, be so commonly linked together by graduated steps? Why should not Nature have taken a leap from structure to structure?—p. 194.

And again:—

> It is a truly wonderful fact—the wonder of which we are apt to overlook from familiarity—that all animals and plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group, in the manner which we everywhere behold, namely, varieties of the same species most closely related together, species of the same genus less closely and unequally related together, forming sections and sub-genera, species of distinct genera much less closely related, and genera related in different degrees, forming sub-families, families, orders, sub-classes, and classes.—pp. 128-9.

How can we account for all this? By the simplest and yet the most comprehensive answer. By declaring the stupendous fact that all creation is the transcript in matter of ideas eternally existing in the mind of the Most High—that order in the utmost perfectness of its relation pervades His works, because it exists as in its centre and highest fountain-head in Him the Lord of all. Here is the true account of the fact which has so utterly misled shallow observers, that Man himself, the Prince and Head of this creation, passes in the earlier stages of his being through phases of

existence closely analogous, so far as his earthly tabernacle is concerned, to those in which the lower animals ever remain. At that point of being the development of the protozoa is arrested. Through it the embryo of their chief passes to the perfection of his earthly frame. But the types of those lower forms of being must be found in the animals which never advance beyond them—not in man for whom they are but the foundation for an after-development; whilst he too, Creation's crown and perfection, thus bears witness in his own frame to the law of order which pervades the universe.

In like manner could we answer every other question as to which Mr. Darwin thinks all oracles are dumb unless they speak his speculation. He is, for instance, more than once troubled by what he considers imperfections in Nature's work. "If," he says, "our reason leads us to admire with enthusiasm a multitude of inimitable contrivances in Nature, this same reason tells us that some other contrivances are less perfect."

> Nor ought we to marvel if all the contrivances in nature be not, as far as we can judge, absolutely perfect; and if some of them be abhorrent to our idea of fitness. We need not marvel at the sting of the bee causing the bee's own death; at drones being produced in such vast numbers for one single act, and with the great majority slaughtered by their sterile sisters; at the astonishing waste of pollen by our fir-trees; at the instinctive hatred of the queen-bee for her own fertile daughters; at ichneumonidae feeding within the live bodies of caterpillars; and at other such cases. The wonder indeed is, on the theory of natural selection, that more cases of the want of absolute perfection have not been observed.—p. 472.

We think that the real temper of this whole speculation as to nature itself may be read in these few lines. It is a dishonouring view of nature.

That reverence for the work of God's hands with which a true belief in the All-wise Worker fills the believer's heart is at the root of all great physical discovery; it is the basis of philosophy. He who would see the venerable features of Nature must not seek with the rudeness of a licensed roysterer violently to unmask her countenance; but must wait as a learner for her willing unveiling. There was more of the true temper of philosophy in the poetic fiction of the Pan-ic shriek, than in the atheistic speculations of Lucretius. But this temper must beset those who do in effect banish God from nature. And so Mr. Darwin not only finds in it these bungling contrivances which his own greater skill could amend, but he stands aghast before its mightier phenomena. The presence of death and famine seems to him inconceivable on the ordinary idea of creation; and he looks almost aghast at them until reconciled to their presence by his own theory that "a ratio of increase so high as to lead to a struggle for life, and as a consequence to natural selection entailing divergence of character and the extinction of less improved forms, is decidedly followed by the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals" (p. 490). But we can give him a simpler solution still for the presence of these strange forms of imperfection and suffering amongst the works of God.

We can tell him of the strong shudder which ran through all this world when its head and ruler fell. When he asks concerning the infinite variety of these multiplied works which are set in such an orderly unity, and run up into man as their reasonable head, we can tell him of the exuberance of God's goodness and remind him of the deep philosophy which lies in those simple words—"All thy works praise Thee, O God, and thy saints give thanks unto Thee." For it is one office of redeemed man to collect the inarticulate praises of the material creation, and pay them with conscious homage into the treasury of the supreme Lord.

* * * * *

It is by putting restraint upon fancy that science is made the true trainer of our intellect:—

> "A study of the Newtonian philosophy," says Sedgwick, "as affecting our moral powers and capacities, does not terminate in mere negations. It teaches us to see the finger of God in all things animate and inaminate [Transcriber's note: sic], and gives us an exalted conception of His attributes, placing before us the clearest proof of their reality; and so prepares, or ought to prepare, the mind for the reception of that higher illumination which brings the rebellious faculties into obedience to the Divine will."—*Studies of the University*, p. 14.

It is by our deep conviction of the truth and importance of this view for the scientific mind of England that we have been led to treat at so much length Mr. Darwin's speculation. The contrast between the sober, patient, philosophical courage of our home philosophy, and the writings of Lamarck and his followers and predecessors, of MM. Demaillet, Bory de Saint Vincent, Virey, and Oken,[1] is indeed most wonderful; and it is greatly owing to the noble tone which has been given by those great men whose words we have quoted to the school of British science. That Mr. Darwin should have wandered from this broad highway of nature's works into the jungle of fanciful assumption is no small evil. We trust that he is mistaken in believing that he may count Sir C. Lyell as one of his converts. We know indeed the strength of the temptations which he can bring to bear upon his geological brother. The Lyellian hypothesis, itself not free from some of Mr. Darwin's faults, stands eminently in need for its own support of some such new scheme of physical life as that propounded here. Yet no man has been more distinct and more logical in the denial of the transmutation of species

than Sir C. Lyell, and that not in the infancy of his scientific life, but in its full vigour and maturity.

[1] It may be worth while to exhibit to our readers a few of Dr. Oken's postulates or arguments as specimens of his views:—

I wrote the first edition of 1810 in a kind of inspiration.

4. Spirit is the motion of mathematical ideas.

10. Physio-philosphy [Transcriber's note: sic] has to … pourtray the first period of the world's development from nothing; how the elements and heavenly bodies originated; in what method by self-evolution into higher and manifold forms they separated into minerals, became finally organic, and in man attained self-consciousness.

42. The mathematical monad is eternal.

43. The eternal is one and the same with the zero of mathematics.

Sir C. Lyell devotes the 33rd to the 36th chapter of his "Principles of Geology" to an examination of this question. He gives a clear account of the mode in which Lamarck supported his belief of the transmutation of species; he interrupts the author's argument to observe that "no positive fact is cited to exemplify the substitution of some *entirely new* sense, faculty, or organ—because no examples were to be found"; and remarks that when Lamarck talks of "the effects of internal sentiment," etc., as causes whereby animals and plants may acquire *new organs*, he substitutes names for things, and with a disregard to the strict rules of induction, resorts to fictions.

He shows the fallacy of Lamarck's reasoning, and by anticipation confutes the whole theory of Mr. Darwin, when gathering clearly up into a few heads the recapitulation of the whole argument in favour of the reality of species in nature. He urges:—[Transcriber's note: numbering in original]

1. That there is a capacity in all species to accommodate themselves to a certain extent to a change of external circumstances.

4. The entire variation from the original type … may usually be effected in a brief period of time, after which no further deviation can be obtained.

5. The intermixing distinct species is guarded against by the sterility of the mule offspring.

6. It appears that species have a real existence in nature, and that each was endowed at the time of its creation with the attributes and organization by which it is now distinguished.[1]

[1] "Principles of Geology," edit. 1853.

We trust that Sir C. Lyell abides still by these truly philosophical principles; and that with his help and with that of his brethren this flimsy speculation may be as completely put down as was what in spite of all denials we must venture to call its twin though less-instructed brother, the "Vestiges of Creation." In so doing they will assuredly provide for the strength and continually growing progress of British science.

Indeed, not only do all laws for the study of nature vanish when the great principle of order pervading and regulating all her processes is given up, but all that imparts the deepest interest in the investigation of her wonders will have departed too. Under such influences a man soon goes back to the marvelling stare of childhood at the centaurs and hippogriffs of fancy, or if he is of a philosophic turn, he comes like Oken to write a scheme of creation under "a sort of inspiration"; but it is the frenzied inspiration of the inhaler of mephitic gas. The whole world of nature is laid for such a man under a fantastic law of glamour, and he becomes capable of believing anything: to him it is just as probable that Dr. Livingstone will find the next

tribe of negroes with their heads growing under their arms as fixed on the summit of the cervical vertebrae; and he is able, with a continually growing neglect of all the facts around him, with equal confidence and equal delusion, to look back to any past and to look on to any future.

ON CARDINAL NEWMAN

[From *The Quarterly Review*, October, 1864]

Apologia pro Vita suâ. By JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, D.D.

Few books have been published of late years which combine more distinct elements of interest than the "Apologia" of Dr. Newman. As an autobiography, in the highest sense of that word, as the portraiture, that is, and record of what the man was, irrespective of those common accidents of humanity which too often load the biographer's pages, it is eminently dramatic. To produce such a portrait was the end which the writer proposed to himself, and which he has achieved with a rare fidelity and completeness. Hardly do the "Confessions of St. Augustine" more vividly reproduce the old African Bishop before successive generations in all the greatness and struggles of his life than do these pages the very inner being of this remarkable man—"the living intelligence," as he describes it, "by which I write, and argue, and act" (p. 47). No wonder that when he first fully recognised what he had to do, he

> shrank from both the task and the exposure which it would entail. I must, I said, give the true key to my whole life; I must show what I am, that it may be seen what I am not, and that the phantom may be extinguished which gibbers instead of me. I wish to be known as a living man, and not as a scarecrow which is dressed up in my

> clothes…. I will draw out, as far as may be, the history of my mind; I will state the point at which I began, in what external suggestion or accident each opinion had its rise, how far and how they were developed from within, how they grew, were modified, were combined, were in collision with each other, and were changed. Again, how I conducted myself towards them; and how, and how far, and for how long a time, I thought I could hold them consistently with the ecclesiastical engagements which I had made, and with the position which I filled…. It is not at all pleasant for me to be egotistical nor to be criticised for being so. It is not pleasant to reveal to high and low, young and old, what has gone on within me from my early years. It is not pleasant to be giving to every shallow or flippant disputant the advantage over me of knowing my most private thoughts, I might even say the intercourse between myself and my Maker.
> —pp. 47-51.

Here is the task he set himself, and the task which he has performed. There is in these pages an absolute revealing of the hidden life in its acting, and its processes, which at times is almost startling, which is everywhere of the deepest interest. For the life thus revealed is well worthy of the pen by which it is portrayed. Of all those who, in these later years, have quitted the Church of England for the Roman communion —esteemed, honoured, and beloved, as were many of them—no one, save Dr. Newman, appears to us to possess the rare gift of undoubted genius.

That life, moreover, which anywhere and at any time must have marked its own character on his fellows, was cast precisely at the time and place most favourable for stamping upon others the impress of itself. The plate was ready to receive and to retain every line of the image which was thrown so vividly upon it. The history, therefore, of this life in its shifting scenes of thought, feeling, and purpose, becomes in fact the history of a school, a

party, and a sect. From its effect on us, who, from without, judge of it with critical calmness, we can form some idea of what must be its power on those who were within the charmed ring; who were actually under the wand of the enchanter, for whom there was music in that voice, fascination in that eye, and habitual command in that spare but lustrous countenance; and who can trace again in this retrospect the colours and shadows which in those years which fixed their destiny, passed, though in less distinct hues, into their own lives, and made them what they are.

Again, in another aspect, the "Apologia" will have a special interest for most of our readers. Almost every page of it will throw some light upon the great controversy which has been maintained for these three hundred years, and which now spreads itself throughout the world, between the Anglican Church and her oldest and greatest antagonist, the Papal See….

The first names to which it introduces us indicate the widely-differing influences under which was formed that party within our Church which has acted so powerfully and in such various directions upon its life and teaching. They are those of Mr.—afterwards Archbishop—Whately and Dr. Hawkins, afterwards and still the Provost of Oriel College. To intercourse with both of whom Dr. Newman attributes great results in the formation of his own character: the first emphatically opening his mind and teaching him to use his reason, whilst in religious opinion he taught him the existence of a church, and fixed in him Anti-Erastian views of Church polity; the second being a man of most exact mind, who through a course of severe snubbing taught him to weigh his words and be cautious in his statements.

To an almost unknown degree, Oriel had at that time monopolised the active speculative intellect of Oxford. Her fellowships being open, whilst those of other Colleges were closed, drew to her the ablest men of the University: whilst the nature of the examination for her fellowships, which

took no note of ordinary University honours, and stretched boldly out beyond inquiries as to classical and mathematical attainments in everything which could test the dormant powers of the candidates, had already impressed upon the Society a distinctive character of intellectual excellence. The late Lord Grenville used at this time to term an Oriel Fellowship the Blue Ribbon of the University; and, undoubtedly, the results of those examinations have been marvellously confirmed by the event, if we think to what an extent the mind, and opinions, and thoughts of England have been moulded by them who form the list of those "Orielenses," of whom it was said in an academic squib of the time, with some truth, flavoured perhaps with a spice of envy, that they were wont to enter the academic circle "under a flourish of trumpets." Such a "flourish" certainly has often preceded the entry of far lesser men than E. Coplestone, E. Hawkins, J. Davison, J. Keble, R. Whately, T. Arnold, E.B. Pusey, J. H. Newman, H. Froude, R. J. Wilberforce, S. Wilberforce, G. A. Denison, &c., &c.

Into a Society leavened with such intellectual influences as these, Dr. Newman, soon after taking his degree, was ushered. It could at this time have borne no distinctively devout character in its religious aspect. Rather must it have been marked by the opposite of this. Whately, whose powerful and somewhat rude intellect must almost have overawed the common room when the might of Davison had been taken from it, was, with all his varied excellences, never by any means an eminently devout, scarcely perhaps an orthodox man. All his earlier writings bristle with paradoxes, which affronted the instincts of simpler and more believing minds. Whately, accordingly, appears in these pages as "generous and warmhearted—particularly loyal to his friends" (p. 68); as teaching his pupil "to see with my own eyes and to walk with my own feet"; yet as exercising an influence over him (p. 69) which, "in a higher respect than intellectual advance, had not been satisfactory," under which he "was beginning to prefer intellectual

excellence to moral, was drifting in the direction of liberalism"; a "dream" out of which he was "rudely awakened at the end of 1827, by two great blows—illness and bereavement" (p. 72).

Though this change in his views is traced by Dr. Newman to the action of these strictly personal causes of illness and bereavement, yet other influences, we suspect, were working strongly in the same direction. It is plain that, so far as regards early permanent impression on the character of his religious opinions, the influence of Whately was calculated rather to stir up reaction than to win a convert. "Whately's mind," he says himself (p. 68), "was too different from mine for us to remain long on one line." The course of events round him impelled him in the same direction, and furnished him with new comrades, on whom henceforth he was to act, and who were to react most powerfully on him. The torrent of reform was beginning its full rush through the land; and its turbulent waters threatened not only to drown the old political landmarks of the Constitution, but also to sweep away the Church of the nation. Abhorrence of these so-called liberal opinions was the electric current which bound together the several minds which speedily appeared as instituting and directing the great Oxford Church movement. Not that it was in any sense the offspring of the old cry of "the Church in danger." The meaning of that alarm was the apprehension of danger to the emoluments or position of the Church as the established religion in the land. From the very first the Oxford movement pointed more to the maintenance of the Church as a spiritual society, divinely incorporated to teach certain doctrines, and do certain acts which none other could do, than to the preservation of those temporal advantages which had been conferred by the State. From the first there was a tendency to undervalue these external aids, which made the movement an object of suspicion to thorough Church-and-State men. This suspicion was repaid by the members of the new school with a return of contempt. They believed that in struggling for the temporal advantages of the Establishment, men

had forgotten the essential characteristics of the Church, and had been led to barter their divine birthright for the mess of pottage which Acts of Parliament secured them. Thus we find Dr. Newman remembering his early Oxford dislike of "the bigoted two-bottle orthodox." He records (p. 73) the characteristic mode in which on the appearance of the first symptoms of his "leaving the clientela" of Dr. Whately he was punished by that rough humorist. "Whately was considerably annoyed at me; and he took a humorous revenge, of which he had given me due notice beforehand…. He asked a set of the least intellectual men in Oxford to dinner, and men most fond of port; he made me one of the party; placed me between Provost this and Principal that, and then asked me if I was proud of my friends" (p. 73). It is easy to conceive how he liked them. He had, indeed, though formerly a supporter of Catholic Emancipation, "acted with them in opposing Mr. Peel's re-election in 1829, on 'simple academical grounds,' because he thought that a great University ought not to be bullied even by a great Duke of Wellington" (p. 172); but he soon parted with his friends of "two-bottle orthodoxy," and joined the gathering knot of men of an utterly different temper, who "disliked the Duke's change of policy as dictated by liberalism" (p. 72).

This whole company shared the feelings which even yet, after so many years and in such altered circumstances, break forth from Dr. Newman like the rumblings and smoke of a long extinct volcano, in such utterances as this: "The new Bill for the suppression of the Irish Sees was in prospect, and had filled my mind. I had fierce thoughts against the Liberals. It was the success of the Liberal cause which fretted me inwardly. I became fierce against its instruments and its manifestations. A French vessel was at Algiers; I would not even look at the tricolor" (97). This was the temper of the whole band. Most of these men appear in Dr. Newman's pages; and from their common earnestness and various endowments a mighty band they were.

* * * * *

Here then was the band which have accomplished so much; which have failed in so much; which have added a new party-name to our vocabulary; which have furnished materials for every scribbling or declaiming political Protestant, from the writer of the Durham Letter down to Mr. Whalley and Mr. Harper; which aided so greatly in reawakening the dormant energies of the English Church; which carried over to the ranks of her most deadly opponent some of the ablest and most devoted of her sons. The language of these pages has never varied concerning this movement. We have always admitted its many excellences—we have always lamented its evils. As long ago as in 1839, whilst we protested openly and fully against what we termed at the time the "strange and lamentable" publication of Mr. Froude's "Remains,"[1] we declared our hope that "the publication of the Oxford Tracts was a very seasonable and valuable contribution to the cause both of the Church and the State." And in 1846, even after so many of our hopes had faded away, we yet spoke in the same tone of "this religious movement in our Church," as one "from which, however clouded be the present aspect, we doubt not that great blessings have resulted and will result, unless we forfeit them by neglect or wilful abuse."[2]

[1] "Quarterly Review," vol. lxiii, p. 551. [2] Ibid., vol. lxxviii, p. 24.

The history of the progress of the movement lies scattered through these pages. All that we can collect concerning its first intention confirms absolutely Mr. Perceval's Statements, 1843, that it was begun for two leading objects: "first, the firm and practical maintenance of the doctrine of the apostolical succession…. secondly, the preservation in its integrity of the Christian doctrine in our Prayerbooks."[1] Its unity of action was shaken by the first entrance of doubts into its leader's mind. His retirement from it tended directly to break it up as an actual party. But it would be a monstrous

error to suppose that the influence of this movement was extinguished when its conductors were dispersed as a party. So far from it, the system of the Church of England took in all the more freely the elements of truth which it had all along been diffusing, because they were no longer scattered abroad by the direct action of an organised party under ostensible chiefs. Where, we may ask, is not at this moment the effect of that movement perfectly appreciable within our body? Look at the new-built and restored churches of the land; look at the multiplication of schools; the greater exactness of ritual observance; the higher standard of clerical life, service, and devotion; the more frequent celebrations; the cathedrals open; the loving sisterhoods labouring, under episcopal sanction, with the meek, active saintliness of the Church's purest time; look—above all, perhaps—at the raised tone of devotion and doctrine amongst us, and see in all these that the movement did not die, but rather flourished with a new vigour when the party of the movement was so greatly broken up. It is surely one of the strangest objections which can be urged against a living spiritual body, that the loss of many of its foremost sons still left its vital strength unimpaired. Yet this was Dr. Newman's objection, and his witness, fourteen years ago, when he complained of the Church of England, that though it had given "a hundred educated men to the Catholic Church, yet the huge creature from which they went forth showed no consciousness of its loss, but shook itself, and went about its work as of old time."[2]

[1] "Collection of Papers connected with the Theological Movement of 1833." By the Hon. and Rev. A.P. Perceval. 1843. Second Edition. [2] "Lectures on Anglican Difficulties," p. 9.

As the unity of the party was broken up, the fire which had burned hitherto in but a single beacon was scattered upon a thousand hills. Nevertheless, the first breaking up of the party was eminently disheartening to its living members. But it was not by external violence that it was

broken, but by the development within itself of a distinctive Romeward bias. Dr. Newman lays his hand upon a particular epoch in its progress, at which, he says, it was crossed by a new set of men, who imparted to it that leaning to Romanism which ever after perceptibly beset it. "A new school of thought was rising, as is usual in such movements, and was sweeping the original party of the movement aside, and was taking its place" (p. 277). This is a curious instance of self-delusion. He was, as we maintain, throughout, the Romanising element in the whole movement. But for him it might have continued, as its other great chiefs still continue, the ornament and strength of the English Church. These younger men, to whom he attributes the change, were, in fact, the minds whom he had consciously or unconsciously fashioned and biassed. Some of them, as is ever the case, had outrun their leader. Some of them were now, in their sensitive spiritual organism, catching the varying outline of the great leader whom they almost worshipped, and beginning at once to give back his own altering image. Instead of seeing in their changing minds this reflection of himself, he dwelt upon it as an original element, and read in its presence an indication of its being the will of God that the stream should turn its flow towards the gulf to which he himself had unawares, it may be, directed its waters. Those who remember how at this time he was followed will know how easily such a result might follow his own incipient change. Those who can still remember how many often involuntarily caught his peculiar intonation—so distinctively singular, and therefore so attractive in himself and so repulsive in his copyists —will understand how the altering fashion of the leader's thoughts was appropriated with the same unconscious fidelity.

One other cause acted powerfully on him and on them to give this bias to the movement, and that was the bitterness and invectives of the Liberal party. Dr. Newman repeatedly reminds us that it was the Liberals who drove him from Oxford. The four tutors—the after course of one of whom, at least, was destined to display so remarkable a Nemesis—and the pack who

followed them turned by their ceaseless baying the noble hart who led the rest towards this evil covert. He and they heard incessantly that they were Papists in disguise: men dishonoured by professing one thing and holding another; until they began to doubt their own fidelity, and in that doubt was death. Nor was this all. The Liberals ever (as is their wont), most illiberal to those who differ from them, began to use direct academic persecution; until, in self-distrust and very weariness, the great soul began to abandon the warfare it had waged inwardly against its own inclinations and the fascinations of its enemy, and to yield the first defences to the foe. It will remain written, as Dr. Newman's deliberate judgment, that it was the Liberals who forced him from Oxford. How far, if he had not taken that step, he might have again shaken off the errors which were growing on him —how far therefore in driving him from Oxford they drove him finally to Rome—man can never know.

In the new light thrown upon it from the pages of the "Apologia," we see with more distinctness than was ever shown before, how greatly this tendency to Rome, which at last led astray so many of the masters of the party, was infused into it by the single influence of Dr. Newman himself. We do not believe that, in spite of his startling speeches, the bias towards Rome was at all as strong even in H. Froude himself. Let his last letter witness for him:—"If," he says, "I was to assign my reasons for belonging to the Church of England in preference to any other religious community, it would be simply this, that she has retained an apostolical clergy, and enacts no sinful terms of communion; whereas, on the other hand, the Romanists, though retaining an apostolical clergy, do exact sinful terms of communion."[1] This was the tone of the movement until it was changed in Dr. Newman. We believe that in tracing this out we shall be using these pages entirely as their author intended them to be used. They were meant to exhibit to his countrymen the whole secret of his moral and spiritual anatomy; they were intended to prove that he was altogether free from that

foul and disgraceful taint of innate dishonesty, the unspoken suspicion of which in so many quarters had so long troubled him; the open utterance of which, from the lips of a popular and respectable writer, was so absolutely intolerable to him. From that imputation it is but bare justice to say he does thoroughly clear himself. The post-mortem examination of his life is complete; the hand which guided the dissecting-knife has trembled nowhere, nor shrunk from any incision. All lies perfectly open, and the foul taint is nowhere. And yet, looking back with the writer on the changes which this strange narrative records, from his subscribing, in 1828, towards the first start of the "Record" newspaper to his receiving on the 9th of October, 1845, at Littlemore, the "remarkable-looking man, evidently a foreigner, shabbily dressed in black,"[2] who received him into the Papal Communion, we see abundant reason, even without the action of that prevalent suspicion of secret dishonesty somewhere, which in English minds inevitably connects itself with the spread of Popery, for the widely-diffused impression of that being true which it is so pleasant to find unfounded.

[1] "Collection of Papers, &c." p. 16. [2] "Historical Notes of the Tractarian Movement," by Canon Oakley. Dublin Review, No. v, p. 190.

From first to last these pages exhibit the habit of Dr. Newman's mind as eminently subjective. It might almost be described as the exact opposite of that of S. Athanasius: with a like all-engrossing love for truth; with ecclesiastical habits often strangely similar; with cognate gifts of the imperishable inheritance of genius, the contradiction here is almost absolute. The abstract proposition, the rightly-balanced proposition, is everything to the Eastern, it is well-nigh nothing to the English Divine. When led by circumstances to embark in the close examination of Dogma, as in his "History of the Arians," his Nazarite locks of strength appear to have been shorn, and the giant, at whose might we have been marvelling,

becomes as any other man. The dogmatic portion of this work is poor and tame; it is only when the writer escapes from dogma into the dramatic representation of the actors in the strife that his powers reappear. For abstract truth it is true to us that he has no engrossing affection: his strength lay in his own apprehension of it, in his power of defending it when once it had been so apprehended and had become engrafted into him; and it is to this as made one with himself, and to his own inward life as fed and nourished by it, that he perpetually reverts.

All this is the more remarkable because he conceives himself to have been, even from early youth, peculiarly devoted to dogma in the abstract; he returns continually to this idea, confounding, as we venture to conceive, his estimate of the effect of truth when he received it, on himself, with truth as it exists in the abstract. And as this affected him in regard to dogma, so it reached to his relations to every part of the Church around him. It led him to gather up in a dangerous degree, into the person of his "own Bishop," the deference due to the whole order. "I did not care much for the Bench of Bishops, nor should I have cared much for a Provincial Council…. All these matters seemed to me to be jure ecclesiastico; but what to me was jure divino was the voice of my Bishop in his own person. My own Bishop was my Pope."—(p. 123.) His intense individuality had substituted the personal bond to the individual for the general bond to the collective holders of the office: and so when the strain became violent it snapped at once. This doubtless natural disposition seems to have been developed, and perhaps permanently fixed, as the law of his intellectual and spiritual being, by the peculiarities of his early religious training. Educated in what is called the "Evangelical" school, early and consciously converted, and deriving his first religious tone, in great measure, from the vehement but misled Calvinism, of which Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, was one of the ablest and most robust specimens, he was early taught to appreciate, and even to judge of, all external truth mainly in its ascertainable bearings on

his own religious experience. In many a man the effect of this teaching is to fix him for life in a hard, narrow, and exclusive school of religious thought and feeling, in which he lives and dies profoundly satisfied with himself and his co-religionists, and quite hopeless of salvation for any beyond the immediate pale in which his own Shibboleth is pronounced with the exactest nicety of articulation. But Dr. Newman's mind was framed upon a wholly different idea, and the results were proportionally dissimilar. With the introvertive tendency which we have ascribed to him, was joined a most subtle and speculative intellect, and an ambitious temper. The "Apologia" is the history of the practical working out of those various conditions. His hold upon any truth external to and separate from himself, was so feeble when placed in comparison with his perception of what was passing within himself, that the external truth was always liable to corrections which would make its essential elements harmonize with what was occurring within his own intellectual or spiritual being. We think that we can distinctly trace in these pages a twofold consequence from all this: first, an inexhaustible mutability in his views on all subjects; and secondly, a continually recurring temptation to entire scepticism as to everything external to himself. Every page gives illustrations of the first of these. He votes for what was called Catholic Emancipation, and is drifting into the ranks of liberalism. But the external idea of liberty is very soon metamorphosed, in his view, from the figure of an angel of light into that of a spirit of darkness; first, by his academical feeling that a great University ought not to be bullied even by a great Duke, and then by the altered temper of his own feelings, as they are played upon by the alternate vibrations of the gibes of "Hurrell Froude," and the deep tones of Mr. Keble's ministrelsy.

The history of his religious alternations is in exact keeping with all this. At every separate stage of his course, he constructs for himself a tabernacle in which for a while he rests. This process he repeats with an incessant simplicity of renewed commencements, which is almost like the blind

acting of instinct leading the insect, which is conscious of its coming change, to spin afresh and afresh its ever-broken cocoon. He is at one time an Anglo-Catholic, and sees Antichrist in Rome; he falls back upon the Via Media—that breaks down, and left him, he says (p. 211), "very nearly a pure Protestant"; and again he has a "new theory made expressly for the occasion, and is pleased with his new view" (p. 269); he then rests in "Samaria" before he finds his way over to Rome. For the time every one of these transient tabernacles seems to accomplish its purpose. He finds certain repose for his spirit. Whilst sheltered by it, all the great unutterable phenomena of the external world are viewed by him in relation to himself and to his home of present rest. The gourd has grown up in a night, and shelters him by its short-lived shadow from the tyrannous rays of the sunshine. But some sudden irresistible change in his own inward preceptions alters everything. The idea shoots across his mind that the English Church is in the position of the Monophysite heretics of the fifth century (p. 209). At once all his views of truth are changed. He moves on to a new position; pitches anew his tent; builds himself up a new theory; and finds the altitudes of the stars above him, and the very forms of the heavenly constellations, change with the change of his earthly habitation.

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In October the final step is taken, and in the succeeding January the mournful history is closed in the following most touching words:—

> Jan. 20, 1846.—You may think how lonely I am. *Obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui*, has been in my ears for the last twelve hours. I realize more that we are leaving Littlemore, and it is like going on the open sea.
>
> I left Oxford for good on Monday, February 23, 1846. On the Saturday and Sunday before, I was in my house at Littlemore simply by

myself, as I had been for the first day or two when I had originally taken possession of it. I slept on Sunday night at my dear friend's, Mr. Johnson's, at the Observatory. Various friends came to see the last of me —Mr. Copeland, Mr. Church, Mr. Buckle, Mr. Pattison, and Mr. Lewis. Dr. Pusey, too, came up to take leave of me; and I called on Dr. Ogle, one of my very oldest friends, for he was my private tutor when I was an undergraduate. In him I took leave of my first College, Trinity, which was so dear to me, and which held on its foundation so many who have been kind to me, both when I was a boy and all through my Oxford life. Trinity had never been unkind to me. There used to be much snapdragon growing on the walls opposite my freshman's rooms there, and I had for years taken it as the emblem of my own perpetual residence, even unto death, in my University.

On the morning of the 23rd I left the Observatory. I have never seen Oxford since, excepting its spires, as they are seen from the railway.

What an exceeding sadness is gathered up in these words! And yet the impress of this time left upon some of Dr. Newman's writings seems, like the ruin which records what was the violence of the throes of the long-passed earthquake, even still more indicative of the terrible character of the struggle through which at this time he passed. We have seen how keenly he felt the suspicious intrusions upon his privacy which haunted his last years in the Church of England. But in "Loss and Gain" there is a yet more expressive exhibition of the extremity of that suffering. He denies as "utterly untrue" the common belief that he "introduced friends or partisans into the tale"; and of course he is to be implicitly believed. And yet ONE there is whom no one who reads the pages can for a moment doubt is there, and that is Dr. Newman himself. The weary, unresting, hunted condition of the leading figure in the tale, with all its accompaniment of keen, flashing wit, always seemed to us the history of those days when a well-meant but

impertinent series of religious intrusions was well-nigh driving the wise man mad.

We have followed out these steps thus in detail, not only because of their intense interest as an autobiography, but also because the narrative itself seems to throw the strongest possible light on the mainly-important question how far this defection of one of her greatest sons does really tend to weaken the argumentative position of the English Church in her strife with Rome. What has been said already will suffice to prove that in our opinion no such consequence can justly follow from it. We acknowledge freely the greatness of the individual loss. But the causes of that defection are, we think, clearly shown to have been the peculiarities of the individual, not the weakness of the side which he abandoned. His steps mark no path to any other. He sprang clear over the guarding walls of the sheepfold, and opened no way through them for other wanderers. Men may have left the Church of England because their leader left it; but they could not leave it as he left it, or because of his reasons for leaving it. In truth, he appears never to have occupied a thoroughly real Church-of-England position. He was at first, by education and private judgment, a Calvinistic Puritan; he became dissatisfied with the coldness and barrenness of this theory, and set about finding a new position for himself, and in so doing he skipped over true, sound English Churchmanship into a course of feeling and thought allied with and leading on to Rome. Even the hindrances which so long held him back can scarcely be said to have been indeed the logical force of the unanswerable credentials of the English Church. On the contrary they were rather personal impressions, feelings, and difficulties. His faithful, loving nature made him cling desperately to early hopes, friendships, and affections. Even to the end Thomas Scott never loses his hold upon him. His narrative is not the history of the normal progress of a mind from England to Rome; it is so thoroughly exceptional that it does not seem calculated to seduce to Rome men governed in such high matters by

argument and reason rather than by impulse and feeling. We do not therefore think that the mere fact of this secession tells with any force against that communion whose claims satisfied to their dying day such men as Hooker and Andrewes, and Ussher and Hammond, and Bramhall and Butler.

But, beyond this, his present view of the English Church appears to be incompatible with that fierce and internecine hostility to the claim upon the loyalty of her children which is really essential to clear the act of perverting others from her ranks from the plainest guilt of schism. It is not merely that the nobleness and tenderness of his nature make his tone so unlike that of many of those who have taken the same step with himself. It is not that every provocation—and how many they have been!—every misunderstanding—and they have been all but universal; every unworthy charge or insinuation—down to those of Professor Kingsley, failed to embitter his feelings against the communion he has deserted and the friends whom he has left. It is not this to which we refer, for this is personal to himself, and the fruit of his own generosity and true greatness of soul. But we refer to his calm, deliberate estimate of the forsaken Church. He says, indeed, that since his change he has "had no changes to record, no anxiety of heart whatever. I have been in perfect peace and contentment. I never had one doubt" (p. 373). But, as we have seen already, this was always the temporary condition in which every new phase of opinion landed him. He was always able to build up these tabernacles of rest. The difference between this and those former resting-places is clear. In those he was still a searcher after truth: he needed and required conviction, and a new conviction might shake the old comfort. But his present resting-place is built upon the denial of all further enquiry. "I have," he says (p. 374), "no further history of religious opinions to narrate": and some following words show how entirely it is this abandonment of the idea of the actual

conviction of truth for the blind admission of the dictates of a despotic external authority on which he rests.

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There is another deeply interesting question raised by Dr. Newman's work, on which, if our limits did not absolutely prevent, we should be glad to enter. We mean the present position of the Church of Rome with that great rationalistic movement with which we, too, are called to contend. Everywhere in Europe this contest is proceeding, and the relations of the Church of Rome towards it are becoming daily more and more embarrassed. Mr. Ffoulkes tells us that "the 'Home and Foreign Review' is the *only* publication professing to emanate from Roman Catholics in this country that can be named in the same breath with the leading Protestant Reviews."[1] Since he wrote these words its course has been closed by Pontifical authority. M. Montalembert has barely escaped censure with the payment of the penalty—so heavy to his co-religionists—of an enforced silence; and Dr. Newman "interprets recent acts of authority as tying the hands of a controversialist such as I should be,"[2] and so is prevented completing the great work which has occupied so much of his thoughts, and which promised, more than any other work this country is likely to see, to set some limiting boundary line between the provinces of a humble faith in Revelation and an ardent love of advancing science. This is an evil inflicted by Rome on this whole generation. But in truth, whenever the mind of Christendom is active, the attitude of the Papal communion before this new enemy is that of a startled, trembling minaciousness, which invites the deadly combat it can so ill maintain.

[1] "Union Review," ix, 294. [2] "Apol." 405.

These facts are patent to every one who knows anything whatever of the present state of religious thought throughout Roman Catholic Europe.

Almost every one knows further that the struggle between those who would subject all science and all the actings of the human mind to the authority of the Church, and those who would limit the exercise of that authority more or less to the proper subject-matter of theology, is rife and increasing. The words of, perhaps, the ablest living member of the Roman Catholic communion have rung through Europe, and many a heart in all religious communions has been saddened by the thought of Dr. Döllinger's virtual censure. And yet it is at such a time as this that Dr. Manning ventures to put forth his "Letters to a Friend," painting all as peace, unanimity, and obedient faith within the Roman Church; all dissension, unbelief, and letting slip of the ancient faith within our own communion. Surely such are not the weapons by which the cause of God's truth can be advanced!

But we must bring our remarks on the "Apologia" to a close.

Some lessons there are, and those great ones, which this book is calculated to instil into members of our own communion. Pre-eminently it shows the rottenness of that mere Act-of-Parliament foundation on which some, now-a-days, would rest our Church. Dr. Newman suggests, more than once, that such a course must rob us of all our present strength. Dr. Manning sings his paean with wild and premature delight, as if the evil was already accomplished. In his first letter he triumphed in the silence of Convocation, but that silence has since been broken. A solemn synodical judgment, couched in the most explicit language, has condemned the false teaching which had been our Church's scandal. But because a "very exalted person in the House of Lords"[1] (p. 4), with an ignorance or an ignoring of law, as was shown in the debate, which was simply astonishing, chose, in a manner which even Dr. Manning condemns, to assert, without a particle of real evidence, that the Convocation had exceeded its legitimate powers, Dr. Manning is in ecstasies. The "very exalted person" becomes "a righteous judge, a learned judge, a Daniel come to judgment—yea, a Daniel." These

shouts of joy ought to be enough to show men where the real danger lies. Our present position is impregnable. But if we abandon it for the new one proposed to us by the Rationalist party, how shall we be able to stand? How could a national religious Establishment which should seek to rest its foundations—not on God's Word; on the ancient Creeds; on a true Apostolic ministry; on valid Sacraments; on a living, even though it be an obscured, unity with the Universal Church, and so on the presence with her of her Lord, and on the gifts of His Spirit—but upon the critical reason of individuals, and the support of Acts of Parliament—ever stand in the coming struggle? How could it meet Rationalism on the one hand? How could it withstand Popery on the other? After such a fatal change its career might be easily foreshadowed. Under the assaults of Rationalism, it would year by year lose some parts of the great deposit of the Catholic faith. Under the attacks of Rome, it would lose many of those whom it can ill spare, because they believe most firmly in the verities for which she is ready to witness. Thus it might continue until our ministry were filled with the time-serving, the ignorant, and the unbelieving; and, when this has come to pass, the day of final doom cannot be far distant. How such evils are to be averted is the anxious question of the present day. The great practical question seems to us to be that to which we have before this alluded,[2]—How the Supreme Court of Appeal can be made fitter for the due discharge of its momentous functions? We cannot enter here upon that great question. But solved it must be, and solved upon the principles of the great Reformation statutes of our land, which maintain, in the supremacy of the Crown, our undoubted nationality; which, besides maintaining this great principle of national life, save us from all the terrible practical evils of appeals to Rome, and yet which maintain the spirituality of the land, as the guardians under God of the great deposit of the Faith, in the very terms in which the Catholic Church of Christ has from the beginning received, and to this day handed down in its completeness, the inestimable gift.

[1] Hansard's "House of Lord's Debates," July 15, 1864 [2] "Quarterly Review," vol. cxv. p. 560

ANONYMOUS ON "WAVERLEY"

[From *The Quarterly Review*, July, 1814]

Waverley; or, 'tis Sixty Years since. 3 vols. 12mo. Edinburgh, 1814.

We have had so many occasions to invite our readers' attention to that species of composition called Novels, and have so often stated our general views of the principles of this very agreeable branch of literature, that we shall venture on the consideration of our present subject with but a few observations, and those applicable to a class of novels, of which it is a favourable specimen.

The earlier novelists wrote at periods when society was not perfectly formed, and we find that their picture of life was an embodying of their own conceptions of the "*beau idéal*."—Heroes all generosity and ladies all chastity, exalted above the vulgarities of society and nature, maintain, through eternal folios, their visionary virtues, without the stain of any moral frailty, or the degradation of any human necessities. But this high-flown style went out of fashion as the great mass of mankind became more informed of each other's feelings and concerns, and as a nearer intercourse taught them that the real course of human life is a conflict of duty and desire, of virtue and passion, of right and wrong; in the description of which it is difficult to say whether uniform virtue or unredeemed vice would be in the greater degree tedious and absurd.

The novelists next endeavoured to exhibit a general view of society. The characters in Gil Blas and Tom Jones are not individuals so much as specimens of the human race; and these delightful works have been, are, and ever will be popular, because they present lively and accurate delineations of the workings of the human soul, and that every man who reads them is obliged to confess to himself, that in similar circumstances with the personages of Le Sage and Fielding, he would probably have acted in the way in which they are described to have done.

From this species the transition to a third was natural. The first class was theory—it was improved into a *generic* description, and that again led the way to a more particular classification—a copying not of man in general, but of men of a peculiar nation, profession, or temper, or, to go a step further—of *individuals*.

Thus Alcander and Cyrus could never have existed in human society—they are neither French, nor English, nor Italian, because it is only allegorically that they are *men*. Tom Jones might have been a Frenchman, and Gil Blas an Englishman, because the essence of their characters is human nature, and the personal situation of the individual is almost indifferent to the success of the object which the author proposed to himself: while, on the other hand, the characters of the most popular novels of later times are Irish, or Scotch, or French, and not in the abstract, *men*.—The general operations of nature are circumscribed to her effects on an individual character, and the modern novels of this class, compared with the broad and noble style of the earlier writers, may be considered as Dutch pictures, delightful in their vivid and minute details of common life, wonderfully entertaining to the close observer of peculiarities, and highly creditable to the accuracy, observation and humour of the painter, but exciting none of those more exalted feelings, giving none of those higher

views of the human soul which delight and exalt the mind of the spectator of Raphael, Correggio, or Murillo.

But as in a gallery we are glad to see every style of excellence, and are ready to amuse ourselves with Teniers and Gerard Dow, so we derive great pleasure from the congenial delineations of Castle Rack-rent and Waverley; and we are well assured that any reader who is qualified to judge of the illustration we have borrowed from a sister art, will not accuse us of undervaluing, by this comparison, either Miss Edgeworth or the ingenious author of the work now under consideration. We mean only to say, that the line of writing which they have adopted is less comprehensive and less sublime, but not that it is less entertaining or less useful than that of their predecessors. On the contrary, so far as utility constitutes merit in a novel, we have no hesitation in preferring the moderns to their predecessors. We do not believe that any man or woman was ever improved in morals or manners by the reading of Tom Jones or Peregrine Pickle, though we are confident that many have profited by the Tales of Fashionable Life, and the Cottagers of Glenburnie.

We have heard Waverley called a Scotch Castle Rack-rent; and we have ourselves alluded to a certain resemblance between these works; but we must beg leave to explain that the resemblance consists only in this, that the one is a description of the peculiarities of Scottish manners as the other is of those of Ireland; and that we are far from placing on the same level the merits and qualities of the works. Waverley is of a much higher strain, and may be safely placed far above the amusing vulgarity of Castle Rack-rent, and by the side of Ennui or the Absentee, the best undoubtedly of Miss Edgeworth's compositions.

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We shall conclude this article, which has grown to an immoderate length, by observing what, indeed, our readers must have already discovered, that Waverley, who gives his name to the story, is far from being its hero, and that in truth the interest and merit of the work is derived, not from any of the ordinary qualities of a novel, but from the truth of its facts, and the accuracy of its delineations.

We confess that we have, speaking generally, a great objection to what may be called historical romance, in which real and fictitious personages, and actual and fabulous events are mixed together to the utter confusion of the reader, and the unsettling of all accurate recollections of past transactions; and we cannot but wish that the ingenious and intelligent author of Waverley had rather employed himself in recording *historically* the character and transactions of his countrymen *Sixty Years since*, than in writing a work, which, though it may be, in its facts, almost true, and in its delineations perfectly accurate, will yet, in sixty years *hence*, be regarded, or rather, probably, *disregarded*, as a *mere* romance, and the gratuitous invention of a facetious fancy.

ON SCOTT'S "TALES OF MY LANDLORD"

[From *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1817]

Tales of My Landlord. 4 vols. 12mo. Third Edition. Blackwood, Edinburgh. John Murray, London. 1817.

These Tales belong obviously to a class of novels which we have already had occasion repeatedly to notice, and which have attracted the attention of the public in no common degree,—we mean Waverley, Guy Mannering, and the Antiquary, and we have little hesitation to pronounce them either entirely, or in a great measure, the work of the same author. Why he should industriously endeavour to elude observation by taking leave of us in one character, and then suddenly popping out upon us in another, we cannot pretend to guess without knowing more of his personal reasons for preserving so strict an incognito that has hitherto reached us. We can, however, conceive many reasons for a writer observing this sort of mystery; not to mention that it has certainly had its effect in keeping up the interest which his works have excited.

We do not know if the imagination of our author will sink in the opinion of the public when deprived of that degree of invention which we have been hitherto disposed to ascribe to him; but we are certain that it ought to increase the value of his portraits, that human beings have actually sate for them. These coincidences between fiction and reality are perhaps the very

circumstances to which the success of these novels is in a great measure to be attributed: for, without depreciating the merit of the artist, every spectator at once recognizes in those scenes and faces which are copied from nature an air of distinct reality, which is not attached to fancy-pieces however happily conceived and elaborately executed. By what sort of freemasonry, if we may use the term, the mind arrives at this conviction, we do not pretend to guess, but every one must have felt that he instinctively and almost insensibly recognizes in painting, poetry, or other works of imagination, that which is copied from existing nature, and that he forthwith clings to it with that kindred interest which thinks nothing which is human indifferent to humanity. Before therefore we proceed to analyse the work immediately before us, we beg leave briefly to notice a few circumstances connected with its predecessors.

Our author has told us it was his object to present a succession of scenes and characters connected with Scotland in its past and present state, and we must own that his stories are so slightly constructed as to remind us of the showman's thread with which he draws up his pictures and presents them successively to the eye of the spectator. He seems seriously to have proceeded on Mr. Bays's maxim—"What the deuce is a plot good for, but to bring in fine things?"—Probability and perspicuity of narrative are sacrificed with the utmost indifference to the desire of producing effect; and provided the author can but contrive to "surprize and elevate," he appears to think that he has done his duty to the public. Against this slovenly indifference we have already remonstrated, and we again enter our protest. It is in justice to the author himself that we do so, because, whatever merit individual scenes and passages may possess, (and none have been more ready than ourselves to offer our applause), it is clear that their effect would be greatly enhanced by being disposed in a clear and continued narrative. We are the more earnest in this matter, because it seems that the author errs chiefly from carelessness. There may be something of system in it,

however: for we have remarked, that with an attention which amounts even to affectation, he has avoided the common language of narrative, and thrown his story, as much as possible, into a dramatic shape. In many cases this has added greatly to the effect, by keeping both the actors and action continually before the reader, and placing him, in some measure, in the situation of the audience at a theatre, who are compelled to gather the meaning of the scene from what the *dramatis personae* say to each other, and not from any explanation addressed immediately to themselves. But though the author gain this advantage, and thereby compel the reader to think of the personages of the novel and not of the writer, yet the practice, especially pushed to the extent we have noticed, is a principal cause of the flimsiness and incoherent texture of which his greatest admirers are compelled to complain. Few can wish his success more sincerely than we do, and yet without more attention on his own part, we have great doubts of its continuance.

In addition to the loose and incoherent style of the narration, another leading fault in these novels is the total want of interest which the reader attaches to the character of the hero. Waverley, Brown, or Bertram in Guy Mannering, and Lovel in the Antiquary, are all brethren of a family; very amiable and very insipid sort of young men. We think we can perceive that this error is also in some degree occasioned by the dramatic principle upon which the author frames his plots. His chief characters are never actors, but always acted upon by the spur of circumstances, and have their fates uniformly determined by the agency of the subordinate persons. This arises from the author having usually represented them as foreigners to whom every thing in Scotland is strange,—a circumstance which serves as his apology for entering into many minute details which are reflectively, as it were, addressed to the reader through the medium of the hero. While he is going into explanations and details which, addressed directly to the reader, might appear tiresome and unnecessary, he gives interest to them by

exhibiting the effect which they produce upon the principal person of his drama, and at the same time obtains a patient hearing for what might otherwise be passed over without attention. But if he gains this advantage, it is by sacrificing the character of the hero. No one can be interesting to the reader who is not himself a prime agent in the scene. This is understood even by the worthy citizen and his wife, who are introduced as prolocutors in Fletcher's Knight of the Burning Pestle. When they are asked what the principal person of the drama shall do?—the answer is prompt and ready —"Marry, let him come forth and kill a giant." There is a good deal of tact in the request. Every hero in poetry, in fictitious narrative, ought to come forth and do or say something or other which no other person could have done or said; make some sacrifice, surmount some difficulty, and become interesting to us otherwise than by his mere appearance on the scene, the passive tool of the other characters.

The insipidity of this author's heroes may be also in part referred to the readiness with which the twists and turns his story to produce some immediate and perhaps temporary effect. This could hardly be done without representing the principal character either as inconsistent or flexible in his principles. The ease with which Waverley adopts and after forsakes the Jacobite party in 1745 is a good example of what we mean. Had he been painted as a steady character, his conduct would have been improbable. The author was aware of this; and yet, unwilling to relinquish an opportunity of introducing the interior of the Chevalier's military court, the circumstances of the battle of Preston-pans, and so forth, he hesitates not to sacrifice poor Waverley, and to represent him as a reed blown about at the pleasure of every breeze: a less careless writer would probably have taken some pains to gain the end proposed in a more artful and ingenious manner. But our author was hasty, and has paid the penalty of his haste.

We have hinted that we are disposed to question the originality of these novels in point of invention, and that in doing so, we do not consider ourselves as derogating from the merit of the author, to whom, on the contrary, we give the praise due to one who has collected and brought out with accuracy and effect, incidents and manners which might otherwise have slept in oblivion. We proceed to our proofs.[1]

[1] It will be readily conceived that the curious MSS. and other information of which we have availed ourselves were not accessible to us in this country; but we have been assiduous in our inquiries; and are happy enough to possess a correspondent whose researches on the spot have been indefatigable, and whose kind, and ready communications have anticipated all our wishes.

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The traditions and manners of the Scotch were so blended with superstitious practices and fears, that the author of these novels seems to have deemed it incumbent on him, to transfer many more such incidents to his novels, than seem either probable or natural to an English reader. It may be some apology that his story would have lost the national cast, which it was chiefly his object to preserve, had this been otherwise. There are few families of antiquity in Scotland, which do not possess some strange legends, told only under promise of secrecy, and with an air of mystery; in developing which, the influence of the powers of darkness is referred to. The truth probably is, that the agency of witches and demons was often made to account for the sudden disappearance of individuals and similar incidents, too apt to arise out of the evil dispositions of humanity, in a land where revenge was long held honourable—where private feuds and civil broils disturbed the inhabitants for ages—and where justice was but weakly and irregularly executed. Mr. Law, a conscientious but credulous clergyman

of the Kirk of Scotland, who lived in the seventeenth century, has left behind him a very curious manuscript, in which, with the political events of that distracted period, he has intermingled the various portents and marvellous occurrences which, in common with his age, he ascribed to supernatural agency. The following extract will serve to illustrate the taste of this period for the supernatural. When we read such things recorded by men of sense and education, (and Mr. Law was deficient in neither), we cannot help remembering the times of paganism, when every scene, incident, and action, had its appropriate and presiding deity. It is indeed curious to consider what must have been the sensations of a person, who lived under this peculiar species of hallucination, believing himself beset on all hands by invisible agents; one who was unable to account for the restiveness of a nobleman's carriage horses otherwise than by the immediate effect of witchcraft: and supposed that the *sage femme* of the highest reputation was most likely to devote the infants to the infernal spirits, upon their very entrance into life.

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To the superstitions of the North Britons must be added their peculiar and characteristic amusements; and here we have some atonement to make to the memory of the learned Paulus Pleydell, whose compotatory relaxations, better information now inclines us to think, we mentioned with somewhat too little reverence. Before the new town of Edinburgh (as it is called) was built, its inhabitants lodged, as is the practice of Paris at this day, in large buildings called *lands*, each family occupying a story, and having access to it by a stair common to all the inhabitants. These buildings, when they did not front the high street of the city, composed the sides of little, narrow, unwholesome *closes* or lanes. The miserable and confined accommodation which such habitations afforded, drove *men of business*, as they were called, that is, people belonging to the law, to hold their professional rendezvouses

in taverns, and many lawyers of eminence spent the principal part of their time in some tavern of note, transacted their business there, received the visits of clients with their writers or attornies, and suffered no imputation from so doing. This practice naturally led to habits of conviviality, to which the Scottish lawyers, till of very late years, were rather too much addicted. Few men drank so hard as the counsellors of the old school, and there survived till of late some veterans who supported in that respect the character of their predecessors. To vary the humour of a joyous evening many frolics were resorted to, and the game of *high jinks* was one of the most common.[1] In fact, high jinks was one of the *petits jeux* with which certain circles were wont to while away the time; and though it claims no alliance with modern associations, yet, as it required some shrewdness and dexterity to support the characters assumed for the occasion, it is not difficult to conceive that it might have been as interesting and amusing to the parties engaged in it, as counting the spots of a pack of cards, or treasuring in memory the rotation in which they are thrown on the table. The worst of the game was what that age considered as its principal excellence, namely, that the forfeitures being all commuted for wine, it proved an encouragement to hard drinking, the prevailing vice of the age.

[1] We have learned, with some dismay, that one of the ablest lawyers Scotland ever produced, and who lives to witness (although in retirement) the various changes which have taken place in her courts of judicature, a man who has filled with marked distinction the highest offices of his profession, *tush'd* (pshaw'd) extremely at the delicacy of our former criticism. And certainly he claims some title to do so, having been in his youth not only a witness of such orgies as are described as proceeding under the auspices of Mr. Pleydell, but himself a distinguished performer.

On the subject of Davie Gellatley, the fool of the Baron of Bradwardine's family, we are assured there is ample testimony that a custom, referred to

Shakespeare's time in England, had, and in remote provinces of Scotland, has still its counterpart, to this day. We do not mean to say that the professed jester with his bauble and his party-coloured vestment can be found in any family north of the Tweed. Yet such a personage held this respectable office in the family of the Earls of Strathemore within the last century, and his costly holiday dress, garnished with bells of silver, is still preserved in the Castle of Glamis. But we are assured, that to a much later period, and even to this moment, the habits and manners of Scotland have had some tendency to preserve the existence of this singular order of domestics. There are (comparatively speaking) no poor's rates in the country parishes of Scotland, and of course no work-houses to immure either their worn out poor or the "moping idiot and the madman gay," whom Crabbe characterizes as the happiest inhabitants of these mansions, because insensible of their misfortunes. It therefore happens almost necessarily in Scotland, that the house of the nearest proprietor of wealth and consequence proves a place of refuge for these outcasts of society; and until the pressure of the times, and the calculating habits which they have necessarily generated had rendered the maintenance of a human being about such a family an object of some consideration, they usually found an asylum there, and enjoyed the degree of comfort of which their limited intellect rendered them susceptible. Such idiots were usually employed in some simple sort of occasional labour; and if we are not misinformed, the situation of turn-spit was often assigned them, before the modern improvement of the smoke-jack. But, however employed, they usually displayed towards their benefactors a sort of instinctive attachment which was very affecting. We knew one instance in which such a being refused food for many days, pined away, literally broke his heart, and died within the space of a very few weeks after his benefactor's decease. We cannot now pause to deduce the moral inference which might be derived from such instances. It is however evident, that if there was a coarseness of mind in deriving amusement from

the follies of these unfortunate beings, a circumstance to the disgrace of which they were totally insensible, their mode of life was, in other respects, calculated to promote such a degree of happiness as their faculties permitted them to enjoy. But besides the amusement which our forefathers received from witnessing their imperfections and extravagancies, there was a more legitimate source of pleasure in the wild wit which they often flung around them with the freedom of Shakespeare's licensed clowns. There are few houses in Scotland of any note or antiquity where the witty sayings of some such character are not occasionally quoted at this very day. The pleasure afforded to our forefathers by such repartees was no doubt heightened by their wanting the habits of more elegant amusement. But in Scotland the practice long continued, and in the house of one of the very first noblemen of that country (a man whose name is never mentioned without reverence) and that within the last twenty years, a jester such as we have mentioned stood at the side-table during dinner, and occasionally amused the guests by his extemporaneous sallies. Imbecility of this kind was even considered as an apology for intrusion upon the most solemn occasions. All know the peculiar reverence with which the Scottish of every rank attend on funeral ceremonies. Yet within the memory of most of the present generation, an idiot of an appearance equally hideous and absurd, dressed, as if in mockery, in a rusty and ragged black coat, decorated with a cravat and weepers made of white paper in the form of those worn by the deepest mourners, preceded almost every funeral procession in Edinburgh, as if to turn into ridicule the last rites paid to mortality.

It has been generally supposed that in the case of these as of other successful novels, the most prominent and peculiar characters were sketched from real life. It was only after the death of Smollet, that two barbers and a shoemaker contended about the character of Strap, which each asserted was modelled from his own: but even in the lifetime of the present author, there is scarcely a dale in the pastoral districts of the

southern counties but arrogates to itself the possession of the original Dandie Dinmont. As for Baillie Mac Wheeble, a person of the highest eminence in the law perfectly well remembers having received fees from him.

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Although these strong resemblances occur so frequently, and with such peculiar force, as almost to impress us with the conviction that the author sketched from nature, and not from fancy alone; yet we hesitate to draw any positive conclusion, sensible that a character dashed off as the representative of a certain class of men will bear, if executed with fidelity to the general outlines, not only that resemblance which he ought to possess as "knight of the shire," but also a special affinity to some particular individual. It is scarcely possible it should be otherwise. When Emery appears on the stage as a Yorkshire peasant, with the habit, manner, and dialect peculiar to the character, and which he assumes with so much truth and fidelity, those unacquainted with the province or its inhabitants see merely the abstract idea, the beau ideal of a Yorkshireman. But to those who are intimate with both, the action and manner of the comedian almost necessarily recall the idea of some individual native (altogether unknown probably to the performer) to whom his exterior and manners bear a casual resemblance. We are therefore on the whole inclined to believe, that the incidents are frequently copied from *actual* occurrences, but that the characters are either entirely fictitious, or if any traits have been borrowed from real life, as in the anecdote which we have quoted respecting Invernahyle, they have been carefully disguised and blended with such as are purely imaginary. We now proceed to a more particular examination of the volumes before us.

They are entitled "Tales of my Landlord": why so entitled, excepting to introduce a quotation from Don Quixote, it is difficult to conceive: for Tales of my Landlord they are *not*, nor is it indeed easy to say whose tales they ought to be called. There is a proem, as it is termed, supposed to be written by Jedediah Cleishbotham, the schoolmaster and parish clerk of the village of Gandercleugh, in which we are given to understand that these Tales were compiled by his deceased usher, Mr. Peter Pattieson, from the narratives or conversations of such travellers as frequented the Wallace Inn, in that village. Of this proem we shall only say that it is written in the quaint style of that prefixed by Gay to his Pastorals, being, as Johnson terms it, "such imitation as he could obtain of obsolete language, and by consequence in a style that was never written nor spoken in any age or place."

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We have given these details partly in compliance with the established rules which our office prescribes, and partly in the hope that the authorities we have been enabled to bring together might give additional light and interest to the story. From the unprecedented popularity of the work, we cannot flatter ourselves that our summary has made any one of our readers acquainted with events with which he was not previously familiar. The causes of that popularity we may be permitted shortly to allude to; we cannot even hope to exhaust them, and it is the less necessary that we should attempt it, since we cannot suggest a consideration which a perusal of the work has not anticipated in the minds of all our readers.

One great source of the universal admiration which this family of Novels has attracted, is their peculiar plan, and the distinguished excellence with which it has been executed. The objections that have frequently been stated against what are called Historical Romances, have been suggested, we think, rather from observing the universal failure of that species of

composition, than from any inherent and constitutional defect in the species of composition itself. If the manners of different ages are injudiciously blended together,—if unpowdered crops and slim and fairy shapes are commingled in the dance with volumed wigs and far-extending hoops,—if in the portraiture of real character the truth of history be violated, the eyes of the spectator are necessarily averted from a picture which excites in every well regulated and intelligent mind the hatred of incredulity. We have neither time nor inclination to enforce our remark by giving illustrations of it. But if those unpardonable sins against good taste can be avoided, and the features of an age gone by can be recalled in a spirit of delineation at once faithful and striking, the very opposite is the legitimate conclusion: the composition itself is in every point of view dignified and improved; and the author, leaving the light and frivolous associates with whom a careless observer would be disposed to ally him, takes his seat on the bench of the historians of his time and country. In this proud assembly, and in no mean place of it, we are disposed to rank the author of these works; for we again express our conviction—and we desire to be understood to use the term as distinguished from *knowledge*—that they are all the offspring of the same parent. At once a master of the great events and minuter incidents of history, and of the manners of the times he celebrates, as distinguished from those which now prevail,—the intimate thus of the living and of the dead, his judgment enables him to separate those traits which are characteristic from those that are generic; and his imagination, not less accurate and discriminating than vigorous and vivid, presents to the mind of the reader the manners of the times, and introduces to his familiar acquaintance the individuals of his drama as they thought and spoke and acted. We are not quite sure that any thing is to be found in the manner and character of the Black Dwarf which would enable us, without the aid of the author's information, and the facts he relates, to give it to the beginning of the last century; and, as we have already remarked, his free-booting robber lives,

perhaps, too late in time. But his delineation is perfect. With palpable and inexcusable defects in the *dénouement*, there are scenes of deep and overwhelming interest; and every one, we think, must be delighted with the portrait of the Grandmother of Hobbie Elliott, a representation soothing and consoling in itself, and heightened in its effect by the contrast produced from the lighter manners of the younger members of the family, and the honest but somewhat blunt and boisterous bearing of the shepherd himself.

The second tale, however, as we have remarked, is more adapted to the talents of the author, and his success has been proportionably triumphant. We have trespassed too unmercifully on the time of our gentle readers to indulge our inclination in endeavouring to form an estimate of that melancholy but, nevertheless, most attractive period in our history, when by the united efforts of a corrupt and unprincipled government, of extravagant fanaticism, want of education, perversion of religion, and the influence of ill-instructed teachers, whose hearts and understandings were estranged and debased by the illapses of the wildest enthusiasm, the liberty of the people was all but extinguished, and the bonds of society nearly dissolved. Revolting as all this is to the Patriot, it affords fertile materials to the Poet. As to the *beauty* of the delineation presented to the reader in this tale, there is, we believe, but one opinion: and we are persuaded that the more carefully and dispassionately it is contemplated, the more perfect will it appear in the still more valuable qualities of fidelity and truth. We have given part of the evidence on which we say this, and we will again recur to the subject. The opinions and language of the *honest party* are detailed with the accuracy of a witness; and he who could open to our view the state of the Scottish peasantry, perishing in the field or on the scaffold, and driven to utter and just desperation, in attempting to defend their first and most sacred rights; who could place before our eyes the leaders of these enormities, from the notorious Duke of Lauderdale downwards to the fellow mind that executed his behest, precisely as they lived and looked,—

such a chronicler cannot justly be charged with attempting to extenuate or throw into the shade the corruptions of a government that soon afterwards fell a victim to its own follies and crimes.

Independently of the delineation of the manners and characters of the times to which the story refers, it is impossible to avoid noticing, as a separate excellence, the faithful representation of general nature. Looking not merely to the litter of novels that peep out for a single day from the mud where they were spawned, but to many of more ambitious pretensions—it is quite evident that in framing them, the authors have first addressed themselves to the involutions and developement of the story, as the principal object of their attention; and that in entangling and unravelling the plot, in combining the incidents which compose it, and even in depicting the characters, they sought for assistance chiefly in the writings of their predecessors. Baldness, and uniformity, and inanity are the inevitable results of this slovenly and unintellectual proceeding. The volume which this author has studied is the great book of Nature. He has gone abroad into the world in quest of what the world will certainly and abundantly supply, but what a man of great discrimination alone will find, and a man of the very highest genius will alone depict after he has discovered it. The characters of Shakespeare are not more exclusively human, not more perfectly men and women as they live and move, than those of this mysterious author. It is from this circumstance that, as we have already observed, many of his personages are supposed to be sketched from real life. He must have mixed much and variously in the society of his native country; his studies must have familiarized him to systems of manners now forgotten; and thus the persons of his drama, though in truth the creatures of his own imagination, convey the impression of individuals who we are persuaded must exist, or are evoked from their graves in all their original freshness, entire in their lineaments, and perfect in all the minute peculiarities of dress and demeanour.

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Admitting, however, that these portraits are sketched with spirit and effect, two questions arise of much more importance than any thing affecting the merits of the novels—namely, whether it is safe or prudent to imitate, in a fictitious narrative, and often with a view to a ludicrous effect, the scriptural style of the zealots of the seventeenth century; and secondly, whether the recusant presbyterians, collectively considered, do not carry too reverential and sacred a character to be treated by an unknown author with such insolent familiarity.

On the first subject, we frankly own we have great hesitation. It is scarcely possible to ascribe scriptural expressions to hypocritical or extravagant characters without some risk of mischief, because it will be apt to create an habitual association between the expression and the ludicrous manner in which it is used, unfavourable to the reverence due to the sacred text. And it is no defence to state that this is an error inherent in the plan of the novel. Bourdaloue, a great authority, extends this restriction still farther, and denounces all attempts to unmask hypocrisy by raillery, because in doing so the satirist is necessarily compelled to expose to ridicule the religious vizard of which he has divested him. Yet even against such authority it may be stated, that ridicule is the friend both of religion and virtue, when directed against those who assume their garb, whether from hypocrisy or fanaticism. The satire of Butler, not always decorous in these particulars, was yet eminently useful in stripping off their borrowed gravity and exposing to public ridicule the affected fanaticism of the times in which he lived. It may also be remembered, that in the days of Queen Anne a number of the Camisars or Huguenots of Dauphiné arrived as refugees in England, and became distinguished by the name of the French prophets. The fate of these enthusiasts in their own country had been somewhat similar to that of the Covenanters. Like them, they used to assemble in the

mountains and desolate places, to the amount of many hundreds, in arms, and like them they were hunted and persecuted by the military. Like them, they were enthusiasts, though their enthusiasm assumed a character more decidedly absurd. The fugitive Camisars who came to London had convulsion-fits, prophesied, made converts, and attracted the public attention by an offer to raise the dead. The English minister, instead of fine and imprisonment and other inflictions which might have placed them in the rank and estimation of martyrs, and confirmed in their faith their numerous disciples, encouraged a dramatic author to bring out a farce on the subject which, though neither very witty nor very delicate, had the good effect of laughing the French prophets out of their audience and putting a stop to an inundation of nonsense which could not have failed to disgrace the age in which it appeared. The Camisars subsided into their ordinary vocation of psalmodic whiners, and no more was heard of their sect or their miracles. It would be well if all folly of the kind could be so easily quelled: for enthusiastic nonsense, whether of this day or of those which have passed away, has no more title to shelter itself under the veil of religion than a common pirate to be protected by the reverence due to an honoured and friendly flag.

Still, however, we must allow that there is great delicacy and hesitation to be used in employing the weapon of ridicule on any point connected with religion. Some passages occur in the work before us for which the writer's sole apology must be the uncontroulable disposition to indulge the peculiarity of his vein of humour—a temptation which even the saturnine John Knox was unable to resist either in narrating the martyrdom of his friend Wisheart or the assassination of his enemy Beatson, and in the impossibility of resisting which his learned and accurate biographer has rested his apology for this mixture of jest and earnest.

"There are writers," he says (rebutting the charge of Hume against Knox), "who can treat the most sacred subjects with a levity bordering on profanity. Must we at once pronounce them profane, and is nothing to be set down to the score of natural temper inclining them to wit and humour? The pleasantry which Knox has mingled with his narrative of his (Cardinal Beatson's) death and burial is unseasonable and unbecoming. But it is to be imputed not to any pleasure which he took in describing a bloody scene, but to the strong propensity which he had to indulge his vein of humour. Those who have read his history with attention must have perceived that he is not able to check this even on the very serious occasions."—*Macrie's Life of Knox*, p. 147.

Indeed Dr. Macrie himself has given us a striking instance of the indulgence which the Presbyterian clergy, even of the strictest persuasion, permit to the *vis comica*. After describing a polemical work as "ingeniously constructed and occasionally enlivened with strokes of humour," he transfers, to embellish his own pages, (for we can discover no purpose of edification which the tale serves), a ludicrous parody made by an ignorant parish-priest on certain words of a Psalm, too sacred to be here quoted. Our own innocent pleasantry cannot, in this instance, be quite reconciled with that of the learned biographer of John Knox, but we can easily conceive that his authority may be regarded in Scotland as decisive of the extent to which a humourist may venture in exercising his wit upon scriptural expressions without incurring censure even from her most rigid divines.

It may however be a very different point how far the author is entitled to be acquitted upon the second point of indictment. To use too much freedom with things sacred is a course much more easily glossed over than that of exposing to ridicule the persons of any particular sect. Every one knows the reply of the great Prince of Condé to Louis XIV when this monarch expressed his surprize at the clamour excited by Molière's Tartuffe, while a

blasphemous farce called *Scaramouche Hermite* was performed without giving any scandal: "C'est parceque Scaramouche ne jouoit que le ciel et la religion, dont les dévots se soucioient beaucoup moins que d'eux-mêmes." We believe, therefore, the best service we can do our author in the present case is to shew that the odious part of his satire applies only to that fierce and unreasonable set of extra-presbyterians, whose zeal, equally absurd and cruel, afforded pretexts for the severities inflicted on non-conformists without exception, and gave the greatest scandal and offence to the wise, sober, enlightened, and truly pious among the Presbyterians.

The principal difference betwixt the Cameronians and the rational presbyterians has been already touched upon. It may be summed in a very few words.

After the restoration of Charles II episcopacy was restored in Scotland, upon the unanimous petition of the Scottish parliament. Had this been accompanied with a free toleration of the presbyterians, whose consciences preferred a different mode of church-government, we do not conceive there would have been any wrong done to that ancient kingdom. But instead of this, the most violent means of enforcing conformity were resorted to without scruple, and the ejected presbyterian clergy were persecuted by penal statutes and prohibited from the exercise of their ministry. These rigours only made the people more anxiously seek out and adhere to the silenced preachers. Driven from the churches, they held conventicles in houses. Expelled from cities and the mansions of men, they met on the hills and deserts like the French Huguenots. Assailed with arms, they repelled force by force. The severity of the rulers, instigated by the episcopal clergy, increased with the obstinacy of the recusants, until the latter, in 1666, assumed arms for the purpose of asserting their right to worship God in their own way. They were defeated at Pentland; and in 1669 a gleam of common sense and justice seems to have beamed upon the Scottish councils

of Charles. They granted what was called an *indulgence* (afterwards repeatedly renewed) to the presbyterian clergy, assigned them small stipends, and permitted them to preach in such deserted churches as should be assigned to them by the Scottish Privy Council. This "indulgence," though clogged with harsh conditions and frequently renewed or capriciously recalled, was still an acceptable boon to the wiser and better part of the presbyterian clergy, who considered it as an opening to the exercise of their ministry under the lawful authority, which they continued to acknowledge. But fiercer and more intractable principles were evinced by the younger ministers of that persuasion. They considered the submitting to exercise their ministry under the controul of any visible authority as absolute erastianism, a desertion of the great invisible and divine Head of the church, and a line of conduct which could only be defended, says one of their tracts, by nullifidians, time-servers, infidels, or the Archbishop of Canterbury. They held up to ridicule and abhorrence such of their brethren as considered mere toleration as a boon worth accepting. Every thing, according to these fervent divines, which fell short of re-establishing presbytery as the sole and predominating religion, all that did not imply a full restoration of the Solemn League and Covenant, was an imperfect and unsound composition between God and mammon, episcopacy and prelacy. The following extracts from a printed sermon by one of them, on the subject of "soul-confirmation," will at once exemplify the contempt and scorn with which these high-flyers regarded their more sober-minded brethren, and serve as a specimen of the homely eloquence with which they excited their followers. The reader will probably be of opinion that it is worthy of Kettledrummle himself, and will serve to clear Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham of the charge of exaggeration.

> There is many folk that has a face to the religion that is in fashion, and there is many folk, they have ay a face to the old company, they have a face for godly folk, and they have a face for persecutors of godly folk,

and they will be daddies bairns and minnies bairns both; they will be *prelates* bairns and they will be *malignants* bairns and they will be the people of God's bairns. And what think ye of that bastard temper? Poor Peter had a trial of this soupleness, but God made Paul an instrument to take him by the neck and shake it from him: And O that God would take us by the neck and shake our soupleness from us.

Therefore you that keeps only your old job-trot, and does not mend your pace, you will not wone at *soul-confirmation,* there is a whine (i.e., *a few*) old job-trot, and does not mend your pace, you will not wone at *soul-confirmation,* there is a whine old job-trot ministers among us, a whine old job-trot professors, they have their own pace, and faster they will not go; O therefore they could never wine to *soul-confirmation* in the mettere of God. And our old job-trot ministers is turned *curates*, and our old job-trot professors is joined with them, and now this way God has turned them inside out, and has made it manifest and when their heart is hanging upon this braw, I will not give a gray groat for them and their profession both.

The devil has the ministers and professors of Scotland, now in a sive, and O as he sifts, and O as he riddles, and O as he rattles, and O the chaff he gets; And I fear there be more chaff nor there be good corn, and that will be found among us or all be done: but the *soul-confirmed* man leaves ever the devil at two more, and he has ay the matter gadged, and leaves ay the devil in the lee side,—Sirs O work in the day of the cross.

The more moderate presbyterian ministers saw with pain and resentment the lower part of their congregation, who had least to lose by taking desperate courses, withdrawn from their flocks, by their more zealous pretenders to purity of doctrine, while they themselves were held up to ridicule, old jog trot professors and chaff-winnowed out and flung away by

Satan. They charged the Cameronian preachers with leading the deluded multitude to slaughter at Bothwell, by prophesying a certainty of victory, and dissuading them from accepting the amnesty offered by Monmouth. "All could not avail," says Mr. Law, himself a presbyterian minister, "with McCargill, Kidd, Douglas, and other witless men amongst them, to hearken to any proposals of peace. Among others that Douglas, sitting on his horse, and preaching to the confused multitude, told them that they would come to terms with them, and like a drone was always droning on these terms with them: 'they would give us a half Christ, but we will have a whole Christ,' and such like impertinent speeches as these, good enough to feed those that are served with wind and not with the sincere milk of the word of God." Law also censures these irritated and extravagant enthusiasts, not only for intending to overthrow the government, but as binding themselves to kill all that would not accede to their opinion, and he gives several instances of such cruelty being exercised by them, not only upon straggling soldiers whom they shot by the way or surprized in their quarters, but upon those who, having once joined them, had fallen away from their principles. Being asked why they committed these cruelties in cold blood, they answered, 'they were obliged to do it by their sacred bond.' Upon these occasions they practised great cruelties, mangling the bodies of their victims that each man might have his share of the guilt. In these cases the Cameronians imagined themselves the direct and inspired executioners of the vengeance of heaven. Nor did they lack the usual incentives of enthusiasm. Peden and others among them set up a claim to the gift of prophecy, though they seldom foretold any thing to the purpose. They detected witches, had bodily encounters with the enemy of mankind in his own shape, or could discover him as, lurking in the disguise of a raven, he inspired the rhetoric of a Quaker's meeting. In some cases, celestial guardians kept guard over their field-meetings. At a conventicle held on the Lomond-hills, the Rev. Mr. Blacader was credibly assured, under the hands of four honest men, that at

the time the meeting was disturbed by the soldiers, some women who had remained at home, "clearly perceived as the form of a tall man, majestic-like, stand in the air in stately posture with the one leg, as it were, advanced before the other, standing above the people all the time of the soldiers shooting." Unluckily this great vision of the Guarded Mount did not conclude as might have been expected. The divine sentinel left his post too soon, and the troopers fell upon the rear of the audience, plundered and stripped many, and made eighteen prisoners.

But we have no delight to dwell either upon the atrocities or absurdities of a people whose ignorance and fanaticism were rendered frantic by persecution. It is enough for our present purpose to observe that the present Church of Scotland, which comprizes so much sound doctrine and learning, and has produced so many distinguished characters, is the legitimate representative of the indulged clergy of the days of Charles II, settled however upon a comprehensive basis. That after the revolution, it should have succeeded episcopacy as the national religion, was natural and regular, because it possessed all the sense, learning, and moderation fit for such a change, and because among its followers were to be found the only men of property and influence who acknowledged presbytery. But the Cameronians continued long as a separate sect, though their preachers were bigoted and ignorant, and their hearers were gleaned out of the lower ranks of the peasantry. Their principle, so far as it was intelligible, asserted that paramount species of presbyterian church-government which was established in the year 1648, and they continued to regard the established church as erastian and time-serving, because they prudently remained silent upon certain abstract and delicate topics, where there might be some collision between the absolute liberty asserted by the church and the civil government of the state. The Cameronians, on the contrary, disowned all kings and government whatsoever, which should not take the Solemn League and Covenant; and long retained hopes of re-establishing that great

national engagement, a bait which was held out to them by all those who wished to disturb the government during the reign of William and Anne, as is evident from the Memoirs of Ker of Kersland, and the Negotiations of Colonel Hooke with the Jacobites and disaffected of the year.

A party so wild in their principles, so vague and inconsistent in their views, could not subsist long under a free and unlimited toleration. They continued to hold their preachings on the hills, but they lost much of their zeal when they were no longer liable to be disturbed by dragoons, sheriffs, and lieutenants of Militia.—The old fable of the Traveller's Cloak was in time verified, and the fierce sanguinary zealots of the days of Claverhouse sunk into such quiet and peaceable enthusiasts as Howie of Lochgoin, or Old Mortality himself. It is, therefore, upon a race of sectaries who have long ceased to exist, that Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham has charged all that is odious, and almost all that is ridiculous, in his fictitious narrative; and we can no more suppose any moderate presbyterian involved in the satire, than we should imagine that the character of Hampden stood committed by a little raillery on the person of Ludovic Claxton, the Muggletonian. If, however, there remain any of those sectaries who, confining the beams of the Gospel to the Goshen of their own obscure synagogue, and with James Mitchell, the intended assassin, giving their sweeping testimony against prelacy and popery, The Whole Duty of Man and bordles, promiscuous dancing and the Common Prayer-book, and all the other enormities and backslidings of the time, may perhaps be offended at this idle tale, we are afraid they will receive their answer in the tone of the revellers to Malvolio, who, it will be remembered, was something a kind of Puritan: "Doest thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?—Aye, by Saint Anne, and ginger will be hot in the mouth too."

ON LEIGH HUNT

[From *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1816]

The Story of Rimini, a Poem. By LEIGH HUNT. fc. 8vo. pp. 111. London, 1816.

A considerable part of this poem was written in Newgate, where the author was some time confined, we believe for a libel which appeared in a newspaper, of which he is said to be the conductor. Such an introduction is not calculated to make a very favourable impression. Fortunately, however, we are as little prejudiced as possible on this subject: we have never seen Mr. Hunt's newspaper; we have never heard any particulars of his offence; nor should we have known that he had been imprisoned but for his own confession. We have not, indeed, ever read one line that he has written, and are alike remote from the knowledge of his errors or the influence of his private character. We are to judge him solely from the work now before us; and our criticism would be worse than uncandid if it were swayed by any other consideration.

The poem is not destitute of merit; but—and this, we confess, was our main inducement to notice it—it is written on certain pretended *principles*, and put forth as a pattern for imitation, with a degree of arrogance which imposes on us the duty of making some observations on this new theory,

which Mr. Leigh Hunt, with the weight and authority of his venerable name, has issued, ex cathedra, as the canons of poetry and criticism.

These canons Mr. Hunt endeavours to explain and establish in a long preface, written in a style which, though Mr. Hunt implies that it is meant to be perfectly natural and unaffected, appears to us the most strange, laboured, uncouth, and unintelligible species of prose that we ever read, only indeed to be exceeded in these qualities by some of the subsequent verses; and both the prose and the verse are the first eruptions of this disease with which Mr. Leigh Hunt insists upon inoculating mankind.

Mr. Hunt's *first* canon is that there should be a *great freedom of versification*—this is a proposition to which we should have readily assented; but when Mr. Hunt goes on to say that by *freedom of versification* he means something which neither Pope nor Johnson possessed, and of which even "they knew less than any poets perhaps who ever wrote," we check our confidence; and, after a little consideration, find that by freedom Mr. Hunt means only an inaccurate, negligent, and harsh style of versification, which our early poets fell into from want of polish, and such poets as Mr. Hunt still practise from want of ease, of expression, and of taste.

"*License* he means, when he cries *liberty*."

Mr. Hunt tells us that Dryden, Spenser and Ariosto, Shakespeare and Chaucer (so he arranges them), are the greatest masters of *modern* versification; but he, in the next few sentences, leads us to suspect that he really does not think much more reverently of these great names than of Pope and of Johnson; and that, if the whole truth were told, he is decidedly of opinion that the only good master of versification, in modern times, is—Mr. Leigh Hunt.

Dryden, Mr. Hunt thinks, is apt to be *artificial* in his style; or, in other words, he has improved the harmony of our language from the rudeness of Chaucer, whom Mr. Hunt (in a sentence which is not grammar, p. xv) says that Dryden (though he spoke of and borrowed from him) neither relished nor understood. Spenser, he admits, was musical from pure taste, but Milton was only, as he elegantly expresses it, "*learnedly* so." Being *learned in music*, is intelligible, and, of Milton, true; but what can Mr. Hunt mean by saying that Milton had "*learnedly* a *musical ear*"? "Ariosto's fine ear and *animal spirits* gave a *frank* and exquisite tone to all he said"—what does this mean?— a fine ear may, perhaps, be said to *give*, as it contributes to, an exquisite tone; but what have *animal spirits* to do here? and what, in the matter of *tones* and *sounds*, is the effect of *frankness*? We shrewdly suspect that Mr. Hunt, with all his affectation of Italian literature, knows very little of Ariosto; it is clear that he knows nothing of Tasso. Of Shakespeare he tells us, "that his versification escapes us because he *over-informed* it with knowledge and sentiment," by which it appears (as well, indeed, as by his own verses), that this new Stagyrite thinks that good versification runs a risk of being spoiled by having *too much meaning* included in its lines.

To wind up the whole of this admirable, precise, and useful criticism by a recapitulation as useful and precise, he says, "all these are about as different from Pope as the church organ is from the bell in the steeple, or, to give him a more decorous comparison, the song of the nightingale from that of the cuckoo."—p. xv.

Now we own that what there is so *indecorous* in the first comparison, or so especially *decorous* in the second, we cannot discover; neither can we make out whether Pope is the organ or the bell—the nightingale or the cuckoo; we suppose that Mr. Hunt knows that Pope was called by his contemporaries the *nightingale*, but we never heard Milton and Dryden called *cuckoos*; or, if the comparison is to be taken the other way, we

apprehend that, though Chaucer may be to Mr. Hunt's ears a *church organ*, Pope cannot, to any ear, sound like the *church bell*.

But all this theory, absurd and ignorant as it is, is really nothing to the practice of which it effects to be the defence.

Hear the warblings of Mr. Hunt's nightingales.

A horseman is described—

> The patting hand, that best persuades the check,
> *And makes the quarrel up with a proud neck*,
> The thigh broad pressed, the spanning palm *upon it*,
> And the jerked feather *swaling* in the *bonnet*.—p. 15.

Knights wear ladies' favours—

> Some tied about their arm, some at the breast, *Some, with a drag, dangling from the cap's crest*.—p. 14.

Paulo pays his compliments to the destined bride of his brother—

> And paid them with an air so frank and bright,
> As to a friend *appreciated at sight*;
> That air, in short, which sets you at your ease,
> Without *implying* your perplexities,
> That *what with the surprize in every way*,
> The hurry of the time, the appointed day,—
> She knew *not how to object* in her confusion.—p. 29.

The meeting of the brothers, on which the catastrophe turns, is excellent: the politeness with which the challenge is given would have delighted the heart of old Caranza.

May I request, Sir, said the prince, and frowned,
Your ear a moment in the tilting ground?
There, brother? answered Paulo with an *air*
Surprized and *shocked*. Yes, *brother*, cried he, *there*.
The word smote *crushingly*.—p. 92.

Before the duel, the following spirited explanation takes place:

The prince spoke low,
And said: Before *you answer what you can*,
I wish to tell you, *as a gentleman*,
That what you may confess—
Will implicate no person known to you,
More than disquiet in *its* sleep may do.—p. 93.

Paulo falls—and the event is announced in these exquisite lines:

Her *aged* nurse—
Who, shaking her *old* head, and pressing close
Her withered *lips* to *keep the tears* that rose—p. 101.

"By the way," does Mr. Leigh Hunt suppose that the aged nurses of Rimini weep with their mouths? or does he mistake crying for drivelling?—In fact, the young lady herself seems to have adopted the same mode of weeping:

With that, a *keen* and *quivering glance of* tears
Scarce moves her *patient mouth*, and disappears.

But to the nurse.—She introduces the messenger of death to the princess, who communicates his story, in pursuance of her command—

Something, I'm sure, has happened—tell me what—
I can bear all, though *you may fancy not*.
Madam, replied the squire, you are, I know,
All sweetness—*pardon me for saying so*.
My Master bade *me* say then, resumed *he*,
That *he* spoke firmly, when he told it *me*,—
That I was also, madam, to your ear
Firmly to speak, and you firmly to hear,—
That he was forced this day, *whether or no*,
To combat with the prince;—'—p. 103.

The *second* of Mr. Hunt's new principles he thus announces:

With the endeavour to recur to a freer spirit of versification, I have joined one of still greater importance—that of having a *free and idiomatic* cast of language. There is a cant of art as well as of nature, though the former is not so unpleasant as the latter, which affects non-affectation.—(What does all this mean?)—But the proper *language of poetry* is in fact nothing different from that of real life, and depends for its dignity upon the strength and sentiment of what it speaks. It is only adding *musical modulation* to what a *fine understanding* might actually utter in the midst of its griefs or enjoyments. The poet therefore should do as Chaucer or Shakespeare did,—not copy what is obsolete or peculiar in either, any more than they copied from their predecessors,—but use as much as possible an *actual, existing language,*—omitting of course *mere vulgarisms* and *fugitive phrases*, which are the cant of ordinary discourse, just as tragedy phrases, *dead idioms,* and exaggerations of dignity, are of the artificial style, and yeas, verilys, and exaggerations of simplicity, are of the natural.—p. xvi.

This passage, compared with the verses to which it preludes, affords a more extraordinary instance of self-delusion than even Mr. Hunt's notion of the merit of his versification; for if there be one fault more eminently conspicuous and ridiculous in Mr. Hunt's work than another, it is,—that it is full of *mere vulgarisms* and *fugitive phrases*, and that in every page the language is—not only not *the actual, existing language*, but an ungrammatical, unauthorised, chaotic jargon, such as we believe was never before spoken, much less written.

In what vernacular tongue, for instance, does Mr. Hunt find a lady's waist called *clipsome* (p. 10)—or the shout of a mob "enormous" (p. 9)—or a fit, *lightsome*;—or that a hero's nose is "*lightsomely* brought down from a forehead of clear-spirited thought" (p. 46)—or that his back "drops" *lightsomely in* (p. 20). Where has he heard of a *quoit-like drop*—of *swaling* a jerked feather—of *unbedinned* music (p. 11)—of the death of *leaping* accents (p. 32)—of the *thick reckoning* of a hoof (p. 33)—of a *pin-drop* silence (p. 17)—a *readable* look (p. 20)—a *half indifferent wonderment* (p. 37)—or of

Boy-storied trees and *passion-plighted* spots,—p. 38.

of

Ships coming up with *scattery* light,—p. 4.

or of self-knowledge being

Cored, after all, in our complacencies?—p. 38.

We shall now produce a few instances of what "*a fine understanding might utter*," with "the addition of *musical modulation*," and of the *dignity* and *strength* of Mr. Hunt's sentiments and expressions.

A crowd, which divided itself into groups, is—

—the multitude,
Who *got* in clumps——p. 26.

The impression made on these "clumps" by the sight of the Princess, is thus "musically" described:

There's not in all that croud one *gallant* being,
Whom, if his heart were whole, and *rank agreeing*,
It would not *fire to twice of what he is*,—p. 10.

"Dignity and strength"—

First came the trumpeters—
And as they *sit along* their easy way,
Stately and *heaving* to the croud below.—p. 12.

This word is deservedly a great favourite with the poet; he *heaves* it in upon all occasions.

The deep talk *heaves*.—p. 5.
With *heav'd* out tapestry the windows glow.—p. 6.
Then *heave* the croud.—*id*.
And after a rude *heave* from side to side.—p. 7.
The marble bridge comes *heaving* forth below.—p. 28.

"Fine understanding"—

The youth smiles *up*, and with a *lowly* grace, *Bending* his *lifted* eyes—p. 22.

This is very neat:

No peevishness there was—
But a *mute* gush of *hiding* tears from one,
Clasped to the *core* of him who yet shed none.—p. 83.

The heroine is suspected of wishing to have some share in the choice of her own husband, which is thus elegantly expressed:

She had stout notions on the marrying *score*.—p. 27.

This noble use of the word *score* is afterwards carefully repeated in speaking of the Prince, her husband—

—no suspicion could have touched him more,
Than that of *wanting* on the generous *score*.—p. 48.

But though thus punctilious on the *generous score*, his Highness had but a bad temper,

And kept no reckoning with his *sweets and sours*.—p. 47.

This, indeed, is somewhat qualified by a previous observation, that—

The worst of Prince Giovanni, as his bride
Too quickly found, was an ill-tempered pride.

How nobly does Mr. Hunt celebrate the combined charms of the fair sex, and the country!

The two divinest things this world HAS GOT,
A lovely woman in a rural spot!—p. 58.

A rural spot, indeed, seems to inspire Mr. Hunt with peculiar elegance and sweetness: for he says, soon after, of Prince Paulo—

For welcome grace, there rode not such another,
Nor yet for strength, except his lordly brother.
Was there a court day, or a sparkling feast,
Or better still—*to my ideas, at least!*—
A summer party in the green wood shade.—p. 50.

So much for this new invented *strength* and *dignity*: we shall add a specimen of his syntax:

But fears like these he never entertain'd,
And had they crossed him, would have been disdain'd.—p. 50.

* * * * *

After these extracts, we have but one word more to say of Mr. Hunt's poetry; which is, that amidst all his vanity, vulgarity, ignorance, and coarseness, there are here and there some well-executed descriptions, and occasionally a line of which the sense and the expression are good— The interest of the story itself is so great that we do not think it wholly lost even in Mr. Hunt's hands. He has, at least, the merit of telling it with decency; and, bating the qualities of versification, expression, and dignity, on which he peculiarly piques himself, and in which he has utterly failed, the poem is one which, in our opinion at least, may be read with satisfaction after GALT'S Tragedies.

Mr. Hunt prefixes to his work a dedication to Lord Byron, in which he assumes a high tone, and talks big of his "*fellow-dignity*" and independence: what fellow-dignity may mean, we know not; perhaps the *dignity* of a *fellow*; but this we will say, that Mr. Hunt is not more unlucky in his pompous pretension to versification and good language, than he is in that which he makes, in this dedication, to *proper spirit*, as he calls it, and *fellow-dignity*; for we never, in so few lines, saw so many clear marks of the

vulgar impatience of a low man, conscious and ashamed of his wretched vanity, and labouring, with coarse flippancy, to scramble over the bounds of birth and education, and fidget himself into the *stout-heartedness* of being familiar with a LORD.

OF SHAKESPEARE

[From *The Quarterly Review*, October, 1816]

Shakespeare's Himself Again! or the Language of the Poet asserted; being a full and dispassionate Examen of the Readings and Interpretations of the several Editors. Comprised in a Series of Notes, Sixteen Hundred in Number, illustrative of the most difficult Passages in his Plays—to the various editions of which the present Volumes form a complete and necessary Supplement. By ANDREW BECKET. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 730. 1816.

If the dead could be supposed to take any interest in the integrity of their literary reputation, with what complacency might we not imagine our great poet to contemplate the labours of the present writer! Two centuries have passed away since his death—the mind almost sinks under the reflection that he has been all that while exhibited to us so "transmographied" by the joint ignorance and malice of printers, critics, etc., as to be wholly unlike himself. But—*post nubila, Phoebus!* Mr. Andrew Becket has at length risen upon the world, and Shakespeare is about to shine forth in genuine and unclouded glory!

What we have at present is a mere scantling of the great work *in procinctu*—[Greek: *pidakos ex ieraes oligaelizas*]—sixteen hundred "restorations," and no more! But if these shall be favourably received, a complete edition of the poet will speedily follow. Mr. Becket has taken him

to develop; and it is truly surprizing to behold how beautiful he comes forth as the editor proceeds in unrolling those unseemly and unnatural rags in which he has hitherto been so disgracefully wrapped:

Tandem aperit vultum, et tectoria prima reponit,—
Incipit agnosci!—

Mr. Becket has favoured us, in the Preface, with a comparative estimate of the merits of his predecessors. He does not, as may easily be conjectured, rate any of them very highly; but he places Warburton at the top of the scale, and Steevens at the bottom: this, indeed, was to be expected. "Warburton," he says, "is the *best*, and Steevens the *worst* of Shakespeare's commentators"; (p. xvii) and he ascribes it solely to his forbearance that the latter is not absolutely crushed: it not being in his nature, as he magnanimously insinuates, "to break a butterfly upon a wheel!" Dr. Johnson is shoved aside with very little ceremony; Mr. Malone fares somewhat better; and the rest are dismissed with the gentle valediction of Pandarus to the Trojans—"asses, fools, dolts! chaff and bran! porridge after meat!" With respect to our author himself, it is but simple justice to declare, that he comes to the great work of "restoring Shakespeare"—not only with more negative advantages than the unfortunate tribe of critics so cavalierly dismissed, but than all who have aspired to illumine the page of a defunct writer since the days of Aristarchus. As far as we are enabled to judge, Mr. Becket never examined an old play in his life:—he does not seem to have the slightest knowledge of any writer, or any subject, or any language that ever occupied the attention of his contemporaries; and he possesses a mind as innocent of all requisite information as if he had dropped, with the last thunderstone, from the moon.

"Addison has well observed, that 'in works of criticism it is absolutely necessary to have a *clear and logical head*.'" (p.v.) In this position, Mr.

Becket cheerfully agrees with him; and, indeed, it is sufficiently manifest, that without the internal conviction of enjoying that indispensable advantage, he would not have favoured the public with those matchless "restorations"; a few specimens of which we now proceed to lay before them. Where all are alike admirable, there is no call for selection; we shall therefore open the volumes at random, and trust to fortune.

"*Hamlet*. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time?"

This reading, Mr. Becket says, he cannot admit; and he says well: since it appears that Shakespeare wrote—

"For who would bear the *scores* of *weapon'd* time?"

using *scores* in the sense of stripes. Formerly, *i.e.,* when Becket was *in his sallad days*, he augured, he says, that the true reading was—

—"the scores of *whip-hand* time."

Time having always the *whip-hand,* the advantage; but he now reverts to the other emendation; though, as he modestly hints, the epithet *whip-hand* (which he still regards with parental fondness) will perhaps be thought to have much of the manner of Shakespeare.—Vol. i, p. 43.

"*Horatio*.—While they, distill'd Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him!"

We had been accustomed to find no great difficulty here: the words seemed, to us, at least, to express the usual effect of inordinate terror—but we gladly acknowledge our mistake. "The passage is not to be understood." How should it, when both the pointing and the language are corrupt? Read, as Shakespeare gave it—

—"While they *bestill'd*
Almost to *gelèe* with the act. Of fear
Stand dumb," &c.—that is, petrified (or rather icefied) p. 13.

"*Lear*. And my poor fool is hang'd!"

With these homely words, which burst from the poor old king on reverting to the fate of his loved Cordelia, whom he then holds in his arms, we have been always deeply affected, and therefore set them down as one of the thousand proofs of the poet's intimate knowledge of the human heart. But Mr. Becket has made us ashamed of our simplicity and our tears. Shakespeare had no such "lenten" language in his thoughts; he wrote, as Mr. Becket tells us,

"And my *pure soot* is hang'd!"

Poor, he adds, might be easily mistaken for *pure*; while the *s* in *soot* (sweet) was scarcely discernible from the *f*, or the *t* from the *l*.—p. 176.

We are happy to find that so much can be offered in favour of the old printers. And yet—were it not that the genuine text is always to be preferred—we could almost wish that the critic had left their blunder as it stood.

"*Wolsey*.—that his bones May have a tomb of orphans' tears wept on them."

A tomb of tears is ridiculous. I read—a *coomb* of tears—a *coomb* is a liquid measure containing forty gallons. Thus the expression, which was before absurd, becomes forcible and just.—vol. ii, p. 134.

It does indeed!

"*Sir Andrew*. I sent thee six-pence for thy leman (mistress): had'st it?" Read as Shakespeare wrote: "I sent thee sixpence for thy *lemma*"—*lemma* is properly an *argument*, or *proposition assumed*, and is used by Sir Andrew Aguecheek for a story.—p. 335.

"*Viola*. She pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy."—Correct it thus:

"She pined in thought
And with *agrein* and *hollow* melancholy."—p. 339.

"*Iago*. I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry"—

that is, or rather *was*, according to our homely apprehension, I have rubb'd this pimple (Roderigo) almost to bleeding:—but, no; Mr. Becket has furnished us not only with the genuine words, but the meaning of Shakespeare—

I have *fubb'd* this young *quat—Quat*, or cat, appears to be a contraction of cater-cousin—and this reading will be greatly strengthened when it is remembered that Roderigo was really the intimate of Iago.—p. 204.

In a subsequent passage, "I am as melancholy as a gibb'd cat"—we are told that *cat* is not the domestic animal of that name, but a contraction of *catin*, a woman of the town. But, indeed, Mr. Becket possesses a most wonderful faculty for detecting these latent contractions and filling them up. Thus,

"*Parolles*. Sir, he will steal an egg out of a cloister." Read (as Shakespeare wrote), "Sir, he will steal an *Ag* (i.e., an *Agnes*) out of a

cloister." *Agnes* is the name of a woman, and may easily stand for chastity.—p. 325.

No doubt.

"*Carter*. Prithee, Tom, put a few flocks in Cut's saddle; the poor beast is wrung in the withers out of all cess."

Out of all cess, we used to think meant, in vulgar phraseology, out of all measure, very much, &c.—but see how foolishly!

Cess is a mere contraction of *cessibility*, which signifies the *quality of receding*, and may very well stand for *yielding*, as spoken of a tumour.—p. 5.

"*Hamlet*. A cry of players."

This we once thought merely a sportive expression for a *company of* players, but Mr. Becket has undeceived us—"*Cry* (he tells us) is contracted from *cryptic*, and cryptic is precisely of the same import as mystery."—p. 53. How delightful it is when learning and judgment walk thus hand in hand! But enough—

> —"the sweetest honey Is loathsome in its own deliciousness"—

and we would not willingly cloy our readers. Sufficient has been produced to encourage them—not perhaps to contend for the possession of the present volumes, though Mr. Becket conscientiously affirms, in his title-page, that "they form a complete and *necessary* supplement to every former

edition"—but, with us, to look anxiously forward to the great work in preparation.

Meanwhile we have gathered some little consolation from what is already in our hands. Very often, on comparing the dramas of the present day (not even excepting Mr. Tobin's) with those of Elizabeth's age, we have been tempted to think that we were born too late, and to exclaim with the poet—

"Infelix ego, non illo qui tempore natus,
Quo facilis natura fuit; sors O mea laeva
Nascendi, miserumque genus!" &c.

but we now see that unless Mr. Andrew Becket had also been produced at that early period, we should have derived no extraordinary degree of satisfaction from witnessing the first appearance of Shakespeare's plays, since it is quite clear that we could not have understood them.

One difficulty yet remains. We scarcely think that the managers will have the confidence, in future, to play Shakespeare as they have been accustomed to do; and yet, to present him, as now so happily "restored," would, for some time at least, render him *caviare to the general*. We know that Livius Andronicus, when grown hoarse with repeated declamation, was allowed a second rate actor, who stood at his back and spoke while he gesticulated, or gesticulated while he spoke. A hint may be borrowed from this fact. We therefore propose that Mr. Andrew Becket be forthwith taken into the pay of the two theatres, and divided between them. He may then be instructed to follow the *dramatis personae* of our great poet's plays on the stage, and after each of them has made his speech in the present corrupt reading, to pronounce aloud the words as "restored" by himself. This may have an awkward effect at first; but a season or two will reconcile the town

to it; Shakespeare may then be presented in his genuine language, or, as our author better expresses it, be HIMSELF AGAIN.

ON MOXON'S SONNETS

[From *The Quarterly Review*, July, 1837]

Sonnets by EDWARD MOXON. Second Edition. London, 1837.

This is quite a *dandy* of a book. Some seventy pages of drawing-paper—fifty-five of which are impressed each with a single sonnet in all the luxury of type, while the rest are decked out with vignettes of nymphs in clouds and bowers, and Cupids in rose-bushes and cockle-shells. And all these coxcombries are the appendages of, as it seems to us, as little intellect as the rings and brooches of the Exquisite in a modern novel. We shall see presently, by what good fortune so moderate a poet has found so liberal a publisher.

We are no great admirers of the sonnet at its best—concurring in Dr. Johnson's opinion that it does not suit the genius of our language, and that the great examples of Shakespeare and Milton have failed to domesticate it with us. It seems to be, even in master hands, that species of composition which is at once the most artificial and the least effective, which bears the appearance of the greatest labour and produces the least pleasure. Its peculiar and unvaried construction must inevitably inflict upon it something of pedantry and monotony, and although some powerful minds have used it as a form for condensing and elaborating a particular train of thought—*an Iliad in a nutshell*—yet the vast majority of sonneteers employ it as an

economical expedient, by which one idea can be expanded into fourteen lines—fourteen lines into one page—and, as we see, fifty-four pages into a costly volume.

The complex construction, which at first sight seems a difficulty, is, in fact, like all mechanism, a great saving of labour to the operator. A sonnet almost makes itself, as a musical snuff-box plays a tune, or rather as a cotton *Jenny* spins twist. When a would-be poet has collected in his memory a few of what may have struck him as poetical ideas, he puts them into his machine, and after fourteen turns, out comes a sonnet, or—if it be his pleasure to spin out his reminiscences very fine—a dozen sonnets.

Mr. Moxon inscribes as a motto on his title-page four lines of Mr. Wordsworth's vindication of his own use of the sonnet-form—

> In truth, the prison, into which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to *me*,
> In sundry moods 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the *sonnet's* scanty plot of ground.

Yes, Mr. Moxon, to *him* perhaps, but not to every one—the "plot of ground" which is "*scanty*" to an elephant is a wilderness to a mouse; and the garment in which Wordsworth might feel straitened hangs flabby about a puny imitator. There seems no great modesty in the estimate which Mr. Moxon thus exhibits of his own superior powers, but we fear there is, at least, as much modesty as truth—for really, so far from being "*bound*" within the narrow limit of the sonnet, it seems to us to be

> —a world too wide For his shrunk shank.

Ordinary sonneteers, as we have said, will spin a single thought through the fourteen lines. Mr., Moxon will draw you out a single thought into

fourteen sonnets:—and these are his best—for most of the others appear to us mere soap bubbles, very gay and gaudy, but which burst at the fourteenth line and leave not the trace of an idea behind. Of two or three Mr. Moxon has kindly told us the meaning, which, without that notice, we confess we should never have guessed.

* * * * *

Another of the same genus—though, he had just told us

My love I can *compare* with *nought* on earth—

is like *nought on earth* we ever read but Dean Swift's song of similes. I *will prove*, he says, that

A swan—
A fawn—
An artless lamb—
A hawthorn tree—
A willow—
A laburnum—
A dream—
A rainbow—
Diana—
Aurora—
A dove that *singeth*—
A lily,—and finally,
Venus herself!
—I in truth will prove
These are not *half* so *fair* as she I love.

Sonnet iii, p. 43.

Such heterogeneous compliments remind us of Shacabac's gallantry to *Beda* in *Blue Beard:* "Ah, you little rogue, you have a prettier mouth *than an elephant*, and you know it!"—A *fawn-coloured* countenance rivalling in *fairness a laburnum* blossom, seems to us a more dubious type of female beauty than even an elephant's mouth.

Love, it may be said, has carried away better poets and graver men than Mr. Moxon seems to be, into such namby-pamby nonsense; but Mr. Moxon is just as absurd in his *grief* or his *musings*, as in his *love*.

When he hears a nightingale—"sad Philomel!"—he concludes that the bird was originally created for no other purpose than to prophesy in Paradise *the fall of man*, or, as he chooses to collocate the words,

Prophetic to have mourned of *man* the *fall*,—p. 9.

but he does not tell us what she has been doing ever since.

When he sees two Cumberland streams—the Brathay and Rothay—flowing down, first to a confluence, and afterwards to the sea, he fancies "a *soul-knit* pair," man and wife, mingling their waters and gliding to their final haven—

in kindred love, The haven Contemplation sees *above*!

Below, he would—following his allegory—have said; but rhyme forbade — and *allegories* are not *so headstrong* on the banks of the Brathay as on those of the *Nile*.

A sonnet on Thomson's grave is a fine specimen of empty sounds and solid nonsense:—

Whene'er I linger, Thomson, near thy tomb,
Where *Thamis*—

"*Classic Cam*" will be somewhat amazed to hear his learned brother called *Thamis*—

Where Thamis urges his majestic way,
And the Muse loves at twilight hour to stray,
I think how in thy theme ALL *seasons* BLOOM;—

What, all four?—*autumn*, nay, *winter*—blooming?

What *heart* so cold that of thy fame has *heard*,
And *pauses* not to *gaze* upon each scene.

We are inclined to be very indulgent to what is called a confusion of metaphors, when it arises from a rush of ideas—but when it is produced by an author's having no idea at all, we can hardly forgive him for equipping the *Heart* with eyes, ears, and legs:—he might just as well have said that on entering Twickenham church to visit the tomb, every *Heart* would take off *its hat*, and on going out again would put *its hand* in *its pockets* to fee the sexton.

And pauses not to gaze upon each scene
That was familiar to thy raptured view,
Those walks beloved by thee while I pursue,
Musing upon the years that intervene—

Why this line *intervenes* or what it means we do not see—it seems inserted just to make up the number—

Methinks, as eve descends, a hymn of praise
To thee, their bard, the *sister Seasons* raise!

That is, as we understand it, ALL the *Seasons meet together* on one or more evenings of the year, to sing a hymn to the memory of Thompson. This *simultaneous entree* of the Four Seasons would be a much more appropriate fancy for the opera stage than for Twickenham meadows.

Such are the tame extravagances—the vapid affectations—the unmeaning mosaic which Mr. Moxon has laboriously tesselated into fifty and four sonnets. If he had been—as all this childishness at first led us to believe—a very young man—we should have discussed the matter with him in a more conciliatory and persuasive tone; but we find that he is, what we must call, an old offender. We have before us two little volumes of what he entitles poetry—one dated 1826, and the other 1829—which, though more laughable, are not in substance more absurd than his new production. From the first of these we shall extract two or three stanzas of the introductory poem, not only on account of their intrinsic merit, but because they state, pretty roundly, Mr. Moxon's principles of poetry. He modestly disclaims all rivalry with Pope, Byron, Moore, Campbell, Scott, Rogers, Goldsmith, Dryden, Gray, Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare; but he, at the same time, intimates that he follows, what he thinks, a truer line of poetry than the before-named illustrious, but, in this point, *mistaken* individuals.

'Tis not a poem with learning fraught,
To that I ne'er pretended;
Nor yet with Pope's fine touches wrought,
From that my time prevented.

We skip four intermediate stanzas; then comes

Milton divine and great Shakespeare
With reverence I mention;
My name with theirs shall ne'er appear,
'Tis far from my intention!

If poetry, as one *pretends,*
Be all imagination!
Why then, at once, *my bardship ends—*
'Mong prose I take my station.

Moxon's Poems, p. 81, Ed. 1826.

But as *"common sense"* must see, says Mr. Moxon, that *imagination* can have nothing to do with *poetry*, he engages to pursue his tuneful vocation, subject to *one* condition—

You'll hear no more from me,
If *critics prove unkind;*
My next *in simple prose* must be,
Unless I favour find!

We regret that some *kind*—or, as Mr. Moxon would have thought it, *unkind*—critic, did not, on the appearance of this first volume, confirm his own misgivings that he had been all this time, like the man in the farce, talking not only *prose*, but *nonsense* into the bargain: this disagreeable information the pretension of his recent publication obliges us to convey to him. The fact is, that the volume at first struck us with serious alarm. Its typographical splendour led us to fear that this style of writing was getting into fashion; and the hints about *"classic Cam"* seemed to impute the production to one of our Universities: on turning, with some curiosity, to the title-page, for the name of the too indulgent bookseller who had bestowed such unmerited embellishment on a work which we think of so little value—*we found none*; and on further inquiry learned that *Dover Street, Piccadilly*, and not the banks of *"classic Cam"* is the seat of this sonneteering muse—in short, that Mr. Moxon, the bookseller, is his own poet, and that Mr. Moxon, the poet, is his own bookseller. This discovery at once calmed both our anxieties—it relieved the university of Cambridge

from an awful responsibility, which might have called down upon it the vengeance of Lord Radnor; and it accounted—without any imputation on the public taste—for the extraordinary care and cost with which the paternal solicitude of the poet-publisher had adorned his own volume. Mr. Moxon seems to be—like most sonneteers—a man of amiable disposition, and to have an ear—as he certainly has a *memory*—for poetry; and—if he had not been an old hand—we should not have presumed to say that he is incapable of anything better than this tumid commonplace. But, however that may be, we do earnestly exhort him to abandon the self-deluding practice of being his own publisher. Whatever may have been said in disparagement of the literary taste of the booksellers, it will at least be admitted that their experience of public opinion and a due attention to their own pecuniary interest, enable them to operate as a salutary check upon the blind and presumptive vanity of small authors. The necessity of obtaining the *"imprimatur"* of a publisher is a very wholesome restraint, from which Mr. Moxon—unluckily for himself and for us—found himself relieved. If he could have looked at his own work with the impartiality, and perhaps the good taste, that he would have exercised on that of a stranger, *he* would have saved himself a good deal of expense and vexation—and *we* should have been spared the painful necessity of contrasting the ambitious pretensions of his volume with its very moderate literary merit.

ON "VANITY FAIR" AND "JANE EYRE"

[From *The Quarterly Review*, December, 1848]

1. *Vanity Fair; a Novel without a Hero.* By WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY. London, 1848.

2. *Jane Eyre; an Autobiography.* Edited by CURRER BELL. In 3 vols. London. 1847.

A remarkable novel is a great event for English society. It is a kind of common friend, about whom people can speak the truth without fear of being compromised, and confess their emotions without being ashamed. We are a particularly shy and reserved people, and set about nothing so awkwardly as the simple art of getting really acquainted with each other. We meet over and over again in what is conventionally called "easy society," with the tacit understanding to go so far and no farther; to be as polite as we ought to be, and as intellectual as we can; but mutually and honourably to forbear lifting those veils which each spreads over his inner sentiments and sympathies. For this purpose a host of devices have been contrived by which all the forms of friendship may be gone through, without committing ourselves to one spark of the spirit. We fly with eagerness to some common ground in which each can take the liveliest interest, without taking the slightest in the world in his companion. Our various fashionable manias, for charity one season, for science the next, are

only so many clever contrivances for keeping our neighbour at arm's length. We can attend committees, and canvass for subscribers, and archaeologise, and geologise, and take ether with our fellow Christians for a twelvemonth, as we might sit cross-legged and smoke the pipe of fraternity with a Turk for the same period—and know at the end of the time as little of the real feelings of the one as we should about the domestic relations of the other. But there are ways and means for lifting the veil which equally favour our national idiosyncrasy; and a new and remarkable novel is one of them—especially the nearer it comes to real life. We invite our neighbour to a walk with the deliberate and malicious object of getting thoroughly acquainted with him. We ask no impertinent questions— we proffer no indiscreet confidences—we do not even sound him, ever so delicately, as to his opinion of a common friend, for he would be sure not to say, lest we should go and tell; but we simply discuss Becky Sharp, or Jane Eyre, and our object is answered at once.

There is something about these two new and noticeable characters which especially compels everybody to speak out. They are not to be dismissed with a few commonplace moralities and sentimentalities. They do not fit any ready-made criticism. They give the most stupid something to think of, and the most reserved something to say; the most charitable too are betrayed into home comparisons which they usually condemn, and the most ingenious stumble into paradoxes which they can hardly defend. Becky and Jane also stand well side by side both in their analogies and their contrasts. Both the ladies are governesses, and both make the same move in society; the one, in Jane Eyre phraseology, marrying her "master," and the other her master's son. Neither starts in life with more than a moderate capital of good looks—Jane Eyre with hardly that—for it is the fashion now-a-days with novelists to give no encouragement to the insolence of mere beauty, but rather to prove to all whom it may concern how little a sensible woman requires to get on with in the world. Both have also an elfish kind of nature,

with which they divine the secrets of other hearts, and conceal those of their own; and both rejoice in that peculiarity of feature which Mademoiselle de Luzy has not contributed to render popular, viz., green eyes. Beyond this, however, there is no similarity either in the minds, manners, or fortunes of the two heroines. They think and act upon diametrically opposite principles — at least so the author of "Jane Eyre" intends us to believe—and each, were they to meet, which we should of all things enjoy to see them do, would cordially despise and abominate the other. Which of the two, however, would most successfully *dupe* the other is a different question, and one not so easy to decide; though we have our own ideas upon the subject.

We must discuss "Vanity Fair" first, which, much as we were entitled to expect from its author's pen, has fairly taken us by surprise. We were perfectly aware that Mr. Thackeray had of old assumed the jester's habit, in order the more unrestrainedly to indulge the privilege of speaking the truth; —we had traced his clever progress through "Fraser's Magazine" and the ever-improving pages of "Punch"—which wonder of the time has been infinitely obliged to him—but still we were little prepared for the keen observation, the deep wisdom, and the consummate art which he has interwoven in the slight texture and whimsical pattern of "Vanity Fair." Everybody, it is to be supposed, has read the volume by this time; and even for those who have not, it is not necessary to describe the order of the story. It is not a novel, in the common acceptation of the word, with a plot purposely contrived to bring about certain scenes, and develop certain characters, but simply a history of those average sufferings, pleasures, penalties, and rewards to which various classes of mankind gravitate as naturally and certainly in this world as the sparks fly upward. It is only the same game of life which every player sooner or later makes for himself— were he to have a hundred chances, and shuffle the cards of circumstance every time. It is only the same busy, involved drama which may be seen at

any time by any one, who is not engrossed with the magnified minutiae of his own petty part, but with composed curiosity looks on to the stage where his fellow-men and women are the actors; and that not even heightened by the conventional colouring which Madame de Staël philosophically declares that fiction always wants in order to make up for its not being truth. Indeed, so far from taking any advantage of this novelist's licence, Mr. Thackeray has hardly availed himself of the natural average of remarkable events that really do occur in this life. The battle of Waterloo, it is true, is introduced; but, as far as regards the story, it brings about only one death and one bankruptcy, which might either of them have happened in a hundred other ways. Otherwise the tale runs on, with little exception, in that humdrum course of daily monotony, out of which some people coin materials to act, and others excuses to doze, just as their dispositions may be.

It is this reality which is at once the charm and the misery here. With all these unpretending materials it is one of the most amusing, but also one of the most distressing books we have read for many a long year. We almost long for a little exaggeration and improbability to relieve us of that sense of dead truthfulness which weighs down our hearts, not for the Amelias and Georges of the story, but for poor kindred human nature. In one light this truthfulness is even an objection. With few exceptions the personages are too like our every-day selves and neighbours to draw any distinct moral from. We cannot see our way clearly. Palliations of the bad and disappointments in the good are perpetually obstructing our judgment, by bringing what should decide it too close to that common standard of experience in which our only rule of opinion is charity. For it is only in fictitious characters which are highly coloured for one definite object, or in notorious personages viewed from a distance, that the course of the true moral can be seen to run straight—once bring the individual with his life and circumstances closely before you, and it is lost to the mental eye in the

thousand pleas and witnesses, unseen and unheard before, which rise up to overshadow it. And what are all these personages in "Vanity Fair" but feigned names for our own beloved friends and acquaintances, seen under such a puzzling cross-light of good in evil, and evil in good, of sins and sinnings against, of little to be praised virtues, and much to be excused vices, that we cannot presume to moralise upon them—not even to judge them,—content to exclaim sorrowfully with the old prophet, "Alas! my brother!" Every actor on the crowded stage of "Vanity Fair" represents some type of that perverse mixture of humanity in which there is ever something not wholly to approve or to condemn. There is the desperate devotion of a fond heart to a false object, which we cannot respect; there is the vain, weak man, half good and half bad, who is more despicable in our eyes than the decided villain. There are the irretrievably wretched education, and the unquenchably manly instincts, both contending in the confirmed *roué*, which melt us to the tenderest pity. There is the selfishness and self-will which the possessor of great wealth and fawning relations can hardly avoid. There is the vanity and fear of the world, which assist mysteriously with pious principles in keeping a man respectable; there are combinations of this kind of every imaginable human form and colour, redeemed but feebly by the steady excellence of an awkward man, and the genuine heart of a vulgar woman, till we feel inclined to tax Mr. Thackeray with an under estimate of our nature, forgetting that Madame de Staël is right after all, and that without a little conventional rouge no human conplexion can stand the stage-lights of fiction.

But if these performers give us pain, we are not ashamed to own, as we are speaking openly, that the chief actress herself gives us none at all. For there is of course a principal pilgrim in Vanity Fair, as much as in its emblematical original, Bunyan's "Progress"; only unfortunately this one is travelling the wrong way. And we say "unfortunately" merely by way of courtesy, for in reality we care little about the matter. No, Becky—our

hearts neither bleed for you, nor cry out against you. You are wonderfully clever, and amusing, and accomplished, and intelligent, and the Soho *ateliers* were not the best nurseries for a moral training; and you were married early in life to a regular blackleg, and you have had to live upon your wits ever since, which is not an improving sort of maintenance; and there is much to be said for and against; but still you are not one of us, and there is an end to our sympathies and censures. People who allow their feelings to be lacerated by such a character and career as yours, are doing both you and themselves great injustice. No author could have openly introduced a near connexion of Satan's into the best London society, nor would the moral end intended have been answered by it; but really and honestly, considering Becky in her human character, we know of none which so thoroughly satisfies our highest *beau idéal* of feminine wickedness, with so slight a shock to our feelings and properties. It is very dreadful, doubtless, that Becky neither loved the husband who loved her, nor the child of her own flesh and blood, nor indeed any body but herself; but, as far as she is concerned, we cannot pretend to be scandalized—for how could she without a heart? It is very shocking of course that she committed all sorts of dirty tricks, and jockeyed her neighbours, and never cared what she trampled under foot if it happened to obstruct her step; but how could she be expected to do otherwise without a conscience? The poor little woman was most tryingly placed; she came into the world without the customary letters of credit upon those two great bankers of humanity, "Heart and Conscience," and it was no fault of hers if they dishonoured all her bills. All she could do in this dilemma was to establish the firmest connexion with the inferior commercial branches of "Sense and Tact," who secretly do much business in the name of the head concern, and with whom her "fine frontal development" gave her unlimited credit. She saw that selfishness was the metal which the stamp of heart was suborned to pass; that hypocrisy was the homage that vice rendered to virtue; that honesty

was, at all events, acted, because it was the best policy; and so she practised the arts of selfishness and hypocrisy like anybody else in Vanity Fair, only with this difference, that she brought them to their highest possible pitch of perfection. For why is it that, looking round in this world, we find plenty of characters to compare with her up to a certain pitch, but none which reach her actual standard? Why is it that, speaking of this friend or that, we say in the tender mercies of our hearts, "No, she is not *quite* so bad as Becky?" We fear not only because she has more heart and conscience, but also because she has less cleverness.

No; let us give Becky her due. There is enough in this world of ours, as we all know, to provoke a saint, far more a poor little devil like her. She had none of those fellow-feelings which make us wondrous kind. She saw people around her cowards in vice, and simpletons in virtue, and she had no patience with either, for she was as little the one as the other herself. She saw women who loved their husbands and yet teazed them, and ruining their children although they doated upon them, and she sneered at their utter inconsistency. Wickedness or goodness, unless coupled with strength, were alike worthless to her. That weakness which is the blessed pledge of our humanity, was to her only the despicable badge of our imperfection. She thought, it might be, of her master's words, "Fallen Cherub! to be weak is to be miserable!" and wondered how we could be such fools as first to sin and then to be sorry. Becky's light was defective, but she acted up to it. Her goodness goes as far as good temper, and her principles as far as shrewd sense, and we may thank her consistency for showing us what they are both worth.

It is another thing to pretend to settle whether such a character be *primâ facie* impossible, though devotion to the better sex might well demand the assertion. There are mysteries of iniquity, under the semblance of man and woman, read of in history, or met with in the unchronicled sufferings of

private life, which would almost make us believe that the powers of Darkness occasionally made use of this earth for a Foundling Hospital, and sent their imps to us, already provided with a return-ticket. We shall not decide on the lawfulness or otherwise of any attempt to depict such importations; we can only rest perfectly satisfied that, granting the author's premises, it is impossible to imagine them carried out with more felicitous skill and more exquisite consistency than in the heroine of "Vanity Fair." At all events, the infernal regions have no reason to be ashamed of little Becky, nor the ladies either: she has, at least, all the cleverness of the sex.

The great charm, therefore, and comfort of Becky is, that we may study her without any compunctions. The misery of this life is not the evil that we see, but the good and the evil which are so inextricably twisted together. It is that perpetual memento ever meeting one—

How in this vile world below
Noblest things find vilest using,

that is so very distressing to those who have hearts as well as eyes. But Becky relieves them of all this pain—at least in her own person. Pity would be thrown away upon one who has not heart enough for it to ache even for herself. Becky is perfectly happy, as all must be who excel in what they love best. Her life is one exertion of successful power. Shame never visits her, for "'Tis conscience that makes cowards of us all"—and she has none. She realizes that *ne plus ultra* of sublunary comfort which it was reserved for a Frenchman to define—the blessed combination of *"le bon estomac et le mauvais coeur"*: for Becky adds to her other good qualities that of an excellent digestion.

Upon the whole, we are not afraid to own that we rather enjoy her *ignis fatuus* course, dragging the weak and the vain and the selffish [Transcriber's note: sic], through mud and mire, after her, and acting all parts, from the

modest rushlight to the gracious star, just as it suits her. Clever little imp that she is! What exquisite tact she shows!—what unflagging good humour!—what ready self-possession! Becky never disappoints us; she never even makes us tremble. We know that her answer will come exactly suiting her one particular object, and frequently three or four more in prospect. What respect, too, she has for those decencies which more virtuous, but more stupid humanity, often disdains! What detection of all that is false and mean! What instinct for all that is true and great! She is her master's true pupil in that: she knows what is really divine as well as he, and bows before it. She honours Dobbin in spite of his big feet; she respects her husband more than ever she did before, perhaps for the first time, at the very moment when he is stripping not only her jewels, but name, honour, and comfort off her.

We are not so sure either whether we are justified in calling hers *"le mauvais coeur."* Becky does not pursue any one vindictively; she never does gratuitous mischief. The fountain is more dry than poisoned. She is even generous—when she can afford it. Witness that burst of plain speaking in Dobbin's favour to the little dolt Amelia, for which we forgive her many a sin. 'Tis true she wanted to get rid of her; but let that pass. Becky was a thrifty dame, and liked to despatch two birds with one stone. And she was honest, too, after a fashion. The part of wife she acts at first as well, and better than most; but as for that of mother, there she fails from the beginning. She knew that maternal love was no business of hers—that a fine frontal development could give her no help there—and puts so little spirit into her imitation that no one could be taken in for a moment. She felt that that bill, of all others, would be sure to be dishonoured, and it went against her conscience—we mean her sense—to send it in.

In short, the only respect in which Becky's course gives us pain is when it locks itself into that of another, and more genuine child of this earth. No

one can regret those being entangled in her nets whose vanity and meanness of spirit alone led them into its meshes—such are rightly served; but we do grudge her that real sacred thing called *love*, even of a Rawdon Crawley, who has more of that self-forgetting, all-purifying feeling for his little evil spirit than many a better man has for a good woman. We do grudge Becky *a heart*, though it belong only to a swindler. Poor, sinned against, vile, degraded, but still true-hearted Rawdon!—you stand next in our affections and sympathies to honest Dobbin himself. It was the instinct of a good nature which made the Major feel that the stamp of the Evil One was upon Becky; and it was the stupidity of a good nature which made the Colonel never suspect it. He was a cheat, a black-leg, an unprincipled dog; but still "Rawdon *is* a man, and be hanged to him," as the Rector says. We follow him through the illustrations, which are, in many instances, a delightful enhancement to the text—as he stands there, with his gentle eyelid, coarse moustache, and foolish chin, bringing up Becky's coffee-cup with a kind of dumb fidelity; or looking down at little Rawdon with a more than paternal tenderness. All Amelia's philoprogenitive idolatries do not touch us like one fond instinct of "stupid Rawdon."

Dobbin sheds a halo over all the long-necked, loose-jointed, Scotch-looking gentlemen of our acquaintance. Flat feet and flap ears seem henceforth incompatible with evil. He reminds us of one of the sweetest creations that have appeared from any modern pen—that plain, awkward, loveable "Long Walter," in Lady Georgina Fullerton's beautiful novel of "Grantley Manor." Like him, too, in his proper self-respect; for Dobbin—lumbering, heavy, shy, and absurdly over modest as the ugly fellow is—is yet true to himself. At one time he seems to be sinking into the mere abject dangler after Amelia; but he breaks his chains like a man, and resumes them again like a man, too, although half disenchanted of his amiable delusion.

But to return for a moment to Becky. The only criticism we would offer is one which the author has almost disarmed by making her mother a Frenchwoman. The construction of this little clever monster is diabolically French. Such a *lusus naturae* as a woman without a heart and conscience would, in England, be a mere brutal savage, and poison half a village. France is the land for the real Syren, with the woman's face and the dragon's claws. The genus of Pigeon and Laffarge claims it for its own—only that our heroine takes a far higher class by not requiring the vulgar matter of fact of crime to develop her full powers. It is an affront to Becky's tactics to believe that she could ever be reduced to so low a resource, or, that if she were, anybody would find it out. We, therefore, cannot sufficiently applaud the extreme discretion with which Mr. Thackeray has hinted at the possibly assistant circumstances of Joseph Sedley's dissolution. A less delicacy of handling would have marred the harmony of the whole design. Such a casualty as that suggested to our imagination was not intended for the light net of Vanity Fair to draw on shore; it would have torn it to pieces. Besides it is not wanted. Poor little Becky is bad enough to satisfy the most ardent student of "good books." Wickedness, beyond a certain pitch, gives no increase of gratification even to the sternest moralist; and one of Mr. Thackeray's excellences is the sparing quantity he consumes. The whole *use*, too, of the work—that of generously measuring one another by this standard—is lost, the moment you convict Becky of a capital crime. Who can, with any face, liken a dear friend to a murderess? Whereas now there are no little symptoms of fascinating ruthlessness, graceful ingratitude, or ladylike selfishness, observable among our charming acquaintance, that we may not immediately detect to an inch, and more effectually intimidate by the simple application of the Becky gauge than by the most vehement use of all ten commandments. Thanks to Mr. Thackeray, the world is now provided with an *idea*, which, if we mistake not, will be the skeleton in the corner of every ball-room and boudoir for a long time to come. Let us leave

it intact in its unique fount and freshness—a Becky, and nothing more. We should, therefore, advise our readers to cut out that picture of our heroine's "Second Appearance as Clytemnestra," which casts so uncomfortable a glare over the latter part of the volume, and, disregarding all hints and inuendoes, simply to let the changes and chances of this moral life have due weight in their minds. Jos had been much in India. His was a bad life; he ate and drank most imprudently, and his digestion was not to be compared with Becky's. No respectable office would have ensured "Waterloo Sedley."

"Vanity Fair" is pre-eminently a novel of the day—not in the vulgar sense, of which there are too many, but as a literal photograph of the manners and habits of the nineteenth century, thrown on to paper by the light of a powerful mind; and one also of the most artistic effect. Mr. Thackeray has a peculiar adroitness in leading on the fancy, or rather memory of his readers from one set of circumstances to another by the seeming chances and coincidences of common life, as an artist leads the spectator's eye through the subject of his picture by a skilful repetition of colour. This is why it is impossible to quote from his book with any justice to it. The whole growth of the narrative is so matted and interwoven together with tendril-like links and bindings, that there is no detaching a flower with sufficient length of stalk to exhibit it to advantage. There is that mutual dependence in his characters which is the first requisite in painting every-day life: no one is stuck on a separate pedestal—no one is sitting for his portrait. There may be one exception—we mean Sir Pitt Crawley, senior; it is possible, nay, we hardly doubt, that this baronet was closer drawn from individual life than anybody else in the book; but granting that fact, the animal was so unique an exception, that we wonder so shrewd an artist could stick him into a gallery so full of our familiars. The scenes in Germany, we can believe, will seem to many readers of an English book hardly less extravagantly absurd—grossly and gratuitously overdrawn; but the initiated will value them as containing some of the keenest strokes of

truth and humour that "Vanity Fair" exhibits, and not enjoy them the less for being at our neighbour's expense. For the thorough appreciation of the chief character they are quite indispensable too. The whole course of the work may be viewed as the *Wander-Jahre* of a far cleverer female, *Wilhelm Meister*. We have watched her in the ups-and-downs of life—among the humble, the fashionable, the great, and the pious—and found her ever new, yet ever the same; but still Becky among the students was requisite to complete the full measure of our admiration.

"Jane Eyre," as a work, and one of equal popularity, is, in almost every respect, a total contrast to "Vanity Fair." The characters and events, though some of them masterly in conception, are coined expressly for the purpose of bringing out great effects. The hero and heroine are beings both so singularly unattractive that the reader feels they can have no vocation in the novel but to be brought together; and they do things which, though not impossible, lie utterly beyond the bounds of probability. On this account a short sketch of the plan seems requisite; not but what it is a plan familiar enough to all readers of novels— especially those of the old school and those of the lowest school of our own day. For Jane Eyre is merely another Pamela, who, by the force of her character and the strength of her principles, is carried victoriously through great trials and temptations from the man she loves. Nor is she even a Pamela adapted and refined to modern notions; for though the story is conducted without those derelictions of decorum which we are to believe had their excuse in the manners of Richardson's time, yet it stamped with a coarseness of language and laxity of tone which have certainly no excuse in ours. It is a very remarkable book: we have no remembrance of another combining such genuine power with such horrid taste. Both together have equally assisted to gain the great popularity it has enjoyed; for in these days of extravagant adoration of all that bears the stamp of novelty and originality, sheer rudeness and vulgarity have come in for a most mistaken worship.

The story is written in the first person. Jane begins with her earliest recollections, and at once takes possession of the readers' intensest interest by the masterly picture of a strange and oppressed child she raises up in a few strokes before him. She is an orphan, and a dependant in the house of a selfish, hard-hearted aunt, against whom the disposition of the little Jane chafes itself in natural antipathy, till she contrives to make the unequal struggle as intolerable to her oppressor as it is to herself. She is, therefore, at eight years of age, got rid of to a sort of Dothegirls Hall, where she continues to enlist our sympathies for a time with her little pinched fingers, cropped hair, and empty stomach. But things improve: the abuses of the institution are looked into. The Puritan patron, who holds that young orphan girls are only safely brought up upon the rules of La Trappe, is superseded by an enlightened committee—the school assumes a sound English character— Jane progresses duly from scholar to teacher, and passes ten profitable and not unhappy years at Lowood. Then she advertises for a situation as governess, and obtains one immediately in one of the midland counties. We see her, therefore, as she leaves Lowood, to enter upon a new life—a small, plain, odd creature, who has been brought up dry upon school learning, and somewhat stunted accordingly in mind and body, and who is now thrown upon the world as ignorant of its ways, and as destitute of its friendships, as a shipwrecked mariner upon a strange coast.

Thornfield Hall is the property of Mr. Rochester—a bachelor addicted to travelling. She finds it at first in all the peaceful prestige of an English gentleman's seat when "nobody is at the hall." The companions are an old decayed gentlewoman housekeeper—a far away cousin of the squire's—and a young French child, Jane's pupil, Mr. Rochester's ward and reputed daughter. There is a pleasing monotony in the summer solitude of the old country house, with its comfort, respectability, and dulness, which Jane paints to the life; but there is one circumstance which varies the sameness and casts a mysterious feeling over the scene. A strange laugh is heard from

time to time in a distant part of the house—a laugh which grates discordantly upon Jane's ear. She listens, watches, and inquires, but can discover nothing but a plain matter of fact woman, who sits sewing somewhere in the attics, and goes up and down stairs peaceably to and from her dinner with the servants. But a mystery there is, though nothing betrays it, and it comes in with marvellous effect from the monotonous reality of all around. After awhile Mr. Rochester comes to Thornfield, and sends for the child and her governess occasionally to bear him company. He is a dark, strange-looking man—strong and large—of the brigand stamp, with fine eyes and lowering brows—blunt and sarcastic in his manners, with a kind of misanthropical frankness, which seems based upon utter contempt for his fellow-creatures and a surly truthfulness which is more rudeness than honesty. With his arrival disappears all the prestige of country innocence that had invested Thornfield Hall. He brings the taint of the world upon him, and none of its illusions. The queer little governess is something new to him. He talks to her at one time imperiously as to a servant, and at another recklessly as to a man. He pours into her ears disgraceful tales of his past life, connected with the birth of little Adele, which any man with common respect for a woman, and that a mere girl of eighteen, would have spared her; but which eighteen in this case listens to as if it were nothing new, and certainly nothing distasteful. He is captious and Turk-like—she is one day his confidant, and another his unnoticed dependant. In short, by her account, Mr. Rochester is a strange brute, somewhat in the Squire Western style of absolute and capricious eccentricity, though redeemed in him by signs of a cultivated intellect, and gleams of a certain fierce justice of heart. He has a *mind*, and when he opens it at all, he opens it freely to her. Jane becomes attached to her "master," as Pamela-like she calls him, and it is not difficult to see that solitude and propinquity are taking effect upon him also. An odd circumstance heightens the dawning romance. Jane is awoke one night by that strange discordant laugh close to her ear— then a noise as if

hands feeling along the wall. She rises—opens her door, finds the passage full of smoke, is guided by it to her master's room, whose bed she discovers enveloped in flames, and by her timely aid saves his life. After this they meet no more for ten days, when Mr. Rochester returns from a visit to a neighbouring family, bringing with him a housefull of distinguished guests; at the head of whom is Miss Blanche Ingram, a haughty beauty of high birth, and evidently the especial object of the Squire's attentions—upon which tumultuous irruption Miss Eyre slips back into her naturally humble position.

Our little governess is now summoned away to attend her aunt's death-bed, who is visited by some compunctions towards her, and she is absent a month. When she returns Thornfield Hall is quit of all its guests, and Mr. Rochester and she resume their former life of captious cordiality on the one side, and diplomatic humility on the other. At the same time the bugbear of Miss Ingram and of Mr. Rochester's engagement with her is kept up, though it is easy to see that this and all concerning that lady is only a stratagem to try Jane's character and affection upon the most approved Griselda precedent. Accordingly an opportunity for explanation ere long offers itself, where Mr. Rochester has only to take it. Miss Eyre is desired to walk with him in shady alleys, and to sit with him on the roots of an old chestnut-tree towards the close of evening, and of course she cannot disobey her "master"—whereupon there ensues a scene which, as far as we remember, is new equally in art or nature; in which Miss Eyre confesses her love—whereupon Mr. Rochester drops not only his cigar (which she seems to be in the habit of lighting for him) but his mask, and finally offers not only heart, but hand. The wedding day is soon fixed, but strange misgivings and presentiments haunt the young lady's mind. The night but one before her bed-room is entered by a horrid phantom, who tries on the wedding veil, sends Jane into a swoon of terror, and defeats all the favourite refuge of a bad dream by leaving the veil in two pieces. But all is ready. The bride has

no friends to assist—the couple walk to church—only the clergyman and the clerk are there—but Jane's quick eye has seen two figures lingering among the tombstones, and these two follow them into church. The ceremony commences, when at the due charge which summons any man to come forward and show just cause why they should not be joined together, a voice interposes to forbid the marriage. There is an impediment, and a serious one. The bridegroom has a wife not only living, but living under the very roof of Thornfield Hall. Hers was that discordant laugh which had so often caught Jane's ear; she it was who in her malice had tried to burn Mr. Rochester in his bed—who had visited Jane by night and torn her veil, and whose attendant was that same pretended sew-woman who had so strongly excited Jane's curiosity. For Mr. Rochester's wife is a creature, half fiend, half maniac, whom he had married in a distant part of the world, and whom now, in self-constituted code of morality, he had thought it his right, and even his duty, to supersede by a more agreeable companion. Now follow scenes of a truly tragic power. This is the grand crisis in Jane's life. Her whole soul is wrapt up in Mr. Rochester. He has broken her trust, but not diminished her love. He entreats her to accept all that he still can give, his heart and his home; he pleads with the agony not only of a man who has never known what it was to conquer a passion, but of one who, by that same self-constituted code, now burns to atone for a disappointed crime. There is no one to help her against him or against herself. Jane had no friends to stand by her at the altar, and she has none to support her now she is plucked away from it. There is no one to be offended or disgraced at her following him to the sunny land of Italy, as he proposes, till the maniac should die. There is no duty to any one but to herself, and this feeble reed quivers and trembles beneath the overwhelming weight of love and sophistry opposed to it. But Jane triumphs; in the middle of the night she rises—glides out of her room—takes off her shoes as she passes Mr. Rochester's chamber;—

leaves the house, and casts herself upon a world more desert than ever to her—

Without a shilling and without a friend.

Thus the great deed of self-conquest is accomplished; Jane has passed through the fire of temptation from without and from within; her character is stamped from that day; we need therefore follow her no further into wanderings and sufferings which, though not unmixed with plunder from Minerva-lane, occupy some of, on the whole, the most striking chapters in the book. Virtue of course finds her reward. The maniac wife sets fire to Thornfield Hall, and perishes herself in the flames. Mr. Rochester, in endeavouring to save her, loses the sight of his eyes. Jane rejoins her blind master; they are married, after which of course the happy man recovers his sight.

Such is the outline of a tale in which, combined with great materials for power and feeling, the reader may trace gross inconsistencies and improbabilities, and chief and foremost that highest moral offence a novel writer can commit, that of making an unworthy character interesting in the eyes of the reader. Mr. Rochester is a man who deliberately and secretly seeks to violate the laws both of God and man, and yet we will be bound half our lady readers are enchanted with him for a model of generosity and honour. We would have thought that such a hero had had no chance, in the purer taste of the present day; but the popularity of Jane Eyre is a proof how deeply the love for illegitimate romance is implanted in our nature. Not that the author is strictly responsible for this. Mr. Rochester's character is tolerably consistent. He is made as coarse and as brutal as can in all conscience be required to keep our sympathies at a distance. In point of literary consistency the hero is at all events impugnable, though we cannot say as much for the heroine.

As to Jane's character—there is none of that harmonious unity about it which made little Becky so grateful a subject of analysis—nor are the discrepancies of that kind which have their excuse and their response in our nature. The inconsistencies of Jane's character lie mainly not in her own imperfections, though of course she has her share, but in the author's. There is that confusion in the relations between cause and effect, which is not so much untrue to human nature as to human art. The error in Jane Eyre is, not that her character is this or that, but that she is made one thing in the eyes of her imaginary companions, and another in that of the actual reader. There is a perpetual disparity between the account she herself gives of the effect she produces, and the means shown us by which she brings that effect about. We hear nothing but self-eulogiums on the perfect tact and wondrous penetration with which she is gifted, and yet almost every word she utters offends us, not only with the absence of these qualities, but with the positive contrasts of them, in either her pedantry, stupidity, or gross vulgarity. She is one of those ladies who puts us in the unpleasant predicament of undervaluing their very virtues for dislike of the person in whom they are represented. One feels provoked as Jane Eyre stands before us—for in the wonderful reality of her thoughts and descriptions, she seems accountable for all done in her name—with principles you must approve in the main, and yet with language and manners that offend you in every particular. Even in that *chef-d'oeuvre* of brilliant retrospective sketching, the description of her early life, it is the childhood and not the child that interests you. The little Jane, with her sharp eyes and dogmatic speeches, is a being you neither could fondle nor love. There is a hardness in her infantine earnestness, and a spiteful precocity in her reasoning, which repulses all our sympathy. One sees that she is of a nature to dwell upon and treasure up every slight and unkindness, real or fancied, and such natures we know are surer than any others to meet with plenty of this sort of thing. As the child, so also the woman—an uninteresting, sententious, pedantic

thing; with no experience of the world, and yet with no simplicity or freshness in its stead. What are her first answers to Mr. Rochester but such as would have quenched all interest, even for a prettier woman, in any man of common knowledge of what was nature—and especially in a *blasé* monster like him?

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But the crowning scene is the offer—governesses are said to be sly on such occasions, but Jane out-governesses them all—little Becky would have blushed for her. They are sitting together at the foot of the old chestnut tree, as we have already mentioned, towards the close of evening, and Mr. Rochester is informing her, with his usual delicacy of language, that he is engaged to Miss Ingram—"a strapper! Jane, a real strapper!"—and that as soon as he brings home his bride to Thornfield, she, the governess, must "trot forthwith"—but that he shall make it his duty to look out for employment and an asylum for her—indeed, that he has already heard of a charming situation in the depths of Ireland—all with a brutal jocoseness which most women of spirit, unless grievously despairing of any other lover, would have resented, and any woman of sense would have seen through. But Jane, that profound reader of the human heart, and especially of Mr. Rochester's, does neither. She meekly hopes she may be allowed to stay where she is till she has found another shelter to betake herself to—she does not fancy going to Ireland—Why?

> "It is a long way off, Sir." "No matter—a girl of your sense will not object to the voyage or the distance." "Not the voyage, but the distance, Sir; and then the sea is a barrier—" "From what, Jane?" "From England, and from Thornfield; and—" "Well?" "From *you*, Sir." —vol. ii, p. 205.

and then the lady bursts into tears in the most approved fashion.

Although so clever in giving hints, how wonderfully slow she is in taking them! Even when, tired of his cat's play, Mr. Rochester proceeds to rather indubitable demonstrations of affection—"enclosing me in his arms, gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips"—Jane has no idea what he can mean. Some ladies would have thought it high time to leave the Squire alone with his chestnut tree; or, at all events, unnecessary to keep up that tone of high-souled feminine obtusity which they are quite justified in adopting if gentlemen will not speak out—but Jane again does neither. Not that we say she was wrong, but quite the reverse, considering the circumstances of the case— Mr. Rochester was her master, and "Duchess or nothing" was her first duty—only she was not quite so artless as the author would have us suppose.

But if the manner in which she secures the prize be not inadmissible according to the rules of the art, that in which she manages it when caught, is quite without authority or precedent, except perhaps in the servants' hall. Most lover's play is wearisome and nonsensical to the lookers on—but the part Jane assumes is one which could only be efficiently sustained by the substitution of Sam for her master. Coarse as Mr. Rochester is, one winces for him under the infliction of this housemaid *beau idéal* of the arts of coquetry. A little more, and we should have flung the book aside to lie for ever among the trumpery with which such scenes ally it; but it were a pity to have halted here, for wonderful things lie beyond—scenes of suppressed feeling, more fearful to witness than the most violent tornados of passion—struggles with such intense sorrow and suffering as it is sufficient misery to know that any one should have conceived, far less passed through; and yet with that stamp of truth which takes precedence in the human heart before actual experience. The flippant, fifth-rate, plebeian actress has vanished, and only a noble, high-souled woman, bound to us by the reality of her sorrow, and yet raised above us by the strength of her will, stands in actual

life before us. If this be Jane Eyre, the author has done her injustice hitherto, not we.

* * * * *

We have said that this was the picture of a natural heart. This, to our view, is the great and crying mischief of the book. Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit, and more dangerous to exhibit from that prestige of principle and self-control which is liable to dazzle the eye too much for it to observe the inefficient and unsound foundation on which it rests. It is true Jane does right, and exerts great moral strength, but it is the strength of a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself. No Christian grace is perceptible upon her. She has inherited in fullest measure the worst sin of our fallen nature—the sin of pride. Jane Eyre is proud, and therefore she is ungrateful too. It pleased God to make her an orphan, friendless, and penniless—yet she thanks nobody, and least of all Him, for the food and raiment, the friends, companions, and instructors of her helpless youth—for the care and education vouchsafed to her till she was capable in mind as fitted in years to provide for herself. On the contrary, she looks upon all that has been done for her not only as her undoubted right, but as falling far short of it. The doctrine of humility is not more foreign to her mind than it is repudiated by her heart. It is by her own talents, virtues, and courage that she is made to attain the summit of human happiness, and, as far as Jane Eyre's own statement is concerned, no one would think that she owed anything either to God above or to man below. She flees from Mr. Rochester, and has not a being to turn to. Why was this? The excellence of the present institution at Casterton, which succeeded that of Cowan Bridge near Kirkby Lonsdale—these being distinctly, as we hear, the original and the reformed Lowoods of the book—is pretty generally known. Jane had lived there for eight years with 110 girls and fifteen teachers. Why had she formed no friendships among them? Other orphans

have left the same and similar institutions, furnished with friends for life, and puzzled with homes to choose from. How comes it that Jane had acquired neither? Among that number of associates there were surely some exceptions to what she so presumptuously stigmatises as "the society of inferior minds." Of course it suited the author's end to represent the heroine as utterly destitute of the common means of assistance, in order to exhibit both her trials and her powers of self-support—the whole book rests on this assumption—but it is one which, under the circumstances, is very unnatural and very unjust.

Altogether the auto-biography of Jane Eyre is pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition. There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment—there is a proud and perpetual assertion of the rights of man, for which we find no authority either in God's word or in God's providence—there is that pervading tone of ungodly discontent which is at once the most prominent and the most subtle evil which the law and the pulpit, which all civilized society in fact has at the present day to contend with. We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written Jane Eyre.

Still we say again this is a very remarkable book. We are painfully alive to the moral, religious, and literary deficiencies of the picture, and such passages of beauty and power as we have quoted cannot redeem it, but it is impossible not to be spell-bound with the freedom of the touch. It would be mere hackneyed courtesy to call it "fine writing." It bears no impress of being written at all, but is poured out rather in the heat and hurry of an instinct, which flows ungovernably on to its object, indifferent by what means it reaches it, and unconscious too. As regards the author's chief

object, however, it is a failure—that, namely, of making a plain, odd woman, destitute of all the conventional features of feminine attraction, interesting in our sight. We deny that he has succeeded in this. Jane Eyre, in spite of some grand things about her, is a being totally uncongenial to our feelings from beginning to end. We acknowledge her firmness—we respect her determination—we feel for her struggles; but, for all that, and setting aside higher considerations, the impression she leaves on our mind is that of a decidedly vulgar-minded woman—one whom we should not care for as an acquaintance, whom we should not seek as a friend, whom we should not desire for a relation, and whom we should scrupulously avoid for a governess.

There seems to have arisen in the novel-reading world some doubts as to who really wrote this book; and various rumours, more or less romantic, have been current in Mayfair, the metropolis of gossip, as to the authorship. For example, Jane Eyre is sentimentally assumed to have proceeded from the pen of Mr. Thackeray's governess, whom he had himself chosen as his model of Becky, and who, in mingled love and revenge, personified him in return as Mr. Rochester. In this case, it is evident that the author of "Vanity Fair," whose own pencil makes him grey-haired, has had the best of it, though his children may have had the worst, having, at all events, succeeded in hitting the vulnerable point in the Becky bosom, which it is our firm belief no man born of woman, from her Soho to her Ostend days, had ever so much as grazed. To this ingenious rumour the coincidence of the second edition of Jane Eyre being dedicated to Mr. Thackeray has probably given rise. For our parts, we see no great interest in the question at all. The first edition of Jane Eyre purports to be edited by Currer Bell, one of a trio of brothers, or sisters, or cousins, by names Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell, already known as the joint-authors of a volume of poems. The second edition the same—dedicated, however, "by the author," to Mr. Thackeray; and the dedication (itself an indubitable *chip* of Jane Eyre) signed Currer

Bell. Author and editor therefore are one, and we are as much satisfied to accept this double individual under the name of "Currer Bell," as under any other, more or less euphonious. Whoever it be, it is a person who, with great mental powers, combines a total ignorance of the habits of society, a great coarseness of taste, and a heathenish doctrine of religion. And as these characteristics appear more or less in the writings of all three, Currer, Acton, and Ellis alike, for their poems differ less in degree of power than in kind, we are ready to accept the fact of their identity or of their relationship with equal satisfaction. At all events there can be no interest attached to the writer of "Wuthering Heights "—a novel succeeding "Jane Eyre," and purporting to be written by Ellis Bell—unless it were for the sake of more individual reprobation. For though there is a decided family likeness between the two, yet the aspect of the Jane and Rochester animals in their native state, as Catherine and Heathfield [Transcriber's note: sic], is too odiously and abominably pagan to be palatable even to the most vitiated class of English readers. With all the unscrupulousness of the French school of novels it combines that repulsive vulgarity in the choice of its vice which supplies its own antidote. The question of authorship, therefore, can deserve a moment's curiosity only as far as "Jane Eyre" is concerned, and though we cannot pronounce that it appertains to a real Mr. Currer Bell and to no other, yet that it appertains to a man, and not, as many assert, to a woman, we are strongly inclined to affirm. Without entering into the question whether the power of the writing be above her, or the vulgarity below her, there are, we believe, minutiae of circumstantial evidence which at once acquit the feminine hand. No woman—a lady friend, whom we are always happy to consult, assures us—makes mistakes in her own *métier*— no woman *trusses game* and garnishes dessert-dishes with the same hands, or talks of so doing in the same breath. Above all, no woman attires another in such fancy dresses as Jane's ladies assume—Miss Ingram coming down, irresistible, "in a *morning* robe of sky-blue crape, a gauze azure scarf twisted in her

hair!!" No lady, we understand, when suddenly roused in the night, would think of hurrying on "*a frock*." They have garments more convenient for such occasions, and more becoming too. This evidence seems incontrovertible. Even granting that these incongruities were purposely assumed, for the sake of disguising the female pen, there is nothing gained; for if we ascribe the book to a woman at all, we have no alternative but to ascribe it to one who has, for some sufficient reason, long forfeited the society of her own sex.

ON GEORGE ELIOT

[From *The Quarterly Review*, October, 1860]

1. *Scenes of Clerical Life* [containing *The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton; Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*; and *Janet's Repentance*]. By GEORGE ELIOT. Second Edition. 2 vols. Edinburgh and London, 1859.

2. *Adam Bede*. By GEORGE ELIOT. Sixth Edition, 2 vols. 1859.

3. *The Mill on the Floss*. By GEORGE ELIOT. 3 vols. 1860.

We frequently hear the remark, that in the present day everything is tending to uniformity—that all minds are taught to think alike, that the days of novelty have departed. To us, however, it appears that the age abounds in new and abnormal modes of thought—we had almost said, forms of being. What could be so new and so unlikely as that the young and irreproachable maiden daughter of a clergyman should have produced so extraordinary a work as "Jane Eyre,"—a work of which we were compelled to express the opinion that the unknown and mysterious "Currer Bell" held "a heathenish doctrine of religion"; that the ignorance which the book displayed as to the proprieties of female dress was hardly compatible with the idea of its having been written by a woman; but that, if a woman at all, the writer must

be "one who had, for some sufficient reason, long forfeited the society of her own sex."

In attempting to guess at the character and circumstances of the writer, a reviewer could only choose among such types of men and women as he had known, or heard, or read of. An early European settler in Australia, in conjecturing whether his garden had been ravaged by a bird or by a quadruped, would not light readily on the conception of an ornithorhynchus; and assuredly no one accustomed only to ordinary men and women could have divined the character, the training, and the position of Charlotte Brontë, as they have been made known to us by her biographer's unsparing revelations. It was not to be expected that any one should have imagined the life of Howorth [Trasncriber's note: sic] parsonage; the gifted, wayward, and unhappy sisterhood in their cheerless home; the rudeness of the only society which was within their reach; while their views of anything beyond their own immediate circle, and certain unpleasing forms of school-life which they had known, were drawn from the representations of a brother whose abilities they regarded with awe, but who in other respects appears to have been an utterly worthless debauchee; lying and slandering, bragging not only of the sins which he had committed, but of many which he had not committed; thoroughly depraved himself, and tainting the thoughts of all within his sphere. There was, therefore, in "Jane Eyre," as the reviewer supposed, the influence of a corrupt male mind, although this influence had been exerted through an unsuspected medium. We now know how it was that a clergyman's daughter, herself innocent, and honourably devoted to the discharge of many a painful duty, could have written such a book as "Jane Eyre" but without such explanations as Mrs. Gaskell has placed (perhaps somewhat too unreservedly) before the world, the thing would have been inconceivable. Indeed there is very sufficient evidence that the Quarterly reviewer was by no means alone in entertaining the opinions we have referred to: for the book was most vehemently cried

up— the society of the authoress, when she became known, was most eagerly courted—assiduous attempts were made (greatly to her annoyance) to enlist her, to exhibit her, to trade on her fame—by the very persons who would have been most ready to welcome her if she had been such as the reviewer supposed her to be. And it is clear that the gentleman who introduced himself to her acquaintance on the ground that each of them had "written a naughty book" must have drawn pretty much the same conclusions from the tone of Miss Brontë's first novel as the writer in this Review.

In like manner a great and remarkable departure from ordinary forms and conditions has caused extreme uncertainty and many mistaken guesses as to the new novelist who writes under the name of George Eliot. One critic of considerable pretensions, for instance, declared his belief that "George Eliot" was "a gentleman of high-church tendencies"; next came the strange mystification which ascribed the "Eliot" tales to one Mr. Joseph Liggins; and finally, the public learnt on authority that the "gentleman of high church tendencies" was a lady; and that this lady was the same who had given a remarkable proof of mastery over both the German language and her own, but had certainly not established a reputation for orthodoxy, by a translation of Strauss's "Life of Jesus."

It is now too late to claim credit for having discovered the female authorship before this disclosure of the fact. But it seems to us impossible, when once the idea has been suggested, to read through these books without finding confirmation of it in almost every page. There is, indeed, power such as is rarely given to woman (or to man either); there are traces of knowledge which is not usual among women (although some of the classical quotations might at least have been more correctly printed); there is a good deal of coarseness, which it is unpleasant to think of as the work of a woman; and, as we shall have occasion to observe more fully hereafter,

the influence which these novels are likely to exercise over the public taste is not altogether such as a woman should aim at. But, with all this, the tone and atmosphere of the books are unquestionably feminine. The men are a woman's men—the women are a woman's women; the points on which the descriptions dwell in persons of each sex are those which a woman would choose. In matters of dress we are assured that "George Eliot" avoids the errors of "Jane Eyre"; for no doubt she has had better opportunities of study than those which were afforded by the Sunday finery of Howorth church. The sketches of nature, of character, of life and manners, show female observation; penetrating where it alone could penetrate, and usually stopping at the boundaries beyond which it does not advance….

On looking at these very slight sketches we cannot but be struck by the uniformly melancholy ending of the tales. The first culminates in the death of the heroine (a word which in relation to these stories must be very loosely interpreted), Mrs. Barton; the second, in the death of the heroine, Mrs. Gilfil; the third, in the death of the hero, Mr. Tryan; the fourth, in the death of one of the heroines, Hetty Sorrel; the fifth, in the simultaneous death of the heroine and her brother, who is, we suppose, to be regarded as the chief hero. Surely this is an exaggerated representation of the proportion which sorrow bears to happiness in human life; and the fact that a popular writer has (whether consciously or not) brought every one of the five stories which she has published to a tragical end gives a very uncomfortable idea of the tone of our present literature. And other such symptoms are only too plentiful—the announcement of a novel with the title of "Why Paul Freeoll Killed his Wife" being one of the latest. With all respect for the talents of the lady who offers us the solution of this question, we must honestly profess that we would rather not know, and that we regret such an employment of her pen.

And in "George Eliot's" writings there is very much of this kind to regret. She delights in unpleasant subjects—in the representation of things which are repulsive, coarse, and degrading. Thus, in "Mr. Gilfil's Story," Tina is only prevented from committing murder by the opportune death of her intended victim. In "Janet's Repentance," a drunken husband beats his beautiful but drunken wife, turns her out of doors at midnight in her night-dress, and dies of "*delirium tremens* and *meningitis*." …

So, in "Adam Bede" we have all the circumstances of Hetty's seduction and the birth and murder of her illegitimate child; and in the "Mill on the Floss" there are the almost indecent details of mere animal passion in the loves of Stephen and Maggie. If these are, as the writer's more thorough-going admirers would tell us, the depths of human nature, we do not see what good can be expected from raking them up,—not for the benefit of those whom the warnings may concern (for these are not likely to heed any warnings which may be presented in such a form), but for the amusement of ordinary readers in hours of idleness and relaxation. Compare "Adam Bede" with that one of Scott's novels which has something in common with it as to story—the "Heart of Midlothian." In each a beautiful young woman of the peasant class is tried and condemned for child-murder; but, although condemned on circumstancial evidence under a law of peculiar severity, Effie Deans is really innocent, whereas Hetty Sorrel is guilty. In the novel of the last generation we see little of Effie, and our attention is chiefly drawn to the simple heroism of her sister Jeanie. In the novel of the present day, everything about Hetty is most elaborately described: her thoughts throughout the whole course of the seduction, her misery on discovering that there is evidence of her frailty, her sufferings on the journey to Windsor and back (for it is the Edie and not the Jeanie of this tale that makes a long solitary journey to the south), her despairing hardness in the prison, her confession, her behaviour on the way to the gallows. That all this is represented with extraordinary force we need not say; and doubtless the

partisans of "George Eliot" would tell us that Scott could not have written the chapters in question. We do not think it necessary to discuss that point, but we are sure that in any case he *would* not have written them, because his healthy judgment would have rejected such matters as unfit for the novelist's art.

The boldness with which George Eliot chooses her subjects is very remarkable. It is not that, like other writers, she fails in the attempt to represent people as agreeable and interesting, but she knowingly forces _dis_agreeable people on us, and insists that we shall be interested in their story by the skill with which it is told. Mr. Amos Barton, for instance, is as uninteresting a person as can well be imagined: a dull, obtuse curate, whose poverty gives him no fair claim to pity; for he has entered the ministry of the English Church without any particular conviction of its superiority to other religious bodies; without any special fitness for its ministry; without anything of the ability which might reasonably entitle him to expect to rise; and without the private means which are necessary for the support of most married men in a profession which, if it is not (as it is sometimes called) a lottery, has very great inequalities of income, and to the vast majority of those who follow it gives very little indeed. Mr. Barton is not a gentleman —a defect which the farmers and tradespeople of his parish are not slow to discover, and for which they despise him. He is without any misgivings as to himself or suspicion of his deficiencies in any way, and his conduct is correctly described in a lisping speech of the "secondary squire" of his parish, "What an ath Barton makth of himthelf!" Yet for this stupid man our sympathy is bespoken, merely because he has a wife so much too good for him that we are almost inclined to be angry with her for her devotion to him.

Tina is an undisciplined, abnormal little creature, without good looks or any attractive quality except a talent for music, and with a temper capable

of the most furious excesses. Although Janet is described as handsome, amiable, and cultivated, all these good properties are overwhelmed in our thoughts of her by the degrading vice of which she is to be cured; while her prophet, Mr. Tryan, although very zealous in his work, is avowedly a narrow Calvinist, wanting in intellectual culture, very irritable, not a little bitter and uncharitable, excessively fond of applause without being very critical as to the quarter from which it comes, and strongly possessed with the love of domination. Tom Tulliver is hard, close, unimaginative, self-confident, repelling, with a stern rectitude of a certain kind, but with no understanding of or toleration for any character different from his own. Philip Wakem is a personage as little pleasant as picturesque. Maggie, as a child—although in her father's opinion "too clever for a gell"—is foolish, vain, self-willed, and always in some silly scrape or other; and when grown up, her behaviour is such, even before the climax of the affair with Stephen Guest, that the dislike of the St. Ogg's ladies for her might have been very sufficiently accounted for even if they had not had reason to envy her superior beauty.

But of all the characters for whom our authoress has been pleased to bespeak our interest, Hetty Sorrel is the most remarkable for unamiable qualities. She is represented as "distractingly pretty," and we hear a great deal about her "kitten-like beauty," and her graceful movements, looks, and attitudes. But this is all that can be said for her. Her mind has no room for anything but looks and dress; she has no feeling for anybody but her little self; and is only too truly declared by Mrs. Poyser to be "no better than a peacock, as 'ud strut about on the wall, and spread its tail when the sun shone, if all the folks i' the parish was dying"—"no better nor a cherry, wi' a hard stone inside it."[1] Over and over this view of Hetty's character is enforced on us, from the time when, early in the first volume, we are told that hers "was a springtide beauty; it was the beauty of young frisking

things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence.[2] …"

[1] "Adam Bede," i. 228; ii. 75. [2] *ibid*., i. 119.

Her conduct throughout is such as to offend and disgust; and the authoress does not seem to be sufficiently aware that, while the descriptions of the little coquette's beauty leave that to be imagined, her follies and faults and crimes are set before us as matters of hard, unmistakeable fact, so that the reader is in no danger of being blinded by the charms which blinded Adam Bede, and Hetty consequently appears as little else than contemptible when she is not odious. Yet it is on this silly, heartless, and wicked little thing that the interest of the story is made to rest. Her agonies, as we have already said, are depicted with very great power; yet, if they touch our hearts, it is merely because they *are* agonies, and our feeling is unmixed with any regard for the sufferer herself.

This habit of representing her characters without any concealment of their faults is, no doubt, connected with that faculty which enables the authoress to give them so remarkable an air of reality. There are, indeed, exceptions to this, as there are in almost every work of fiction. Thus, Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel strike us as old acquaintances whom we have known not in real life, but in books. We are not altogether sure of stately old Mrs. Irwine, and are sceptical as to Dinah Morris, notwithstanding the very great pains which the authoress has evidently bestowed on her—perhaps because she is utterly unlike such female Methodists as have fallen within our own (happily, small) experience; and Bob Jakin is a grotesque caricature, which would have been far better done by Mr. Dickens, who is undeniably great in the production of grotesques, although we do not remember that throughout the whole of his voluminous works he has ever succeeded in embodying a single natural and lifelike

character. But, with a very few exceptions, "George Eliot's" personages have that appearance of reality in which those of Mr. Dickens are so conspicuously wanting. And while Mr. Dickens's views of English life and society are about as far from the truth as those of the French dramatists and romancers, "George Eliot" is able to represent the social circumstances in which her action is laid with the strongest appearance of verisimilitude. We may not ourselves have known Shepperton, or Hayslope, or St. Ogg's; but we feel as much at home in them as if we had….

Tulliver may be cited as another well-imagined and well-executed character, with his downright impetuous honesty, his hatred of "raskills," and his disposition to see rascality everywhere; his resolution to stand on his rights, his good-natured contempt for his wife, his very justifiable dislike of her sisters, his love for his children, and his determination that they shall have a good education, cost what it may,—the benefits of education having been impressed on his mind by his own inability to "wrap up things in words as aren't actionable," and by the consequent perception that "it's an uncommon fine thing, that is, when we can let a man know what you think of him without paying for it."[1] His love of litigation is reconciled with his belief that "the law is meant to take care o' raskills," and that "Old Harry made the lawyers" by the principle that the cause which has the "biggest raskill" for attorney has the best chance of success; so that honesty need not despair if it can only secure the professional assistance of accomplished roguery. And when, notwithstanding this, the law and Mr. Wakem have been too much for him, great skill is shown in the description of poor Tulliver's latter days; his prostration and partial recovery; the concentration of his feelings on the desire to wipe out the dishonour of insolvency, and to avenge himself on the hostile attorney. Indeed, we confess that, notwithstanding his somewhat unedifying end, Tulliver is the only person in "The Mill on the Floss" for whom we can bring ourselves to care much.

[1] "The Mill on the Floss," i. 32.

The reality of which we have been speaking is connected with a peculiar sort of consciousness in the authoress, as if she had actually witnessed all that she describes, and were resolved to describe it without any attempt to refine beyond the naked truth. Thus, the most serious characters make their most solemn and most pathetic speeches in provincial dialect and ungrammatical constructions, although it must be allowed that the authoress has not ventured so far in this way as to play with the use and abuse of the aspirate. And her dialect appears to be very carefully studied, although we may doubt whether the Staffordshire provincialisms of "Clerical Life" and "Adam Bede" are sufficiently varied when the scene is shifted in the latest book to the Lincolnshire side of the Humber. But where a greater variation than that between one midland dialect and another is required, "George Eliot's" conscientiousness is very curiously shown. There is in "Mr. Gilfil's Story" a gardener of the name of Bates, who is described as a Yorkshireman, and in "Adam Bede" there is another gardener, Mr. Craig, whose name would naturally indicate a Scotchman. Each of these horticulturists is introduced into the dialogue, and of course the reader would expect the one to talk Yorkshire and the other to talk some variety of Scotch. But the authoress, apparently, did not feel herself mistress of either Scotch or Yorkshire to such a degree as would have warranted her in attempting them, and therefore, before her characters are allowed to open their mouths, she, in each case, is careful to tell us that we must moderate our expectations: "Mr. Bates's lips were of a peculiar cut, and I fancy this had something to do with the peculiarity of his dialect, which, as we shall see, was individual rather than provincial."[1]

[1] "Scenes of Clerical Life," i. 191.

"I think it was Mr. Craig's pedigree only that had the advantage of being Scotch, and not his 'bringing up'; for, except that he had a stronger burr in his accent, his speech differed little from that of the Loamshire people around him."[2] In short, except that lucifer matches are twice introduced as familiar things in days when the tinder-box was the only resource in general use for obtaining a light,[3] we have not observed anything in which the authoress could be "caught out."

[2] "Adam Bede," i. 302. [3] "Adam Bede," i. 219, 362.

But this conscientious fidelity has very serious drawbacks. It seems as if the authoress felt herself under an obligation to give everything literally as it took place; to shut out nothing which is superfluous; to suppress nothing which is unfit for a work of fiction (for not only have we a report of Dinah Morris's sermons, but the very words of the prayer which she put up for Hetty in the prison); to abridge nothing which is tiresome. People and incidents are described at length, although they have little or nothing to do with the story. We may mention as instances the detailed history and character which are given of Tom Tulliver's tutor, the Reverend Walter Stelling, and the account of Mr. Poyser's harvest-home, which, however good in itself, is utterly out of place between the crisis and the conclusion of the story. But most especially we complain of the fondness which the authoress shows for exhibiting uninteresting and tiresome people in all their interminable tediousness; and if the morbid tone which we have already mentioned reminds us of a French school of novelists, her passion for photographing the minutest details of dullness reminds us painfully of those American ladies who contribute so largely to the literature of our railway-stalls, by flooding their boundless prairies of dingy paper with inexhaustible masses of blotchy type. We quite admit the naturalness of the tradespeople and other small folks whom this writer has perhaps explored more deeply than any earlier novelist; but surely we have far too much of them. It has

indeed been said that we are spoiled by the activity of the present day for enjoying the faithful picture of what life was in country parishes and in little country towns fifty years ago; but we really cannot admit the justice of this attempt to throw the blame on ourselves. Dullness, we may be sure, has not died out within the last half century, but is yet to be found in plenty; and, if times were dull fifty or a hundred years ago, the novelists of those days—Scott and Fielding, and Smollett, and even Goldsmith in his simple tale—did not make their readers groan under their dullness….

But *are* we likely to feel more kindly towards such people as those of whom we are now complaining, because all their triviality, and smallness, and tediousness are displayed at wearisome length on paper? If some Dutch painters bestowed their skill on homely old women and boozy boors, there is no evidence that they were capable of better things, and their choice of subjects is no justification for one who certainly can do better. Nor do we complain that we have an old woman or a coarse merrymaking occasionally, but that such things in their monotonous meanness fill whole rooms of "George Eliot's" gallery; and, in truth, the real parallel to her is not to be found in the old Dutchmen who honestly painted what was before their eyes, but rather in the perverseness of our modern "pre-Raphaelites." It is of these gentlemen—who, by the way, in their reactionary affectations are the most entire opposites of the simple, unaffected, and forward-striving artists who really lived before Raphael—it is of these gentlemen, with their choice of disagreeable subjects, uncomely models, and uncouth attitudes, their bestowal of superfluous labour on trifling details, and the consequent obtrusiveness of subordinate things so as to mar the general effect of the work, that "George Eliot" too often reminds us.

How very wearisome is the conversation of the clique of inferior women who worship Mr. Tryan! how dismally twaddling is that respectable old congregationalist, Mr. Jerome, with his tidy little garden and his "littel

chacenut hoss"! We feel for Mr. Tryan when in the society of such people, although to him it was mitigated by the belief that he was doing good by associating with them, and that by love of incense from any quarter which is described as part of his character. But why should it be inflicted in such fearful doses on us, who have done nothing to deserve it, who have no "mission" to encounter it, and are entirely without Mr. Tryan's consolations under the endurance of it?

Adam Bede's mother is another sore trial of the reader's patience—with her endless fretful chatter, and all the details of her urging her sons, one after the other, to refresh themselves with cold potatoes: nay, we are not reconciled to these vegetables even by the fact that on one occasion they are recommended as "taters wi' the gravy in 'em."[1] But it is in "The Mill on the Floss" that the plague of tedious conversation reaches its height. Mrs. Tulliver is one of four married sisters, whose maiden name had been Dodson, and in these sisters there is a studious combination of family likeness with individual varieties of character. Mrs. Tulliver herself—whose "blond" complexion is generally associated by our authoress with imbecility of mind and character—belongs to that class of minds of which Mrs. Quickly may be considered as the chief intellectual type. Mrs. Pullet—the wife of a gentleman farmer, whose great characteristic is a habit of sucking lozenges, and whom Tom Tulliver most justly sets down as a "nincompoop"—is almost sillier than Mrs. Tulliver. She has the gift of tears ever ready to flow, and sheds them profusely on the anticipation of imaginary and ridiculous woes. Her favourite vanity consists in drawing dismal pictures of the future and in priding herself on the bodily sufferings of her neighbours; that one had "been tapped no end o' times, and the water —they say you might ha' swum in it if you'd liked"; that another's "breath was short to that degree as you could hear him two rooms off"; and her highest religion— the loftiest exercise of her faith and self-denial—is the accumulation of superfluous clothes and linen, in the hope that they may

make a creditable display after her death. Mrs. Deane is "a thin-lipped woman, who made small well-considered speeches on peculiar occasions, repeating them afterwards to her husband, and asking him if she had not spoken very properly"; and of her we see but little. But of the eldest of the four, Mrs. Glegg, we see so much that we are really made quite uncomfortable by her; for she is a very formidable person indeed,— utterly without kindness, bullying everybody within her reach (her husband included), holding herself up as a model to everybody, and shaming all other families—especially those into which she and her sisters had married —by odious comparisons with the Dodsons. All this we grant is very cleverly done. The grim Mrs. Glegg and the fatuous Mrs. Tulliver and Mrs. Pullet talk admirably in their respective kinds; and we can quite believe that there are people who are not unfairly represented by the Dodsons—with, the narrow limitation of their thoughts to their own little circle—the extravagantly high opinion of their own vulgar family, with the corresponding depreciation of all in and about their own rank who do not belong to it—their perfect conviction that their own family traditions (such as the copious eating of salt in their broth) are the standard of all that is good—their consecration of all their most elevated feelings to the worship of furniture, and clothes, and table-linen, and silver spoons—their utter alienation from all that, in the opinion of educated people, can make life fit to be enjoyed. The humour of Mrs. Glegg's determination that no ill desert of a relation shall interfere with the disposal of her property by will on the most rigidly Dodsonian principles of justice, according to the several degrees of Dodsonship, is excellent; and so is the change in her behaviour towards Maggie, whom, after having always bullied her, she takes up for the sake of Dodsondom's credit when everybody else has turned against her….

[1] "Adam Bede," i. 54.

The writer does not seem to be aware that the fools and bores of a book, while they bore the other characters, ought not to bore but to amuse the reader, and that they will become seriously wearisome to him if there be too much of them. Shakespeare has contented himself with showing us his Dogberry and Verges, his Shallow and Slender, and Silence, to such a degree as may sufficiently display their humours; but he has not filled whole acts with them, and, even if he had, a five-act play is a small field for the display of prolix foolishness as compared with a three-volume novel. Lord Macaulay has been supposed to speak sarcastically in saying that he "would not advise any person who reads for amusement to venture on a certain *jeu d'esprit* of Mr. Sadler's as long as he can procure a volume of the Statutes at Large";[1] but we are afraid that we should not be believed if we were to mention the books to which *we* have had recourse by way of occasional relief from the task of perusing "George Eliot's" tales.

[1] "Miscellaneous Writings," ii. 68.

In the case of "these emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers," the authoress again defends her principle. "I share with you," she says, "the sense of oppressive narrowness; but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie."[2] We must confess that we care very little for Tom and Maggie, who, although the inscription on their tombstone and the motto on the title-page of the book tell us that "in their death they were not divided," do not strike us as having been "lovely and pleasant in their lives." We do not think the development of the brother and the sister a matter of any great interest; and, if it were, we believe that a sufficient ground might have been laid for our understanding it without so severely trying our patience by the details of the "sordid life" amid which their early years were spent.

[2] "The Mill on the Floss," ii. 150.

Another mistake, as it appears to us, is the too didactic strain into which the authoress occasionally falls—writing as if for the purpose of forcing lessons on children or the poor, rather than for grown-up and educated readers. The story of "Janet's Repentance" might, with the omission of a few passages such as the satirical flings at Mr. Tryan's female worshippers, be made into a very edifying little tract for some "evangelical" society. Mr. Tryan's opponents are all represented as brutes and monsters, drunkards and unclean, enemies of all goodness; while, with the usual unscrupulousness of party tract-writers, we are required to choose between an alliance with such infamous company and unreserved adhesion to the Calvanistic curate, without being allowed any possibility of a third course. And, in addition to Mr. Tryan's victory, there is the conversion of Mrs. Dempster, not only from drunkenness to teetotalism (which might form the text for a set of illustrations by Mr. Cruikshank, in the moral style of his later days), but from hatred to love of the Gospel according to Mr. Tryan. In its place we should not care to object to such a story, or to a great deal of the needless talk which it contains both of sinners and of saints; but we *do* object to it in a book which is intended for the lighter reading of educated people, and the more so because we know that it comes from a writer who can feel nothing of the bitter but conscientious bigotry which the composition of such a story in good faith implies….

In reading of Maggie's early indiscretions, we—hardened, grey-headed reviewers as we are—feel something like a renewal of the shame and mortification with which, long decades of years ago, we read of the weaknesses of Frank and Rosamond,—as if we ourselves were the little girl who made the mistake of choosing the big, bright-coloured bottle from the chemist's window, or the little boy who allowed himself to be deceived by the flattery of the lady in the draper's shop. In order that her hair may have no chance of appearing in curls on a great occasion (according to her mother's wish), Maggie plunges her head into a basin of water. On getting

an old dress and a bonnet from her unloved aunt Glegg, she bastes the frock along with the roast beef on the following Sunday, and souses the bonnet under the pump. In consequence of the continual remarks of her mother and aunts, about the un-Dodsonlike colour of her hair, she cuts it all off. She makes the most deplorable exhibition of her literary vanity at every turn. Out of spite she pushes her cousin Lucy, when arrayed in the prettiest of dresses, into the "cow-trodden mud," and thereupon she runs off to a gang of gipsies, with the intention of becoming their queen,—an adventure from which we are glad that she is allowed to escape with less of suffering than Miss Edgeworth might perhaps have felt it a matter of duty to inflict on her. For the Toms and Maggies, the Franks and Rosamonds, of real life, such monitory anecdotes as these may be very good and useful; but it seems to us that they are out of place in a book intended for readers who have got beyond the early domestic schoolroom.

We cannot praise the construction of these tales. The plots are very slight; the narrative drags painfully in some parts, and in other parts the authoress has recourse to very violent expedients, as where she brings in the "startling Adelphi stage-effect" of the flood to drown Tom and Maggie, in order to escape from the unmanageable complication of her story. Both in "Adam Bede" and in "The Mill on the Floss" the chief interest is over long before the tale comes to an end; and in looking at the whole series together we see something of repetition. Thus, both Tina and Hetty set their hearts on a young man above their own position, and turn a deaf ear to a longer-known, more suitable, and worthier suitor. Each disappears at a critical time, and each, after a disappointment in the higher quarter, falls back on a marriage with the humbler admirer; with the difference, however, that, as Hetty had committed murder, and as Tina had just been saved from doing so, the marriage in the first case never actually takes place, and in the second it ends after a few months. And as a smaller instance of repetition, we may

compare the bedroom visit of the seraphic Dinah Morris to the earthly Hetty with that of the pattern Lucy Deane to the tempestuous Maggie Tulliver.

There is less of affectation in these books than in most of our recent novels, yet there is by far too much. Among the portions which are most infected by this sin we may mention the description of scenery,—thanks, doubtless, in no small measure, to the influence of that very dangerous model Mr. Ruskin….

Before concluding our article we must notice the authoress's views on two important subjects which enter largely into her stories—love and religion. That ladies, of their own accord and uninvited, fall in love with gentlemen is a common circumstance in novels written by ladies; and we are very much obliged to Madame D'Arblay, Miss Austen, and the other writers of the softer sex, who have let us into the knowledge of the important fact that such is the way in real life. But the peculiarity of "George Eliot," among English novelists, is that in her books everybody falls in love with the wrong person. She seems to be continually on the point of showing us, with the author of "The Rovers"—

> How two swains one nymph her vows may give,
> And how two damsels with one lover live.

Love is represented as a passion conceived without any ground of reasonable preference, and as entirely irresistible in its sway. Tina bestows her affections on Captain Wybrow, while the Captain, without caring for anybody but himself, is paying his addresses to Miss Assher; and Mr. Gilfil is pining for Tina, whom, if he had any discernment at all, he could not but see to be quite unfitted for him. Adam Bede is in love with the utterly undeserving Hetty, while Dinah Morris and Mary Burge are both in love with Adam, Hetty with Arthur Donnithorne, and Seth Bede with Dinah. At last, Hetty is got out of the way, Dinah comes to a clearer understanding of

her feelings towards Adam, and Adam, on being made aware of this, is set on by his mother to make a successful proposal; but "quiet Mary Burge" subsides into a bridesmaid, and Seth, the "poor wool-gatherin' Methodist," is left without any other consolation than that of worshipping his sister-in-law.

But it is in "The Mill on the Floss" that the unwholesome view which we have mentioned finds its most startling development. Maggie is in love with Philip, and Philip with Maggie; Stephen Guest is in love with Lucy Deane, and Lucy with Stephen, while at the same time she has an undeclared admirer in Tom Tulliver. But as soon as Maggie and Stephen become acquainted with each other, they exercise a powerful mutual attraction, and the mischief of love (as the passion is represented by our authoress) breaks loose in terrible force. The reproach which Tom Tulliver had coarsely thrown in Philip's teeth, that he had taken advantage of Maggie's inexperience to secure her affections before she had had any opportunity of comparing him with other men, turns out to be entirely just. Stephen is a mere underbred coxcomb, and is intended to appear as such (for we do not think that the authoress has failed in any attempt to make him a gentleman); his only merit, in so far as we can discover, is a foolish talent for singing, and, except as to person, he is infinitely inferior to Philip. But for this mere physical superiority the lofty-souled Maggie prefers him to the lover whom she had before loved for his deformity; and the passion is represented as one which no considerations of moral or religious principle, no regard to the claims of others, no training derived from the hardships of her former life or from the ascetic system to which she had at one time been devoted, can withstand. Here is a delicate scene, which is described as having taken place in a conservatory, to which the pair had withdrawn on the night of a ball:—

Maggie bent her arm a little upward towards the large half-opened rose that had attracted her. Who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm? —the unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled elbow, and the varied gently-lessening curves down to the delicate wrist, with its tiniest, almost imperceptible nicks in the firm softness?

A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted towards the arm and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist.

But the next moment Maggie snatched it from him, and glanced at him like a wounded war-goddess, quivering with rage and humiliation.

"How dare you?" she spoke in a deeply-shaken, half-smothered voice: "what right have I given you to insult me?"

She darted from him into the adjoining room, and threw herself on the sofa panting and trembling.[1]

[1] iii. 156.

We should not have blamed the young lady if, like one of Mr. Trollope's heroines, she had made her admirer feel not only "the beauty of a woman's arm," but its weight. But, unwarned by the grossness of his behaviour on this occasion, she is represented as admitting Stephen to further intercourse; and, although she rescues herself at last, it is not until after having occasioned irreparable scandal. A good-natured ordinary novelist might have found an easy solution for the difficulties of the case at an earlier stage by marrying Stephen to Maggie, and handing over Lucy (who is far too amiable to object to such a transfer) to her admiring cousin Tom; while Philip, left in celibacy, might either have been invested with a pathetic interest, or represented as justly punished for the offence of forestalling. But

George Eliot has higher aims than ordinary novelists, and to her the transfer which we have suggested would appear as a profanation. Her characters, therefore, plunge into all manner of sacrifices of reputation and happiness; and it is not until Maggie and Tom have been drowned, and Philip's whole life embittered, that we catch a final view of Mr. Stephen Guest visiting the grave of the brother and sister in company with the amiable wife, *née* Lucy Deane. If we are to accept the natural moral of this story, it shows how coarse and immoral a very fastidious and ultra-refined morality may become.

It is with reluctance that we go on to notice the religion of these books; but since religion appears so largely in them, we must not decline the task. To us, at least, the theory of the writer's "High-Church tendencies" could never have appeared plausible; for even in the "Scenes of Clerical Life" the chief religious personage is the "evangelical" curate Mr. Tryan, and whatever good there is in his parish is confined to the circle of his partisans and converts; while in "Adam Bede" the Methodess preacheress, Dinah Morris, is intended to shine with spotless and incomparable lustre. Yet, although the highest characters, in a religious view, are drawn from "evangelicism" and Methodism, we find that neither of these systems is set forth as enough to secure the perfection of everybody who may choose to profess it….

Mr. Parry, although agreeing with Mr. Tryan in opinion, is represented as no less unpopular and inefficient than Mr. Tryan was the reverse; and the Reverend Amos Barton is a hopeless specimen of that variety of "evangelical" clergymen to which the late Mr. Conybeare gave the name of "low and slow,"—a variety which, we believe, flourishes chiefly in the midland counties. On the other hand, Mr. Gilfil and Mr. Irwine, clergymen of the "old school," are held up as objects for our respect and love; and Mr. Irwine is not only vindicated by Adam Bede in his old age, in comparison

with his evangelical successor Mr. Ryde, but the question between high and low church, as represented by these two, is triumphantly settled by a quotation which Adam brings from our old friend Mrs. Poyser:—

> Mrs. Poyser used to say—you know she would have her word about everything—she said Mr. Irwine was like a good meal o' victual, you were the better for him without thinking on it; and Mr. Ryde was like a dose o' physic, he griped and worrited you, and after all he left you much the same.[1]

[1] "Adam Bede," i. 269.

In "The Mill on the Floss," too, the "brazen" Mr. Stelling is represented as "evangelical," in so far as he is anything; while Dr. Kenn, a very high Anglican, is spoken of with all veneration; although, perhaps, "George Eliot's" opinion as to the efficiency of the high Anglican clergy may be gathered from the circumstance that when the Doctor interferes for the benefit of Maggie Tulliver, he not only fails to be of any use, but exposes himself to something like the same kind of gossip which had arisen from Mr. Amos Barton's hospitality to Madame Czerlaski. As to Methodism, again, the reader need hardly be reminded of the sayings which we have quoted from Mrs. Poyser. And while the feeble and "wool-gathering" Seth Bede becomes a convert, the strong-minded Adam holds out, even although he is so tolerant as to marry a female Methodist preacher, and to let her enjoy her "liberty of prophesying" until stopped by a general order of the Wesleyan Conference.

From all these things the natural inference would seem to be that the authoress is neither High-Church nor Low-Church nor Dissenter, but a tolerant member of what is styled the Broad-Church party—a party in which we are obliged to say that breadth and toleration are by no means universal. It would seem that, instead of being exclusively devoted to any

one of the religious types which she has embodied in the persons of her tales (for as yet she has not presented us with a clergyman of any liberal school), she regards each of them as containing an element of pure Christianity, which, although in any one of them it may be alloyed by its adjuncts and by the faults of individuals, is in itself of inestimable value, and may be held alike by persons who differ widely from each other as to the forms of religious polity and as to details of Christian doctrine.

But what is to be thought of the fact that the authoress of these tales is also the translator of Strauss's notorious book? Is the Gospel which she has represented in so many attractive lights nothing better to her, after all, than "fabula ista de Christo"? Are the various forms under which she has exhibited it no more for her than the Mahometan and Hindoo systems were for the poet of Thalaba and Kehama? Has she been carrying out in these novels the precepts of that chapter in which Dr. Strauss teaches his disciples how, while believing the New Testament narrative to be merely mythical, they may yet discharge the functions of the Christian preacher without exposing themselves by their language to any imputation of unsoundness? But, even apart from this distressing question, there is much to interfere with the hope and the interest with which we should wish to look forward to the future career of a writer so powerful and so popular as the authoress of these books—much to awaken very serious apprehensions as to the probable effect of her influence. No one who has looked at all into our late fictitious literature can have failed to be struck with the fondness of many of the writers of the day for subjects which at an earlier time would not have been thought of, or would have been carefully avoided. The idea that fiction should contain something to soothe, to elevate, or to purify seems to be extinct. In its stead there is a love for exploring what would be better left in obscurity; for portraying the wildness of passion and the harrowing miseries of mental conflict; for dark pictures of sin and remorse and punishment; for the discussion of questions which it is painful and revolting

to think of. By some writers such themes are treated with a power which fascinates even those who most disapprove the manner in which it is exercised; by others with a feebleness which shows that the infection has spread even to the most incapable of the contributors to our circulating libraries. To us the influence of the "Jack Shepherd" school of literature is really far less alarming than that of a class of books which is more likely to find its way into the circles of cultivated readers, and, most especially, to familiarize the minds of our young women in the middle and higher ranks with matters on which their fathers and brothers would never venture to speak in their presence. It is really frightful to think of the interest which we have ourselves heard such readers express in criminals like Paul Ferroll, and in sensual ruffians like Mr. Rochester: and there is much in the writings of "George Eliot" which, on like grounds, we feel ourselves bound most earnestly to condemn. Let all honour be paid to those who in our time have laboured to search out and to make known such evils of our social condition as Christian sympathy may in some degree relieve or cure. But we do not believe that any good end is to be effected by fictions which fill the mind with details of imaginary vice and distress and crime, or which teach it—instead of endeavouring after the fulfilment of simple and ordinary duty—to aim at the assurance of superiority by creating for itself fanciful and incomprehensible perplexities. Rather we believe that the effect of such fictions must be to render those who fall under their influence unfit for practical exertion; while they most assuredly do grievous harm in many cases, by intruding on minds which ought to be guarded from impurity the unnecessary knowledge of evil.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

In the early days of the nineteenth century Edinburgh certainly aspired to prouder eminence as a centre of light and learning than it has continued to maintain. Tory energy, provoked by the arrogance of Jeffrey, had found its earliest expression in London, but the northern capital evidently determined not to be left behind in the game of unprincipled vituperation. *Blackwood*, unlike its rivals in infancy, was issued monthly, and its closely printed double columns add something to the impression of heaviness in its satire.

JOHN WILSON (1785-1854)

There is admittedly something incongruous in any association between the genial and laughter-loving Christopher North and the reputation incurred by the periodical with which he was long so intimately associated. He had contributed—as few of his confederates would have been permitted — to the *Edinburgh*; but he was Literary Editor to *Blackwood* from October, 1817, to September, 1852. Originally a disciple of the Lake School, at whom he was frequently girding, he migrated to Edinburgh (where he became Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1820), and attracted to himself many brilliant men of letters, including De Quincey.

The "mountain-looking fellow," as Dickens called him, the patron of "cock-fighting, wrestling, pugilistic contests, boat-racing, and horse-racing" left his mark on his generation for a unique combination of boisterous

joviality and hardhitting. Well known in the houses of the poor; more than one observer has said that he reminded them of the "first man, Adam." He "swept away all hearts, withersoever he would." "Thor and Balder in one," "very Goth," "a Norse Demigod," "hair of the true Sicambrian yellow"; Carlyle describes him as "fond of all stimulating things; from tragic poetry down to whiskey-punch. He snuffed and smoked cigars and drank liqueurs, and talked in the most indescribable style…. He is a broad sincere man of six feet, with long dishevelled flax-coloured hair, and two blue eyes keen as an eagle's … a being all split into precipitous chasms and the wildest volcanic tumults … a noble, loyal, and religious nature, not *strong* enough to vanquish the perverse element it is born into."

The foundation of Wilson's criticism, unlike most of his contemporaries, was generous and wide-minded appreciation, yet he "hacked about him, distributing blows right and left, delivered sometimes for fun, though sometimes with the most extraordinary impulse of perversity, in the impetus of his career." With all a boy's love of a good fight, he shared with youth its thoughtless indifference to the consequences.

His not altogether unfriendly criticisms inspired one of Tennyson's lightest effusions—

You did late review my lays,
Crusty Christopher;
You did mingle blame and praise
Rusty Christopher.
When I learnt from whence it came,
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher;
I could not forgive the praise
Fusty Christopher.

The *Noctes Ambrosianae* is certainly a unique production. Though ostensibly a dialogue mainly between himself, Tickler (i.e., Lockhart), and Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd—with other occasional dramatis personae; the main bulk of them (including everything here quoted) was written by Wilson himself—in this form, to produce an original effect. The conversations are, for the most part, thoroughly dramatic, and cover every conceivable subject from politics and literature to the beauty of scenery, dress, cookery, and the various sports beloved of Christopher. There is much boisterous interruption for eating, drinking, and personal chaff.

Of the longer quotations selected we would particularly draw attention to the humorous and epigrammatic parody of Wordsworth, on whom Wilson elsewhere bestows generous enthusiasm; and the broad-minded outlook which can appreciate the contrasted virility of Byron and Dr. Johnson. But it would be impossible to give an approximately fair impression of the *Noctes*, without many examples of those paragraph criticisms scattered broadcast on every page, which we have presented as "Crumbs" from the feast. The magnificent recantation to Leigh Hunt—on whom *Blackwood* had bestowed even more than its share of abuse—has passed into a proverb.

ANONYMOUS

As in the case of the *Quarterly* these untraced effusions may be assigned, with fair confidence, to the principal originators of the magazine: Wilson himself, Lockhart, and William Maginn (1793-1842), a thriftless Irishman who helped to start *Fraser's Magazine* in 1830, and stood for Captain Shandon in Pendennis; author of *Bob Burke's Duel with Ensign Brady*, "perhaps the raciest Irish story ever written."

They almost certainly combined in the heated attack on "The Cockney School," of which Leigh Hunt's generous, but not always judicious, advertisement was an obvious temptation to satire, embittered by political

bias. Coleridge, also, provided easy material for scorn from vigorous manhood; and Shelley, as Wilson remarks elsewhere, was "the greatest sinner of the oracular school—because the only true poet."

CHRISTOPHER NORTH ON POPE[1]

[1] A Discussion of the Edition by Bowles.

[From *Noctes Ambrosianae*, March, 1825]

Tickler. Pope was one of the most amiable men that ever lived. Fine and delicate as were the temper and temperament of his genius, he had a heart capable of the warmest human affection. He was indeed a loving creature.

North. Come, come, Timothy, you know you were sorely cut an hour or two ago—so do not attempt characteristics. But, after all, Bowles does not say that Pope was unamiable.

Tickler. Yes, he does—that is to say, no man can read, even now, all that he has written about Pope, without thinking on the whole, somewhat indifferently of the man Pope. It is for this I abuse our friend Bowles.

Shepherd. Ay, ay—I recollect now some of the havers o' Boll's about the Blounts,—Martha and Theresa, I think you call them. Puir wee bit hunched-backed, windle-strae-legged, gleg-eed, clever, acute, ingenious, sateerical, weel-informed, warm-hearted, real philosophical, and maist poetical creature, wi' his sounding translation o' a' Homer's works, that reads just like an original War-Yepic,—His Yessay on Man that, in spite o' what a set o' ignoramuses o' theological critics say about Bolingbroke and Croussass, and heterodoxy and atheism, and like haven, is just-ane o' the best moral

discourses that ever I heard in or out o' the poupit,—His yepistles about the Passions, and sic like, in the whilk he goes baith deep and high, far deeper and higher baith than mony a modern poet, who must needs be either in a diving-bell or a balloon,— His Rape o' the Lock o' Hair, wi' a' these Sylphs floating about in the machinery o' the Rosicrucian Philosophism, just perfectly yelegant and gracefu', and as gude, in their way, as onything o' my ain about fairies, either in the *Queen's Wake* or *Queen Hynde*,—His Louisa to Abelard is, as I said before, coorse in the subject-matter, but, O sirs! powerfu' and pathetic in execution—and sic a perfect spate o' versification! His unfortunate lady, who sticked hersel for love wi' a drawn sword, and was afterwards seen as a ghost, dim-beckoning through the shade—a verra poetical thocht surely, and full both of terror and pity….

North. Pope's poetry is full of nature, at least of what I have been in the constant habit of accounting nature for the last threescore and ten years. But (thank you, James, that snuff is really delicious) leaving nature and art, and all that sort of thing, I wish to ask a single question: what poet of this age, with the exception, perhaps, of Byron, can be justly said, when put in comparison with Pope, to have written the English language at all….

Tickler. What would become of Bowles himself, with all his elegance, pathos, and true feeling? Oh! dear me, James, what a dull, dozing, disjointed, dawdling, dowdy of a drawe would be his muse, in her very best voice and tune, when called upon to get up and sing a solo after the sweet and strong singer of Twickenham!

North. Or Wordsworth—with his eternal—Here we go up, and up, and up, and here we go down, down, and here we go roundabout, roundabout! —Look at the nerveless laxity of his *Excursion!*—What interminable prosing!— The language is out of condition:—fat and fozy, thick-winded,

purfled and plethoric. Can he be compared with Pope?—Fie on't! no, no, no!— Pugh, pugh!

Tickler. Southey—Coleridge—Moore?

North. No; not one of them. They are all eloquent, diffusive, rich, lavish, generous, prodigal of their words. But so are they all deficient in sense, muscle, sinew, thews, ribs, spine. Pope, as an artist, beats them hollow. Catch him twaddling.

Tickler. It is a bad sign of the intellect of an age to depreciate the genius of a country's classics. But the attempt covers such critics with shame, and undying ridicule pursues them and their abettors. The Lake Poets began this senseless clamour against the genius of Pope.

ON BYRON

[From *Noctes Ambrosianae*, October, 1825]

North. People say, James, that Byron's tragedies are failures. Fools! Is Cain, the dark, dim, disturbed, insane, hell-haunted Cain, a failure? Is Sardanapalus, the passionate, princely, philosophical, joy-cheated, throne-wearied voluptuary, a failure? Is Heaven and Earth, that magnificent confusion of two worlds, in which mortal beings mingle in love and hate, joy and despair, with immortal—the children of the dust claiming alliance with the radiant progeny of the skies, till man and angel seem to partake of one divine being, and to be essences eternal in bliss or bale—is Heaven and Earth, I ask you, James, a failure? If so, then Appollo has stopt payment—promising a dividend of one shilling in the pound—and all concerned in that house are bankrupts.

Tickler. You have nobly—gloriously vindicated Byron, North, and in doing so, have vindicated the moral and intellectual character of our country. Miserable and pernicious creed, that holds possible the lasting and intimate union of the first, purest, highest, noblest, and most celestial powers of soul and spirit, with confirmed appetencies, foul and degrading lust, cowardice, cruelty, meanness, hypocrisy, avarice, and impiety! You,—in a strong attempt made to hold up to execration the nature of Byron as deformed by all these hideous vices,—you, my friend, reverently unveiled

the countenance of the mighty dead, and the lineaments struck remorse into the heart of every asperser.

ON DR. JOHNSON

[From *Noctes Ambrosianae*, April, 1829]

North. I forgot old Sam—a jewel rough set, yet shining like a star, and though sand-blind by nature, and bigoted by Education, one of the truly great men of England, and "her men are of men the chief," alike in the dominions of the understanding, the reason, the passions, and the imagination. No prig shall ever persuade me that *Rasselas* is not a noble performance—in design and execution. Never were the expenses of a mother's funeral more gloriously defrayed by son, than the funeral of Samuel Johnson's mother by the price of *Rasselas*, written for the pious purpose of laying her head decently and honourably in the dust.

Shepherd. Ay, that was pittin' literature and genius to a glorious purpose indeed; and therefore nature and religion smiled on the wark, and have stamped it with immortality.

North. Samuel was seventy years old when he wrote the *Lives of the Poets*.

Shepherd. What a fine old buck! No unlike yoursel'.

North. Would it were so! He had his prejudicies, and his partialities, and his bigotries, and his blindnesses,—but on the same fruit-tree you see

shrivelled pears or apples on the same branch with jargonelles or golden pippins worthy of paradise. Which would ye show to the Horticultural Society as a fair specimen of the tree?

Shepherd. Good, kit, good—philosophically picturesque. (*Mimicking the old man's voice and manner.*)

North. Show me the critique that beats his on Pope, and on Dryden—nay, even on Milton; and hang me if you may not read his essay on Shakespeare even after having read Charles Lamb, or heard Coleridge, with increased admiration of the powers of all three, and of their insight, through different avenues, and as it might seem almost with different bodily and mental organs, into Shakespeare's "old exhausted," and his "new imagined worlds." He was a critic and a moralist who would have been wholly wise, had he not been partly—constitutionally insane. For there is blood in the brain, James—even in the organ—the vital principle of all our "eagle-winged raptures"; and there was a taint of the black drop of melancholy in his.

Shepherd. Wheesht—wheesht—let us keep aff that subject. All men ever I knew are mad; and but for that law o' natur, never, never, in this warld had there been a *Noctes Ambrosianae*.

CRUMBS FROM THE "NOCTES"

MISS MITFORD

North. Miss Mitford has not in my opinion either the pathos or humour of Washington Irving; but she excels him in vigorous conception of character, and in the truth of her pictures of English life and manners. Her writings breathe a sound, pure, and healthy morality, and are pervaded by a genuine rural spirit—the spirit of merry England. Every line bespeaks the lady.

Shepherd. I admire Miss Mitford just excessively. I dinna wunner at her being able to write sae weel as she does about drawing-rooms wi' sofas and settees, and about the fine folk in them seeing themsels in lookin-glasses frae tap to tae; but what puzzles the like o' me, is her pictures o' poachers, and tinklers, and pottery-trampers, and ither neerdoweels, and o' huts and hovels without riggin' by the wayside, and the cottages o' honest puir men, and byres, and barns, and stackyards, and merry-makins at winter ingles, and courtship aneath trees, and at the gable-end of farm houses, 'tween lads and lasses as laigh in life as the servants in her father's ha'. That's the puzzle, and that's the praise. But ae word explains a'—Genius—Genius, wull a' the metafhizzians in the warld ever expound that mysterious monosyllable.— *Nov, 1826.*

HAZLITT

Shepherd.. He had a curious power that Hazlitt, as he was ca'd, o' simulatin' sowl. You could hae taen your Bible oath sometimes, when you were readin him, that he had a sowl—a human sowl—a sowl to be saved—but then, heaven preserve us! in the verra middle aiblins o' a paragraph, he grew transformed afore your verra face into something bestial,—you heard a grunt that made ye grue, and there was an ill smell in the room, as frae a pluff o' sulphur.—*April, 1827.*

WORDSWORTH

Shepherd. Wordsworth tells the world, in ane of his prefaces, that he is a water-drinker—and its weel seen on him.—There was a sair want of speerit through the haill o' yon lang "Excursion." If he had just made the paragraphs about ae half shorter, and at the end of every ane taen a caulker, like ony ither man engaged in geyan sair and heavy wark, think na ye that his "Excursion" would hae been far less fatiguesome?—*April, 1827.*

North. I confess that the "Excursion" is the worst poem, of any character, in the English language. It contains about two hundred sonorous lines, some of which appear to be fine, even in the sense, as well as sound. The remaining seven thousand three hundred are quite ineffectual. Then, what labour the builder of that lofty rhyme must have undergone! It is, in its own way, a small tower of Babel, and all built by a single man.—*Sept., 1825.*

COLERIDGE

North. James, you don't know S.T. Coleridge—do you? He writes but indifferent books, begging his pardon: witness his "Friend," his "Lay Sermons," and, latterly, his "Aids to Reflection"; but he becomes inspired by the sound of his own silver voice, and pours out wisdom like a sea. Had he a domestic Gurney, he might publish a Moral Essay, or a Theological

Discourse, or a Metaphysical Disquisition, or a Political Harangue, every morning throughout the year during his lifetime.

Tickler. Mr. Coleridge does not seem to be aware that he cannot write a book, but opines that he absolutely has written several, and set many questions at rest. There's a want of some kind or another in his mind; but perhaps when he awakes out of his dream, he may get rational and sober-witted, like other men, who are not always asleep.

Shepherd. The author o' "Christabel," and "The Ancient Mariner," had better just continue to see visions, and dream dreams—for he's no fit for the wakin' world.—*April, 1827.*

FASHIONABLE NOVELS

North. James, I wish you would review for Maga all those fashionable novels—Novels of High Life; such as *Pelham*—the *Disowned*.

Shepherd. I've read thae twa, and they're baith gude. But the mair I think on't, the profounder is my conviction that the strength o' human nature lies either in the highest or lowest estate of life. Characters in books should either be kings, and princes, and nobles, and on a level with them, like heroes; or peasants, shepherds, farmers, and the like, includin' a' orders amaist o' our ain working population. The intermediate class—that is, leddies and gentlemen in general—are no worth the Muse's while; for their life is made up chiefly o' mainners,— mainners,—mainners;—you canna see the human creters for their claes; and should ane o' them commit suicide in despair, in lookin' on the dead body, you are mair taen up wi' its dress than its decease.—*March, 1829.*

WILL CARLETON

Shepherd. What sort o' vols., sir, are the *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* [W. Carleton], published by Curry in Dublin.

North. Admirable. Truly, intensely Irish. The whole book has the brogue —never were the outrageous whimsicalities of that strange, wild, imaginative people so characteristically displayed; nor, in the midst of all the fun, frolic, and folly, is there any dearth of poetry, pathos, and passion. The author's a jewel, and he will be reviewed next number. —*May, 1830.*

BURNS

Shepherd. I shanna say ony o' mine's [songs] are as gude as some sax or aucht o' Burns's—for about that number o' Robbie's are o' inimitable perfection. It was heaven's wull that in them he should transcend a' the minnesingers o' this warld. But they're too perfeckly beautifu' to be envied by mortal man—therefore let his memory in them be hallowed for evermair. —*August, 1834.*

Shepherd. I was wrang in ever hintin ae word in disparagement o' Burn's *Cottar's Saturday Night*. But the truth is, you see, that the subjeck's sae heeped up wi' happiness, and sae charged wi' a' sort o' sanctity—sae national and sae Scottish—that beautifu' as the poem is— and really, after a', naething can be mair beautifu'—there's nae satisfying either paesant or shepherd by ony delineation o't, though drawn in lines o' licht, and shinin' equally w' genius and wi' piety.— *Nov., 1834.*

LEIGH HUNT

Shepherd. Leigh Hunt truly loved Shelley.

North. And Shelley truly loved Leigh Hunt. Their friendship was honourable to them both, for it was as disinterested as sincere; and I hope Gurney will let a certain person in the City understand that I treat his offer of a reviewal of Mr. Hunt's *London Journal* with disdain. If he has anything to say against us or against that gentleman, either conjunctly or severally, let him out with it in some other channel, and I promise him a touch and taste of the Crutch. He talks to me of Maga's desertion of principle; but if he were a Christian—nay, a man—his heart and head too would tell him that the Animosities are mortal, but the Humanities live for ever—and that Leigh Hunt has more talent in his little finger than the puling prig, who has taken upon himself to lecture Christopher North in a scrawl crawling with forgotten falsehoods. Mr. Hunt's *London Journal*, may dear James, is not only beyond all comparison, but out of all sight, the most entertaining and instructive of all the cheap periodicals; and when laid, as it duly is once a week, on my breakfast table, it lies there—but is not permitted to lie long—like a spot of sunshine dazzling the snow.—*Aug*., 1834.

ANONYMOUS ON COLERIDGE

[From *Blackwood's Magazine*, October, 1817]

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE "BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA" OF S. T. COLERIDGE, ESQ., 1817

When a man looks back on his past existence, and endeavours to recall the incidents, events, thoughts, feelings, and passions of which it was composed, he sees something like a glimmering land of dreams, peopled with phantasms and realities undistinguishably confused and intermingled —here illuminated with dazzling splendour, there dim with melancholy mists,—or it may be shrouded in impenetrable darkness. To bring, visibly and distinctly before our memory, on the one hand, all our hours of mirth and joy, and hope and exultation,—and, on the other, all our perplexities, and fears and sorrows, and despair and agony,— (and who has been so uniformly wretched as not to have been often blest?—who so uniformly blest as not to have been often wretched?)— would be as impossible as to awaken, into separate remembrance, all the changes and varieties which the seasons brought over the material world,—every gleam of sunshine that beautified the Spring,—every cloud and tempest that deformed the Winter. In truth, were this power and domination over the past given unto us, and were we able to read the history of our lives all faithfully and perspicuously recorded on the tablets of the inner spirit,—those beings, whose existence had been most filled with important events and with energetic passions,

would be the most averse to such overwhelming survey—would recoil from trains of thought which formerly agitated and disturbed, and led them, as it were, in triumph beneath the yoke of misery or happiness. The soul may be repelled from the contemplation of the past as much by the brightness and magnificence of scenes that shifted across the glorious drama of youth, as by the storms that scattered the fair array into disfigured fragments; and the melancholy that breathes from vanished delight is, perhaps, in its utmost intensity, as unendurable as the wretchedness left by the visitation of calamity. There are spots of sunshine sleeping on the fields of past existence too beautiful, as there are caves among its precipices too darksome to be looked on by the eyes of memory; and to carry on an image borrowed from the analogy between the moral and physical world, the soul may turn away in sickness from the untroubled silence of a resplendent Lake, no less than from the haunted gloom of the thundering Cataract. It is from such thoughts, and dreams, and reveries, as these, that all men feel how terrible it would be to live over again their agonies and their transports; that the happiest would fear to do so as much as the most miserable; and that to look back to our cradle seems scarcely less awful than to look forward to the grave.

But if this unwillingness to bring before our souls, in distinct array, the more solemn and important events of our lives, be a natural and perhaps a wise feeling, how much more averse must every reflecting man be to the ransacking of his inmost spirit for all its hidden emotions and passions, to the tearing away that shroud which oblivion may have kindly flung over his vices and his follies, or that fine and delicate veil which Christian humility draws over his virtues and acts of benevolence. To scrutinize and dissect the character of others is an idle and unprofitable task; and the most skilful anatomist will often be forced to withhold his hand when he unexpectedly meets with something he does not understand—some confirmation of the character of his patient which is not explicable on his theory of human

nature. To become operators on our own shrinking spirits is something worse; for by probing the wounds of the soul, what can ensue but callousness or irritability. And it may be remarked, that those persons who have busied themselves most with inquiries into the causes, and motives, and impulses of their actions, have exhibited, in their conduct, the most lamentable contrast to their theory, and have seemed blinder in their knowledge than others in their ignorance.

It will not be supposed that any thing we have now said in any way bears against the most important duty of self-examination. Many causes there are existing, both in the best and the worst parts of our nature, which must render nugatory and deceitful any continued diary of what passes through the human soul; and no such confessions could, we humbly conceive, be of use either to ourselves or to the world. But there are hours of solemn inquiry in which the soul reposes on itself; the true confessional is not the bar of the public, but it is the altar of religion; there is a Being before whom we may humble ourselves without being debased; and there are feelings for which human language has no expression, and which, in the silence of solitude and of nature, are known only unto the Eternal.

The objections, however, which might thus be urged against the writing and publishing accounts of all our feelings,—all the changes of our moral constitution,—do not seem to apply with equal force to the narration of our mere speculative opinions. Their rise, progress, changes, and maturity may be pretty accurately ascertained; and as the advance to truth is generally step by step, there seems to be no great difficulty in recording the leading causes that have formed the body of our opinions, and created, modified, and coloured our intellectual character. Yet this work would be alike useless to ourselves and others, unless pursued with a true magnanimity. It requires, that we should stand aloof from ourselves, and look down, as from an eminence, on our souls toiling up the hill of knowledge;—that we should

faithfully record all the assistance we received from guides or brother pilgrims;— that we should mask the limit of our utmost ascent, and, without exaggeration, state the value of our acquisitions. When we consider how many temptations there are even here to delude ourselves, and by a seeming air of truth and candour to impose upon others, it will be allowed, that, instead of composing memoirs of himself, a man of genius and talent would be far better employed in generalizing the observations and experiences of his life, and giving them to the world in the form of philosophic reflections, applicable not to himself alone, but to the universal mind of Man.

What good to mankind has ever flowed from the confessions of Rousseau, or the autobiographical sketch of Hume? From the first we rise with a confused and miserable sense of weakness and of power—of lofty aspirations and degrading appetencies—of pride swelling into blasphemy, and humiliation pitiably grovelling in the dust—of purity of spirit soaring on the wings of imagination, and grossness of instinct brutally wallowing in "Epicurus' stye,"—of lofty contempt for the opinion of mankind, yet the most slavish subjection to their most fatal prejudices— of a sublime piety towards God, and a wild violation of his holiest laws. From the other we rise with feelings of sincere compassion for the ignorance of the most enlightened. All the prominent features of Hume's character were invisible to his own eyes; and in that meagre sketch which has been so much admired, what is there to instruct, to rouse, or to elevate—what light thrown over the duties of this life or the hopes of that to come? We wish to speak with tenderness of a man whose moral character was respectable, and whose talents were of the first order. But most deeply injurious to every thing lofty and high-toned in human Virtue, to every thing cheering, and consoling, and sublime in that Faith which sheds over this Earth a reflection of the heavens, is that memoir of a worldly-wise Man; in which he seems to

contemplate with indifference the extinction of his own immortal soul, and jibes and jokes on the dim and awful verge of Eternity.

We hope that our readers will forgive these very imperfect reflections on a subject of deep interest, and accompany us now on our examination of Mr. Coleridge's "Literary Life," the very singular work which caused our ideas to run in that channel. It does not contain an account of his opinions and literary exploits alone, but lays open, not unfrequently, the character of the Man as well as of the Author; and we are compelled to think, that while it strengthens every argument against the composition of such Memoirs, it does, without benefiting the cause either of virtue, knowledge, or religion, exhibit many mournful sacrifices of personal dignity, after which it seems impossible that Mr. Coleridge can be greatly respected either by the Public or himself.

Considered merely in a literary point of view, the work is most execrable. He rambles from one subject to another in the most wayward and capricious manner; either from indolence, or ignorance, or weakness, he has never in one single instance finished a discussion; and while he darkens what was dark before into tenfold obscurity, he so treats the most ordinary common-places as to give them the air of mysteries, till we no longer know the faces of our old acquaintances beneath their cowl and hood, but witness plain flesh and blood matters of fact miraculously converted into a troop of phantoms. That he is a man of genius is certain; but he is not a man of a strong intellect nor of powerful talents. He has a great deal of fancy and imagination, but little or no real feeling, and certainly no judgment. He cannot form to himself any harmonious landscape such as it exists in nature, but beautified by the serene light of the imagination. He cannot conceive simple and majestic groupes of human figures and characters acting on the theatre of real existence. But his pictures of nature are fine only as imaging the dreaminess, and obscurity, and confusion of distempered sleep; while all

his agents pass before our eyes like shadows, and only impress and affect us with a phantasmagorial splendour.

It is impossible to read many pages of this work without thinking that Mr. Coleridge conceives himself to be a far greater man than the Public is likely to admit; and we wish to waken him from what seems to us a most ludicrous delusion. He seems to believe that every tongue is wagging in his praise—that every ear is open to imbibe the oracular breathings of his inspiration. Even when he would fain convince us that his soul is wholly occupied with some other illustrious character, he breaks out into laudatory exclamations concerning himself; no sound is so sweet to him as that of his own voice; the ground is hallowed on which his footsteps tread; and there seems to him something more than human in his very shadow. He will read no books that other people read; his scorn is as misplaced and extravagant as his admiration; opinions that seem to tally with his own wild ravings are holy and inspired; and unless agreeable to his creed, the wisdom of ages is folly; and wits, whom the world worship, dwarfed when they approach his venerable side. His admiration of nature or of man, we had almost said his religious feelings towards his God, are all narrowed, weakened, and corrupted, and poisoned by inveterate and diseased egotism; and instead of his mind reflecting the beauty and glory of nature, he seems to consider the mighty universe itself as nothing better than a mirror in which, with a grinning and idiot self-complacency, he may contemplate the Physiognomy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Though he has yet done nothing in any one department of human knowledge, yet he speaks of his theories, and plans, and views, and discoveries, as if he had produced some memorable revolution in Science. He at all times connects his own name in Poetry with Shakespeare, and Spenser, and Milton; in politics with Burke, and Fox, and Pitt; in metaphysics with Locke, and Hartley, and Berkely, and Kant—feeling himself not only to be the worthy compeer of those illustrious Spirits, but to unite, in his own mighty intellect, all the glorious powers and

faculties by which they were separately distinguished, as if his soul were endowed with all human power, and was the depository of the aggregate, or rather the essence of all human knowledge. So deplorable a delusion as this, has only been equalled by that of Joanna Southcote, who mistook a complaint in the bowels for the divine afflatus; and believed herself about to give birth to the regenerator of the world, when sick unto death of an incurable and loathsome disease.

The truth is that Mr. Coleridge is but an obscure name in English literature. In London he is well known in literary society, and justly admired for his extraordinary loquacity: he has his own little circle of devoted worshippers, and he mistakes their foolish babbling for the voice of the world. His name, too, has been often foisted into Reviews, and accordingly is known to many who never saw any of his works. In Scotland few know or care any thing about him; and perhaps no man who has spoken and written so much, and occasionally with so much genius and ability, ever made so little impression on the public mind. Few people know how to spell or pronounce his name; and were he to drop from the clouds among any given number of well informed and intelligent men north of the Tweed, he would find it impossible to make any intelligible communication respecting himself; for of him and his writings there would prevail only a perplexing dream, or the most untroubled ignorance. We cannot see in what the state of literature would have been different had he been cut off in childhood, or had he never been born; for except a few wild and fanciful ballads, he has produced nothing worthy remembrance. Yet, insignificant as he assuredly is, he cannot put pen to paper without a feeling that millions of eyes are fixed upon him; and he scatters his Sibylline Leaves around him, with as majestical an air as if a crowd of enthusiastic admirers were rushing forward to grasp the divine promulgations, instead of their being, as in fact they are, coldly received by the accidental passenger, like a lying lottery puff or a quack advertisement.

This most miserable arrogance seems, in the present age, confined almost exclusively to the original members of the Lake School, and is, we think, worthy of especial notice, as one of the leading features of their character. It would be difficult to defend it either in Southey or Wordsworth; but in Coleridge it is altogether ridiculous. Southey has undoubtedly written four noble Poems—Thalaba, Madoc, Kehama, and Roderick; and if the Poets of this age are admitted, by the voice of posterity, to take their places by the side of the Mighty of former times in the Temple of Immortality, he will be one of that sacred company. Wordsworth, too, with all his manifold errors and defects, has, we think, won to himself a great name, and, in point of originality, will be considered as second to no man of this age. They are entitled to think highly of themselves, in comparison with their most highly gifted contemporaries; and therefore, though their arrogance may be offensive, as it often is, it is seldom or ever utterly ridiculous. But Mr. Coleridge stands on much lower ground, and will be known to future times only as a man who overrated and abused his talents—who saw glimpses of that glory which he could not grasp—who presumptuously came forward to officiate as High-Priest at mysteries beyond his ken—and who carried himself as if he had been familiarly admitted into the Penetralia of Nature, when in truth he kept perpetually stumbling at the very Threshold.

This absurd self-elevation forms a striking contrast with the dignified deportment of all the other great living Poets. Throughout all the works of Scott, the most original-minded man of this generation of Poets, scarcely a single allusion is made to himself; and then it is with a truly delightful simplicity, as if he were not aware of his immeasurable superiority to the ordinary run of mankind. From the rude songs of our forefathers he has created a kind of Poetry, which at once brought over the dull scenes of this our unimaginative life all the pomp, and glory, and magnificence of a chivalrous age. He speaks to us like some ancient Bard awakened from his tomb, and singing of visions not revealed in dreams, but contemplated in all

the freshness and splendour of reality. Since he sung his bold, and wild, and romantic lays, a more religious solemnity breathes from our mouldering Abbeys, and a sterner grandeur frowns over our time-shattered Castles. He has peopled our hills with Heroes, even as Ossian peopled them; and, like a presiding spirit, his Image haunts the magnificent cliffs of our Lakes and Seas. And if he be, as every heart feels, the author of those noble Prose Works that continue to flash upon the world, to him exclusively belongs the glory of wedding Fiction and History in delighted union, and of embodying in imperishable records the manners, character, soul, and spirit of Caledonia; so that, if all her annals were lost, her memory would in those tales be immortal. His truly is a name that comes to the heart of every Briton with a start of exultation, whether it be heard in the hum of cities or in the solitude of nature. What has Campbell ever obtruded on the Public of his private history? Yet his is a name that will be hallowed for ever in the souls of pure, and aspiring, and devout youth; and to those lofty contemplations in which Poetry lends its aid to Religion, his immortal Muse will impart a more enthusiastic glow, while it blends in one majestic hymn all the noblest feelings which can spring from earth, with all the most glorious hopes that come from the silence of eternity. Byron indeed speaks of himself often, but his is like the voice of an angel heard crying in the storm or the whirlwind; and we listen with a kind of mysterious dread to the tones of a Being whom we scarcely believe to be kindred to ourselves, while he sounds the depths of our nature, and illuminates them with the lightnings of his genius. And finally, who more gracefully unostentatious than Moore, a Poet who has shed delight, and joy, and rapture, and exultation, through the spirit of an enthusiastic People, and whose name is associated in his native Land with every thing noble and glorious in the cause of Patriotism and Liberty. We could easily add to the illustrious list; but suffice it to say, that our Poets do in general bear their faculties meekly and manfully, trusting to their conscious powers, and the susceptibility of

generous and enlightened natures, not yet extinct in Britain, whatever Mr. Coleridge may think; for certain it is, that a host of worshippers will crowd into the Temple, when the Priest is inspired, and the flame he kindles is from Heaven.

Such has been the character of great Poets in all countries and in all times. Fame is dear to them as their vital existence—but they love it not with the perplexity of fear, but the calmness of certain possession. They know that the debt which nature owes them must be paid, and they hold in surety thereof the universal passions of mankind. So Milton felt and spoke of himself, with an air of grandeur, and the voice as of an Archangel, distinctly hearing in his soul the music of after generations, and the thunder of his mighty name rolling through the darkness of futurity. So divine Shakespeare felt and spoke; he cared not for the mere acclamations of his subjects; in all the gentleness of his heavenly spirit he felt himself to be their prophet and their king, and knew,

> When all the breathers of this world are dead,
> That he entombed in men's eyes would lie.

Indeed, who that knows any thing of Poetry could for a moment suppose it otherwise? Whatever made a great Poet but the inspiration of delight and love in himself, and an empassioned desire to communicate them to the wide spirit of kindred existence? Poetry, like Religion, must be free from all grovelling feelings; and above all, from jealousy, envy, and uncharitableness. And the true Poet, like the Preacher of the true religion, will seek to win unto himself and his Faith, a belief whose foundation is in the depths of love, and whose pillars are the noblest passions of humanity.

It would seem that in truly great souls all feeling of self-importance, in its narrower sense, must be incompatible with the consciousness of a mighty achievement. The idea of the mere faculty or power is absorbed as it were

in the idea of the work performed. That work stands out in its glory from the mind of its Creator; and in the contemplation of it, he forgets that he himself was the cause of its existence, or feels only a dim but sublime association between himself and the object of his admiration; and when he does think of himself in conjunction with others, he feels towards the scoffer only a pitying sorrow for his blindness—being assured, that though at all times there will be weakness, and ignorance, and worthlessness, which can hold no communion with him or with his thoughts, so will there be at all times the pure, the noble, and the pious, whose delight it will be to love, to admire, and to imitate; and that never, at any point of time, past, present, or to come, can a true Poet be defrauded of his just fame.

But we need not speak of poets alone (though we have done so at present to expose the miserable pretensions of Mr. Coleridge), but look through all the bright ranks of men distinguished by mental power, in whatever department of human science. It is our faith, that without moral there can be no intellectual grandeur; and surely the self-conceit and arrogance which we have been exposing, are altogether incompatible with lofty feelings and majestic principles. It is the Dwarf alone who endeavours to strut himself into the height of the surrounding company; but the man of princely stature seems unconscious of the strength in which nevertheless he rejoices, and only sees his superiority in the gaze of admiration which he commands. Look at the most inventive spirits of this country,—those whose intellects have achieved the most memorable triumphs. Take, for example, Leslie in physical science, and what airs of majesty does he ever assume? What is Samuel Coleridge compared to such a man? What is an ingenious and fanciful versifier to him who has, like a magician, gained command over the very elements of nature,—who has realized the fictions of Poetry,—and to whom Frost and Fire are ministering and obedient spirits? But of this enough.—It is a position that doubtless might require some modification, but in the main, it is and must be true, that real Greatness, whether in

Intellect, Genius, or Virtue, is dignified and unostentatious; and that no potent spirit ever whimpered over the blindness of the age to his merits, and, like Mr. Coleridge, or a child blubbering for the moon, with clamorous outcries implored and imprecated reputation.

The very first sentence of this Literary Biography shows how incompetent
Mr. Coleridge is for the task he has undertaken.

> It has been my lot to have had my name introduced both in conversation and in print, more frequently than I find it easy to explain; *whether I consider the fewness, unimportance, and limited circulation of my writings, or the retirement and distance in which I have lived, both from the literary and political world*.

Now, it is obvious, that if his writings be few, and unimportant, and unknown, Mr. Coleridge can have no reason for composing his Literary Biography. Yet in singular contradiction to himself—

"If," says he, at p. 217, vol. i, "*the compositions which I have made public*, and that too in a form the most certain of an extensive circulation, though the least flattering to an author's self-love, had been published in books, they *would have filled a respectable number of volumes."*

He then adds,

> Seldom have I written that in a day, the acquisition or investigation of which had not cost me *the precious labour of a month!*

He then bursts out into this magnificent exclamation,

> Would that the criterion of a scholar's ability were the number and moral value of the truths which he has been the means of throwing into

general circulation!

And he sums up all by declaring,

By what I *have* effected am I to be judged by my fellow men.

The truth is, that Mr. Coleridge has lived, as much as any man of his time, in literary and political society, and that he has sought every opportunity of keeping himself in the eye of the public, as restlessly as any charlatan who ever exhibited on the stage. To use his own words, "In 1794, when I had barely passed the verge of manhood, I published a small volume of juvenile poems." These poems, by dint of puffing, reached a third edition; and though Mr. Coleridge pretends now to think but little of them, it is amusing to see how vehemently he defends them against criticism, and how pompously he speaks of such paltry trifles. "They were marked *by an ease and simplicity* which I have studied, *perhaps with inferior success,* to bestow on my latter compositions." But he afterwards repents of this sneer at his later compositions, and tells us, that they have nearly reached his standard of perfection! Indeed, his vanity extends farther back than his juvenile poems; and he says, "For a school boy, I was *above par in English versification*, and had already produced two or three compositions, which I may venture to say, *without reference to my age, were somewhat above mediocrity*." Happily he has preserved one of those wonderful productions of his precocious boyhood, and our readers will judge for themselves what a clever child it was.

Underneath a huge oak-tree,
There was of swine a huge company;
That grunted as they crunch'd the mast,
For that was ripe and fell full fast.
Then they trotted away for the wind grew high,
One acorn they left and no more might you spy.

It is a common remark, that wonderful children seldom perform the promises of their youth, and undoubtedly this fine effusion has not been followed in Mr. Coleridge's riper years by works of proportionate merit.

We see, then, that our author came very early into public notice; and from that time to this, he has not allowed one year to pass without endeavouring to extend his notoriety. His poems were soon followed (they may have been preceded) by a tragedy, entitled, the "Fall of Robespierre," a meagre performance, but one which, from the nature of the subject, attracted considerable attention. He also wrote a whole book, utterly incomprehensible to Mr. Southey, we are sure, on that Poet's Joan of Arc; and became as celebrated for his metaphysical absurdities, as his friend had become for the bright promise of genius exhibited by that unequal, but spirited poem. He next published a Series of political essays, entitled, the "Watchman," and "Conciones ad Populum." He next started up, fresh from the schools of Germany, as the principal writer in the Morning Post, a *strong opposition paper*. He then published various outrageous political poems, some of them of a gross personal nature. He afterwards assisted Mr. Wordsworth in planning his Lyrical Ballads; and contributing several poems to that collection, he shared in the notoriety of the Lake School. He next published a mysterious periodical work, "The Friend," in which he declared it was his intention to settle at once, and for ever, the principles of morality, religion, taste, manners, and the fine arts, but which died of a galloping consumption in the twenty-eighth week of its age. He then published the tragedy of "Remorse," which dragged out a miserable existence of twenty nights, on the boards of Drury-Lane, and then expired for ever, like the oil of the orchestral lamps. He then forsook the stage for the pulpit, and, by particular desire of his congregation, published two "Lay Sermons." He then walked in broad day-light into the shop of Mr. Murray, Albemarle Street, London, with two ladies hanging on each arm, Geraldine and Christabel,—a bold step for a person at all desirous of a good reputation,

and most of the trade have looked shy at him since that exhibition. Since that time, however, he has contrived means of giving to the world a collected edition of all his poems, and advanced to the front of the stage with a thick octavo in each hand, all about himself and other Incomprehensibilities. We had forgot that he was likewise a contributor to Mr. Southey's Omniana, where the Editor of the Edinburgh Review is politely denominated an "ass," and then *became himself a writer in the said Review*. And to sum up "the strange eventful history" of this modest, and obscure, and retired person, we must mention, that in his youth he held forth in a vast number of Unitarian chapels—preached his way through Bristol, and "Brummagem," and Manchester, in a "blue coat and white waistcoat"; and in after years, when he was not so much afraid of "the scarlet woman," did, in a full suit of sables, lecture on Poesy, to "crowded, and, need I add, highly respectable audiences," at the Royal Institution. After this slight and imperfect outline of his poetical, oratorical, metaphysical, political, and theological exploits, our readers will judge, when they hear him talking of "his retirement and distance from the literary and political world," what are his talents for autobiography, and how far he has penetrated into the mysterious non-entities of his own character.

Mr. Coleridge has written conspicuously on the Association of Ideas, but his own do not seem to be connected either by time, place, cause and effect, resemblance, or contrast, and accordingly it is no easy matter to follow him through all the vagaries of his Literary Life. We are told,

> At school *I enjoyed the inestimable advantage* of a very sensible, though at the same time a very severe master.—I learnt from him that Poetry, even that of the loftiest and wildest odes, had a logic of its own as severe as that of science.—Lute, harp, and lyre; muse, muses, and inspirations; Pegasus, Parnassus, and Hippocrene; were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now exclaiming,

"Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and Ink! Boy you mean! Muse! boy! Muse! your Nurse's daughter you mean! Pierian Spring! O Aye! the cloister Pump!"—Our classical knowledge was the least of the good gifts which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage.

With the then head-master of the grammar-school, Christ Hospital, we were not personally acquainted; but we cannot help thinking that he has been singularly unfortunate in his Eulogist. He seems to have gone out of his province, and far out of his depth, when he attempted to teach boys the profoundest principles of Poetry. But we must also add, that we cannot credit this account of him; for this doctrine of poetry being at all times logical, is that of which Wordsworth and Coleridge take so much credit to themselves for the discovery; and verily it is one too wilfully absurd and extravagant to have entered into the head of an honest man, whose time must have been wholly occupied with the instruction of children. Indeed Mr. Coleridge's own poetical practices render this story incredible; for, during many years of his authorship, his diction was wholly at variance with such a rule, and the strain of his poetry as illogical as can be well imagined. When Mr. Bowyer prohibited his pupils from using, in their themes, the above-mentioned names, he did, we humbly submit, prohibit them from using the best means of purifying their taste and exalting their imagination. Nothing could be so graceful, nothing so natural, as classical allusions, in the exercises of young minds, when first admitted to the fountains of Greek and Latin Poetry; and the Teacher who could seek to dissuade their ingenious souls from such delightful dreams, by coarse, vulgar, and indecent ribaldry, instead of deserving the name of "sensible," must have been a low-minded vulgar fellow, fitter for the Porter than the Master of such an Establishment. But the truth probably is, that all this is a fiction of Mr. Coleridge, whose wit is at all times most execrable and disgusting. Whatever the merits of his Master were, Mr. Coleridge, even from his own account, seems to have derived little benefit from his

instruction, and for the "inestimable advantage," of which he speaks, we look in vain through this Narrative. In spite of so excellent a teacher, we find Master Coleridge,

> Even before my fifteenth year, bewildered *in metaphysicks and in theological controversy*. Nothing else pleased me. *History and particular facts* lost all interest in my mind. Poetry itself, yea novels and romances, became insipid to me. This preposterous pursuit was beyond doubt *injurious, both to my natural powers and to the progress of my education.*

This deplorable condition of mind continued "even unto my seventeenth year." And now our readers must prepare themselves for a mighty and wonderful change, wrought, all on a sudden, on the moral and intellectual character of this metaphysical Greenhorn. *"Mr. Bowles' Sonnets, twenty in number, and just then published in a quarto volume* (a most important circumstance!) *were put into my hand!"* To those sonnets, next to the School-master's lectures on Poetry, Mr. Coleridge attributes the strength, vigour, and extension, of his own very original Genius.

> By those works, year after year, I was enthusiastically delighted and inspired. My earliest acquaintances will not have forgotten the undisciplined eagerness and impetuous zeal with which I labored to make proselytes, not only *of my companions, but of all with whom I conversed, of whatever rank, and in whatever place.* As my school finances did not permit me to purchase copies, I made, within less than a year and a half, *more than forty transcriptions, as the best presents I could make to those who had in any way won my regard.* My obligations to Mr. Bowles were indeed important, and for radical good!

There must be some grievous natural defect in that mind which, even at the age of seventeen, could act so insanely; and we cannot but think, that no

real and healthy sensibility could have exaggerated to itself so grossly the merits of Bowles' Sonnets. They are undoubtedly most beautiful, and we willingly pay our tribute of admiration to the genius of the amiable writer; but they neither did nor could produce any such effects as are here described, except upon a mind singularly weak and helpless. We must, however, take the fact as we find it; and Mr. Coleridge's first step, after his worship of Bowles, was to see distinctly into the defects and deficiencies of Pope (a writer whom Bowles most especially admires, and has edited), and through all the false diction and borrowed plumage of Gray! But here Mr. Coleridge drops the subject of Poetry for the present, and proceeds to other important matters.

We regret that Mr. Coleridge has passed over without notice all the years which he spent "in the happy quiet of ever-honoured Jesus College, Cambridge." That must have been the most important period of his life, and was surely more worthy of record than the metaphysical dreams or the poetical extravagancies of his boyhood. He tells us, that he was sent to the University "an excellent Greek and Latin scholar, and a tolerable Hebraist"; and there might have been something rousing and elevating to young minds of genius and power, in his picture of himself, pursuits, visions, and attainments, during the bright and glorious morning of life, when he inhabited a dwelling of surpassing magnificence, guarded and hallowed, and sublimed by the Shadows of the Mighty. We should wish to know what progress he made there in his own favourite studies; what place he occupied, or supposed he occupied, among his numerous contemporaries of talent; how much he was inspired by the genius of the place; how far he "pierced the caves of old Philosophy," or sounded the depths of the Physical Sciences. All this unfortunately is omitted, and he hurries on to details often trifling and uninfluential, sometimes low, vile, and vulgar, and, what is worse, occasionally inconsistent with any feeling of personal dignity and self-respect.

After leaving College, instead of betaking himself to some respectable calling, Mr. Coleridge, with his characteristic modesty, determined to set on foot a periodical work called "The Watchman," that through it "*all might know the truth*." The price of this very useful article was *"four-pence."* Off he set on a tour to the north to procure subscribers, "preaching in most of the great towns as a hireless Volunteer, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, that not a rag of the Woman of Babylon might be seen on me." In preaching, his object was to show that our Saviour was the real son of Joseph, and that the Crucifixion was a matter of small importance. Mr. Coleridge is now a most zealous member of the Church of England—devoutly believes every iota in the thirty-nine articles, and that the Christian Religion is only to be found in its purity in the homilies and liturgy of that Church. Yet, on looking back to his Unitarian zeal, he exclaims,

> O, never can I remember those days *with either shame or regret!* For I was *most sincere, most disinterested! Wealth, rank, life itself,* then seem'd cheap to me, compared with the interests of truth, and the will of my Maker. I cannot even accuse myself of having been actuated by *vanity!* for in the expansion of my enthusiasm *I did not think of myself at all!*

This is delectable. What does he mean by saying that life seemed cheap? What danger could there be in the performance of his exploits, except that of being committed as a Vagrant? What indeed could rank appear to a person thus voluntarily degraded? Or who would expect vanity to be conscious of its own loathsomeness? During this tour he seems to have been constantly exposed to the insults of the vile and the vulgar, and to have associated with persons whose company must have been most odious to a Gentleman. Greasy Tallow-chandlers, and pursey Woollen-drapers, and grim-featured dealers in Hard-ware, were his associates at Manchester,

Derby, Nottingham, and Sheffield; and among them the light of truth was to be shed from its cloudy tabernacle in Mr. Coleridge's Pericranium. At the house of a "Brummagem Patriot" he appears to have got dead drunk with strong ale and tobacco, and in that pitiable condition he was exposed to his disciples, lying upon a sofa, "with my face like a wall that is white-washing, *deathly* pale, and with the cold drops of perspiration running down it from my forehead." Some one having said, "Have you seen a paper to-day, Mr. Coleridge?" the wretched man replied, with all the staring stupidity of his lamentable condition, "Sir! I am far from convinced that a Christian is permitted to read either newspapers, or any other works of merely political and temporary interest." This witticism quite enchanted his enlightened auditors, and they prolonged their festivities to an "early hour next morning." Having returned to London with a thousand subscribers on his list, the "Watchman" appeared in all his glory; but, alas! not on the day fixed for the first burst of his effulgence; which foolish delay incensed many of his subscribers. The Watchman, on his second appearance, spoke blasphemously, and made indecent applications of Scriptural language; then, instead of abusing Government and Aristocrats, as Mr. Coleridge had pledged himself to his constituents to do, he attacked his own Party; so that in seven weeks, before the shoes were old in which he travelled to Sheffield, the Watchman went the way of all flesh, and his remains were scattered "through sundry old iron shops," where for one penny could be purchased each precious relic. To crown all, "his London Publisher was a ——"; and Mr. Coleridge very narrowly escaped being thrown into jail for this his heroic attempt to shed over the manufacturing towns the illumination of knowledge. We refrain from making any comments on this deplorable story. This Philosopher, and Theologian, and Patriot, now retired to a village in Somersetshire, and, after having sought to enlighten the whole world, discovered that he himself was in utter darkness.

> Doubts rushed in, broke upon me from the fountains of the great deep, and fell from the windows of heaven. The fontal truths of natural Religion, and the book of Revelation, alike contributed to the flood; and it was long ere my Ark touched upon Ararat, and rested. My head was with Spinoza, though my heart was with Paul and John….

We have no room here to expose, as it deserves to be exposed, the multitudinous political inconsistence of Mr. Coleridge, but we beg leave to state one single fact: He abhorred, hated, and despised Mr. Pitt,— and he now loves and reveres his memory. By far the most spirited and powerful of his poetical writings, is the War Eclogue, Slaughter, Fire, and Famine; and in that composition he loads the Minister with imprecations and curses, long, loud, and deep. But afterwards, when he has thought it prudent to change his Principles, he denies that he ever felt any indignation towards Mr. Pitt; and with the most unblushing falsehood declares, that at the very moment his muse was consigning him to infamy, death, and damnation, he would "have interposed his body between him and danger." We believe that all good men, of all parties, regard Mr. Coleridge with pity and contempt.

Of the latter days of his literary life, Mr. Coleridge gives us no satisfactory account. The whole of the second volume is interspersed with mysterious inuendoes. He complains of the loss of all his friends, not by death, but estrangement. He tries to account for the enmity of the world to him, a harmless and humane man, who wishes well to all created things, and "of his wondering finds no end." He upbraids himself with indolence, procrastination, neglect of his worldly concerns, and all other bad habits,— and then, with incredible inconsistency, vaunts loudly of his successful efforts in the cause of Literature, Philosophy, Morality, and Religion. Above all, he weeps and wails over the malignity of Reviewers, who have persecuted him almost from his very cradle, and seem resolved to bark him into the grave. He is haunted by the Image of a Reviewer wherever he goes.

They "push him from his stool," and by his bedside they cry, "Sleep no more." They may abuse whomsoever they think fit, save himself and Mr. Wordsworth. All others are fair game—and he chuckles to see them brought down. But his sacred person must be inviolate, and rudely to touch it, is not high treason, it is impiety. Yet his "ever-honoured friend, the laurel-honouring Laureate," is a Reviewer—his friend Mr. Thomas Moore is a Reviewer—his friend Dr. Middleton, Bishop of Calcutta, was the Editor of a Review—almost every friend he ever had is a Reviewer;—and to crown all, he himself is a Reviewer. Every person who laughs at his silly Poems—and his incomprehensible metaphysics, is malignant—in which case, there can be little benevolence in this world; and while Mr. Francis Jeffrey is alive and merry, there can be no happiness here below for Mr. Samuel Coleridge.

And here we come to speak of a matter, which, though somewhat of a personal and private nature, is well deserving of mention in a Review of Mr. Coleridge's Literary Life, for sincerity is the first of virtues, and without it no man can be respectable or useful. He has, in this Work, accused Mr. Jeffrey of meanness—hypocrisy—falsehood—and breach of hospitality. That gentleman is able to defend himself—and his defence is no business of ours. But we now tell Mr. Coleridge, that instead of humbling his Adversary, he has heaped upon his own head the ashes of disgrace—and with his own blundering hands, so stained his character as a man of honour and high principles, that the mark can never be effaced. All the most offensive attacks on the writings of Wordsworth and Southey, had been made by Mr. Jeffrey before his visit to Keswick. Yet, does Coleridge receive him with open arms, according to his own account—listen, well-pleased, to all his compliments—talk to him for hours on his Literary Projects—dine with him as his guest at an Inn—tell him that he knew Mr. Wordsworth would be most happy to see him—and in all respects behave to him with a politeness bordering on servility. And after all this, merely because his own

vile verses were crumpled up like so much waste paper, by the grasp of a powerful hand in the Edinburgh Review, he accuses Mr. Jeffrey of abusing hospitality which he never received, and forgets, that instead of being the Host, he himself was the smiling and obsequious Guest of the man he pretends to have despised. With all this miserable forgetfulness of dignity and self-respect, he mounts the high horse, from which he instantly is tumbled into the dirt; and in his angry ravings collects together all the foul trash of literary gossip to fling at his adversary, but which is blown stifling back upon himself with odium and infamy. But let him call to mind his own conduct, and talk not of Mr. Jeffrey. Many witnesses are yet living of his own egotism and malignity; and often has he heaped upon his "beloved Friend, the laurel-honouring Laureate," epithets of contempt, and pity, and disgust, though now it may suit his paltry purposes to worship and idolize. Of Mr. Southey we at all times think, and shall speak, with respect and admiration; but his open adversaries are, like Mr. Jeffrey, less formidable than his unprincipled Friends. When Greek and Trojan meet on the plain, there is an interest in the combat; but it is hateful and painful to think, that a hero should be wounded behind his back, and by a poisoned stiletto in the hand of a false Friend.

The concluding chapter of this Biography is perhaps the most pitiful of the whole, and contains a most surprising mixture of the pathetic and the ludicrous.

> "Strange," says he, "as the delusion may appear, yet it is most true, that three years ago I did not know or believe that I had an enemy in the world; and now even my strongest consolations of gratitude are mingled with fear, and I reproach myself for being too often disposed to ask,—Have I one friend?"

We are thus prepared for the narration of some grievous cruelty, or ingratitude, or malice—some violation of his peace, or robbery of his reputation; but our readers will start when they are informed, that this melancholy lament is occasioned solely by the cruel treatment which his poem of Christabel received from the Edinburgh Review and other periodical Journals! It was, he tells us, universally admired in manuscript—he recited it many hundred times to men, women, and children, and always with an electrical effect—it was bepraised by most of the great Poets of the day—and for twenty years he was urged to give it to the world. But alas! no sooner had the Lady Christabel "come out," than all the rules of good-breeding and politeness were broken through, and the loud laugh of scorn and ridicule from every quarter assailed the ears of the fantastic Hoyden. But let Mr. Coleridge be consoled. Mr. Scott and Lord Byron are good-natured enough to admire Christabel, and the Public have not forgotten that his Lordship handed her Ladyship upon the stage. It is indeed most strange, that Mr., Coleridge is not satisfied with the praise of those he admires,—but pines away for the commendation of those he contemns.

Having brought down his literary life to the great epoch of the publication of Christabel, he there stops short; and that the world may compare him as he appears at that aera to his former self, when "he set sail from Yarmouth on the morning of the 10th September, 1798, in the Hamburg Packet," he has republished, from his periodical work the "Friend," seventy pages of Satyrane's Letters. As a specimen of his wit in 1798, our readers may take the following:—

We were all on the deck, but in a short time I observed marks of dismay. The Lady retired to the cabin in some confusion; and many of the faces round me assumed a very doleful and frog-coloured appearance; and within an hour the number of those on deck was lessened by one half. I was giddy, but not sick; and the giddiness soon went away, but left a feverishness and

want of appetite, which I attributed, in great measure, to the "*saeva mephitis*" of the bilge-water; and it was certainly not decreased by the *exportations from the cabin*. However, I was well enough to join the able-bodied passengers, one of whom observed, not inaptly, that Momus might have discovered an easier *way to see a man's inside* than by placing a window in his breast. He needed only have taken a salt-water trip in a packet boat. I am inclined to believe, that a packet is far superior to a stage-coach as a means of making men *open out to each other*!

The importance of his observations during the voyage may be estimated by this one:—

> At four o'clock I observed a wild duck swimming on the waves,*a single solitary wild duck!* It is not easy to conceive how interesting a thing it looked in that round objectless desert of waters!

At the house of Klopstock, brother of the Poet, he saw a portrait of Lessing, which he thus describes to the Public:—"His eyes were uncommonly *like mine*! if any thing, rather larger and more prominent! But the lower part of his face I and his nose—O what an exquisite expression of elegance and sensibility!" He then gives a long account of his interview with Klopstock the Poet, in which he makes that great man talk in a very silly, weak, and ignorant manner. Mr. Coleridge not only sets him right in all his opinions on English literature, but also is kind enough to correct, in a very authoritative and dictatorial tone, his erroneous views of the characteristic merits and defects of the most celebrated German Writers. He has indeed the ball in his own hands throughout the whole game; and Klopstock, who, he says, "was seventy-four years old, with legs enormously swollen," is beaten to a standstill. We are likewise presented with an account of a conversation which his friend W. held with the German Poet, in which the author of the Messiah makes a still more paltry figure. We can

conceive nothing more odious and brutal, than two young ignorant lads from Cambridge forcing themselves upon the retirement of this illustrious old man, and, instead of listening with love, admiration and reverence, to his sentiments and opinions, insolently obtruding upon him their own crude and mistaken fancies,—contradicting imperiously every thing he advances, —taking leave of him with a consciousness of their own superiority,—and, finally, talking of him and his genius in terms of indifference bordering on contempt. This Mr. W. had the folly and the insolence to say to Klopstock, who was enthusiastically praising the Oberon of Wieland, that he never could see the smallest beauty in any part of that Poem.

We must now conclude our account of this "unaccountable" production. It has not been in our power to enter into any discussion with Mr. Coleridge on the various subjects of Poetry and Philosophy, which he has, we think, vainly endeavoured to elucidate. But we shall, on a future occasion, meet him on his own favourite ground. No less than 182 pages of the second volume are dedicated to the poetry of Mr. Wordsworth. He has endeavoured to define poetry—to explain the philosophy of metre—to settle the boundaries of poetic diction—and to show, finally, "What it is probable Mr. Wordsworth meant to say in his dissertation prefixed to his Lyrical Ballads." As Mr. Coleridge has not only studied the laws of poetical composition, but is a Poet of considerable powers, there are, in this part of his Book, many acute, ingenious, and even sensible observations and remarks; but he never knows when to have done,—explains what requires no explanation,—often leaves untouched the very difficulty he starts,—and when he has poured before us a glimpse of light upon the shapeless form of some dark conception, he seems to take a wilful pleasure in its immediate extinction, and leads "us floundering on, and quite astray," through the deepening shadows of interminable night.

One instance there is of magnificent promise, and laughable non-performance, unequalled in the annals of literary History. Mr. Coleridge informs us, that he and Mr. Wordsworth (he is not certain which is entitled to the glory of the first discovery) have found out the difference between Fancy and Imagination. This discovery, it is prophesied, will have an incalculable influence on the progress of all the Fine Arts. He has written a long chapter purposely to prepare our minds for the great discussion. The audience is assembled—the curtain is drawn up—and there, in his gown, cap, and wig, is sitting Professor Coleridge. In comes a servant with a letter; the Professor gets up, and, with a solemn voice, reads to the audience.—It is from an enlightened Friend; and its object is to shew, in no very courteous terms either to the Professor or his Spectators, that he may lecture, but that nobody will understand him. He accordingly makes his bow, and the curtain falls; but the worst of the joke is, that the Professor pockets the admittance-money,—for what reason, his outwitted audience are left, the best way they can, to "fancy or imagine."

But the greatest piece of Quackery in the Book is his pretended account of the Metaphysical System of Kant, of which he knows less than nothing. He wall not allow that there is a single word of truth in any of the French Expositions of that celebrated System, nor yet in any of our British Reviews. We do not wish to speak of what we do not understand, and therefore say nothing of Mr. Coleridge's Metaphysics….

We have done. We have felt it our duty to speak with severity of this book and its author—and we have given our readers ample opportunities to judge of the justice of our strictures. We have not been speaking in the cause of literature only, but, we conceive, in the cause of Morality and Religion. For it is not fitting that He should be held up as an example to the rising generation (but, on the contrary, it is most fitting that he should be exposed as a most dangerous model), who has alternately embraced,

defended, and thrown aside all systems of Philosophy—and all creeds of Religion,—who seems to have no power of retaining an opinion,—no trust in the principles which he defends,—but who fluctuates from theory to theory, according as he is impelled by vanity, envy, or diseased desire of change,—and who, while he would subvert and scatter into dust those structures of knowledge, reared by the wise men of this and other generations, has nothing to erect in their room but the baseless and air-built fabrics of a dreaming Imagination.

ON THE COCKNEY SCHOOL OF POETRY

No. I

[From *Blackwood's Magazine*, October, 1817]

Our talk shall be (a theme we never tire on)
Of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron,
(Our England's Dante)—Wordsworth—HUNT, and KEATS,
The Muses' son of promise; and of what feats
He yet may do.

CORNELIUS WEBB.

While the whole critical world is occupied with balancing the merits, whether in theory or in execution, of what is commonly called THE LAKE SCHOOL, it is strange that no one seems to think it at all necessary to say a single word about another new school of poetry which has of late sprung up among us. This school has not, I believe, as yet received any name; but if I may be permitted to have the honour of christening it, it may henceforth be referred to by the designation of THE COCKNEY SCHOOL. Its chief Doctor and Professor is Mr. Leigh Hunt, a man certainly of some talents, of extravagant pretensions both in wit, poetry, and politics, and withal of exquisitely bad taste, and extremely vulgar modes of thinking and manners in all respects. He is a man of little education. He knows absolutely nothing

of Greek, almost nothing of Latin, and his knowledge of Italian literature is confined to a few of the most popular of Petrarch's sonnets, and an imperfect acquaintance with Ariosto, through the medium of Mr. Hoole. As to the French poets, he dismisses them in the mass as a set of prim, precise, unnatural pretenders. The truth is, he is in a state of happy ignorance about them and all that they have done. He has never read Zaïre nor Phèdre. To those great German poets who have illuminated the last fifty years with a splendour to which this country has, for a long time, seen nothing comparable, Mr. Hunt is an absolute stranger. Of Spanish books he has read Don Quixote (in the translation of Motteux), and some poems of Lope de Vega in the imitations of my Lord Holland. Of all the great critical writers, either of ancient or of modern times, he is utterly ignorant, excepting only Mr. Jeffrey among ourselves.

With this stock of knowledge, Mr. Hunt presumes to become the founder of a new school of poetry, and throws away entirely the chance which he might have had of gaining some true poetical fame, had he been less lofty in his pretensions. The story of Rimini is not wholly undeserving of praise. It possesses some tolerable passages, which are all quoted in the Edinburgh Reviewer's account of the poem, and not one of which is quoted in the very illiberal attack upon it in the Quarterly. But such is the wretched taste in which the greater part of the work is executed, that most certainly no man who reads it once will ever be able to prevail upon himself to read it again. One feels the same disgust at the idea of opening Rimini, that impresses itself on the mind of a man of fashion, when he is invited to enter, for a second time, the gilded drawing-room of a little mincing boarding school mistress, who would fain have an *At Home* in her house. Every thing is pretence, affectation, finery, and gaudiness. The beaux are attorneys' apprentices, with chapeau bras and Limerick gloves—fiddlers, harp teachers, and clerks of genius: the belles are faded fan-twinkling spinsters, prurient vulgar misses from school, and enormous citizens' wives. The

company are entertained with lukewarm negus, and the sounds of a paltry piano forte.

All the great poets of our country have been men of some rank in society, and there is no vulgarity in any of their writings; But Mr. Hunt cannot utter a dedication, or even a note, without betraying the *Shibboleth* of low birth and low habits. He is the ideal of a Cockney Poet. He raves perpetually about "greenfields," "jaunty streams," and "o'er-arching leafiness," exactly as a Cheapside shop-keeper does about the beauties of his box on the Camberwell road. Mr. Hunt is altogether unacquainted with the face of nature in her magnificent scenes; he has never seen any mountain higher than Highgate-hill, nor reclined by any stream more pastoral than the Serpentine River. But he is determined to be a poet eminently rural, and he rings the changes—till one is sick of him, on the beauties of the different "high views" which he has taken of God and nature, in the course of some Sunday dinner parties, at which he has assisted in the neighbourhood of London. His books are indeed not known in the country; his fame as a poet (and I might almost say, as a politician too) is entirely confined to the young attorneys and embryo-barristers about town. In the opinion of these competent judges, London is the world—and Hunt is a Homer.

Mr. Hunt is not disqualified by his ignorance and vulgarity alone, for being the founder of a respectable sect in poetry. He labours under the burden of a sin more deadly than either of these. The two great elements of all dignified poetry, religious feeling, and patriotic feeling, have no place in his mind. His religion is a poor tame dilution of the blasphemies of the *Encyclopaedie*—his patriotism a crude, vague, ineffectual, and sour Jacobinism. He is without reverence either for God or man; neither altar nor throne have any dignity in his eyes. He speaks well of nobody but two or three great dead poets, and in so speaking of them he does well; but, alas! Mr. Hunt is no conjurer [Greek: technae ou lanthanei]. He pretends, indeed,

to be an admirer of Spencer and Chaucer, but what he praises in them is never what is most deserving of praise—it is only that which he humbly conceives, bears some resemblance to the more perfect productions of Mr. Leigh Hunt; and we can always discover, in the midst of his most violent ravings about the Court of Elizabeth, and the days of Sir Philip Sidney, and the Fairy Queen—that the real objects of his admiration are the Coterie of Hampstead and the Editor of the Examiner. When he talks about chivalry and King Arthur, he is always thinking of himself, and "*a small party of friends, who meet once a-week at a Round Table, to discuss the merits of a leg of mutton, and of the subjects upon which we are to write.*"— Mr. Leigh Hunt's ideas concerning the sublime, and concerning his own powers, bear a considerable resemblance to those of his friend Bottom, the weaver, on the same subjects; "I will roar, that it shall do any man's heart good to hear me."—"I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale."

The poetry of Mr. Hunt is such as might be expected from the personal character and habits of its author. As a vulgar man is perpetually labouring to be genteel—in like manner, the poetry of this man is always on the stretch to be grand. He has been allowed to look for a moment from the anti-chamber into the saloon, and mistaken the waving of feathers and the painted floor for the *sine quâ non's* of elegant society. He would fain be always tripping and waltzing, and is sorry that he cannot be allowed to walk about in the morning with yellow breeches and flesh-coloured silk stockings. He sticks an artificial rose-bud into his button hole in the midst of winter. He wears no neckcloth, and cuts his hair in imitation of the Prints of Petrarch. In his verses also he is always desirous of being airy, graceful, easy, courtly, and ITALIAN. If he had the smallest acquaintance with the great demigods of Italian poetry, he could never fancy that the style in which he writes, bears any, even the most remote resemblance to the severe and simple manner of Dante—the tender stillness of the lover of Laura—or the sprightly and good-natured unconscious elegance of the inimitable

Ariosto. He has gone into a strange delusion about himself, and is just as absurd in supposing that he resembles the Italian Poets as a greater Quack still (Mr. Coleridge) is, in imagining that he is a Philosopher after the manner of Kant or Mendelshon—and that "the eye of Lessing bears a remarkable likeness to MINE," i.e., the eye of Mr. Samuel Coleridge.[1]

[1] Mr. Wordsworth (meaning, we presume, to pay Mr. Coleridge a compliment), makes him look very absurdly,

"A noticeable man, with *large grey eyes*."

The extreme moral depravity of the Cockney School is another thing which is for ever thrusting itself upon the public attention, and convincing every man of sense who looks into their productions, that they who sport such sentiments can never be great poets. How could any man of high original genius ever stoop publicly, at the present day, to dip his fingers in the least of those glittering and rancid obscenities which float on the surface of Mr. Hunt's Hippocrene? His poetry is that of a man who has kept company with kept-mistresses. He talks indelicately like a tea-sipping milliner girl. Some excuse for him there might have been, had he been hurried away by imagination or passion. But with him indecency is a disease, and he speaks unclean things from perfect inanition. The very concubine of so impure a wretch as Leigh Hunt would be to be pitied, but alas! for the wife of such a husband! For him there is no charm in simple seduction; and he gloats over it only when accompanied with adultery and incest.

The unhealthy and jaundiced medium through which the Founder of the Cockney School views every thing like moral truth, is apparent, not only from his obscenity, but also from his want of respect for all that numerous class of plain upright men, and unpretending women, in which the real

worth and excellence of human society consists. Every man is, according to Mr. Hunt, a dull potato-eating blockhead—of no greater value to God or man than any ox or dray-horse—who is not an admirer of Voltaire's *romans*, a worshipper of Lord Holland and Mr. Haydon and a quoter of John Buncle and Chaucer's Flower and Leaf. Every woman is useful only as a breeding machine, unless she is fond of reading Launcelot of the Lake, in an antique summer-house.

How such a profligate creature as Mr. Hunt can pretend to be an admirer of Mr. Wordsworth, is to us a thing altogether inexplicable. One great charm of Wordsworth's noble compositions consists in the dignified purity of thought, and the patriarchal simplicity of feeling, with which they are throughout penetrated and imbued. We can conceive a vicious man admiring with distant awe and spectacle of virtue and purity; but if he does so sincerely, he must also do so with the profoundest feeling of the error of his own ways, and the resolution to amend them. His admiration must be humble and silent, not pert and loquacious. Mr. Hunt praises the purity of Wordsworth as if he himself were pure, his dignity as if he also were dignified. He is always like the ball of Dung in the fable, pleasing himself, and amusing by-standers with his "nos poma natamus." For the person who writes *Rimini*, to admire the Excursion, is just as impossible as it would be for a Chinese polisher of cherry-stones, or gilder of tea-cups, to burst into tears at the sight of the Theseus or the Torso.

The Founder of the Cockney School would fain claim poetical kindred with Lord Byron and Thomas Moore. Such a connexion would be as unsuitable for them as for William Wordsworth. The days of Mr. Moore's follies are long since over; and, as he is a thorough gentleman, he must necessarily entertain the greatest contempt for such an under-bred person as Leigh Hunt. But Lord Byron! How must the haughty spirit of Lara and Harold contemn the subaltern sneaking of our modern tuft-hunter. The

insult which he offered to Lord Byron in the dedication of Rimini,—in which he, a paltry cockney newspaper scribbler, had the assurance to address one of the most nobly-born of English Patricians, and one of the first geniuses whom the world ever produced, as "My dear Byron," although it may have been forgotten and despised by the illustrious person whom it most nearly concerned,—excited a feeling of utter loathing and disgust in the public mind, which will always be remembered whenever the name of Leigh Hunt is mentioned. We dare say Mr. Hunt has some fine dreams about the true nobility being the nobility of talent, and flatters himself, that with those who acknowledge only that sort of rank, he himself passes for being the *peer* of Byron. He is sadly mistaken. He is as completely a Plebeian in his mind as he is in his rank and station in society. To that highest and unalienated nobility which the great Roman satirist styles "sola atque unica," we fear his pretensions would be equally unavailing.

The shallow and impotent pretensions, tenets, and attempts, of this man,—and the success with which his influence seems to be extending itself among a pretty numerous, though certainly a very paltry and pitiful, set of readers,—have for the last two or three years been considered by us with the most sickening aversion. The very culpable manner in which his chief poem was reviewed in the Edinburgh Review (we believe it is no secret, at his own impatient and feverish request, by his partner in the Round Table), was matter of concern to more readers than ourselves. The masterly pen which inflicted such signal chastisement on the early licentiousness of Moore, should not have been idle on that occasion. Mr. Jeffrey does ill when he delegates his important functions into such hands as Mr. Hazlitt. It was chiefly in consequence of that gentleman's allowing Leigh Hunt to pass unpunished through a scene of slaughter, which his execution might so highly have graced that we came to the resolution of laying before our

readers a series of essays on *the Cockney School*—of which here terminates the first. *Z.*

THE COCKNEY SCHOOL OF POETRY

No. III

[From *Blackwood's Magazine*, July, 1818]

Our hatred and contempt of Leigh Hunt as a writer, is not so much owing to his shameless irreverence to his aged and afflicted king—to his profligate attacks on the character of the king's sons—to his low-born insolence to that aristocracy with whom he would in vain claim the alliance of one illustrious friendship—to his paid panderism to the vilest passions of that mob of which he is himself a firebrand—to the leprous crust of self-conceit with which his whole moral being is indurated—to that loathsome vulgarity which constantly clings round him like a vermined garment from St. Giles'—to that irritable temper which keeps the unhappy man, in spite even of his vanity, in a perpetual fret with himself and all the world beside, and that shews itself equally in his deadly enmities and capricious friendships, —our hatred and contempt of Leigh Hunt, we say, is not so much owing to these and other causes, as to the odious and unnatural harlotry of his polluted muse. We were the first to brand with a burning iron the false face of this kept-mistress of a demoralizing incendiary. We tore off her gaudy veil and transparent drapery, and exhibited the painted cheeks and writhing limbs of the prostitute. We denounced to the execration of the people of England, the man who had dared to write in the solitude of a cell, whose walls ought to have heard only the sighs of contrition and repentance, a

lewd tale of incest, adultery, and murder, in which the violation of Nature herself was wept over, palliated, justified, and held up to imitation, and the violators themselves worshipped as holy martyrs. The story of Rimini had begun to have its admirers; but their deluded minds were startled at our charges,—and on reflecting upon the character of the poem, which they had read with a dangerous sympathy, not on account of its poetical merit, which is small indeed, but on account of those voluptuous scenes, so dangerous even to a pure imagination, when insidiously painted with the seeming colours of virtue,—they were astounded at their own folly and their own danger, and consigned the wretched volume to that ignominious oblivion, which, in a land of religion and morality, must soon be the doom of all obscene and licentious productions.

The story of Rimini is heard of no more. But Leigh Hunt will not be quiet. His hebdomadal hand [**Pointing hand symbol] is held up, even on the Sabbath, against every man of virtue and genius in the land; but the great defamer claims to himself an immunity from that disgrace which he knows his own wickedness has incurred,—the Cockney calumniator would fain hold his own disgraced head sacred from the iron fingers of retribution. But that head shall be brought low—aye—low "as heaped up justice" ever sunk that of an offending scribbler against the laws of Nature and of God.

Leigh Hunt dared not, Hazlitt dared not, to defend the character of the "Story of Rimini." A man may venture to say that in verse which it is perilous to utter in plain prose. Even they dared not to affirm to the people of England, that a wife who had committed incest with her husband's brother, ought on her death to be buried in the same tomb with her fraticidal [Transcriber's note: sic] paramour, and that tomb to be annually worshipped by the youths and virgins of their country. And therefore Leigh Hunt flew into a savage passion against the critic who had chastised his crime, pretended that he himself was insidiously charged with the offences which

he had applauded and celebrated in others, and tried to awaken the indignation of the public against his castigator, as if he had been the secret assassin of private character, who was but the open foe of public enormity. The attempt was hopeless,— the public voice has lifted up against Hunt,— and sentence of excommunication from the poets of England has been pronounced, enrolled, and ratified.

There can be no radical distinction allowed between the private and public character of a poet. If a poet sympathizes with and justifies wickedness in his poetry, he is a wicked man. It matters not that his private life may be free from wicked actions. Corrupt his moral principles must be, —and if his conduct has not been flagrantly immoral, the cause must be looked for in constitution, &c., but not in conscience. It is therefore of little or no importance, whether Leigh Hunt be or be not a bad private character. He maintains, that he is a most excellent private character, and that he would blush to tell the world how highly he is thought of by an host of respectable friends. Be it so,—and that his vanity does not delude him. But this is most sure, that, in such a case, the world will never be brought to believe even the truth. The world is not fond of ingenious distinctions between the theory and the practice of morals. The public are justified in refusing to hear a man plead in favour of his character, when they hold in their hands a work of his in which all respect to character is forgotten. We must reap the fruit of what we sow; and if evil and unjust reports have arisen against Leigh Hunt as a man, and unluckily for him it is so, he ought not to attribute the rise of such reports to the political animosities which his virulence has excited, but to the real and obvious cause—his voluptuous defence of crimes revolting to Nature.

The publication of the voluptuous story of Rimini was followed, it would appear, by mysterious charges against Leigh Hunt in his domestic relations. The world could not understand the nature of his poetical love of incest; and

instead of at once forgetting both the poem and the poet, many people set themselves to speculate, and talk, and ask questions, and pry into secrets with which they had nothing to do, till at last there was something like an identification of Leigh Hunt himself with Paolo, the incestuous hero of Leigh Hunt's chief Cockney poem. This was wrong, and, we believe, wholly unjust; but it was by no means unnatural; and precisely what Leigh Hunt is himself in the weekly practice of doing to other people without the same excuse. Leigh Hunt has now spoken out so freely to the public on the subject, that there can be no indelicacy in talking of it, in as far as it respects him, at least….

There is no need for us to sink down this unhappy man into deeper humiliation. Never before did the abuse and prostitution of talents bring with them such prompt and memorable punishment. The pestilential air which Leigh Hunt breathed forth into the world to poison and corrupt, has been driven stiflingly back upon himself, and he who strove to spread the infection of loathsome licentiousness among the tender moral constitutions of the young, has been at length rewarded, as it was fitting he should be, by the accusation of being himself guilty of those crimes which it was the object of "The Story of Rimini" to encourage and justify in others. The world knew nothing of him but from his works; and were they blameable (even though they erred) in believing him capable of any enormities in his own person, whose imagination feasted and gloated on the disgusting details of adultery and incest? They were repelled and sickened by such odious and unnatural wickedness—he was attracted and delighted. What to them was the foulness of pollution, seemed to him the beauty of innocence. What to them was the blast from hell, to him was the air from heaven. They read and they condemned. They asked each other "What manner of man is this?" The charitable were silent. It would perhaps be hard to call them uncharitable who spoke aloud. Thoughts were associated with his name which shall be nameless by us; and at last the wretched scribbler himself

has had the gross and unfeeling folly to punish them all to the world, and that too in a tone of levity that could have been becoming only on our former comparatively trivial charges against him of wearing yellow breeches, and dispensing with the luxury of a neckcloth. He shakes his shoulders, according to his rather iniquitous custom, at being told that he is suspected of adultery and incest! A pleasant subject of merriment, no doubt, it is—though somewhat embittered by the intrusive remembrance of that unsparing castigator of vice, Mr. Gifford, and clouded over by the melancholy breathed from the shin-bone of his own poor old deceased grandmother. What a mixture of the horrible and absurd! And the man who thus writes is—not a Christian, for that he denies—but, forsooth, a poet! one of the

Great spirits who on earth are sojourning!

But Leigh Hunt is not guilty, in the above paragraph, of shocking levity alone,—he is guilty of falsehood. It is not true, that he learns for the first time, from that anonymous letter (so vulgar, that we could almost suspect him of having written it himself) what charges were in circulation against him. He knew it all before. Has he forgotten to whom he applied for explanation when Z.'s sharp essay on the Cockney Poetry cut him to the heart? He knows what he said upon those occasions, and let him ponder upon it. But what could induce him to suspect the amiable Bill Hazlitt, "him, the immaculate," of being Z.? It was this,—he imagined that none but that foundered artist could know the fact of his feverish importunities to be reviewed by him in the Edinburgh Review. And therefore, having almost "as fine an intellectual touch" as "Bill the painter" himself, he thought he saw Z. lurking beneath the elegant exterior of that highly accomplished man.

Dear Hazlitt, whose tact intellectual is such,
That it seems to feel truth as one's fingers do touch.

But, for the present, we have nothing more to add. Leigh Hunt is delivered into our hands to do with him as we will. Our eyes shall be upon him, and unless he amend his ways, to wither and to blast him. The pages of the Edinburgh Review, we are confident, are henceforth shut against him. One wicked Cockney will not again be permitted to praise another in that journal, which, up to the moment when incest and adultery were defended in its pages, had, however openly at war with religion, kept at least upon decent terms with the cause of morality. It was indeed a fatal day for Mr. Jeffrey, when he degraded both himself and his original coadjutors, by taking into pay such an unprincipled blunderer as Hazlitt. He is not a coadjutor, he is an accomplice. The day is perhaps not far distant, when the Charlatan shall be stripped to the naked skin, and made to swallow his own vile prescriptions. He and Leigh Hunt are

Arcades ambo
Et cantare pares—

Shall we add,

et respondere parati?

Z. ON KEATS

[From *Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1818]

COCKNEY SCHOOL OF POETRY

No. IV

—— OF KEATS,
THE MUSES' SON OF PROMISE, AND WHAT FEATS
HE YET MAY DO, &C.

CORNELIUS WEBB.

Of all the manias of this mad age, the most incurable, as well as the most common, seems to be no other than the *Metromanie*. The just celebrity of Robert Burns and Miss Baillie has had the melancholy effect of turning the heads of we know not how many farm-servants and unmarried ladies; our very footmen compose tragedies, and there is scarcely a superannuated governess in the island that does not leave a roll of lyrics behind her in her band-box. To witness the disease of any human understanding, however feeble, is distressing; but the spectacle of an able mind reduced to a state of insanity is of course ten times more afflicting. It is with such sorrow as this that we have contemplated the case of Mr. John Keats. This young man appears to have received from nature talents of an excellent, perhaps even

of a superior order— talents which, devoted to the purposes of any useful profession, must have rendered him a respectable, if not an eminent citizen. His friends, we understand, destined him to the career of medicine, and he was bound apprentice some years ago to a worthy apothecary in town. But all has been undone by a sudden attack of the malady to which we have alluded. Whether Mr. John had been sent home with a diuretic or composing draught to some patient far gone in the poetical mania, we have not heard. This much is certain, that he has caught the infection, and that thoroughly. For some time we were in hopes, that he might get off with a violent fit or two; but of late the symptoms are terrible. The phrenzy of the "Poems" was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of "Endymion." We hope, however, that in so young a person, and with a constitution originally so good, even now the disease is not utterly incurable. Time, firm treatment, and rational restraint, do much for many apparently hopeless invalids; and if Mr. Keats should happen, at some interval of reason, to cast his eye upon our pages, he may perhaps be convinced of the existence of his malady, which, in such cases, is often all that is necessary to put the patient in a fair way of being cured.

The readers of the Examiner newspaper were informed, some time ago, by a solemn paragraph, in Mr. Hunt's best style, of the appearance of two new stars of glorious magnitude and splendour in the poetical horizon of the land of Cockaigne. One of these turned out, by and by, to be no other than Mr. John Keats. This precocious adulation confirmed the wavering apprentice in his desire to quit the gallipots, and at the same time excited in his too susceptible mind a fatal admiration for the character and talents of the most worthless and affected of all the versifiers of our time. One of his first productions was the following sonnet, "*written on the day when Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison.*" It will be recollected, that the cause of Hunt's

confinement was a series of libels against his sovereign, and that its fruit was the odious and incestuous "Story of Rimini."

What though, for shewing truth to flattered state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spenser's halls! he strayed, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton! through the fields of air;
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

The absurdity of the thought in this sonnet is, however, if possible, surpassed in another, "*addressed to Haydon*" the painter, that clever, but most affected artist, who as little resembles Raphael in genius as he does in person, notwithstanding the foppery of having his hair curled over his shoulders in the old Italian fashion. In this exquisite piece it will be observed, that Mr. Keats classes together WORDSWORTH, HUNT, and HAYDON, as the three greatest spirits of the age, and that he alludes to himself, and some others of the rising brood of Cockneys, as likely to attain hereafter an equally honourable elevation. Wordsworth and Hunt! what a juxta-position! The purest, the loftiest, and, we do not fear to say it, the most classical of living English poets, joined together in the same compliment with the meanest, the filthiest, and the most vulgar of Cockney

poetasters. No wonder that he who could be guilty of this should class Haydon with Raphael, and himself with Spenser.

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;
He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing:
He of the rose, the violet, the spring,
The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake:
And lo!—whose steadfastness would never take
A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
And other spirits there are standing apart
Upon the forehead of the age to come;
These, these will give the world another heart,
And other pulses. *Hear ye not the hum*
Of mighty workings?—
Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

The nations are to listen and be dumb! and why, good Johnny Keats? because Leigh Hunt is editor of the Examiner, and Haydon has painted the judgment of Solomon, and you and Cornelius Webb, and a few more city sparks, are pleased to look upon yourselves as so many future Shakespeares and Miltons! The world has really some reason to look to its foundations! Here is a *tempestas in matulâ* with a vengeance. At the period when these sonnets were published, Mr. Keats had no hesitation in saying, that he looked on himself as "*not yet* a glorious denizen of the wide heaven of poetry," but he had many fine soothing visions of coming greatness, and many rare plans of study to prepare him for it….

Having cooled a little from this "fine passion," our youthful poet passes very naturally into a long strain of foaming abuse against a certain class of

English Poets, whom, with Pope at their head, it is much the fashion with the ignorant unsettled pretenders of the present time to undervalue. Begging these gentlemen's pardon, although Pope was not a poet of the same high order with some who are now living, yet, to deny his genius, it is just about as absurd as to dispute that of Wordsworth, or to believe in that of Hunt. Above all things, it is most pitiably ridiculous to hear men, of whom their country will always have reason to be proud, reviled by uneducated and flimsy striplings, who are not capable of understanding either their merits, or those of any other *men of power*—fanciful dreaming tea-drinkers, who, without logic enough to analyse a single idea, or imagination enough to form one original image, or learning enough to distinguish between the written language of Englishmen and the spoken jargon of Cockneys, presume to talk with contempt of some of the most exquisite spirits the world ever produced, merely because they did not happen to exert their faculties in laborious affected descriptions of flowers seen in window-pots, or cascades heard at Vauxhall; in short, because they chose to be wits, philosophers, patriots, and poets, rather than to found the Cockney school of versification, morality, and politics, a century before its time. After blaspheming himself into a fury against Boileau, &c., Mr. Keats comforts himself and his readers with a view of the present more promising aspect of affairs; above all, with the ripened glories of the poet of Rimini. Addressing the names of the departed chiefs of English poetry, he informs them, in the following clear and touching manner, of the existence of "him of the Rose," &c.

> From a thick brake,
> Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
> Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
> About the earth. Happy are ye and glad….

From some verses addressed to various individuals of the other sex, it appears, notwithstanding all this gossamer-work, that Johnny's affectations are not entirely confined to objects purely etherial. Take, by way of specimen, the following prurient and vulgar lines, evidently meant for some young lady east of Temple-bar.

Add too, the sweetness
Of thy honied voice; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turn'd:
With those beauties, scarce discerned,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave;
Like twin water lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breathed then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage *higher*
Than twin sister of *Thalia*?
At last for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four.

Who will dispute that our poet, to use his own phrase (and rhyme),

Can mingle music fit for the soft *ear*
Of Lady *Cytherea*.

So much for the opening bud; now for the expanded flower. It is time to pass from the juvenile "Poems," to the mature and elaborate "Endymion, a

Poetic Romance." The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so prettily told by a Roman Classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon by Mr. John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or of Wieland. If the quantity, not the quality, of the verses dedicated to the story is to be taken into account, there can be no doubt that Mr. Keats may now claim Endymion entirely to himself. To say the truth, we do not suppose either the Latin or the German poet would be very anxious to dispute about the property of the hero of the "Poetic Romance." Mr. Keats has thoroughly appropriated the character, if not the name. His Endymion is not a Greek shepherd, love of a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymster, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon. Costume, were it worth while to notice such a trifle, is violated in every page of this goodly octavo. From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea, that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that no mythology can be so finely adapted for the purposes of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the two Cockneys make of this mythology; the one confesses that he never read the Greek Tragedians, and the other knows Homer only from Chapman, and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, Nymphs, Muses, and Mysteries, as might be expected from persons of their education. We shall not, however, enlarge at present upon this subject, as we mean to dedicate an entire paper to the classical attainments and attempts of the Cockney poets. As for Mr. Keats's "Endymion," it has just as much to do with Greece as it has with "old Tartary the fierce"; no man, whose mind has ever been imbued with the smallest knowledge or feeling of classical poetry or classical history, could have stooped to profane and vulgarise every association in the manner which has been adopted by this "son of promise." Before giving any extracts, we must inform our readers, that this romance is meant to be written in English heroic rhyme. To those

who have read any of Hunt's poems, this hint might indeed be needless. Mr. Keats has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini; but in fairness to that gentleman, we must add, that the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciples' work than in his own. Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities, which he has done every thing in his power to spoil….

After all this, however, the "modesty," as Mr. Keats expresses it, of the Lady Diana prevented her from owning in Olympus her passion for Endymion. Venus, as the most knowing in such matters, is the first to discover the change that has taken place in the temperament of the goddess. "An idle tale," says the laughter-loving dame,

A humid eye, and steps luxurious,
When these are new and strange, are ominous.

The inamorata, to vary the intrigue, carries on a romantic intercourse with Endymion, under the disguise of an Indian damsel. At last, however, her scruples, for some reason or other, are all overcome, and the Queen of Heaven owns her attachment.

She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanish far away!—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

And so, like many other romances, terminates the "Poetic Romance" of Johnny Keats, in a patched-up wedding.

We had almost forgotten to mention, that Keats belongs to the Cockney School of Politics, as well as the Cockney School of Poetry.

It is fit that he who holds Rimini to be the first poem, should believe the Examiner to be the first politician of the day. We admire consistency, even in folly. Hear how their bantling has already learned to lisp sedition.

There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
Their baaing vanities, to browse away
The comfortable green and juicy hay
From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge
Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
By the blue-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones.
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belaboured drums,
And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—
Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—
Are then regalities all gilded masks?

And now, good-morrow to "the Muses' son of Promise"; as for "the feats he yet may do," as we do not pretend to say, like himself, "Muse of my native land am I inspired," we shall adhere to the safe old rule of *pauca verba*. We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not

a second time venture £50 upon any thing he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starving apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr. John, back to plasters, pills, and ointment boxes, &c. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry.

Z.

ON SHELLEY

[From *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1820]

"PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

Whatever may be the difference of men's opinions concerning the measure of Mr. Shelley's poetical power, there is one point in regard to which all must be agreed, and that is his Audacity. In the old days of the exulting genius of Greece, Aeschylus dared two things which astonished all men, and which still astonish them—to exalt contemporary men into the personages of majestic tragedies—and to call down and embody into tragedy, without degradation, the elemental spirits of nature and the deeper essences of Divinity. We scarcely know whether to consider the *Persians* or the *Prometheus Bound* as the most extraordinary display of what has always been esteemed the most audacious spirit that ever expressed its workings in poetry. But what shall we say of the young English poet who has now attempted, not only a flight as high as the highest of Aeschylus, but the very flight of that father of tragedy—who has dared once more to dramatise Prometheus—and, most wonderful of all, to dramatise the *deliverance* of Prometheus—which is known to have formed the subject of a lost tragedy of Aeschylus no ways inferior in mystic elevation to that of the [Greek: Desmotaes].

Although a fragment of that perished master-piece be still extant in the Latin version of Attius—it is quite impossible to conjecture what were the personages introduced in the tragedy of Aeschylus, or by what train of passions and events he was able to sustain himself on the height of that awful scene with which his surviving *Prometheus* terminates. It is impossible, however, after reading what is left of that famous trilogy,[1] to suspect that the Greek poet symbolized any thing whatever by the person of Prometheus, except the native strength of human intellect itself—its strength of endurance above all others—its sublime power of patience. STRENGTH and FORCE are the two agents who appear on this darkened theatre to bind the too benevolent Titan—*Wit* and *Treachery*, under the forms of Mercury and Oceanus, endeavour to prevail upon him to make himself free by giving up his dreadful secret;— but *Strength* and *Force*, and *Wit* and *Treason*, are all alike powerless to overcome the resolution of that suffering divinity, or to win from him any acknowledgment of the new tyrant of the skies. Such was this simple and sublime allegory in the hands of Aeschylus. As to what had been the original purpose of the framers of the allegory, that is a very different question, and would carry us back into the most hidden places of the history of mythology. No one, however, who compares the mythological systems of different races and countries, can fail to observe the frequent occurrence of certain great leading Ideas and leading Symbolisations of ideas too—which Christians are taught to contemplate with a knowledge that is the knowledge of reverence. Such, among others, are unquestionably the ideas of an Incarnate Divinity suffering on account of mankind—conferring benefits on mankind at the expense of his own suffering;—the general idea of vicarious atonement itself—and the idea of the dignity of suffering as an exertion of intellectual might—all of which may be found, more or less obscurely shadowed forth, in the original [Greek: Mythos] of Prometheus the Titan, the enemy of the successful rebel and usurper Jove. We might have also mentioned the idea

of a *deliverer*, waited for patiently through ages of darkness, and at least arriving in the person of the child of Io— but, in truth, there is no pleasure, and would be little propriety, in seeking to explain all this at greater length, considering, what we cannot consider without deepest pain, the very different views which have been taken of the original allegory by Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley.

[1] There was another and an earlier play of Aeschylus, Prometheus the Fire-Stealer, which is commonly supposed to have made part of the series; but the best critics, we think, are of opinion, that that was entirely a satirical piece.

It would be highly absurd to deny, that this gentleman has manifested very extraordinary powers of language and imagination in his treatment of the allegory, however grossly and miserably he may have tried to pervert its purpose and meaning. But of this more anon. In the meantime, what can be more deserving of reprobation than the course which he is allowing his intellect to take, and that too at the very time when he ought to be laying the foundations of a lasting and honourable name. There is no occasion for going round about the bush to hint what the poet himself has so unblushingly and sinfully blazoned forth in every part of his production. With him, it is quite evident that the Jupiter whose downfall has been predicted by Prometheus, means nothing more than Religion in general, that is, every human system of religious belief; and that, with the fall of this, he considers it perfectly necessary (as indeed we also believe, though with far different feelings) that every system of human government also should give way and perish. The patience of the contemplative spirit in Prometheus is to be followed by the daring of the active demagorgon, at whose touch all "old thrones" are at once and for ever to be cast down into the dust. It appears too plainly, from the luscious pictures with which his play terminates, that Mr. Shelley looks forward to an unusual relaxation of all moral *rules*—or

rather, indeed, to the extinction of all moral feelings, except that of a certain mysterious indefinable *kindliness*, as the natural and necessary result of the overthrow of all civil government and religious belief. It appears, still more wonderfully, that he contemplates this state of things as the ideal SUMMUM BONUM. In short, it is quite impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality, than is visible in the whole structure and strain of this poem—which, nevertheless, and notwithstanding all the detestation its principles excite, must and will be considered by all that read it attentively, as abounding in poetical beauties of the highest order—as presenting many specimens not easily to be surpassed, of the moral sublime of eloquence—as overflowing with pathos, and most magnificent in description. Where can be found a spectacle more worthy of sorrow than such a man performing and glorying in the performance of such things? His evil ambition,—from all he has yet written, but most of all, from what he has last and best written, his *Prometheus*,—appears to be no other, than that of attaining the highest place among those poets,—enemies, not friends, of their species, who, as a great and virtuous poet has well said (putting evil consequence close after evil cause).

Profane the God-given strength, and *mar the lofty line.*

We should hold ourselves very ill employed, however, were we to enter at any length into the reprehensible parts of this remarkable production. It is sufficient to shew, that we have not been misrepresenting the purpose of the poet's mind, when we mention, that the whole tragedy ends with a mysterious sort of dance, and chorus of elemental spirits, and other indefinable beings, and that the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR, one of the most singular of these choral personages, tells us:

I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in other things; but soon I looked,
And behold! THRONES WERE KINGLESS, and men walked
One with the other, even as spirits do, etc.

* * * * *

We cannot conclude without saying a word or two in regard to an accusation which we have lately seen brought against ourselves in some one of the London Magazines; we forget which at this moment. We are pretty sure we know who the author of that most false accusation is—of which more hereafter. He has the audacious insolence to say, that we praise Mr. Shelley, although we dislike his principles, just because we know that he is not in a situation of life to be in any danger of suffering pecuniary inconvenience from being run down by critics, and, *vice versâ*, abuse Hunt, Keats, and Hazlitt, and so forth, because we know that they are poor men; a fouler imputation could not be thrown on any writer than this creature has dared to throw on us; nor a more utterly false one; we repeat the word again —than this is when thrown upon us.

We have no personal acquaintance with any of these men, and no personal feelings in regard to any one of them, good or bad. We never even saw any one of their faces. As for Mr. Keats, we are informed that he is in a very bad state of health, and that his friends attribute a great deal of it to the pain he has suffered from the critical castigation his Endymion drew down on him in this magazine. If it be so, we are most heartily sorry for it, and have no hesitation in saying, that had we suspected that young author, of being so delicately nerved, we should have administered our reproof in a

much more lenient shape and style. The truth is, we from the beginning saw marks of feeling and power in Mr. Keats's verses, which made us think it very likely, he might become a real poet of England, provided he could be persuaded to give up all the tricks of Cockneyism, and forswear for ever the thin potations of Mr. Leigh Hunt. We, therefore, rated him as roundly as we decently could do, for the flagrant affectations of those early productions of his. In the last volume he has published, we find more beauties than in the former, both of language and of thought, but we are sorry to say, we find abundance of the same absurd affectations also, and superficial conceits, which first displeased us in his writings;—and which we are again very sorry to say, must in our opinion, if persisted in, utterly and entirely prevent Mr. Keats from ever taking his place among the pure and classical poets of his mother tongue. It is quite ridiculous to see how the vanity of these Cockneys makes them overrate their own importance, even in the eyes of us, that have always expressed such plain unvarnished contempt for them, and who do feel for them all, a contempt too calm and profound, to admit of any admixture of any thing like anger or personal spleen. We should just as soon think of being wroth with vermin, independently of their coming into our apartment, as we should of having any feelings at all about any of these people, other than what are excited by seeing them in the shape of authors. Many of them, considered in any other character than that of authors are, we have no doubt, entitled to be considered as very worthy people in their own way. Mr. Hunt is said to be a very amiable man in his own sphere, and we believe him to be so willingly. Mr. Keats we have often heard spoken of in terms of great kindness, and we have no doubt his manners and feelings are calculated to make his friends love him. But what has all this to do with our opinion of their poetry? What, in the name of wonder, does it concern us, whether these men sit among themselves, with mild or with sulky faces, eating their mutton steaks, and drinking their porter at Highgate, Hampstead, or Lisson Green? What is there that should prevent us, or any

other person, that happens not to have been educated in the University of Little Britain, from expressing a simple, undisguised, and impartial opinion, concerning the merits or demerits of men that we never saw, nor thought of for one moment, otherwise than as in their capacity of authors? What should hinder us from saying, since we think so, that Mr. Leigh Hunt is a clever wrong-headed man, whose vanities have got inwoven so deeply into him, that he has no chance of ever writing one line of classical English, or thinking one genuine English thought, either about poetry or politics? What is the spell that must seal our lips, from uttering an opinion equally plain and perspicuous concerning Mr. John Keats, viz., that nature possibly meant him to be a much better poet than Mr. Leigh Hunt ever could have been, but that, if he persists in imitating the faults of that writer, he must be contented to share his fate, and be like him forgotten? Last of all, what should forbid us to announce our opinion, that Mr. Shelley, as a man of genius, is not merely superior, either to Mr. Hunt, or to Mr. Keats, but altogether out of their sphere, and totally incapable of ever being brought into the most distant comparison with either of them. It is very possible, that Mr. Shelley himself might not be inclined to place himself so high above these men as we do, but that is his affair, not ours. We are afraid that he shares, (at least with one of them) in an abominable system of belief, concerning Man and the World, the sympathy arising out of which common belief, may probably sway more than it ought to do on both sides. But the truth of the matter is this, and it is impossible to conceal it were we willing to do so, that Mr. Shelley is destined to leave a great name behind him, and that we, as lovers of true genius, are most anxious that this name should ultimately be pure as well as great.

As for the principles and purposes of Mr. Shelley's poetry, since we must again recur to that dark part of the subject; we think they are on the whole, more undisguisedly pernicious in this volume, than even in his Revolt of Islam. There is an Ode to Liberty at the end of the volume, which contains

passages of the most splendid beauty, but which, in point of meaning, is just as wicked as any thing that ever reached the world under the name of Mr. Hunt himself. It is not difficult to fill up the blank which has been left by the prudent bookseller, in one of the stanzas beginning:

O that the free would stamp the impious name,
Of ——- into the dust! Or write it there
So that this blot upon the page of fame,
Were as a serpent's path, which the light air
Erases, etc., etc.

but the next speaks still more plainly:

O that the WISE from their bright minds would kindle
Such lamps within the dome of this wide world,
That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
Into the HELL from which it first was hurled!

This is exactly a versification of the foulest sentence that ever issued from the lips of Voltaire. Let us hope that Percy Bysshe Shelley is not destined to leave behind him, like that great genius, a name for ever detestable to the truly FREE and the truly WISE. He talks in his preface about MILTON, as a "Republican," and a "bold inquirer into Morals and religion." Could any thing make us despise Mr. Shelley's understanding, it would be such an instance of voluntary blindness as this! Let us hope, that ere long a lamp of genuine truth may be kindled within his "bright mind"; and that he may walk in its light the path of the true demigods of English genius, having, like them, learned to "fear God and Honour the king."

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW

Started in 1824 to represent Radical opinions, the *Westminster* was associated, in its palmy days, with such "persons of importance" as George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, and J.S. Mill, retaining to the present moment an isolated preference for the expression of unconventional, and often *outré* opinions. It has always been somewhat fanatical and, now that really distinguished writers seldom enter its pages, has become associated, in the general view, with the promotion of fads.

JOHN STUART MILL

(1806-1873)

Though Mill's principle work was of a highly expert and technical nature, he had the rare power of conveying accurate expressions of sound thoughts in popular language; and he was conspicuous for the moral fervour of his opinions in practical politics. His fascinating autobiography is absolutely sincere, and very copious, in its revelations. It has been said, moreover, that he was "more at pains to conceal his originality" than "most writers are to set forth" this quality: and it was this characteristic which inspired his broad-minded conduct of the *London Review*, soon incorporated with the *Westminster*, which, after ten years as a contributor, he edited from 1834, and owned from 1837 until 1840. Here he made "a noble experiment to endeavour to combine opposites, and to maintain a perpetual attitude of

sympathy with hostile opinions." It was officially, the organ of Utilitarianism; but articles were frequently inserted requiring the editorial *caveat*. It was the friend of liberty in every shape and form.

In a philosophic writer whose style was admittedly always literary, it is of special interest to notice that he so frequently chose a volume of poetry to review himself: and no better example of this work can be found than the following critique of Tennyson, which, again, may be most profitably compared with Gladstone's. It proves that he loved poetry for its own sake.

The notice of Macaulay's Lays further illustrates his interesting *theories* of poetry.

JOHN STERLING

(1806-1844)

It is the remarkable fate of Sterling, leaving behind him no work of permanent distinction—to have been the subject of two biographies by persons of far greater importance than his—Archdeacon Hare and Thomas Carlyle. The editorial foot-note affixed to the following review, in which Mill describes him as "one of our most valued contributors" provides further evidence of what his contemporaries expected of "Poor Sterling." "A loose, careless looking, thin figure," says Carlyle, "in careless dim costume, sat, in a lounging posture, carelessly and copiously talking. I was struck with the kindly but restless swift-glancing eyes, which looked as if the spirits were all out coursing like a pack of merry eager beagles, beating every bush…. A smile, half of kindly impatience, half of real mirth, often sat on his face."

Sterling wrote poetry, essays, and stories, largely inspired by capricious enthusiasms. The son of an editor of *The Times*, he was, for a short time

owner of *The Athenaeum*, and also a curate under Hare.

Since Carlyle's "extraordinary elegy, apology, eulogium" is itself a classic, particular interest attaches itself to Sterling's generous estimate of the man destined to make him immortal.

J.S. MILL ON TENNYSON

[From *The Westminster Review*, January, 1831]

Poems, chiefly Lyrical. By ALFRED TENNYSON. Wilson, 12 mo. 1830.

It would be a pity that poetry should be an exception to the great law of progression that obtains in human affairs; and it is not. The machinery of a poem is not less susceptible of improvement than the machinery of a cotton mill; nor is there any better reason why the one should retrograde from the days of Milton, than the other from those of Arkwright….

The old epics will probably never be surpassed, any more than the old coats of mail; and for the same reason; nobody wants the article; its object is accomplished by other means; they are become mere curiosities….

Poetry, like charity, begins at home. Poetry, like morality, is founded in the precept, know thyself. Poetry, like happiness, is in the human heart. Its inspiration is of that which is in man, and it will never fail because there are changes in costume and grouping. What is the vitality of the Iliad? Character; nothing else. All the rest is only read out of antiquarianism or of affectation. Why is Shakespeare the greatest of poets? Because he was one of the greatest of philosophers. We reason on the conduct of his characters with as little hesitation as if they were real living human beings. Extent of observation, accuracy of thought, and depth of reflection, were the qualities

which won the prize of sovereignty for his imagination, and the effect of these qualities was practically to anticipate, so far as was needful for his purposes, the mental philosophy of a future age. Metaphysics must be the stem of poetry for the plant to thrive; but if the stem flourishes we are not likely to be at a loss for leaves, flowers, and fruit. Now, whatever theories may have come into fashion and gone out of fashion, the real science of mind advances with the progress of society like all other sciences. The poetry of the last forty years already shows symptoms of life in exact proportion as it is imbued with this science. There is least of it in the exotic legends of Southey, and the feudal romances of Scott. More of it, though in different ways, in Byron and Campbell. In Shelley there would have been more still, had he not devoted himself to unsound and mystical theories. Most of all in Coleridge and Wordsworth. They are all going or gone; but here is a little book as thoroughly and unitedly metaphysical and poetical in its spirit as any of them; and sorely shall we be disappointed in its author if it be not the precursor of a series of productions which shall beautifully illustrate our speculations, and convincingly prove their soundness.

Do not let our readers be alarmed. These poems are anything but heavy; anything but stiff and pedantic, except in one particular, which shall be noticed before we conclude; anything but cold and logical. They are graceful, very graceful; they are animated, touching, and impassioned. And they are so, precisely because they are philosophical; because they are not made up of metrical cant and conventional phraseology; because there is sincerity where the author writes from experience, and accuracy whether he writes from experience or observation; and he only writes from experience and observation, because he has felt and thought, and learned to analyse thought and feeling; because his own mind is rich in poetical associations, and he has wisely been content with its riches; and because, in his composition, he has not sought to construct an elaborate and artificial harmony, but only to pour forth his thoughts in those expressive and simple

melodies whose meaning, truth, and power, are the soonest recognised, and the quickest felt….

Mr. Tennyson seems to obtain entrance into a mind as he would make his way into a landscape; he climbs the pineal gland as if it were a hill in the centre of the scene; looks around on all objects with their varieties of form, their movements, their shades of colour, and their mutual relations and influences, and forthwith produces as graphic a delineation in the one case as Wilson or Gainsborough could have done in the other, to the great enrichment of our gallery of intellectual scenery….

Our author has the secret of the transmigration of the soul. He can cast his own spirit into any living thing, real or imaginary….

"Mariana" is, we are disposed to think, although there are several poems which rise up reproachfully in our recollection as we say so, altogether, the most perfect composition in the volume. The whole of this poem, of eighty-four lines, is generated by the legitimate process of poetical creation, as that process is conducted in a philosophical mind, from a half sentence in Shakespeare. There is no mere samplification; it is all production, and production from that single germ. That must be a rich intellect, in which thoughts thus take root and grow….

A considerable number of the poems are amatory; they are the expression not of heathen sensuality, nor of sickly refinement, nor of fantastic devotion, but of manly love; and they illustrate the philosophy of the passion while they exhibit the various phases of its existence and embody its power….

Mr. Tennyson sketches females as well as ever did Sir Thomas Lawrence. His portraits are delicate, his likenesses (we will answer for them), perfect, and they have life, character, and individuality. They are nicely assorted

also to all the different gradations of emotion and passion which are expressed in common with the descriptions of them. There is an appropriate object for every shade of feeling, from the light touch of a passing admiration, to the triumphant madness of soul and sense, or the deep and everlasting anguish of survivorship….

That these poems will have a rapid and extensive popularity we do not anticipate. Their very originality will prevent their being appreciated for a time. But that time will come, we hope, to a not far distant end. They demonstrate the possession of powers, to the future direction of which we look with some anxiety. A genuine poet has deep responsibilities to his country and the world, to the present and future generations, to earth and heaven. He, of all men, should have distinct and worthy objects before him, and consecrate himself to their promotion. It is then he best consults the glory of his art, and his own lasting fame. Mr. Tennyson has a dangerous quality in that facility of impersonation on which we have remarked, and by which he enters so thoroughly into the most strange and wayward idiosyncracies of other men. It must not degrade him into a poetical harlequin. He has higher work to do than that of disporting himself among "mystics" and "flowing philosophers." He knows that "the poet's mind is holy ground"; He knows that the poet's portion is to be

> Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love;

he has shown, in the lines from which we quote, his own just conception of the grandeur of the poet's destiny; and we look to him for its fulfilment. It is not for such men to sink into mere verse-makers for the amusement of themselves or others. They can influence the associations of unnumbered minds; they can command the sympathies of unnumbered hearts; they can disseminate principles; they can give those principles power over men's

imaginations; they can excite in a good cause the sustained enthusiasm that is sure to conquer; they can blast the laurels of tyrants, and hallow the memories of the martyrs' patriotism; they can act with a force, the extent of which it is difficult to estimate, upon national feelings and character, and consequently upon national happiness.

MILL ON MACAULAY'S "LAYS"

[From *The Westminster Review*. February, 1843]

It is with the two great masters of modern ballad poetry (Campbell and Scott) that Mr. Macaulay's performances are really to be compared, and not with the real ballads or epics of an early age. The "Lays," in point of form, are not in the least like the genuine productions of a primitive age or people, and it is no blame to Mr. Macaulay that they are not. He professes imitation of Homer, but we really see no resemblance, except in the nature of some of the incidents, and the animation and vigour of the narrative; and the "Iliad," after all, is not the original ballads of the Trojan War, but these ballads moulded together, and wrought into the forms of a more civilised and cultivated age. It is difficult to conjecture what the form of the old Roman ballad may have been, and certain, that whatever they were, they could no more satisfy the aesthetic requirements of modern culture, than an ear accustomed to the great organs of Freyburg or Harlem could relish Orpheus's hurdy-gurdy, although the airs which Orpheus played, if they could be recovered, might perhaps be executed with great effect on the more perfect instrument.

The former of Mr. Macaulay's ballad poetry are essentially modern: they are those of the romantic and chivalrous, not the classical ages, and even in those they are a reproduction, not of the originals, but of the imitations of Scott. In this we think he has done well, for Scott's style is as near to that of

the ancient ballad as we conceive to be at all compatible with real popular effect on the modern mind. The difference between the two may be seen by the most cursory comparison of any real old ballad, "Chevy Chase," for instance, with last canto of Marmion, or with any of these "Lays." Conciseness is the characteristic of the real ballad, diffuseness of the modern adaptation. The old bard did everything by single touches; Scott and Mr. Macaulay by repetition and accumulation of particulars. They produce all their effect by what they *say*; he by what he *suggested*; by what he stimulated the imagination to paint for itself. But then the old ballads were not written for the light reading of tired readers. To do the work in *their* way, they required to be brooded over, or had at least the aid of tune and of impassioned recitation. Stories which are to be told to children in the age of eagerness and excitability, or sung in banquet halls to assembled warriors, whose daily ideas and feelings supply a flood of comment ready to gush forth on the slightest hint of the poet, cannot fly too swift and straight to the mark. But Mr. Macaulay wrote to be only read, and by readers for whom it was necessary to do all.

These poems, therefore, are not the worse for being un-Roman in their form; and in their substance they are Roman to a degree which deserves great admiration. Mr. Macaulay's prose writings had not prepared us for the power which he has here manifested of identifying himself easily and completely, with states of feeling and modes of life alien to modern experience. Nobody could have previously doubted that he possessed fancy, but he has added to it the higher faculty of Imagination. We have not been able to detect, in the four poems, one idea or feeling which was not, or might not have been Roman; while the externals of Roman life, and the feelings characteristic of Rome and of that particular age, are reproduced with great felicity, and without being made unduly predominant over the universal features of human nature and human life.

Independently therefore of their value as poems, these compositions are a real service rendered to historical literature; and the author has made this service greater by his prefaces, which will do more than the work of a hundred dissertations in rendering that true conception of early Roman history, the irrefragable establishment of which has made Niebuhr illustrious, familiar to the minds of general readers. This is no trifling matter, even in relation to present interests, for there is no estimating the injury which the cause of popular institutions has suffered, and still suffers from misrepresentations of the early condition of the Roman and Plebs, and its noble struggles against its taskmasters. And the study of the manner in which the heroic legends of early Rome grew up as poetry and gradually became history, has important bearings on the general laws of historical evidence, and on the many things which, as philosophy advances, are more and more seen to be therewith connected. On this subject Mr. Macaulay has not only presented, in an agreeable form, the results of previous speculation, but has, though in an entirely unpretending manner, thrown additional light upon it by his own remarks: as where he shows, by incontestible instances, that a similar transformation of poetic fiction into history has taken place on various occasions in modern and sceptical times….

We are more disposed to break a lance with our author on the general merits of Roman literature, which, by a heresy not new with him, he sacrifices, in what appears to us a most unfair degree, on the score of its inferior originality to the Grecian. It is true the Romans had no Aeschylus nor Sophocles, and but a secondhand Homer, though this last was not only the most finished but even the most original of imitators. But where was the Greek model of the noble poem of Lucretius? What, except the mere idea, did the Georgics borrow from Hesiod? and whoever thinks of comparing the two poems? Where, in Homer or the Euripides, will be found the original of the tender and pathetic passages in the Aeneid, especially the

exquisitely told story of Dido? There is no extraordinary merit in the "Carmen Secculare" as we have it, the only production of Horace which challenges comparison with Pindar; although we are not among those who deem Pindar one of the brightest stars in the Greek heaven. But from whom are the greater part of Horace's *Carmina* borrowed (they should never be termed Odes), any more than those of Burns or Béranger, the analogous authors in modern times? and by what Greek minor poems are they surpassed? We say nothing of Catullus, whom some competent judges prefer to Horace. Does the lyric, then, or even the epic poetry of the Romans, deserve no better title than that of "a hot-house plant, which, in return for assiduous and skilful culture, yielded only scanty and sickly fruits?" The complete originality and eminent merit of their satiric poetry, Mr. Macaulay himself acknowledges. As for prose, we give up Cicero as compared with Demosthenes, but with no one else; and is Livy less original, or less admirable, than Herodotus? Tacitus may have imitated, even to affectation, the condensation of Thucydides, as Milton imitated the Greek and Hebrew poets; but was the mind of the one as essentially original as that of the other? Is the Roman less an unapprochable master, in his peculiar line, that of sentimental history, than the Grecian in his? and what Greek historian has written anything similar or comparable to the sublime peroration of the *Life of Agricola*? The Latin genius lay not in speculation, and the Romans did undoubtedly borrow all their philosophical principles from the Greeks. Their originality *there*, as is well said by a remarkable writer in the most remarkable of his works,[1] consisted in taking these principles *au serieux*. They *did* what the others talked about. Zeno, indeed, was not a Roman; but Poetus Thrasea and Marcus Antoninus were.

[1] Mr. Maurice, in the essay on the history of moral speculation and culture, which forms the article "Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy" in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana.*

JOHN STERLING ON CARLYLE

[From *London and Westminster Review* October, 1839]

All countries at all times require, and England perhaps at the present not less than others, men having a faith at once distinct and large, the expression of what is best in their times, and having also the courage to proclaim it, and take their stand upon it….

But in our day such visionaries are less and less possible. The spread of shallow but clear knowledge, like the cold snow-water issuing from the glaciers, daily chills and disenchants the hearts of millions once credulous. Daily, therefore, does it become more probable that millions will follow in the track of those who are called their betters. Thus will they find in the world nothing but an epicurean stye, to be managed, with less dirt and better food, by patent steam-machinery; but still a place for swine, though the swine may be washed, and their victuals more equally divided.

Is it not then strange that in such a world, in such a country, and among those light-hearted Edinburgh Reviewers, a man should rise and proclaim a creed; not a new and more ingenious form of words, but a truth to be embraced with the whole heart, and in which the heart shall find as he has found, strength for all combats, and consolation, though stern not festal, under all sorrows? Amid the masses of English printing sent forth every day, part designed for the most trivial entertainment, part black with the

narrowest and most lifeless sectarian dogmatism, part, and perhaps the best, exhibiting only facts and theories in physical science, and part filled with the vulgarest economical projects and details, which would turn all life into a process of cookery, culinary, political, or sentimental—how few writings are there that contain like these a distinct doctrine as to the position and calling of man, capable of affording nourishment to the heart, and support to the will, and in harmony at the same time with the social state of the world, and with the most enlarged and brightened insight which human wisdom has yet attained to?

We have been so little prepared to look for such an appearance that it is difficult for us to realize the conception of a genuine coherent view of life thus presented to us in a book of our day, which shall be neither a slight compendium of a few moral truisms, flavoured with a few immoral refinements and paradoxes, such as constitute the floating ethics and religion of the time; nor a fierce and gloomy distortion of some eternal idea torn from its pure sphere of celestial light to be raved about by the ignorant whom it has half-enlightened, and half made frantic. But here, in our judgment—that is, in the judgment of one man who speaks considerately what he fixedly believes—we have the thought of a wide, and above all, of a deep soul, which has expressed in fitting words, the fruits of patient reflection, of piercing observation, of knowledge many-sided and conscientious, of devoutest awe and faithfullest love….

The clearness of the eye to see whatever is permanent and substantial, and the fervour and strength of heart to love it as the sole good of life, are, in our view, Mr. Carlyle's pre-eminent characteristics, as those of every man entitled to the fame of the most generous order of greatness. Not to paint the good which he sees and loves, or see it painted, and enjoy the sight; not to understand it, and exult in the knowledge of it; but to take his position upon it, and for it alone to breathe, to move, to fight, to mourn, and die—this is

the destination which he has chosen for himself. His avowal of it and exhortation to do the like is the object of all his writings. And, reasonably considered, it is no small service to which he is thus bound. For the real, the germinal truth of nature, is not a dead series of physical phenomena into the like of which all phenomena are cunningly to be explained away. This pulseless, rigid iron frame-work, on which the soft soil of human life is placed, and above which its aërial flowers and foliage rise, does not pass with him for the essential and innermost principle of all. It is rather that which, being itself poorest, the poorest of faculties can apprehend. As physical mechanism, it is that which is most palpable, and undeniable by any, because it is that which lies nearest the nothingness whence it has been hardly rescued, and is therefore, most akin to minds in whose meanness of structure or culture, even human existence might seem scarce better than nothingness. He knows, few in our nation so well, that of a world of new machinery, the highest king and priest would be the neatest clockwork figure. And in such a world, a being feeling ever towards or somewhat beyond what he can weigh and measure, and looking up to find above himself that which is too high for him to understand, would be an anomaly as lawless and incredible as the wildest fabled monster, the Minotaur or the Chimera, the Titan—the Sphynx itself—nay a more delirious riddle than any that in dreams it proposes to us.

On the other hand, neither is for him the solid, abiding, inexhaustible, that merely which is received as such by the popular acquiescence. It must needs be a truth which the spirit, cleared and strengthened by manifold knowledge and experience, and above all by steadfast endeavour, can rest in and say: This I mean; not because it is told me, were my informants all the schools of Rabbins or a hierarchy of angels; but because I have looked into it, tried it, found it healthful and sufficient, and thus know that it will stand the stress of life. We may be right or wrong in our estimate of Mr. Carlyle,

but we cannot be mistaken in supposing that on this kind of anvil have all truly great men been fashioned, and of metal thus honest and enduring.

Further it must be said that, true as is his devotion to the truth, so flaming and cordial is his hatred of the false, in whatever shapes and names delusions may show themselves. Affectations, quackeries, tricks, frauds, swindlings, commercial or literary, baseless speculations, loud ear-catching rhetoric, melodramatic sentiment, moral drawlings and hyperboles, religious cant, clever political shifts, and conscious or half-conscious fallacies, all in his view, come under the same hangman's rubric,—proceed from the same offal heart. However plausible, popular, and successful, however dignified by golden and purple names, they are lies against ourselves, against whatever in us is not altogether reprobate and infernal. His great argument, theme of his song, spirit of his language, lies in this, that there is a work for man worth doing, which is to be done with the whole of his heart, not the half or any other fraction. Therefore, if any reserve be made, any corner kept for something unconnected with this true work and sincere purpose, the whole is thereby vitiated and accurst. So far as his arm reaches he is undoing whatever in nature is holy: ruining whatever is the real creation of the great worker of all. This truth of purpose is to the soul what life is to the body of man; that which unites and organises the mass, keeping all the parts in due proportion and concord, and restraining them from sudden corruption into worthless dust….

Anyone who should take up the writings themselves with no other preconception than that which we have attempted to give him, would doubtless be startled at the strangeness of the style which prevails more or less throughout them. They are not careless, headstrong, passionate, confused; but they bear a constant look of oddity which seems at first mere wilful wantonness, and which we only afterwards find to be the discriminating stamp of original and strong feeling. This— this feeling,

rooted in profound susceptibility and matured into a central vivifying power —is, we should say, the author's most extraordinary distinction. For it is not the ostentatious, impetuous sentiment, which calls, a sufficient audience being by, on heaven and earth for sympathy, and would wish for that of Tartarus too, as an additional acknowledgment of its sublime sincerity. Here, on the contrary, the feeling is not that which the man is proud of, and would fain exhibit. He shrinks from the profession, nay from the sense of it; even painfully labours to trifle, and be at ease, that he may hide from others, and may for himself forget, the thorny fagot load of his own emotions. Yet make them known he must; for they are not those of some private personal grief or passion, from which he may escape into literature or science, and leave his pains and longings behind him; but his sensibilities are burning with a slow, immense fire, kindled by the very theme on which he writes, and compelling him to write. The greatness and weakness, the infinite hopes and unquenchable reality of human life; the aching pressure of the body and its wants on the myriads of millions in whom celestial force sleeps and dreams of hell; the sight of follies, frauds, cruelties, and lascivious luxury in the midst of a race then endowed and thus suffering; and the unconquerable will and thought with which the few work out the highest calling of all men; these it is, and not self-indulging distresses and theatrical aspirations of his own, which boil and storm within. Therefore does he speak with the solid strength and energy, which gives so serious and rugged an aspect to his sentences; while, perpetually checking himself, from a wise man's shame at excessive emotion, and from the knowledge that others will but half sympathise with him, he adds to his most weighty utterances a turn of irony which relieves the excessive strain…. Add to this, that Mr. Carlyle's resolution to convey his meaning at all hazards, makes him seize the most effectual and sudden words in spite of usage and fashionable taste; and that, therefore, when he can get a brighter tint, a more expressive form, by means of some strange—we must call it—Carlylism;

English, Scotch, German, Greek, Latin, French, Technical, Slang, American, or Lunar, or altogether superlunar, transcendental, and drawn from the eternal nowhere—he uses it with a courage which might blast an academy of lexicographers into a Hades, void even of vocables….

Here must end our remarks on the admirable writings of a great man. Could it be hoped, that by what has been said, any readers, and especially any thinkers, will be led to give them the attention they require, but also deserve, in this there would be ample repayment, even were there not at all events a higher reward, for the labour, which is not a slight one, of forming and assorting distinct opinions on a matter so singular and so complex. For few bonds that unite human beings are purer or happier than a common understanding and reverence of what is truly wise and beautiful. This also is religion. Standing at the threshold of these works, we may imitate the saying of the old philosopher to the friends who visited him on their return from the temples—Let us enter, for here too are gods.

FRASER'S MAGAZINE

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

(1811-1863)

There can be no occasion to enlarge upon this generous tribute of one of the greatest of our Victorian novelists to another. Considering how inevitably the critic is driven to compare these two, if not to set one up against the other, we can experience no feeling but pleasure and pride in humanity, before the evidence of their mutual appreciation. *The Cornhill* "In Memoriam" article of Charles Dickens may well stand beside this burst of glowing enthusiasm.

We have retained, by way of illustrating our general subject, a paragraph from the earlier part of the article, in which Thackeray falls foul of reviewers in general, for characteristics from which he himself was singularly free.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

(1819-1875)

The brilliant versatility of Kingsley's work will prepare us, in some measure, for his virile impatience, here revealed, with elements in the

romantic revival of poetry among his contemporaries, which were an offence to his "muscular" morality. "There are certain qualities which may be called moral in all his work, evincing a literary faculty of the highest kind. Always instructive without being exactly instructed, always argumentative without being very guarded in argument, he yet displays a marvellously contagious enthusiasm for his own creeds, and surrounds his own ideals with an atmosphere of passionate nobility. We forgive the partisanship for the sincerity of the partisan."

* * * * *

Alexander Smith (1830-1867) was a poet and essayist of some distinction; though A. H. Clough also criticises his exclusive devotion to the "writers of his own immediate time"; and calls him "the latest disciple of the school of Keats." The volume of essays entitled *Dreamthorp* "entitles him to a place among the best writers of English prose."

ANONYMOUS

There is a similarity, and a difference, between this summary of Christmas literature and Thackeray's. The personal criticism lacks his special geniality, revealing rather a tone which would have perfectly suited Blackwood or the *Quarterly*. Lytton was a favourite subject of abuse to his contemporaries.

THACKERAY ON DICKENS

[From "A Box of Novels," *Fraser's Magazine*, February, 1844]

MR. TITMARSH, in Switzerland, to MR. YORKE

…This introduction, then, will have prepared you for an exceedingly humane and laudatory notice of the packet of works which you were good enough to send me, and which, though they doubtless contain a great deal that the critic would not write (from the extreme delicacy of his taste and the vast range of his learning) also contain, between ourselves, a great deal that the critic *could* not write if he would ever so; and this is a truth which critics are sometimes apt to forget in their judgments of works of fiction. As a rustical boy, hired at twopence a week, may fling stones at the blackbirds and drive them off and possibly hit one or two, yet if he get into the hedge and begin to sing, he will make a wretched business of the music, and Labin and Colin and the dullest swains of the village will laugh egregiously at his folly; so the critic employed to assault the poet…. But the rest of the simile is obvious, and will be apprehended at once by a person of your experience.

The fact is, that the blackbirds of letters—the harmless, kind singing creatures who line the hedge-sides and chirp and twitter as nature bade them (they can no more help singing, these poets, than a flower can help smelling sweet), have been treated much too ruthlessly by the watch-boys of the press, who have a love for flinging stones at the little innocents, and

pretend that it is their duty, and that every wren or sparrow is likely to destroy a whole field of wheat, or to turn out a monstrous bird of prey. Leave we these vain sports and savage pastimes of youth, and turn we to the benevolent philosophy of maturer age.

* * * * *

And now there is but one book left in the box, the smallest one, but oh! how much the best of all. It is the work of the master of all the English humourists now alive; the young man who came and took his place calmly at the head of the whole tribe, and who has kept it. Think of all we owe Mr. Dickens since these half-dozen years, the store of happy hours that he has made us pass, the kindly and pleasant companions whom he has introduced to us, the harmless laughter, the generous wit, the frank, manly, human love which he has taught us to feel! Every month of these years has brought us some kind token from this delightful genius. His books may have lost in art, perhaps, but could we afford to wait? Since the days when the *Spectator* was produced by a man of kindred mind and temper, what books have appeared that have taken so affectionate a hold of the English public as these? They have made millions of rich and poor happy; they might have been locked up for nine years, doubtless, and pruned here and there, and improved (which I doubt) but where would have been the reader's benefit all this time, while the author was elaborating his performance? Would the communication between the writer and the public have been what it is now —something continual, confidential, something like personal affection? I do not know whether these stories are written for future ages; many sage critics doubt on this head. There are always such conjurors to tell literary fortunes; and, to my certain knowledge, Boz, according to them, has been sinking regularly these six years. I doubt about that mysterious writing for futurity which certain big wigs prescribe. Snarl has a chance, certainly. His works, which have not been read in this age, *may* be read in future; but the receipt

for that sort of writing has never as yet been clearly ascertained. Shakespeare did not write for futurity, he wrote his plays for the same purpose which inspires the pen of Alfred Bunn, Esquire, viz., to fill his Theatre Royal. And yet we read Shakespeare now. Le Sage and Fielding wrote for their public; and through the great Dr. Johnson put his peevish protest against the fame of the latter, and voted him "a dull dog, sir,—a low fellow," yet somehow Harry Fielding has survived in spite of the critic, and Parson Adams is at this minute as real a character, as much loved by us as the old doctor himself. What a noble, divine power of genius this is, which, passing from the poet into his reader's soul, mingles with it, and there engenders, as it were, real creatures; which is as strong as history, which creates beings that take their place besides nature's own. All that we know of Don Quixote or Louis XIV we got to know in the same way—out of a book. I declare I love Sir Roger de Coverley quite as much as Izaak Walton, and have just as clear a consciousness of the looks, voice, habit, and manner of being of the one as of the other.

And so with regard to this question of futurity; if any benevolent being of the present age is imbued with a desire to know what his great-great-grandchild will think of this or that author—of Mr. Dickens especially, whose claims to fame have raised the question—the only way to settle it is by the ordinary historic method. Did not your great-great-grandfather love and delight in Don Quixote and Sancho Panza? Have they lost their vitality by their age? Don't they move laughter and awaken affection now as three hundred years ago? And so with Don Pickwick and Sancho Weller, if their gentle humours and kindly wit, and hearty benevolent natures, touch us and convince us, as it were, now, why should they not exist for our children as well as for us, and make the twenty-fifth century happy, as they have the nineteenth? Let Snarl console himself, then, as to the future.

As for the *Christmas Carol*, or any other book of a like nature which the public takes upon itself to criticise, the individual critic had quite best hold his peace. One remembers what Buonaparte replied to some Austrian critics, of much correctness and acumen, who doubted about acknowledging the French republic. I do not mean that the *Christmas Carol* is quite as brilliant or self-evident as the sun at noonday; but it is so spread over England by this time, that no sceptic, no *Fraser's Magazine*,—no, not even the godlike and ancient *Quarterly* itself (venerable, Saturnian, big-wigged dynasty!) could review it down. "Unhappy people! deluded race!" One hears the cauliflowered god exclaim, mournfully shaking the powder out of his ambrosial curls, "What strange new folly is this? What new deity do you worship? Know ye what ye do? Know ye that your new idol hath little Latin and less Greek? Know ye that he has never tasted the birch at Eton, nor trodden the flags of Carfax, nor paced the academic flats of Trumpington? Know ye that in mathematics, or logic, this wretched ignoramus is not fit to hold a candle to a wooden spoon? See ye not how, from describing law humours, he now, forsooth, will attempt the sublime? Discern ye not his faults of taste, his deplorable propensity to write blank verse? Come back to your ancient, venerable, and natural instructors. Leave this new, low and intoxicating draught at which ye rush, and let us lead you back to the old wells of classic lore. Come and repose with us there. We are your gods; we are the ancient oracles, and no mistake. Come listen to us once more, and we will sing to you the mystic numbers of *as in presenti* under the arches of the *Pons asinorum*." But the children of the present generation hear not; for they reply, "Rush to the Strand, and purchase five thousand more copies of the *Christmas Carol*."

In fact, one might as well detail the plot of the *Merry Wives of Windsor* or *Robinson Crusoe*, as recapitulate here the adventures of Scrooge the miser, and his Christmas conversion. I am not sure that the allegory is a very complete one, and protest, with the classics, against the use of blank verse

in prose; but here all objections stop. Who can listen to objections regarding such a book as this? It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it a personal kindness. The last two people I heard speak of it were women; neither knew the other, or the author, and both said, by way of criticism, "God bless him!" A Scotch philosopher, who nationally does not keep Christmas, on reading the book, sent out for a turkey, and asked two friends to dine—this is a fact! Many men were known to sit down after perusing it, and write off letters to their friends, not about business, but out of their fulness of heart, and to wish old acquaintances a happy Christmas. Had the book appeared a fortnight earlier, all the prize cattle would have been gobbled up in pure love and friendship, Epping denuded of sausages, and not a turkey left in Norfolk. His royal highness's fat stock would have fetched unheard of prices, and Alderman Bannister would have been tired of slaying. But there is a Christmas for 1844 too; the book will be as early then as now, and so let speculators look out.

As for TINY TIM, there is a certain passage in the book regarding that young gentleman, about which a man should hardly venture to speak in print or in public, any more than he would of any other affections of his private heart. There is not a reader in England but that little creature will be a bond of union between the author and him; and he will say of Charles Dickens, as the woman just now, "GOD BLESS HIM!" What a feeling is this for a writer to be able to inspire, and what a reward to reap.

M. A. T.

CHARLES KINGSLEY ON ALEXANDER SMITH AND ALEXANDER POPE

[From *Fraser's Magazine*, October, 1853]

Poems, by ALEXANDER SMITH. London, Bogue. 1853

On reading this little book, and considering all the exaggerated praise and exaggerated blame which have been lavished on it, we could not help falling into many thoughts about the history of English poetry for the last forty years, and about its future destiny. Great poets, even true poets, are becoming more and more rare among us. There are those even who say that we have none; an assertion which, as long as Mr. Tennyson lives, we shall take the liberty of denying. But, were he, which Heaven forbid, taken from us, whom have we to succeed him? And he, too, is rather a poet of the sunset than of the dawn—of the autumn than of the spring. His gorgeousness is that of the solemn and fading year; not of its youth, full of hope, freshness, gay and unconscious life. Like some stately hollyhock or dahlia of this month's gardens, he endures while all other flowers are dying; but all around is winter—a mild one, perhaps, wherein a few annuals or pretty field weeds still linger on; but, like all mild winters, especially prolific in fungi, which, too, are not without their gaudiness, even their beauty, although bred only from the decay of higher organisms, the plagiarists of the vegetable world….

"What matter, after all?" one says to oneself in despair, re-echoing Mr. Carlyle. "Man was not sent into this world to write poetry. What we want is truth—what we want is activity. Of the latter we have enough in all conscience just now. Let the former need be provided for by honest and righteous history, and as for poets, let the dead bury their dead." … And yet, after all, man will write poetry, in spite of Mr. Carlyle: nay, beings who are not men, but mere forked radishes, will write it. Man is a poetry-writing animal. Perhaps he was meant to be one. At all events, he can no more be kept from it than from eating. It is better, with Mr. Carlyle's leave, to believe that the existence of poetry indicates some universal human hunger, whether after "the beautiful," or after "fame," or after the means of paying butchers' bills, and accepting it as a necessary evil which must be committed, to see that it be committed as well, or at least a little ill, as possible. In excuse of which we may quote Mr. Carlyle against himself, reminding him of a saying in Goethe once bepraised by him in print,—"we must take care of the beautiful for the useful will take care of itself."

And never, certainly, since Pope wrote his *Dunciad*, did the beautiful require more taking care of, or evince less capacity for taking care of itself, and never, we must add, was less capacity for taking care of it evinced by its accredited guardians of the press than at this present time, if the reception given to Mr. Smith's poem is to be taken as a fair expression of "the public taste."

Now, let it be fairly understood, Mr. Alexander Smith is not the object of our reproaches: but Mr. Smith's models and flatterers. Against him we have nothing whatever to say; for him, very much indeed….

What if he has often copied…. He does not more than all schools have done, copy their own masters…. We by no means agree in the modern outcry for "originality." …

As for manner, he does sometimes, in imitating his models, out-Herod Herod. But why not? If Herod be a worthy king, let him be by all means out-Heroded, if any man can do it. One cannot have too much of a good thing. If it be right to bedizen verses with metaphors and similes which have no reference, either in tone or in subject, to the matter in hand, let there be as many of them as possible. If a saddle is a proper place for jewels, then let the seat be paved with diamonds and emeralds, and Runjeet Singh's harness maker be considered as a lofty artist, for whose barbaric splendour Mr. Peat and his Melton customers are to forswear pigskin and severe simplicity—not to say utility, and comfort. If poetic diction be different in species from plain English, then let us have it as poetical as possible, as unlike English: as ungrammatical, abrupt, insolved, transposed, as the clumsiness, carelessness, or caprice of man can make it. If it be correct to express human thought by writing whole pages of vague and bald abstract metaphyric, and then trying to explain them by concrete concetti; which bear an entirely accidental and mystical likeness to the notion which they are to illustrate, then let the metaphysic be as abstract as possible, the concetti as fanciful and far-fetched as possible. If Marino and Cowley be greater poets than Ariosto and Milton, let young poets imitate the former with might and main, and avoid spoiling their style by any perusal of the too-intelligible common sense of the latter. If Byron's moral (which used to be thought execrable) be really his great excellence, his style (which used to be thought almost perfect) unworthy of this age of progress, then let us have his moral without his style, his matter without his form; or—that we may be sure of never falling for a moment into his besetting sin of terseness, grace, and completeness—without any form at all. If poetry, in order to be worthy of the nineteenth century, ought to be as unlike as possible to Homer or Sophocles, Virgil or Horace, Shakespeare or Spenser, Dante or Tasso, let those too idolised names be rased henceforth from the calendar; let the *Ars Poetica*, be consigned to flames by Mr. Calcraft, and Bartinus Scriblerus's

Art of Sinking placed forthwith on the list of the Committee of the Council for Education, that not a working man in England may be ignorant that, whatsoever superstitions about art may have haunted the benighted heathens who built the Parthenon, *nous avons changés tout cela*. In one word, if it be best and most fitting to write poetry in the style in which almost everyone has been trying to write it since Pope and plain sense went out, and Shelley and the seventh heaven came in; let it be so written: and let him who most perfectly so "sets the age to music," be presented by the assembled guild of critics, not with the obsolete and too classical laurel, but with an electro-plated brass medal, bearing the due inscription, *Ars est nescire artem*. And when, in twelve months' time, he finds himself forgotten, perhaps descried, for the sake of the next aspirant, let him reconsider himself, try whether, after all, the common sense of the many will not prove a juster and a firmer standing-ground than the sentimentality and bad taste of the few, and read Alexander Pope.

In Pope's writings, whatsoever he may not find, he will find the very excellences after which our young poets strive in vain, produced by their seeming opposites, which are now despised and discarded; naturalness produced by studious art; daring sublimity by strict self-restraint; depth by clear simplicity; pathos by easy grace; and a morality infinitely more merciful, as well as more righteous, than the one now in vogue among poetasters, by honest faith in God….

Yes, Pope knew, as well as Wordsworth and our "Naturalisti," that no physical fact was so mean or coarse as to be below the dignity of poetry—when in its right place. He could draw a pathos and sublimity out of the dirty inn-chamber, such as Wordsworth never elicited from tubs and daffodils—because he could use them according to the rules of art, which are the rules of sound reason and of true taste….

The real cause of the modern vagueness is rather to be found in shallow and unsound culture, and in that inability, or carelessness about seeing any object clearly, which besets our poets just now; as the cause of antique clearness lies in the nobler and healthier manhood, in the severer and more methodic habits of thought, the sounder philosophic and critical training which enabled Spenser and Milton to draw up a state paper, or to discourse deep metaphysics, with the same manful possession of their subject which gives grace and completeness to the *Penseroso* or the *Epithalmion*. And if our poets have their doubts, they should remember, that those to whom doubt and enquiry are real and stern, are not inclined to sing about them till they can sing poems of triumph over them. There has no temptation taken our modern poets save that which is common to man—the temptation of wishing to make the laws of the universe and of art fit them, as they do not feel inclined to make themselves fit the laws, or care to find them out….

The "poetry of doubt," however pretty, would stand us in little stead if we were threatened with a second Armada. It will conduce little to the valour, "virtues," manhood of any Englishman to be informed by any poet, even in the most melodious verse, illustrated by the most startling and pan-cosmic metaphors, "See what a highly organised and peculiar stomach-ache I have had! Does it not prove indisputably that I am not as other men are?" What gospel there can be in such a message to any honest man who has either to till the earth, plan a railroad, colonise Australia, or fight the despots, is hard to discover. Hard indeed to discover how this most practical, and therefore most epical of ages, is to be "set to music," when all those who talk about so doing persist obstinately in poring, with introverted eyes, over the state of their own digestion, or creed.

What man wants, what art wants, perhaps what the maker of the both wants, is a poet who shall begin by confessing that he is as other men are, and sing about things which concern all men, in language which all men

can understand. This is the only road to that gift of prophecy which most young poets are nowadays in such a hurry to arrogate to themselves….

There is just now as wide a divorce between poetry and the commonsense of all time, as there is between poetry and modern knowledge. Our poets are not merely vague and confused, they are altogether fragmentary— *disjecta membra poetarum*; they need some uniting idea. And what idea?

Our answer will probably be greeted with a laugh. Nevertheless we answer simply. What our poets want is faith. There is little or no faith nowadays. And without faith there can be no real art, for art is the outward expression of firm, coherent belief….

In the meanwhile, poets write about poets, and poetry, and guiding the age, and curbing the world, and waking it, and thrilling it, and making it start, and weep, and tremble, and self-conceit only knows what else; and yet the age is not guided, or the world curbed, or thrilled, or waked, or anything else, by them. Why should it be? Curb and thrill the world? The world is just now a most practical world; and these men are utterly unpractical. The age is given up to physical science: these men disregard and outrage it in every page by their false analogies….

Let the poets of the new school consider carefully Wolfe's "Sir John Moore," Campbell's "Hohenlinden," "Mariners of England," and "Rule Britannia," Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and "Bridge of Sighs," and then ask themselves, as men who would be poets, were it not better to have written any one of these glorious lyrics than all which John Keats has left behind him; and let them be sure that, howsoever they may answer the question to themselves, the sound heart of the English people has already made its choice, and that when that beautiful "Hero and Leander," in which Hood has outrivalled the conceit-mongers at their own weapons, by virtue of that

very terseness, clearness, and manliness which they neglect, has been gathered to the limbo of the Crashawes and Marines, his "Song of the Shirt" and his "Bridge of Sighs," will be esteemed by great new English nations far beyond the seas, for what they are—two of the most noble lyric poems ever written by an English pen. If our poetasters talk with Wordsworth of the dignity and pathos of the commonest human things, they will find them there in perfection; if they talk about the cravings of the new time, they will find them there. If they want the truly sublime and awful, they will find them there also. But they will find none of their own favourite concetti; hardly even a metaphor; no taint of this new poetic diction into which we have now fallen, after all our abuse of the far more manly and sincere "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century; they will find no loitering by the way to argue and moralise, and grumble at Providence, and show off the author's own genius and sensibility; they will find, in short, two real works of art, earnest, melodious, self-forgetful, knowing clearly what they want to say, saying it in the shortest, the simplest, the calmest, the most finished words. Saying it—rather taught to say it. For if that "divine inspiration of poets," of which the poetasters make such rash and irreverent boastings, have, indeed, as all ages have held, any reality corresponding to it, it will rather be bestowed on such works as these, appeals from an unrighteous man to a righteous God, than on men whose only claim to celestial help seems to be that mere passionate sensibility, which our modern Draco once described when speaking of poor John Keats, as "an infinite hunger after all manner of pleasant things, crying to the universe, 'oh, that thou wert one great lump of sugar, that I might suck thee!'"

ANONYMOUS

NOVELS FOR CHRISTMAS, 1837

[From *Fraser's Magazine*, January, 1838]

If[1] against the inroads of the evangelical party the orthodox church has need of a defender, it hardly would wish, we should think, to be assisted *tali auxilio*. Mrs. Trollope has not exactly the genius which is best calculated to support the Church of England, or to argue upon so grave a subject as that on which she has thought proper to write.

[1] *The Vicar of Wrexhill*. By Mrs. Trollope. London, 1837.

With a keen eye, a very sharp tongue, a firm belief, doubtless, in the high church doctrines, and a decent reputation from the authorship of half-a-dozen novels, or other light works, Mrs. Trollope determined on no less an undertaking than to be the champion of oppressed Orthodoxy. These are feeble arms for one who would engage in such a contest, but our fair Mrs. Trollope trusted entirely in her own skill, and the weapon with which she proposed to combat a strong party is no more nor less than this novel of *The Vicar of Wrexhill*. It is a great pity that the heroine ever set forth on such a foolish errand; she has only harmed herself and her cause (as a bad advocate always will), and had much better have remained home, pudding-

making or stocking-mending, than have meddled with matters which she understands so ill.

In the first place (we speak it with due respect for the sex), she is guilty of a fault which is somewhat too common among them; and having very little, except prejudice, on which to found an opinion, she makes up for want of argument by a wonderful fluency of abuse. A woman's religion is chiefly that of the heart, and not of the head. She goes through, for the most part, no tedious process of reasoning, no dreadful stages of doubt, no changes of faith: she loves God as she loves her husband—by a kind of instinctive devotion. Faith is a passion with her, not a calculation; so that, in the faculty of believing, though they far exceed the other sex, in the power of convincing they fall far short of them.

Oh! we repeat once more, that ladies would make puddings and mend stockings! that they would not meddle with religion (what is styled religion, we mean), except to pray to God, to live quietly among their families, and move lovingly among their neighbours! Mrs. Trollope, for instance, who sees so keenly the follies of the other party—how much vanity there is in Bible Meetings—how much sin even at Missionary Societies—how much cant and hypocrisy there is among those who desecrate the awful name of God, by mixing it with their mean interests and petty projects—Mrs. Trollope cannot see that there is any hypocrisy or bigotry on her part. She, who designates the rival party as false, and wicked, and vain—tracing all their actions to the basest motives, declaring their worship of God to be only one general hypocrisy, their conduct at home one fearful scene of crime, is blind to the faults on her own side. Always bitter against the Pharisees, she does as the Pharisees do. It is vanity, very likely, which leads these people to use God's name so often, and to devote all to perdition who do not coincide in their peculiar notions. Is Mrs. Trollope less vain than they when she declares, and merely *declares*, her own to be the real creed,

and stigmatises its rival so fiercely? Is Mrs. Trollope serving God, in making abusive licencious pictures of those who serve Him in a different way? Once, as Mrs. Trollope has read—it was a long time ago!—there was a woman taken in sin; the people brought her before a great Teacher of Truth, who lived in those days. Shall we not kill her? said they; the laws command that all adulteresses be killed. We can fancy a Mrs. Trollope in the crowd, shouting, "oh, the wretch! oh, the abominable harlot! kill her, by all means—stoning is really too good for her!" But what did the Divine Teacher say? He was quite as anxious to prevent the crime as any Mrs. Trollope of them all; but he did not even make an allusion to it—he did not describe the manner in which the poor creature was caught—He made no speech to detail the indecencies which she committed, or to raise the fury of the mob against her—He said "let the man who is without sin himself throw the first stone!" Whereupon the Pharisees and Mrs. Trollope slunk away, for they knew they were no better than she. There was as great a sin in His eyes as that of the poor erring woman—it was the sin of pride.

Mrs. Trollope may make a licentious book, of which the heroes and heroines are all of the evangelical party; and it may be true, that there are scoundrels belonging to that party as to every other; but her shameful error has been in fixing upon the evangelical *class* as an object of satire, making them necessarily licentious and hypocritical, and charging everyone of them with the vices which belong to only a very few of all sects….

There are some books, we are told, in the libraries of Roman Catholic theologians, which, though written for the most devout purposes, are so ingeniously obscene as to render them quite dangerous for common eyes. The groom, in the old story, had never learned the art of greasing horses' teeth, to prevent their eating oats, until the confessor, in interrogating him as to his sins, asked him the question. The next time the groom came to confess, he *had* greased the horses' teeth. It was the holy father who taught

him, by the very fact of warning him against it. By which we mean, that there are some scenes of which it is better not to speak at all.

Our fair moralist, however, has no such squeamishness. She will show up these odious evangelicals; she will expose them and chastise them, wherever they be. So have we seen, in that beautiful market in Thames Street, whither the mariners of England bring the glittering produce of their nets—so have we seen, we say, in Billingsgate, a nymph attacking another of her sisterhood. How keenly she detects and proclaims the number and enormity of her rival's faults! How eloquently she enlarges upon the gin she has drunk, the children she has confided to the parish, the watchmen whose noses she has broken, and the bridewells which she has visited in succession! No one can but admire the lady's eloquence and talent in conducting the case for the prosecution; no one will, perhaps, doubt the guilt of the hapless object on whom her wrath is vented. But, with all her rage for morality, had not that fair accused have better left the matter alone? That torrent of slang and oath, O nymph! falls ill from thy lips, which should never open but for a soft word or a smile; that accurate description of vice, sweet orator [-tress or-trix]! only shows that thou thyself art but too well acquainted with scenes which thy pure eyes should never have beheld. And when we come to the matter in dispute—a simple question of mackerel —O, Mrs. Trollope! Why, why should you abuse other people's fish, and not content yourself with selling your *own*….

There can be little doubt as to the cleverness of this novel, but, coming from a women's pen, it is most odiously and disgustingly indecent. As a party attack, it is an entire failure; and as a representation of a very large portion of English Christians, a shameful and wicked slander.

BULWER'S "ERNEST MALTRAVERS"

To talk of *Ernest Maltravers* now, is to rake up a dead man's ashes. The poor creature came into the world almost still-born, and, though he has hardly been before the public for a month, is forgotten as much as *Rienzi* or the *Disowned*. What a pity that Mr. Bulwer will not learn wisdom with age, and confine his attention to subjects at once more grateful to the public and more suitable to his own powers! He excels in the *genre* of Paul de Kock, and is always striving after the style of Plato; he has a keen perception of the ridiculous and, like Liston or Cruikshank, and other comic artists, persists that his real vein is the sublime. What a number of sparkling magazine-papers, what an outpouring of fun and satire, might we have had from Neddy Bulwer, had he not thought fit to turn moralist, metaphysician, politician, poet, and be Edward Lytton, Heaven—knows—what Bulwer, Esquire and M.P., a dandy, a philosopher, a spouter at Radical meetings. We speak feelingly, for we knew the youth at Trinity Hall, and have a tenderness even for his tomfooleries. He has thrown away the better part of himself—his great inclination for the LOW, namely; if he would but leave off scents for his handkerchief, and oil for his hair; if he would but confine himself to three clean shirts a week, a couple of coats in a year, a beefsteak and onions for dinner, his beaker a pewter-pot, his carpet a sanded floor, how much might be made of him even yet! An occasional pot of porter too much—a black eye, in a tap-room fight with a carman—a night in the watch-house—or a surfeit produced by Welsh-rabbit and gin and beer,

might, perhaps, redden his fair face and swell his slim waist; but the *mental* improvement which he would acquire under such treatment— the intellectual pluck and vigour which he would attain by the stout diet—the manly sports and conversation in which he would join at the Coal-Hole, or the Widow's, are far better for him than the feeble fribble of the Reform Club (not inaptly called "The Hole in the Wall"); the windy French dinners, which, as we take it, are his usual fare; and, above all, the unwholesome Radical garbage which form the political food of himself and his clique in the House of Commons.

For here is the evil of his present artificial courses—the humbug required to keep up his position as dandy, politician, and philosopher (in neither of which latter characters the man is in earnest), must get into *his heart* at last; and then his trade is ruined. A little more politics and Plato, and the natural disappears altogether from Mr. Bulwer's writings: the individual man becomes as undistinguishable amidst the farrago of philosophy in which he has chosen to envelope himself, as a cutlet in the sauces of a French cook. The idiosyncracy of the mutton perishes under the effects of the adjuncts: even so the moralising, which may be compared to the mushrooms, of Mr. Bulwer's style; the poetising, which may be likened unto the flatulent turnips and carrots; and the politics, which are as the gravy, reeking of filthy garlic, greasy with rancid oil;—even so, we say, pursuing this savoury simile to its fullest extent, the natural qualities of young Pelham—the wholesome and juicy *mutton of the mind*, is shrunk and stewed away.

Or, to continue in this charming vein of parable, the author of *Pelham* may be likened to Beau Tibbs. Tibbs, as we all remember, would pass for a pink of fashion, and had a wife whom he presented to the world as a paragon of virtue and *ton*, and who was but the cast-off mistress of a lord. Mr. Bulwer's philosophy is his Mrs. Tibbs; he thrusts her forward into the company of her betters, as if her rank and reputation never admitted of a

question. To all his literary undertakings this goddess of his accompanies him; what a cracked, battered truly she is! with a person and morals that would suit Vinegar yard, and a chastity that would be hooted in Drury Lane.

The morality which Mr. Bulwer has acquired in his researches, political and metaphysical, is of the most extraordinary nature. For one who is always preaching of Truth of Beauty, the dulness of his moral sense is perfectly ludicrous. He cannot see that the hero into whose mouth he places his favourite metaphysical gabble—his dissertations about the stars, the passions, the Greek plays, and what not—his eternal whine about what he calls the good and the beautiful—is a fellow as mean and paltry as can be well imagined; a man of rant, and not of action; foolishly infirm of purpose, and strong only in desire; whose beautiful is a tawdry strumpet, and whose good would be crime in the eyes of an honest man. So much for the portrait of Ernest Maltravers: as for the artist, we cannot conceive a man to have failed more completely. He wishes to paint an amiable man, and he succeeds in drawing a scoundrel: he says he will give us the likeness of a genius, and it is only the picture of a *humbug*.

Ernest Maltravers is an eccentric and enthusiastic young man, to whom we are introduced upon his return from a German university. Fond of wild adventure and solitary rambles, we find him upon a heath, wandering alone, tired, and benighted. The two first chapters of the book are in Mr. Bulwer's very best manner; the description of the lone hut to which the lad comes—the ruffian who inhabits it—the designs which he has upon the life of his new guest, and the manner in which his daughter defeats them, are told with admirable liveliness and effect. The young man escapes, and with him the girl who had prevented his murder. Both are young, interesting, and tender hearted; she loves but him, and would die of starvation without him. Ernest Maltravers cannot resist the claim of so unprotected a creature; he hires a cottage for her, and a writing-master. He is a young man of genius, and

generous dispositions; he is a Christian, and instructs the ignorant Alice in the awful truth of his religion; moreover he is deep in poetry, philosophy, and the German metaphysics. How should such a Christian instruct an innocent and beautiful child, his pupil? What should such a philosopher do? Why seduce her, to be sure! After a deal of namby-pamby Platonism, the girl, as Mr. Bulwer says, "goes to the deuce." The expression is as charming as the morality, and appears amidst a quantity of the very finest writing about the good and the beautiful, youth, love, passion, nature and so forth. It is curious how rapidly one turns from good to bad in this book. How clever the descriptions are! how neatly some of the minor events and personalities are hit off! and yet, how astonishingly vile and contemptible the chief part of it is!—that part, we mean, which contains the adventures of the hero, and, of course, the choice reflections of the author.

The declamations about virtue are endless, as soon as Maltravers appears upon the scene; and yet we find him committing the agreeable little *faux pas* of which we have just spoken. In one place, we have him making violent love to another man's wife; in another place, raging for blood like a tiger and swearing for revenge….

It is curious and painful to read Mr. Bulwer's [philosophy], and to mark the easy vanity with which virtue is assumed here, self-knowledge arrogated, and a number of windy sentences, which really possess no meaning, are gravely delivered with all the emphasis of truth and the air of profound conviction.

"I have learned," cries our precious philosopher, "to lean on my own soul, and not look eleswhere [Transcriber's note: sic] for the reeds that a wind can break!" And what has he learned by leaning on his own soul? Is it to be happier than others? or to be better? Not he!—he is as wretched and wicked a dog as any unhung. He "leans on his own soul," and makes love to

the Countess and seduces Alice Darvell. A ploughboy is a better philosopher and moralist than this mouthing Maltravers, with his boasted love of mankind (which reduces itself to a very coarse love of _woman_kind), and his scorn of "the false gods and miserable creeds" of the world, and his soul "lifting its crest to heaven!" A Catholic whipping himself before a stone-image, a Brahmin dangling on a hook, or standing on one leg for a year, has a higher notion of God than this ranting fool, who is always prating about his own perfections and his divine nature; the one is humble, at least, though blind; the other is proud of his very imperfections and glories in his folly. What does this creature know of virtue, who finds it *by leaning on his own soul*, forsooth? What does he know of God, who, in looking for him, can see but himself, steeped in sin, bloated and swollen with monstrous pride, and strutting before the world and the creator as a maker of systems, a layer down of morals, and a preacher of beauty and truth?…

[Some of the] characters are excellently drawn; how much better than "*their lips spake of sentiment, and their eyes applied it*!" How soon these philosophers begin ogling! how charmingly their unceasing gabble about beauty and virtue is exemplified in their actions! Mr. Bulwer's philosophy is like a French palace—it is tawdry, shady, splendid; but, *gare aux nez sensibles*! one is always reminded of the sewer. "Their lips spoke sentiment, and their eyes applied it." O you naughty, naughty Mr. Bulwer!

WILLIAM JOHN FOX

The dedicatory inscription in the volume of *The Monthly Repository*, in which the following review appears, will indicate—in a few words—the motives inspiring the editor, W. J. Fox, in his journalistic career:— "To the Working People of Great Britain and Ireland; who, whether they produce the means of physical support and enjoyment, or aid the progress of moral, political, and social reform and improvement, are fellow-labourers for the well-being of the entire community."

* * * * *

Pauline was published, when Browning was 21, at his aunt's expense. It secured only *one* favourable notice, here printed; while the author and his sister deliberately destroyed the unsold copies.

W. J. FOX ON BROWNING

[From *The Monthly Repository*, 1833]

Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession. London, Saunders & Otley. 1833

The most deeply interesting adventures, the wildest vicissitudes, the most daring explorations, the mightiest magic, the fiercest conflicts, the brightest triumphs, and the most affecting catastrophes, are those of the spiritual world….

The knowledge of mind is the first of sciences; the records of its formation and workings are the most important of histories; and it is eminently a subject for poetical exhibition. The annals of a poet's mind are poetry. Nor has there ever been a genuine bard, who was not himself more poetical than any of his productions. They are emanations of his essence. He himself is, or has been, all that he truly and touchingly, *i.e.*, poetically, describes. Wordsworth, indeed, never carried a pedlar's pack, nor did Byron ever command a pirate ship, or Coleridge shoot an albatross; but there were times and moods in which their thoughts intently realised, and identified themselves with the reflective wanderer, the impetuous Corsair, and the ancient mariner. They felt *their* feelings, thought *their* thoughts, burned with *their* passions, dreamed *their* dreams, and lived their lives, or died their deaths. In relation to his creations, the poet is the omnific spirit in whom they have their being. All their vitality must exist in his life. He only,

in them, displays to us fragments of himself. The poem, in which a great poet should reveal the whole of himself to mankind would be a study, a delight, and a power, for which there is yet no parallel; and around which the noblest creations of the noblest writers would range themselves as subsidiary luminaries.

These thoughts have been suggested by the work before us, which, though evidently a hasty and imperfect sketch, has truth and life in it, which gave us the thrill, and laid hold of us with the power, the sensation of which has never yet failed us as a test of genius. Whoever the anonymous author may be, he is a poet. A pretender to science cannot always be safely judged of by a brief publication, for the knowledge of some facts does not imply the knowledge of other facts; but the claimant of poetic honours may generally be appreciated by a few pages, often by a few lines, for if they be poetry, he is a poet. We cannot judge of the house by the brick, but we can judge of the statue of Hercules by its foot. We felt certain of Tennyson, before we saw the book, by a few verses which had straggled into a newspaper; we are not less certain of the author of Pauline.

Pauline is the recipient of the confessions: the hero is as anonymous as the author, and this is no matter, for *poet* is the title both of the one and the other. The confessions have nothing in them which needs names: the external world is only reflected in them in its faintest shades; its influences are only described after they have penetrated into the intellect. We have never read anything more purely confessional. The whole composition is of the spirit, spiritual. The scenery is in the chambers of thought: the agencies are powers and passions; the events are transitions from one state of spiritual existence to another. And yet the composition is not dreamy; there is on it a deep stamp of reality. Still less is it characterised by coldness. It has visions that we love to look upon, and tones that touch the inmost heart till it responds.

The poet's confessions are introduced with an analysis of his spiritual constitution, in which he is described as having an intense consciousness of individuality, combined with a sense of power, a self-supremacy, and a "principle of restlessness which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel all"; of this essential self, imagination is described as the characteristic quality; an imagination, steady and unfailing in its power. A "yearning after God," or supreme and universal good, unconsciously cherished through the earlier stages of the history, keeps this mind from utterly dissipating itself; and, which seems to us the only point in which the coherence fails, there is added an unaptness for love, a mere perception of the beautiful, the perception being felt more precious than its object….

And now when he has run the whole toilsome yet giddy round and arrived at the goal, there arises, even though that goal be religion, or because it is religion, a yearning after human sympathies and affections, which would not have assorted with any state or moment of the previous experience; he could not have loved before; at one time it would have been only a fancy, a cold, and yet perhaps extravagant imagining; at another, a low and selfish passion. Some souls are purified *by* love, others are purified *for* love. Othello needed not Desdemona to listen to his tale of disastrous chances; they were only external perils, rapid by elevated station; but the mind that has gone through more than his vicissitudes, been in deeper dangers, and deadlier struggles, even when it rests at last in a far higher repose and dignity, yearns for some one who will "seriously incline" to listen to the "strange eventful history," one who will sympathise and soothe, who will receive the confession, and give the absolution of heaven its best earthly ratification, that of a pure and loving heart. The poem is addressed to Pauline; with her it begins, and ends; and her presence is felt throughout, as that of a second conscience, wounded by evil, but never stern, and incorporate in a form of beauty, which blends and softens the strong

contrasts of different portions of the poem, so that all might be murmured by the breath of affection.

The author cannot expect such a poem as this to be popular, to make a "hit," to produce a "sensation." The public are but slow in recognising the claims of Tennyson whom in some respects he resembles; and the common eye scarcely yet discerns among the laurel-crowned, the form of Shelley, who seems (how justly, we stop not now to discuss), to have been the god of his early idolatory. Whatever inspiration may have been upon him from that deity, the mysticism of the original oracles has been happily avoided. And whatever resemblance he may bear to Tennyson (a fellow worshipper probably at the same shrine) he owes nothing of the perhaps inferior melody of his verse to an employment of archaisms which it is difficult to defend from the charge of affectation. But he has not given himself the chance for popularity which Tennyson did, and which it is evident that he easily might have done. His poem stands alone, with none of those light but taking accompaniments, songs that sing themselves, sketches that everybody knows, light little lyrics, floating about like humming birds, around the trunk and foliage of the poem itself; and which would attract so many eyes, and delight so many ears, that will be slow to perceive the higher beauty of that composition, and to whom a sycamore is no sycamore, unless it be "musical with bees."

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

(1785-1859)

De Quincey has been said to have "taken his place in our literature as the author of about 150 magazine articles," and, though chiefly remembered by his *Confessions of an Opium Eater* and by his wonderful experiments in "impassioned prose," there can be no question that his critical work occupied much of his attention, and was nearly always original. In many respects his point of view was perverse, and towards his contemporaries occasionally spiteful; while his tendency to dwell upon disputed points was apt to obscure the general impression.

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It is interesting to compare his unmeasured condemnation of Pope with Kingsley's eulogy: since both were, more or less, directly inspired by the contrast of eighteenth century correctness to the poetical gospel of the Lake Poets. From the two articles we can obtain a fair and emphatic statement of "both sides of the case."

DE QUINCEY ON POPE

[From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, May, 1851]

Whom shall we pronounce a fit writer to be laid before an auditory of working-men, as a model of what is just in composition—fit either for conciliating their regard to literature at first or afterwards for sustaining it? The qualifications for such a writer are apparently these two; first, that he should deal chiefly with the elder and elementary affections of man, and under those relations which concern man's grandest capacities; secondly, that he should treat his subject with solemnity, and not with sneer—with earnestness, as one under a prophet's burden of impassioned truth, and not with the levity of a girl hunting a chance-started caprice. I admire Pope in the very highest degree; but I admire him as a pyrotechnic artist for producing brilliant and evanescent effects out of elements that have hardly a moment's life within them. There is a flash and a startling explosion, then there is a dazzling coruscation, all purple and gold; the eye aches under the suddenness of a display that, springing like a burning arrow out of darkness, rushes back into the darkness with arrowy speed, and in a moment is all over. Like festal shows, or the hurrying music of such shows—

It *was*, and it is not.

Untruly, therefore, was it ever fancied of Pope, that he belonged by his classification to the family of the Drydens. Dryden had within him a

principle of continuity which was not satisfied without lingering upon his own thoughts, brooding over them, and oftentimes pursuing them through their unlinkings with the *sequaciousness* (pardon a Coleridgian word) that belongs to some process of creative nature, such as the unfolding of a flower. But Pope was all jets and tongues of flame; all showers of scintillation and sparkle. Dryden followed, genially, an impulse of his healthy nature. Pope obeyed, spasmodically, an overmastering febrile paroxysm. Even in these constitutional differences between the two are written and are legible the corresponding necessities of "utter falsehood in Pope, and of loyalty to truth in Dryden." Strange it is to recall this one striking fact, that if once in his life Dryden might reasonably have been suspected of falsehood, it was in the capital matter of religion. He *ratted* from his Protestant faith; and according to the literal origin of that figure he *ratted*; for he abjured it as rats abjure a ship in which their instinct of divination has deciphered a destiny of ruin, and at the very moment when Popery wore the promise of a triumph that might, at any rate, have lasted his time. Dryden was a papist by apostacy; and perhaps, not to speak uncharitably, upon some bias from self-interest. Pope, on the other hand, was a Papist by birth, and by a tie of honour; and he resisted all temptations to desert his afflicted faith, which temptations lay in bribes of great magnitude prospectively, and in persecutions for the present that were painfully humiliating. How base a time-server does Dryden appear on the one side! on the other, how much of a martyr should we be disposed to pronounce Pope! And yet, for all that, such is the overruling force of a nature originally sincere, the apostate Dryden wore upon his brow the grace of sincerity, whilst the pseudo-martyr Pope, in the midst of actual fidelity to his church, was at his heart a traitor—in the very oath of his allegiance to his spiritual mistress had a lie upon his lips, scoffed at her while kneeling in homage to her pretensions, and secretly forswore her doctrines while suffering insults in her service.

The differences as to truth and falsehood lay exactly where by all the external symptoms they ought *not* to have lain. But the reason for this anomaly was that to Dryden sincerity had been a perpetual necessity of his intellectual nature, whilst Pope, distracted by his own activities of mind, living in an irreligious generation, and beset by infidel friends, had early lost his anchorage of traditional belief; and yet, upon honourable scruple of fidelity to the suffering Church of his fathers, he sought often to dissemble the fact of his own scepticism, which often he thirsted ostentatiously to parade. Through a motive of truthfulness he became false. And in this particular instance he would, at any rate, have become false, whatever had been the native constitution of his mind. It was a mere impossibility to reconcile any real allegiance to his church with his known irreverence to religion. But upon far more subjects than this Pope was habitually false to the quality of his thoughts, always insincere, never by any accident in earnest, and consequently many times caught in ruinous self-contradiction. Is that the sort of writer to furnish an advantageous study for the precious leisure, precious as rubies, of the toil-worn artisan.

The root and pledge of this falseness in Pope lay in a disease of his mind, which he (like the Roman poet Horace) mistook for a feature of praeter-natural strength; and this disease was the incapacity of self-determination towards any paramount or abiding *principles*. Horace, in a well-known passage, had congratulated himself upon this disease as upon a trophy of philosophical emancipation:

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes:

which words Pope translates, and applies to himself in his English adaptation of this epistle—

But ask not to what doctors I apply—
Sworn to no master, of no sect am I.
As drives the storm, at any door I knock;
And house with Montaigne now, and now with Locke.

That is, neither one poet nor the other having, as regarded philosophy, any internal principle of gravitation or determining impulse to draw him in one direction rather than another, was left to the random control of momentary taste, accident, or caprice; and this indetermination of pure, unballasted levity both Pope and Horace mistook for a special privilege of philosophic strength. Others, it seems, were chained and coerced by certain fixed aspects of truth, and their efforts were over-ruled accordingly in one uniform line of direction. But *they*, the two brilliant poets, fluttered on butterfly wings to the right and the left, obeying no guidance but that of some instant and fugitive sensibility to some momentary phasis of beauty. In this dream of drunken eclecticism, and in the original possibility of such an eclecticism, lay the ground of that enormous falsehood which Pope practised from youth to age. An eclectic philosopher already, in the very title which he assumes, proclaims his self-complacency in the large liberty of error purchased by the renunciation of all controlling principles. Having served the towing-line which connected him with any external force of guiding and compulsory truth, he is free to go astray in any one of ten thousand false radiations from the true centre of rest. By his own choice he is wandering in a forest all but pathless,

—ubi passim Pallantes error recto de tramite
pellit;

and a forest not of sixty days' journey, like that old Hercynian forest of Caesar's time, but a forest which sixty generations have not availed to traverse or familiarise in any one direction….

Here would be the most advantageous and *remunerative* station to take for one who should undertake a formal exposure of Pope's hollow-heartedness; that is, it would most commensurately reward the pains and difficulties of such an investigation. But it would be too long a task for this situation, and it would be too polemic. It would move through a jungle of controversies…. Instead of this I prefer, as more amusing, as less elaborate, and as briefer, to expose a few of Pope's *personal* falsehoods, and falsehoods as to the notorieties of *fact*. Truth speculative often-times, drives its roots into depth, so dark that the falsifications to which it is liable, though detected, cannot always be exposed to the light of day—the result is known, but not therefore seen. Truth personal, on the other hand, may easily be made to confront its falsifier, not with reputation only, but with the visible *shame* of refutation. Such shame would settle upon *every* page of Pope's satires and moral epistles, oftentimes upon every couplet, if any censor, armed with an adequate knowledge of the facts, were to prosecute the inquest. And the general impression from such an inquest would be, that Pope never delineated a character, nor uttered a sentiment, nor breathed an aspiration, which he would not willingly have recast, have retracted, have abjured or trampled underfoot with the curses assigned to heresy, if by such an act he could have added a hue of brilliancy to his colouring or a new depth to his shadows. There is nothing he would not have sacrificed, not the most solemn of his opinions, nor the most pathetic memorial from his personal experience, in return for a sufficient consideration, which consideration meant always with *him* poetic effect. It is not, as too commonly is believed, that he was reckless of other people's feelings; so far from *that*, he had a morbid *facility* in his kindness; and in cases where he had no reason to suspect any lurking hostility, he showed even a paralytic benignity. But, simply and constitutionally, he was incapable of a sincere thought or a sincere emotion. Nothing that ever he uttered, were it even a prayer to God, but he had a fancy for reading it backwards. And he was

evermore false, not as loving or preferring falsehood, but as one who could not in his heart perceive much real difference between what people affected to call falsehood, and what they affected to call truth.

THE END

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