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# BRITISH WRITERS ON CLASSIC LANDS

A LITERARY SKETCH

BY THE  
HON. ALBERT S. G. CANNING

*Author of*

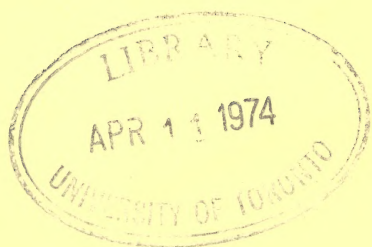
"HISTORY IN SCOTT'S NOVELS," "SHAKESPEARE STUDIED  
IN SIX PLAYS," ETC., ETC.

"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge  
shall be increased."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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## Prefatory Note

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THIS work is not intended for classical scholars so much as for general readers, to whom, I hope, it may prove useful.

A. S. G. CANNING.

LONDON, 1907.





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## CHAPTER I





# British Writers on Classic Lands

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## CHAPTER I

**D**URING the last century the most celebrated countries of the ancient world in Western Asia, Northern Africa and South-Eastern Europe have evidently been more explored, examined, and written about than at any previous period; yet their elucidation owed comparatively little to the natives of these interesting lands. Neither the Arabs in Asia or Africa, nor the Turks or Persians, or even the modern Greeks, have given much assistance in the investigation of their ancestral countries. This grand enterprise was chiefly, if not mainly, due to the learning, energy, and resources of the western European nations. It was from Britain, France, Germany, and Italy that industrious explorers, animated by literary instruction and strengthened by the warlike powers

of their rulers over sea and land, have chiefly brought to light the many partly concealed wonders of the ancient world, while to Spaniards and Portuguese the discovery and conquest of the larger part of America were mostly due. These last two nations, however, as if exhausted or engrossed by their enterprises in the New World, have left both the peaceful investigation, as well as the military conquest of the Old, almost entirely to northern and western Europeans. The ancient lands of Assyria, Egypt, and Palestine have found, among many others during the nineteenth century, the British writers, George Rawlinson and Austen Layard, enthusiastic scholars, combining the knowledge of classical writers with the energy of enterprising travellers. These men, living fortunately in a time of prevailing Christian power or influence, were thereby protected, strengthened, and encouraged by their European rulers and fellow-countrymen. Thus aided by such national advantages these writers, as well as some subsequent ones, were enabled to impart safely the results of their efforts in works of the highest antiquarian, as well as historical, value. Among the most successful of British explorers and discoverers in the last century are Rawlinson in his translation of Herodotus, the great "Father of History," and Layard by his discoveries in Assyria.

Of their peculiar importance in relation to those in other lands Layard observes<sup>1</sup>:

“Through them may be traced the origin of many arts, of many mystics and symbols and of many traditions, afterwards perfected and made familiar to us through the genius of the Greeks. . . . We knew nothing of the civilisation of the Assyrians except what could be gathered from casual notices scattered through the works of the Greeks. From their evidence, indeed, we are led to believe that the inhabitants of Assyria had attained a high degree of culture at a very remote period. The testimony of the Bible and the monuments of the Egyptians on which the conquests of that people over Asiatic nations are recorded, lead to the same conclusion.” . . .

These industrious and finally successful explorers have indeed enlightened all learned Europe, but especially Britain, by published accounts of their antiquarian researches, which, though guided by historical knowledge, were yet practically successful through their country's political power and far-extended influence. The two most eminent of ancient Greek writers, Homer and Herodotus, the poet and historian, have been, perhaps, more fully examined, appreciated, and made known by British writers than by those of any other nation. The History of Herodotus, comparatively ignored or distrusted even by his fellow-countrymen in

<sup>1</sup> “Nineveh and its Remains,” by Austen Layard. Vol. ii. chap. i.

mediæval times, is now, through the medium of translation, spread throughout the whole learned world of Europe, chiefly owing to the industrious efforts of accomplished and travelled Englishmen. The poet Pope and the fourteenth Earl of Derby have in different periods rivalled each other in relative translations of Homer's "Iliad," while Herodotus, long under-valued, and sometimes termed the Father of Lies, rather than of History, has probably been more understood and generally appreciated by Europeans in the last century than ever before. Rawlinson, in his learned Preface,<sup>1</sup> says of this great writer's knowledge of ancient Egypt, a land now so fully open to all European intercourse :—

"His knowledge is for the most part close and accurate. He has not merely paid a hasty visit to the countries, but has examined them leisurely and is familiar with their scenery, their cities, small and large, and their various wonders, their temples and their buildings, and with the manners and customs of their inhabitants. The fulness and minuteness of his information is even more remarkable than its wide range, though it has attracted less observation. In Egypt, for instance, he has not contented himself with a single voyage up and down the Nile, like the modern tourist, but has evidently passed months, if not years, in examining the various objects of interest."

While Rawlinson thus admires and vindicates the

<sup>1</sup> "Translation of Herodotus."



historic merit of Herodotus, by examining the most celebrated lands in Western Asia, North-Eastern Africa, and South-Eastern Europe, Layard has chiefly devoted himself to the study and elucidation of the ancient Assyrian empire. He writes in emphatic words well worthy the attention of historical students<sup>1</sup> :—

“Although the names of Nineveh and Assyria have been known to us from childhood and are connected with our earliest impressions derived from Inspired Writings, it is only when we ask ourselves what we really know concerning them, that we discover ignorance of all that relates to their history and even to their geographical position. It is, indeed, one of the most remarkable facts in history, that the records of an empire so renowned for its fame and civilisation should have been entirely lost, and that the site of a city as eminent for its extent as its splendour should for ages have been a matter of doubt.”

Mr. Layard, by various illustrations in his great work, shows the wonderful discoveries of winged bulls and human figures, some of great size, which, buried for many centuries, were thus finally rescued and brought to the knowledge of a learned European world. Yet these discoveries, like those in Egypt, were mainly effected by Europeans who, guided by classic literature and inspired by its charm as well as by its information, eventually succeeded in bringing to light a knowledge of the ancient world which,

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, p. 20.



except in somewhat vague Scriptural records, solely derived from Jewish authority or from Greek history and poetry, was comparatively known to few during many centuries of human history. Phœnicia, likewise a small country on the Syrian coast, though often mentioned in ancient history, has apparently owed its investigation chiefly to modern European research. Rawlinson writes of this country <sup>1</sup> :—

“In her the commercial spirit first showed itself as the dominant spirit of a nation. She was the carrier between the East and the West—the link that bound them together, in times anterior to the first appearance of the Greeks as navigators. No complete history of Phœnicia has come down to us, nor can a continuous history be constructed.”

Throughout one period, Rawlinson says, the Phœnicians, “conjointly with the Jews,” had established factories on the Red Sea.

“Phœnicia had at this time (about 800 years B.C.) no serious commercial rival, and the trade of the world was in her hands.”

This country was conquered first by Assyria and then by Egypt, but

“as Greece rose to power and as Carthage increased in importance, the sea trade of Phœnicia was greatly checked.”

Rawlinson adds of the Phœnician people :

“They have a claim to be considered one of the most

---

<sup>1</sup> “Manual of Ancient History,” part i.

ingenious nations of antiquity, though we must not ascribe to them the first invention of letters or the possession of any remarkable artistic talent."

The comparatively short-lived importance of these enterprising people present, a thorough contrast to the wonderful history of the Jews who, among all nations of the most remote antiquity, have preserved the most enduring interest by their position and national character in the philosophical history of man to the present time. They still occupy, and indeed have always occupied, a position distinct from all other nations in the world's history. As the late learned historian, Dean Milman, observes :<sup>1</sup>

"The history of this, perhaps the only unmingled race which can boast of high antiquity, leads us through every gradation of society, and brings us into contact with almost every nation which commands our interest in the ancient world. The migratory pastoral population of Asia, Egypt, the mysterious parent of arts, science, and legislation ; the Arabian Desert, the Hebrew theocracy under the form of a federative agricultural republic, their kingdom powerful in war and splendid in peace, Babylon in its magnificence and downfall, Grecian arts and luxury endeavouring to force an unnatural refinement within the pale of the rigid Mosaic institutions, Roman arms waging an exterminating war with the independence even of the smallest states ; it descends at length to all the changes in the social state of the modern European and Asiatic nations."

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Jews," vol. i.

Milman, referring to the singular geographical position and alleged religious preference of the Jews, emphatically writes :

“ In the narrow slip of land inhabited by their tribes the worship of one Almighty Creator of the Universe subsists, as in its only sanctuary. . . . As there is but one Almighty God, so there is but one people under His especial protection.”

## CHAPTER II





## CHAPTER II

THE Jews would seem from the earliest times to have preserved their strictly, if not exclusively, national feelings, habits, and aspirations, with but little sympathy for or from any of the more powerful or numerous nations by whom they were surrounded and occasionally ruled, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans had in historical course conquered them for a time, while they themselves seem neither to have ruled or wished to rule any other nation. Though apparently associated from the earliest times with commercial habits or enterprises, their consequent intercourse with other lands did not seem to incline the Jews to cultivate, or perhaps much examine, either the learning, the religion, or the accomplishments even of those nations whose political rule they were forced to obey. The historical or political changes, therefore, in other countries apparently made little, if any, difference in the thoughts, feelings, or belief of this "peculiar people." They seemed to have had little, if any, in-

terest in the wonders of ancient Assyria and Egypt, or in the philosophic learning of the Greeks, or in the martial and legislative superiority of the Romans. On the other hand, though geographically placed so near those two chief nations of antiquity, the Jews in their history and literature were either ignored or despised by both these pagan nations, while politically subjected to each in historical course. On the subject of their relative positions, Macaulay writes with the calm, learned impartiality prevalent in Britain during the last century, and which formerly might not have been well understood or admired. Yet even he admits or intimates that he can hardly understand what he calls this "astonishing indifference" of Greeks and Romans towards the history or religion of that extraordinary nation, so long their political subject and so comparatively helpless in naval and military power. Yet this was the nation destined to produce, apparently among its humblest inhabitants, the Prophet or Moral Teacher, whose enthusiastic worship was fated to finally replace the time-honoured, poetical paganism of Greece and Rome in almost every country, city, town, and village where it had for centuries reigned supreme. Macaulay, even his learned mind evidently perplexed, says of this indifference of the powerful Romans towards the subdued Jews :

“The sacred books of the Hebrews seem to have been utterly unnoticed by them. The peculiarities of Judaism and the rapid growth of Christianity, attracted their notice. They made war against the Jews. They made laws against the Christians. But they never opened the books of Moses. When we consider what sublime poetry, what curious history, what striking and peculiar views of the Divine nature and of the social duties of men are to be found in the Jewish Scriptures, when we consider that two sects (Hebrew and Christian), on which the attention of the [Roman] Government was constantly fixed, appealed to those Scriptures as the rule of their faith and practice, this indifference is astonishing.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet while the Jews had the “sole custody”<sup>2</sup> of the Scriptures according to their own, and also to Christian, if not to Mohammedan belief, it cannot be said they ever equalled either Greeks or Romans in arts or accomplishments, except that of music, or even in legislative capacity. Their religious history alone was their peculiar, national glory. Its wonderful records seem alike trusted, at least in some respects, by both Christians and Mohammedans. Yet their respective additions or supplements of the Gospel and of the Koran to the Old Testament, on which all three religions seem to rely, remain still disavowed by the resolute, morally invincible, yet subjected race who at this day are, and for many centuries have been, almost

<sup>1</sup> “Essay on History.”

<sup>2</sup> Newman’s “Grammar of Assent.”

without exception, under the political rule of Christians and Mohammedans. While the ancient Jewish faith, however, is in fact believed and studied by Christians and Mohammedans, as the foundations of their belief, the subsequent revelations of Jesus and of Mohammed remain disowned alike by them. The intellectual triumphs of pagan Greece and Rome are more appreciated and carefully preserved by modern civilised nations than the historical records of any other people. Greece, whose intellectual glory was appreciated and admired by her Roman conquerors, has been specially studied, praised, and illustrated in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This admiration for Greek literature by her Roman rulers is generally admitted by modern writers. Thus Professor Mahaffy writes :

“When the Romans suddenly found themselves a great and conquering Power, when circumstances, as it were, thrust upon them sovran authority, they were as inferior to the East in culture as they were superior in force and arms, and they knew it. . . . It was inevitable that the Romans should imitate what they found and that their literature must be moulded upon Greek models. . . . The purest and best of the Romans were in real earnest learning from the best of the Greeks that knowledge of philosophy, of history, of the plastic arts, which was ultimately spread over the world in Roman form.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Alexander’s Empire,” chap. xxii.



The poetry of Homer, the wise thoughts, reasoning, and writings of Greek philosophers, orators, and statesmen, are still by learned British writers declared the original or the model of subsequent instructive European literature. The extraordinary way in which civilisation, classic study and knowledge, accompanying political power, have been transferred in the Old World from East to West has perhaps been more ably or carefully examined during the nineteenth century than at any previous time. Britain, France, and Germany now take the lead in studying not only the instructive beauties of Greece and Italy, but the revealed wonders of Assyria and Egypt as well as of Asia Minor and Palestine. Yet of all these ancient countries Greece seems to be on the whole specially admired, studied, and venerated for its acknowledged great services to modern European civilisation. Thus Macaulay eloquently writes about ancient Greek, especially Athenian, literature inspiring pagans and Romans as well as modern Europeans, certainly with truth, yet perhaps with some exaggeration :

“From hence have sprung directly or indirectly all the noblest creations of the human intellect—the vast accomplishments and brilliant fancy of Cicero, the withering fire of Juvenal, the plastic imagination of Dante, the humour of Cervantes, the comprehension of Bacon, the wit of Butler,



the supreme and universal excellence of Shakespeare. All the triumphs of truth and genius over prejudice and power in every country and in every age have been the triumphs of Athens." <sup>1</sup>

In these admiring words the enthusiastic British historian of the last century pronounces the intellectual superiority of ancient Romans, mediæval Italians, Spaniards, and Englishmen to be a glorious legacy bequeathed by the ancient Greeks to subsequent ages and to different countries. In a rather similar admiration for classic literature, Milton, Pope, and Byron among the chief English poets almost rival each other in evincing equal enthusiasm. Milton's religious mind inclined him to specially describe the glories of ancient Greece and Rome as the chief wonders of the human world, which according to the Christian Gospel were shown by Satan to Jesus, with, of course, only evil intent. The Christian Founder hears the splendid descriptions given first of Rome and then of Greece by the Enemy of mankind from its creation. Satan, though dwelling on the chief temporal glories of the two most distinguished nations then existing, with a brilliant appreciative power, concealing his implacable malevolence, can have no real delight but in secretly contemplating their ultimate ruin. He therefore tempts the Friend

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Mitford's "History of Greece."

of mankind by showing Him Rome at a most interesting period of her wonderful history. It was at the time when her grand empire, ruling all or nearly all the civilised nations of the earth, was herself under the tyranny of Tiberius Cæsar, considered by some, but not by all historians, as one of the worst Roman Emperors, and who evidently puzzled some of them to understand, owing to various and conflicting accounts of him.

About this mysterious ruler Macaulay writes :

“A man singularly dark and inscrutable, whose real disposition long remained swathed up in intricate folds of factitious virtues, over whose actions the hypocrisy of his youth and the seclusion of his old age threw a singular mystery, . . . a character distinguished by courage, self-command, and profound policy, yet defiled by all ‘th’ extravagancy and crazy ribaldry of fancy’; . . . conscious of failing strength, raging with capricious sensuality, yet to the last the keenest of observers, the most artful of dissemblers, and the most terrible of masters.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was Tiberius Cæsar, at least according to the account of Tacitus,<sup>2</sup> and believed by

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay’s “Essay on History.”

<sup>2</sup> “A celebrated Latin historian, born in the reign of Nero. . . . The history of the reign of Tiberius is his masterpiece, the deep policy, the dissimulation, and various intrigues of this celebrated prince are painted with all the fidelity of the historian, and Tacitus boasted in saying that he neither would flatter the follies or maliciously or partially represent the extravagance of the several characters he

Macaulay, yet this prince was the earthly sovereign of Jesus and the almost despotic master of Pontius Pilate, governing Judea in his name. It was this Emperor, in Dean Farrar's opinion, whose image on a coin was shown to Jesus by some Jews when asking Him if it was right or lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, and about this singular event Farrar writes<sup>1</sup> of the coin :

“On one side were stamped the haughty, beautiful features of the Emperor Tiberius, with all the wicked scorn upon his lip.”

The reply or advice of Jesus—

“Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's”

—Farrar says conveyed the meaning that the payment was

“not a voluntary gift, but a legal due, not a cheerful gift, but a political necessity.”

Farrar's account of the whole scene, being written from an exclusively Christian standpoint, lays an amount of blame on the Jews for so “tempting” Him, which some honest Jewish writers might firmly deny. They, not delineated. Candour and impartiality were his standard, and his claim to these essential qualifications of a historian has never been disputed.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> “Life of Christ.”

believing in His Divine mission, but that He was perverting their nation from religious truth, endeavoured to elicit from Him some disapproval of Roman rule which would justify His immediate arrest, and thus prevent what they conscientiously thought would be perversions from Judaism. A similar course has often been subsequently adopted by both Christians and Mohammedans, for the sake of preserving what each has firmly believed to be religious truth or even the most minute points of doctrinal accuracy.





CHAPTER III



### CHAPTER III

**E**VEN some modern Christian writers have used words which might be construed as justifying almost any amount of persecution. Thus Carlyle writes about John Knox, who was said to have approved of the murder of Cardinal Beaton in Scotland,<sup>1</sup> and to have advised the most severe measures against the Scottish Roman Catholics :

“We are here to extinguish Falsehoods, and put an end to them in some wise way. I will not quarrel so much with the way, the doing of the thing is our great concern. In this sense Knox was full surely intolerant.”—“Heroes and Hero-worship.”

These words might with equal truth vindicate Torquemada in justifying the Spanish Inquisition, striving to suppress what he believed heresy against religious truth. The Jewish priests, there-

<sup>1</sup> “Knox himself had no hand in the murder of Beaton, but he afterwards joined the assassins and assisted them.”—Hume’s “History,” chap. xxxiv.

fore, actuated by similar motives, desired, and thought it their duty, to stop as soon as possible the increasing influence of a teacher whom they, without impugning His moral or personal character, believed was a fanciful dreamer, unable to give any proof of His alleged mission, yet opposing in some ways the hitherto venerated doctrines of their Old Testament among their nation. Yet to their disappointment, according to Christian belief, He gave no encouragement to any idea of revolt against the Roman Government, but on the contrary, enjoined practically the duty of temporary obedience at least to Tiberius Cæsar, then ruling Judea through his subordinate ministers, Sejanus in Rome and Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem. It was through the influence of Sejanus that Pilate governed Judea,<sup>1</sup> and both these Roman statesmen detested the Jews.<sup>2</sup> At this time, apparently, Tiberius, his ambitious minister Sejanus, and his obsequious viceroy or deputy, Pilate, in a short-lived alliance together ruled Judea as a mere Roman province. But this alliance between Tiberius and Sejanus was fated to have a fearful end, the Emperor secretly instigating the murder of his proud favourite at Rome, who he justly, perhaps, feared was becoming too powerful while he himself was enjoying his beautiful retirement

<sup>1</sup> Farrar's "Life of Christ."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



in the island of Capreæ on the Italian coast. The learned poet Milton, therefore, carefully observant of Roman as well as of Jewish history, describes Satan in "Paradise Regained" showing to Jesus the various glories of the noble Roman Empire under its evil ruler Tiberius, during the recorded Temptation of Christ in the Gospel. He highly praises Julius Cæsar, whose glorious career and somewhat recent murder were at this time in Roman history doubtless generally admired and deplored. Satan exclaims, therefore, in words which might have delighted many young Romans, but had no effect upon Jesus :

"Great Julius, who now all the world admires,  
The more he grew in years, the more inflamed  
With glory, wept that he had lived so long  
Inglorious, but thou yet are not too late."

To this temptation for Jesus to rival or excel Cæsar in martial triumphs the Christian Founder is supposed to reply in words which, though consistent with what is termed the Christian spirit, would scarcely have won the applause of many subsequent Christian warriors :

"They err who count it glorious to subdue  
By conquest far and wide, to overrun  
Large countries, and in field great battles win,  
Great cities by assault. What do these worthies,

But rob, and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave  
Peaceable nations, neighbouring or remote.

And all the flourishing works of peace destroy,  
Then swell with pride, and must be titled gods,  
Great benefactors of mankind, deliverers,  
Worshipp'd with temple, priest, and sacrifice?  
One is the son of Jove, of Mars the other ;  
Till conqueror death discovers them scarce men,  
Rolling in brutish vices, and deformed,  
Violent or shameful death their due reward." \*

Previous to this scene Milton ascribes noble thoughts to Jesus, which He utters to Himself when alone. He alludes to His recorded visit to the Temple at Jerusalem when a child or boy, and where He "astonished" all the assembled Jewish priests by His singular wisdom. The Christian poet represents Him, at this early period of His human life, entertaining some desire of freeing the Jews from Roman rule. This idea was finally construed into an accusation of political treason against the established Government by some of the Jews, while it was evidently disbelieved by the Roman governor, Pilate, who was chiefly interested in its truth. Yet this charge was made at a tempting period of somewhat sudden degradation in the moral state of Rome itself, then the proud, powerful mistress of all, or nearly all, the civilised world. The noble and beneficent

\* "Paradise Regained," book iii.

Emperor, Augustus Cæsar, his wise minister Mecœnas, and the intellectual, refined poets, Virgil and Horace, had passed away. In their place lived and ruled the deceitful Emperor Tiberius Cæsar, his ambitious, unscrupulous ministers, Sejanus and Macro, while Pontius Pilate, the friend of Sejanus<sup>1</sup> through his short-lived influence was ruling the Jews in the name of Tiberius. At such a time as this, when the famed land of the ancient Jewish Faith, and the home of its first Prophets, was under the rule of such men, Jesus is imagined by Milton to exclaim :

“ O what a multitude of thoughts at once  
 Awaken'd in me swarm, while I consider  
 What from within I feel myself, and hear  
 What from without comes often to my ears,  
 Ill-sorting with my present state compared !  
 When I was yet a child, no childish play  
 To me was pleasing ; all my mind was set  
 Serious to learn and know, and thence to do  
 What might be public good. . . .

. . . Ere yet my age  
 Had measured twice six years, at our great feast  
 I went into the Temple, there to hear  
 The teachers of our law, and to propose  
 What might improve my knowledge or their own,  
 And was admired by all ; yet this not all  
 To which my spirit aspired ; victorious deeds  
 Flamed in my heart, heroic acts ; one while  
 To rescue Israel from Roman yoke,

---

<sup>1</sup> Farrar's "Life of Christ."

Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth  
 Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,  
 Till truth were freed and equity restored ;  
 Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first  
 By winning words to conquer willing hearts,  
 And make persuasion do the work of fear."

These last words apparently refer to the comparatively peaceful progress of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, long after the public execution of its Founder, so unlike the subsequent warlike triumph of Mohammedanism. Yet each religion finally and completely replaced the very different paganisms of Greece and of Arabia.

Milton's grand poem of "Paradise Regained," though never so popular as his "Paradise Lost," was known to be their author's favourite, and Dr. Johnson observes in words which rather confirm its historic value :

"Of 'Paradise Regained,' the general judgment seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant and everywhere instructive."<sup>1</sup>

Macaulay, perhaps a too enthusiastic admirer of Milton, says :

"That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work to 'Paradise Lost' we readily admit. But we are sure that the

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Milton."



superiority of the 'Paradise Lost' to the 'Paradise Regained' is not more decided than the superiority of the 'Paradise Regained' to every poem which has since made its appearance."

The Scriptural words,<sup>1</sup> few yet most impressive, seem the sole foundation of Milton's magnificent superstructure about Satan's temptation of Jesus :

"The devil taketh Him into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith unto Him, 'All these things will I give Thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

Milton, in noble language, yet founded carefully on the Scriptural intimation, writes :

"And now the Tempter thus his silence broke :  
 'The city which thou seest no other deem  
 Than great and glorious Rome, queen of the earth,  
 So far renowned, and with the spoils enrich'd  
 Of nations ; there the Capitol<sup>2</sup> thou seest  
 Above the rest lifting his stately head  
 On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel  
 Impregnable, and there Mount Palatine,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. iv.

<sup>2</sup> "A magnificent temple and citadel at Rome. . . . The consuls and magistrates offered sacrifices there, when they first entered upon their offices, and the processions in triumph were always conducted to the Capitol."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> "A celebrated hill, the largest of the seven hills on which Rome was built."—Ibid.



The imperial palace, compass huge, and high  
 The structure, skill of noblest architects,  
 With gilded battlements conspicuous far,  
 Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires.  
 Many a fair edifice besides, more like  
 Houses of gods, so well I have disposed  
 My aery microscope, thou mayest behold,  
 Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs,  
 Carved work, the hand of famed artificers  
 In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold.  
 Thence to the gates cast round thine eye, and see  
 What conflux issuing forth, or entering in,  
 Prætors, proconsuls to their provinces  
 Hasting, or on return, in robes of state ;  
 Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power,  
 Legions and cohorts, turms of horse and wings ;  
 Or embassies from regions far remote.' ”

Milton proceeds to describe Satan as if the fiend believed the proud Roman idea of ruling all countries, yet only a minority of them even in the ancient world was ever under Roman authority :

“ ’All nations now to Rome obedience pay,  
 To Rome’s great Emperor, whose wide domain  
 In ample territory, wealth, and power,  
 Civility of manners, arts, and arms,  
 . . . thou justly may prefer  
 Before the Parthian.<sup>1</sup> These two thrones except,

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<sup>1</sup> “ A celebrated country in Asia, . . . between the Caspian and Arabian seas, it even disputed the empire of the world

The rest are barbarous, and scarce worth the sight,  
Shared among petty kings too far removed.  
These having shewn thee, I have shewn thee all  
The kingdoms of the world, and all their glory."

Then Milton, evidently sharing the now sometimes contradicted opinion of Tacitus about Tiberius Cæsar, represents Satan describing Rome's condition at this time with the avowed object of inducing Jesus, as if He were a young patriotic Jew, to attempt freeing Judea, as well as other lands, from the degrading yoke of a wicked and almost despotic tyrant. He therefore proceeds, thoroughly knowing all about the enmity between Tiberius and Sejanus :

" This Emperor hath no son, and now is old,  
Old and lascivious, and from Rome retired  
To Capreæ, an island small but strong  
On the Campanian shore, with purpose there  
His horrid lusts in private to enjoy,  
Committing to a wicked favourite  
All public cares, and yet of him suspicious,  
Hated of all and hating."

The fiend then proceeds, in a very different spirit from that indicated by Goethe's account of him as the mocking and sneering Mephistopheles,

with the Romans, and could never be subdued by that nation."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

and assumes a philanthropic tone utterly inconsistent with the supposed Father of all Evil :

“ . . . With what ease,  
 Endued with regal virtues as thou art,  
 Appearing and beginning noble deeds,  
 Mightst thou expel this monster from his throne,  
 Now made a sty, and, in his place ascending,  
 A victor people free from servile yoke ?  
 And with my help thou mayst ; to me the power  
 Is given, and by that right I give it thee.  
 Aim therefore at no less than all the world ;  
 Aim at the highest.”<sup>1</sup>

These grand words, expressing such noble feelings and aspirations, though of course distrusted by Jesus, might well deceive the best and wisest of men. Milton's conception of Satan is thus ably noticed by Sir Walter Scott,<sup>2</sup> than whom perhaps no British writer except Shakespeare better understood human nature. Scott says, thoughtfully comparing the differing ideas of Satan in the great minds of the English and of the German poets :

“Goethe's conception of the character and reasoning of Mephistopheles, the tempting spirit in the singular play of 'Faust,' appears to me more happy than that which has been formed by Byron and even than the Satan of Milton.

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<sup>1</sup> “Paradise Regained,” book iv.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to “Quentin Durward.”

These last great authors have given to the Evil Principle something which elevates and dignifies his wickedness. . . . The great German poet has, on the contrary, rendered his seducing spirit a being who, otherwise totally unimpassioned, seems only to have existed for the purpose of increasing, by his persuasion and temptations, the mass of moral evil, and who calls forth by his seductions those slumbering passions which otherwise might have allowed the human being who was the object of the Evil Spirit's operations to pass the tenor of his life in tranquillity. For this purpose Mephistopheles is, like Louis XI. (of France), endowed with an acute and depreciating spirit of caustic wit, which is employed incessantly in undervaluing and vilifying all actions, the consequences of which do not lead certainly and directly to self-gratification."

The grand idea of Satan tempting Jesus to supplant Tiberius Cæsar as Emperor of Rome would likely only have occurred to a Christian mind after at least some experience of the political power or extension of that Faith. Yet it was surely the most alluring temptation in a moral sense that could be offered to any man interested in the welfare and happiness of his race at this period. In the awful Trial of Jesus, if such it can be called, His fate seems strangely involved with the political position of the Romans at this eventful period of their national history. Their late noble, beneficent, and deified Emperor Augustus, with his gifted subjects, the wise statesman Mecœnas, and the admirable poets, Horace and Virgil, had all disappeared. In Rome now

reigned the deceitful tyrant, Tiberius Cæsar, and his ambitious if not unscrupulous minister Sejanus, while Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, was their subordinate in ruling the Jews in the name of Cæsar.



CHAPTER IV



## CHAPTER IV

THE report or idea of Jesus calling Himself or being called King of the Jews was therefore seized on by the Jewish priests, who, thinking Him a pervert from Judaism and dangerous to its existence, besought, and finally almost threatened, the reluctant Pilate to permit His execution. Dean Farrar describes<sup>1</sup> the scene before Pilate with Jesus before him and surrounded by accusing Jews, some of whom doubtless thought they were "doing God service" by destroying an eloquent or attractive heretical preacher :

"If thou let this man go," shouted the mob again and again, "thou art not Cæsar's friend. Every one who tries to make himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

Farrar proceeds :

"And at that dark, terrible name of Cæsar, Pilate trembled. It was a name to conjure with. It mastered him. . . . He thought of Tiberius, the aged, gloomy Emperor then hiding

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Christ," chap. lx.

at Capreæ, his poisonous suspicions, his sick infamies, his desperate revenge. At this very time he had been maddened into a yet more sanguinary and misanthropic ferocity by the detected falsity and treason of his only friend and minister, Sejanus, and it was to Sejanus himself that Pilate is said to have owed his position. There might be secret delators in that very mob. Panic-stricken the unjust judge, in obedience to his own terrors, consciously betrayed the innocent victim to death."

It was reserved, however, for the sublime English poet Milton to recall the Crucifixion in Satan's vague prophecy many centuries after its occurrence, and when the spread of Christianity had replaced the pagan faith of Tiberius throughout almost every province of his grand empire. The reply of Jesus in Milton's words is calm, resolute, and totally unimpressed by all He hears from the Tempter. He firmly intimates His having power to "expel" Satan himself, whom He states has morally ruined Tiberius, while refusing to interfere in any way with the Emperor's worldly career, thus consistently adhering to His own words uttered at another time :

" My kingdom is not of this world."

He therefore replies, unmoved by all He heard or saw of this world's greatness :

" Nor does this grandeur and majestic show  
Of luxury, though called magnificence,

More than of arms before, allure mine eye,  
Much less my mind."

Jesus, as if possessing full knowledge of the fragile greatness of the Roman Empire, destined to be completely destroyed by hordes of comparative barbarians, though whether Milton believed that Satan shared this knowledge may be doubted, steadily proceeds :<sup>1</sup>

" . . . Then embassies thou shew'st  
From nations far and nigh. What honour that,  
But tedious waste of time to sit and hear  
So many hollow compliments and lies,  
Outlandish flatteries ? Then proceedst to talk  
Of the Emperor, how easily subdued,  
How gloriously ! I shall, thou sayst, expel  
A brutish monster : what if I withal  
Expel a devil who first made him such ?"

This rather sudden avowal of His own power over His tempter seems hardly consistent with His apparent position during this extraordinary scene. But His words here and in what follows are Milton's and no longer directly founded on Scripture, though the poet evidently means to still express its spirit. Jesus continues, according to Milton, alluding to Tiberius Cæsar :

"Let his tormentor Conscience find him out ;  
For him I was not sent."

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<sup>1</sup> "Paradise Regained," book iv.



In these last words the devout Christian poet apparently remembered those of Jesus :

“ I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel,”

indicating that His personal mission and earthly life were to be exclusively among the Jews. The idea of the “ conscience ” of Tiberius “ finding him out ” and being his “ tormentor ” is clearly Milton’s invention and not founded on any Scriptural authority. If this belief was either uttered or entertained by Jesus it would surely intimate some respect for the pagan faith, which could alone influence Tiberius Cæsar. Yet the idea is surely consistent enough with a merciful Creator’s rule or power over mankind generally. His sole omnipotent and omniscient rule, according to Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan belief, must have originally ordained that all Greeks and Romans, among whom were certainly some of the best and wisest of men, should live in inevitable and therefore innocent ignorance of those doctrines which many subsequent Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans believed essential to the favour of their common Creator. The further reply of Jesus, though written by such a sincere Christian as Milton, seems also unsupported by any of His recorded words, in rather unjustly denouncing the

Roman people while stating that His personal mission was not to be among them :

“ . . . Nor yet to free  
 That people, victor once, now vile and base,  
 Deservedly made vassal, who, once just,  
 Frugal, and mild, and temperate, conquer'd well,  
 But governed ill the nations under yoke,  
 Peeling their provinces ; exhausted all  
 By lust and rapine ; first ambitious grown  
 Of triumph, that insulting vanity ;  
 Then cruel, by their sports to blood inured  
 Of fighting beasts, and men to beasts exposed ;  
 Luxurious by their wealth, and greedier still,  
 And from the daily scene effeminate.  
 What wise and valiant man would seek to free  
 These thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved ? ”

These last words, being decidedly Milton's invention, may greatly exaggerate Roman degradation except in the luxurious capital, and are rather contradicted by the learned historian Gibbon, who writes :

“The emperors, Tiberius and Claudius, suppressed the dangerous power of the Druids, but the priests themselves, their gods and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of paganism. . . . The aspiring genius of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honourable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own, wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Decline and Fall,” chap. ii.

The Roman rule generally, despite abuses chiefly caused by the almost absolute power of occasional wicked rulers, would thus seem at this period, long before and long after, the most enlightened of all known existing governments.<sup>1</sup> Yet Milton thus describes Jesus chiefly dwelling on the vices of Roman rule prevalent at Rome itself or in its vicinity, omitting to own that throughout the vast empire wise laws, when not occasionally violated by the presence or example of wicked rulers, diffused more religious toleration and general security than were known in any other part of the world.

The characters of Tiberius and of his minister Sejanus as given by Tacitus and Suetonius, authorities evidently trusted by both Milton and Macaulay,<sup>2</sup> are presented in dramatic form, yet founded on historic record in Ben Jonson's tragedy, "The Fall of Sejanus." At first Tiberius, "the most artful of dissemblers," flatters his "wicked favourite," whose assassination he finally instigates, addressing him in words of praise and deprecating his assumed modesty when the Roman Senate are about erecting a statue in his honour :

" Blush not, Sejanus, thou great aid of Rome,  
Associate of our labours, our chief helper ;

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<sup>1</sup> Lecky's "Pagan Empire" ("European Morals").

<sup>2</sup> "Essay on History."

Let us not force thy simple modesty  
With offering at thy praise, for more we cannot,  
Since there's no voice can take it. . . .  
Nor let them ask the causes of our praise.  
Princes have still their grounds reared with themselves,  
Above the low poor flats of common men ;  
And who will search the reasons of their acts,  
Must stand on equal bases. Lead, away :  
Our loves unto the Senate." <sup>1</sup>

At this period of Roman history the Emperor Tiberius and his chief minister, Sejanus, alike distrust and plot against each other, yet both wish to please the Senate. These two unscrupulous men now rule the vast empire, which in the recent reign of Augustus Cæsar had been governed well and prosperously. But Augustus and his minister Meccenas were indeed noble contrasts to their dangerous successors in Roman political power. The secret enmity of Tiberius and Sejanus to one another they reveal to themselves, according to Ben Jonson, who, like Shakespeare, seems to closely follow historical information in imputing words to classical personages which seem justified by their actual conduct. Thus Sejanus secretly avows his designs against his Sovereign, who in his turn justly suspects him. In fact, both sovereign and minister are about equally jealous of one another ; yet unlike Tiberius, who thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> Act I., Scene ii.



understands Sejanus, the latter evidently underestimates the extraordinary art and cunning of the Emperor. The way in which these treacherous men, now ruling Rome between them, plot against each other, is much the same. Sejanus exclaims, giving a sort of private lecture how to manage, cajole, and deceive princes in general, while evidently overrating his own abilities in performing so dangerous a task :<sup>1</sup>

“ . . . The way to put  
A prince in blood, is to present the shapes  
Of dangers greater than they are, like late  
Or early shadows : and, sometimes, to feign  
Where there are none, only to make him fear ;  
His fear will make him cruel : and once entered,  
He doth not easily learn to stop, or spare  
Where he may doubt. This have I made my rule,  
To thrust Tiberius into tyranny,  
And make him toil, to turn aside those blocks,  
Which I alone could not remove with safety.

Work then, my art, on Cæsar's fears, as they  
On those they fear, till all my lets be cleared,  
And he in ruins of his house, and hate  
Of all his subjects, bury his own state ;  
When with my peace, and safety, I will rise,  
By making him the public sacrifice.”

These revealed designs of the ambitious, plotting

<sup>1</sup> Act II., Scene ii.



statesman Sejanus well explain Milton's describing the distrust of him by Tiberius in the words :

“ And yet of him suspicious.”

The imperial tyrant then confidentially addresses another of his ministers, Macro, fated to be his own slayer, whom he leaves as a spy upon Sejanus in Rome while he departs for his retirement at Capreæ :<sup>1</sup>

“ . . . We have thought on thee,  
Amongst a field of Romans, worthiest Macro,  
To be our eye and ear : to keep strict watch.

. . . Ay

And on Sejanus ; not that we distrust  
His loyalty, or do repent one grace,  
Of all that heap we have conferred on him.”

Tiberius continues gradually revealing his apprehensive jealousy of Sejanus :

“ But greatness hath his cankers. Worms and moths  
Breed out of too much humour, in the things  
Which after they consume, transferring quite  
The substance of their makers into themselves.”

Then becoming more explicit and practical, the crafty Emperor intimates rather than expresses dangerous directions to his unscrupulous new

<sup>1</sup> Act III.

favourite how to check all suspected treason in Rome :

“ Here, Macro, we assign thee both to spy,  
 Inform, and chastise ; think, and use thy means,  
 Thy ministers, what, where, on whom thou wilt ;  
 Explore, plot, practise : all thou dost in this  
 Shall be, as if the Senate or the laws  
 Had given it privilege and thou thence styled  
 The saviour both of Cæsar and of Rome.

Be still our loved and, shortly, honoured Macro.”

Tiberius, after these words, departs to Capreæ, and the newly trusted Macro when alone exultingly exclaims, hoping soon to supplant the suspected Sejanus in all his worldly authority :

“ I will not ask why Cæsar bids do this ;  
 But joy, that he bids me. It is the bliss  
 Of courts to be employed, no matter how ;  
 A prince’s power makes all his actions virtue.  
 We, whom he works by, are dumb instruments,  
 To do, but not inquire : his great intents  
 Are to be served, not searched.”

Evidently delighted at the prospect of future power or indulgence, the wicked satellite, well worthy of his master, and equally capable of obeying or destroying him according to his own interests, concludes :

“ If then it be the lust of Cæsar’s power,  
To have raised Sejanus up, and in an hour  
O’erturn him, tumbling down, from height of all ;  
We are his ready engine : and his fall  
May be our rise. It is no uncouth thing  
To see fresh buildings from old ruins spring.”



CHAPTER V





## CHAPTER V

LATER on in this play of "Sejanus," the short-lived triumph of the ambitious minister, when thinking himself in almost absolute power at Rome, is also revealed in safe soliloquy. He evidently does not suspect that his absent sovereign is all the time having him carefully watched while himself at Capreæ, there enjoying his luxurious and beautiful retirement.<sup>1</sup> Sejanus exclaims to himself in joyous and probably natural excitement :<sup>2</sup>

"Swell, swell, my joys ; and faint not to declare  
Yourselves as ample as your causes are."

Inspired with fiery, selfish ambition, this dangerous, ill-fated favourite proceeds, in Jonson's words,

<sup>1</sup> "An island on the coast of Campania, abounding in quails and famous for the residence and debaucheries of the Emperor Tiberius during the seven last years of his life."  
—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Act V.

which yet seem to follow classic history in describing this Roman statesman :<sup>1</sup>

“ I did not live till now : this my first hour ;  
 Wherein I see my thoughts reached by my power.  
 But this, and gripe my wishes. Great and high  
 The world knows only two, that's Rome and I.  
 My roof receives me not ; 'tis air I tread ;  
 And, at each step, I feel my advanced head  
 Knock out a star in heaven ! reared to this height,  
 All my desires seem modest, poor, and slight,  
 That did before sound impudent ; 'tis place,  
 Not blood, discerns the noble and the base.”

Then the exulting Sejanus vaguely reveals his future hopes and plans, which well justify the aroused suspicions of his absent yet observant sovereign, by asking himself :

“ Is there not something more than to be Cæsar ?  
 Must we rest there ? it irks t' have come so far,  
 To be so near a stay.”

Towards the end of this play, which on the whole certainly adheres to Roman historians, Tiberius

<sup>1</sup> “ Tiberius, naturally fond of ease and luxury, retired to Campania, leaving Sejanus at the head of the empire. This was highly gratifying to the favourite, and he was now without a master. Prudence and moderation might have made him what he wished to be ; but Sejanus offended the whole empire when he declared that he was Emperor of Rome, and Tiberius only the dependent prince of the island of Capreæ.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

instigates the Senate at Rome by letter to suspect Sejanus ; and at such a time and among such men deep distrust of any minister by his sovereign was almost sure to be fatal to the suspected statesman.

At the end of his letter—a masterpiece of crafty insinuation—the absent tyrant thus partly reveals his feelings, which many unscrupulous adherents in Rome, well acquainted with him, thoroughly understood :

“ True it is, conscript fathers, that we have raised Sejanus from obscure, and almost unknown gentry, to the highest and most conspicuous point of greatness, and, we hope, deservingly ; yet not without danger : it being a most bold hazard in that sovereign who, by his particular love to one, dares adventure the hatred of all his other subjects. . . . We have not been covetous, honourable fathers, to change ; . . . but those needful jealousies of state, that warn wiser princes hourly to provide their safety, and do teach them how learned a thing it is to beware of the humblest enemy.”

Then Tiberius gives a sufficiently broad hint about the suspected Sejanus :

“ Much more of those great ones, whom their own employed favours have made fit for their fears. We therefore desire, that the office he holds be first seized by the Senate ; and himself suspended from all exercise of place or power, but till due and mature trial be made of his innocency, which yet we can faintly apprehend the necessity to doubt.”

He proceeds to give yet more dangerous hints

to the Senate while pretending to be deferential to them :

“If, conscript fathers, to your more searching wisdoms, there shall appear farther cause—or of farther proceeding, either to seizure of lands, goods, or more—it is not our power that shall limit your authority.”

The Emperor then excuses his own absence from Rome at this dangerous crisis, preferring his delicious retreat in the lovely island of his choice, while safely directing from thence all that should be done to maintain his power at Rome.

“We would willingly be present with your counsels in this business ; but the danger of so potent a faction, if it should prove so, forbids our attempting it.”

At the close of this long, extraordinary letter, the artful, intriguing tyrant seems to surpass himself. He suggests, or recommends, the most dangerous acts without openly authorising their commission, and with assumed respect for the senators, on whom he wishes to devolve the apparent responsibility for the performance of his secret desires :

“In the meantime, it shall not be fit for us to importune so judicious a Senate, who know how much they hurt the innocent, that spare the guilty ; and how grateful a sacrifice to the gods is the life of an ingrateful person. We reflect not in this on Sejanus, (notwithstanding, if you



keep an eye upon him—and there is Latiaris, a senator, and Pinnarius Natta, two of his most trusted ministers ; and so professed, whom we desire not to have apprehended,) but as the necessity of the cause exacts it.”

After this deceitful, dangerous letter is read to the listening Senate, among whom the luckless Sejanus has apparently more foes than friends, Jonson describes, with a force and vividness almost worthy of Shakespeare, the rage of the favourite's enemies and the murderous threats of Macro, eagerly obeying what he knows is the will of Tiberius, while longing himself to supplant Sejanus in power. The words of these different Romans, though in English, seem to closely follow Roman history and to faithfully represent, at least to a great degree, what really happened at this terrible crisis in the political history of Rome.<sup>1</sup> Macro exclaims to the Senate, in well-assumed, loyal indignation against the suspected minister, soon after

<sup>1</sup> “The Emperor ordered him (Sejanus) to be accused before the Senate. Sejanus was deserted by all his pretended friends, as soon as by fortune ; and the man who aspired to the empire, who called himself the favourite of the people, was seized without resistance and the same day strangled in prison, A.D. 31. His remains were exposed to the fury and insolence of the populace and afterwards thrown into the Tiber.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, relying on the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius.

the Emperor's letter is read before Sejanus himself and the assembled senators :

“ Wherefore, fathers,  
Sit you amazed and silent ; and not censure  
This wretch, who, in the hour he first rebelled  
'Gainst Cæsar's bounty, did condemn himself ?”

The many enemies of Sejanus in the Senate immediately shout forth severally :

“ Take him hence,  
And all the gods guard Cæsar. . . .  
    To the dungeon with him. . . .

And let an ox,  
With gilded horns and garlands, straight be led  
Unto the Capitol.

And sacrificed  
To Jove, for Cæsar's safety.

All our gods  
Be present still to Cæsar.”

Six pagan deities are then eagerly invoked by the excited Senators to protect Tiberius, whose artful letter has completely succeeded in convincing them of his danger :

“ Phœbus.’  
                    ‘ Mars.’  
                    ‘ Diana.’  
                                    ‘ Pallas.’  
‘ Juno, Mercury,  
All guard him ! ’”

while Macro, having Sejanus arrested, exclaims :

“Forth, thou prodigy of men,”

and the victim is soon after slain by the infuriated Roman mob. In this account Ben Jonson, like Milton and Macaulay, trusts the Roman historian Tacitus, though some modern writers represent Tiberius Cæsar more favourably. In “Paradise Regained,” after Satan’s failure in tempting Jesus to dethrone Tiberius Cæsar and rule the Roman Empire, the fiend turns to the more intellectual glories of Greece, now a subjected Roman province like Judea, though not equally despised ; obeying Tiberius, but in many respects admired and appreciated by her shrewd though martial Roman conquerors. Pagan Greece and Rome during Milton’s time, as well as for many previous centuries, and even to the present day, form the admired study alike of antiquarians, poets, travellers, and legislators. Yet while in most important branches of civilised education Greece and Rome were supreme, the Jews alone knew religious Truth according to their own ideas, and to those of subsequent Christian and Mohammedan nations. Thus Cardinal Newman writes :

. . . “Their country may be called the classical home of the religious principle, as Greece is the home of intellectual

power and Rome that of political and practical wisdom.”—  
“Grammar of Assent,” p. 427.

In hardly any other respect save that of religious history, and perhaps knowledge of music, did the Jews apparently afford much instruction to the modern world, at least when compared to Greece and Rome.

In the true spirit of a profound English scholar, therefore, Milton makes Satan pass from describing to Jesus the martial triumphs of Rome to the more intellectual or peaceful glories of subjected Greece. Milton's own studies at his English college<sup>1</sup> had likely imbued him and many other thoughtful British students of his time with the most profound admiration for these two most famous classic lands of pagan Greeks and Romans. The vast empire, martial renown, and legislative wisdom of the latter, and the splendid poetry and grand philosophy of the former, naturally enough impressed Milton's learned mind as the most attractive worldly temptations, mentioned somewhat vaguely in Scripture, that could be offered to Jesus by the Enemy of Man. The histories of Greece and Rome were, indeed, usually associated together in the European mind as the most valuable studies bequeathed as an instructive, enlightening legacy

<sup>1</sup> Christ's College, Cambridge.



by the wisest of men to their successors in historical course. The ancient histories of Northern and Western Europe, like their former religions, were little studied, and they seem to have had scarcely any authentic literature, save in a few vague, uncertain legends or traditions. Thus Carlyle writes of the former god of Northern Europe :

“Of Odin there exists no history, no document of it ; no guess about it worth repeating. . . . Odin’s date, adventures, whole terrestrial history, figure and environment are sunk from us for ever into unknown thousands of years.”<sup>1</sup>

But classic Greece and Rome excel all other nations of antiquity in transmitting through a long course of subsequent centuries their intellectual triumphs to a civilised posterity, while in religious truth they alike yield completely to the teachings of Jewish history in the belief of the modern civilised world. Yet in the palmy days of Greece and Rome the faith of the Jews, a pure Deism, prevailed only among that one small solitary and most exclusive nation.

Milton, therefore, the accomplished Christian scholar, had no hesitation in assuming that the pagan lands of Greece and Rome were the chief countries indicated in the Gospel, as those shown to Jesus by Satan. These two famous classic lands

<sup>1</sup> “Heroes and Hero-worship.”



were naturally combined in the English poet's mind as formed by his early education. He thus describes the Tempter, turning the attention of Jesus from the triumphant, powerful Rome of the period, to the subjected, powerless, yet most artistic Greece, in the noble language which Milton could always command, and in which profound learning and brilliant imagination are so rarely and exquisitely blended.

CHAPTER VI



## CHAPTER VI

THE fiend when showing Athens to Jesus, uses the language of a most refined classical scholar, as if trying to incline Him to admire the intellectual glory of Greece, instead of the martial triumphs of Rome, about which Satan perceived, Jesus cared nothing :

“ . . . Let pass, as they are transitory,  
The kingdoms of this world ; I shall no more  
Advise thee ; gain them as thou canst, or not.”<sup>1</sup>

Satan then refers to the early history of Jesus on earth, with which he seems thoroughly acquainted :

“ And thou thyself seem'st otherwise inclined  
Than to a worldly crown, addicted more  
To contemplation and profound dispute ;  
As by that early action may be judged,  
When, slipping from thy mother's eye, thou went'st  
Alone into the Temple, there wast found  
Among the grave Rabbis, disputant  
On points and questions fitting Moses' chair,

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<sup>1</sup> “ Paradise Regained,” book iv.

Teaching, not taught. . . .  
 All knowledge is not couched in Moses' law,  
 . . . . .  
 The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach  
 To admiration, led by nature's light" ;

As if foretelling the future triumph of Christianity over the classic paganism, after its rejection in Judea, Satan continues :

" And with the Gentiles must thou converse,  
 Ruling them by persuasion as thou mean'st.  
 Without their learning, how wilt thou with them,  
 Or they with thee, hold conversation meet ?  
 How wilt thou reason with them ? how refute  
 Their idolisms, traditions, paradoxes ?  
 . . . . .  
 Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount,  
 . . . . .  
 Where on the Ægean shore a city stands,  
 Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil,  
 Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts  
 And eloquence, native to famous wits,  
 Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,  
 City or suburban, studious walks and shades."

Milton proceeds, indulging his grand imagination and classical tastes, to invest Satan with his own admiration for the philosophy, accomplishments, and learning of Athens, with its natural beauty, indicating that Jesus was likewise acquainted with them. There hardly seems any Scriptural warrant for these assumptions, but the enlightened Christian



poet of the seventeenth century, as if inspired by mankind's Creator in remembering the wisest men, gradually disappearing in the passing centuries, imagines Satan to continue, though with evil intent, his beautiful description :

“ See there the olive grove of Academe,  
 Plato's retirement,<sup>1</sup> where the Attic bird  
 Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long ;  
 There flow'ry hill Hymettus with the sound  
 Of bees' industrious murmur oft invites  
 To studious musing ; there Ilissus rolls  
 His whispering stream ; within the walls then view  
 The schools of ancient sages ; his who bred  
 Great Alexander to subdue the world :<sup>2</sup>  
 Lyceum<sup>3</sup> there, and painted Stoa next.  
 There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power  
 Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit  
 By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,

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<sup>1</sup> “ A celebrated philosopher at Athens. . . . When he had finished his travels Plato retired to the groves of Academus, in the neighbourhood of Athens, where his lectures were soon attended by a crowd of learned, noble, and illustrious pupils, and the philosopher, by refusing to have a share in the administration of affairs, rendered his name more famous and his schools more frequented.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “ Aristotle, a famous philosopher. He was, according to some, ten years preceptor to Alexander, who received his instructions with much pleasure and deference.”—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “ A celebrated place near the banks of the Ilissus, in Attica: it was in this pleasant and salubrious spot that Aristotle taught philosophy.”—Ibid.

Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,  
 And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,  
 Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer call'd,<sup>1</sup>  
 Whose poem Phœbus challenged for his own."<sup>2</sup>

Milton here intimates the alleged admiration of the Greek gods for this wonderful poem by the most ancient of classic writers, and proceeds to praise and exalt the Greek democratic orators and champions of ancient times. In thus writing Milton, himself now the old, helpless, and to some extent persecuted foe of the restored British monarchy, under Charles the Second, may recall the vanished image of his great hero, Cromwell, in his dejected mind, who certainly "wielded at will" the English people in their brief triumph over the alleged tyranny of a king's rule:

"Thence to the famous orators repair,  
 Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence  
 Wielded at will that fierce democracy  
 Shook the Arsenal, and fulminated over Greece,  
 To Macedon, and Artaxerxes' throne.  
 To sage philosophy next lend thine ear,

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<sup>1</sup> "A celebrated Greek poet, the most ancient of all the profane writers. . . . He was called Melesigenes because supposed to be born on the borders of the river Meles."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "Apollo, called also Phœbus. . . . As he presided over poetry, he was often seen on Mount Parnassus, with the nine muses."—Ibid.

From heaven descended to the low-roof'd house  
 Of Socrates ;<sup>1</sup> see there his tenement,  
 Whom, well inspired, the oracle pronounced  
 Wisest of men ; from whose mouth issued forth  
 Mellifluous streams, that water'd all the schools  
 Of Academics old and new, with those  
 Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect  
 Epicurean, and the Stoic severe."

Satan then assuming the spirit of a sage counsellor advising a future young king in preparatory study for his high calling, proceeds and concludes :

" These here revolve, or, as thou likest, at home,  
 Till time mature thee to a kingdom's weight ;  
 These rules will render thee a king complete  
 Within thyself, much more with empire join'd."

Satan's grand idea of sovereignty here indicated, extends evidently far beyond the limited ambition of becoming King of the Jews. This desire, imputed to Jesus by some of that nation, was yet quite disbelieved by their Roman governor, who was, of course, most interested in its proof.

At this period Rome was at the height of political authority, while Greece, whose noble literature, despite her subjected state, was the admired

<sup>1</sup> "The most celebrated philosopher of all antiquity, was a native of Athens, and was condemned to drink hemlock. . . . Socrates was attended by a number of illustrious pupils, whom he instructed by his exemplary life as well as by his doctrines."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

study of her Roman rulers, presented a comparatively happy contrast to the oppressed, or perhaps rather the discontented, Jews in their country, which was then, like Greece, a mere Roman province. Yet their helpless, subdued, if not despised land was fated in the world's mysterious history to diffuse and proclaim the prevailing religion of Europe, completely replacing the imaginative and warlike faiths of Jupiter and of Odin in every country. The final reply to Satan which Milton imputes to Jesus expresses a partiality for, or fellow-feeling with the Jews, which seems to have little if any historic foundation in Scripture. His supposed ideas in this respect are apparently those of the devout Christian poet, taught to connect the Old and the New Testaments together in a common and relative veneration. The most eminent English Christian theologian, perhaps, of the last century observes, about the apparent failure of Jesus in Judea :

“ He left the earth without apparently doing much for the object of His coming. But when He was gone, His disciples took upon themselves to go forth to preach to all parts of the earth, with the object of preaching *Him* and collecting converts in *His Name*. After a little while they are found wonderfully to have succeeded. Large bodies of men in various places are to be seen professing to be His disciples, owning Him as their King, and continually swelling in numbers and penetrating into the populations



of the Roman Empire ; at length they convert the empire itself. All this is historical fact.”<sup>1</sup>

Such a fact, therefore, seems hardly consistent with the answer ascribed by Milton to Jesus, though it may truly express the feelings or beliefs of many British Christians at the poet's time.

Alluding to the wisdom, genius, or learning of the classic Greeks and Romans, Jesus is supposed to express a contempt, which likely many Jews entertained, for all pagan nations, yet which seems without any firm Scriptural evidence of His alleged views. He exclaims, according to Milton :

“ Alas ! what can they teach and not mislead,  
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,

Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,  
And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves  
All glory arrogate, to God give none.”

He proceeds, like a patriotic Jew, of which he surely gave no sign whatever, to avow feelings which, perhaps, subsequent Christian scholars would think were never in His mind, as if animated by the national ideas, if not prejudices, of the race that conscientiously rejected Him and who, in His own words, believed that in slaying His believers, “ they were doing God a service ” :

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<sup>1</sup> Newman's “ Grammar of Assent,” p. 457.



“ Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon  
 That pleased so well our victor’s ear,<sup>1</sup> declare  
 That rather Greece these arts from us derived ;  
 Ill imitated, while they loudest sing  
 The vices of their deities, and their own,  
 In fable, hymn, or song, so personating  
 Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.”

It does not, however, seem from Scripture that the subjected Jews in any country ever pleased their victors except by their music. In this delightful art alone the Jews evidently excelled other nations, but it can hardly be shown that they ever surpassed the Greeks and Romans in any other. Jesus is supposed to proceed in the same depreciating spirit :

“ Their orators thou then extol’st, as those  
 The top of eloquence, statists indeed,  
 And lovers of their country, as may seem ;  
 But herein to our prophets far beneath,  
 As men divinely taught, and better teaching  
 The solid rules of civil government  
 In their majestic, unaffected style,  
 Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.  
 In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,  
 What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so.”

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<sup>1</sup> “ By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion. . . . For they that led us away captive required of us then a song and melody in our heaviness.”—Psa. cxxxvii.

CHAPTER VII



## CHAPTER VII

THESE praises of ancient Jewish laws or principles are, indeed, Milton's invention, without much warrant from either Scriptural or profane history. The Jews surely never made a nation happy, or apparently had ever the means of doing so, as their own peculiar history scarcely gave them the power for such a purpose. The true, undeniable glory of this long-subjected race was their calm, invincible heroism, proved in resisting persecution and temptation alike, inflicted and offered by pagans, Christians, and Mohammedans in successive generations, through the passing centuries to the present time, when in most, though it is to be feared not in all Christian and Mohammedan lands, they enjoy religious freedom. Yet in their synagogues neither the claims of Jesus or of Mohammed to mankind's belief are acknowledged, though under their votaries it may be said the whole Jewish race now exists, and has done so for centuries. Milton, however, omits through-

out this splendid scene of his poetic fancy to describe those wise Roman laws on which modern European legislation<sup>1</sup> is greatly founded in most civilised countries, and which is so fully acknowledged by the most enlightened recent historians. Thus the late Mr. W. H. Lecky says :

“The Roman method of conciliation was first of all, the most ample toleration of the customs, religions, and municipal freedom of the conquered, and then their gradual admission to the privileges of the conqueror. . . . To rule the nations was justly pronounced by the Roman poet the supreme glory of his countrymen, and their administrative genius is even now unrivalled in history.”<sup>2</sup>

Milton proceeds to imagine and to describe Satan's disappointment at his failure to arouse any earthly ambition in Jesus, and to make him reply in apparent mortification, yet not as yet discouraged :

“ Since neither wealth nor honour, arms nor arts,  
Kingdom nor empire, pleases thee, nor aught  
By me proposed, in life contemplative  
Or active, tended on by glory or fame,  
What dost thou in this world ? ”

Without awaiting or receiving an answer to this extraordinary question, Satan proceeds to reveal the future life of Jesus in Judea at this period, as

<sup>1</sup> Blackstone's "Commentaries on English Law."

<sup>2</sup> "European Morals," chap. ii.



if possessing prophetic knowledge. Yet without any such special enlightenment it was not difficult to foresee the likely fate of Him in Judea, at this time placed among irritated or discontented Jewish fellow-subjects and haughty, scornful Roman rulers, and apparently utterly unknown to all other nations in the world. The fiend continues in a spirit of malignant warning, vaguely indicating his vast yet strangely limited powers :

“ . . . If I read aught in heaven,  
Or heaven write aught of fate, by what the stars,  
Voluminous, or single characters,  
In their conjunction met, give me to spell,  
Sorrows and labours, opposition, hate,  
Attend thee ; scorns, reproaches, injuries,  
Violence and stripes, and last cruel death.  
A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom,  
Real or allegoric, I discern not.”

Satan here, happily for mankind, admits his limited knowledge. Throughout this awful scene, indeed, he never indicates that hatred to men which in all ages they have attributed to him. In the German poet Goethe's tragedy of "Faust" this animosity is revealed by the fiend, there called Mephistopheles, when owning that he would destroy all life if he could, and that it is his constant desire to thus oppose and thwart its Divine Creator.

Mephistopheles admits to Faust, in the first interview with his future victim :

“ I am the Spirit that evermore denies,  
And rightly so, for all that doth arise  
Deserves to perish—this distinctly seeing—  
No, say I, No ! to everything that bubbles into being.  
My proper element is what you name  
Sin, Dissolution : in a word, the Bad.”<sup>1</sup>

Milton's account of Satan's assumed wish for the good of the Roman Empire, and detestation of its evil ruler, Tiberius Cæsar, while utterly inconsistent with being himself the Father of Evil, so decisively shown in “Faust,” is yet quite in accordance with his description in “Paradise Lost.” Milton, in fact, gives him much the same character in each of his immortal poems, endowed with some noble ideas of which, according to the limits of human knowledge, he is incapable, and are merely the invention of the poet's imaginative mind.

Satan's next temptation of Jesus is by placing Him in a gloomy wilderness during a terrific stormy night, exposed to the full fury of the elements, over which the fiend, apparently, presides while remaining near Him, though pretending to disappear :

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<sup>1</sup> “Faust” (Tauchnitz edition).

“ . . . At His head

The Tempter watched, and soon with ugly dreams  
Disturb'd his sleep. And either tropic now  
'Gan thunder, and both ends of heaven ; the clouds  
From many a horrid rift abortive poured  
Fierce rain with lightning mix'd, water with fire  
In ruin reconciled : nor slept the winds  
Within their stony caves, but rush'd abroad  
From the four hinges of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Milton also describes “Infernal ghosts” and  
“hellish furies” under Satan's order vainly trying  
to awe or terrify Jesus, while He remained

“ Unappall'd in calm and sinless peace.”

A bright, calm morning is supposed to succeed this  
terrific night, when all Nature revives, and even  
Satan, strange to say, whom Milton often endows  
with human feelings in both his grand poems :

“ Glad would also seem  
Of this fair change,”

and addressing Jesus in apparent congratulation,  
exclaims :

“ Fair morning yet betides thee, Son of God,  
After a dismal night. I heard the wrack,  
As earth and sky would mingle, but myself  
Was distant.”

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<sup>1</sup> Book iv.

He proceeds, still trying vainly to alarm Jesus by the prospect of a dreadful fate, or rather of intermediate suffering in this world, unless He accepts his aid in obtaining "Israel's sceptre," which strange rank or dignity Satan still falsely imagines He secretly covets. The alluring position, indeed, so tempting at this special period to all patriotic Jews, would seem in Satan's mind, according to Milton, to involve acquisition of the vast Roman Empire, of which Judea was only a small province. This grand ambition, however, on the part of Jesus seems quite unwarranted by Scriptural authority, and probably the most bold and enterprising of the Jews at this period never desired more than the national independence of their own country.

CHAPTER VIII





## CHAPTER VIII

IN this imaginary scene, invented by Milton's grand mind but resting on very slight Scriptural authority or intimation, Jesus, throughout supported by the secret power of the Creator, contemptuously answers His tempter while alluding to the fearful night that has just passed :<sup>1</sup>

“ Me worse than wet thou find'st not ; other harm  
Those terrors, which thou speak'st of, did me none ;  
I never fear'd they could, though noising loud  
And threatening nigh ; what they can do as signs  
Betokening, or ill-boding, I contemn  
As false portents, not sent from God, but thee ;  
Who, knowing I shall reign past thy preventing,  
Obtrudest thy offer'd aid, that I accepting  
At least might seem to hold all power of thee,  
Ambitious spirit ! and would'st be thought my God ;  
  . . . Desist (thou art discern'd,  
And toil'st in vain), nor me in vain molest.”

At this calm defiance Satan, “ now swoll'n with rage,” abandons his friendly pretensions, and finally disclosing his evil mind, bitterly exclaims :

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<sup>1</sup> Book iv.

“ . . . By all best conjectures I collect  
 Thou art to be my fatal enemy.  
 Good reason, then, if I beforehand seek  
 To understand my adversary, who  
 And what he is ; his wisdom, power, intent ;

Therefore to know what more thou art than man,  
 Worth naming Son of God by voice from heaven,  
 Another method I must now begin.”<sup>x</sup>

Satan, as his last resource, is supposed to bear off Jesus to the highest pinnacle of the venerated Jewish Temple at Jerusalem, which, humanly speaking, He had doubtless been taught from childhood to view with special love, interest, and reverence. He had probably, also, often heard the Roman rule blamed and bitterly complained of by neighbours and fellow-countrymen as an unjust, odious tyranny. Yet in this opinion of Roman authority in Judea He apparently never shared, but on the contrary, showed what the Jews might have thought a want of true patriotism in openly reproaching their priesthood, which could hardly have been unknown to the Roman garrison of Jerusalem.

Milton then represents Satan addressing Jesus almost in scorn, and as if still doubtful if He is divinely protected, while eager to discover if possible His real nature :

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<sup>x</sup> Book iv.

“There stand, if thou wilt stand ; to stand upright  
 Will ask thee skill ; I to thy Father’s house  
 Have brought thee, and highest placed ; highest is best.  
 Now show thy progeny ; if not to stand,  
 Cast thyself down ; safely, if Son of God.”

Satan proceeds to quote the precise words of the Bible, thus giving good ground for Shakespeare’s well-known opinion,

“The Devil can quote Scripture for his purpose,”<sup>1</sup>

and continues :

“For it is written, ‘He will give command  
 Concerning thee to His angels ; in their hands  
 They shall uplift thee, lest at any time  
 Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.’”

To this last temptation, uttered by an evil spirit whose arts no unassisted man could hope to resist, Jesus replies decisively and with invincible courage, confounding the fiend as much by His superior knowledge as by His utter defiance of all human danger :

“ . . . ‘Also it is written,  
 Tempt not the Lord thy God.’ He said, and stood :  
 But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.

So, struck with dread and anguish, fell the fiend,  
 And to his crew that sat consulting, brought  
 Joyless triumphals of his hoped success,

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<sup>1</sup> “Merchant of Venice.”

Ruin, desperation, and dismay,  
 Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God.  
 So Satan fell."

Milton then describes Jesus surrounded by ministering angels bringing Him sustenance for his human frame :

"That soon refresh'd Him wearied, and repaired  
 What hunger, if aught hunger had impair'd  
 Or thirst ; and, as He fed, angelic quires  
 Sung heavenly anthems of His victory  
 Over temptation and the Tempter proud.  
 ' Hail, Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds,  
 Queller of Satan ! on thy glorious work  
 Now enter, and begin to save mankind.' "

In this grand language Milton expresses the fervent, firm belief of Christians, and to some extent of Mohammedans, in praising the invincible virtue of Jesus, while acknowledging His moral superiority to all living at that period.

Some years after this sublime scene where Satan vainly displays the attractive glories of pagan Athens to Jesus, His faith was fated to be preached to a pagan audience by St. Paul. Describing this event, a learned theologian and historian of the last century says :<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Farrar's "Life of St. Paul," chap. xxvii.



“ He was standing under the blue dome of heaven, a vaster and diviner temple than any which man could rear. And therefore it was with the deepest seriousness, as well as with the most undaunted composure, that he addressed them. ‘ Athenians,’ he said, standing forth amongst them with the earnest gaze and outstretched hand which was his attitude when addressing a multitude, ‘ I observe that in every respect you are unusually religious.’ Their attention would naturally be won, and even a certain amount of personal kindness towards the orator be enlisted, by an exordium so courteous and so entirely in accordance with the favourable testimony which many writers had borne to their city as the common altar and shrine of Greece. ‘ For,’ he continued, ‘ in wandering through your city and gazing about me on the objects of your devotion, I found among them an altar, on which had been carved in inscription, “ To the unknown God.” That, then, which ye unconsciously adore, that am I declaring unto you. The God who made the universe and all things in it, He being the natural Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is He in need of anything so as to receive service from human hands, seeing that He is Himself the giver to all of life and breath and all things.’ ”

Farrar proceeds, however, to own that directly St. Paul mentioned the Resurrection his heathen audience interrupted him with jeering mockery rather than with dangerous rage, adding of the Athenians :

“ They were not nearly serious enough in their own belief, nor did they consider this feeble wanderer a sufficiently important person to make them care to enforce against St. Paul that decree of the Areopagus<sup>1</sup> which had brought

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<sup>1</sup> “ A seat of justice on a small eminence near Athens.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

Socrates to the hemlock draught in the prison, . . . but they instantly offered to the great missionary a contemptuous toleration. . . . One dignified adherent, indeed, he found in Dionysius the Areopagite, and one more, a woman whose very name is uncertain, but at Athens he founded no Church, to Athens he wrote no epistle, and in Athens, often as he passed its neighbourhood, he never set foot again. . . . He left Athens as he had lived in it, a despised and lonely man. And yet his visit was not in vain. . . . Little did those philosophers in their self-satisfied superiority suppose that the trivial incident in which they had condescended to take part was for them the beginning of the end. . . . In all his seeming defeats lay the germ of certain victory. He founded no Church at Athens, but there a Church grew up. In the next century it furnished to the cause of Christianity its martyr-bishops and its eloquent apologists. In the third century it flourished in peace and plenty."

Upon this subject of St. Paul at Athens a French writer, M. Renan, whose works are all, or nearly all, translated into English, and whose historical knowledge is indisputable, says, alluding to the scorn Paul received at Athens :

"We have never seen a better example of how men of mind ought to distrust themselves and to guard against laughing at an idea, however foolish it may seem to them. The bad Greek spoken by Paul, his incessant and halting phraseology, were not reasons for making him accredited in Athens. The philosophers turned their backs disdainfully at his barbarous speech. 'He is a babbler,' said some. 'He is a preacher of strange gods,' said others. No one could have suspected that this babbler would one day supplant them, and that four hundred and seventy-four years later their professor-

ships would be suppressed as useless and injurious in consequence of the preaching of Paul. What a grand lesson! . . . When philosophy declares that she will not occupy herself with religion, religion responds by extinguishing her; and this is just, for philosophy is something only when she shows to humanity the way, when she takes up seriously the infinite problem which is the same for all.”<sup>1</sup>

Respecting St. Paul’s great coadjutor, St. Peter, Dean Milman says :

“The home of St. Peter [in Rome], from whom she claims the supremacy of the Christian world, has eclipsed that of St. Paul in the Eternal City. The most splendid temple which has been erected by Christian zeal, to rival or surpass the proudest edifices of heathen magnificence, bears the name of that apostle, while that of St. Paul rises in a remote and unwholesome suburb. . . . In no part of the authentic Scripture occurs the slightest allusion to the personal history of St. Peter, as connected with the Western Churches. At all events, the conversion of the Gentile world was the acknowledged province of St. Paul. In that partition treaty in which these two moral invaders divided the yet unconquered world, the more civilised province of Greek and Roman heathenism was assigned to him who was emphatically called the Apostle of the Gentiles, while the Jewish population fell under the particular care of the Galilean Peter.”<sup>2</sup>

The historian, Gibbon, who visited Rome, where he conceived the idea of writing his noble history of that empire’s “Decline and Fall,” observes with

<sup>1</sup> Renan’s “Life of St. Paul,” pp. 112-113.

<sup>2</sup> “History of Christianity.”

apparent, yet perhaps not real, sarcasm about this grandest of Christian churches : <sup>1</sup>

“If the Christian apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, could return to the Vatican, they might possibly inquire the name of the deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple.”

Then alluding to the two chief Protestant divisions of Prelatists and Puritans, Gibbon proceeds in his cool, reasoning style, which intensely provoked some Christian readers of his period : <sup>2</sup>

“At Oxford or Geneva they would experience less surprise, but it might still be incumbent on them to peruse the catechism of the Church and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings and the words of their master.” <sup>3</sup>

Yet few men of Gibbon's time knew better than he himself that the political progress of Christianity, little short of miraculous in its extent and results,

<sup>1</sup> “If Gibbon were writing now (1896) the tone of his candid and rational inquiry would certainly be different. His manner would not be that of sometimes open, sometimes apparently veiled dislike, he would rather assume an attitude of detachment. He would be affected by that merely historical point of view which is a note of the present century and its larger tolerances, and more than half disarmed by that wide diffusion of unobtrusive scepticism among educated people which seems to render offensive warfare superfluous.”  
—Professor Bury's Preface to his edition of Gibbon's “History.”

<sup>2</sup> “Decline and Fall,” chap. 50th.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



would fully explain the cause of that wonderful change in the religious convictions of the majority among civilised men, which the two devoted Saints were fated never to behold, though they evidently anticipated it, or something like it, even during their temporal degradation and personal failure. But the Jews even yet, though gratitude for just rule in some Christian and Mohammedan countries may make them rarely discuss the prevailing faiths, remain, like their ancestry, firm unbelievers in either of them. Among the most enlightened Jews of the present time, mankind's Creator seems still the special and favouring God of their peculiar nation from the earliest times. The extraordinary relations, however, between ruling Romans and subjected Jews, so eloquently described by Milton in "Paradise Regained," have supplied modern Christian writers, lay and clerical, with a most important subject for remark and discussion. Thus an able writer, during the last years of the nineteenth century, who has evidently made Jewish history a special study, says :

"Give a comprehensive glance at the career of the Jews. It is the marvel of history that this little people, beset and despised by all the earth for ages, maintains its solidarity unimpaired. Unique among all the peoples of the earth, it has come undoubtedly to the present day from the most distant antiquity. Forty, perhaps fifty, centuries rest upon this venerable contemporary of Egypt, Chaldea, and Troy. . . . Lan-



guage, literature, customs, traits of character, these, too, have all survived. The Jew of New York, Chicago, St. Louis, is in body and soul the Jew of London, of St. Petersburg, of Constantinople, of the fenced cities of Judah in the days of David.”<sup>1</sup>

Recent years prove, however, that the Jews under British and Turkish rule are happier and safer than under the Russian or the German, yet Hosmer alludes to former Mohammedan intolerance towards the Jews, which seems to have at least comparatively ceased :

“ In reality it is only at times that the outraged people has received kindness at their [Mohammedan] hands, fiery Mussulman intolerance bringing more often to pass a persecution scarcely less bitter than that from Christian hands. . . . Not a single Christian people has kept itself free from the reproach of inhumanity towards the Jews.”

It would appear from Gibbon's historic researches that Mohammed, when he first obtained power, persecuted the Arabian Jews, or at least viewed them with a hatred which for many years has practically ceased in most, though perhaps not in all, Mohammedan countries. At his first rise Mohammed forbade the previous worship of idols, and human sacrifices, among whom his father, the handsome Abdallah, was numbered, and had a

<sup>1</sup> Hosmer's "Story of the Jews" ("Story of the Nations" series).

narrow escape through a ransom. Mohammed so far, like Jesus, claimed the Jewish Old Testament as the foundation of his new religion, and thereby incurred a similar dread and enmity from Arabian Jews.<sup>1</sup> Thus in the Koran the Holy Spirit is represented as saying or intimating to Mohammed the doctrinal connection of the Old and New Testaments :

“ We did send our apostles with manifest signs and we did send down among you the Book and the balance that men might stand by justice. . . . And we sent Noah and Abraham and placed in their seed prophecy and the Book. . . . Then we followed up their footsteps with our apostles and we followed them up with Jesus, the son of Mary, and we gave him the gospel and we placed in the hearts of those who followed him, kindness and compassion.—The Koran, vol. ix. (“ Sacred Books of the East ”), translated by E. H. Palmer.

Still, the Jews read with historic incredulity, yet without bitterness, of Jesus and Mohammed each adding what they believe to be unauthorised, fanciful supplements of Gospel and Koran to their one Sacred Volume.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Mohammed certainly wished his religion to be looked upon as a further fulfilment of Christianity, just as Christianity is the fulfilment of Judaism.”—Palmer’s Preface to his translation of the Koran, vol. vi. (“ Sacred Books of the East ”).

<sup>2</sup> Friedlander’s “ Jewish Religion.”



CHAPTER IX





## CHAPTER IX

THE Greek or Roman paganism which Christianity replaced throughout Europe, and the cruel idolatry which Mohammedanism replaced in Arabia, were less dangerous to the Jews being subjected strangers in different lands, than these two powerful faiths established by alleged inspired Prophets, both of whom the Jews had wished to destroy. Yet at first, it would seem, Mohammed was inclined to favour the Jews, with whom he certainly agreed in detesting the Arabian idolatry, which he was destined to almost entirely destroy in Arabia during his lifetime. Gibbon says of the relations between the Jews and the first Mohammedans :

“The choice of Jerusalem for the first Kebla of prayer discovers the early propensity of Mohammed in favour of the Jews, and happy would it have been for their temporal interest had they recognised in the Arabian prophet the hope of Israel and the promised Messiah.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Decline and Fall,” chap. 50th.

This, however, the firm, conscientious Jews would never do, yet strange to say their resolute heroism in defying religious persecution and temptation alike is hardly done moral justice to, even by the liberal-minded, if not free-thinking, historian Gibbon himself, as he proceeds :

“*Their obstinacy* converted his [Mohammed’s] friendship into perpetual hatred, with which he pursued that unfortunate people to the last moment of his life.”

Such fearless devotion in an opposed, helpless race surely merits a better name than obstinacy ; yet it has been the evident fate, during many civilised centuries, of this morally invincible people to endure persecution and legalised injustice even from the votaries of a religion calling itself one of mercy, a name surely owing to its Founder, but for a long period disobeyed and often violated by His professed followers.

The Jews, next to the Arabian idolaters, were apparently Mohammed’s first foes ; the fearful wars between his followers with European Christian nations were yet to come. During his life, therefore, the victorious Prophet was inclined by policy, perhaps by sympathy, to prefer Christians to Jews ; thus Gibbon writes :

“ To his Christian subjects Mohammed readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the

property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship." <sup>1</sup>

The unchangeable views of the modern Jews about Christianity and Mohammedanism, under whose respective votaries the whole race had been subjected for centuries and still remain so, are ably described by a recent Jewish writer : <sup>2</sup>

"Mohammedans and Christians tried by all means in their power to convince the Jews that the Anointed, whose advent was prophesied by the [Jewish] Prophets, had already appeared, the former pointing to Mohammed, the latter to Jesus, as the persons realising those predictions. The Biblical passages adduced as evidence prove nothing of the kind."

This Jewish writer, happily free, unlike his ancestry, to safely state the opinions of his co-religionists without fear of legal penalty, continues in a style more pleasing to philanthropists generally than to Christian or Mohammedan enthusiasts :

"In refuting arguments brought by Christians and Mohammedans against Jews and Judaism and rejecting the Messianic claims of Jesus and Mohammed, Jews are ready to acknowledge the good work done by the religions founded by these men in combating idolatry and spreading civilisation."

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<sup>1</sup> "Decline and Fall," chap. 50th.

<sup>2</sup> Friedlander's "Jewish Religion," pp. 225-6, published 1891.

The late illustrious statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, a descendant of the Jewish race, though a Christian, shows great admiration for the Jews, during their historic persecutions, while regretting, from rather a peculiar point of view, their rejection of Christianity. In his brilliant novel, "Tancred," Disraeli, under this name, describes a young English nobleman visiting Judea in the nineteenth century. The author indicates throughout his own firm attachment to the Jewish race and belief in their superiority for all time to other nations, yet he himself remained a Christian and devoted to the interests of the British Empire, which for a time he ruled with all the powers entrusted by its laws to a prime minister. He shows much the same feeling in this novel and in his subsequent biography of Lord George Bentinck. Yet his peculiar views seem never to have been shared by either Jews or Christians. He apparently wished to associate all Christian triumphs with Judaism, or with the Jewish race, owing to the common belief of both Jews and Christians in the Old Testament. Yet in reality the triumph of Christianity over paganism in Europe was politically disastrous, rather than favourable, to the Jews for many years.<sup>1</sup> The be-

<sup>1</sup> See Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" and Lecky's "Pagan Empire," book iii.



lievers in the Gospel and in the Koran oppressed the Jews, who successively rejected both, with far more severity than the subjected race had previously endured from the pagans of Europe and of Arabia. Yet Disraeli writes, alluding to the Emperor Titus, the most terrible political enemy of the Jews :

“Titus destroyed the Temple. The religion of Judea has in turn subverted the fanes which were raised to his father (Vespasian) and to himself in their imperial capital, and the God of Abraham and of Jacob is now worshipped before every other in Rome.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be hardly possible to prove that this triumph of Christians over pagans in Rome was ever rejoiced at or thought a gain by the subjected Jews passing from pagan to Christian political rule, but this change is evidently to Disraeli a cause of exultation. He again cites the atheistical revolution in France before the supremacy of Napoleon the First, as if the subsequent restoration of the Roman Catholic form of Christianity was at least indirectly a triumph of or for the Jewish race. He writes of Christian Europe :

“The most powerful and the most civilised of its kingdoms, about to conquer the rest, shut up its churches, desecrated its altars, massacred and persecuted their sacred servants,

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<sup>1</sup> “Tancred,” book iii.



and announced that the Hebrew creeds which Simon Peter brought from Palestine, and which his successors revealed to Clovis,<sup>1</sup> were a mockery and a fiction. What has been the result? In every city, town, village, and hamlet of that great kingdom, the divine image of the most illustrious of Hebrews has been again raised, amid the homage of kneeling millions, while in the heart of its bright and witty capital the nation has erected the most gorgeous of modern temples and consecrated its marble and golden walls to the name and memory and celestial efficacy of a Hebrew woman."

Disraeli, in a later work, expresses his somewhat original views, though probably to little purpose, as few, if any, conversions from Judaism resulted:

"It is no doubt to be deplored that several millions of the Jewish race should persist in believing only a part of their religion."<sup>2</sup>

In this peculiar view of Jewish incredulity Disraeli seems to somewhat resemble Mohammed. The latter declares in the Koran,<sup>3</sup> as if anticipating the future political triumph of Christians over the unfortunate race:

"O ye who believe! be ye the helpers of God? As Jesus, son of Mary, said to the apostles, 'Who are my helpers for God?' Said the apostles, 'We are God's helpers!' And a

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<sup>1</sup> Pagan king of France, converted to Christianity, 493.—  
"Mangnall's Questions."

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Lord George Bentinck," chap. xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Volume ninth (Sacred Books of the East).

party of the children of Israel believed and a party misbelieved. And we aided those who believed against their enemies, and they were on the morrow superior."

Disraeli wrote his "Life of Bentinck" in 1852, but despite his great talents and high position as England's Prime Minister, his peculiar views from a religious standpoint had little apparent effect on the Jews either in the British Empire or in any other part of the world. Indeed, even since his time the unconverted Jews have, at least in many countries, rather increased, both in number and influence. Disraeli would surely not deny that ancient Greece and Rome excelled in philosophy, in ruling nations, and in legislation, as well as in other arts and sciences, yet with a partiality for his own race he may rather exaggerate their superior talent in music; though in it, and apparently it alone among refined accomplishments, the Jews seem to have excelled other ancient nations. He writes, perhaps rather ignoring many artists unconnected with the Jewish race :

"The most admirable artists of the drama have been and still are of the Hebrew race, . . . the most entrancing singers and dancers have been and still are sons and daughters of Israel."

After stating boldly that

"the degradation of the Jewish race is alone a striking

proof of its excellence, for none but one of the great races could have survived the trials it has endured,"

he proceeds to exalt Jewish superiority in music in what may be too partial a strain :

"Music seems to be the only means of creating the beautiful in which we not only equal, but in all probability greatly excel, the ancients. The music of modern Europe ranks with the transcendent creations of human genius, the poetry, the statues, the temples of Greece. It produces and represents, as they did, whatever is most beautiful in the spirit of man, and often expresses what is most profound. And who are the great composers?"

Disraeli finally answers his own question, in ascribing the chief if not the only excellence in musical composition to those, like himself, of Jewish descent, while not naming the many famous Italian, French, and German composers who were wholly unconnected with the Hebrew race. He proceeds with patriotic pride :

"When the Russian, the Frenchman, and the Anglo-Saxon, amid applauding theatres or the choral voices of solemn temples, yield themselves to the full spell of a Mozart or a Mendelssohn, it seems difficult to comprehend how these races can reconcile it to their hearts to persecute a Jew."

Disraeli proceeds with historic truth, and in a more practical spirit :

"The world has by this time discovered that it is impossible to destroy the Jews. The attempt to extirpate them

has been made under the most favourable auspices and on the largest scale; the most considerable means that man could command have been pertinaciously applied to this object for the longest period of recorded time."

In historical order Disraeli then briefly reviews the various persecuting foes of his race, before, during, and since the establishment of Christianity, but omitting to name the Mohammedans :

"Egyptian pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, and holy inquisitors have alike devoted their energies to the fulfilment of their common purpose. . . . A curious system of degrading customs and debasing laws, which would have broken the heart of any other people, have been tried and in vain,"

and Disraeli is truly able to declare :

"The Jews after all this havoc are probably more numerous at this date (1852) than they were during the reign of Solomon the wise."

Yet though this wonderful race must always preserve a grand position, altogether unique in the history of nations, the transmitted glories of the ancient Greeks and Romans chiefly occupied the studious thoughts of the most distinguished men in Britain during the last two centuries. Homer's "Iliad," the most famous of Greek poems, was translated by Pope in the eighteenth century, and the work attracted immense attention



in the literary world. Dr. Johnson, its great admirer, called the translation

“A great event in the annals of learning,”<sup>1</sup>

while in the last century the fourteenth Earl of Derby, then Prime Minister, rivalled, or tried to rival, Pope in also translating this same masterpiece of poetic description. In the Preface to his more literal, if less elegant translation, Lord Derby observes :

“Pope’s ‘Iliad,’ admirable as it is, can hardly be said to be Homer’s ‘Iliad,’”

probably meaning some graces of style wanting in the grand original, as Dr. Johnson had previously remarked :

“I suppose many readers of the English [Pope’s] ‘Iliad,’ when they have been touched with some unexpected beauty of the lighter kind have tried to enjoy it in the original, where, alas ! it was not to be found. Homer doubtless owes to his translator many Ovidian<sup>2</sup> graces, not exactly suitable to his character ; but to have added can be no great crime if nothing be taken away.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Life of Pope.”

<sup>2</sup> “Ovid, a celebrated Roman poet. . . . His poetry contains great sweetness and elegance.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson’s “Life of Pope.”



In comparing Lord Derby's translation with Pope's, the truth of Johnson's words on the latter seems evident. Lord Derby may be more true to the original, but Pope, while writing in a more polished style, yet may sufficiently express Homer's meaning, though in a more attractive manner. One remarkable instance occurs in a noble passage (chap. xiii.) where Neptune, the Sea-king,<sup>1</sup> rushes over his subjected element to help the besieging Greeks, with whom he takes part against the unfortunate Trojans desperately defending their ill-fated city. Lord Derby's version of this passage gives much the same meaning as that of Pope, though in plainer words, by trying to adhere closer to the original :

" No careless watch the monarch Neptune kept.  
Wondering, he viewed the battle where he sat  
Aloft on wooded Samos<sup>2</sup> topmost peak,  
Samos of Thrace. Whence Ida's<sup>3</sup> heights he saw  
And Priam's<sup>4</sup> city and the ships of Greece.  
Thither ascended from the sea he sat,

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<sup>1</sup> "Neptune, a god, son of Saturn, brother to Jupiter, and received as his portion the kingdom of the sea."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "An island in the Ægean Sea, on the coast of Asia Minor."—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "A celebrated mountain in the neighbourhood of Troy. It was covered with green woods, and the poets say it was frequented by the gods during the Trojan war."—Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "The last king of Troy."—Ibid.

And thence the Greeks by Trojans overborne  
Pitying he saw, and deeply wrath with Jove.  
Thence down the mountain's craggy side he passed  
With rapid step, and as he moved along,  
Beneath the immortal feet of Ocean's Lord  
Quaked the huge mountain and the shadowy wood.  
Three strides he took, the fourth he reached his goal,  
Ægæ,<sup>1</sup> whereon the margin of the bay  
His temple stood, all glittering, all of gold,  
Imperishable. There arrived, he yoked  
Beneath his car the brazen-footed steeds  
Of swiftest flight, with manes of flowing gold,  
All clad in gold; the golden lash he grasped  
Of curious work, and mounting on his car,  
Skimm'd o'er the waves; swift flew the bounding steeds,  
Nor was the brazen axle wet with spray  
When to the ships of Greece their Lord they bore."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "A town of Eubœa, whence Neptune is called Ægeus."  
—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "Iliad," book xiii.

CHAPTER X



## CHAPTER X

POPE'S more eloquent version of this noble passage runs thus :

“ Meantime the monarch of the watery main  
Observ'd the Thunderer (Jupiter), nor observ'd in vain.  
In Samothracia,<sup>1</sup> on a mountain's brow,  
Whose many woods o'erhung the depths below,  
He sat, and round him cast his azure eyes  
Where Ida's misty tops confus'dly rise ;  
Below fair Ilion's<sup>2</sup> glittering spires were seen,  
The crowded ships and sable seas between.  
There, from the crystal chambers of the main  
Emerg'd, he sat, and mourned his Argives<sup>3</sup> slain.  
At Jove incens'd, with grief and fury stung,  
Prone down the rocky steep he rush'd along.

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<sup>1</sup> “ An island in the Ægean Sea. . . . It was distinguished from the Samos which lies on the coast of Ionia by the name of Samothrace.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “ A citadel of Troy. It is generally taken for Troy itself.”—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “ The word is indiscriminately applied to all the inhabitants of Greece.”—Ibid.



Fierce as he pass'd the lofty mountains nod,  
 The forests shake, earth trembled as he trod  
 And felt the footsteps of the immortal god ;  
 From realm to realm three ample strides he took,  
 And at the fourth the distant Ægæ shook.  
 Far in the bay his shining palace stands,  
 Eternal frame, not rais'd by mortal hands.  
 This having reached, his brass-hoof'd steeds he reins,  
 Fleet as the winds and deck'd with golden manes ;  
 Refulgent arms his mighty limbs infold,  
 Immortal arms of adamant and gold.  
 He mounts his car, the golden scourge applies ;  
 He sits superior, and the chariot flies ;  
 His whirling wheels the glossy surface sweep,  
 Th' enormous monsters rolling o'er the deep  
 Gambol around him on the watery way,  
 And heavy whales in awkward measures play ;  
 The sea, subsiding, spreads a level plain,  
 Exults, and owns the monarch of the main ;  
 The parting waves before his coursers fly,  
 The wondering waters leave his axle dry." <sup>1</sup>

Pope's beautiful language in this noble passage apparently confirms Johnson's words. The poet presents really the same ideas as in Lord Derby's translation, though less literally, and many readers will probably agree with Johnson's views, before quoted, on the subject of Pope's merit as a translator.

<sup>1</sup> "The bold invention by which the gods take sides in the War of Troy . . . is not a flight of imagination only. The partisanship of the respective deities this way and that is evidently dictated by sympathies of race."—Gladstone's "Juventus Mundi."

The splendid genius of Homer seems to have specially interested rival British statesmen of the last century. About the same time that Lord Derby's translation of the "Iliad" appeared, Mr. Gladstone produced his learned works on Homer and the Homeric Age, and the "Juventus Mundi," or Youth of the World, which last work, though bearing such a comprehensive title, deals chiefly with ancient Greece. Mr. Gladstone's admiration for Homer, though more of a practical or political nature, is quite as profound as that of any other English writer, yet expressed in a less enthusiastic style than that of Macaulay. His personal knowledge of the British nation renders some of his remarks equally interesting and instructive.

He writes :

"The poems of Homer are the seed-plot of what is best and soundest in the Greek politics of the historic period. Nor are we, the moderns, and, as I think, the British in particular, without a special relation to the subject. In part we owe to these ancient societies a debt. In part we may trace with reasonable pleasure an original similitude between the Homeric picture and the best ideas of our European and our British ancestry. What are those ideas? Among the soundest of them we reckon the power of opinion and persuasion as opposed to force ; the sense of responsibility in governing men, the hatred not only of tyranny, but of all unlimited power, . . . the reconciliation and harmony between the spirit of freedom on the one hand, the spirit

of order and reverence on the other, and a practical belief in right as relative and in duty as reciprocal. Out of these elements, whether in ancient or in modern times, great governments have been made." <sup>1</sup>

Both Mr. Gladstone's works alike try to exalt the literary fame of the Greeks, Homer especially, in the estimation of modern British readers. Their well-merited admiration for this illustrious statesman naturally induced them to study with additional interest those noble works which, surviving all the changes of recorded time, this eminent scholar thoughtfully recalls to public attention, amid all the absorbing excitement and fatigue of British political life, constant exertion, and official responsibility. Yet Mr. Gladstone's even more literary contemporary, Lord Macaulay, who if not himself the greatest was surely among the greatest of British scholars in the nineteenth century, has likely been still more successful in vindicating classic literature by his brilliantly attractive style, united to immense learning. He tried to revive or inspire in British minds the most ardent admiration as well as comprehension of the classic literature of Greece and Rome, which he himself enjoyed with sincere and avowed enthusiasm. His delight in its study when allied to his vast information and wonderfully retentive

<sup>1</sup> "Juventus Mundi," chap. xi.

memory had the rare good fortune of making his views, even on profound subjects, almost equally interesting and instructive. Some years before he wrote his great work on British history, he seemed to almost anticipate his own future success as a historian, by eloquently describing what such a writer should be, and of this description he finally proved himself almost the embodiment. He writes :<sup>1</sup>

“The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction.”

Macaulay's avowed liking for scholastic education and delightful recollections even of school life, though quite sincere, might almost seem written at the direction of some arbitrary teacher, forcing, like Mr. Squeers in “Nicholas Nickleby,” his helpless pupils to write home their love for their school and its instructions. For Macaulay, an accomplished man of the world, mixing in political and fashionable society, yet casts a loving eye on a time of life which has often left on other celebrated men a very different impression of the past.

<sup>1</sup> “Essay on History.”



In praise of classic studies he writes enthusiastically :<sup>1</sup>

“The celebrity of the great classical writers is confined within no limits except those which separate civilised from savage man. Their works are the common property of every polished nation. They have furnished subjects for the painter and models for the poet.”

He then proceeds to joyfully recall, in the words of a thoroughly successful and likely a deservedly rewarded pupil, certain school memories with feelings which, it may be feared, represent those of a decided if not small minority :<sup>2</sup>

“In the minds of the educated classes throughout Europe their names are indissolubly associated with the endearing recollections of childhood.”

Some readers might here expect to find games, amusements, lively friends, or happy homes enumerated, but no : the future historian proceeds to thus describe his early delights :

“The old schoolroom, the dog-eared grammar, the first prize—the tears so often shed and so quickly dried.”

Again, when describing Greek literature, though

<sup>1</sup> “Essay on the Athenian Orators.”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



chiefly that of Athens,<sup>1</sup> he writes with the eloquent, yet earnest enthusiasm which seems his rather particular characteristic :

“Who shall say how many thousands have been made wiser, happier, and better by those pursuits in which she [Greece] has taught mankind to engage, to how many the studies which took their rise from her have been wealth in poverty—liberty in bondage—health in sickness—society in solitude? Her power is indeed manifested at the bar, in the senate, in the field of battle, in the schools of philosophy.”

Then, with perhaps slightly exaggerated eloquence, the accomplished British scholar, probably the credit and delight of his school instructors, adds this emphatic reflection :

“Wherever literature consoles sorrow or assuages pain—wherever it brings gladness to eyes which fail with wakefulness and tears, and ache for the dark house and the long sleep—there is exhibited in its noblest form the immortal influence of Athens.”

In this noble passage, however, Macaulay's enthusiasm, or personal taste, may ascribe too much value or importance to Greek literature, considering how many eminent, virtuous, and gifted men in various countries were blessings to their

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Mitford's “History of Greece.”

race, yet who never had the least chance of knowing anything about it. His eloquent language here is clearly that of a highly educated, appreciating student, a pupil indeed after a zealous tutor's own heart, one whose individual tastes, cordially and rarely enjoying his educational training, made him perhaps the most brilliant or successful scholar in Britain in the nineteenth century. Inspired with classic ideas and ardent love of literature, Macaulay poetically expresses his feelings in noble verses written after his own defeat at a parliamentary election for Edinburgh. In these he turns his disappointed, if not mortified mind, to Literature for consolation, while attributing to it in elegant poetry the same power of relief to unhappy persons in past history that he himself evidently found in its comforting influence. He imagines the Spirit of Literature appearing to him and promising, in a vision, the consolation she had previously administered to others, and which she now invites him to accept. This fanciful yet wise counsel the future historian practically followed years after this imaginary vision, and he produced a "History of Britain" which, despite some errors and occasional partiality or hero-worship, took its place among the most brilliant and standard specimens of English literature in the last century. This supposed Fairy Queen of Literature thus alike advises

and consoles the defeated candidate for what are called parliamentary honours :<sup>1</sup>

“ Without one envious sigh, one anxious scheme,  
The nether sphere the fleeting hour resign,  
Mine is the world of thought, the world of dream,  
Mine all the past and all the future mine.  
Fortune, that lays in sport the mighty low  
Age, that to penance turns the joys of youth,  
Shall leave untouch'd the gifts which I bestow,  
The sense of beauty and the thirst of truth.”

She then recalls two great Englishmen of Queen Elizabeth's and James the First's times, who during disgrace and imprisonment alike found real relief in the gifts of her peculiar power :

“ In the dark hour of shame I deigned to stand,  
Before the frowning peers at Bacon's side.”

From these words Macaulay may have had in his mind “The Advancement of Learning,” “The Wisdom of the Ancients,” and other Essays of this great English writer, which, despite his political disgrace, succeeded in establishing his lasting fame. The yet more pathetic case of Bacon's brilliant contemporary, Sir Walter Raleigh, writing his “History of the World” in a London prison shortly before execution, and whose accomplished mind

<sup>1</sup> “Miscellaneous Writings,” vol. ii.

always loved classic wisdom, the Fairy Queen thus mentions :

“ I brought the wise and brave of ancient days  
To cheer the cell where Raleigh pined alone.”

Then, recalling Milton's lofty mind reverting to Scripture history during his last years of blindness and political danger :

“ I lighted Milton's darkness with the blaze  
Of the bright ranks that guard the eternal throne.”

Finally, in firm assurance of practical comfort during all the trials of life, irrespective of friends, health, or country, the Spirit of Literature concludes :

“ No, when on restless night dawns cheerless morrow,  
When weary soul and wasting body pine  
Thine am I still in danger, sickness, sorrow,  
In conflict, obloquy, want, exile, thine.”

“ Amidst the din of all things fell and vile,  
Hate's yell, and envy's hiss, and folly's bray,  
Remember me ; and, with an unforced smile,  
See riches, baubles, flatterers pass away.  
Yes, they will pass away ; nor deem it strange  
They come and go as comes and goes the sea.  
And let them come and go : thou through all change  
Fix thy firm gaze on virtue and on me.”

CHAPTER XI





## CHAPTER XI

IT seems evident that love of classic literature chiefly inspired Macaulay when writing these lines, from all he reveals of his personal taste and feelings. He thus even admits loss of temper on the subject of Greek literature when examining Mitford's "Grecian History" :

"Of the indifference of Mr. Mitford on this subject I will not speak, for I cannot speak with patience."

Then, in the true spirit of a literary enthusiast, Macaulay proceeds :

"It is a subject on which I love to forget the accuracy of a judge in the veneration of a worshipper and the gratitude of a child,"

eloquently continuing :

"From hence have sprung, directly or indirectly, all the noblest creations of the human intellect."

Thus wrote the distinguished British historian in 1824, when attributing, perhaps more in the spirit

of "a worshipper" than of "a judge," all subsequent literary excellence to Greek origin or foundation. Shakespeare, whose unrivalled mind seems to acquire more and more admiration through the progress of time, and who Macaulay himself declares to have had neither equal nor second,<sup>1</sup> wrote, and apparently knew little about ancient Greece. His Greek plays, "Troilus and Cressida" and "Timon of Athens," are surely inferior to his Roman and English ones; indeed, Macaulay admits

"that of all Shakespeare's classical plays, 'Troilus and Cressida' is commonly considered the most incorrect,"<sup>2</sup>

while thoughtfully adding—

"yet it seems to us infinitely more correct, in the sound sense of the term, than what are called the most correct plays of the most correct dramatist."

Upon the grand subject of Shakespeare's increasing fame, Dr. Johnson in the eighteenth and Herbert Spencer in the nineteenth centuries, despite their differing opinions on many subjects, unite in expressing much the same on this. Johnson writes :

"It is proper to inquire by what peculiarities of excellence Shakespeare has gained and kept the favour of his country-

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<sup>1</sup> Essay on Madame D'Arblay.

<sup>2</sup> Essay on Moore's "Life of Byron."

men. . . . Shakespeare is, above all writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life."

Referring to Shakespeare's description of classical personages, Johnson emphatically says :

"Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident. . . . His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men,"

and Johnson further remarks, in his forcible style,

"The stream of Time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare."<sup>1</sup>

Herbert Spencer, in practical confirmation of Johnson's words, writes, more than a hundred years later :

"Shakespeare during the present (nineteenth) century has been continually rising, until now his position is so high that criticism is practically paralysed, and Societies occupy themselves with the minutiae of his sentences."<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare, in his remarkable Prologue to the Greek play of "Troilus and Cressida," briefly yet expressively reveals admiration for the grand subject of the siege of Troy, about which he had,

<sup>1</sup> Preface to "Shakespeare."

<sup>2</sup> "Facts and Comments," published 1892.

apparently, read or knew little, except in extracts from classic history or from vague allusions, inferior in truth or merit, to the grand English translations of later times. The speaker of this Prologue is supposed to address a London theatrical audience, and was evidently clad in armour, and thus prepares his English audience for what they are to see and hear :

“ In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece  
The princes orgulous,<sup>1</sup> their high blood chaf'd,  
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,  
Fraught with the ministers and instruments  
Of cruel war : . . .

. . . and their vow is made  
To ransack Troy ; within whose strong immures  
The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen,  
With wanton Paris sleeps ; and that's the quarrel.

. . . Now on Dardan plains  
The fresh and yet unbruised Greeks do pitch  
Their brave pavilions. . . .

Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits  
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,  
Sets all on hazard : and hither am I come  
A prologue arm'd,<sup>2</sup> but not in confidence

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<sup>1</sup> “ Haughty.”—Staunton's notes.

<sup>2</sup> “ From this it appears that the speaker of the Prologue, instead of wearing the customary black cloak, was dressed in armour.—Staunton's notes to his illustrated edition.



Of author's pen or actor's voice ; but suited  
In like conditions as our argument,  
To tell you, fair beholders, that our play  
Leaps o'er the vaunt<sup>1</sup> and firstlings of those broils,  
Beginning in the middle ; starting thence away,  
To what may be digested in a play."

This classic drama, though not, perhaps, of high interest or correctness in itself, yet contains many grand passages likely better known to and remembered by intelligent readers than the actual events it describes. Shakespeare selects the two wise Greek leaders, old Nestor and the younger Ulysses, to express in noble English his own imperishable thoughts of practical wisdom. In this he so far follows classic history by representing these two chiefs as among, if not above, the wisest of their period, while ascribing to them views and sentiments, which supposing they had never uttered them, they would probably have admired and sanctioned. The spirit of their remarks, however, on the absolute necessity of maintaining law and order seems well worthy of a loyal or timid subject of Shakespeare's almost despotic sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. Though it remains, and likely must always remain, doubtful if she heard the words of her wonderful subject, it might surely be safely assumed she would have highly approved of them

<sup>1</sup> "The van, the foregoing."—Staunton's notes.

either from interest or conviction. Yet some absolute rulers might wish to extend their meaning far beyond the poet's intention; for Shakespeare was evidently too sincere a friend to mankind generally to advocate or justify anything resembling tyranny. Nestor, apparently deprecating rivalry for power, and advising the supremacy of the most able men commanding either on sea or land, exclaims, addressing his fellow-Greek leaders in an attractive though metaphorical style :

". . . In the reproof of chance,  
Lies the true proof of men :<sup>1</sup> the sea being smooth,  
How many shallow bauble boats dare sail  
Upon her patient breast, making their way  
With those of noble bulk !  
But let the ruffian Boreas<sup>2</sup> once enrage  
The gentle Thetis,<sup>3</sup> and, anon, behold  
The strong-ribb'd bark through liquid mountains cut  
Bounding between the two moist elements,

. . . where's then the saucy boat,  
Whose weak untimber'd sides but even now  
Co-rivall'd greatness ? either to harbour fled,  
Or made a toast for Neptune."

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<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare's account of Nestor's oratorical power and beauty quite agrees with Mr. Gladstone's opinion of Homer's version : 'Nestor's tones of happy and benevolent egotism flow sweeter than a stream of honey.'"—"Juventus Mundi," chap. xi.

<sup>2</sup> "The north wind."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> "One of the sea deities."—Ibid.

Ulysses, in a similar spirit to the older chief, exclaims also to their king Agamemnon and their fellow-leaders, in words which really apply to most if not to all countries, people, and times at special periods of their national history, and which might well apply to the endangered though preserved authority of Queen Elizabeth and James the First :

“ The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office and custom, in all line of order :  
And therefore is the glorious planet, Sol,  
In noble eminence enthron'd and spher'd  
Amidst the other ; whose med'cinable eye  
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,  
And posts, like the commandment of a king,  
Sans check, to good and bad.” <sup>1</sup>

Then Shakespeare describing, if not perhaps rather exaggerating, the dangers of revolution to the human world at large, proceeds, apparently meaning or

<sup>1</sup> “ The Homeric Greeks are in the main a people of warm affections and high honour, commonly tender, never morbid ; they respect the weak and helpless ; they hold authority in reverence. . . . Distinctions of class are recognised, but they are mild and genial ; there is no arrogance on the one side, nor any servility on the other. Reverence is paid to those in authority, and yet the Greek thinks in the spirit and moves in the sphere of habitual freedom.”—Gladstone's “ *Juventus Mundi*,” chap. x.

including rebellion among subjects, while naming the stars and the elements :

“ . . . But when the planets,  
In evil mixture, to disorder wander,  
What plagues, and what portents ! what mutiny !  
What raging of the sea ! shaking of earth !  
Commotion in the winds ! frights, changes, horrors,  
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate <sup>1</sup>  
The unity and married calm of states  
Quite from their fixture.” <sup>2</sup>

An English writer thus addressing fellow-countrymen would have likely gratified such sovereigns as Elizabeth and James the First, in whose reigns Shakespeare lived. For though their reigns were in the end successful, they were alike endangered by many foes, avowed and secret, with whose designs, if not characters, the cotemporary poet must to some extent have been acquainted.

<sup>1</sup> Pluck up by the roots.

<sup>2</sup> “Troilus and Cressida,” Act I.

CHAPTER XII





## CHAPTER XII

**Y**ET Shakespeare, though often mentioning Greek names and historic events, even in his English plays, apparently took less interest in or knew less about the Greeks than he did about the Romans. In his Greek play, "Timon of Athens," the illustrious general Alcibiades, pleading vainly for a friend's life, quarrels with his Athenian rulers and paymasters, the Senate at Athens. When they, refusing his request, banish him on pain of death, their ill-requited champion turns against them, rather in the style of Cromwell when appealing to his victorious, devoted army to support him against the English Parliament, hitherto his acknowledged rulers, but who he considered became unfair, or ungrateful to him and to his soldiery, to whom the Parliament owed its authority. Alcibiades, on hearing his sentence, exclaims with defiance :

" Banish me !  
Banish your dotage ; banish usury,  
That makes the Senate ugly."

One of the Senators, evidently voicing and representing the others, sternly replies :

“ If, after two days’ shine, Athens contain thee,  
Attend our weightier judgment. And, not to swell our spirit,  
He shall be executed presently.”<sup>1</sup>

The Senators depart, and the irritated general exclaims when alone, revealing his design of usurping supreme power in words which to modern readers may rather recall the spirit not only of Cromwell, but of the two Napoleons, finally inducing their armies to place themselves in supreme authority. He exclaims to himself in moody indignation :

“ I have kept back their foes,  
.  
.  
.  
.  
Is this the balsam, that the usuring Senate  
Pours into captains’ wounds ?”

In rising, dangerous anger he proceeds :

“ Banishment !  
It comes not ill ; I hate not to be banish’d ;  
It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,  
That I may strike at Athens.”

Then Alcibiades intimates his determined resolution in decisive words worthy of Cromwell himself, these two generals, the Greek and the

<sup>1</sup> “ Timon of Athens,” Act III.

Englishman, being alike the glory of their triumphant forces, whom they attached devotedly to themselves alone :

" I'll cheer up  
My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.

Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods."

His complete though rather brief triumph over his former Athenian masters soon follows, but after its commencement Shakespeare pursues Greek history no further.

In his Roman plays Shakespeare, while endowing historic personages with his own grand language, yet adheres closely to historic record. In comparing, for instance, the assassination of Julius Cæsar by Roman conspirators in dramatic form with its prose description in Plutarch,<sup>1</sup> their faithful resemblance is sufficiently evident. Had the fatal deed been seen by eye-witnesses they could hardly describe it with more truth to nature. Plutarch writes of this terrible scene in the Capitol :

" When Cæsar entered, the Senate stood up to show their respect for him, . . . some came about his chair and stood

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<sup>1</sup> " A Greek distinguished for his learning and virtue. . . . The most esteemed of his works are his *Lives of illustrious men.*"—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

behind it, others met him, pretending to add their petitions to those of Tillius Cimber, on behalf of his brother who was in exile, and they followed him with their joint supplications till he came to his seat. . . . He refused to comply with their requests, and upon their urging him further, began to reproach them severally for their importunities, when Tillius, laying hold of his robe with both his hands, pulled it down from his neck, which was the signal for the assault. . . . Which way soever he turned he met with blows, and saw their swords levelled at his face and eyes, and was encompassed, like a wild beast in the toils, on every side.”<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare, in his dramatic version, makes Cæsar thus answer the conspirators now requesting the pardon of Publius Cimber, and secretly resolved to slay him in case of his expected refusal. Cæsar thus speaks in Shakespeare’s noble English, yet truly expressing his real feelings, as far as ascertainable from historical record. Cæsar, evidently believing it wrong to pardon Cimber, replies :

“I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix’d and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.”

He then makes a grand comparison, proudly identifying himself, as the supreme ruler of Rome, with the reigning Sun of Nature. He thus rouses the murderous fury of the republican enthusiasts

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch’s “Life of Julius Cæsar.”



around him, of whose fatal design he has no idea. He therefore haughtily replies, as if in fearless majesty or almost absolute power :

“ The skies are painted with unnumber’d sparks,  
They are all fire, and every one doth shine ;  
But there’s but one in all doth hold his place :  
So, in the world, ’tis furnish’d well with men,  
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive ;  
Yet in the number I do know but one  
That unassailable holds on his rank,  
Unshak’d of motion : and that I am he,  
Let me a little show it, even in this,  
That I was constant Cimber should be banish’d,  
And constant do remain to keep him so.”

Cæsar is then in the play, as in history, immediately stabbed to death by the enraged conspirators, Brutus inflicting the last wound, and to whom Cæsar exclaims in historic words :

“ Et tu, Brute ! <sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>.—Then fall, Cæsar !”

These last words, addressed to the young republican enthusiast by Cæsar, between whom there had hitherto been a mutual friendship, are also

<sup>1</sup> Cæsar made him one of his most faithful friends. He (Brutus), however, forgot the favour, because Cæsar aspired to tyranny. He conspired with many of the most illustrious citizens of Rome against the tyrant, and stabbed him.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “ And you, Brutus !”

recorded by Suetonius,<sup>1</sup> whom Shakespeare here follows, and evidently the share he represents Brutus taking in Cæsar's assassination is strictly historical. Nor is it likely for an ardent, impetuous young republican in those fierce days to hear Cæsar's proud words without deep exasperation. Despite Cæsar's heroic achievements and wise rule, his words, like his real actions, denoted a man bent on obtaining absolute power, and who, if once that system could be justified, seemed in almost every respect well worthy of it. Of this wonderful man, almost equally celebrated as a warrior and as a ruler, Bacon writes, with his usual calm judgment :<sup>2</sup>

“ He was a man of unruly passions and desires, but extremely clear and settled in his judgment and understanding ; as appears by his ready address to extricate himself both in action and discourse, for no man ever resolved quicker or spoke clearer. But his will and appetite were restless and ever launched out beyond his acquisitions, yet the transitions of his actions were not rash, but well concerted, for he always brought his undertakings to complete and perfect periods. . . . He was, without dispute, a man of a great and noble soul, though rather bent upon procuring his own private advantage than good to the public. . . . He was constant, singularly beneficent, and indulgent in his friendships.”

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<sup>1</sup> “ A Latin historian. Suetonius, in his Lives (of the Cæsars), is praised for his impartiality and correctness.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Essay on Julius Cæsar.

Bacon proceeds to describe a man likely, if not certain, to make himself a complete despot, as the conspirators apprehended, but which his artful adherent, Mark Antony, ably strove to deny :

“ As he was both by nature and habit led, not to be eminent among great men, but to command among inferiors, he made friends of mean and industrious persons, to whom he alone gave law.”

This system of despotism by a Ruler's assuming sole supreme power was apparently desired and to some extent carried out by the late French Emperor, Napoleon the Third, in his triumph over the French Republicans who had made him their President. In his “ Life of Julius Cæsar,” whom he seems to take for his own model—at least, in some respects—he emphatically writes :

“ When extraordinary facts attest an eminent genius, what is more contrary to good sense than to ascribe to him all the passions and sentiments of mediocrity ! What more erroneous than not to recognise the pre-eminence of those privileged beings who appear in history from time to time like luminous beacons, dissipating the darkness of their epoch and throwing light into the future. . . . When Providence raises up such men as Cæsar and Napoleon [his uncle], it is to trace out to peoples the path they ought to follow ; to stamp with the seal of their genius a new era, and to accomplish in a few years the labour of many centuries.

Happy the people who comprehend and follow them ! Woe to those who misunderstand and combat them !”<sup>1</sup>

Louis Napoleon’s rise from President to Emperor of France through the arrest and imprisonment of all the allied leaders against him, is thus described by Sir Archibald Alison, who seems on the whole to rather favour what some others call Napoleon the Third’s unjust usurpation over those who had peacefully elected him as President of their Republic :

“The police and military were entirely at the devotion of the President, and executed energetically all the orders which they received. Before the morning of December 2, 1851, the whole leaders of all the coalesced parties were arrested, the most of them in their beds, and safely lodged in prison. . . . The Empire was in reality established on that day. . . . It only remained to see how the revolution was to be received by the inhabitants of France when they came to give their votes in the electoral districts. The results exceeded the most sanguine hopes of the President and his friends. . . . By an overwhelming majority France closed the convulsions of the revolution by a military despotism based on universal suffrage.”<sup>2</sup>

The two celebrated speeches of Brutus and of Mark Antony,<sup>3</sup> the former vindicating himself for

<sup>1</sup> Preface to “Life of Julius Cæsar.”

<sup>2</sup> Alison’s “History of Europe” (1859), from the fall of Napoleon to the accession of Louis Napoleon.

<sup>3</sup> “In his public character Antony was brave and coura-



his part in Cæsar's death, the latter, with consummate art, rousing his Roman audience to avenge it, are both recorded by Plutarch, but in comparatively brief, prosaic style. Shakespeare's genius seems in these famous instances to have caught the spirit of the classic orators, while ascribing to them a power of eloquence and beauty in expressions of his own. Plutarch calmly writes that Brutus and his fellow-conspirator, Cassius, differed whether Antony should be also slain or not with Cæsar :

“Which Brutus would not consent to, insisting that an action undertaken in defence of right and the laws must be maintained unsullied and pure of injustice.”

Shakespeare attributed more eloquent words to Brutus, yet expressing the same sentiments with a beauty entirely his own. Cassius proposes :

“Let Antony and Cæsar fall together.”

Brutus replies, little knowing the real character of the brave yet astute Antony :

“Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,  
To cut the head off, and then hack the limbs,  
Like wrath in death, and envy <sup>1</sup> afterwards ;

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geous, but with the intrepidity of Cæsar he possessed all his voluptuous inclinations.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> “Envy in this place, as usual, means hatred.”—Staunton's notes to “Shakespeare.”



For Antony is but a limb of Cæsar :  
Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.

And, for Mark Antony, think not of him ;  
For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm  
When Cæsar's head is off."

Cassius, who in this case certainly knows human nature better than Brutus, distrustfully replies :

"Yet I fear him ;  
For in the engrafted love he bears to Cæsar,—"

The sentimental or imaginative Brutus here interrupts his unscrupulous ally :

"Alas ! good Cassius, do not think of him :  
If he love Cæsar, all that he can do  
Is to himself take thought,<sup>1</sup> and die for Cæsar."

In describing Brutus's speech in the Forum<sup>2</sup> to the Romans, trying to justify Cæsar's murder, Plutarch writes :

"And a multitude being gathered together, Brutus made an oration to them very popular and proper, for the state that affairs were then in."

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<sup>1</sup> "Abandon himself to grief."—Staunton's notes.

<sup>2</sup> "Many places have the name of Forum, where the Prætor held his Court of Justice."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

While Shakespeare makes him deliver a grand speech to the same effect, beginning :

“Romans, countrymen, and lovers! Hear me for my cause ; and be silent, that you may hear : believe me for mine honour ; and have respect to mine honour that you may believe. . . . If there be any, in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar’s, to him I say, that Brutus’s love to Cæsar was no less than his. If, then, that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer : not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves ; than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free men ?”

Without awaiting answer to this difficult or perplexing question, Brutus proceeds, in Shakespeare’s words, though apparently in accord with the character of this young Roman :

“As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him ; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it ; as he was valiant, I honour him : but, as he was ambitious, I slew him : there is tears for his love ; joy for his fortune ; honour for his valour ; and death for his ambition.”

Plutarch records that the listening Romans

“applauded his speech and cried out to him to come down ; they all took confidence and descended into the Forum. . . . Many of the most eminent persons attending Brutus conducted him in the midst of them, with great honour, from the Capitol, and placed him in the rostra.”

Shakespeare makes the crowd exclaim :

“ Live, Brutus, live, live !  
Bring him with triumph home unto his house.  
Give him a statue with his ancestors,” &c.

In comparing Plutarch's prosaic account of Mark Antony's speech to that of Shakespeare over the body of Cæsar, the poet's adherence to historic facts, while adorning rather than disguising them by his splendid language, is strikingly evident.

CHAPTER XIII





## CHAPTER XIII

PLUTARCH, in rather dry, precise style,  
says :<sup>1</sup>

“When the body was brought forth into the Forum, Antony, as the custom was, making a funeral oration in the praise of Cæsar, and, finding the multitude moved with his speech passing into the pathetic tone, unfolded the bloody garment of Cæsar, showed them in how many places it was pierced and the number of his wounds.”

Antony, in Shakespeare’s words, then makes his extraordinary speech, gradually working up his Roman hearers to fury against the assassins, by whose leave he was addressing them. Without at first showing the least excitement, he pathetically praises the slain Cæsar for his brilliant services and benefits to the Roman people, even appealing to their avarice or love of money :

“He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill :  
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious ?

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<sup>1</sup> “Life of Marcus Brutus.”

When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept :  
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff :  
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious ;  
 And Brutus is an honourable man.  
 You all did see that on the Lupercal <sup>1</sup>  
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
 Which he did thrice refuse : was this ambition ?”

Antony, by slow degrees

“passing into the pathetic,”

as Plutarch says, proceeds according to Shakespeare :

“You all did love him once, not without cause :  
 What cause withholdeth you, then, to mourn for him ?  
 O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
 And men have lost their reason ! Bear with me ;  
 My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,  
 And I must pause till it come back to me.

But here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar,  
 . . . 'Tis his will.”

Before reading it, Antony, as Plutarch records, then showed Cæsar's fatal wounds to the assembled crowd, and in Shakespeare's words exclaims, though he could hardly have known the minute particulars

<sup>1</sup> “A place where festivals were yearly celebrated.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.



We will be revenged : seek—burn—fire—kill—slay—let  
not a traitor live !”<sup>1</sup>

Antony then, according to both Plutarch and Shakespeare, proclaims Cæsar’s will to the Roman people, leaving them all

“ his walks, his private arbours,”

and

“ new planted orchards,”

to them and to their heirs for ever. This will, though it might not have contained all that Shakespeare mentions, completely turns the public feeling against the conspirators, according to both the classic biographer and the English poet.

In his Roman play of “*Coriolanus*,” Shakespeare’s adherence to classic history is equally clear. This Roman hero and champion, ungratefully banished by his fellow-countrymen, when about in revenge to attack Rome is met by his mother, the stern yet noble *Volumnia*, who, interceding for Rome, in Plutarch’s words :

“ Threw herself down at his feet, as did also his wife and children, upon which *Marcus* (*Coriolanus*) crying out, ‘O mother, what is it you have done to me?’ raised her up from the ground, and, pressing her right hand with more than ordinary vehemence, ‘You have gained a victory,’ said he,

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<sup>1</sup> “*Julius Cæsar*,” Act III.

'fortunate enough for the Romans, but destructive to your son, whom you, though none else, could have defeated.'

He here foresees that his Volscian allies<sup>1</sup> will never forgive him for sparing Rome, against which he was leading them, and he was slain by them soon after the scene with his Roman relatives.

But Shakespeare ascribes his own grand words to the unfortunate Roman hero at this awful crisis of his public and private history—words which may, indeed, truly express his real feelings, but for their selection Shakespeare is responsible :

“O, mother, mother !

What have you done ? Behold ! the heavens do ope,  
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene  
They laugh at. O, my mother ! mother ! O !  
You have won a happy victory for Rome,  
But for your son—believe it, O, believe it—  
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,  
If not most mortal to him. But let it come.”<sup>2</sup>

In the magnificent play of “Antony and Cleopatra” Shakespeare also closely follows history and recorded facts. For instance, the learned Plutarch, describing the many accomplishments and charms of Cleopatra, writes with more

<sup>1</sup> “Volsci. A people of Latium . . . and in the time of the (Roman) republic they became formidable enemies.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “Coriolanus,” Act V.



enthusiasm and perhaps exaggeration than usual with him :

“The contact of her presence if you lived with her was irresistible, the attraction of her person, joining with the charm of her conversation and the character that attended all she did, was something bewitching. It was a pleasure merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another ; so that there were few of the barbarian nations that she answered by an interpreter, to most of them she spoke herself, as to the Ethiopians, Troglodytes,<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, Parthians, and others whose languages she had learnt.”<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare, as if having this account in his mind, makes the enamoured Antony say to her, during their occasional brief quarrels :

“ Fie, wrangling queen !  
Whom every thing becomes—to chide, to laugh,  
To weep ; whose every passion fully strives  
To make itself, in thee, fair and admir’d ! ”<sup>3</sup>

Yet Antony, as if at times knowing and dreading the fascinating arts of this extraordinary woman, exclaims, evidently from his heart, to his adherent Enobarbus, who apparently understands Cleopatra better than any one else does :

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<sup>1</sup> “A people of Ethiopia who dwelt in caves.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch’s “Life of Antony.”

<sup>3</sup> Act I.

"She is cunning past man's thought.

Would I had never seen her!"

To this revelation of regret Enobarbus replies :

"O sir, you had then left unseen a marvellous piece of work ; which not to have been blessed withal, would have discredited your travel."

Later in the play, confirming Plutarch's account the shrewd Enobarbus describing Cleopatra to Mecænas, the Roman adherent of young Octavius, the future Emperor of Rome, says :

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety : other women cloy,  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies : for vilest<sup>1</sup> things  
Become themselves in her."

Even in comparatively trifling details Shakespeare would seem to follow in this grand play especially all the information derivable from history. Thus Plutarch gravely writes :<sup>2</sup>

"It would be trifling without end to be particular in his [Antony's] follies, but his fishing must not be forgotten. He went out one day to angle with Cleopatra, and, being so unfortunate as to catch nothing in the presence of his mistress,

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<sup>1</sup> Commonest.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Antony."

he gave secret orders to the fisherman to dive under water and put fishes that had been already taken upon his hooks, and these he drew so fast that the Egyptian perceived it. But feigning great admiration, she told everybody how dexterous Antony was."

Shakespeare, as if mindful of this story, makes Cleopatra's obsequious if not frightened female attendant, Charmian, recall it to her mistress during Antony's absence from Egypt, exclaiming :<sup>1</sup>

" 'Twas merry when  
You wager'd on your angling ; when your diver  
Did hang a salt-fish on his hook, which he  
With fervency drew up."

Cleopatra then recalling her complete power over the absent Roman warrior, replies in triumphant recollection :

" That time !—O times !—  
I laugh'd him out of patience ; and that night  
I laugh'd him into patience ; and next morn,  
Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed ;  
Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst  
I wore his sword Philippan."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Antony and Cleopatra," Act II.

<sup>2</sup> "The sword so named after the great battle at Philippi" (Staunton's notes). "A town of Macedonia, celebrated for two battles between Augustus (Octavius) and Antony (allies), and the republican forces of Brutus and Cassius, in which the former obtained the victory."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

CHAPTER XIV





## CHAPTER XIV

IN comparing Shakespeare's classic plays with their historic origins or foundation, considering the poet's dramatic style and grand language, Johnson's words comparing Pope's translation of Homer with the original, may perhaps be applicable to Shakespeare's English versions :

"To have added surely can be no great crime, if nothing be taken away. Elegance is surely to be desired, if it be not gained at the expense of dignity." <sup>1</sup>

Yet in both these cases, like that of Walter Scott in his historical novels, the feelings and spirit of the times portrayed seem carefully studied, owing to that profound knowledge of human nature which both the British poet and the subsequent British novelist possessed to an unrivalled degree. As Macaulay says, when comparing Shakespeare's classic plays with those of the French poet Racine :

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Pope."

“We are sure that the Greeks of Shakespeare bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine to the real Greeks who besieged Troy, and for this reason: that the Greeks of Shakespeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine mere words printed in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation.”

In likewise comparing Scott's superiority to the learned Addison in knowledge of human nature, Macaulay proceeds:<sup>1</sup>

“No man can possibly think that the Romans of Addison resemble the real Romans so closely as the moss-troopers of Scott resemble the real moss-troopers. Wat Tinlinn and William of Deloraine are not, it is true, persons of so much dignity as Cato. But the dignity of the persons represented has as little to do with the correctness of poetry, as with the correctness of painting.”

Then the able future historian adds, with not ill-natured yet keen sarcasm:

“We prefer a gipsy by Reynolds to His Majesty's head on a sign-post, and a Borderer by Scott to a senator by Addison.”

The extraordinary and keen interest with which classic history has inspired modern European writers, and the British especially, survived the lapse of centuries, yet next to Pope's brilliant translation of Homer, perhaps no British writer has so

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Moore's "Life of Byron."

warmly expressed admiration for Greece, or with such mingled beauty, taste, and poetic charm, as Lord Byron in the earlier part of the last century. This brilliant British poet and the learned British historian, Macaulay, despite their very different characters, talents, and objects, met, as it were, on common ground when mentioning or recalling ancient Greece. Byron's interest in it, although largely founded on its ancient fame, was yet apparently still more aroused by its picturesque scenery and the sad position of its inhabitants, under the oppressive rule of the Turks, both of which, as an observant traveller, he saw around him. Macaulay's love for Greece seems to arise chiefly by recalling the glories of her ancient days. These two brilliantly gifted men, who alike excelled in delighting their readers through the different mediums of attractive poetry and eloquent history, inspired and maintained British interest in Greece probably more than any other European writers ever did or tried to do. Its nearer neighbours, Italians, Austrians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, scarcely showed the same interest in either ancient or modern Greece as was displayed by these writers from "The remote barbarian Isle."<sup>1</sup> Macaulay thus warmly describes Byron's practical sympathy for the Greeks of his time, who, shortly

<sup>1</sup> Bulwer Lytton's "Last Days of Pompeii."

before his death, had plunged into their heroic revolt against the Turks, which although nearly crushed, at last succeeded through European assistance :

“A Nation once the first among the Nations, eminent in knowledge, pre-eminent in military glory, the cradle of philosophy, of eloquence, and of the fine arts, had been for ages bowed down under a cruel yoke. . . . On a sudden these degraded people had risen on their oppressors. . . . As a man of letters, Lord Byron could not but be interested in the event of this contest. . . . To Greece he was attached by peculiar ties. He had, when young, resided in that country. Much of his most splendid and most popular poetry had been inspired by its scenery and by its history Sick of inaction, degraded in his own eyes by his private vices and literary failures, pining for untried excitement and honourable distinction, he carried his exhausted body and his wounded spirit to the Grecian camp.”

It was the fate of Greece, after enduring Roman and Venetian rule, to fall under that of Turkish Mohammedans, who to the present time retain a large but diminished part under their dominion. Yet the most famed part, including the cities of Athens, Sparta, and Corinth, after a heroic revolution from 1824 to 1827, with the aid of the English, French, and Russian navies threw off the Turkish yoke and established a small independent kingdom with Athens for its capital. This kingdom has been since ruled by a Bavarian and a Danish



sovereign, while the rest of Greece remains under the Turks. It so remains, apparently, by not only the consent but the wish of the Christian Powers, either through jealousy of each other, or wishing not to offend the Mohammedans generally, who in parts of Asia and Africa obey French, British, and Russian rule, and seem on the whole loyal to Christian rulers. Yet while these three Powers now seem to practically prefer Turkish authority over many Christian subjects to allowing each other to rule them, such purely political ideas had no friend in the accomplished, imaginative Byron. He visited Greece during the beginning of the Greek revolt in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. His refined mind being well stored with the beauties of ancient Greek literature, his classical education had taught him to view it with much the same admiration as Pope likely felt when translating the "Iliad," and subsequently as Macaulay expresses when mentioning Greek history. In Byron's poetic mind the remote period of ancient Greek fame reappeared while travelling in modern Greece, oppressed by and hating Turkish rule. Yet this illustrious land of antiquity had hitherto not produced men of sufficient talent or genius to arouse it from its degradation, or to recall by word or deed its long-departed fame, while its grand recollections never left Byron's



mind. In him, even when amid proud, overruling Turks, or complaining, discontented Greek subjects, the spirit of long vanished Greek poets, sages, and warriors seems to arouse some of their departed energy.

His enthusiasm thus enabled him, through his poetic genius, to arouse his powerful but distant fellow-countrymen to practically come to the rescue of the remote posterity of a famous nation, immortal indeed in its intellectual past, but in his time a helpless victim of Mohammedan political rule. Yet the Turks certainly find some able defenders even among Christian writers. Their remarkable race, usually surrounded by foes rather than allies, has for centuries ruled some of the most famous lands of antiquity—Greece, Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt—and still retains some authority over all except Southern Greece and some Greek islands. The celebrated city of Constantinople is still the constant residence of the Turkish Sultan. Its grand church, Saint Sophia, or Church of the Holy Wisdom, formerly a Christian church is now a Mohammedan mosque, where its Turkish sovereign often pays his devotions. The Turks themselves are at present friendly rather than hostile to the European Christian Powers, and their national character is thus ably reviewed by a distinguished British

historian, writing in the middle and latter part of the last century :

“The character of the Turks taken as individuals, has many estimable qualities which have gone far to counteract the disastrous effects of their system of government. . . . They have left the labours of the soil, the cares of commerce, to the Armenians and the islanders (Greeks) of the Archipelago. . . . They deem the wielding of the sword or managing a steed the only honourable occupation. . . . Fearless, honest, and trustworthy, their word is their bond. Inactivity is their great characteristic, repose their enjoyment. . . . To sit on a carpet, smoke a scented pipe, and gaze under shade on the dancing of the sunbeams on the waves of the Bosphorus<sup>1</sup> is their supreme enjoyment.”<sup>2</sup>

Byron was evidently no admirer of the Turks. He poetically deplored all he saw or heard of their rule in Greece, and wrote as if addressing the spirit of ancient Greece, though by writing in eloquent English he virtually appealed to his own strong, free nation in her behalf, and in words of peculiarly attractive power :<sup>3</sup>

“Fair Greece, sad relic of departed worth,  
Immortal though no more, though fallen, great.”

Then, as if deploring the absence of Greek leaders

<sup>1</sup> “Two narrow straits situate at the confines of Europe and Asia.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Alison’s “History of Europe,” chap. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> “Childe Harold,” canto ii.

of ability, though some certainly appeared during their finally successful revolution against the Turks, he writes :

“ Who now shall lead thy scatter'd children forth  
And long accustom'd bondage uncreate.

Nor rise thy sons, but idle rail in vain  
Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,  
From birth till death enslaved ; in word, in deed, un-  
mann'd.”

Surveying the remaining beauty of the oppressed land, he continues, trying to arouse or encourage a spirit of revolt :

“ In all save form alone how chang'd, and who  
That marks the fire still sparkling in each eye,  
Who but would deem their bosoms burned anew  
With thy unquenched beam, lost Liberty.”

Then emphatically addressing the Greeks now in revolt or in its contemplation, Byron, with more poetical beauty than political knowledge or foresight, as the future of Greece happily proved, writes with eager yet ignorant enthusiasm :

“ Hereditary bondsmen ! know ye not  
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow ?  
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.”

He then asks and answers a question himself, but his answer was nobly contradicted a few years after it was written :

“ Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye ? No.”

For some few years after beheld “ the Gaul and the Muscovite ” united with the English making war with the Turks, and thus freeing the Greeks from their yoke when their revolution was on the point of being quelled by allied Turks and Egyptians.<sup>1</sup>

This joint European interference resulted in the established freedom of Southern Greece with many of its islands, since which it remains an independent kingdom, and is now under a Danish monarch. The “ right arms ” of the poor, outnumbered Greeks were indeed near utter extermination, when they were unexpectedly freed by the sea victory of Navarino,<sup>2</sup> the British fleet being allied with the French and Russians against the Turks, now aided by their Egyptian tributaries headed by Ibrahim Pasha, son of the Pasha of Egypt. The defeat of the Mohammedans was complete, yet the Turks complained that they had given no offence to any of the allied European

<sup>1</sup> Alison's “ History of Europe,” vol. iii.

<sup>2</sup> 1827.

Powers. They had, however, to retire completely from the contest, just as they were on the point of quelling the Greek insurrection, and thus the destiny of the liberated land was left to the decision of Britain, France, and Russia.



CHAPTER XV



## CHAPTER XV

**Y**ET the gifted English poet was fated to die in Greece, shortly before its final emancipation.<sup>1</sup> Byron's beautiful lines, therefore, continued to mournfully recall the past fame of Greece, while he was denied in this world knowing of her complete deliverance from the Turkish tyranny he had so eloquently denounced. In the true spirit of an appreciating British scholar and in words which modern Greeks might admire, though but partly understand, and would likely be totally incomprehensible to most if not to all Turks, Byron wrote, still dwelling on his beloved vanished past :

“ And yet how lovely in thine age of woe,  
Land of lost gods and godlike men art thou !  
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow,  
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favourite now ;  
Thy fanes, thy temples to the surface bow,  
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,  
Broke by the share of every rustic plough :  
So perish monuments of mortal birth.”

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<sup>1</sup> April, 1824. Alison's "History of Europe."

Then he adds a beautiful tribute to the immortal value of transmitted wisdom :

“So perish all in turn, save well-recorded Worth.”

He proceeds, poetically describing those imperishable charms of external nature in Greece, which his observant mind recognised as having escaped the destructive course of a disastrous religious and political history :

“Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild,

Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled.<sup>1</sup>

Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,<sup>2</sup>

Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare ;

Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.”

Again, when recalling the beauties of classic Greek literature, probably well taught and explained to him by English instructors, Byron, the travelling scholar, in a spirit rather like Macaulay, writes with a learned enthusiasm and love for his earliest

<sup>1</sup> “Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. . . . The actions of Minerva are numerous as well as the kindness by which she endeared herself to mankind.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “Apollo, son of Jupiter, is often confounded with the Sun.”—Ibid.

classical education that would have delighted Scott's worthy tutor, Dominie Sampson :<sup>1</sup>

“Where'er we tread, 'tis haunted, holy ground ;  
No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mould,  
But one vast realm of wonder spreads around,  
And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,  
Till the sense aches with gazing to behold  
The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon.”

While the varied charms and intellectual grandeur of ancient Greece have so delighted British poets, historians, and travellers, its Roman conqueror and successor has evidently been pre-eminently famous for her more practical or lasting benefits to mankind generally. Gibbon, who devoted the powers of his shrewd, exact, comprehensive mind to the profound study of the Roman character as well as of the Roman Empire, of which he wrote the unrivalled History, writes calmly and with perfect truth :<sup>2</sup>

“It is not alone by the rapidity or extent of conquest that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. . . . But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws and adorned

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<sup>1</sup> “Guy Mannering.”

<sup>2</sup> “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” chap. ii.



by arts. They might occasionally suffer by the partial abuse of delegated authority ; but the general principle of government was wise and simple and beneficent. . . . The policy of the Emperors and the Senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened and by the habits of the superstitious part of their subjects. The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord."

Gibbon carefully proceeds, describing the position of the Roman Empire in its state of religious peace as evidently a contrast to that of Christian and of Mohammedan countries during part of the Middle Ages :

"The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancour ; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith the different religions of the earth. Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the pagan mythology was interwoven with various but not discordant materials."

The historian proceeds as if inspired or surrounded by some of the pagan poets and philosophers, eloquently advocating their fanciful, interesting faith :

“As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived, or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed that they deserved if not the adoration, at least the reverence of mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed in peace their local and respective influence, nor could the Roman who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of Nature, the planets, and the elements, were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative ; every art and profession its patron.”

Gibbons proceeds about the general religious toleration and concord throughout the Roman Empire, despite its almost despotic, and occasionally tyrannical, political rule :

“Such was the mild spirit of antiquity that the nations were less attentive to the difference than to the resemblance of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves that under various names and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful and almost regular form to the polytheism of the ancient world. . . . The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the Senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute and without control. But the same salutary maxims of government which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing

colonies and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome. 'Wheresoever the Roman conquers he inhabits' is a very just observation of Seneca,<sup>1</sup> confirmed by history and experience."

Later in the same chapter Gibbon says :

"It is a just though trite observation that victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe,<sup>2</sup> soon became the favourite object of study and imitation in Italy and the western provinces."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The ill-fated, philosophical teacher of the young Roman Emperor Nero, and who was forced to commit suicide by the order of his Imperial pupil."—Suetonius's *Lives of the Cæsars*, also Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon wrote his *History* between the years 1776–1788. ("Student's English Literature.") From the subsequent writings of Byron, Gladstone, Lord Derby, Macaulay, Bulwer Lytton, Lecky, &c., the "admiration" Gibbon names seems to have since increased, rather than diminished, amongst influential as well as amongst learned Englishmen.

<sup>3</sup> "Decline and Fall," chap. ii.

CHAPTER XVI





## CHAPTER XVI

THE interesting part which the pagan deities were believed to take in the wars of men, and the opposite sides they favoured, are consistently recorded by both the grand classic poets, Homer the Greek and Virgil the Italian. The latter, living in the happy and glorious reign of Augustus Cæsar, wrote, perhaps, partly to gratify his Roman sovereign and fellow-countrymen representing a band of Trojan fugitives escaping from their destroyed capital under command of the gallant Æneas, as the original ancestry of the Romans destined by the gods to become the rulers, yet not the oppressors, of their Greek conquerors. While Homer has described Neptune favouring the victorious Greeks in the "Iliad," Virgil in his turn describes the opposing influences of the two rival goddesses, Juno and Venus, in the "Æneid," the former favouring the Greeks and the latter the unfortunate Trojans. Juno, as if apprehending the future triumph of the

latter, now sailing in the Mediterranean, seeking a refuge, entreats Æolus, King of the Winds, to destroy the wandering fleet. Virgil's noble poem found an able English translator in the poet Dryden, whose rendering Dr. Johnson carefully compares to Pope's rendering of Homer's "Iliad." He writes about Dryden's works with the profound interest of a learned scholar :

"The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great ; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. . . . the hopes of the public were not disappointed. 'He produced,' says Pope, 'the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language.'"

"It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends and for the most part to have silenced his enemies."<sup>1</sup>

In his "Life of Pope" Johnson makes the following able, picturesque comparison between these two eminent English translators of the Greek "Iliad" and the Latin "Æneid":

"Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid, Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation. Pope's is a velvet lawn, mown by the scythe and levelled by the roller."

Virgil, in Dryden's version, thus represents the

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Dryden."

vindictive Queen Juno addressing the King of the Winds, but, fortunately for the Trojans, without the knowledge or sanction of the supreme Jupiter :

“O Æolus ! For to thee, the King of Heav'n,  
The power of tempests and of winds has giv'n ;  
Thy force alone their fury can restrain  
And smooth the waves, or swell the troubl'd main.”

After thus soliciting the god, Juno practically reveals her meaning and hatred of the Trojans :

“A race of wandering slaves, abhorr'd by me,  
With prosperous passage, cut the Tuscan Sea ;  
To fruitful Italy their course they steer,  
And for their vanquish'd gods design new temples there.”

She then adjures him fiercely to destroy them, promising him those singular bribes or rewards believed so acceptable even to the heathen deities from their devout suppliants :

“ Raise all thy winds, with might involve the skies,  
Sink or disperse my fatal enemies.  
Twice seven the charming daughters of the main  
Around my person wait and bear my train ;  
Succeed my wish and second my design,  
The fairest Deiopeia shall be thine.”

To these tempting words Æolus answers compliantly, with evident respect for Juno, as being the wife of the ruling Jupiter :

" 'Tis yours, O Queen, to will  
 The work which duty binds me to fulfil :  
 These airy kingdoms and this wide command  
 Are all the presents of your bounteous hand,  
 Yours is my sovereign's grace, and as your guest  
 I sit with gods at their celestial feast.  
 Raise tempests at your pleasure, or subdue,  
 Dispose of empire which I hold from you."

He accordingly rouses his obeying winds, and a terrific sea storm ensues at his command; when Neptune the Sea-king, who, though favouring the Greeks in the "Iliad" is now apparently tempted by jealousy of Æolus to favour or pity the Trojan fugitives, hears the tempest, and angrily rebukes the winds for thus disturbing his special kingdom of the sea :

" Displeas'd, and fearing for his wat'ry reign,  
 He rear'd his awful head above the main ;  
 Serene in majesty then rolled his eyes  
 Around the space of earth, and seas and skies ;  
 He saw the Trojan fleet dispers'd, distress'd,  
 By stormy winds and wintry Heav'n oppress'd."

He then summons Eurus <sup>1</sup> and the western blast :

" And first an angry glance on both he cast,  
 Then thus rebuk'd : ' Audacious winds ! from whence  
 This bold attempt, this rebel insolence ?

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<sup>1</sup> " 'Eurus.' A wind blowing from the eastern parts of the world."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.



Is it for you to ravage seas and lands  
 Unauthoris'd by my supreme command,  
 To raise such mountains on the troubl'd main ?  
 Whom I——'”

Neptune here pauses in making an apparent threat,  
 and resumes practically :

“ ‘ But first 'tis fit the billows to restrain,  
 And then you shall be taught obedience to my reign.’ ”

Neptune then sends off the rebuked winds to  
 their king Æolus, with reproaches for interfering  
 with his subjected sea, exclaiming in majestic  
 anger :

“ ‘ Hence to your lord my royal mandate bear :  
 The realms of ocean and the fields of air  
 Are mine, not his ; by fatal lot to me  
 The liquid empire fell, and trident of the sea,  
 His pow'r to hollow caverns is confin'd.  
 There let him reign the jailor of the wind.’ ”

He spoke, and while he spoke he smooth'd the sea,  
 Dispell'd the darkness, and restor'd the day.  
 Cymothoe,<sup>1</sup> Triton,<sup>2</sup> and the Sea-green train

<sup>1</sup> “ One of the Nereids. . . . nymphs of the sea. . . .  
 Their duty was to attend upon the more powerful deities of  
 the sea and to be subservient to the will of Neptune. . . .  
 They are represented as young and handsome virgins, sitting  
 on dolphins and holding Neptune's trident in their hands,  
 or sometimes garlands of flowers.”—Lemprière's Classical  
 Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “ A sea deity, son of Neptune.”—Ibid.



Of beauteous nymphs, the daughters of the main,  
 Clear from the rocks the vessel with their hands ;  
 The god himself with ready trident stands,  
 And opes the deep and spreads the moving sands,  
 Then heaves them off the shoals where'er he guides  
 His finny coursers, and in triumph rides,  
 The waves unruffle and the sea subsides."

Virgil then indulges in a practical human comparison thus rendered by Dryden. It might almost recall some riotous parliamentary elections especially in Ireland, even at the present time :

" As when in tumults rise th' ignoble crowd  
 Mad are their motions and their tongues are loud,  
 And stones and brands in rattling volleys fly,  
 And all the rustic arms that fury can supply.  
 If then some grave and pious man appear  
 They hush their noise and lend a list'ning ear ;  
 He soothes with sober words their angry mood  
 And quenches their innate desire of blood:  
 So when the Father of the flood appears,  
 And o'er the seas his sov'reign trident rears,  
 Their fury falls ; he skims the liquid plains  
 High on his chariot, and with loosen'd reins  
 Majestic moves along, and awful peace maintains." 1

Neptune's prompt calming of the tempestuous sea now enables the Trojan fugitives to pursue their voyage in safety :

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1 " Æneid," book i.

"The weary Trojans ply their shatter'd oars  
To nearest land, and make the Libyan shores."<sup>1</sup>

The sea-king, by his last words and orders, has thus rather changed in his sympathies from those he expressed in Homer's "Iliad," when aiding the Greeks, as he now practically rescues their defeated, flying foes. The Trojans, however, have, fortunately, a yet more powerful friend in Venus, the goddess of beauty, who appeals on their behalf during their perilous voyage to the supreme Jupiter. Venus, the mother of the Trojan chief Æneas by the Greek Anchises,<sup>2</sup> thus reverently, beseeches the sublime and almost omnipotent deity :

"O King of Gods and Men, whose awful hand  
Disperses thunder on the seas and land,  
Disposing all with absolute command,  
How could my pious son thy pow'r incense,  
Or what, alas ! is vanish'd Troy's offence ?  
Our hope of Italy not only lost  
On various seas, by various tempests tost,  
But shut from every shore and barr'd from every coast."

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<sup>1</sup> "A name given to Africa."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "He was of such a beautiful complexion that Venus came down from heaven on mount Ida, in the form of a nymph, to enjoy his company."—Ibid.

Venus then reminds Jupiter of his promise, pleasing indeed to the Roman world of Virgil's time to admire and believe :

“ You promis'd once a progeny divine  
Of Romans rising from the Trojan line  
In after-times should hold the world in awe,  
And to the land and ocean give the law.  
How is your doom revers'd which eas'd my care ?  
When Troy was ruin'd in that cruel war ?  
Then Fates to Fates I could oppose ; but now  
When Fortune still pursues her former blow  
What can I hope ? What worse can still succeed,  
What end of labours has your will decreed ? ”

Jupiter, in answering yet more of her pathetic pleading, is thus described by the pagan poet, whose own reverent words indicate a believer in his divine power :

“ To whom the Father of th' immortal race,  
Smiling with that serene, indulgent face  
With which he drives the clouds and clears the skies,  
First gave a holy kiss, then thus replies.”

His answer is indeed a grand foreshadowing of the future power and glory of the Romans, which subsequent history fully verified.

Jupiter's reply to Venus foretells in noble language the future triumphant rise of Rome to be finally accomplished by the descendants of those Trojan fugitives whom he now protects from Juno's

enmity ; and, doubtless to the thankful delight of Venus, says :

“ Daughter, dismiss thy fears to thy desire,  
The Fates of thine are fix'd and stand entire ;  
Thou shalt behold thy wish'd Lavinian walls<sup>1</sup>  
And ripe for heav'n when Fate Æneas calls,  
Then shalt thou bear him up sublime to me,  
No councils have revers'd my firm decree.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Lavinium, a town of Italy built by Æneas, and called by that name in honour of Lavinia, the founder's wife.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.





CHAPTER XVII



## CHAPTER XVII

IT is said that Virgil, shortly before his death, wished his splendid poem to be destroyed, but the Emperor Augustus, one of the best, if not the very best of all the Roman sovereigns, had it preserved, and it has certainly formed ever since a beautiful poetic accompaniment to the recorded facts of Roman history.<sup>1</sup> Jupiter clearly predicts the future Roman power in words which recorded history has fully confirmed, and with part of which Virgil was doubtless acquainted when writing in the glorious and happy reign of Augustus :

“The subject world shall Rome’s dominion own  
And prostrate shall adore the Nation of the Gown.”

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<sup>1</sup> “The ‘Æneid’ was begun, as some suppose, at the particular request of Augustus, and the poet visibly described in the pious and benevolent character of his hero the amiable qualities of his Imperial patron. . . . He ordered, as his last will, his unfinished poem to be burnt. These last injunctions were disobeyed, and, according to the words of an ancient

Virgil, ascribing to Jupiter his grand prophecy of Roman greatness, proceeds in words specially gratifying to his sovereign, Augustus :

“An age is ripening in revolving Fate  
When Rome shall overturn the Grecian state.

Then Cæsar, from the Julian stock shall rise,  
Whose empire ocean and whose fame the skies  
Alone shall bound.”

This practical exaggeration about the extent of the Roman Empire which, in its best days, never comprised the whole even of the limited world then known, seems the favourite idea of many Roman writers. Yet this belief of universal Roman dominion seems to have been specially prevalent during the peaceful and prosperous reign of Augustus Cæsar. As a recent English theological writer observes :

“The establishment of the Augustan monarchy, expressing the material and moral unity of so many climes and nations, penetrated the Roman mind still more deeply with a sense of the vastness of the national power and the boundless extent of its dominion. . . . A glance on the map of the world, as it is known in our own times, will suffice to reduce these vaunts

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poet, Augustus saved his favourite Troy from a second conflagration.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

to their proper limits. . . . It will be fairer, however, to measure the ideas of the Romans by the knowledge they themselves possessed ; though, judged even by this test, the extravagance of their notions will stand reprov'd." <sup>1</sup>

The same proud idea is indicated in the well-known Imperial decree in the Bible, which Augustus issued—

“ That all the world should be taxed.”

This order must have been sent forth about the time that Virgil was writing these lines. Yet at that period all Northern and part of Central Europe, Northern and Eastern Asia, and the West and South of Africa, were alike beyond the limit of Roman rule, if not beyond that of Roman knowledge. Virgil, however, probably sincerely admiring his powerful and, in many respects, benevolent sovereign, again thus alludes to him by describing Jupiter, continuing in his praise about his vast dominions :

“ Whom fraught with Eastern spoils  
Our heaven, the just reward of human toils,  
Securely shall repay with rites divine,  
And incense shall ascend before his sacred shrine.”

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<sup>1</sup> Merivale's "Romans under the Empire," chap. xxxviii. He wrote this work between 1850-62.



These words clearly predict the future exaltation of Augustus to the position of a god by his grateful subjects, whom he seems by most accounts to have ruled with admirable success, wisdom, and true glory. As Merivale observes of Augustus:<sup>1</sup>

“His intellect expanded with his fortunes, and his soul grew with his intellect. The Emperor was not less magnanimous than he was magnificent. With the world at his feet he began to conceive the real grandeur of his position; he learnt to comprehend the manifold variety of the interests subjected to him, he rose to a sense of the awful mission imposed upon him.”

Virgil, well knowing the peaceful inclination of his great sovereign, proceeds in words which he might know would specially please him, attributing them to Jupiter, truly prophesying Roman happiness under his reign:

“Then dire debate and impious war shall cease,  
And the stern age be softened into peace,  
Then banish'd Faith shall once again return,  
And Vestal fires in hallowed temples burn,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Romans under the Empire,” chap. xxxix.

<sup>2</sup> “The employment of the Vestals (priestesses among the Romans) was to take care that the sacred fire of Vesta (a goddess, sister to Ceres and Juno) was not extinguished, for if it ever happened it was deemed the prognostic of great calamities to the State.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

And Remus<sup>1</sup> with Quirinus<sup>2</sup> shall sustain  
The righteous laws, and fraud and force restrain.”

Shakespeare evidently takes much the same view of Augustus Cæsar who, when young, was termed Octavius, as the loyal Latin poet does during that Emperor's middle age or declining years. The English poet, consistently with practical history, makes him exclaim on the day of the decisive battle of Actium when, by the defeat of Antony, he became sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire :

“ The time of universal peace is near :  
Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nook'd world  
Shall bear the olive freely.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet these noble, comprehensive words can only mean the limited territory under Roman dominion, which, however, during his reign enjoyed, as he expected and intended, unusual and prosperous tranquillity.

Bacon's emphatic account of this illustrious Emperor fully agrees with Shakespeare's, and

<sup>1</sup> The twin brother of Romulus.

<sup>2</sup> “ ‘Quirinus.’ This name was given to Romulus when he had been made a god by his superstitious subjects, . . . and it is not to be wondered that he received such distinguished honours when the Romans considered him as the founder of their city and empire.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> “Antony and Cleopatra,” Act IV.

apparently confirms the long previous praises bestowed on him by his devoted poetical, as well as political subject, Virgil :

“ If ever mortal had a grand, serene, well regulated mind it was Augustus Cæsar, as appears by the heroical actions of his early youth. . . . Augustus, sober and mindful of his mortality, seemed to have thoroughly weighed his ends and laid them down in admirable order. Hence in his youth he affected power ; in his middle age dignity ; in his decline of life pleasure ; and in his old age fame and the good of posterity.”<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinary success and practical enlightenment of the Roman Empire, at least during the reigns of its best rulers, have been most carefully studied and explained by a recent British historian, Mr. Lecky, who writes :

“ Travelling had become more easy, and perhaps more frequent, than it has been at any other period before the nineteenth century. The subjection of the whole civilised world to a single rule removed the chief obstacles to locomotion. Magnificent roads, which modern nations have rarely rivalled and never surpassed, intersected the entire empire, and relays of post-horses enabled the voyager to proceed with an astonishing rapidity. . . . The European shores of the Mediterranean and the port of Alexandria<sup>2</sup> were thronged

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<sup>1</sup> “ Essay on Augustus.”

<sup>2</sup> “ A grand and extensive city, built, 332 B.C., on the western side of the Delta by Alexander (the Great). The illustrious founder intended it not only for the capital of

with vessels. Romans traversed the whole extent of the empire on political, military, or commercial errands, or in search of health, or knowledge, or pleasure. The entrancing beauties of Como and of Tempe, the soft winters of Sicily, the artistic wonders and historic recollections of Athens and of the Nile attracted their thousands, while Roman luxury needed the products of the remotest lands, and the demand for animals for the amphitheatre spread Roman enterprise into the wildest deserts. In the capital, the toleration accorded to different creeds was such that the city soon became a miniature of the world. Almost every variety of charlatanism and of belief displayed itself unchecked, and boasted its train of proselytes. Foreign ideas were in every form in the ascendant. Greece, which had presided over the intellectual development of Rome, acquired a new influence under the favouring policy of Hadrian,<sup>1</sup> and Greek became the language of some of the later, as it had been of the earliest, writers. Egyptian religion and philosophies excited the wildest enthusiasm. As early as the reign of Augustus there were many thousand of Jewish residents at Rome, and their manners and creed spread widely among the people."<sup>2</sup>

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Egypt but of his immense conquests, and the commercial advantages which its situation commanded continued to improve from the time of Alexander till the invasion of the Saracens in the seventh century."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> "The fifteenth Emperor of Rome. In the beginning of his reign he followed the virtues of his adopted father and predecessor, Trajan."—Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky's "European Morals," vol. i.





CHAPTER XVIII



## CHAPTER XVIII

THE superiority of Roman legislative rule, especially under the Emperors, apparently accompanied its authority both at home and abroad, and has been thus acknowledged by able English lawyers of the eighteenth century :

“The mercantile law (in Britain) is deducible in great part from the Imperial code of Rome. It is chiefly conversant with personal property, the laws regulating which are to be looked for in those of Rome.”<sup>1</sup>

In perhaps no other history has the intellectual and practical progress of mankind been so remarkable or so consistent as in that of the pagan Romans. Gibbon at some length examines the value and excellence of Roman, laws especially those under the Emperor Justinian,<sup>2</sup> one of the wisest or most practical of the Emperors, and of whom he says :

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<sup>1</sup> Blackstone's "Commentaries," chap. lii.

<sup>2</sup> "Decline and Fall," chap. xlv.

“Under his reign and by his care the civil jurisprudence was digested in the immortal works of the Code, the Pandects, and the Institutes ; the public reason of the Romans has been silently or studiously transfused into the domestic institutions of Europe, and the laws of Justinian still command the respect or obedience of independent nations.”

The learned historian here makes an instructive reflection, showing not only his own good sense but also his fervent interest in all connected with Roman history :

“Wise or fortunate is the prince who connects his own reputation with the honour and interest of a perpetual order of men. The defence of their founder is the first cause which in every age has exercised the zeal and industry of the civilians. . . . The idolatry of love has provoked, as it usually happens, the rancour of opposition ; the character of Justinian has been exposed to the blind vehemence of flattery and invective.”

Gibbon proceeds to allude to his own personal feeling and sense of duty as a historian, which he seldom does, and his words, therefore, may be of the more value and interest :

“Attached to no party, interested only for the truth and candour of history, and directed by the most temperate and skilful guides.”

Here Gibbon gives a short list of trusted authorities, and continues :

"I enter with just diffidence on the subject of civil law, which has exhausted so many learned lives and clothed the walls of such spacious libraries. . . . The laws of a nation form the most instructive portion of its history."<sup>1</sup>

And later on in the same chapter Gibbon shrewdly observes :

"The science of the laws is the slow growth of time and experience, and the advantage both of method and materials is naturally assumed by the most recent authors."

Thus in imaginative poetry, in martial history, and in legal study the greatness of the Romans has been acknowledged by the ablest of civilised writers, and in an earlier chapter Gibbon emphatically says :<sup>2</sup>

"The celebrated 'Institutes' of Justinian are addressed to the youth of his dominions who had devoted themselves to the study of Roman jurisprudence, and the sovereign condescends to animate their diligence by the assurance that their skill and ability would in time be rewarded by an adequate share in the government. . . . After a regular course of education, which lasted five years, the students dispersed themselves through the provinces in search of fortune and honours, nor could they want an inexhaustible supply of business in a great empire, already corrupted by the multiplicity of laws, of arts, and of vices."

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<sup>1</sup> "Decline and Fall," chap. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., chap. xvii.



Gibbon's following account of some Roman lawyers may, perhaps, remind modern British readers of some recent representatives of their own nation's class, as described by Dickens in "Pickwick" and in "Bleak House." These English lawyers would seem rather founded on classical examples invented and confirmed by Dickens's personal knowledge and brilliant imagination; Gibbon proceeds with cool discernment: <sup>1</sup>

"The honour of a liberal profession has indeed been vindicated by ancient and modern advocates who have filled the most important stations with pure integrity and consummate wisdom, but in the decline of Roman jurisprudence the ordinary promotion of lawyers was pregnant with mischief and disgrace. . . . Some of them procured admittance into families for the purpose of fomenting differences, of encouraging suits and of preparing a harvest of gain for themselves or their brethren. Others, recluse in their chambers, maintained the dignity of legal professors by furnishing a rich client with subtleties to confound the plainest truth and with arguments to colour the most unjustifiable pretensions. The splendid and popular class was composed of the advocates who filled the forum with the sound of their turgid and loquacious rhetoric. Careless of fame and justice, they are described, for the most part, as ignorant and rapacious guides, who conducted their clients through a maze of expense, of delay, and of disappointment; from whence, after a tedious series of years, they were at length dismissed when their patience and fortune were almost exhausted."

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. xvii.

Gibbon, when concluding his learned History, impressively writes :

“ Of every reader the attention will be excited by a History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, the greatest and perhaps the most awful scene in the history of mankind. The various causes and progressive effects are connected with many of the events most interesting in human annals ; the artful policy of the Cæsars, who long maintained the fame and image of a free republic ; the disorders of military despotism ; the rise, establishment, and sects of Christianity ; the foundation of Constantinople ; the division of the monarchy ; the invasion and settlements of the barbarians of Germany and Scythia ; the institutions of the civil law (of Rome) ; the character and religion of Mohammed ; the temporal sovereignty of the Popes ; the restoration and decay of the Western Empire of Charlemagne ; the crusades of the Latins in the East ; the conquests of the Saracens and Turks, the ruin of the Greek Empire ; the state and revolution of Rome in the middle age. The historian may applaud the importance and variety of his subjects, but, while he is conscious of his own imperfections, he must often accuse the deficiency of his own materials. It was among the ruins of the Capitol that I first conceived the idea of a work which has amused and exercised nearly twenty years of my life.”

This “ deficiency ” in historical or geographical materials of which Gibbon here complains has, indeed, been vastly and wonderfully supplied by recent discovery and research, throughout classic countries since his time. Yet despite such disadvantages as Gibbon’s candour or modesty admits, no similar general History of the eventful times

and interesting lands which he describes has appeared hitherto which has actually surpassed or diminished the paramount value of his standard work. It is still, and may long continue, a most precious book of reference and varied information to all historical students, on the Continent as well as in Britain. Yet while poets, antiquarians, and historians study classic times with unfailing interest, the genius, enterprise, and curiosity of British novelists and travellers have been, perhaps, more generally directed to them during the last most eventful century than ever before. Upon this subject its distinguished statesmen, Disraeli,<sup>1</sup> Gladstone,<sup>2</sup> and the fourteenth Earl of Derby,<sup>3</sup> expressed nearly as much interest, if not the same knowledge, as the late eminent historians, Lord Macaulay and Mr. Lecky. They all have dwelt with evident interest and pleasure on ancient Greece, Rome, and in Disraeli's case, Judea, while some contemporary British novelists and travellers have likewise written about them with likely more knowledge and careful study than were ever attainable before.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxiv. in "Life of Bentinck," and "Tancred."

<sup>2</sup> "Homer and the Homeric Age," and "Juventus Mundi."

<sup>3</sup> Translation of the "Iliad."

CHAPTER XIX





## CHAPTER XIX

IT may be regretted that Sir Walter Scott never wrote any of his instructive novels about classic times, though often briefly alluding to their history and fame. To his romantic mind the period of the Crusades, of European chivalry, in the Middle Ages and in later times, and above all the historical events of his beloved Scotland, were the most delightful subjects to recall in thought and to illustrate by description. He travelled but little, while his chief thoughts as well as best works were mostly devoted to his own country's social, religious, and political history ; yet in his English historical novel of " Kenilworth " he describes a scene which, briefly representing the differing styles of ancient historic nations, proves his attentive accuracy in their picturesque delineation. He describes a scene in Kenilworth Castle during Queen Elizabeth's historic visit there, when four bands, both in singing and dancing, represented <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxxvii.

"the various nations by which England had at different periods been occupied. The aboriginal Britons, who first entered, were ushered in by two ancient Druids,<sup>1</sup> whose hoary hair was crowned with a chaplet of oak and who bore in their hands branches of mistletoe. The masqueraders who followed these venerable figures were succeeded by two bards arrayed in white, bearing harps, which they occasionally touched, singing at the same time."

Scott then, with picturesque truth, describes the Romans succeeding the ancient Britons in political rule over England :

"The sons of Rome, who came to civilise as well as to conquer, were next produced before the princely assembly, and the manager of the revels had correctly imitated the high crest and military habits of that celebrated people, accommodating them with the light yet strong buckler and the short two-edged sword, the use of which had made them victors of the world. The Roman eagles were borne before them by two standard-bearers, who recited a hymn to Mars, and the classical warriors followed with the grave and haughty step of men who aspired to universal conquest."

The Saxons and Normans, as the subsequent conquerors of England, are then described, in both of whom Scott took great interest, especially in his novel of "Ivanhoe." On the other hand, Macaulay rarely shows much interest or admiration for either

<sup>1</sup> "The ministers of religion among the ancient Gauls and Britons."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

of these nations during the Middle Ages. His accomplished, instructive mind loves to dwell alternately on the intellectual beauties of classic times, and on the most recent improvements in British, social, and political history. He seems, moreover, unlike Scott, to take little if any interest in Scottish history or historical characters. In his beautiful "Lays of Ancient Rome" this eminent scholar shows an ardent, keen appreciation of classic times and literature rarely equalled among British writers. His poetical expressions may well accompany and illustrate Gibbon's and Lecky's historic descriptions of this most glorious and successful of pagan empires. Macaulay thus represents the Trojan Capys, who "came with Æneas into Italy,"<sup>1</sup> prophecy the future glory of the Roman Empire at a supposed banquet in the Capitol :

" In the hall-gate sate Capys,  
           Capys, the sightless seer ;  
 From head to foot he trembled  
           As Romulus drew near."

Then, addressing the future founder of Rome :

" From sunrise unto sunset  
 All earth shall hear thy fame :

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<sup>1</sup> Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

A glorious city shalt thou build  
And name it by thy name.'"

Alluding to the hardy, martial nature of the Romans, so different from some luxurious or effeminate nations of the time :

" Leave to the soft *Campanian*<sup>1</sup>  
His baths and his perfumes ;  
Leave to the sordid race of Tyre  
Their dyeing vats and looms ;  
Leave to the sons of Carthage<sup>2</sup>  
The rudder and the oar " ;

then alluding to the artistic superiority of the Greeks, though fated to become Roman subjects :

" Leave to the Greek, his marble Nymphs  
And scrolls of wordy lore."

Then proudly praising the martial glory of the Romans, to whom nearly all nations yielded :

" Thine, Roman, is the pilum,  
Roman, the sword is thine,  
The even trench, the bristling mound,  
The legion's ordered line ;

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<sup>1</sup> " A country of Italy, of which Capua was the capital."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> " A celebrated city of Africa, the rival of Rome. It maintained three famous wars against Rome, in the third of which Carthage was totally destroyed."—Ibid.

And thine the wheels of triumph,  
Which with their laurelled train  
Move slowly up the shouting streets  
To Jove's eternal fane."

The prophet then confidently foresees Roman triumph over both Eastern and Western Europe, Gaul, and Greece :

"The Gaul shall come against thee  
From the land of snow and night,  
Thou shalt give his fair-haired armies  
To the raven and the kite.  
The Greek shall come against thee  
The conqueror of the East.  
Beside him stalks to battle  
The huge earth-shaking beast,  
The beast on whom the castle  
With all its guards doth stand,  
The beast who hath between his eyes  
The serpent for a hand."

Macaulay observes about "the earth-shaking beast" :<sup>1</sup>

"The elephants, when the surprise caused by their first appearance was over, could cause no disorder in the steady yet flexible battalions of Rome. . . . But now, for the first time, the riches of Asia and the arts of Greece adorned a Roman pageant. Plate, fine stuffs, costly furniture, rare animals, exquisite paintings and sculptures, formed part of the procession."

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to the "Prophecy of Capys."



He concludes his beautiful, picturesque account of Capys's prophecy in words rather resembling Virgil in eager exultation about future Roman greatness and vast extent of power, throughout, perhaps, the finest parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa :

“Blest and thrice blest the Roman  
 Who sees Rome's brightest day  
 Who sees that long, victorious pomp  
 Wind down the Sacred Way.

Then where o'er two bright havens,  
 The towers of Corinth <sup>1</sup> frown,  
 Where the gigantic King of Day  
 On his own Rhodes looks down,<sup>2</sup>  
 Where soft Orontes <sup>3</sup> murmurs  
 Beneath the laurel shades,  
 Where Nile reflects the endless length  
 Of dark-red colonnades.

Where fur-clad hunters wander  
 Amidst the northern ice,  
 Where through the sand of morning-land  
 The camel bears the spice,

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<sup>1</sup> “An ancient city of Greece . . . totally destroyed by the Roman consul 146 B.C.”—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “Colossus, a celebrated brazen image at Rhodes, which passed for one of the seven wonders of the world.”—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “A river of Syria, falling, after a rapid and troubled course, into the Mediterranean.”—Ibid.

Where Atlas <sup>1</sup> flings his shadow  
Far o'er the western foam  
Shall be great fear on all who hear  
The mighty name of Rome."

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<sup>1</sup> "This mountain, which runs across the deserts of Africa east and west, is so high that the ancients have imagined that the heavens rested on its top."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.



CHAPTER XX





## CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER brilliant British contemporary writer, Mr. Kinglake, who about the middle of the last century visited Greece, Syria, and Egypt, expresses an admiration for classic lands and writings almost equal to that of Macaulay, yet in a less historical spirit. Though a wonderfully observant and entertaining traveller, eagerly noticing all he saw around him, he yet found evident delight in recalling his former classic studies, though apart from school teachings, whose recollection has produced such opposite results in British scholars, he thus writes :<sup>1</sup>

“I too loved Homer. . . . True it is that the Greek was ingeniously rendered into English—the English of Pope—but not even a mesh like that can screen an earnest child from the fire of Homer’s battles. But the ‘Iliad,’ line by line, I clasped it to my brain with reverence as well as love. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> “Eothen,” chap. iv., signifying “From the East.”—*Author’s Preface.*

There was a preface or dissertation printed in type still more majestic than the rest of the book ; this I read, but not till my enthusiasm for the 'Iliad' had already run high. The writer, compiling the opinions of many men, and chiefly of the Ancients, set forth, I know not how quaintly, that the 'Iliad' was all in all to the human race—that it was history, poetry, revelation—that the works of men's hands were folly and vanity and would pass away like the dreams of a child, but that the kingdom of Homer would endure for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

When in Egypt this enthusiastic writer says about the Pyramids :<sup>2</sup>

"Familiar to one from the days of early childhood are the forms of the Egyptian Pyramids, and now as I approached them from the banks of the Nile, I had no print, no picture before me, and yet the old shapes were there : there was no change, they were just as I had always known them. I straightened myself in my stirrups and strived to persuade my understanding that this was real Egypt. . . . Yet it was not till I came to the base of the Great Pyramid that reality began to weigh upon my mind. . . . When I came and trod and touched with my hands and climbed, in order that by climbing I might come to the top of one single stone ; then almost suddenly a cold sense and understanding of the Pyramid's enormity came down, overcasting my brain."

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<sup>1</sup> "Homerus, a celebrated Greek poet, the most ancient of all the profane writers. The age in which he lived is not known. In his two celebrated poems, the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey,' Homer had displayed the most consummate knowledge of human nature."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. xix.

The sight of these wonderful Pyramids impresses Mr. Kinglake's mind with the following reflections. He shows neither the historic knowledge of Macaulay nor does he indulge in the romantic fancy of Bulwer Lytton, yet his thoughts are evidently those of a most observant enlightened Englishman of the nineteenth century :

“And Time, too, the remoteness of its origin no less than the enormity of its proportions, screens an Egyptian pyramid from the easy and familiar contact of our modern minds. At its base the common earth ends, and all above is a world—one not created by God—not seeming to be made by men's hands, but rather the sheer giant work of some old dismal age, weighing down this younger planet. Fine sayings! But the truth seems to be, after all, that the Pyramids are quite of this world, and they were piled up into the air for the realisation of some kingly crotchets about immortality, some priestly longing for burial fees, and that as for the building, they were built, like coral rocks, by swarms of insects, by swarms of poor Egyptians who were not only the abject tools and slaves of power, but also ate onions for the reward of their immortal labours. <sup>1</sup> The Pyramids are quite of this world.”

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kinglake here alludes to Herodotus who, writing on Egypt, says : “There is an inscription in Egyptian characters on the Pyramid which records the quantity of radishes, onions, and garlic consumed by the labourers who constructed it, and I perfectly well remember that the interpreter who read the writing to me, said that the money expended in this way was 1,600 talents of silver.”—Rawlinson's “Herodotus,” vol. ii. chap. cxxv.

Mr. Kinglake proceeds to relate a rather startling personal anecdote, perhaps as a warning to other Egyptian travellers :

“ I of course ascended the summit of the Great Pyramid and also explored its chambers. . . . There were a number of Arabs hanging about in its neighbourhood. . . . Their sheik was with them. . . . There was also present an ill-looking fellow in a soldier’s uniform. This man, on my departure, claimed a reward on the ground that he had maintained order and decorum among the Arabs. His claim was not considered valid by my dragoman and was rejected accordingly. My donkey-boys afterwards said they overheard this fellow propose to the sheik to put me to death while I was in the interior of the Great Pyramid and to share with him the booty. Fancy a struggle for life in one of those burial chambers with acres and acres of solid masonry between oneself and the daylight ! I felt exceedingly glad that I had not made the rascal a present.”

Mr. Kinglake further makes the following impressive remarks, suggested to his mind by the sight of the greatest of remaining Egyptian wonders :

“ And near the Pyramids, more wondrous and more awful than all else in the land of Egypt, there sits the lonely Sphynx. . . . In one regard the stone idol bears awful semblance of Deity . . . unchangefulness in the midst of change, the same seeming will and intent for ever and ever inexorable ! Upon ancient dynasties of Ethiopian and Egyptian kings—upon Greek and Romans, upon Arab and Ottoman conquerors—upon Napoleon dreaming of an Eastern Empire—upon battle and pestilence . . . upon all, and more,



this unworldly Sphynx has watched and watched like a Providence, with the same earnest eyes and the same sad, tranquil mien . . . and we—we shall die and Islam will wither away : and the Englishman straining far over to hold his loved India, will plant a firm foot on the banks of the Nile and sit in the seats of the Faithful, and still that sleeping rock will be watching and watching the works of the new busy race, with those same sad, earnest eyes and the same tranquil mien everlasting. You dare not mock at the Sphynx."





CHAPTER XXI



## CHAPTER XXI

**K**INGLAKE'S and Macaulay's gifted literary contemporary, Sir Edward Bulwer, first Lord Lytton, shared to some extent both the chivalrous and classic tastes of Walter Scott and of Macaulay in some of his brilliant romances. In his historic novel, "The Last Days of Pompeii," especially, this highly accomplished scholar, inspired, like Macaulay, with an almost enthusiastic love for classic times and writings, says in his Preface,<sup>1</sup> evidently preferring them to the Middle Ages, which Scott delighted to describe or allude to :

"With the classical age we have no household and familiar associations. The creed of that departed religion, the customs of the departed civilisation, present little that is attractive or sacred to our northern imaginations ; they are rendered yet more trite to us by the scholastic pedantry which first acquainted us with their nature, and linked with the recollection of studies which were imposed as a labour and not cultivated as a delight. . . . The date of my story is that of the short reign of Titus, when Rome was at its proudest and most gigantic eminence of luxury and power."

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<sup>1</sup> Written 1834.

Bulwer Lytton, in his Preface to a later edition,<sup>1</sup> writes alluding to the success of his classical novel :

“ Writing the work almost on the spot and amidst a population that still preserve a strong family likeness to their classic forefathers, I could scarcely fail to catch something of those living colours, which mere book study alone would not have sufficed to bestow ; it is, I suppose, to this accidental advantage that this work is principally indebted, for a greater popularity than has hitherto attended the attempts of scholars to create an interest by fictitious narrative in the manners and persons of a classic age.”

While describing, in remarkably elegant English, fanciful characters involved with historic and imaginary events, Bulwer Lytton probably presents, owing to his scholastic taste and knowledge, a tolerably true picture of the classic city of Pompeii before and during its awful destruction by earthquake. He writes with all the glowing, picturesque interest of an accomplished scholar, loving to recall his favourite classic times to himself and to his readers :<sup>2</sup>

“ It was early noon, and the forum was crowded alike with the busy and the idle. As at Paris at this day, so at that time in the cities of Italy, men lived almost entirely out of doors ; the public buildings, the forum, the porticos,

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<sup>1</sup> 1850.

<sup>2</sup> Book iii. chap. i.



the baths, the temples themselves, might be considered their real homes ; it was no wonder that they decorated gorgeously the favourite places of resort ; they felt for them a sort of domestic affection as well as a public pride. And animated indeed was the aspect of the forum of Pompeii at this time ! Along its broad pavement, composed of large flags of marble, were assembled various groups, conversing in energetic fashion, which appropriates a gesture to every word, and which is still the characteristic of the people of the South. Here in seven stalls on one side the colonnade sat the money-changers with their glittering heaps before them and merchants and seamen in various costumes crowding round their stalls. On one side several men in long togas were seen bustling up to a stately edifice where the magistrates administered justice ; there were the lawyers, active, chattering, joking, and punning, as you may find them at this day in Westminster. In the centre of the space pedestals supported several statues, of which the most remarkable was the stately form of Cicero.”<sup>1</sup>

Bulwer Lytton’s lively description of the ill-fated city extends through some chapters of this attractive work ; but the fatal earthquake, one of the most momentous events, perhaps, in European history, he describes with rare graphic power at the end of his novel, is apparently much founded on recorded facts, though involved with imaginary

<sup>1</sup> “A Roman senator. The learning and the ability which he possessed have been the admiration of every age and country, and his style has always been accounted as the true standard of pure Latinity.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

personages and incidents. The novelist's account, however, is so brilliant and vivid that an extract may be given as proof of the admiring interest of this accomplished English writer in detailing classic events and of his pictorial genius in their description :<sup>1</sup>

“Suddenly the place became lighted with an intense and lurid glare. Bright and gigantic through the darkness, which closed around it like the walls of hell, the mountain shone a pile of fire ! Its summits seemed riven in two ; or rather above its surface there seemed to rise two monster shapes, each confronting each, as Demons contending for a World. These were of one deep blood-red hue of fire, which lighted up the whole atmosphere far and wide, but *below* the nether part of the mountain was still dark and shrouded, save in three places, adown which flowed serpentine and irregular rivers of the molten lava.”

Bulwer here gives an explanatory note, showing the accurate interest he took in the historical subject of his novel :

“Various theories as to the exact mode by which Pompeii was destroyed have been invented by the ingenious. I have adopted that which is the most generally received, and which, upon inspecting the strata, appears the only one admissible by common-sense, namely, a destruction by showers of ashes

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. viii. vol. ii.

and boiling water, mingled with frequent irruptions of large stones, and aided by partial convulsions of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

The final conclusion of this awful earthquake Bulwer describes in his usual pictorial style, while evidently adhering to actual recorded facts :

“The ground shook with a convulsion that cast all around upon its surface. A simultaneous crash resounded through the city, as down toppled many a roof and pillar! The lightning, as if caught by the metal, lingered an instant on the Imperial statue—then shivered bronze and column! Down fell the ruin, echoing along the street and riving the solid pavement where it crashed.”

At the end of the novel Bulwer invents an eloquent letter, written after the earthquake from a young Greek Christian in Athens to an Italian friend named Sallust. It fervently expresses an admiration, like that of Byron and Macaulay, for the intellectual glories of Greece :

“You request me to visit you at Rome ; no, Sallust, come rather to me at Athens! I have forsworn the Imperial city, its nightly tumult and hollow joys. In my own land henceforth I dwell for ever. The ghost of our departed greatness

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<sup>2</sup> “Pompeii, a town of Campania, was partly demolished by an earthquake A.D. 63 and afterwards rebuilt. Sixteen years after it was swallowed up by another earthquake, which accompanied one of the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius. Herculaneum in its neighbourhood shared the same fate. The people of the town were then assembled in a theatre



is dearer to me than the gaudy life of your loud prosperity. There is a charm to me which no other spot can supply in the porticos hallowed still by holy and venerable shades. In the olive groves of Ilyssus I still hear the voice of poetry, . . . you smile at my enthusiasm, Sallust ! better be hopeful in chains than resigned to their glitter. You tell me you are sure that I cannot enjoy life in these melancholy haunts of a fallen majesty. You dwell with rapture on the Roman splendours and the luxuries of the Imperial Court. My Sallust—' *non sum qualis eram* '—I am not what I was ! The events of my life have sobered the bounding blood of my youth. My health has never quite recovered its wonted elasticity ere it felt the pangs of disease and languished in the damps of a criminal's dungeon. My mind has never shaken off the dark shadow of the Last Days of Pompeii. . . . Visit me then, Sallust ; bring with you the learned scrolls of Epicurus,<sup>1</sup> Pythagoras,<sup>2</sup> Diogenes ;<sup>3</sup> arm yourself for defeat, and let us midst the groves of Academus,<sup>4</sup> dispute under

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where public spectacles were exhibited."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> "A celebrated (Greek) philosopher. . . . He taught that the happiness of mankind consisted in pleasure . . . from the enjoyments of the mind and the sweets of virtue."—Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "A celebrated philosopher born at Samos. . . . Admired for his venerable aspect. . . . His voice was harmonious, his eloquence persuasive."—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "A celebrated Cynic philosopher. A sect famous for their contempt of riches. . . . Alexander the Great, asked Diogenes if there was anything in which he could gratify or oblige him. 'Get out of my sunshine,' was the only answer the philosopher gave."—Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "A place near Athens, surrounded with high trees and adorned with spacious covered walks."—Ibid.

a surer guide than any granted to our fathers on the mighty problem of the true end of life and the nature of the soul. . . . The sunlight quivers over Hymettus,<sup>1</sup> and along my garden I hear the hum of the summer bees. Am I happy, ask you? Oh, what can Rome give me equal to what I possess at Athens? . . . fair though in mourning—mother of the poets and the Wisdom of the World.”

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<sup>1</sup> “A mountain about two miles from Athens, still famous for its bees.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.





## CHAPTER XXII



## CHAPTER XXII

**M**ACAULAY, so eminent as essayist and historian, but who never wrote a romance, expresses in a beautiful essay an admiration for ancient Athens similar to that which Bulwer Lytton intimates through the powerful medium of imaginary persons. Macaulay's admiration, however, is evidently that of a future historian, as well as of the appreciative classical scholar. No sentimental love-story seems to occur to him. He invokes the historic past as a living reality. The real persons and the actual historic events recur to his studious yet brilliant mind with all the vivid force and interest of actual existences. He therefore recalls Athens with evident delight as its noble past history is again recalled to his enlightened, thoughtful mind :<sup>1</sup>

“Let us for a moment transport ourselves in thought to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are entering

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<sup>1</sup> “Essay on the Athenian Orators.”

its gates, at the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature ; for Phidias<sup>1</sup> is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street : a rhapsodist is reciting there ; men, women, and children are thronging around him, the tears are running down their cheeks ; their eyes are fixed, their very breath is still, for he is telling how Priam<sup>2</sup> fell at the feet of Achilles.<sup>3</sup> We enter the public place ; there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward with sparkling eyes and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous Atheist from Ionia, and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying 'Room for the Prytanes !'<sup>4</sup> The general assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation is made : 'Who wishes to speak ?' There is a shout and clapping of hands. Pericles is mounting the stand.<sup>5</sup> Then for a play of Sophocles<sup>6</sup> and away to sup with Aspasia."<sup>7</sup>

Macaulay, evidently delighted with the ideas inspired by his brilliant fancy, and as if these

<sup>1</sup> "A celebrated statuary of Athens. . . . The statute he made of Jupiter has passed for one of the wonders of the world."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "The last king of Troy."—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "The bravest of all the Greeks in the Trojan War."—Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "Magistrates at Athens who presided over the Senate."—Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "An Athenian of a noble family. . . . The Athenians were so pleased with his eloquence that they compared it to thunder and lightning."—Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "A celebrated tragic poet of Athens."—Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Famous for her personal charms and elegance. She came to Athens, where she taught eloquence."—Ibid.



bright classic scenes were only just vanishing, adds with regretful enthusiasm :

“ I know of no modern university which has so excellent a system of education.”

While Kinglake, Macaulay, and Bulwer Lytton in prose and verse vie with one another in reverential admiration for classic scenes, personages, and history, their two British contemporary novelists, Dickens and Thackeray, alike evince very different feelings when visiting the classic lands of antiquity. Yet all these eminent Englishmen had been educated about the same period according to the modern British and Christian system, though in very differing degrees of educational attainment. But the impressions produced on their youthful minds by a similar education, at least in its chief principles, show an interesting and a rather amusing contrast. Thackeray, the witty, comic, sarcastic novelist, visited Athens in 1844, about twelve years after Bulwer Lytton's half-classic, half-sentimental novel about Pompeii was written. He admits, with his usual witty frankness, which renders his novels as amusing as instructive :

“ Not feeling any enthusiasm myself about Athens, my

bounden duty, of course, is clear, to sneer and laugh heartily at all who have." <sup>1</sup>

Then, apparently alluding to his own London life or experiences, he writes rather ridiculing classic enthusiasm, as if asking himself questions while appealing to his readers in self-defence :

"What business has a lawyer who was in Pump Court this day three weeks, and whose common reading is law reports or the newspaper, to pretend to fall in love for the Long Vacation with mere poetry, of which I swear a great deal is very doubtful, and to get up an enthusiasm quite foreign to his nature and usual calling in life. . . . What is the reason that blundering Yorkshire squires, young dandies from Corfu regiments,<sup>2</sup> jolly sailors from ships in the harbour, and yellow old Indians from Bundelcund, should think proper to be enthusiastic about a country of which they know nothing . . . because certain characters lived in it two thousand four hundred years ago? What have these people in common with Pericles, what have these ladies in common with Aspasia (O fie)? Of the race of Englishmen who come wandering about the tomb of Socrates do you think the majority would not have voted to hemlock him? Yes, for the very same superstition which leads men by the nose now, drove them onward in the days when the lowly husband of Xantippe<sup>3</sup> died for

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<sup>1</sup> "A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo," chap. v.

<sup>2</sup> At the time Thackeray wrote this the island of Corfu, since given over to the Kingdom of Greece, was under British rule.

<sup>3</sup> "The wife of Socrates, remarkable for her ill-humour and peevish disposition. . . . One day, not satisfied with using

daring to think simply and to speak the truth. I know of no quality more magnificent in fools than their faith, that perfect consciousness, that they are doing virtuous and meritorious actions when they are performing acts of folly, murdering Socrates or pelting Aristides<sup>1</sup> with holy oyster-shells, all for Virtue's sake ; and a History of Dullness in all ages of the world is a book which a philosopher would surely be hanged, but as certainly blessed, for writing."

Here Thackeray reveals his private or personal reasons for comparative indifference to or ignorance of the classic works of antiquity. Though educated at Cambridge like Bulwer Lytton and Macaulay, probably studying much the same books selected for British education about the same period, his remembrances of classic learning were indeed not only widely different from but almost opposite to theirs. What Macaulay affectionately calls "the endearing recollections of childhood," including "the old schoolroom," "the dog-eared grammar," and "the tears so quickly shed and so quickly dried,"<sup>2</sup> revive totally different feelings in the mind of his, contemporary British novelist, who,

the most bitter invectives, she emptied a vessel of water on his head, upon which the philosopher coolly observed, 'After thunder there generally follows rain.'"—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup> A celebrated Athenian whose great temperance and virtue procured him the surname of *Just*."—Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "Essay on the Athenian Orators."

in a style both sad and regretful, thus recalls in vindication of his own dislike to, or ignorance of, classic literature, the misery of his own school life :

“If Papa and Mama (honour be to them !) had not followed the faith of their fathers and thought proper to send away their only beloved son (afterwards to be celebrated under the name of Titmarsh) into ten years’ banishment of infernal misery, tyranny, annoyance ; to give over the fresh feelings of the heart of the little Michael Angelo to the discipline of vulgar bullies, who, in order to lead tender young children to the Temple of Learning (as they do in the spelling-books), drive them on with clenched fists and low abuse ; if they fainted revive them with a thump or assailed them with a curse ; if they were miserable, consoled them with a brutal jeer.”

Thackeray repeats with regretful, yet rather comic lamentation :

“If, I say, my dear parents, instead of giving me the inestimable benefit of a ten years’ classical education had kept me at home with my dear thirteen sisters, it is probable I should have liked this country of Attica, in sight of the blue waters of which the present pathetic letter is written, but I was made so miserable in youth by a classical education that all connected with it is disagreeable in my eyes, and I have the same recollection of Greek in youth that I have of castor-oil.”

CHAPTER XXIII





## CHAPTER XXIII

**Y**ET despite these depressing remembrances, Thackeray's wit and comic power make him render even their description interesting, if not amusing. Thus it may be an improving as well as interesting study to compare the different impressions a very similar classical education, pursued at the same College and at nearly the same period, produced on the young minds of these eminent British writers of the nineteenth century. Thackeray, as if believing it a sort of duty to admire and praise the ancient Greeks while visiting their land, invents an amusing talk between himself and the Greek Muse, who, offended at his neglect of her, now appears to reproach him for it. But Thackeray, apparently, is never able to rid his too retentive memory of gloomy school recollections. Without in the least sharing the ardent enthusiasm of Byron, the learned brilliancy of Macaulay, or the vivid fancy of Bulwer Lytton, Thackeray sadly disappoints the Greek Muse, hitherto accustomed

to so much varied yet sincere admiration from appreciating British travellers.

Accordingly this eminent novelist, though no lover of the classics, writes in his customary, sensible, lively style, which so distinguished him in literary estimation :

“So in coming in sight of the promontory of Sunium,<sup>1</sup> where the Greek Muse, in an awful vision, came to me and said in a patronising way : ‘Why, my dear’ (she always, the old spinster, adopts this high and mighty tone)—‘Why, my dear, are you not charmed to be in this famous neighbourhood, in this land of poets and heroes, of whose history your classical education ought to have made you a master ? If it did not you have wofully neglected your opportunities, and your dear parents have wasted their money in sending you to school.’”

To this admittedly just reproach Thackeray makes a reply, which, perhaps, might have somewhat irritated Byron, Bulwer Lytton, and Macaulay. Yet it would likely express the feelings of some, if not of a majority, of British scholars on the trying subject of their former classical studies. Accordingly Thackeray answers the Greek Muse with his sardonic, vigorous mind evidently full of odious school remembrances :

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<sup>1</sup> “A promontory of Attica about forty-five miles distant from the Piræus—a celebrated harbour at Athens, about three miles distant from the city.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

“Madam, your company in youth was made so laboriously disagreeable to me, that I can’t at present reconcile myself to you in age. I read your poets, but it was in fear and trembling, and a cold sweat is but an ill accompaniment to poetry. I blundered through your histories, but history is so dull (saving your presence) of herself, that when the brutal dullness of a schoolmaster is superadded to her own slow conversation the union becomes intolerable ; hence I have not the slightest pleasure in renewing my acquaintance with a lady who has been the source of so much bodily and mental discomfort to me.”

Thackeray here explains to general readers, as if anticipating and wishing to deprecate their disappointment :

“To make a long story short, I am anxious to apologise for the want of enthusiasm in the classical line, and to excuse an ignorance which is of the most undeniable sort.”

In describing Constantinople, however, Thackeray seems to show more interest and admiration than for any other place he saw during his Eastern tour. This magnificent and most picturesque of capital cities, so long the object of contention between Christians and Mohammedans, and whose singular position still causes constant political anxiety in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, is described at length, and with close attention, in Gibbon’s History. It may be interesting to compare the accounts of this splendid city given by the learned historian

of the eighteenth century with that of the popular novelist of the nineteenth. Gibbon writes :<sup>1</sup>

“The harbour of Constantinople obtained in a very remote period the denomination of the *Golden Horn*. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or, as it should seem with more propriety, to that of an ox. The epithet of *golden* was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. . . . When the passages of the straits were thrown open for trade they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the north and south of the Euxine<sup>2</sup> and of the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia<sup>3</sup> . . . whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia, the corn of Egypt and the gems and spices of the farthest India were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which for many ages attracted the commerce of the ancient world.”

Gibbon adds, explaining the choice of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, in selecting this city for his capital :

“The prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth united in a single spot was sufficient to justify the choice of

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<sup>1</sup> “Decline and Fall,” chap. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> “A sea between Europe and Asia. It is now called the Black Sea, from the thick, dark fogs which cover it.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> “A large country situated in the most northern parts of Europe and Asia.”—Ibid.



Constantine. . . . We should deviate from the design of this history if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. It may be sufficient to observe that whatever could adorn the dignity of a great capital or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its numerous inhabitants was contained within the walls of Constantinople."



CHAPTER XXIV



## CHAPTER XXIV

THE calm, learned historian hardly avoids enthusiasm in describing the lasting and material advantages of this splendid city as an empire's capital. But Thackeray, the imaginative novelist whose observant mind often recurs to his London life and experiences, after stating that a white fog disappeared as his vessel advanced towards the Golden Horn, adds also, with an admiration not usual with him :

“There the fog cleared off, as it were, by flakes, and as you see gauze curtains lifted away one by one before a great fairy scene at the theatre. This will give idea enough of the fog ; the difficulty is to describe the scene afterwards, which was in truth the great fairy scene, than which it is impossible to conceive anything more brilliant and magnificent.”

Again Thackeray's London life supplies him with lively ideas and recollections, which perhaps might hardly occur to many profound classic scholars, who prefer to revive the past rather than to recall the present. He continues :



"I can't go to any more romantic place than Drury Lane (theatre), such as we used to see it in our youth when to our sight the grand last pictures of the melodrama or pantomime were as magnificent as any objects of nature we have seen with maturer eyes. Well, the view of Constantinople is as fine as any of Stanfield's best theatrical pictures, seen at the best period of youth when fancy had all the bloom in her—when all the heroines who danced before the scene appeared as ravishing beauties. . . . The enjoyments of boyish fancy are the most intense and delicious in the world. Stansfield's panorama used to be the realisation of the most intense youthful fancy ; I puzzle my brains, and find no better likeness for the place."

Thackeray makes scarcely any allusion to the ancient history of Byzantium, Constantinople's former name in pagan days, or to its Mohammedan conqueror, Mohammed the Second, or to its grand Church of St. Sophia, or the "Holy Wisdom," or to its gallant but ill-fated Greek defenders.

Again this able, gifted London writer, recalling the theatrical delights of his younger days in the English capital, proceeds :

"The view of Constantinople resembles the *ne plus ultra* of a Stansfield diorama, with a glorious accompaniment of music, spangled houris, warriors, and winding processions feasting the eye and the soul with light, splendour, and harmony."

Thackeray then addresses his readers generally, which he rarely does in words, showing the powerful impression Constantinople's peculiar charm pro-

duced on his original and vigorous, yet by no means classical, mind :

“If you were never in this way during your youth ravished at the play-house, of course the whole comparison is useless and you have no idea from this description of the effect which Constantinople produces on the mind. But if you were never affected by a theatre, no words can work upon your fancy.”

Thackeray's accounts of Jerusalem and the Holy Land show less of his peculiar genius than his amusing allusions to the ancient reproachful Greek Muse at Athens, or his gorgeous picturesque description of Constantinople. His description of the effect Jerusalem produced on his mind is too hopelessly gloomy and depressing to be either pleasing or perhaps very instructive reading, and to a theological mind might seem rather superficial. He writes :

“I made many walks round the city to Olivet and Bethany to the tombs of the kings and the fountains sacred in story . . . A landscape unspeakably ghastly and desolate meets the eye wherever you wander round about the city. The place seems quite adapted to the events which are recorded in the Hebrew histories. It and they, as it seems to me, can never be regarded without terror. Fear and blood, crime and punishment, follow from page to page in frightful succession. There is not a spot at which you look but some violent deed has been done there, some massacre has been committed, some victim has been murdered, some idol has been worshipped with bloody and dreadful rites.”

A yet more recent English visitor to Jerusalem, (in 1858), the late Dean Stanley of Westminster, writes on this subject with a more patient and reflecting spirit. This enlightened Christian theologian is here on his own ground, as it were, and writes on the desolate aspect of Judea with more thought and greater power of reflection :

“All this renders the Holy Land the fitting cradle for a religion which expressed itself not through the voices of rustling forests, or the clefts of mysterious precipices, but through the souls and hearts of men ; which was destined to have no home on earth, least of all in its own birthplace ; which has attained its full dimensions only in proportion as it has travelled further from its original source to the daily life and homes of nations as far removed from Palestine in thought and feeling as they are in climate and latitude.”<sup>1</sup>

Again Dean Stanley writes of modern Jerusalem with more deep thought and sound religious philosophy than Thackeray is likely capable of, as the subject is less suited to the eminent novelist :

“So far as localities have any concern with religion it is well to feel that Christianity, even in its first origin, was nurtured in no romantic scenery ; that the discourses in the walks to and from Bethany and in earlier times the Psalms and Prophecies of David and Isaiah, were not, as in Greece, the offspring of oracular cliffs and grottos, but the simple outpouring of souls which thought of nothing but God and man.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Sinai and Palestine,” chap. ii.

CHAPTER XXV





## CHAPTER XXV

WHEN visiting Egypt Thackeray expresses much the same amusing indifference or ignorance of its ancient wonders as he owns about those in Greece. Yet this singular country still retains some information for all interested in historical inquiry or instruction. But it is for the living world around him to which Thackeray, whether in fiction or in travel, nearly always directs his rare and most entertaining powers. In comparing the words of Gibbon and of Thackeray about the wonders of antiquity, the differing tastes as well as talents of these two eminent Englishmen, historian and novelist, are instructively revealed to a reading world. The former writes on the wonderful Egyptian Pyramids with grave, serious reflection :

“The art of man is able to construct monuments far more permanent than the narrow span of his own existence ; yet these monuments, like himself, are perishable and frail and in the boundless annals of time his life and his labours must equally be measured as a fleeting moment. . . . As the

wonders of ancient days the Pyramids attracted the curiosity of the ancients : a hundred generations the leaves of autumn have dropped into the grave and after the fall of the Pharaohs and Ptolemies, the Cæsars and Caliphs, the same Pyramids stand erect and unshaken above the floods of the Nile." <sup>1</sup>

But Thackeray vindicates himself in much the same witty style as before, from the apparently expected reproaches or angry disappointment of the British reading public about his ignorance of, or indifference to, subjects of classic interest. He writes in his characteristic, lively manner about his troublesome yet amusing visit with fellow-travellers, and amongst begging Arabs, to these wonderful Pyramids :

"It was nothing but joking and laughter, bullying of guides, shouting for interpreters, quarrelling about sixpences. We were acting a farce with the Pyramids for the scene. There they rose up, enormous under our eyes, and the most absurd trivial things were going on under their shadow. The sublime has disappeared, vast as they were. . . . Every traveller must go through all sorts of chaffering and bargaining and paltry experiences at this spot. You look up the tremendous steps, with a score of savage ruffians bellowing round you. . . . Forwards ! Up with you ! It must be done. Six Arabs are behind you, who won't let you escape if you would. The importunity of these ruffians is a ludicrous annoyance to which a traveller must submit. For two miles before you reach the Pyramids they seize on you and never

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<sup>1</sup> "Decline and Fall," chap lxxi.

cease howling. Five or six of them pounce upon one victim, and never leave him until they have carried him up and down."

After describing yet more the troubles of this visit, which probably recent visitors to Egypt would likely find diminished, if not vanished altogether, owing to increased and increasing European intercourse, Thackeray proceeds as if answering some disappointed readers awaiting him in England :

"And this is all you have to tell about the Pyramids? Oh! for shame! Not a compliment to their age and size? Not a big phrase—not a rapture? Do you mean to say that you had no feeling of respect and awe? Try, man, and build up a monument of words as lofty as they are—they whom *imber edax*<sup>1</sup> and *aquilo impotens*<sup>2</sup> and the flight of ages have not been able to destroy."

To these expected reproaches, perhaps natural enough for some learned minds to express, as Thackeray's shrewdness anticipated, the great novelist replies with mingled wit and truth worthy of the future author of "Vanity Fair," disclaiming what he thinks himself unfitted to attempt, yet briefly intimating his own rare and peculiar genius :

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<sup>1</sup> "Consuming rain."—Riddle's Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "The north wind."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

“No: be that work for great geniuses, great painters, great poets! This quill was never made to take such flights; it comes of the wing of a humble domestic bird, who walks a common, who talks a great deal.”

Here Thackeray briefly admits his sarcastic powers:

“(and hisses sometimes) who can’t fly far or high, and drops always very quickly, and whose unromantic end is, to be laid on a Michaelmas or Christmas table, and there to be discussed for half an hour—let us hope with some relish.”

He wrote thus in 1844, returning to England to write in 1847-8 his masterpiece, “Vanity Fair.” This famous novel was an acknowledged triumph of his sarcastic “hissing,” chiefly about London society early in the last century. He hardly again alludes in any of his works to classic subjects or to his Eastern journey. His great English contemporary novelist, Charles Dickens, also shows a rather similar indifference to ancient classic history in his interesting sketch of his foreign journey, “Pictures from Italy,” written in 1844.

In it this truly philanthropic writer, who has done so much in his delightful fictions to amuse and to improve English fellow-countrymen, is chiefly occupied in making shrewd, practical remarks on the Italy he finds of his own day. His wonderfully keen, observant mind evidently takes far more



lively interest in all he sees and hears around him than in fancifully recalling, like Byron, Bulwer Lytton, and Macaulay, the glories of the remote past even in its most famous scenes. Yet when he very rarely does so his bright, intelligent mind makes the few thoughts he expresses of peculiar interest. At Rome the Coliseum greatly attracted him, about which Gibbon wrote :<sup>1</sup>

“The amphitheatre of Titus,<sup>2</sup> which has obtained the name of the Coliseum either from its magnitude, or from Nero’s colossal statue ; an edifice, had it been left to time and nature, which might perhaps have claimed an eternal duration. . . . The Flavian amphitheatre was contemplated with awe and admiration by the pilgrims of the north, and their rude enthusiasm broke forth in a sublime, proverbial expression, which is recorded in the eighth century in the fragments of The Venerable Bede,<sup>3</sup> ‘As long as the Coliseum stands, Rome shall stand ; when the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall ; when Rome falls, the world will fall.’ ”

On the fearful human combats which formed a Roman public amusement in this terrible arena, Byron wrote some of his finest lines :

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<sup>1</sup> “Decline and Fall,” chap lxxi.

<sup>2</sup> “No Roman emperor was ever more generous and magnificent than Titus.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> “Born in the bishopric of Durham 673, died 735. He was a monk of very superior learning for the times, and wrote an ecclesiastical history of Britain.”—“Mangnall’s Questions.”



“And here the buzz of eager nations ran,  
 In murmur'd pity, or loud-roar'd applause,  
 As man was slaughter'd by his fellow-man.  
 And wherefore slaughter'd? wherefore, but because  
 Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,  
 And the imperial pleasure.”<sup>1</sup>

After the profound and brilliant words of the great English historian, and of the great English poets, those of the illustrious English novelist on the same subject may seem the more interesting. Dickens writes in his usual observant style on personally visiting the Coliseum, and as if trying to restrain his powerful imagination while briefly recalling historic scenes or events:

“It is no fiction, but simple, plain, honest truth to say, so suggestive and distinct is it at this hour, that for a moment actually in passing in—they who will may have the whole great pile before them, as it used to be, with thousands of eager faces staring down into the arena and such a whirl of strife and blood and dust going on there as no language can describe. Its solitude, its awful beauty, and its utter desolation strike upon the stranger, the next moment, like a softened sorrow, and never in his life, perhaps, will he be so moved and overcome by any sight, not immediately connected with his own affections and afflictions.”

Dickens, evidently gazing at this wonderful edifice, the relic of a long-vanished time of triumph, excitement, and ferocity, yet which was once enjoyed or patronised by some of the most

<sup>1</sup> “Childe Harold,” canto iv.

intellectual men, writes in his picturesque, attractive style, sure to claim the attention of most readers :

“To see it crumbling there an inch a year, its walls and arches overgrown with green, its corridors open to the day, the long grass growing in its porches, young trees of yesterday springing upon its ragged parapets and bearing fruit . . . to see its Pit of Fight filled up with earth and the peaceful Cross planted in the centre, to climb into its upper halls and look down on ruin, ruin, ruin all about it, the triumphal arches of Constantine,<sup>1</sup> Septimus Severus,<sup>2</sup> of Titus; the Roman Forum, the palaces of the Cæsars, the temples of the old religion fallen down and gone, is to see the ghost of old Rome, wicked, wonderful old city, haunting the very ground on which its people trod.”

Dickens, though not much of a classic scholar, is so much impressed at this sight of the ruined Coliseum that he emphatically writes, in a manner not very usual with him :

“It is the most impressive, the most stately, the most solemn, grand, majestic, mournful sight conceivable. Never in its bloodiest prime can the sight of the gigantic Coliseum, full and running over with the lustiest life, have moved one heart, as it must move all who look upon it now—a ruin, God be thanked, a ruin.”

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<sup>1</sup> “He became a convert to Christianity and sole Emperor. He founded a city where old Byzantium formerly stood and called it by his own name, Constantinople.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “So much admired for his military talents, that some have called him the most warlike of the Roman Emperors.”—Ibid.



CHAPTER XXVI





## CHAPTER XXVI

**D**ICKENS rarely alludes to historic events or characters in his interesting fictitious works. In surveying Rome and Italy generally it was their condition as he saw them that chiefly engrossed his ever observant mind. But for Lord Byron, the sight of the old capital of the civilised world made his poetic spirit in a few words recall its astounding greatness: its fame first as the capital of a pagan empire ruling near and distant nations, and then its extraordinary change from political to religious supremacy over a Christian world. Rome thus practically seemed to exchange political for religious authority over the civilised world for a long period. Even since the Protestant Reformation it may yet be called the chief Christian city, or rather the city to which the majority of Christians pay a spiritual obedience. Byron, with these vast historical Roman changes inspiring his accomplished, brilliant mind, thus in verse reviews them :

“Rome—Rome imperial, bows her to the storm,  
 In the same dust and blackness, and we pass  
 The skeleton of her Titanic<sup>1</sup> form,  
 Wrecks of another world, whose ashes still are warm.

Mother of Arts! as once of Arms; thy hand  
 Was then our guardian, and is still our guide;  
 Parent of our Religion! whom the wide  
 Nations have knelt to for the keys of heaven!”<sup>2</sup>

Dickens, contemplating the ruined Coliseum in the thoughtful spirit of a philanthropic inquirer, proceeds:

“As it tops the other ruins, standing there, a mountain among graves, so do its ancient influences outlive all other remnants of the old mythology and old butchery of Rome, in the nature of the fierce and cruel Roman people.”

Dickens continues, it may be hoped indulging his lively fancy somewhat erroneously, as nothing in Rome—which since he wrote has become the peaceful capital of Italy seems to justify or in any way prove his opinion:

“The Italian face changes as the visitor approaches the city, its beauty becomes devilish, and there is scarcely one countenance in a hundred, among the common people in the streets, that would not be at home and happy in a renovated Coliseum to-morrow. Here was Rome indeed at last, and

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<sup>1</sup> “The Titans were all of a gigantic stature and with proportionate strength.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “Childe Harold,” canto iv.

such a Rome as no one can imagine in its full and awful grandeur! We wandered out upon the Appian Way, and then went on through miles of ruined tombs and broken walls . . . past the Circus<sup>1</sup> of Romulus, where the course of the chariots, the stations of the judges, competitors, and spectators are yet as plainly to be seen as in the old time. . . . Broken aqueducts, left in the most picturesque and beautiful clusters of arches, broken temples, broken tombs. A desert of decay, sombre and desolate beyond all expression, and with a history in every stone that strews the ground."

Later on Dickens thus describes the impression Rome, or rather its immediate neighbourhood, made on his rarely observant mind, comparing them with what he had previously seen during his tour in the American United States :

"The aspect of the desolate Campagna in one direction, where it was most level, reminded me of an American prairie."

Here his thoughtful mind asks a natural and interesting question, involving historic comparison :

"But what is the solitude of a region where men have never dwelt, to that of a desert where mighty men have left their footprints in the earth from which they have vanished?"

His humane spirit was ever aiding and abetting in word, thought, and deed the improvement and

<sup>1</sup> "A large and elegant building at Rome, where plays and shows were exhibited."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

happiness of his fellow-men living around him. Dickens was, therefore, apparently so deeply impressed with the former cruelty of the Romans, especially in their proud, luxurious capital when under their worst rulers, that he may hardly enough remember their beneficent rule throughout their vast empire generally. Even the charge of relentless severity, often truly brought against them, may not have been always justifiable. Thus, in the great orator, Cicero's celebrated speech, praising their great general Pompey,<sup>1</sup> that warrior's humanity is reckoned by his eloquent advocate as among his virtues, and it is doubtful if many subsequent Christian generals could have laid claim to it with equal justice. Cicero declares, and apparently with historic truth, of Pompey's merciful use of power: "His humanity is such that it is difficult to say whether the enemy feared his valour more when fighting against him, or loved his mildness more when they had been conquered by him."<sup>2</sup> From historic evidence it would seem that the principles of Roman government varied greatly, not only according to the characters of

<sup>1</sup> "Pompey was kind and clement to the conquered and generous to his captives."—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> "Cicero's Oration in Defence of the Manilian Law" (Bohn's edition).



different rulers, but were practically often more humane and just towards subjects at a distance from the capital than towards those living in it or in its neighbourhood. At the close of his interesting sketch Dickens writes in his usual hopeful style, preferring the present to the past, and the future to the present :

“ Let us not remember Italy the less regardfully because in every fragment of her fallen temples and every stone of her deserted palaces and prisons, she helps to inculcate the lesson that the wheel of Time is rolling for an end, and that the world is in all great essentials better, gentler, more forbearing and more hopeful as it rolls.”





CHAPTER XXVII



## CHAPTER XXVII

DICKENS'S opinion of the dull or repelling way in which the lessons of antiquity are, or were, often taught in English schools, agrees with that of his literary friend and contemporary, Bulwer Lytton. The latter's regretful statement about the repulsive "scholastic pedantry" of some schoolmasters in teaching their unlucky pupils is most amusingly exposed by Dickens in his admirable novel, "Dombey and Son." In this story a pompous, yet evidently learned, well-educated schoolmaster, Dr. Blimber, punishes a luckless pupil for coughing and choking at dinner, thereby interrupting the Doctor's classical, though not to many people very interesting or instructive, remarks. Addressing his timid usher, Mr. Feeder specially, yet really speaking to all the pupils, while they are at dinner, and, of course, requiring their silent attention to all he says, their formal preceptor gravely begins :

"It is remarkable, Mr. Feeder, that the Romans——' At the mention of this terrible people, their implacable enemies,

every young gentleman fastened his gaze upon the Doctor with the assumption of the deepest interest. One of the number, who happened to be drinking, and who caught the Doctor's eye glaring at him through the side of his tumbler, left off so hastily that he was convulsed for some moments, and in the sequel ruined Dr. Blimber's point. 'It is remarkable, Mr. Feeder,' said the Doctor, beginning again slowly, 'that the Romans, in those gorgeous and profuse entertainments of which we read in the days of the emperors, when luxury had attained a height unknown before or since, and when whole provinces were ravaged to supply the splendid means of one imperial banquet.' Here the offender, who had been swelling and straining and waiting in vain for a full stop, broke out violently.

"'Johnson,' said Mr. Feeder, in a low, reproachful voice, 'take some water.'

"The Doctor, looking very stern, made a pause until the water was brought, and then resumed :

"'And when, Mr. Feeder——'

"But Mr. Feeder, who saw that Johnson must break out again, and who knew that the Doctor would never come to a period before the young gentlemen until he had finished all he meant to say, couldn't keep his eye off Johnson, and thus was caught in the fact of not looking at the Doctor, who consequently stopped.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mr. Feeder, reddening. 'I beg your pardon, Dr. Blimber.'

"'And when,' said the Doctor, raising his voice, 'when, sir, we read, and have no occasion to doubt, incredible as it may appear to the vulgar of our time—the brother of Vitellius'

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1 "His food was of the most rare and exquisite nature; the deserts of Libya, the shores of Spain, and the waters of the Carpathian Sea were diligently searched to supply the table of the Emperor. The most celebrated of his feasts



prepared for him a feast in which were served of fish two thousand dishes——’ ‘Take some water, Johnson—dishes, sir,’ said Mr. Feeder. ‘Of various sort of fowl, five thousand dishes——’ ‘Or try a crust of bread,’ said Mr. Feeder. ‘And one dish,’ pursued the Doctor, raising his voice still higher as he looked round the table, ‘called, from its enormous dimensions, the Shield of Minerva, and made, among other costly ingredients, of the brains of pheasants——’ ‘Ow, ow, ow’ (from Johnson). ‘Woodcocks.’ ‘Ow, ow, ow.’ ‘The sounds of the fish called scari.’ ‘You’ll burst some vessel in your head,’ said Mr. Feeder; ‘you had better let it come.’ ‘And the spawn of the lamprey, brought from the Carpathian Sea,’ pursued the Doctor in his severest voice. ‘When we read of costly entertainments such as these, and still remember that we have a Titus——’ ‘What would your mother’s feelings be if you died of apoplexy?’ said Mr. Feeder. ‘A Domitian——’ ‘And you’re blue, you know,’ said Mr. Feeder.”

But ignoring this timid usher’s evident sympathy for the poor coughing Johnson, the imperious if not unfeeling old pedant proceeds, making a list of the worst among the Roman emperors, knowing he is quite master of the present situation, yet with little, if any, practical idea of giving real information.

“‘A Nero, a Tiberius, a Caligula, a Heliogabalus, and many more,’ pursued the Doctor, ‘it is, Mr. Feeder, if you are doing me the honour to attend—remarkable,

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was that with which he was treated by his brother Lucius.”—Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary.

VERY remarkable, sir.' But Johnson, unable to suppress it any longer, burst at that moment into such an overwhelming fit of coughing, that although both his immediate neighbours thumped him on the back, and Mr. Feeder himself held a glass of water to his lips and the butler walked him up and down several times between his own chair and the sideboard like a sentry, it was full five minutes before he was moderately composed. Then there was a profound silence. 'Gentlemen,' said the Doctor, 'rise for grace. . . . Johnson will repeat to me to-morrow morning before breakfast, without book and from the Greek Testament, the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. We will resume our studies, Mr. Feeder, in half an hour.' The young gentlemen bowed and withdrew."<sup>1</sup>

"Dombey and Son" was written in 1848, about two years after the "Pictures from Italy."<sup>2</sup> Though Dickens's bright, cheerful wit makes the above scene amusingly comic, thoughtful people interested in education may well hope that the charms of classic genius and wisdom are now seldom rendered dull, wearisome, and practically useless by such a formal stupid instructor as Dr. Blimber. He is, apparently, a correct classic scholar, but his pompous vanity or selfishness would surely make his learning repelling, rather than attractive or pleasing, to any of his pupils. His wife, Mrs. Blimber, Dickens writes, "was not learned herself, but she pretended to be, and that did quite as well." When alluding to little

<sup>1</sup> "Dombey and Son," chap. xii.

<sup>2</sup> "Student's English Literature."

Paul Dombey's becoming her husband's pupil, she exclaims "with uplifted eyes" to the child's pompous father, Mr. Dombey :

"Like a bee, sir, about to plunge into a garden of the choicest flowers, and sip the sweets for the first time : Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Terence, Plautus, Cicero. What a world of honey have we here."

She proceeds, though likely knowing little of what she is talking about, making no quotation and showing little real knowledge of the splendid orator she pretends to admire :

"Really, if I could have known Cicero, and been his friend, and talked with him in his retirement at Tusculum<sup>1</sup> (beautiful Tusculum), I could have died contented."

Dickens sarcastically adds :

"A learned enthusiasm is so very contagious that Mr. Dombey half believed this was exactly his case, and even Mrs. Pipchin, who was not, as we have seen, of an accommodating disposition generally, gave utterance to a little sound between a groan and a sigh, as if she would have said that nobody but Cicero could have proved a lasting consolation."

Despite their pedantry, however, the Blimbers are certainly an improvement on the cruel, ignorant

<sup>1</sup> "A country house of Cicero, near Tusculum, where, among other books, he composed his 'Questions.'"—Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.

Squeerses,<sup>1</sup> whom Dickens had described many years before. Yet that such repelling teachers, to some extent resembling either the Blimbers or the Squeerses, were only too common in England is likely, if not certain, from the descriptive knowledge of such men as Dickens and Thackeray. Dickens, describing Dr. Blimber's system of classical education, apparently from personal knowledge, or relying on true information, writes :

“Under the forcing system, a young gentleman usually took leave of his spirits in three weeks. He had all the cares of the world on his head in three months . . . and at the end of the first twelvemonth had arrived at the conclusion, from which he never afterwards departed, that all the fancies of the poets and lessons of the sages were a mere collection of words and grammar, and had no other meaning in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Nicholas Nickleby.”

<sup>2</sup> “Dombey and Son,” chap. xi.

CHAPTER XXVIII





## CHAPTER XXVIII

**B**OTH Dickens and Thackeray had been apparently alike disgusted with some systems of classical teaching, considering how little their gifted, superior minds examined or appreciated the original beauties of classic literature. This grand subject of mental interest, however, eminently succeeded in always charming the great yet very different minds of their distinguished British contemporaries, the Earl of Derby, Gladstone, Bulwer Lytton, and Macaulay, and to an extent which would have likely gratified even the greatest classic writers themselves. It is hardly likely, indeed, that many young Greeks or young Romans, at the time of the great classic writers, would have admired them with more genuine enthusiasm than these British students, though living in that "isle," which, according to Bulwer Lytton :

"The imperial Roman shivered when he named." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Last Days of Pompeii."

In fact the real delight of so many eminent Englishmen, especially during the last century, in classic works, produced on them a very different effect from what Walter Scott describes its having on the dreamy nature of the worthy tutor Dominie Sampson.<sup>1</sup> In his peculiar case love for classic study makes him utterly unfit for the practical business of life, and that this unfitness is frequently the result of absorbing, enthusiastic literary taste, is often acknowledged. The peculiar excellence of the illustrious British scholars above mentioned seems to be, that while fully appreciating the talents, merit, and character of those living in a remote period, they themselves were nevertheless the deserving and popular objects of admiration among men of their own time and living around them. It may be hoped, though perhaps hardly to be generally expected, that their views on classic education may greatly aid in making it as delightful to many less gifted readers than themselves. In reviewing the recent progress of classic study in its historical diffusion from South-eastern Europe, Western Asia, and North-eastern Africa chiefly to European Western lands, the British, the French, and the Germans seem its most successful promoters. Were the classical sages of antiquity to revive, they would

<sup>1</sup> "Guy Mannering."

apparently find far more in common with Western Europeans than with the modern inhabitants of the famed countries of their pagan ancestry. It would surely seem, from the connected evidence of ancient, mediæval, and modern history, that the last century has beheld, more than any other in the same space of time, the practical success of British writers in examining, translating, and explaining the long concealed or comparatively little known wonders of classic lands.

Amidst the vast and extraordinary changes during the eventful nineteenth century the merit of classical literature seems to have increased rather than diminished in the estimation of the most enlightened modern European nations. Its study has, indeed, often wearied, if not repelled, students at schools and colleges, yet it has especially during the last century, attracted statesmen, poets, and travellers, who, while influencing or enjoying present times, find in their classical studies a charm and interest independent of all other pleasures or occupations.

THE END.





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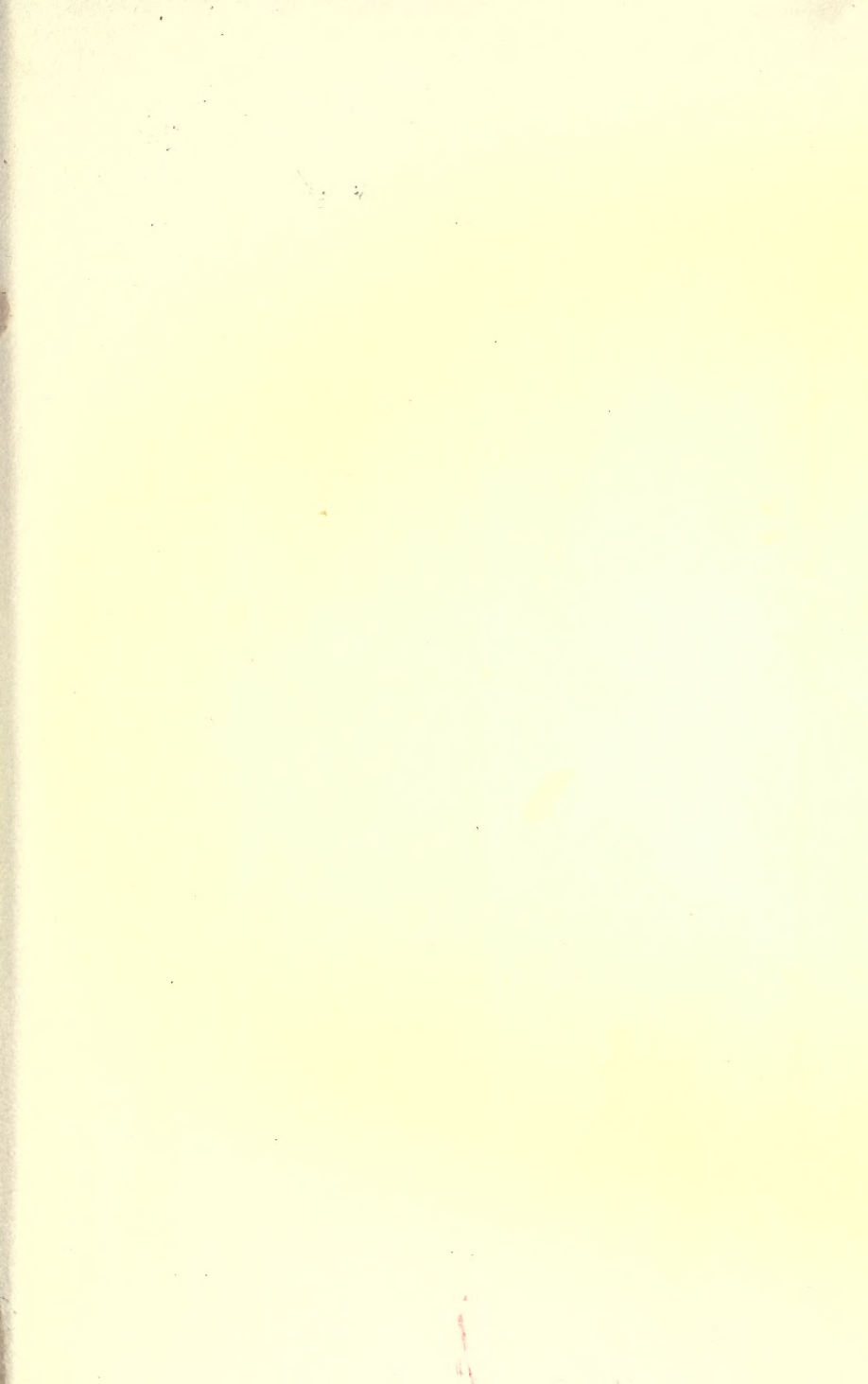
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