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HISTORY

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

AND OF THE

NINETEENTH

TILL THE OVERTHROW OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE.

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO

MENTAL CULTIVATION AND PROGRESS.

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TRANSLATED, WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES,

By D. DAVISON, M.A.

VOL. I.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN introducing the following portion of Prof. Schlosser's 'History of the Eighteenth Century' to the notice of the English public, I must trespass upon the reader with a few preliminary remarks. In the course of a residence for some time in Germany, with a view to acquire a knowledge of the language and literature of the country, of its social and political condition, and especially its educational institutions, I have passed the last winter in Heidelberg, from which I now write. The European reputation of Prof. Schlosser, and his lectures upon the Eighteenth Century, naturally attracted my attention, as bearing upon the various objects of my inquiry; attendance upon his lectures led to a careful perusal of the portions of his work already published, and to a personal acquaintance with himself; and repeated intercourse and conversation enable me to speak authoritatively with respect to his general views, to the spirit in which the work is conceived, and the accessory as well as the main objects which it was intended to accomplish.

The 'History of the Eighteenth Century,' of which no inconsiderable portion of the second part of the third volume, not yet issued in Germany, is here presented, has excited great attention on the continent of Europe*.

* The opinion which is entertained of its value and importance in Germany may be seen by a reference to the Allgemeine Zeitung of Dec. 1842, No. 358, and following numbers, pp. 2860, etc. etc.

It has been already translated into French and Dutch, and now appears in an English dress. The literary portion of the history, as far as it has yet been written—till 1780, is contained in these volumes, and will be immediately followed by the political portion till the same period. And the Translator believes he will thus best consult the taste and convenience of the public, inasmuch as each of the parts is in itself complete.

The Work derives its value, not merely from the profound and minute acquaintance of the Author with the subject, from the new views which are presented and the hitherto unexamined sources from which much has been derived ; but from his well-known independence of character—from the freedom, alas ! how rare in German political writers ! with which he speaks of events, many of which have occurred during his own life—from the general conclusions which he draws from comparative views of the resources, conduct, manners, institutions and literature of the great European nations, during a period unparalleled in the history of the world for the development of the physical and mental powers of mankind, for the greatness of the events which have occurred, for the progress of knowledge, for the cultivation of the arts and sciences, for all that which can contribute to the greatness and prosperity of nations. The eighteenth century was an age of transition sometimes gradual and peaceful, and sometimes rapid and revolutionary, from the still lingering usages and institutions of the middle ages to the full light and liberty of the present day. The progress is continuous in our own century, notwithstanding occasional drawbacks, pointing onward to a period of still freer institutions, of greatly increased knowledge, of higher degrees of mental refinement and moral culture. In the eastern parts

of Europe the sparks of freedom are yet scarcely kindled, in its centre they glimmer feebly and give indications of bursting out into a flame, in the west they shine with a brighter but far from a pure or a uniform lustre. It will be the great glory of the rising constitutional and freer age of European politics, that we shall have no longer these violent convulsions and volcanic throes, which, in the past century, have paved the way to freedom, dimmed the splendour of its progress, and diminished the value of its possession. War and its horrors will gradually disappear, private and national rights will be better understood, tyranny and oppression on the one hand, and popular revolutions and violence on the other, will be rendered powerless, and there will be a progressive illustration of the truth that "knowledge is power."

Nothing can more effectually contribute to this end, than that the various nations of Europe should become still better acquainted with each other, with their manners, institutions, literature and resources. There are yet existing the strongest feelings of jealousy, and in many cases of unmitigated hostility and aversion, much of which is founded on mutual ignorance, on overweening national pride, or lazy indifference. Englishmen must be admitted to have stronger feelings of nationality and, perhaps, national pride, than any other people. This may be the result of their insular situation, of their comparatively small intercourse as a nation with other nations, and of their comparative ignorance of their institutions, customs and people. As far as the feeling is truly patriotic it is noble and elevating, as far as it prompts to the maintenance of the true honour, the commercial renown, and political greatness of the nation, may it never fail! but when it degenerates, as it

often does, into mere insolent pretension, into ignorant contempt and ridiculous assumption, the sooner we understand the effects of these evils, and learn to discriminate between what is national greatness and what is merely national presumption, so much the better for ourselves and for the world, upon which the influence of England is, notwithstanding all drawbacks, incomparably greater than that of any other nation.

In this respect the result of my experience is by no means singular. Most men who have lived for any time in Germany, who have had opportunities of mixing in the societies of the people and of free intercourse with its best minds, have come to similar conclusions, viz. that we are still, to an extent almost incredible, unacquainted with each other, that our mutual prejudices are strong, and that much yet remains to be done by the well-thinking portion of the community in both countries, to remove those prejudices, to open up a freer and a better intercourse, not merely the intercourse of books and learning, which are but imperfect types of men, but an intercourse of minds prepared to see and understand each other's excellences as well as defects, and so to work for mutual progress and improvement. This mutual forbearance is becoming daily more and more necessary, in proportion as commercial and political jealousies increase, when Germany, hitherto distracted by the disunion of its princes, by the crookedness of their policy, the selfishness and intolerance of their rule, begins to pant for freedom, to aspire after national union, to develop her immense internal resources, to shake herself free from dependence on other nations for the supply of her wants, and from her past Anglomania and Gallomania, to stand up for national honour and independence. Her best men are working

assiduously for the realization of these objects ; the current of their labours is uniform, and their influence is becoming rapidly apparent. Schlosser's history is conceived altogether in this spirit : he labours to awaken and cherish the spirit of freedom and independence in the minds of his fellow-countrymen, to wean them from their adulation and imitation of other nations, to rouse them from their crouching and abject servility towards their own despotic or miscalled constitutional rulers, and to endeavour to give them the bearing of self-judging, practical, self-relying men, who know their power and their rights, and who will calmly and peacefully but energetically pursue and maintain them, like men who are acquainted with the temper of the weapons which they use, and have a solid conviction that the triumph of reason and argument, illustrated and confirmed by history and experience, is eventually sure.

Schlosser's history and views are so much the more important, as he stands apart from the two great parties which almost share between them the literary world in Germany ; and by the straightforwardness of his opinions, the freedom with which they are uttered, and the arguments by which they are sustained, has exposed himself to the criticism and obloquy of both. According to his own phrase in the Heidelberg Jahrbuch for 1842, in which he gives some account of the progress of his history, " he knows no kind of accommodation." He neither yields to the solicitations of the learned, but mystical, dreaming, sceptical philosophers of the age, who abound to an almost incredible extent, nor to the earnest, passionate, but equally mystical views of their antagonists, who are raising their heads in Germany, and labouring with indefatigable assiduity, both with carnal and spiritual weapons, to put down the enemies

of the orthodox faith*. The Author, in the same paper, observes,—“ That the strong reaction which has taken place within a few years, and the return of the circumstances of the time from 1770—1790, has rendered the task of writing a satisfactory history so difficult, that what is said may have the appearance of satire rather than history. He is, however, conscious that he never thought of any moral application, and brings forward with care and accuracy the facts upon which he rests. As to faith and duty, he may now and then be wanting in the proper belief, or in true and pure political wisdom; on this score, however, he feels quite at peace with himself, because God is more tolerant than man; and after the very few years he may yet dwell in the darkness of this life, God will vouchsafe to him in another that true light, after which he has always faithfully, if not always successfully, striven.” Again,—“ The Author expresses himself as being very sensible that, as an old man, he no longer goes at the steam-boat and railroad pace of the age; but that he has, however, long and carefully weighed what he says. His judgements rest upon his views of human destination, and these, as well as those upon the nature and affections of man, he has formed and maintained for half a century, without allowing himself to be misled by all the systems of philosophy which have been developed and propagated, since the time of Kant, all which he has carefully studied and examined. He knows therefore no accommodation, declares our age to be an age of sophists, proselytes, renegades and time-servers:—how could he hope to satisfy such an age?”

* The efforts especially of the King of Prussia, and the High Church party in North Germany. The means to which they resort, the influence which they use, and the spiritual favouritism and tyranny which they exercise, afford but too many and too painful illustrations of the fact. The King of Prussia is either the most dangerous or the most hopeful man for liberty in the present day.

So much with regard to the Author's position and general views ; his opinions on literature in particular are fully explained in the Introduction, which has not been published in Germany, but is intended to form a part of the new edition already called for, of the first and second volumes, and which the Author has done me the honour to communicate in manuscript. It will be there seen, that he treats literature only as it bears upon life and morals, and the English more incidentally than the French and German. He selects such authors only as, in his opinion, at once indicated a great change in the modes of thinking and morals of the people, and exercised an important influence in promoting and confirming this change. His great object is to draw a true picture of the moral and social condition of the age, and to show in what respects and through what instrumentality the men and the literature of one country acted upon and affected those of the other. We must not therefore expect to find anything very new in the account given of our literature, which has been drawn from the ordinary English sources, and perhaps not always from the best ; but the novelty and interest consist especially in the new results which are deduced, in the new connexions which are pointed out, and in the manner in which the literature of England is shown to have been derived from that of France, and the effects which, in its turn, it produced both in France and Germany—effects which are still not only visible, but which characterize the whole prevailing literature of Europe.

In the Athenæum for September 1842, No. 780, there appears a well-written letter from an anonymous correspondent, intended to call the attention of the English public to the opinion entertained of the English in general upon the continent of Europe, and especially in

France and Germany. This letter contains so much which corresponds with my own experience, and is so well deserving of attention, that I subjoin some extracts in a note*.

* "Any candid well-informed Englishman who lives some time abroad, will find but too ample justification of any conceivable prejudices of foreigners as to our national character, in the specimens of it they are too often compelled to witness. I believe the effects of these deplorable exhibitions of the worst side of Englishmen are more serious than are generally imagined, and that a great deal of asperity has been added to the envy and jealousy excited by the commercial greatness of England, by the impertinent sneering remarks, the affronting comparisons and the insolent wonder of purse-proud travellers, who profoundly ignorant of, and indifferent to, the language, literature, institutions and history of the country, can find nothing worthy their observation but the marks of *material* inferiority, which are quite undeniable, and which a well-informed man is fully prepared to encounter. Well may foreigners think the only means by which they can secure our respect is wealth; well may they imagine that the only contest we think it worth while to engage in, is the contest for money. What wonder, if, dazzled by our magnificence and humbled by our insolence, they are learning to distrust the value of all that so honourably distinguished them? to blush before these ostentatious intruders into their own contented poverty? to believe that if Englishmen attach honour and dishonour to wealth or its absence, it must be because they are conscious that it is, after all, the sole root of their superiority and their power? Nay, worse: what wonder, if even into kind and honest hearts the demons of resentment, envy and rapacity find entrance? if those whom we have so long taunted as beggarly, see with unchristian satisfaction beggary stalking through our land? if they anticipate with malignant joy the fall of a pride that never spared the lowly, the decay of a luxury that could not be content without thrusting itself into an insulting contact and comparison with their privations and their homeliness?"

"Every Englishman feels, even in society, that he has some unfavourable impressions to get over. It is but justice to add, that when this is once done, when Germans see that he understands them, and are persuaded that he will neither laugh at their habits, nor betray their confidence, nothing can exceed the cordiality with which they receive him into their most intimate society—the respect, the kindness, the affection with which he will be treated.

"Few know the impression they leave, and fewer care; but an Englishman, jealous of the honour of his noble country, and mindful of the solid virtue, sense and knowledge of the kind hearts and sound heads he has left gathered around her tranquil hearths, sighs to see her so misrepresented, and acquiesces with humiliation in judgements against which he cannot appeal."

"I was going to mention other notions equally groundless, which I have heard in conversation; but there is little use in quoting individual instances of croneous judgements. The press is what we must look to for the expression of general opinion. Among books of permanent value and deserved authority, I will cite only one. Schlosser, in his 'History of the Eighteenth Century'—one of those works which combine profound research with a lively and interesting mode of narrating—says (I think in a parenthesis, but certainly in a passing way, as a thing that admits of no dispute), that the manners of the present aristocracy of England are those of the Regency in France. I shall not attempt to controvert a blunder so gross and so absurd. Nor need we descend to any examination of private life, since whether that be spotless or

My special object, however, in mentioning it here, is to allude to a notice which it contains, by way of illustration of the work, the literary portion of which is now submitted to the English reader. The writer of the letter, after speaking, as will be seen, in terms of merited eulogium of Schlosser's work, adds with some marked expressions of disapprobation, that the historian has affirmed, "that the manners of the present aristocracy of England are those of the Regency of France." It must be confessed that Schlosser is no particular admirer of aristocracy in general, and that he bears somewhat heavily upon the whole class in England, in Germany, and most especially in France; but the conclusion of the letter-writer is by much too sweeping, and must arise from an imperfect acquaintance with the work to which he refers. There are indeed passages which occur in the course of the work, which, standing alone, might be made, without much force, to bear this construction, one of which will be found in the following pages, and there are others perhaps more marked, in some parts of the political history; but the work must be judged as a whole, its plan and objects must be comprehended; and then it will be seen that the Author, whatever his opinions may be, has no such design as to commit his reputation as an historian to the assertion of any such sweeping condemnation. His remarks apply to particular times, to particular classes or coteries of the aristocracy—to those who appear or put themselves forward in the great social or political affairs of the country, the reverse, would affect the question but little. What distinguished the manners of the Regency was, the defiance of all appearances, the open irreligion, the daring indecency, the undiguised profligacy. How like this is to our aristocracy, remarkable rather for a punctilious conformity to all the decourms of life, and the outward observances of religion, our readers will judge. Nor, setting aside the exceptions (which are notorious), are these appearances deceitful. But this point it is hard to prove, and irrelevant to the question. The utter inappropriateness of the comparison is manifest."

and draw upon themselves public attention, as in very recent cases, by their notorious immorality and profligacy. I feel, in common with the writer of the letter, that no such general assertion is capable of being at all maintained, and that the number of the aristocracy, how many soever frivolous or licentious there may be amongst them, how many soever reckless of public opinion, how many soever who degrade their station, and whose conduct is calculated to bring their order into contempt,—that the number is yet far greater who do honour to their rank, and whose principles and conduct are above serious reproach. Great allowance, however, must be made for a stranger, who must judge chiefly upon documentary evidence, who has not been an eye-witness of English life : and comparisons of the most disadvantageous kind may be drawn, when by means of the press, all is laid open to the public gaze, and commented upon with a just severity ; but it ought to be remembered, that in other countries all such breaches of decency and morality, yes, and heavier crimes than these, are carefully kept from the public view—in other countries rank confers a privileged licence, and servility and flattery ennoble and sanctify the crime ; and, moreover, that the very fearlessness of the exposure, the boldness and the just severity of the press, liable also to its partialities, are evidences of a sound and wholesome state of feeling in the community ; and if such an allegation really were true, it would lead, and that speedily, not only to the moral degradation, but to the rapid destruction of the whole political power of the aristocracy.

We must always bear in mind also, the great distinction between the aristocracy of England and that of almost all other nations. They are far more intimately mixed up with the people and the institutions

of the country, than the aristocracies of the despotic kingdoms and empires of the world. They form no strong barriers to the progress of opinion, but are themselves influenced and carried onward by the spirit of the age, and many of them are amongst the most enlightened, ablest and most zealous reformers. They are not the mere patrons of the arts of life from ostentation or the love of patronage, but real friends and admirers and eager promoters of all those great practical discoveries which are calculated to advance and consolidate the civilization of a great and free people; whereas, in other countries the aristocracy forms a peculiar and antagonist class—the servile adherents of the monarchy, the sharers of its privileges, and the instruments of its tyranny.

The remarks of such a writer as Schlosser may, however, well serve as a warning to the nobility of England, to consider what is due to their station and their influence, and how incumbent it is upon the great majority of the honourable, generous and patriotic among them to discountenance in every possible way, those of their order, who bring disgrace upon themselves, upon their rank, and upon their country, and to allow no talents or genius, no political sequacity or rhetorical powers, to be a passport to high places, and to supply the place of those solid, true and genuine qualities which ought to distinguish English statesmen and peers. The spirit of the book, however, and of its several parts, will be best understood by its perusal, aided by the hints which I have given with respect to the general views and objects of its Author.

Admitting that there is much in every part of Schlosser's 'History of the Eighteenth Century,' which is neither calculated to soothe nor flatter our pride, and sometimes perhaps, as we may think, a severity beyond

what the circumstances fairly justify, I feel no hesitation, on that account, in being instrumental in introducing the whole or any part of the work to the English reader. His opinion will have its influence, not only in his own country, but in Europe ; his object and desire are, as a great practical historian, to make the history of the past the instructor of the future ; and in these times, when a spirit of universal inquiry is abroad, when there are so many competent judges amongst all classes of society, when nations, like men, are cited to the bar of public opinion, and their destinies are materially affected by the results of the decision, it is especially interesting and important not to look at our own history and literature from our own point of view alone, and through our own spectacles, but to consider it also, as viewed by others, and to understand the impressions which it has made and makes upon the minds of able, learned and partial or impartial writers of every country. The feeling of Germany towards England is of special importance. The German language, literature and customs have so much in common with our own, that we are better calculated to understand and sympathize with each other, and to work for common ends, than any other nations in Europe. Whenever the struggle comes, we are the most natural, as we shall be the most efficient allies ; and with a good mutual understanding and a hearty confidence in each other, we may defy the autocratical or revolutionary and democratical states to do their worst.

What Lord Bolingbroke, in his ' Letters upon the Study of History*,' says of the distinguishing characteristic of a Roman in the days of Regulus, is no inapt description of the feeling which too many on the conti-

* Letter II.

ment, some from ignorance and some from other causes, attribute to Englishmen of the present day, viz. "an insatiable thirst of military [naval] fame, an unconfined ambition of extending their empire, an extravagant confidence in their own courage and force, an insolent contempt of their enemies, and an impetuous overbearing spirit with which they pursue all their enterprizes." If to this we add an habitual worship of money, an all-consuming love of gain, solicitude about the substantial comforts of life, we shall have completed a somewhat faithful picture of the partly exaggerated or wholly unjust notions to which our rivals in trade and the enemies of our greatness wish to give currency. It would be vain to deny, that to some of these accusations we offer occasionally but too sufficient grounds, and lay ourselves open to imputations which do no credit to the national character. These, however, are but exceptions, magnified beyond their real significance. There is no Englishman who has resided for any time on the continent, and mixed with the people, who has not often had reason deeply to regret the impressions which many of his countrymen have left behind them, and to wish that those who travel with merely trifling objects in view, who signalize themselves only by the rudeness of their demeanour, the insolence of their manners, the presumption of their claims, and the niggardliness of their remuneration, should draw down upon themselves the ridicule and the contempt of those whom they call "the beggarly Germans," and should mistake the ill-concealed obsequiousness of an innkeeper, who hopes to profit by their pocket while he hates themselves, for the respect which is due to their assumption of importance and wealth. Such people complain that they are cheated and imposed upon, whilst they are led into errors by

their guide-books, and look with English prejudices upon every thing they see, and have but one standard of perfection for their judgement, and exclaim, "That is very good, it is something like English!" They expect, at the same time, to be treated with more than ordinary distinction and respect; and merely because they believe themselves to be imposed upon, they pay with a niggardliness foreign to their real nature and habits. If this were the place and occasion, this might be illustrated by anecdotes and examples *ad nauseam*; for "there is, perhaps, no folly more common, or vice more epidemical, among the sons of men than that ridiculous and hurtful vanity, by which the people of each country are apt to prefer themselves to those of every other," and it may be added, to which the English travelling public, are above all nations, prone. Such persons see only what is outward, and draw their conclusions about German life from the gaming-tables of the spas and the table d'hôtes of the hotels. They see little, if anything, of real German life, and know nothing of the manners and feelings of the best of the people.

However injurious such specimens of our country may be, the well-informed and well-educated know better than to confound these idle rangers in search of occupation and pleasure, with the sounder part of our people; and there can be little doubt but that the prevailing feeling against the English, as far as it rests upon any solid foundations or extends beyond the circle to which I have just alluded, is and can only be of a temporary nature. There are Germans who are as blindly national as any man can possibly be; they have begun to dream about national greatness and independence; their material and substantial interests increase; they feel that they can do without English looms and forges,

and entertain already a somewhat foolish contempt for their masters in the practical arts, whilst they can yet offer only awkward imitations of their skill. The Zollverein has been an immense step both for princes and people ; it will first be the means of wealth, then of power, then of political freedom, and finally, perhaps, of political combination. The King of Prussia, with a constitution in his hand, could at any moment awaken Germany into a new life, extinguish the minor states which are but bars to national prosperity—which cripple the resources and obstruct the operations of the national spirit, and raise and maintain a barrier against all aggressors however powerful, for the Germans will never again fight for their princes but for themselves. When the Germans have had a little longer experience of prosperity, they will find that they can afford to drop the spirit of commercial jealousy, to occupy their natural position, and to enjoy their own resources, without casting an envious eye upon the superiority of more favoured nations, or wishing to see their injury or decline.

Notwithstanding all the evil feeling that prevails, it will be found to rest on no permanent foundation. The institutions of England are still longed for, her practical arts are still admired and imitated, her language and literature are more and more cultivated and understood almost to the exclusion of others, and no people as a people can long continue to dislike a nation to whose skill and resources they are so deeply indebted, whose language and literature they find so congenial to their tastes and worthy of their admiration, and whose free institutions are the models by which they endeavour to fashion their own. The Germans have yet assuredly much useful and practical knowledge to learn, and whilst we are contented to acknowledge their superiority

in learned research, let them not hesitate to recognise the vast superiority of our social and practical institutions, which they are yet far from being in a condition thoroughly to appreciate, much less to rival. It would be altogether foreign to my design, however copious the materials, to indulge in any feelings of ridicule, or to lay myself open to the imputation of embittering when I mean to conciliate. In a more suitable place and manner I may, perhaps, hereafter venture to offer some reflections on various points of interest connected with the moral and social condition of the Germans, and especially upon the nature and influence of their plans and institutions for education, to which I have devoted no inconsiderable time and attention, and for which I have collected some useful materials.

In the mean time I will only observe, that it is impossible to be blind to the weak points of the moral and political character of the Germans in general, to the prevailing want or total absence of all free discussion, of all public spirit, of generous self-sacrifice for the promotion of the cause of freedom and truth, to the too common paltry concealments of opinion, to the pitiful subservience to the higher powers, and to the manner in which too many sacrifice honour and truth, soul and body, to win the favour or avoid the displeasure of some petty tyrant upon whom they are dependent for their bread. These and other faults lie not in their natures but in their circumstances. The best men among them know them well, and believe they now see the dawn of a brighter day approaching, in which truth, justice and freedom will prevail, and the emancipated minds of a great people will put forth new energies for the enlightenment and benefit of the present and future generations.

I have now only a few words to add with regard to my own share in bringing this Work before the English public. The Translation was first begun for self-improvement, and my only study has been fully to convey the meaning and spirit of the Author, without sacrificing the genius of the language in which they are conveyed; with such a writer as Schlosser, whose sentences are so parenthetical and pregnant, this is no easy task. The Author, who is a very competent judge of our language, has been good enough to read over and compare the Translation, and by his permission I subjoin his approval of the manner in which the meaning of his Work has been transferred from his language into mine. In respect to the style, I must crave the indulgence due to a first attempt, and hope in the continuation of the Work to acquire a greater facility and to avoid such faults as may attach to the present volumes.

D. D.

Da der Herr Davison zu seinem Vergnügen den ganzen litterarischen Theil von der Unterzeichneten Geschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts diesen Winter ins Englische uebersetzt hat, so würde es dem Unterzeichneten sehr lieb seyn, wenn diese Uebersetzung, die er durchgesehen hat und für deren Genauigkeit und Richtigkeit er bürgt, gedruckt wurde.

Der Unterzeichnete hat der Uebersetzung in der Vorrede des letzten Theils ausdrücklich erwahnt um Herrn Davisons Verdienst anzuerkennen, und hat sie mit ihm aufmerksam durchgelesen und geprüft, er bürgt also dafür, wie für seine eigne Arbeit.

F. C. SCHLOSSER.

Heidelberg, Feb. 25, 1843.

ERRATA.

- Page 6, line 5, *for* Zurotas *read* Zurita
— 9, — 17, *for* Dalbergfange *read* Dalberg
— 11, — 2, *for* Fourteenth *read* Twelfth

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ERRATA IN VOLUME I.

The Translator regrets, that in consequence of his great distance from the press, and the difficulty of seeing revises, a few errors have escaped which affect the sense, notwithstanding the great care of the printers. He hopes those mentioned below are all that are material.

- Page 16, l. 8 from bottom, for *marotique*, read *marotisme*
— 19, last line, for *Voltaires*, read *Voitures*
— 61, l. 14 from the bottom, after out insert of
— 88, l. 14, for was (not) recommended, read was (best) recommended
— 90, l. 4, for sociality, read ideality
— 102, l. 2, for poem, read fiction
— 113, note, l. 7, for national, read natural
— 177, lines 11, 12, for *Genovesa*, read *Genovefa*
— 179, l. 9 from bottom, for *Woss*, read *Voss*
— 181, l. 4, for *Carpzovin*, read *Carpzov*
— 202, l. 17, for when, read where
— 211, l. 9, for *Gottsched* 'Man and Wife,' read the *Gottsched's Husband and Wife*
— 264, l. 23, *dele* not
— 296, l. 4, for *These supposititious orders*, read *Those suppositions and ideas*

HISTORY

OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

INTRODUCTION.

§ I.

CONNEXION OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF MODERN TIMES IN GENERAL WITH THE HISTORY OF GENERAL LITERATURE.

THE remark, that every external change in the state gave rise to a change in the literature intended for the educated classes of society among the western nations, particularly among the Greeks, Romans, and the people of the Germanic stem, leads immediately to the supposition of a real difference between the history of the Oriental nations and the early times of the Greeks and Romans, and modern history. These two different species of history require to be treated in a wholly different method; the middle ages alone, till towards the fourteenth century, may be treated in the same manner as is employed for that of the primitive ages and of the East. On this general principle, the history of the eighteenth century demands a continual reference to the mutual relation existing between the internal culture and the external political changes of the people and kingdoms of Europe; and a somewhat closer consideration of the course of political history and of the civilization and mental improvement of mankind in general, shows, that if a reference to this mutual relation just mentioned, be neglected, all notions of the relation of our times to antiquity and to the middle ages, must remain imperfect and distorted.

From the beginning of history till the present time, cold reason has held dominion in China and Japan, and rigid prejudice, hostile to everything foreign and to every thought of improvement. India, Egypt, Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, and all the great kingdoms which were subject to despotic or hierarchical rule, were under the influence of exaggerated fancy: this impressed a characteristic upon all the mental culture and training of these countries and people, which is quite unvarying and wholly inseparable from their existence. Religion, worship, literature, the political arrangements of the state, even the arts, all rest upon the permanence and stability of the present state of things, so as neither to encourage or allow any progress in what is of native production, nor to be accessible to the effect of anything which is foreign. As these principles had also gained a footing and ascendancy in Europe in the middle ages, the history of that period must necessarily be treated in the same manner as that of the East, did not the searching eye of the keen observer perceive a real difference, and discover in the fixed and benumbed condition of the middle ages, a secret striving after progress of which no trace is exhibited in the East.

The middle ages therefore, and the Theocracy which was dormant in its earlier periods, for the reason just mentioned necessarily require a mode of historical treatment different from that which is applicable to the East, although in both the power of the priesthood served to hold the state and the intelligence of the people in a state of non-progression. Wherever a caste, or priesthood, is in exclusive possession of the administration of a state, and of the mental culture and training spread among the people—wherever the people are entertained with amusements, pictures, symbols, secrets, and hieroglyphics, and deceived by a shadow of knowledge, history has only once to describe the existing order of things in the time of the highest bloom of the state, in order to give an idea of the degree of development at which the nation permanently stood, whilst it possessed its highest influence. The complete period during which any of the colossal powers of the early ages and of the East oppressed the world, is therefore fully represented, when its origin—the period of its highest prosperity—and its end, are accurately described. This must be regarded as not altogether true with respect to the period of non-progression among the German races in the first centuries of the middle ages. We find there

at least three different kinds of mental culture running parallel and contemporaneous with one another, although not progressive. The people, whose freedom was afterwards converted into bondage, or into a condition equally grievous, by the priesthood and the feudal lords, were still in possession of traditions of their early free life, and of a kind of poetry handed down and transmitted by oral communication; the orders of knighthood, before they became altogether fixed and rigid, were in possession of a poetry, which related to religion and the circumstances of their caste, and the priesthood had its scholastic knowledge. There existed therefore indeed the mysteries of the spiritual schools, exaggerated and unnatural imaginative poetry, and an active practical education and training of the people; but these three things were not, as in the East, for ever kept apart from one another by an impassable wall of separation. This point we must always keep carefully in our eye, if beginning from the middle ages, we wish to follow the course of the political and literary history of Europe from the fourteenth century till the end of the seventeenth.

In order to lay a solid historical foundation for the origin of the political arrangements and the literature of the people of the three leading nations of Europe in the eighteenth century, we fix our attention first exclusively upon Italy; because it was in Italy that the German nations which had destroyed the Roman empire, first shook themselves free from their prejudices, and from the fetters of the hierarchy. Their proximity to Rome greatly contributed to this end; because they were less dazzled by the power and majesty of the pope on a nearer acquaintance, than those who lived on the further side of the Alps. A general change had been progressive in Italy since the twelfth century; there was a general movement within and without, which continued till the middle of the sixteenth century, and which, without laying any peculiar stress upon the comparison, we think may with justice be compared to the change which made the period from the time of Lycurgus till that of Alexander in Greece, an era of great importance in the history of mankind.

We must indeed presuppose an acquaintance with the political history of the period from the fourteenth century till the eighteenth, because it would lead much too far from our design to give even a cursory view of it; but in this history of the

eighteenth century, we must necessarily trace out the origin of those portions of the English, French, and German literature which it contains during the course of, and anterior to, the seventeenth century. Had space permitted, we must have commenced the history of modern civilization, by endeavouring to sketch a picture of the condition of Italy in the fifteenth century, in order to make it obvious that all that which was admired in Holland in the seventeenth century, and which is now admired in England, together with that species of art, poetry and science with which both the English and the Dutch still remain unacquainted, was then in full bloom, when all the rest of Europe was still in a state of slumber; we only wish, however, to touch upon this point in passing. The partial notices which we shall give, shall merely relate to the origin and fate of the civilized life of the Greeks in the time of the successors of Alexander, and of the Romans in the time of the Empire, which was regenerated by the aid of the study of the ancient writings. From these indications, the reasons will be obvious, why, in reference to the eighteenth century and the civil and literary changes in the first half of it, especial attention must be given to the French and in the second place to the Germans, why the English literature is only incidentally treated, and no mention at all is made of that of Italy, as being altogether destitute of contents, and only maintaining a prolonged existence by means of ornamental forms.

In reference to modern history, we start from the principle, that the literature of Italy in the earlier parts of the middle ages contained in itself, mixed in chaotic confusion, all the different elements of modern culture and civilization and of modern politics. We there find the Byzantine garnish together with the remains of classical antiquity, the new Eastern or Arabic along with the ancient Orientalism of the Old and the New Testament, that of the Fathers of the Church with Christianity in general; and still further the Northern, German, Celtic and its various transformations in the poetry and the traditions of the old Gaulish dialects of the North and the South, of the Bretons and Normans, as well as of the Catalonians and the inhabitants of Provence. About the same time the chaos of these sometimes mutually attracting and sometimes repelling materials began to resolve itself, and all assumed a new modern form, resembling the classical, when the modern theories of administration, con-

stitutions, government, police, and political economy were formed in Italy. We have only to recollect that before the time of Dante the songs of the Troubadours, Trouvères, and poets of Provence as well as their language, were of equal importance and currency with the Italian, and that all this ceased, as soon as the Italian language after the time of Dante was perfected, and poetry had assumed a form which was regulated according to classical rules. The contents of the works and poems of the following period belonged indeed still later partly to the middle ages; but in proportion as civil society in Italy assumed the form of the period of the successors of Alexander, and of the first Roman Emperors, so much the more the literature also received the impress of the form which was handed down from that period. In the Italian cities of the fifteenth century, we find therefore crowds of court poets, rhetoricians, sophists, masters of the structure of language, and elegant Latinists; and the so-called academies served, like the orders of our days, as means to form the bases of permanent societies. In these times Louis the Twelfth and Francis the First wished to force themselves among the Italian Princes; and not only assumed the distinction of protectors of the arts and sciences in Italy, but sought to give the same splendour to their city of Paris, which the arts and the study of classical literature had already conferred upon the Italian capitals. From this time forward the new Italian civilization was mainly propagated by the instrumentality of the French.

§ II.

LITERATURE OF EUROPE TILL THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

The first rise of modern civilization, of the modern languages, of the arts and sciences, as well as of the new social life, corresponds indisputably with the time of the highest renown and prosperity of the Moorish kingdoms in Spain; modern studies were first favoured in Castile, Arragon, and Portugal. A new Christian life and a new literature were first formed among the Spaniards, out of the Arabic and Northern elements together with the classical aids of the ancients; neither of them, however, passed wholly and completely over into the character of

modern times. The life of the Spanish and Portuguese, as well as their poetry, continued always romantic and knightly, although we cannot deny that there are some splendid exceptions to this assertion, among which, in the course of the fifteenth century, we would especially mention Zurotas, 'Annals of Arragon.' In reference to tone, philosophy, language, and tendency, we may venture to place this work by the side of any production of classical antiquity. The Spaniards and Portuguese, however, worked upon the literature of France and England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not merely by means of those and other works written after the models of classical antiquity, but by poems also which altogether disdained those rules; we cannot therefore refer to these when we speak of the chain of connexion between the mental culture and civilization of ancient and of modern times.

All the Spanish works which form the foundation of the dramatic writings of the French and English, are full of genius; but by no means worked out according to the rules of Aristotle: wherefore Corneille, as is well known, excels Racine with respect to genius, but in other respects is much his inferior. The same remark holds good of the most distinguished novels of the French, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; they owe their importance, not to their conformity to ancient rules, but to their Spanish eccentricity. We need only refer to Scarron and Le Sage, whose 'Gil Blas,' indeed, is and was regarded as an original work; the French themselves, however, have convincingly proved that it is only an original worked after a Spanish model. In literature, the Spaniards despised all the trammels of rule, and remained true to the spirit of the middle ages: they did the same also in their ecclesiastical and political institutions. Even daily life, in the most usual things, remained standing at that point which it had reached in the seventeenth century. And how completely it was destitute of all those conveniences which the Germans were accustomed to enjoy, may be learned from Leodius' 'Life of the Count Palatine, Frederic the Second.'

In Italy, on the other hand, civilization took that course which the Greek and Roman had previously taken, as soon as the constitution of the Greeks had passed over from a democratical, and that of the Romans from an aristocratical, to a monarchical form. Since the time of Petrarch, and partly through him, Italian literature received that charm which the Greek had

had under the successors of Alexander, and the Roman under the emperors from Augustus till the time of the Antonines; the later Greeks and Romans were much less careful about matter, about nature and simplicity, than about form and a perfect observance of the theory of art. With respect to those arts which contribute to the conveniences and comforts of life, the Italians at this time had made as great progress as the Romans, of whom Montesquieu remarks, in his brief work upon their greatness and decline, that the deeper their politics and their public life sank, so much the more all the arrangements for the conveniences of private life were increased. Theatres, great national roads, police and architecture, are all the productions of these very times. Among the most ancient Egyptians, and in Egypt under the Ptolemies, as may be seen from their monuments and sculptures, private life and social pleasures were precisely the same as they are in our days; all their instruments, their domestic utensils, their social spirit, resembled ours. The same may be shown to be also precisely the case in the Roman empire, from the results of the excavations in Pompeii and Herculaneum; but in those empires, as well as in Italy, during the fourteenth century, simplicity, truth, and freedom disappeared along with poverty.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century Dante makes reiterated complaints with respect to knightly pomp and dissipation, which was poisoning the life of his Florentines; scarcely forty years after, Petrarch praises all that which Dante had so strongly blamed, he becomes the flatterer of tyrants and boasts of his access to their tables. The rhetorical sophistical eloquence, and the artificial prose of the fifteenth century, were admirably suited for such objects. In these times, all the practical and exact sciences and the arts which stand in connexion with them, were newly formed upon the foundations of the ancients and of their Arabic interpreters. Anatomy, physiology, natural history in all its branches, natural philosophy, astronomy, the arts and their application to navigation, mathematics, together with all the sciences to which it is necessary, calculation, together with dealing, exchange, and banking, manufactures, handicraft, and the arts of life, were all in their fullest bloom, whilst the masses of the people had lost all their importance and power in the state. At the end of the fifteenth century, there arose in Italy two great aristocratic republics, and a number of smaller and greater prin-

cipalities which adopted the new political forms, their police and strict discipline; all the arrangements of antiquity, which contributed to make life convenient, agreeable, and educated, were again called forth, and every thing assumed a modern form. The governing princes and the heads of the great families in Venice and Genoa, who were possessed of princely power, founded their usurped dominion upon standing armies, which were formed out of the so-called Condottieri of the fourteenth century, and at a later period of Swiss mercenaries, and upon splendour and wealth. In these times, as in those of the empire, the people became indolent and abject through idleness, festivals, processions, distributions, pomp, and alms; hundreds of public officials, domestic officers, servants, and courtiers, suffered and performed all these duties and services, which venal and abject libertines and slaves had previously suffered and performed under the Ptolemies as well as under the Roman emperors—all freedom was destroyed—every art and every science became courtly; and for this reason each readily found its Mæcenas. The sophistical ornamental discourse of the court sophists, of the court historians, and of the Ciceronian publicists, was admired and imitated in the whole of Europe, and when the little states were not carrying on long or bloody wars, they were contending in their respective cabinets with faithless tricks and with polished discourse. This called into existence a new species of political sophistry, which was called the doctrine of the law of nations and politics, and which was not merely theoretically developed but was also practically used for the unceasing oppression and annihilation of the smaller states by the greater, and in the cunning, deceitful, diplomatic art which made Venice, Milan, and the pope all-powerful in Italy. Tactics, strategy, trade upon a grand scale, banking, exchange and its laws, manufactures, industry in its great branches, political economy, police and political investigations, as the terminology employed in these subjects denotes, all belong to the Italians of the fifteenth century. And without the aid and favour of princes and men of power, learning would never have been able to raise its head.

The academies of Italy secured a renown to the learned men of the country; their deductions and panegyrics made them indispensable to princes, so that our emperor, Charles IV., in the person of Petrarch, honoured a man who was able to pro-

cure for him the renown of an Augustus. After Charles' time, the circumstances of Germany were too unlike those of Italy to allow the new literature to take root in Germany under any modification, or to assume the form of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without the intervention and instrumentality of France. The freer tendency of this mental culture and civilization, in religious as well as in civil things, first came to us through France. On the one hand this was lost in Theological disputes about the pope, councils, and formulas of concord, and on the other, in the thirty years' war, and the people were obliged afterwards to receive the servile tendency of the French, who were forced into submission to rules by Richelieu. Had this not been the case, a new Germany would have been founded before a new France, from the time of Nicolaus Cusanus (Crebs), of Regiomontanus (Johann Müller), Wessel, Agricola, Hegius, Conrad Celtes (Pickel or Meissel), and of all the companions of the noble Johann von Dalbergfange, but it sank as soon as it gave birth to the Reformation. Hutten, Reuchlin, the authors of the 'Letters of the Men of Darkness,' and Luther, called forth light, Melanethon taught in Wittenberg with the same success as the Greeks formerly taught in Italy. The foundation of the numerous gymnasiums and later schools of North Germany, by means of which the studies of Italy were carried even into the smallest country towns, the schools which Melanethon and his numerous scholars urged on by their reforming zeal, not only founded, but provided with teachers, are too well known to make it needful to dwell on the matter: but the mental cultivation which sprung from them, was suddenly disturbed.

The want of union among the governments, and the various subjects of scholastic and subtle strife about unimportant trifles in religious dogmas, which was carried on between the Calvinists and Lutherans in barbarous Latin, a struggle for life and death among the Lutherans about Crypto-Calvinism, and the so-called symbolical books, speedily annihilated all free mental cultivation and improvement among the Protestants. Among the Catholics, the Jesuits at that time created their well-known conservative system of knowledge, Latin, memoriter learning, and mathematics, and, in all cases logic and rhetoric. The practical sciences, which, in our times, are also favoured above others, were largely indebted to the Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but in their schools, on the other hand, every

free movement, every impulse of a power which prompted to self-examination and a searching out of new paths, was wholly suppressed. At the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, barbarous polemics and a renovated scholasticism bound both Protestants and Catholics in new chains. Among the Protestants, Luther and Melancthon, and among the Catholics, the Emperor Maximilian the Second, had favoured the advance and progress of a generation striving to emancipate itself from the bonds of the middle ages; at the end of the sixteenth century a rapid retrogradation took place, and at the beginning of the seventeenth the thirty years war threw back German mental improvement and cultivation of all kinds for at least a century. No one had time to think of the arts, and trade and industry were in a complete state of stagnation. A mere reminiscence of poetry (for more it was not) found refuge in Silesia; and foreigners ruled from the limits of the Tyrol to the Baltic sea. These foreigners consisted of Spaniards and Italians, Hungarians, Croats, Pandours and half Turks in the Imperial service, Danes, Swedes and French. The last-mentioned pretended to fight for the cause of the Protestants, and laid waste Catholic districts; the adventurers and criminals of all nations who were the mercenaries of Wallenstein, and his associates were formally instructed to plunder and rob. Precisely at this time, when Germany, for the reasons and in the manner just mentioned, was falling altogether back into the condition of the middle ages, that literature was developed in France, which, since the time of Francis the First, had been brought over the Alps out of Italy, because it was suited to the new form which had been given to the French state under Richelieu and Mazarin. Louis the Fourteenth, although he could neither write grammatically, nor spell correctly, found it advisable and suitable for his designs to imitate the institutions and arrangements of Italy, and like the princes of that country, to assume the position and secure the renown of a protector of learning and learned men. The Germans, at a later period, received their mental improvement from France so much the earlier, because Christina of Sweden, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, who, at that time, was as powerful in Germany as the French, had preceded them in this; for it was only at a later time that she went to the source itself, *i.e.* to the artificial education and training of the Italians of the seventeenth century.

The foundation of the so-called classical French literature under Louis the Fourteenth was laid by means of the Italians, some of whom were called to France for that purpose. From the time of his reign, the thread of connexion with Italy was no longer broken, as had happened in Germany for a whole century. Louis the Twelfth found it suitable and politically prudent to imitate the princes of Italy, among whom he forced himself, in showing favour to the learned and to artists of all kinds, who, since the time of Petrarch, formed a part of the splendour of a court. They had, at that time, long begun in Italy to console the people for the loss of freedom by the splendour of the arts, and for the loss of simple truth by the adornments of discourse, sophisms, and the beautiful forms of poetry and history. Poetry and prose in the age of Louis the Twelfth had already attained in Italy the form which they had possessed under the successors of Alexander and the first Roman emperors. From the democratic education and culture of the period of Dante, which had been the production of a great time, and of an individual poetic and philosophic striving of single men of genius, there arose a scientific period, which demanded academies, expenditure, institutions, and the spur of honour and vanity. In Italy, therefore, in the fifteenth century, those species of arts and sciences alone were promoted and favoured by the princes and by the ruling aristocrats, which shed a splendour around the courts in their residences, and dazzled the eyes of the people in Venice and Genoa. Even the popes of the time supported, at great expense, a species of art, learning, and science, which praised and glorified the existing order of things, the houses of the Visconti, and even those of the Sforzas in Milan; the Estes, the Medici, the Gonzagas in Mantua, the Marquises of Montferrat and Savoy, and even the smallest dynasts and tyrants created academies, libraries, collections of medals and antiquities, whose value the learned men, who were the objects of their favour, and the recipients of their bounty, announced to the world, at the same time with the praise of their Mæcenases. To this period also belong the historians who wrote the purest Latin, and one of the most celebrated of whom boasted that he was sure of riches and honour, because he understood how to clothe him who bestowed them in cloth of gold, and him who gave nothing in sackcloth. Dedications were the order of the day. Every one among us knows whom Tasso and Ariosto honoured and magnified, and

how they interwove the names of princes in their immortal verse. No man is unacquainted with the manner of Machiavel's conversion from aristocratical to monarchical principles, because he himself has given us instruction on the point, even in the dedication and contents of his 'Prince.'

Louis the Twelfth already found this condition of things existing in the Italian States, Italian art and artists, splendour, pomp, luxury, learning, academies, dedications, panegyrics, Ciceronian Latin, when he, who was in other respects a noble and honourable ruler, was entrapped by his ambition to become the tool of Ferdinand the Catholic. He borrowed two sorts of things from the then existing Italian cultivation; in politics the employment of mercenary troops and a standing army; in literature an imitation of Grecian models and the customs of the Ciceronian historiographers. Paulus Emilius not only wrote the first history of France in the newly revived Latinity of the age, but he and some other learned men who were called out of Italy, also laid the foundation of that building of classical learning, which was afterwards erected by Francis the First, and carried out by the following kings.

Francis the First was much better guided in his monarchical undertakings by his instinct, by his knightly zeal for splendour, by his French sensibility and excitable nature, than his opponent and conqueror Charles the Fifth, by his keen and cold understanding. This led him to the full attainment of his designs in the field and in the cabinet in reference to the outward extension of his might, but led him wholly astray in reference to the foundation of an enduring dominion over the various nations which were subject to him. Charles wished to found a universal European monarchy by power and policy, and he partly attained his object; but in effecting it rendered it impossible that the single parts of his monarchy could be united together by any inward bond. Spain, which was the chief state in his dominions, was internally divided down till our own times, effectually hindered from advancing with the spirit of the age, and continued in a state of subjection to priests, monks and feudal knights. Francis the First failed in his external designs; but he not only imitated the Italian princes by maintaining a standing army and favouring a faithless system of politics, but also by promoting and encouraging a national literature and national arts formed by the study and aid of the ancients. For this purpose he

founded most magnificent institutions in his capital, and in this way made French literature the literature of a court, and as necessary to its splendour, connected the whole nation and its mental culture and progress with the king and the capital, and made them in their very nature altogether dependent upon both.

In order to explain and to prove this, it would be necessary here to enumerate all his institutions and collections, the Collège de France, the library, printing establishments, the collections of manuscripts which were purchased, the promotion of Oriental and Occidental languages, the casting of types, &c., but we shall take all these for granted as things well known, in order to show, in what manner the same religious disputes and controversies, which were destructive to the new classical and national education in Germany, served to promote and forward it in France. Religious controversies and a religious war in Germany destroyed the institutions which had been erected with a view to promote classical education, and obstructed the efforts of the learned; whereas in France the Réformers compelled their opponents to make the most vigorous efforts to maintain their ascendancy, for if they had not, Geneva would have gained the victory over Paris. Calvin and Theodore Beza had sprung from the bosom of the Catholic schools which pursued at the same time the study of Roman law and that of the classics in such a way, that the teachers of them are even now regarded as masters of their science; Calvin therefore not merely founded in Geneva a kind of reformed popery, but also a species of European institution for education in the *litteris humanioribus*, and we learn from the letters of Calvin and Beza that students came in numbers from all parts of Europe to Geneva. In all the provinces of France, where the Reformation found adherents, schools were founded on the principles of the normal seminary in Geneva, skilful and able teachers were settled in all these new Reformed Universities, and the Catholics were obliged to put forth all their vigour and to employ all their energies, in order to prevent their Universities from being forsaken and the whole learned and national education from falling into the hands of the Reformers. It was the schools of the Reformed institutions which, when they were driven out of France by Louis the Fourteenth in 1681, brought the light of the new studies, but together with a purely French or monarchical court life, into Holland, Germany and other districts of that part of Europe,

which they called the North. It would lead us too far to follow out this course into individual cases, and we wish therefore only to point out those particular circumstances, whose consideration appears to us useful for understanding the brief view of the condition of literature in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, which we shall presently give.

The first thing which we must remark with this view, is the fact, that the progress and application of the various kinds of knowledge drawn from the sources of antiquity, of the civilization which was suited for the new age and its relations, continued to advance in France in the course of the seventeenth century, in spite of a religious war, whilst in Germany and Italy all was in a state of retrograde movement. In order to connect this notice with well-known names, we have only to call to the recollection of our readers, that Francis the First, in order to awaken a love of the arts, brought Benvenuto Cellini with him from Italy, and that under his direction, the French jurisprudence put to shame the tasteless studies of the Italian glossarists, whilst at the same time in imitation of the Italian Princes, he founded libraries, institutions for the study of languages (Collège de France), printing establishments, and valuable collections, through the instrumentality of Lascaris, Pellisier and others. The names of Danès, Postel, Budé, Cujace, the two Godefroys, Brisson, Tournebœuf, Lambin, Muret, to which we might add twenty others, form a chain of names which is by no means inferior to those of the Italians from Boccaccio and Petrarch till the middle of the sixteenth century. Calvin (Chauvin) sprung from the school of philologically learned jurists of the time of Francis the First and his successors. Calvin as a reformed Pope, founded the Academy in Geneva and all its daughter institutions as rivals of the Parisian seminaries. Even the Catholic Seminary of Paris in the midst of all the tumults of war continued to be an institution for the advancement of education, as appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, when some of the able jurists and public men who were formed by it, by their masterly satire prevailed over the fanaticism of the League and the cabals of the Spaniards, and opened the eyes of their Catholic contemporaries to the motives and designs of the monks, priests, and Jesuits. The satire ‘*Ménippée*,’ which paved the way for Henry the Fourth’s accession to the throne, went through three editions in the course of three weeks, and the

names of Peter Pithou, Rapin, Passerat, Gillet, Florent Chretien, who were contributors to this master-piece of French wit, are as celebrated as the restorers of classical education, as the names of any equal number of Italians from the time of Petrarch, or as any Protestant institution whatsoever.

The second fact, to which we must call the attention of our readers is, that precisely in this restless time, *i. e.* till the beginning of the seventeenth century, the half-classical, half-national prose and poetry of the French were formed, which ever afterwards remained as the foundation of their whole national literature. The writers of this period had drawn immediately from the classical authors their knowledge of antiquity, and immediately from their extinguished national poetry, and from the light and joyful life of that time, the genuine French tone, their national wantonness, and their keen national wit, which was afterwards suffocated by Italian affectation, and by the rules of their rigid academy of schoolmasters under Mary de Medici, under Richelieu and Mazarin. If we mention the names of some few other men from the time of Francis the First till the death of Henry the Fourth, the reason will immediately be perceived, why the French even down till our day must have recourse to the books and poems of the men named by us if they would be either national or original, and give to their works a spirit of freshness or nature. Theodore Beza, the assistant and successor of Calvin in his Protestant popedom, was especially celebrated in his youth by his wanton verses and his classical learning; we shall not, however, take any further notice of him, because he never became a national writer; Clement Marot on the contrary, combined the pious and religious spirit of the time with that classical training which was derived from the convents and with the spirit of wantonness which sprung from the national literature. Clement Marot drew his wanton morals or the national element of the poets of the middle ages, who, as among us, had become ballad-singers, from a vagabond, who with genuine French humour continued to sing in prison, in the galleys and under the gallows, which he richly deserved. This was Villon, whose poem Francis the First caused to be made known as a model of original poetry, although its author says of himself in his celebrated will, that he has always been—

“ La mère nourricière
De ceux qui n’avoient point d’argent
A tromper devant et derrière
Un homme diligent.”

Marot became for poetry what Rabelais had been at an earlier time, only that the latter was well-furnished with solid classical learning. His satirical prose, as is well known, is sought out, commented upon, and multiplied by repeated impressions and reprints in the present century by the French. In the writings of Rabelais we meet with the indecency and vulgarity of the priests (for he was himself a clergyman), gross obscenity and most extensive reading in the ancients and the Bible all mixed together. His countrymen took as little offence at this, as almost at the same period it was neither regarded as offensive nor scandalous, that the great reformer should be at the same time engaged in translating the Bible and in writing books full of all sorts of coarseness and indecency, as those against Henry the Eighth of England, and Henry of Brunswick. Clement Marot was less wanton than Rabelais and less vulgar than Villon, but he was also less original and nearer to classical models, although he also knew well how to combine in a way altogether peculiar to himself the classical and religious education of his time with the merry, *naïve* and wanton species of writing which was characteristic of the poetry of the people immediately antecedent to his time. We must here make especial mention of Marot, as well as of Montaigne, because they were of great importance in reference to the times of Louis the Fourteenth, and because they succeeded in introducing something of nature into the Court literature, after the rule of the false taste which prevailed at the time of Mary de Medici and her Marini, a time when the misunderstood rules of Aristotle exercised dominion over the stage, and in literature.

Boileau, who, as is well known, measured every description of poetry by a rule which was strictly turned after the prescribed forms of Aristotle, nevertheless regarded Marot's elegant badinage as worthy of imitation, and La Fontaine, who was the ideal of an artificial nature in the times of Louis the Fourteenth, owes his reputation in this respect especially to his archaisms (*au marotique*) borrowed from Marot. For this reason his fables have been read now for a century as a book of instruction for the French youth, as Luther's Bible is used among us. The pith and kernel of the language and moral training were to be drawn from both at the same time. In the same manner as Marot at the same time composed hymns and wrote songs, and the first, however admirable they are, have been altogether forgotten, whilst the latter are still read, so was it also with the works of

Margaret of Navarre, who died in 1549. She was celebrated on account of her numerous and learned pious poems by the poets of the so-called lyric Pleiades, who, in various ways, introduced into their verses a panegyric of 200 distichs, in which three ladies have celebrated Margaret, but she lives in French literature even down to our days only through her indecent, offensive, and very *naïve* stories. The ‘Heptameron’ of Margaret may in many respects be placed along with the ‘Decameron’ of Boccaccio, but especially on account of its obscenity, and it is precisely this circumstance which has caused the book to be newly printed almost once in every five years, in our century. The same relation which Marot and Margaret of Navarre bore to poetry and to entertaining literature in the times of Louis the Fourteenth, was maintained by Montaigne towards philosophy and the wisdom of life, and that especially because the systematic philosophy of Descartes, Mallebranche, and Fénelon had never properly penetrated the literature of the age, as systems of philosophy are wont to do in Germany. Even Pascal only attained the great influence which he enjoyed and enjoys by means of the aphoristic form of his celebrated ‘Pensées,’ which consist more of sceptical than dogmatical speculations. Montaigne recommended his ‘Essays’ at the same time to the reading of the people, and as philosophy to the learned by his practical prudence, by aphoristic wisdom, by the delicate and often well-concealed scepticism of a man of the world, by collections of anecdotes and passages from the ancients, and by broad jokes. In the same manner as the influence and writings of Rabelais and Marot are everywhere visible in the lighter species of the later French literature, Montaigne ruled in the sceptical philosophy of the classical periods, and along with him, Pascal, as an apparently simple wag, appears here and there usually to help out with his dialectics. Montaigne is quoted almost in every page in the writings of Bayle, who was ever desirous of allowing his own opinions to be expressed by another, whether he was a classical writer, or of another class if he was only well-known. Voltaire profited by him in the same manner as the profound-thinking Pascal; and Rousseau’s ideas of life, religion and education may without difficulty be deduced from Montaigne’s ‘Essays.’

The time of the non-progression and retrogradation of French mental culture from the death of Henry the Fourth till Molière,

is much more important for our German literature than for the French—of which we shall speak below—for we Germans tormented ourselves with the false Italian taste of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and of the whole of the seventeenth, even till beyond the middle of the eighteenth, whilst the French had completely set themselves free from its dominion as early as the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This false taste showed itself in two different ways; first in an excessive and singular observance of stiff rules, and of vain attempts to compress the French language into ancient forms; and secondly, in an originality which despised rules of all kinds, and delighted in bombast and fustian. The former error, strict observance of rules and constraint, deprived the lyric Pleiades, who in other respects possessed varied talent—of all the charms of nature,—and left behind merely cold artificiality; the second served to make Marini's imitators, as D'Urfé and Scudery, ridiculous!

This affected name of the Pleiades was given to the poets, Baïf, Jean Daurat, Dubellay, Ponthus de Thiard, Ronsard, Jodelle, and Belleau. Malesherbes, who did not belong to their number, alone preserved any tinge of nature and nationality, and as he also, like Voltaire, became an oracle for the French language and its rules, he is still studied and published; all the rest, like our Voss, were thoroughly acquainted with antiquity, and like him, worked, by means of influence and force, to introduce and give currency to the Roman and Grecian forms. The most learned of the seven, Ronsard, who was a scholar of Tourneboeuf's, and Jean Daurat, enjoyed at first a very great renown; but public opinion afterwards declared itself against his learned poetry, and called him unintelligible. In the same way as these poets sinned by an affectation of learning and antique observance of rule, the later artists in language, Balzac and Voiture, pushed to an exaggerated length their anxiety for fine and witty applications and turns of speech, for the correctness and ornaments of language; all which Molière and Boileau afterwards banished from life, by scoffing and satire. The far-fetched, wire-drawn, and prolix style of their letters, and now antiquated panegyrics, which in their time was eagerly sought after and splendidly remunerated by all the princes in Europe, and their manner of seeking every thing in the form, and nothing in the substance, has been admirably described by one of Voiture's panegyrists, in this commendatory

phrase, "Partout il badine si bien, qu'il fit des chefs d'œuvres de rien."

The bombastic and tumid literature of the times, from the death of Henry the Fourth till that of Molière, was brought into fashion by Mary de Medici, and continued afterwards dominant, till Corneille brought from Spain into France other and better models than Guarini and Marini, and other Italians of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and this even against the will of the reigning Cardinal Richelieu and his courtly academy. The Chevalier Marini, whose manner of indulging in tropes and metaphors, in ridiculous and far-fetched bombast, in plays upon words and allusions, may be well learned from our Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau, was the fashionable poet of Italy, when Mary de Medici became regent of France. He even came to France, and by his influence all nature disappeared from the literature of the time. What Marini effected with respect to poetry, the two Scuderys, brother and sister, who were praised by the Society, in the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the three brothers, D'Urfé, Anne, Honoré, and Antoine, afterwards accomplished in prose, by a long series of volumes of sentimental and bombastic novels, which were imitated and translated in German, even in the eighteenth century, because they might be measured, in particularity and solidity, with German books and their authors. The Artamène, or Cyrus the Great, of Mademoiselle Scudery, consisted of ten thick volumes octavo; her Clelia, or Roman History, reached even to fifteen parts.

The so-called classical literature of the French, from the year 1670 onwards, put an end to the perverted life, pursuits, and writing which sprung from the emulation of Guarini and Marini, viz. of the degenerate Italian literature after the time of Tasso, or of the false taste which poisoned and destroyed the structural arts and style of architecture of the time of Louis the Thirteenth. This literary reformation ennobled the reign of Louis the Fourteenth still more than all his conquests, and placed among us Gottsched, and afterwards Wieland, in a condition to liberate our Germany also, at last about 1750, from its Marinis, Balzacs and Voltaires, its D'Urfés and Scuderys.

§ III.

CONDITION OF LITERATURE IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE AT
THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

In this manner there arose in France in the time of Louis the Fourteenth, an entirely new literature, which found its way into the circles of the English aristocracy under Charles the Second, and in a short time became prevailing all over Europe, because it appeared thoroughly aristocratic and monarchical, although in reality it was not so. The character of this literature determined the character of that of the former half of the eighteenth century, and we must therefore in this place just refer to that literature which was peculiarly favoured from the time of the foundation of the French academy in France.

The literature of the French, from the time of Richelieu, was in one point of view altogether national, full of pomp and splendour, of wit and declamation, full of wantonness and a practical understanding of life, with very few exceptions heartless and without humour, but in the other point of view, borrowed from the ancients, and adapted by the learned men in France to the rules of the ancients, or more properly speaking, starting from this, it was improved and made. This new literature had reached its highest point of prosperity before the end of the seventeenth century, and school philosophy, couched in admirable language (Mallebranche, Pascal), eloquence which was fitted to the national character, the regular drama, and a poetry modelled according to the strictest rules of art, had all reached that degree of perfection which it was possible for them to attain; who ever in future wished to gain splendid renown as a writer, must seek another path to reputation; and this introduced an entirely new literature and philosophy of life into France at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This new wisdom, this enlightenment and superiority to the prejudices of the people on the subject of Church and State, had been earlier formed in Holland and England, and was so much the more eagerly received in France, in proportion as the fanaticism of the French ecclesiastics and of the parliaments had embittered the minds of all intelligent men. The quietism of the visionaries, and the destructive doctrines of the Jesuits with respect to the great importance of ecclesiastical ceremonies, as well as the progress of the philosophy of religion, had first called forth scepticism in the bosom

of the Catholic church itself; then the reformers who were driven out of their country by Louis the Fourteenth, and found a refuge in the low countries, attacked the Catholic system of religion and the French Government, which was hostile to them, the court, and the morals of the Parisians, and at the same time every species of despotism, with those weapons of knowledge and learning for which they were indebted to the admirable schools, and to the literature which was universally acknowledged as classical in the time of Louis the Fourteenth. This new species of mental culture spread so much the more without observation, from the charm which it derived, from escaping the notice or despising the vigilance of that severe police, which watched over literature as well as the state. Scoffing and doubt spread everywhere in secret, under the severe government of Louis, and the mischiefs which they caused were so much the more dreadful as they escaped public observation; all the sin and shame was afterwards laid to the charge of the Regency alone, because Philip of Orleans did homage to the genius of his age, and showed a feeling of indulgence, or exercised patience towards its crimes and its scepticism. We have elsewhere* alluded to the origin and connexion of the struggle against Church and State in the seventeenth century; and we shall here only add some remarks upon the changes in English literature since the times of Cromwell. The affectation of piety and of religious fanaticism, which reigned in England during the time of the republic, both in writings and in life, and which introduced a wholly absurd and ridiculous tone and language into conversation, begat a strong repugnance in the public mind to such hypocrisy, and awakened an inclination for natural freedom; this degenerated into extreme licentiousness in the time of Charles the Second. The tone and language of the Restoration were frivolous, because Biblical forms of language, and real or pretended religiousness of life fell into utter contempt along with the republic and the republicans, among whom this manner prevailed. On his restoration, Charles the Second brought with him the morals and usages of the times of the Fronde, and the wanton tone of the memoirs and novels of the time immediately following, and these prevailed in England during the whole of his reign. The re-instating of the hierarchy in the old form, which immediately followed the restoration of the Stuarts, the

* In an Essay on Schlosser and Bercht's Archives for History and Literature, vol. ii. pp. 2—52.

continuance of those crying abuses connected with the hierarchy, and the maintenance of them under William the Third, even after the expulsion of James the Second, drew the attention of all thinking and able men to the subject, and caused them to attack this wholly rigid ecclesiastical system, and along with it incidentally Christianity itself. Besides, during the course of the seventeenth century, an Englishman brought forward an entirely new system of moral and political philosophy, in support of the military dominion of absolute power. Thomas Hobbes had forsaken the beaten path—had at the same time bid defiance both to freedom and hierarchy, and without suspecting it, had paved the way for the bold scoffers at all spiritual and temporal dominion, as well as for the defenders of the rights of a sound understanding, and of the demands of a free people against the pretensions and claims of their rulers. Harrington and Algernon Sydney, as political writers, went beyond the boldest French writers of the eighteenth century, and the same Hobbes, who defended temporal despotism, and propounded a philosophical system of temporal absolutism, bitterly attacked Christianity.

The wanton and scoffing manner of speaking about religion which we find prevailing under the reign of Charles the Second, was a natural consequence of the pietistic severity and caricature of Biblical language, which was the fashion in the time of Cromwell, or the so-called Commonwealth. The wanton and offensive memoirs and novels, which were well known among the French, were read at the court of Charles; the courtiers lived and wrote quite after the manner of the French, among whom Charles and his brother had lived, and who swarmed about the English court. About the same time as the French wantonness was extended to England, Locke invented his new philosophy of reflection, which was afterwards embraced, developed, and metamorphosed by the French in the eighteenth century. We cannot either here or afterwards—when we return to Locke, whose influence first began to be felt in the eighteenth century, some time after his death,—allow ourselves to enter into an investigation with respect to the nature of this philosophy; we shall however afterwards point out the connexion of the pious Locke, with the audacious attacks of the scoffers upon Christianity; in this place, we shall only notice some occurrences of the eighteenth century, which stood in connexion with the origin of the new philosophy.

The doctrine of experience and observation, of calculation and

measurement, as the sources of knowledge, and the means of applying it, pervaded the whole system of life, whose further development it promoted; even Leibnitz was obliged to do it homage, although, according to his system, all true knowledge was derived from God alone, and he endeavoured to clothe the whole ecclesiastical system, the Trinity, Atonement, and even Transubstantiation, in a philosophical dress: the rapid development of external life, the multiplication of wants and conveniences were thereby no little promoted. This must have strongly recommended this new philosophy to the inhabitants of the Low Countries, between which and England there existed a very lively intercourse under the reign of William the Third; because industry, wealth and activity in trade and commerce, abounded there as much as in England itself. The universities and their teachers indeed were in no respects better disposed to Spinoza in Holland, than to Locke in England, with whose system the orthodoxy of traditionary faith could be ill made to agree; there were however thinking men such as Bayle, Le Clerc, and others, even in the seventeenth century, who did not stop at the modest doubts of Locke, but ventured to go still further. Bayle, as is well known, brought together at the end of the seventeenth century in his periodical and in his great dictionary, every thing which both ancients and moderns had said against the prevailing system—and proved in his work upon comets, that the superstition and tendencies to belief in miracles in his time, were absurd remnants of barbarism. The more skilfully he concealed his proper meaning, as Locke also did, the more his satire took effect, and the desire to find out the sting of his wit, gave a charm to his words, which open scorn for the existing order of things could not have given them. Bayle and Le Clerc were obliged to proceed with great caution, in order to win the favour of the Dutch and French; for those doctrines which had been discovered and developed in England, were received by the French, and by their means universally disseminated; the English ventured to speak out more boldly. Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, had made a bold attack upon Christianity in the former half of the seventeenth century; Shaftesbury, after Locke, directed his wit and his satire against the hierarchy and the decrees of councils and confessions of faith of the clergy, against learned investigators and courtiers. Shaftesbury, as well as Collins, Tindal, Chubb, Mandeville, and Morgan, belong

to the eighteenth century, we shall therefore speak of them hereafter: Toland, on the contrary, began his attacks upon Christianity—which were vehement, but not always very reasonable—shortly before the close of the seventeenth century.

Toland, like Shaftesbury and Bayle, whose friend he was, belonged to those whom Locke's prudence and piety did not permit him to know; he was not sufficiently sly and cautious to conceal himself in so thick a veil as Shaftesbury and Bayle, so that it might still remain a question, whether he had really criticised Christian dogmatics, or wished to attack the system, in like manner, as it was a question earnestly disputed, whether Shaftesbury had been really an enemy of Christianity or not. Toland was very zealous in favour of Deism and republicanism, but often in a very unreasonable manner. He wrote his 'Christianity not mysterious,' and was obliged to flee from England to Dublin, as soon as his book appeared (1696), and was afterwards not much less persecuted in Dublin than in England. Toland besides, in his book, not only attacked the clergy in the same manner as Voltaire and the whole body of scoffers in the eighteenth century, but declared himself a republican, and directed his attacks, not merely against the theology of the church, but with bitterness and vehemence against Christianity itself. Provoked by persecution, he afterwards wrote (1698) his 'Life of Milton,' and under the title of Amyntor, a defence of the work, in which he attacks religion quite in the manner of the French Encyclopedists, who have used his materials.

Toland conducted himself very unskilfully; he was often vulgar, and gave way so completely to his humour and his momentary impulses, that his attacks would have passed over altogether unheeded, if a number of other men, for the most part of good reputation, had not at the same time entered the lists against a theology and philosophy which had become antiquated, and which was nevertheless violently forced upon every man by wicked governments and heartless aristocracies, in order to hold the people in dependence by means of the hierarchy and sophists. We must again return to Toland, when speaking of the literature and mental culture of the eighteenth century, because Huet, Mosheim, and other learned and pious men, by their defence of Christianity against his attacks, first directed the attention of all those to Toland, whom the spirit of the age excited against Christianity.

CHAPTER I.

REFORMATION OR REVOLUTION OF PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE IN ENGLAND.

§ I.

GENERAL REMARKS.—LOCKE.

AT the conclusion of the introduction to this volume, we have remarked, that the political changes in England at the end of the seventeenth century, had given rise to a contest about the foundations and principles of divine and human order, which sooner or later must prove destructive to the whole existing system of the middle ages. Those who doubted and scoffed, were, however, by no means, the organs of the popular voice; on the contrary, the bold innovators, both in Holland and in England—where alone their writings were tolerated by the police—had most to fear both from the higher powers and from the people, notwithstanding a party ruled in both countries at the beginning of the century, who boasted, that they had been the defenders of freedom, and had even maintained the republican constitution in Holland. This party, called Whigs in England, opponents of the House of Orange in Holland, was however, quite as near, nay, perhaps more nearly, approximated to the middle ages, than their adversaries. The Anglican Whigs, the strict Calvinists who governed Holland, and the Dominies of their pulpits, were, after their own fashion, just as fanatical as the Jesuits in Spain, Austria, or France: both covered their worldly views with the mantle of hypocritical piety. The small number of persons in England who purchased a share in the government, or who were purchased by it, exhibited no greater respect for the laws of morality than the servants of absolute monarchs. The gentlemen of consequence in England and Ireland, precisely in the same manner as the government in France, considered the church

and its possessions as the property and the asylum of their relatives and favourites.

It was these circumstances which gave strength and attraction to awakened scepticism, and to the teaching of sound reason in opposition to the prevailing positive dogmas of the church and the petrified wisdom of the schools; and there arose a class of writers who directed the whole power of their wit against the prevailing dogmas. We shall indeed see that the first properly decisive attack was made from Paris or Berlin; but we must search for the weapons, armour, materials, and preparations for the battle, in England.

We must besides, in this inquiry, keep in view a wider circle of writers, because it is characteristic of the eighteenth century, that all its writers began to work for a very different public from that of their predecessors. They attempted to make easy, pleasant, and accessible, all that had been previously regarded as serious, difficult, and unattainable; without learned instruction they sported with philosophy, poetry, and history, and the writers of this period gained in grace and the powers of entertainment what they lost in seriousness and depth.

For the illustration of this point we return to Locke; because the system of observation, reflection, and experience which, at the end of the seventeenth century, he set forth in opposition to the pedantic system of the universities, to the visionary and poetical teaching of a Pascal, a Mallebranche (of a perception in God), and to the pantheism of a Spinoza, paved the way for a Bolingbroke and a Shaftesbury. We shall not inquire, in how far Locke drew his materials from Hobbes, but only show in what manner, without knowing or wishing it, he shook the established system to its foundations. Locke himself, like the first commentators on religion in Germany in the eighteenth century, did not entertain the slightest thought of working a revolution; but his very first scholars, as we shall hereafter remark, entered upon the way which Voltaire also took.

What however Locke himself did not perceive, by no means escaped the well-armed—but alas! contemptible—defenders of the orthodoxy of the Anglican church, and of the benefices therewith connected. Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, who held a number of other rich benefices together with his bishopric, scented the tendency of Locke's philosophy, just as correctly as the watchman of Lutheran orthodoxy, Melchior Götze, Pastor in Hamburg, discovered the dangerous views of

our renowned Lessing, from the mere advertisement of the so called ‘Wolfenbuttel Fragments.’ Stillingfleet, properly speaking, only contended against a scholar and friend of the philosopher, the Deist Toland; but he took advantage of the opportunity to attack Locke also, concluding with justice, that the whole system of dogmatics which had sprung from the school of the Aristotelian and scholastic Christian divines, must fall together with the metaphysics of Aristotle himself. The Trinity, which the Bishop of Worcester recognises as the foundation of his Anglican scholastic Christianity, must stand or fall together with the play upon the notion expressed by the word substance, which had been invented by the dogmatic Aristotelian school of Byzantium. The bishop therefore buckles on his armour, and takes the field on behalf of the notion substance, and in the truest sense, fights *pro aris et focis*.

The contest which Locke had to carry on with the learned and well-read bishop, with respect to the greater or less danger with which Christianity was threatened by the new philosophy, became more vehement, especially because Locke neither wished to be reckoned among the opponents of Christianity, nor to be mixed up with those who were dissatisfied with the established church. As we have only to relate facts, it is sufficient to show that such a contest really took place, to state that Locke’s answer to the bishop’s imputations occupies as great a space in his works, as his ‘*Essay on the Human Understanding*,’ itself.* This notice may suffice, in reference to the relation of the new philosophy to the prevailing doctrines of the church.

Locke had no occasion to conceal his opinions with respect to civil constitutions, as he had in relation to Theology. He might boldly and safely affirm in England, that he was opposed to the system prevailing on the Continent. Thereby he secured the friendship of the ministers, to whom an attack upon a church which was so serviceable to them, would have made him an object of hatred. Locke therefore wrote a treatise upon civil government, in opposition to the theological political principles of Filmer. In this treatise he defended the original freedom of man, and maintained, that the union of men in civil societies, and consequently that all government, had its origin in a compact, in opposition to Filmer, and those who were like-minded, who maintained that all government had its foundation in pa-

* Locke’s Works, London, 1714, 3 v. 4to., *Human Understanding*, 1-342. *Controversy with the Bishop*, 343-576.

triarchal power, that consequently absolute monarchy is divine, and no man born free. The whole of the first part of Locke's small book is taken up with the refutation of those theological proofs or alleged proofs, which deduced the sovereign power of princes from the monarchical power of Adam.

However ridiculous this derivation of monarchical power from Adam may appear to us, it had nevertheless, even in England in the beginning of the last century, such an apparent importance, as to lead a man of Locke's eminence to come forward in opposition to Filmer. As to the second part, to which he gave the title of 'Civil Government,' we can only so far allude to it, as it falls within the scope of our plan. It is important as showing that the originator of the new philosophy, which demanded toleration, and subjected faith to rational conviction, was the first also to publish a theory of civil government which was not founded upon divine right, but upon human compact.

Toleration of differences in religious opinions, was a thing nowhere thought of in the beginning of the last century, except in Turkey and in Holland; and no man, who did not wish to be accused as an Indifferentist or Latitudinarian, durst raise his voice in its behalf: with respect to this principle, Locke took the foreway of Voltaire and Montesquieu, who afterwards wrote with so much zeal in favour of universal toleration. In his treatise upon toleration, Locke claims full liberty of thought and of opinion for every man*—he desires that the Jew, heathen, and Mahometan should stand upon a precisely equal footing with their Christian fellow-subjects in every thing which concerns civil rights†, a principle which, even in our day, still meets with great opposition in various quarters.

Locke's view of Christianity and of its reasonableness was first adopted by the German theologians; in his time, the one party reproached him with being too much attached to the old forms of belief, whilst the other calumniated him, as if he were altogether an enemy to Christianity. Locke drew his proofs in favour of Christianity as a divine revelation, from the nature and effects of its teaching, and rejected the proof which rests upon

* "Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, is the thing that we stand in need of. Now, though this has indeed been much talked of, I doubt it has not been much understood, I am sure not at all practised, either by our governors towards the people in general, or by any dissenting parties of the people towards one another."—*Toleration*, p. 249.

† "I would not have so much as a pagan, Jew, or Mahometan excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion."—*Locke's Works*, vol. ii. p. 259.

miracles and supernatural operations, because he regarded it as unnecessary, and as an historical proof liable to attack on historical and critical grounds. This supposition of Locke's was as much opposed to the views of his disciples, the so-called Deists, as to those of Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke and the philosophers of the school of Voltaire. Locke besides carefully drew a distinction between the Evangelists and the letters of the Apostles, and again between the history of their actions, and what was properly only a legend of their miracles. He distinguishes even between those doctrines in the Apostolic Epistles, which were only calculated for the moment and for the particular circumstances of the persons addressed, and those universal and eternal truths, which were veiled to a generation whose eyes were blinded by the dross of Judaism*. These assertions immediately gave rise to a great outcry against him. What would have been the consequence had he gone further?

We believe that it will be sufficiently evident from these few words of introduction to the history of all the following attacks which were made at this time by the wits of the age, by all persons of talent and knowledge, upon a system which had outlived itself, and which was altogether unsuited to the new condition and relations of society, that Locke, with all his discretion, opened up and led the way; we shall merely add, that he insisted earnestly upon a reformation in education and the means of instruction. In this respect also he showed himself prudent and anxious, and may be said rather to have collected the materials and sharpened the weapons for the struggle against all that which, in the course of time, had become either useless or hurtful in monarchical and hierarchical government, than himself to have entered upon the contest. Locke's immediate followers and scholars, Shaftesbury and still more the numerous deists, who were reproachfully called atheists, wielded the weapons which he had forged, against the system upon which the European states of the middle ages were built, as upon a rock.

* "And as for the General Epistles, they, we may see, regard the state and exigencies and some peculiarities of those times. These holy writers, inspired from above, wrote nothing but truth; but yet every sentence of theirs must not be taken up and looked on as a fundamental article necessary to salvation, without an explicit belief whereof, nobody could be a member of Christ's Church here, or be admitted into his eternal kingdom hereafter. If all or most of the truths declared in the Epistles, were to be received and believed as fundamental articles, what then becomes of those Christians who were fallen asleep? (as St. Paul witnesses, in his 'First Epistle to the Corinthians,' many were.)"—*Reasonableness of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 519.

§ II.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN RELIGION.—
 OPPONENTS AND SCOFFERS OF THE PREVAILING DOC-
 TRINES.—SHAFTESBURY AND SOME OF THE DEISTS.

Locke's follower and disciple, Shaftesbury, so much the more deserves to be first mentioned among the creators of a new literature, which was altogether opposed to that which was existing and had prevailed, because his manner and style were calculated to induce the higher classes, who shrink from every thing requiring effort, and who do not bring much knowledge to the work, to read his writings. In these respects he was superior to Bolingbroke, who, however, was much wittier and more splendid than he. He guards himself carefully from exhausting his subject or going too deep for his readers; and he became therefore immediately the favourite writer of the fashionable world*.

Shaftesbury deserves here also to be first named; because he was in some measure, and against his will, drawn forth as a free-thinking writer, in the very beginning of the eighteenth century. He was first educated by his grandfather, who has gained a name in history on account of his prudence, and a bad renown for the way in which he proved and exercised it; he was afterwards trained by Locke according to a new method, or in other words, like Voltaire, he had gained an earlier acquaintance with the world so-called, than with science; like Montaigne, he had learned the ancient languages by the easy and superficial method of practice, and was therefore, by his intercourse, education, and improvement of mind altogether free from the prejudices of his age, and found nobody in England who satisfied him as an instructor. He sought out Bayle, Le Clerc and others in the Low Countries, maintained his connexion with them during his life, and turned from Locke's doctrine of virtue and reason to the scoffing and ridicule of Bayle. He was confessedly much less anxious for truth than the applause of the world. He had been drawn forth, as we have remarked, by Toland, who published his treatise upon 'Virtue and Merit,' and by numerous interpolated sentences made it approximate closely to his own

* See Schlosser and Bercht's 'Archiv. für Geschichte und Literatur, 2 Band,' 7—52. p. 22, of Shaftesbury.

system. This occurred at the close of the seventeenth century ; and at the beginning of the eighteenth, Shaftesbury thought himself called upon to publish an improved and purified edition of his work.

Whoever has read this single treatise of Shaftesbury, will acknowledge that Voltaire was altogether right when, with bitter irony, he called him even a too vehement opponent of Christianity. It was he, who long before Voltaire, showed the higher circles the way to elude the morality and religion of the lower. In this treatise he attacked the fanaticism and intolerance of his time, spoke with bitterness and scorn against the assertions of the Old Testament and the orthodox church, that God could command or forbid anything else than what seemed right and good, or evil and wrong, to an unprepossessed human being left to the free exercise of his understanding. Man, so unbiassed, neither led astray by prejudices, by fanaticism, nor system, with his understanding directed to the discovery of what is profitable and pleasant, is according to his view the only infallible guide, and by the manner in which he speaks of superstition and atheism and their effects he shows, that he feared little from a deficiency in religion, but from its abuse every thing. He says expressly, "Whoever thinks there is a God, and pretends formally to believe that he is just and good, must suppose, that there is such a thing as justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, according to which he pronounces that God is just, righteous, and true." This is afterwards supported by a facility of speech, which is never offensive, with that refinement and art, which is to be learned only in the world, in which Shaftesbury, like Voltaire, shone by his talents and his tone ; without attracting attention, he then places all positive religion far behind natural morality. By a very clever turn of discourse, the belief in God, as the supreme judge and as the rewarder of all those who have fulfilled certain religious duties, is placed in deep shade, in comparison with Shaftesbury's notions of virtue.

Shaftesbury ironically says the same thing, which strict moralists, and among them Kant, have said in earnest, viz., that a belief in God which originates in hope or fear, robs virtue of all its merit, because man in this case renders merely an interested service*. Moreover, Shaftesbury, in other passages of the

* L. c. pp. 46, 47.

new edition of his improved and enlarged treatise, attacks all positive religions, and especially the Mosaic and the Christian more vehemently than any of the other Deists, although he neither mentions expressly the Old Testament nor the Christian religion. He uses these words:—

“ But if, by insensible degrees as a man proceeds in his religious faith and devout exercise, he comes to be more and more reconciled to the malignity, arbitrariness, partiality or revengefulness of his believed deity, his reconciliation with those qualities themselves will soon grow in proportion; and the most cruel, unjust, and barbarous acts, will by the power of this example be often considered by him, not only as just and lawful, but as divine and worthy of imitation.”

This is afterwards applied to the principle of all positive religions, and especially to the doctrine of atonement, which is readily suggested without being named, as appears from the following passage:—

“ If the mere voice, decree, or law of God be said absolutely to constitute right and wrong, then are these latter words of no significancy at all. For thus, if each part of a contradiction were affirmed for truth by the Supreme Power, they would consequently become true. Thus, if one person were decreed to suffer for another’s guilt, the sentence would be just and equitable; and thus, in the same manner, if arbitrarily and without reason, some beings were sentenced to endure perpetual ill, and others as constantly to enjoy good, this also would pass under the same denomination. But to say of anything that it is just or unjust on such a foundation, is to say nothing, or to speak without a meaning. And thus it appears that where a real devotion and hearty worship is paid to a Supreme Being, who, in his history or character is represented otherwise than as really and truly just and good, there must ensue a loss of rectitude, a disturbance of thought and a corruption of tempers and manner in the believer. His honesty will, of necessity, be supplanted by his zeal, whilst he is thus unnaturally influenced and rendered thus immorally devout.”—*Characteristics*, vol. xii. book 2. pp. 39, 40.

In other passages, indeed, he lays great stress upon, and attaches a high value to religion and to what he calls piety; but this is done in such a way as plainly to show that he means clearly to distinguish what he calls religion from the prevailing religion of the state.

The effort to establish a certain kind of morality, of which religion has no need, and which was indeed anterior to it, is perfectly in unison with this mode of attacking the established faith. And this, indeed, he does not expressly assert, but allows to be inferred in the 'Moralist,' a work which was brought before the public in the ninth year of the eighteenth century. In this book, which he calls a rhapsody, he has introduced an absolute sceptic and a defender of reason and its use, speaking, after the manner of Cicero, but rather more in the tone of conversation, about moral order and the existence of a God. Here every thing which, since the time of Aristotle, had been assumed as proved, and all the notions which were applied to life, morality, and religion, are subjected to the criticism of an understanding educated and trained without traditionary learning. The view appears to be, to prove to the great public of educated persons, that their natural understanding had no reason to shrink back before the learning of the schools, or before their systematic creeds and metaphysics. The form of dialogue here chosen, affords the cunning English peer, who did not wish to incur the displeasure of the bishops and of the rigid believing and dull-minded Anglicans, an opportunity of declaring himself in much stronger terms against the prevailing notions than it was possible for him to do in the treatise first published by Toland. In reference to the irony which he thinks it necessary to adopt, one of the persons who is introduced as speaking, says expressly: "You know the common fate of those who dare to appear fair authors; what was that pious and learned man's case, who wrote the 'Intellectual System of the Universe'? I confess it was pleasant enough to consider, that though the whole world were no less satisfied with his capacity and learning than with his sincerity in the cause of Deity, yet was he accused of giving the upper hand to the atheists, for having only stated their reasons and those of their adversaries fairly together."—*Moralist*, part ii. sect. 3. In what follows it is shown in the shrewdest and most scoffing manner, that the defenders have made their task a very easy one, by assuming what ought first to have been proved, and that they injure their own cause by so strongly deprecating the blessings of this life in order to exalt those of a life to come, and denying the existence of all happiness and order here with a view to seek them in a hereafter.

It will be seen from this passage that Shaftesbury laughs to scorn the teaching of all churches, pulpits, and chairs, according to which this earth is a vale of tears, and heaven alone the home of men. Thus he makes another of the persons of his dialogue, in another passage, speak out with still more distinctness and severity:—

“A Providence must be proved from what we see of order in things present; we must contend for order, and in this part chiefly where virtue is concerned. All must not be referred to a hereafter; for a disordered state, on which all present care of things is given up, vice uncontrolled, and virtue neglected, represents a very chaos, and reduces it to the beloved atoms, chance, and confusion of the atheists. What, therefore, can be worse done in the cause of a deity than to magnify disorder, and exaggerate, as some zealous people do, the misfortunes of virtue, so far as to render it an unhappy choice with respect to this world? They err widely, who propose to turn men to the thoughts of a better world by making them think so ill of this. For to declaim in this manner against virtue to those of a looser faith, will make them less believe a Deity, but not the more a future state.”—*Moralist*, part ii. sect. 3.

In a subsequent passage, but always indeed in a covert manner, and under the appearance of a dialogue between two friends who defend opposite systems, he ridicules the method of the theologians who rail against nature and its arrangements, against passions, inclinations, and impulses, upon the very ground that they show themselves forgetful of the fact, that the Godhead is responsible for nature and its properties. The pious reflections of Locke and the natural theologians upon the wisdom and goodness revealed in the phænomena of the world, are here treated with scepticism and scoffing. Shaftesbury does not, indeed, enter upon the discussion of natural theology itself—he has only to do with men, and leads into a labyrinth of doubts, without allowing a malicious, a scornful, or a frivolous word to escape from him; Diderot and Leibnitz have, therefore, both availed themselves of Shaftesbury. The German philosopher profited by his sentimental pictures of virtue, which, as we shall hereafter see, Mandeville ridiculed; the French one confined himself to his warfare against the doctrines of the church. This controversy is found in the fifth part of the ‘*Moralist*,’ where

Shaftesbury ingeniously contends against miracles and supernatural appearances—against a revelation founded upon signs and wonders, or what he calls the atheism of superstition.

Shaftesbury, like the Frenchman who followed in his footsteps, opposes the unbiassed and bold judgment of the men of the world to the speculation of the deep-searching schools and privileged churches of his age; he does this, however, like Bayle, in a form which conceals contempt under the appearance of esteem for the only true religion. He alleges, for example, with contempt and scorn, that the teacher of a revelation may be in a certain sense right and true; but nevertheless in reference to a faith which he regards as good and salutary, he may be placed in circumstances which induce him to sanction all sorts of pious frauds, and he adds:—"And so very natural do I take this to be, that in all religions, except the true, I look upon the greatest zeal to be accompanied with the strongest inclination to deceive; for, the design and end being the truth, it is not customary to hesitate or be scrupulous about the use of the means."—*Moralist*, part ii. sect. 5.

In a subsequent passage in the same work he cleverly and ingeniously refutes, or rather ridicules, and as it appears altogether to the advantage of religion itself, the proofs in favour of miracles, the theory on which they rest, and the doctrine of spirits, angels and devils, with which they are connected. Shaftesbury shows that this whole theory of spirits and miracles leads as necessarily to the doctrine of Epicurus, as that of eternal and immutable order leads to God. "How singular," he exclaims, "that the defenders of miracles, who quarrel with and abuse one another, wish to teach us, that harmony, order, and union, have led to atheism, that disorder, confusion, and interferences with the operations of nature lead to the conviction of the existence of a God!"

The last division of his book contains the well known poetical Theodike, "O mighty Nature! wise substitute of Providence! empowered greatness! O thou empowering Deity, supreme Creator*," which so much delighted Leibnitz and provoked Mandeville. In the first part, the easy and obvious notion of sound reason is substituted for all the old metaphysical notions of mode and substance, of thought and intelligence, and the old cosmology and morals appear in the obscure distance like the ruins of

* 'Moralist,' part iii.

abstruse vagaries when placed in juxtaposition with the bright and new buildings of Shaftesbury. In the same manner, the notions of beauty, of enjoyment, of good, lose the form which had been given them in the middle ages, and appear in a dress altogether new. All this was recommended to persons of rank, and to the circles in which, at the same time, Shaftesbury shone as a brilliant star, by means of pleasantness of form, of ingenious clothing, and of wit which was borrowed from his French models. Can it be any matter of surprise that the earnestness and rigidity of the schools became ridiculous?

As to facility and agreeableness of form, Shaftesbury wrote a book especially to show the superiority of the lively manner in which French writers treated grave and important things, over that of the dulness of his countrymen. Shaftesbury, like the French writers, addressed himself to the good society of great cities, who alone by their connexions and by their lively intercourse with one another, could become masters of the jests and wit, by means of which Voltaire and Bolingbroke gained their reputation; he calls upon the fashionable and the rich to pass judgment upon the most important concerns of mankind, which, as everybody knows, in the ever-moving circles of the great world, must always give way to the concerns and frivolities of the day. The very title of this book bespeaks its object*. What Shaftesbury brought forward must necessarily have paved the way for a Bolingbroke, a Montesquieu and a Voltaire. How much the new ton of good society was hostile to the hierarchy, to despotism and fanaticism, how powerfully the fashion of bold scepticism, like all other fashions, ruled, will become obvious from the enumeration of the celebrated so-called deists, whom we shall for this reason expressly introduce.

Before we pass on to the deists, we shall still make one remark, namely that Shaftesbury preferred the so-called French literature to the English. According to his letters, Shakespeare and Milton are antiquated; and they, and all who have imitated their vigour, are not upon a level with the polished, easy, and new world, which he has in his eye. This is abundantly proved in his letters, and we only mention it because Addison, Steele, Prior, Pope, Thomson, Swift and others followed his example, and formed a poetry from poetical reminiscences, and a prose

* *Sensus Communis*, an 'Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour in a Letter to a Friend.' Basl. Ed. vol. i. p. 49.

from humourous incidents and polished speech which could dispense with the creative power of genius. The rapid extension of the notions which originated in this time will be readily understood, when it is seen in what charming clothing they are presented in the writings of Shaftesbury, with what delicacy and foresight he guards himself against every prejudice by offering no rude violence to any prevailing opinion. Leibnitz was deceived, he perceived in Shaftesbury's animated tirades his own views of the best part of the world. The good Bishop Hurd was beside himself when he read Shaftesbury's praises of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator in the arrangement and order of the world. Voltaire alone, who in such things was particularly keen-sighted, discovered in Shaftesbury the fatalism and underhand dealing of a cautious pantheist.

In order to show how widely diffused the philosophy of a Bayle and a Shaftesbury was, and how hollow the ground on which the hierarchical and monarchical system of the European states rested, we shall proceed to enumerate the best known of the so-called deists, confining ourselves, however, to the names of those men of whose services the French philosophers of the eighteenth century have especially availed themselves. If we bestow only the most hasty glance on the writings of the men whose names we are about to mention, it is because, as writers, they are in general insignificant, and theology and its history do not fall within the scope of our plan.

Here we first meet again with Toland, who, in the end of the preceding century, had already begun to direct his rude and open attacks against the existing established opinions, which indeed had become antiquated, somewhat in the manner of Shaftesbury, but in a comparatively plebeian style. A nearer consideration of Toland is not here needful; our readers will find an account of him and his writings in 'Mosheim's Dissertation' on the subject, and in the celebrated *Des Maizeaux*, who published his posthumous works. We avail ourselves, however, of the opportunity suggested by Toland's name to remark, that, in the beginning of the century, French and English scoffers, if they were recommended as men of talents, were endured at German courts, whilst the timid and modest German philosophers, such as Wolf for example, were persecuted as heretics. The wife of Frederic the Great of Prussia, that Hanoverian princess who is so well known by her correspondence

with Leibnitz and Bayle, and who made pretensions to philosophy and to learned and clever French conversation, gave a favourable hearing to sceptics in the midst of the pietists of that age, and accepted with pleasure the dedication of Toland's chief work*, against Christianity and morality. In the title of his letters, which appeared in 1704, the queen of Prussia is mentioned under the title of *Serena*. In these letters the author, who had evidently read much more than he had thought, brings before the public a bold infidelity. He teaches a kind of Spinosism of his own invention, ascribes motion to matter as an inherent property, and derives thinking from motion. He denies the immortality of the soul, calls faith in a continued state of existence after death an Egyptian invention, and established religions in general mere contrivances of law-makers, to keep down the people. It has been indeed alleged that these letters never reached the clever queen, but we learn from Toland's account of his journey to Berlin, and from the panegyric, which in this book he addresses to her, that he had been admitted to her society, and that she had invited him to Charlottenburg, in order to discuss the subject in her presence. Toland was by no means indeed equal to the learned Beausobre, whom she appointed as his opponent, and the Frenchman also was naturally a much more complete master of his own language, than the Englishman who had acquired it; it is clear, however, from Toland's travels, which appeared in German, in 1707, that he was delighted that his somewhat audacious infidelity and republicanism were so favourably received and listened to in a country under such strict military and theological government as Prussia. He still calls the queen a republican in a monarchical state.

Toland's '*Abäsidæmon*,' and his '*Nazareus*,' a gentile, Jewish, Mahometan Christianity, show, by the very title, that they are directed against all professed revelations; his '*Tetradynamus*' attacks all rituals and liturgies. In the book last-named, the Anglican church in particular is attacked, but often rudely and unskilfully, and with contemptible wit.

His '*Pantheisticon*' is directed against every kind of religion which teaches belief in a personal God, and in this treatise he announces that the number of the confessors of pantheism was uncommonly great. This book appeared in 1720. Toland has

* '*Christianity not mysterious.*' London, 8vo., 1702.

without doubt greatly exaggerated the number of pantheists in the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Lalande the astronomer exaggerated the number of atheists at its close; it is remarkable, however, that in those apparently believing and pious times, the great circulation and numerous editions of his very mediocre writings appear to confirm his assertion. Although however, he preached republicanism and pantheism with so much boldness, he did not go by any means so far as Lalande, nor publish a list of his pantheists by name, as the latter did of his atheists, in which he introduced the names of persons without first asking their permission.

In his work, Toland proposes to establish a pantheistic congregation, or a formal society to oppose superstition, that is, religion of every kind, and recommends to his society, that instead of plaguing themselves about things wholly destitute of reality, they should strive after the real blessings of life, health, truth, and freedom. This ill-arranged and ill-written book, in which Toland badly defends his own principles, found notwithstanding numerous readers; and the fact seems to confirm the allegation, that the number of opponents of the prevailing belief was by no means insignificant. These unbelievers eagerly sought after every book which ventured to speak out their own concealed opinions. And on this ground alone can the fact be explained, that Toland's posthumous works, published in 1726, went off with such rapidity, that a new and large edition was called for and published in 1747.

Toland's* attacks upon the prevailing belief were too coarse

* Toland was born in Ireland, studied in Glasgow, graduated in Edinburgh, and afterwards studied in Leyden.

The spirit of the times with respect to persecutions for matters of opinion, may be learned from an appeal made against Toland, by Brown, a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, in which he urged upon the authorities the necessity of vindicating Christianity, by inflicting severe penalties upon Toland. The writer entreats the tender mercies of the magistrate, in these words:—"Domine judex, rogamus vos cum omni affectu quo possimus, ut amore Dei, pietatis et misericordie intuitu, et nostrorum interventu precacionum, miserrimo huic nullum mortis vel mutilationis periculum inferatis."

His works were finally brought under the notice of the Irish Parliament, and considered in the Committee of Religion. After various debates, and a peremptory refusal to allow Toland to defend himself, either personally or by letter, the House resolved—"That the Book entitled 'Christianity not mysterious,' containing several heretical doctrines contrary to the Christian religion and the established Church of Ireland, be publicly burnt by the hands of the common hangman. Likewise, that the author thereof, John Toland, be taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, and be prosecuted by the Attorney-General, for writing and publishing the said book.—(Trans.)

and violent to be willingly sanctioned or favoured by those who did not wish to renounce religion of every kind (such as Holbach, Diderot, and their friends). Collins, on the other hand, entered upon his course with greater modesty, and his writings proved much more serviceable to the French Encyclopedists, especially to Diderot and Holbach, than the superficial labours of Toland.

Collins, like Shaftesbury, stood in close connexion with Locke, and like Shaftesbury also, studied under his direction. He received from his instructor the most honourable testimonial of his approbation, viz., that he had a love for the highest human perfections, and a pure and an upright attachment to truth. For this very reason it was impossible that Collins could be altogether satisfied with Locke, who thought, or professed to think, that Christian piety and empiric philosophy might be very well united in one and the same system. Collins declared himself freely and openly against dogmatics, however far he kept himself from the insolence and boldness of Toland.

After he had altogether broken off from the Christian faith, he sought carefully to avoid every offence against what was becoming. It was only his feeling of indignation against those narrow-minded men, who, without any reference to the new way which Spinoza, Locke, Bayle and Shaftesbury, had opened up, continued to write and to preach, as if they still lived in the middle ages, which induced him formally to attack Christianity. Collins's attack proved to be especially injurious to the prevailing system, because the French availed themselves of his learning, solidity, and philosophical acuteness, in order to promote and advance their views.

The controversy which led Collins so far, as to write a challenge to the theologians and the philosophers of the universities and governments of his time, best shows to what a degree the learned of that period, supported by technical knowledge and subtilty, ventured to sin against that sound human reason, which was paving a way for itself with such power. They had controversies in England, for example, about the nature of the soul; Dodwell, well-known as one of the most learned men of his age, and especially as deeply read in the Christian Fathers, considered, as those people are accustomed to do, the soul as a pure ætherial being (and therefore still corporeal), and was reduced to the greatest difficulty as to the man-

ner of rescuing its immortality. He hit upon the singular supposition, that the Holy Spirit, in baptism, conveys the principle of immortality into the ætherial bodily material of his souls*. Another deeply-learned divine, Samuel Clarke, opposed a formal mathematical demonstration to this palpable theological nonsense. The theological mathematician proceeded from step to step, and proposition to proposition, and in this way demonstrated the ancient metaphysics, as if the question had pertained to a principle in mathematics, natural philosophy, or astronomy. This led Collins to stand up against both; and the theologians, by their vehement hostility against his writings and his person, constrained him to throw away the scabbard of the sword which he had once drawn.

Collins first stood forward, and that with caution and modesty, against the abuses of the prevailing and traditionary metaphysics, and of the ecclesiastical belief connected with it; but he was notwithstanding abused, accused of heresy, persecuted and finally obliged, for a time, to take refuge in Holland, in order to avoid the orthodox storm; and it will be easily seen why, in such circumstances, his ‘Discourse upon Freethinking’ should be written in a very different fashion from Locke’s, who had written upon ‘Toleration,’ in the quiet enjoyment of English endowments.

We can neither here enter upon theological nor philosophical investigations, as it would be necessary to do if we wished more closely to examine the writings of Collins. It must suffice to indicate the relation in which some of them stood to the writings of their time, and to the later attacks of the French upon Christianity. We remark therefore, that his philosophical investigations upon freethinking were controverted by the well-armed theological-philosophical-mathematical pugilist Clarke†, who had vehement controversies with Leibnitz, with Dodwell, with Whiston and others, in favour of his fine-spun speculative spider’s web; that his ‘Critical Examination of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church,’ embittered the theologians; and that

* ‘An Epistolary Discourse, proving from the Scriptures and the first Fathers, that the Soul is a principle naturally mortal; but immortalized actually by the Pleasure of God to Punishment or Reward by its Union with the divine baptismal Spirit, wherein is proved that none have the Power of communicating this Spirit since the Apostles, but only the Bishops.’ Lond. 1706.—(Trans.)

† ‘A letter to Mr. Dodwell, wherein all the Arguments in his Epistolary Discourse against the Immortality of the Soul, are particularly answered, and the Judgment of the Fathers concerning that matter truly represented.’—(Trans.)

his treatise upon 'The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion,' incensed the pious against him. These treatises were the armouries from which the French of the eighteenth century borrowed the weapons which they themselves were unable to forge.

The writings of Collins were of remarkable service to the school of Encyclopedists and to the society which met at Paris in the house of Holbach, to impugn Christianity. This is obvious from the fact, that Holbach and Diderot, at the very time of their highest renown, either translated or worked after Collins. The four or five treatises which Collins had directed against the prevailing and traditionary morality, as well as against the established faith, are for the most part solid and quiet, free from all indecent scorn, and drawn up without blustering or abuse.

One of Collins's treatises (his paradoxes about the principle of human actions), 'A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty,' was therefore translated word for word by Diderot, and incorporated as a formal article in his large Encyclopedia.

Before Collins and contemporaneously with Toland, Tindal had appeared. His style was quite after the fashion and manner of the French scoffers, and in his morals and the laxity of his moral principles, he may also be compared to the dissolute Parisians who preached immorality. This fact injured Tindal and his views with the middle classes in England, whilst it proved an advantage to him among the higher, with whom at that time levity was the fashion. Tindal moreover attacked the prevailing system in such a manner, that Middleton and others, who were no blind adherents of the Established Religion, thought they did the defenders of antiquated dogmatics a service, by recommending them to give up and let go what was untenable, in order to save what was real and sound. This counsel was disregarded, and those who disregarded it were not wrong in concluding, that the whole system of the Byzantine and scholastic theology and metaphysics was so closely connected, that it was impossible to relinquish or remove any of its single parts without endangering the whole.

Tindal wrote his book* against the constitution of the Church,

* 'The Rights of the Christian Church asserted against the Romish and all other Priests who claim an Independent Power over it; with a Preface concerning the Government of the Church of England.' 1706.—(Trans.)

as early as 1706, and therein chiefly relied upon Louis Meyer, a disciple of Spinoza; but because he had here to do with the influence, property and power of the clergy, which the Whigs in England, who are always speaking of freedom, had no wish to relinquish, the second part of his treatise, entitled 'False Churches,' did not appear in England, but was printed in Holland. This work is apparently directed only against the Romish hierarchy; but Tindal availed himself of this as a pretence, in order to attack every ecclesiastical constitution, which is in any way connected with the state, and stands in need of worldly possessions. The English, and especially all those who were connected with the Established Religion or had any interest in benefices or their patrons, and among these the otherwise freethinking writers, Swift and Pope, took up arms against the book and its author, whilst the freethinking portion of the public loaded him with applause. Le Clerc did not hesitate earnestly to recommend the persecuted treatise of the Englishman in his widely read journals, which were written in French, although appearing in Holland*.

Four-and-twenty years after this work there appeared another, which afterwards became the hand-book of all those who wished to impugn Christianity without losing sight of what was due to propriety. This work which appeared in 4to. in 1739, was entitled 'Christianity as old as the Creation.' In this treatise Tindal's object is to show the impossibility of that kind of revelation which Christian dogmatics teach, and to prove the absurdity of a belief in miracles. He endeavours, on the contrary, to show that Christianity is nothing else than the rational religion of the primitive world, purified from the additions and dross of Judaism. The irrational defenders of the fables and legends which had been received into the religious books of the Jews and the Christians, of the histories of the Old Testament which are so frequently stumbling-blocks, and against which at that time Voltaire and other Frenchmen had directed the bitterest scorn, contributed in no small degree to bring Tindal's book into the hands of commentators.

* Collins's 'Essays concerning the Use of Reason.' 1707.

'Priestcraft in Perfection, or a Detection of the Fraud of inserting and continuing that Clause (the Church hath Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Controversies on Matters of Faith) in the Twentieth Article of the Articles of the Church of England.' 1709.

'Historical and Critical Essay on the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England.' 1724.—(Trans.)

How untenable the whole system which Tindal attacked at that time was, appears particularly in the controversy to which this work, 'Christianity as old as the Creation,' led, between two distinguished Anglican scholars and divines, upon the manner in which such attacks might be best guarded off, and the unsound fabric be sustained by being propped up with sound wood. The one, Waterland, betook himself to the strife in a Jesuitical manner. He wished to defend the Anglican system through and through, as the Jesuits did that of Popery. He contends for the literal truth of the whole Mosaic history of the fall of man, and of the transactions connected with it, which dogmatics have attributed to the devil—and defends the confusion of tongues at the building of the tower of Babel, and other similar things, against all doubters, with the usual dogmatism and nicknames. Middleton doubted about all these things: he had recourse to allegories, or, to use an expression of our times, to the symbolical, and wished to leave the devil altogether out of the question, because such an instrumentality may be very dangerous. In this way Middleton* thought of rescuing Christianity as a revelation, although he gave up the verbal inspiration of the books of Moses, which had been previously set forth as the absolute dictation of the Holy Spirit. The loud outcry which was raised against this learned and vigorous divine, terrified others from venturing to follow his example; and reasonable men were left no other choice, than either to do homage to the blind faith of the Established Church,—so productive in places, benefices and honours conferred by the government,—or to the scoffing and scornful infidelity of the continually increasing number of enemies of every thing traditionary. On this occasion also we may remark, that the Protestant fanatics showed that they yielded in no respect to the violence of those of the Romish Church. It was announced on the titlepage of those numerous writings which appeared during this controversy in England, that Middleton's writings against the watchmen of the faith—Waterland and Pearce, as well as even those against the heretic Tindal, deserved to be publicly burned, and he himself to be banished from the country.

A writer now appeared, more modest than Toland, Tindal, or

* A Letter to Dr. Waterland, containing some remarks on his vindication of Scripture, in answer to a book entitled, 'Christianity as old as the Creation,' with the sketch of a plan of another answer to the said book, 8vo., 1730.—(Trans.)

Collins. Wollaston came forward in favour of the improvement of the religion of the people, and of its learned exposition, in a manner suited to the progressive education of the age, and his work excited the greater attraction in proportion to the peacefulness and morality of his life, the well-weighed propositions of his system, and the modesty with which he brought it before the public. Wollaston, in his ‘Religion of Nature Delineated,’ is so little an opponent of positive religion, that although he altogether avoids the mention of Revelation and of Christianity in his book, he nevertheless says :—

“I have brought forward nothing in this my delineation of natural religion, at all contrary to revelation of any kind. Every thing which is said to be an immediate revelation from God, must be taken, like all other things, for what it is said to be. This can only be done by treating it with respect. The principles which are contained in my book are therefore in no respect positively opposed to Revelation. They rather pave the way for it, and make men disposed to receive its doctrines.”

All this, however, was of no avail ; it was enough that he was praised by able writers, and by the people of the world, who were discontented with what was old, to set in motion against him the learned and the parsons, the systematic university lecturers, and the government police ; the only effect of this indeed was, that the cause which was thus maintained by force, appeared only so much the worse in the eyes of that small portion of the public, which were thus opposed by the ignorant multitude and the public authorities.

Wollaston endeavoured to found a system of pure rational religion, which had need of no revelation and no forgiveness of sins, by means of a mathematical demonstration which he supported by learning, and used with ability and taste. This indeed he does not expressly admit, but it results from the connexion and consequence of his doctrine. His religion rests upon three notions ; Happiness, Truth, Reason—and his definition of it runs thus :—“The pursuit of happiness by the practice of reason and truth.”—Such a religion as this, which he proves in mathematical form and at the same time by a passage from the Christian Father Lactantius*, cannot only not be learned—or not be believed upon the authority of another, but

* *Religio cogi non potest ; verbis potius quam verberibus res agenda est, ut sit voluntas.*—Lact.—(Trans.)

the teacher himself must necessarily be followed, and his principles made a subject of reflection.

In the same way as Leibnitz and Wolf sought to prove in a strict mathematical manner the necessity of a revelation, Wollaston sought to prove that religion is wholly independent of faith; or in other words, as the school of Leibnitz subjects reason to faith, Wollaston, by the very same method, proves the reverse. He relies so confidently on reason, and so highly estimates the intrinsic worth of virtue, that although a man of a truly pious heart, whose life was pure and distinguished by the practice of every virtue, who lived without ostentation or luxury in the midst of abundance, beyond the reach of all unholy worldly impulses and passions, in the exercise and practice of all the duties of humanity, and devoted himself to reflection and study, yet at the end of his book he never once mentions a last judgment, or a future state of punishment or reward.

We readily perceive that a representation of deism and of the moral arrangements of the world here below, which first of all can dispense with a world above, contains a strain of bitter irony, which just as little slipped unconsciously out from the author, who by no means wished to break immediately with the Anglican church, as it escaped the notice of the champions of the churches and universities of his country. He first published only an outline of his work, in a very small number of copies: all the friends of the dawning light, and all the enemies of the prevailing darkness, encouraged him shortly before his death to prepare a new and enlarged edition; of this edition 20,000 copies were printed; six others succeeded, from 1724 to 1738; and a seventh, in 1750. The orthodox bewailed the growing numbers of unbelievers; but they never thought in consequence of attempting to bring their own system nearer to the demands and wants of the age, of which there was such abundant evidence.

The French used Wollaston as well as Collins, to promote their reforming plans; the French translation, however, of 1726 is bad, and altogether incorrect. Those who in 1756 prepared a new translation, at the time in which infidelity and scoffing were the fashion in Paris, took the liberty of committing the grossest perversions of the text in favour of their own opinions.

Contemporaneously with Wollaston, Mandeville and Morgan

also wrote against the state religion, and the morality and policy founded upon it; but quite in a different style. Morgan wrote only against religion, and wished to set up morality in its stead. Mandeville, on the other hand, apparently maintained the usefulness of religion: in his second treatise he took all the Romish abuses ironically under his protection; but ridiculed, on the other hand, not only Christian, but also philosophical morality; and invented, in some measure in their stead, an optimism of immorality.

In other times neither of these authors nor their ill-written books, could have excited so much notice, or attained such a reputation, as would have induced us to mention their names on that account; they are indebted for this notice to the absurd rage of their opponents, the defenders of the antiquated system. The more vehemently Morgan was attacked, abused, and persecuted by privileged or paid writers, admitting that his ignorance, incapacity and confusion laid him open to just complaint and censure, so much the more were these diffuse, dark, tedious, and pedantic books read; because it was believed that every thing which was abused by the friends of spiritual and temporal despotism must be worth the attention of the friends of freedom.

Morgan's book is in the form of a dialogue between a Christian Jew, as he names the defender of the prevailing religious doctrines, and a Christian Deist, *i.e.*, a man who alleges that the Christian religion is nothing else than pure natural religion*. The Deist, whom he introduces speaking, speaks with great presumption, as the ignorant are accustomed to do: that he neither possessed any acquaintance with the ancient languages nor with history, which he betrays in the very beginning, awakens no good anticipations in favour of Morgan, who appears in the person of the Deist. Morgan alleges with great boldness, that his religion of reason alone is divine, that the Christian is a mere invention and device of man, and through all ages since

* The title of the book, according to the custom of the time, contains a full indication of the contents:—

'The Moral Philosopher, in a Dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew. In which the Grounds and Reasons of Religion in general, and particularly of Christianity, are distinguished from the Religion of Nature, &c. London, 1737.'

The second book has a shorter title:—

'Physio-Theology; or, a Philosophic Moral Disquisition concerning Human Nature, Free Agency, Moral and Divine Providence.'—(Trans.)

its introduction, has been regarded as such by a small but oppressed party: that the character of Judaism, which is not only human, but altogether devilish, cleaves still to the followers of a blind faith: that the apostle Paul was the chief of the free-thinkers who wished to have no connexion with Judaism, and alone preached Christianity in its purity, whilst the other apostles were merely the chiefs of a political party who in the spirit of Judaism had attached themselves to it.

The freer Paulinian party, according to Morgan's view, had been from the first always persecuted and oppressed by the others; and although the Jewish Christians had afterwards fallen asunder and separated into various hostile sects, the same intolerant Jewish spirit still, in a greater or a less degree, animated them all, and they would not consent to relinquish the service of sacrifices; this spirit has given birth to a religion of priests among all those sects, which is immeasurably removed from the true religion. In addition, Morgan will not at all admit that his opinions approach in any respect to atheism, or that his object is to defend any thing similar to it; he alone, as he alleges, is a teacher of the true moral religion. It will not therefore be a matter of surprise, that a division of his book treats of the public forms of divine worship, and especially upon prayer. On the other hand, his Christian Deist will have nothing to do with sacrifices or satisfaction,—nothing with the vicarious death of Christ,—nothing with sacrifices and ceremonies,—with grace or election, which does not depend upon the merit of the person elected.

The belief in a priesthood appointed by God, necessarily falls together with the doctrines just quoted. The whole civil constitution of the Church, its government and tribunals, are Jewish; divine inspiration, miracles and prophecies, the whole history of Revelation are Jewish inventions, to which he opposes the words of Christ in the New Testament as pure and divine truth. This last-mentioned part, viz. his exposition of the views which are represented as pure and holy, free from the dross of Judaism, is moreover precisely the weaker part of his book. The author is manifestly deficient in talent and knowledge justly to estimate the truth: the stronger part is the exposure of the deficiency and weakness of the prevailing dogmas of all sects.

Mandeville, who enjoys a much higher reputation than Morgan, was a man wholly destitute of morality, and without insight

into the nature of man or the connexion between bodily and mental soundness and well-being. He was born in Holland, passed over to England, and was probably himself surprised, that, in consequence of the increased aversion towards traditional absurdities and errors, his memorable rhymes or his ill-conceived ‘Fable of the Bees*’ (printed in 1706), should have excited so much attention as to call for several editions, and to induce him to write and publish a copious commentary.

This commentary is usually understood, when ‘The Fable of the Bees’ is spoken of as one of the chief sources from which the French opponents of Christianity, and of its morality, drew their materials for scoffing and contempt for virtue, upon which, with the exception of Mandeville, the English sceptics were not accustomed to animadvert. Mandeville, like the Frenchmen who followed his steps, sets out from the corrupted condition of human society, as he saw it exhibited in London, and compares it with the comfort, the wealth and the prosperity, and the ever-growing greatness of England, which nobody could mistake or deny. He draws a strong contrast, and makes the most wicked use of his representation. He shows that selfishness, knavery and flattery are in alliance; that falsehood and crime rule; that bribery and pride, the self-interest of the rich and the degradation of the poor, go hand in hand at elections, in trade, at court, in the ministry and in Parliament; but that, notwithstanding, every thing advances, each attains his object, the arts spring up and are encouraged, every comfort and means of well-being increase; consequently, he concludes, that crime, passion and corruption are necessary and wholesome, because they are altogether inseparable from those pleasures which educated men will enjoy. A society of purely virtuous men would be, according to this book, without art and without science, in the highest degree wearisome and miserable. With respect to the morality connected with his so-called fable, he explains himself in the following manner:—

“No longer complain, ye foolish mortals: the greatness of a nation is incompatible with righteousness. Fools alone flatter themselves with the notion, that it is possible to enjoy all the comforts and conveniences of life, to be renowned in war, to

* ‘The Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices made Public Benefits: with an Essay on Charity and Charity Schools, and a Search into the Nature of Society.’—[Trans.]

spend their days in worldly prosperity, and still to remain virtuous. These are mere dreams of the fancy. Deceit, luxury, vanity must necessarily be among us, and they are profitable in the society of living men. Hunger is indeed often burdensome and grievous; but without hunger digestion is impossible, and on this nutriment and growth wholly depend. We are indebted for wine to an ugly, dry, crooked stick! In the same way, sin will also be found advantageous; but justice must indeed purify and curb it, and lop off all its excess. It is impossible that virtue alone can make a nation renowned and glorious. And if we wish to see the renowned golden age of happiness in some measure again flourish among us, we must be contented to enjoy the fruits of temptation which allured our first parents in Paradise, along with the virtue."

The fable which constitutes the foundation of the book of which we speak, is, moreover, neither a fable nor a poem; but something in itself very silly. The chief point in the book is the argument founded upon observation and experience, supported by individual examples drawn from daily life, by which he would prove the advantage and even the necessity of vices, passions, and even crimes.

The theory which Mandeville proposed, served the Encyclopedists in France, and is in our days clothed in a philosophical or poetic apparel, in the same way as in the beginning of the eighteenth century it was set up in opposition to visionaries and their dreams. The French translated Mandeville's book in 1751, because it contained the system which they were desirous of teaching.

In this book, which no man would now trouble himself to read, although it passed rapidly through six editions each greater in number than that by which it was preceded, man is considered wholly as a sensual being; and Mandeville states the result of his experience of the world among Englishmen, to be the same as Helvetius, in his book subsequently published, had stated his conclusions to be with respect to the spirit of the French world with which he had become acquainted. Both set out with their experience of men in corrupt capitals and among rich egotists, and as far as this goes are undoubtedly right; but the fashionable notion of the world does not comprehend the whole world in itself.

We have always found in this apology for social vices and for

the corruptions of civilization, only a satire upon the doctrines of the Church with respect to a state of innocence and a holy life. An Englishman, however, who is also well acquainted with, and an admirable judge of German poetry and philosophy, has directed our attention to the fact, that Mandeville had Shaftesbury particularly in his eye. We shall give below a passage from his private letter*. According to the remarks there contained, it was Shaftesbury's declamation about the loveliness of human virtue, and about the happiness to which this would necessarily lead, without reference to immortality, and without piety or religiousness, which Mandeville ridiculed and refuted. Certain it is, that Mandeville was intimidated by the attention which his book excited, and by the complaints which in England were publicly and loudly uttered against the principles which it contained, and in the later edition of his ample commentary gives it clearly to be understood, that he is concerned with philosophy alone, and that he had no intention to speak anything about divines †.

That this is mere jeering and scorn is obvious at first view. Mandeville however, whose whole life moreover quite corresponded with his book, escaped legal prosecution, whilst the formal complaint of the Middlesex grand jury against another of the English Deists, who did not at the same time laugh at the heathen principle of morals and the Christian principle of piety, as Mandeville did, but only attacked a belief in miracles, led to a very different result. Wollaston, whose whole life and behaviour were just and irreproachable, wrote a work against the miracles of Christ, for which he was condemned by the English

* Henry Crabbe Robinson. "Of Shaftesbury you left (in the treatise on the Archives) a main feature unnoticed. He characterized nature as something lovely and beautiful, whereas Kant and most philosophers prefer considering virtue as something sublime, to be admired and esteemed. Hence Shaftesbury's book is full of fine declamation about the worth and excellence of men's reason and natural qualities, with an obvious intention to set these up against Revelation. It was against this system that Mandeville wrote his 'Fable of the Bees.' This book has anticipated the French writers in all their offensive representations of human nature, and it is remarkable that the severely religious parties have always had a sneaking kindness for Mandeville, at least, they hate the Shaftesbury school more, and for an obvious reason. If man's nature be as Shaftesbury represented it, religion is by no means necessary. Mandeville, on the contrary, shows man in his fallen state, and so points out the necessity of a Redeemer."—(Author.) In the remark T in the 'Fable of the Bees,' Mandeville names Shaftesbury expressly, and directs his discourse against him as an Epicurean.

† See his Introduction.

courts, and died after three years and a half's confinement in prison.

We must avail ourselves of this opportunity, to point out how unreasonably the champions of the ancient faith in England proceeded, as the Romish church in France and the Protestant zealots in Germany afterwards did. They forbid the entrance of every ray of reason, they defended every hand's-breath of a territory which no more belonged to them, they oppressed the modest doubter; but the fullest licence was extended to infidelity, to jeering and scoffing about all that must for ever be regarded as holy and sacred by men, provided only that the outward formalities of religion were observed. This is illustrated in the cases of Wollaston and Mandeville. The former proposed only to explain by natural causes the miracles of Christ; he applied his solid learning, and his extensive reading in the Christian Fathers, to modify and ameliorate the limited and unreasonable notions of his Church; but he guarded himself against touching too closely upon the validity of Christianity, and for that reason did not venture to refer to the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus: all to no purpose.

The watchmen of the Anglican Zion,—Pearce, Shaw, Atkinson,—blew vigorously the trumpet of alarm, and the juristical theologians of the English courts of law, like the theological jurists of the French Parliament, directed the barbarous forms and formulas of their subtle law against an honourable man; whilst Mandeville scoffed at virtue with impunity, and a short time before his death published a second work, which appears to us at least as offensive as 'The Fable of the Bees,' or as any one of Holbach's ill-reputed treatises.

As regards 'The Fable of the Bees,' all the good which it contained was borrowed from Bayle, although Mandeville never mentions his name, except with a view to oppose him. The second work attracted little notice, and was soon forgotten. It was announced, indeed, as a defence of order; but it is, nothing less than the former, a bitter satire upon all the moral arrangements in church and state*. The book appeared in 1730 as a pretended confutation of the principles contained in his former work. The confutation is maliciously ironical. This appears

* 'An Inquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War. By the Author of 'The Fable of the Bees.' London, 8vo. 1732.'—[Trans.]

from the manner in which Mandeville afterwards proves that religion and the clergy are profitable to the state in peace and war. He frames his argument in such a way as to show, that every religion, but especially the Romish and its constitution, as well as the preachers of the Protestants, appear only as means for the attainment of outward objects—as machines for something which has nothing in common with the early constitution of the Church, with that which clergymen and preachers announce as their business. This is so well carried through, that however badly in other respects the book is written, many people, otherwise very intelligent, have mistaken the malicious irony for seriousness.

Amongst all the so-called deists, Chubb surprised his contemporaries the most, and convinced no small number of thinking and intelligent friends of truth, of the untenable nature of the scholastic system. Chubb was a man advantageously known as a very learned and as a theological writer: great astonishment therefore was excited, when he also put forth a theory of Christian doctrine, which had neither need of incomprehensible dogmas, facts, history nor miracles—which did not acknowledge them. The same writer had previously taken part in a subtle controversy with respect to the triunity of God. Gay, Pope, the learned and capricious Whiston, who lived on no very good terms of friendship with systematic theology, had been well-satisfied with his orthodox treatise upon the first person in the Godhead, although the pillars of learned and canting metaphysics, a Clarke, Harris, Hoadley, names celebrated for their mathematical knowledge and book-learning, afterwards alleged, they had always scented the trail of a heretic, and had never fully confided in Chubb. We shall quote the title of Chubb's work in a note*, and add, that his contemporaries alleged, that he went further than any Socinian had ever gone. The book contains a complete system of evangelical and Christian doc-

* 'The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted: wherein is shown, what is, and what is not Gospel; what was the great and good End it was intended to serve; how it excellently suited to answer that Purpose, and how or by what means that End in a great measure has been frustrated. Humbly offered to public Consideration, and in particular to all those who esteem themselves, or are esteemed by others, to be Ministers of Jesus Christ, and Preachers of his Gospel; and more especially to all those who have obtained the Reputation of being the great Defenders of Christianity. By Thomas Chubb. To which is added, a short Dissertation on Providence. London. Cox. 1738.'

trine, a doctrine very peculiarly revealed ; nevertheless, however, the question of miracles and of a providential government of the world is not treated of, and even the Apostles are esteemed only in so far valuable as witnesses, as they do not deliver their own opinions ; that they do however deliver their own opinions, and are then subject to error, is proved from the most distinguished among them—John and Paul.

It is worth while to understand what Chubb alleged and set forth as the principles of pure charity, particularly in reference to the reformation of the ancient system, which commenced in the seventh decennium of the eighteenth century, in Germany, which reformation here and there, under the name of rationalism, is yet proclaimed as heresy ; they are as follow :—

1. That Christ requires of men, that with all their heart and all their soul, they should follow the eternal and unchangeable precepts of natural morality.

2. That men, if they transgress the laws of morality, must give proofs of true and genuine repentance ; because without such repentance, forgiveness or pardon is impossible.

3. In order more deeply to impress these principles upon the minds of men, and give them a greater influence upon their course of action, Jesus Christ has announced to mankind, that God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, and acquit and condemn, reward or punish, according as their conduct has been guided by the precepts which he has laid down, or not.

In these there is naturally no trace of redemption, satisfaction, &c. Chubb does not declare himself expressly upon miracles ; however he altogether excludes them from what he denominates properly speaking, the Gospel, or glad tidings of salvation ; but allows that the miracles, as well as the virtuous life of Christ, are of value as a support of the doctrine for the weak. Of sacraments, ceremonies, ecclesiastical punishment and policy, Chubb makes no account ; but he allows baptism, the Lord's supper, and prayer to remain as profitable observances. He declares the so-called Athanasian creed to be nonsense, whose contents are self-contradictory, or command the belief of something altogether unintelligible. The doctrines of predestination, of original sin, and the natural incapacity of men to do any good thing, infant baptism, and the endowment of the Church with worldly goods, are all called injurious inventions,

and regarded as obstructions to the preaching of the pure and true doctrine.

We here break off this half theological history, and only remark that it is no part of our duty to inquire whether, and in how far, the men whose names have been mentioned, among whom there is no good writer and only two or three are entitled to the reputation of solid learning and estimable lives, were right or wrong; to the historian, writings and doctrines, like actions or wars, are only the marks and phænomena of the spirit of the age, and as facts alone we quote these names and writings, in themselves perhaps insignificant. The number of readers of these attacks upon the ancient dogmatics, the numerous editions which were called for of the worst books of this description; the learned writings of Warburton, Pearce, Clarke, and a great number of others against the deists, which, as is generally the case, were only read by those who were previously of those opinions—the bitter and lamentable complaints of these and other antagonists of infidelity, that the number of persons who wished to read their own infidelity in the works of the deists, more and more approached to the number of those who sought after the faith of their Zion in the writings of its watchmen—and finally the use which the French made of these writings, prove sufficiently that they proclaimed a necessity of the age, which neither the church, the state, nor the learned would acknowledge.

We now pass on from these theological writers, in themselves insignificant, to those who worked with a mighty influence upon Voltaire and Montesquieu, who gave a new complexion to the literature of their native land, and changed the form and figure of the life of educated men, before the Parisian literati had even begun the struggle against the existing order of things.

§ III.

BOLINGBROKE.

We name Bolingbroke first, although Pope and Swift as writers are both more celebrated than he, because he was the instructor and forerunner of both, although by no means a facile writer after their kind, and because he was also used by Voltaire and Montesquieu. Bolingbroke besides had great influence at the

same time as a writer, and as a minister and leader of the ton in certain circles. He, as well as Shaftesbury, availed himself of the fashion which had now begun to prevail in the great world, in which it was the custom to pass opinions upon the most important subjects, as upon the news or fashions of the day, with a feeling of social superiority to give play to wit, scoffing and contempt against every thing serious. Poetry, history, religious knowledge, politics, all come by inspiration to men of the world, a pedant must master them by studies which make him dull. Such was the characteristic of Bolingbroke, Pope and Swift, as it was of Voltaire and the Marquis d'Argent. In Germany for a long time no man would believe the possibility of such a course, and those who believed it must have read French books, which they did. In our own days people have just begun among us to treat science in the same tone as a novel; because the learned, philosophers and theologians, have shown too great contempt for the people.

We must neither here enter upon an investigation into the life and character of Bolingbroke*, nor examine and criticise his works at length, which were published after his death in four volumes quarto, or in nine volumes octavo, but shall merely avail ourselves of a few of his treatises, in order to show clearly what direction Bolingbroke and his friends sought to give to the education of their times. We shall here incidentally remark, that Bolingbroke as well as Voltaire had quite a masterly skill in appropriating other men's knowledge,—a capacity which, as is well known, procured for Montesquieu and Gibbon the reputation of men of learning; and that he was educated far less after the English than after the French manner. With respect to the last-mentioned point, we can only at present draw attention to his life, to his connexion with France and with the French court, and to his sojourn at two different times in Paris.

Bolingbroke had fully made his own the light and trivial, the scoffing and jeering, and often also the malicious and lying tone of the latest periods of Louis XIV. and of the Regency. He spoke and wrote of a belief in God, of church and state, in such a way as that none could fail to recognise in him the worthy pre-

* A solid work upon the life and writings of Bolingbroke by an Englishman, is yet a great desideratum; for the 'Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke, by George Wingrove Cooke,' Lond. 1825. 2 vols. 8vo., are quite unsatisfactory even with respect to his political life.

decessor of Voltaire. In fact it was a very bad anticipation for the result of the long and hard battle which was to be fought in the eighteenth century for light, freedom and the breaking of those chains which the nobility and clergy had forged in the middle ages, that the first blows were given by such men as Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and their distinguished society, whose occupation it was to ridicule all peaceful and serious inquirers. Whoever is acquainted with the leading men of these societies, or the turbulent and dissolute life which they led, will see, that such men, and the means which they used for the attainment of their objects, must have been destructive of all economy, of quiet family life—must have led to dissipation, vanity and pride—been deadly enemies, in short, to truth, simplicity and virtue, without which freedom is a dream, and right only a shadow.

As to Bolingbroke's personal character and his life, it will be seen in the political history, how he changed his party and his principles according to circumstances. Immediately before the death of Queen Anne, he attached himself to a party which was as dangerous to the freedom of their native country, as to enlightenment and progress in religion; and he took no less trouble to form a connexion with the opposite party. When these attempts failed, he became minister of the Pretender, whose cause he sacrificed in a manner no little discreditably to himself, to promote the Hanoverian interest.

Moreover, it is not these early histories alone which prove that no upright self-sacrificing zeal, that no earnest desire for the advancement of mankind, springing from the love of his species, that no disinterested struggle for knowledge and freedom, for truth and right, could be expected from a man so restless, so vain, and so wholly influenced by selfishness and ambition; his whole life till his eightieth year was divided between treachery, ambitious political designs, a forced retirement and ostentatious philosophical repose. It will be readily perceived, that all his writings betray the bitterness of a mind which was willing to deceive others, as it had been itself deceived.

As to Bolingbroke's connexion with Paris and with the philosophy which was propagated from thence, we must not overlook the fact, that he appeared personally and shone as a light in the Parisian circles, in which those who frequented them decided upon literature, wit and reputation, as the pit determines the fate of a theatrical piece. He had already played off his

wit in the house of Madame de Croissy, when he came to Paris with a view to a secret discussion of the preliminaries of the peace of Utrecht. At that time he remained six months in Paris, and was received and treated with great attention by the king and his court, which seldom fails of its calculated design. During his banishment, he afterwards passed some time at the court of the Regent; and wrote, as is well known, to M. de Pouilly his letters in the French language, which contain the complete philosophy of religion of a Voltaire or a Diderot. In Chanteloup, on French soil, he also wrote his celebrated ‘*Letters upon the Study of History*;

’ and finally he was on the most intimate terms with Voltaire in England, when the latter visited that country. How could he do otherwise than receive and give a French direction?

Among Bolingbroke’s writings, we select expressly, not his much-read letters written while he was in exile, or his ‘*Natural Theology*,’ &c., because in these works he appears as a sentimental philosopher, which was least of all his true character; but limit ourselves, together with his ‘*Letters upon the Study of History*,’ to those writings, on which, just when the circumstances required it, he openly declared his views of human and divine things. On such occasions, the object which he wished to attain by means of his works obliged him to throw away the mask which he usually wore.

In the writings of Bolingbroke, as well as those of the Frenchmen who admired and imitated him, we must in general distinguish things of two kinds—the talent to oppose what was antiquated, and the capacity to teach what was new. The negative direction against the remnants of the middle ages, and against the abuses of his times, makes him one of the earliest champions who defended the rights of the people and of reason, against antiquated prejudices; he is the organ of a new age—the announcer of new relations, of which neither the defenders of the hierarchy, of the feudality of the middle ages, nor those of a military monarchy after the example of Louis the Fourteenth, wished to know anything. When, on the contrary, he wishes to set up a new system, he merely puts forward the principles of his own life—selfish prudence, sophistically clothed in philosophical or rhetorical language, just as his disciples among the French have done. His style also, his eagerness for popularity, his derision of learning, of scholastic acquirements, of a

dull manner of exposition, may be considered in two points of view. In the one, it tended to increase the number of readers of philosophic writings, and made attractive and agreeable what was previously repulsive and wearisome; in the other, he merely plays when we expect earnest, easily slips over the essential points, and assumes the character of a rhetorician when we had hoped to meet with the philosopher or the historian, and places shallow prattlers in a condition to speak about things which they were formerly unable to draw within their circle, because they lay beyond their reach.

His writings upon the study of history pre-eminently indicate this double direction, this talent for describing so-called good society, on account of which we have named him as the originator of ornamental and witty writing on very serious subjects, and these letters have thereby attained an importance which might almost be named classical. He contends (viz., in order to maintain this first) with skill, eloquence, and success, against absurd scholastic learning, pedantry and prejudice of every kind, and especially against the folly of a blind faith in church creeds, which are repeated without reflection or inquiry. Naturally connected with this was an attack upon the credulity and tastelessness with which universal history was accustomed to be written in England, as well as in all Europe. How this was done may be seen by consulting the numerous thick quartos of the so-called 'Halle Universal History,' translated from English. In this respect, the wit, the clearness, the facility of the circle in which Bolingbroke as well as Voltaire shone, were admirably employed. On the other hand, there appears every where in these letters, as well as in his other writings, that view of knowledge and inquiry, which afterwards became general by means of the French school, that all human knowledge is of value only as a means and not as an object. According to him, knowledge of human actions or of mental efforts, like mathematics or natural philosophy, is of value only as it bears upon the state, upon traffic, or upon pleasure; pure knowledge and perception of the divine in what is human, a purely active mental life, and the efforts of the rational being for the satisfaction of its intellectual powers and wants, he does not acknowledge, however much he and his Pope also speak of philosophic repose.

In connexion with this view of Bolingbroke and the Frenchmen who followed him, it may be stated that they set as much

too low a value upon Christianity and its morality, as their opponents and the whole canting world, in despite of daily evidence, overrated both. According to this new theory, all the phænomena of human life were considered only from the standing point of their own time, and of the society in which they lived, which felt no hesitation in calumniating and disowning human nature, and sought even for the sources of universal benevolence and patriotism in selfishness. Writers of this class necessarily acknowledged no man as a historian or philosopher, except him who could boast of an acquaintance with the rhetoric and sophistry of their school.

We shall call attention to the ‘Letters upon the Study of History,’ so much the more particularly as they have gained a reputation through the eloquence, the rank, and the connexions of their author, and the excessive commendations of the English and French of the new school, which according to our judgment, they could only have in so far deserved as they spoke out what men previously had scarcely ventured to think. In other respects these letters contain neither remarkable historical knowledge, pure criticism, nor deep views.

From these letters, moreover, in our days we can draw a lesson of humility and modesty, if we have not already drawn it from history itself. All that Bolingbroke wittily ridicules as tedious and without talent—all that he laughs at as useless and without taste—all that, which by his labours and those of his like-minded associates, had for eighty years disappeared from ancient history, is again brought back in our days, only that former investigations, original histories, genealogies and chronologies have been replaced by others, which appear to us, who belong to the older generation, neither less absurd nor less empty.

Bolingbroke, besides, is not concerned with history as a science; he speaks of historical works, not as works of art in which the author shadows out or gives a reflexion of a spirit which either attracts or terrifies. He knows nothing of animation and zeal for truth and right; history is to him only a designed narration; it is made, and is in no respect the creation of a mind filled with the subject. And according to this view, the contents of the first of his letters must be judged. History is only there considered in its reference to external life, according to its outward advantages. This is indeed something, of which the learned compilers, originators of new systems, investigators of the pri-

mitive world of Egyptian, Indian, old Greek, Italian, Celtic, German, and God knows what antiquity, often never trouble themselves to think.

The abuse of learning and science in history gives Bolingbroke the victory, and has created the historical half-novel, in the same way as orthodoxy and oppressive ceremonial piety called forth the deists. The sound understanding of an unbiassed man of the world is the less likely to be diverted from its object the less he suffers himself to enter upon a systematic struggle. Bolingbroke, like Voltaire, who in history was altogether his disciple, is zealous against the merely learned or Jesuitical use of history, and against its entire separation from the affairs of life. As is well known, it was Bolingbroke who first also, in England, called history away from treating of the dead, to a consideration of the living; because he with justice requires that history should always be exhibited in a form suited to the relations of progressive education and of art, as the phænomena of the world are at each particular period conceived. That in this respect he, as well as Voltaire, went too far, we shall afterwards remark, when we have first shown in what way his boldness carried the torch of the new light into those places where before all was darkness.

Bolingbroke will hear nothing either of the legends of preceding ages, or of the mythical or poetical narratives of the Greeks. He condemns the predilections of learned inquirers for their favourite study, and the manner in which antiquity was idolized in the first times of the newly awakened love for its study. He ridicules the ingenuity which, as he expresses himself, makes history out a Manetho, Berosus, Hellanicus and other fragments, laughs even at the ancient history of Herodotus, for whose epic, and therefore poetical, form he has no taste. Such a judgment may be unworthy of an historian; it is, however, quite in character for a man of the world like Bolingbroke, who soon found a favourable hearing in England.

The collection of immense masses of materials, the building up of systems, was left to the authors of the celebrated English 'Universal History;' and every man of higher intelligence and deeper thought sought, from that time forward, from history to throw a light upon life, and laughed at the legends and fables of an imaginary primitive world. It might appear surprising that Bolingbroke and Voltaire, with their ridicule and their discourses against a primitive world and mysticism, should have addressed

themselves to the very same class of men, and been favourably heard by them, with whom in our days the creators of a new primitive world, of new chronologies and systems about times and places, which to us, are altogether strange, have had the greatest success. The thing is easily explained: a public of ignorant, credulous, or imaginative people always follows the fashion and the leaders of the ton; to-day Bolingbroke and Voltaire, to-morrow their vehement opponents.—This so-called great world is a reed shaken with the wind.

Bolingbroke's vehement attacks upon the history of the Old Testament, and upon every thing connected with it, must be judged of in the same manner as his attacks upon the pedantic or fancifully learned men of the English schools and universities. He speaks as a man of the world, refutes as a man of the world, starts from the views of the good society in which he lived, and naturally finds the spirit of the primitive world ridiculous, the views of the Jewish people and of the East hateful and unreasonable. It is remarkable, however, in these letters, and as regards the time in which they appeared, that he quite openly attacks the prevailing system of the time, merely with the power of a sound understanding, that he speaks out what most intelligent men thought, but what nobody, not even the scoffers among the French, had once ventured openly to declare.

The hierarchical obscurity was suddenly and unsparingly dissipated by these letters; Bolingbroke proved that history and theology must ever remain separate; and that, if history will claim and vindicate her right, blind faith must be altogether set aside; only then can history first gain a new form through life, and life through history. Starting from this point of view, Bolingbroke, like Voltaire, treated the Jews and their traditions with the greatest contempt; calls primitive history, as it is related in the books of Moses, an altogether silly and tasteless tale of a tub, and makes merry over the manner in which Jewish history has been incorporated into Christian teaching*. With this he

* "Thus you see, my Lord, that when we consider these books merely as histories, delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people, among whom the custom and the art of pious lying prevailed remarkably, we may be allowed to doubt whether greater credit is to be given to what they tell us concerning the original compiled in their own country, and, as it were, out of sight of the world.....In short, my Lord, the Jewish history never obtained any credit in the world till Christianity was established. The foundations of this system being laid partly on these histories and on the prophecies joined to them or inserted in them, Christianity has reflected back upon them an authority

connects his ironical remarks upon those incomprehensible Christian dogmas, which are required to be believed upon frail historical evidence †.

Bolingbroke's manner which was exclaimed against as superficial by the learned, and the great deficiency of his knowledge of ancient customs, make it easy for the learned to refute him in the universities and schools, and to triumph over him in and before the rostrum; but he triumphed without in the world. In this way the whole fabric of theological history was suddenly overthrown, which, in our days, is attempted to be again rebuilt on new foundations and adorned with new carvings; schools and churches presented their history, indeed, according to the old way, the new generation and the reading public sought for or created a new history.

The greatest portion of the book of which we speak, is not new, nor the result of Bolingbroke's own reflections; he merely recommends to his fellow-countrymen in his letters, the French method, and illustrates what he recommends by examples. He has only to do with modern, only with what is properly speaking political history. He does not narrate, but only presents reflections, which, as is well known, is very easy, and very much desired by a public who shrink from all effort and fatigue, and seek only for results. It is moreover obvious, that Bolingbroke had very limited notions of his subject from the way in which he treats the whole of modern history, which he had still exclusively in his eye, and from the very large part of his letters, which relate to the histories in which he himself was involved. The whole is nothing else than what would be called in our days a well-written leading article in Bolingbroke's newspaper. History here becomes politics and diplomatic skill, as politics had previously by the author of the letters become history. Hume, Robertson, Gibbon and others, in good and in evil stand upon the shoulders of Bolingbroke, and the practical 'History of the Eighteenth Century' acknowledges him as its creator.

which they had not before, wherever Christianity has spread. Both Jews and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, whilst each condemns the other for not understanding, or for abusing them."—*Third Letter*.

† In another place, he says with bitter scorn:—"Truth and reason may be reconciled a little better than they commonly are; I may deny that the Old Testament is transmitted to us under all the conditions of an authentic history, and yet be at liberty to maintain, that the passages in it which establish original sin, which seem favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, and all others of similar kind, are come down to us as they were originally dictated by the Holy Ghost."

We must now give some hints borrowed from these letters, with respect to the facile direction which it was proposed to give to education. And here we first mention a passage of the Fifth Letter, in which quite a new arrangement and subordination of moral duties is substituted for the generally acknowledged theological and moral one; and selfishness is dignified by being raised to a principle, because Bolingbroke here asserts the same doctrine which the French afterwards repeated. He states it as his opinion that virtue and happiness do not spring from benevolence and patriotism, or from the idea of the Godhead, which is the root of both, as various schools have taught; but from self-love, which has self alone as its ultimate object. We shall here quote the most striking passages. He appears to do homage to a Platonic or a Platonistic idea, but says:—"Because every approach of this kind renders a man wiser and better for himself, for his family, for the little community of his own country, and for the great community of the world. Be not surprised, my Lord, at the order in which I place these objects. Whatever order divines and moralists who contemplate the duties belonging to these objects, may place them in, this is the order they hold in nature: and I have always thought that we might lead ourselves and others to private virtue more effectually by a due observation of this order, than by any of those sublime refinements that pervert it." This supposition he afterwards supports with verses of his friend and disciple Pope.

It is in full accordance with this view of history and of human things in general which we have pointed out, that Bolingbroke, in a manner almost ridiculous, confers a rank upon the entertaining Davila who wrote memoirs after the French fashion for good society, and upon the pragmatistical Guiccardini who pours himself out in political dissertations, to which these authors themselves would scarcely have made any claim. His words are: "Davila, a noble historian surely, and one whom I should not scruple to confess equal in many respects to Livy, as I should not scruple to prefer his countryman Guiccardini to Thucydides in every respect."—*Fifth Letter*.

In another place he connects, precisely in the same manner as Voltaire afterwards did, the merited chastisement of the people who in his time substituted collections and narratives for historical writing, with bitter and malicious sallies upon the legends of Christianity. He says, among other things:—"No

scholar will dare to deny, that false history, as well as sham miracles, was employed to propagate Christianity formerly; and whoever examines the writers of our own age, will find the same abuse of history continued. Many and many instances of this abuse might be produced. It is grown into custom, writers copy one another, and the mistake that was committed, or the falsehood that was invented by one, is adopted by hundreds.”—*Fifth Letter*.

In another passage, the whole of which we cannot introduce, because this vehement attack upon Christians runs on through several pages, in which he attacks Lardner and other learned men of his time who defended Christianity against the Deists, or rather abuses and jeers at them, he says in a few words,—“Whilst the authenticity and sense of the text of the Bible remain as disputable, and whilst the tradition of the church remains as problematical, to say no worse, as the immense labours of the Christian divines in several communions have made them appear to be, Christianity may lean on the civil and ecclesiastical power, and be supported by the forcible influence of education; but the proper force of religion, that force which subdues the mind and awes the conscience by conviction, will be wanting.”—*Fifth Letter*.

Further, like Voltaire, he directs the weapons of his history, wherever he can find an assailable point, against the remains of the ideas of the middle ages, which he conceives in a wholly unhistorical manner, in so far as he altogether disallows the necessity of a Theocracy under certain circumstances. In the Sixth Letter he speaks out in this respect in the bitterest and openest strain, when alluding to ecclesiastical government in Europe since the beginning of the sixteenth century.

He commences with the heretics of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and observes incidentally :—“Sometimes the doctrines of the church were alone attacked; and sometimes the doctrine, the discipline, and the usurpations of the pope. But little fires kindled in a corner of a dark world were soon stifled by that great abettor of Christian unity, the hangman.”—*Sixth Letter*.

The same may be said of Bolingbroke’s letters upon English history*, and their proper historical contents, which has been said of his letters upon the study of universal history.

* ‘Remarks on the History of England.’ Basil, 1794, 8vo.

We can only dwell very shortly on the contents of those letters, which refer to English history, and were written merely for the effect of the moment; we must however select some hints from them with respect to the changed manner of treating a science which had previously been regarded as accessible only to the learned.

These letters have an equal importance as regards political history and the education of the time. They procured for the magazine in which they first appeared, a considerable publicity; they were read with pleasure, afterwards as a volume had an extensive circulation, and removed from history and politics the discouraging, learned, juristical and diplomatic vesture in which it had hitherto been clothed. These sciences have since become easy and accessible; and the portion of society which was at that time formed exclusively of the government and the higher ranks, has become conscious how pitiful that was which was concealed under such a distinguished appearance. The daring disclosure of what was accustomed to be called the secrets of the Cabinet, by one who had been fully initiated into all the mysteries, showed, in all their nakedness, the emptiness of the presumption of the ruling castes and their tools—those learned men, who were indispensable to their indolence and their ignorance. A universal feeling of ridicule was thrown upon the wearisome legal wisdom of the writers of folios and quartos, upon the deductions which they drew, as well as upon their solid well-supported official histories. Bolingbroke and his friends opposed wit, easiness, boldness, skill, nature, to the stiff and tedious ornament, purity, and morality of Steele, Addison and other creators of the new style; this was decisive in England as regards historical writing.

Another observation with respect to Bolingbroke's influence as a writer in general, may be in like manner best supported by passages selected from these letters.

Bolingbroke, namely, like Voltaire and innumerable others in our days, defended truth, freedom and right, with the same cold calculation and circumspection, from the same egotistical motives, and impelled by the same vanity and love of rule, with which their antagonists maintained the opposite; they were therefore born to be leaders of parties, and were just so much the more cool and prudent calculating advocates of the cause which they had undertaken, the less they were led away into inconsiderateness by enthusiasm.

Bolingbroke, moreover, was the first, we might rather say the only one, among the writers of the new, and particularly of the French school, who had properly conceived the nature of a constitutional monarchy, and propounded it with correctness. These letters afford proofs, that he saw much further than the writers of the governments of constitutional states, even down to the present moment, appear to see; because he did not flatter himself and others with the thought that truly free men would dwell with one another like sheep. He proves in these letters, that struggles and wrestlings are inseparable from freedom; and that a continuous attention and watchfulness of the people, and of every individual, upon the government and their plans, is an indispensable necessity in all constitutional states. In his time in France nothing was known of these things, and in Germany, where people have been accustomed, since time immemorial, to an absolute government by officials, opposition and complaint before the public, where the governments also have their organs, is always confounded with rebellion and conspiracy. Bolingbroke proves, in the passage to which we here allude, that in every form of government definite limits must be set to the power of the prince, or of individual magistrates; but that the laws which define and fix these limits will remain wholly fruitless if they are not aided by the greatest attention of the citizens of the state. Lust of power and influence, according to Bolingbroke who ought to know this best, is so natural to men, that tyranny, like avarice, will always infallibly grow up and be satiated by no possession. He continues:—

“If therefore all men will endeavour to increase their power, or at least to prolong and secure the enjoyment of it, according to the uncertain measure of their own passions, and not according to the state proportion of reason and of law; and if neither one nor the other of these can be attempted without a danger to liberty; it follows undeniably that, in the nature of things, the notion of a perpetual danger to liberty is inseparable from the very notion of government.”

This proposition, which is always recurring, and which by the easy treatment of the whole English history given in these letters, is made clearly evident and is strongly impressed, is explained more accurately in another passage, by a definite application:—

“If I agree with the gentlemen,” he says, with a compliment

to George the Second, "who have insisted so much on the little reason there was in the last reign, or in the present, to apprehend any encroachments from the crown on British liberties; these gentlemen must, I think, agree with me likewise, that this will not alter the case, subvert what I have endeavoured to establish, or cast any blame on those who have endeavoured to revive that public spirit of watchfulness over all national interests, which is the proper and true guardian of liberty, in an age when the public spirit has more than begun to sink and die away. I hope there will be always men found to preach this doctrine in season and out of season, as the apostles preached the Gospel; because if this spirit is not kept at all times in vigour, it may fail us at some particular time when we shall want to exert it most. In great and immediate danger, the most sluggish sentinel is alert; but surely they who in times of apparent security excite us to be upon our guard, do as real service as they who animate us to our defence when we are actually attacked; and the first is, in my opinion, that kind of service of which we stand the most in need."

In the discussion of this subject which is wholly political, and which is moreover treated quite after the manner, and sometimes with the wit of Voltaire, he often assails with bitter scorn those religious notions, which he and his French friends alleged they only struggled against, because they stood in contradiction to the necessities of their age. He throws an ironical look upon the priestly dynasty, or upon the constitution in which the ruler is represented as a god upon earth; when he wishes to prove, that no form of government or constitution can be a protection against popular commotions, and that therefore this reproach against free constitutions is altogether without foundation. He says, namely:—

"Even Theocracy was attended by some real inconveniences, according to the Jewish histories; and neither the divine presence in the tabernacle, nor the ambulant oracle, which the priest carried about with him, could preserve entire purity in religion or good order in the state."

Those letters had besides also an ambitious object, which is carefully concealed under their general and scientific one. The author begins his letters with an explanation in the preface of the manner in which he hoped they would prove detrimental to the interests, and lead to the overthrow of the power

of his political opponents, and returns to the same topic at their conclusion. He shows us that in him we are not to look for an author whose object is the promotion of the interests of the schools or of literature, but of his own and that of his circle and friends. As we have not undertaken to describe Bolingbroke as a writer, or even as a political author, we shall merely mention, in passing, two incidental writings, of which the one was never completed, but which is not on that account written in a less masterly style. The other is as able as it is severe and bitter against his enemies, especially against Harley (Earl of Oxford) : it is admirably calculated, on the one hand, to excite ridicule and hatred against the party which he had forsaken ; and on the other, to bring himself into favour with the King, if the King had been able to read and understand what was ably written.

One of these was his celebrated letter to Windham, which was printed as a pamphlet, largely circulated, and excited great attention at the end of the second decennium of the eighteenth century. The other, which remained incomplete, he composed at a very advanced age, and it proves that his power of mind continued wholly unimpaired, till a period far beyond the ordinary life of man. Neither deficiency in vigour or in clearness is at all perceptible, nor can any diminution of liveliness be traced. The letter contains some considerations upon the present state of the nation, upon its taxes and debt. With a view to our object, we must also call attention to his printed letter addressed to Pope*, which was much larger than both these. Bolingbroke, as is well known, was on very intimate terms with this poet, as well as with Arbuthnot and Swift, and he knew admirably how to use the vain Pope for his own purposes, without Pope having the least suspicion of it ; Swift did not go quite as far as Bolingbroke wished. This letter is also important to us on this account, because its limited extent very much lightens our labour in discovering and disclosing those views and principles, which, as the principles of modern wisdom, and suited to the necessities of the age, Bolingbroke wished to substitute for the old.

The intention of the letter, as he says, is, altogether in confidence to communicate to his friend Pope what he means to

* ' A Letter addressed to Alexander Pope, Esq., by the late Right Honorable Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke.'

express by the words, first philosophy. This first philosophy he sets up in opposition to what, in somewhat free language, he calls the reveries of their Theologians, the subtlety of the domineering Aristotelians, and the obscurity of German speculation (Leibnitz). He describes the last-mentioned in very unfriendly and harsh terms. We shall here bring forward the passage, which appears to us most striking:—

“Do not imagine that I understand, by the first philosophy, what has usually passed under that name, metaphysical pneumatics for instance, or ontology. The first is conversant about imaginary substances, such as may and may not exist. That there is a God, we can demonstrate; and although we know nothing of his manner of being, yet we acknowledge him to be immaterial, because a thousand absurdities, and such as imply the strongest contradiction, result from the supposition, that the Supreme Being is a system of matter. But of any other spirits we neither have nor can have any knowledge; and no man will be inquisitive about the physiognomy of spirits, nor go about to inquire, I believe at this time, as Evodius inquired of St. Austin, whether our immaterial part, the soul, does not remain united when it forsakes this gross terrestrial body, to some ætherial body, more subtle and more fine; which was one of the Pythagorean and Platonic whims; nor be under any concern to know, if this be not the case of the dead, how souls can be distinguished after their separation. The second, that of ontology, treats most scientifically of being abstracted from all being ‘*de ente quatenus ens.*’ It came into fashion whilst Aristotle was in vogue, and has been spun into an immense web out of scholastic brains. But it should be, and is, I think, already left to the acute disciples of Leibnitz, who dug for gold in the ordure of the schools, and to other German wits. Let them darken, by tedious definitions, what is too plain to need any; or let them employ their vocabulary of barbarous terms to propagate an unintelligible jargon, which is supposed to express such abstractions as they cannot make, and according to which however they presume often to control the particular and most evident truths of experimental knowledge—such reputed science deserves no rank in philosophy, not the last, and much less the first.”

What is afterwards said of Bacon does not bear upon our present design, which is merely to show, in what way Bolingbroke

brought forward, what was afterwards called the eloquence of the saloons, and what has become prevailing in France and Germany as the doctrine of a sound human understanding. We have hitherto only presented that portion of his writings which was directed against the prevailing philosophy; we shall now however quote what he himself calls his fundamental principles, and which he propounds in opposition to the old metaphysics, or ontology and pneumatology:—

“I understand by first philosophy,” he says, “that which deserves the first place on account of the dignity and importance of its objects, natural theology or Theism, and natural religion or ethics.” In reference to the former he expresses himself thus:—“In plain terms, I speak not here of supernatural or revealed science; and therefore, I say, that all science, if it be real, must rise from below, and from our own level. It cannot descend from above, nor from superior systems of being and knowledge.” In these propositions another system is clearly and openly opposed to that which was the then prevailing one, according to which that alone was acknowledged as true by the former, which according to the latter was to be rejected as the error of our sensual natures. A little after he definitely declares, as the heads of the new French school did also at a later period, that “the notices we receive from without concerning the beings that surround us, and the inward consciousness we have of our own, are the foundations, and the true criterions too, of all the knowledge we acquire of body and of mind: and body and mind are objects alike of natural philosophy.”

“We assume commonly,” he continues, “that they are two distinct substances. Be it so. They are still united and blended, as it were, together in one human nature; and all natures, united or not, fall within the province of natural philosophy. On the hypothesis, indeed, that body and soul are two distinct substances, one of which subsists after the dissolution of the other, certain men, who have taken the whimsical title of metaphysicians, as if they had science beyond the bounds of nature, or of nature discoverable by others, have taken likewise to themselves the doctrine of mind, and have left that of body, under the name of physics, to a supposed inferior order of philosophers. But the right of these stands good; for all the knowledge that can be acquired about mind, or the unextended substance of the Cartesians, must be acquired, like that about body, or the ex-

tended substance, within the bounds of their province, and by the means they employ particular experiments and observations. Nothing can be true of mind, any more than of body, that is repugnant to these; and an intellectual hypothesis, which is not supported by the intellectual phænomena, is, at least, as ridiculous as a corporeal hypothesis which is not supported by the corporeal phænomena.”

In another passage he expresses the same sentiments still more strongly, in which he alleges, when speaking of the corruptions of natural theology and natural religion: “They have been corrupted to such a degree, that it is grown, and was so long since, as necessary to plead the cause of God, if I may use this expression after Seneca, against the divine as against the atheist; to assert his existence against the latter, to defend his attributes against the former, and to justify his providence against both. To both, a sincere and humble Theist might say very properly, ‘I make no difference between you on many occasions, because it is indifferent* whether you deny or defame the Supreme Being.’ Nay, Plutarch was not in the wrong, perhaps, when he declared the last to be the worst.”

Bolingbroke’s opinion with respect to Locke and Leibnitz is strongly expressed. He regards the philosophy of the former, which is founded upon experience and knowledge, as the only true wisdom and science, and the mathematical, metaphysical speculation of the latter, as nonsense. In the following vehement and bitter words we recognise the character of a man, whom no glory of greatness could frighten, but who had also other reasons than those which were purely scientific for regarding the man, who was so highly favoured in Hanover, as intolerable. He says:—

“Leibnitz, one of the vainest and most chimerical men that ever got a name in philosophy, and who is often so unintelligible that no man ought to believe he understood himself, censured Locke as a superficial philosopher. What has happened? The philosophy of the one has forced its way into general approbation; that of the other has carried no conviction and scarcely any information to those who have misspent their time about it.” He thinks the different effects of Locke’s and of Leibnitz’s philosophy may be easily explained: “God is hid from us in the majesty of his nature, and the little we discover of him must be

* *Utrum Deum neges an inficias.*

discovered by the light that is reflected from his works. Out of this light, therefore, we should never go in our inquiries and reasonings about his nature, his attributes, and the order of his providence; and yet upon these subjects men depart the furthest from it; nay, they who depart the furthest are the least heard by the bulk of mankind; the less men know the more they believe that they know. Belief passes in their minds for knowledge, and the very circumstances which should beget doubt produce increase of faith."

When he afterwards speaks of Cudworth and his ideal system, he places his readers fully upon that standing-point which he regards as the only one from which a correct estimate can be formed of what is ideal and of what is real in the world. "It would be sounded high," he says, "that he debased human nature, which has a cognation, so the reverend and learned Doctor Cudworth calls it, with the divine; that the soul of man, immaterial and immortal by its nature, was made to contemplate higher and nobler objects than this sensible world, and even than itself, since it was made to contemplate God and to be united to him. In such a clamour as this, the voice of truth and of reason would be drowned; and with both of them on his side, he who opposed it would make many enemies and few converts. Nay, I am apt to think that some of these, if he made any, would say to him, as soon as the gaudy visions of error were dispelled, and till they were accustomed to the simplicity of truth, 'Pol, me occidistis.'"

He cautiously adds, "Prudence forbids me therefore to write as I think to the world, whilst friendship forbids me to write otherwise to you. I have been a martyr to faction in politics, and have no vocation to be so in philosophy."

He further alleges, "Truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance, revelation of the Creator, inventions of the creature, dictates of reason, sallies of enthusiasm, have been blended so long together in our systems of Theology, that it may be thought dangerous to separate them; lest, by attacking some parts of these systems, we should shake the whole. It may be thought that error itself deserves to be respected on this account, and that men, who are deluded for their good, should be deluded on. Nay," he exclaims, "I would go still further than Erasmus, who says in a letter to Melancthon, that he concurs in opinion with Scævola and Varro, who both thought that 'things

evidently false might deserve an outward respect when they are interwoven into a system of government ; and that a good citizen will be cautious how he propagates even truth in opposition to them.” In these sentences he manifests the same contempt for the lower classes, the same mean opinion of all those who did not belong to good society, which Voltaire always exhibited. The latter, as is well known, was accustomed to allege, and to express in print, that he had nothing to say to lacqueys and the populace. In the writings of Bolingbroke, however, we find a view of things which never entered the mind of Voltaire.

“If the religion we profess,” says he, “contained nothing more than articles of faith, and points of doctrine clearly revealed to us in the Gospel, we might be obliged to renounce our natural freedom of thought in favour of this supernatural authority. But since it is notorious that a certain order of men, who call themselves the church, have been employed to make and propagate a theological system of their own which they call Christianity,” &c. &c.

Bolingbroke alleges that all that was usually said about the pagan systems of religion, was equally applicable to the artificial theology of the Christian systems and their councils. “If it be hard to conceive how anything so absurd as the pagan theology stands represented by the Fathers who wrote against it and as it really was, could ever gain credit among rational creatures, it is full as hard to conceive how the artificial theology we speak of could ever prevail not only in ages of ignorance, but even in the most enlightened*.” “You may bring,” he continues, “Fathers and councils as evidences in the cause of artificial theology : but reason must be the judge ; and all I contend for is, that she should be so in the breast of every Christian that can appeal to her tribunal.”

In expressions such as these and stronger still, he rejects all so-called authoritative interpretation by churches or individuals founded upon tradition and the apostolical succession of the clergy, to which the Anglican church so firmly adheres. He

* He says in the continuation of this sentence. “There is a letter of St. Austin, wherein he says, that he was ashamed of himself, when he refuted the opinions of the former philosophers, that he was ashamed of mankind when he considered that such absurdities were received and defended. The reflections might be retorted on the saint, since he broached and defended doctrines as unworthy of the supreme and perfect, as those which the heathens taught concerning their fictitious and inferior gods.”

says—"It would be a game to provoke laughter, if there was no suspicion of profanation in it, to see them gravely lay hands on one another, and bid one another receive the Holy Ghost."

"We know, too," he afterwards says, "that if we receive the explanations and commentaries of these dark sayings from the clergy, we take the greatest part of our religion from the word of man, not from the word of God." And what is still worse, according to his opinion, is, that those who boast they are appointed by God to be the interpreters of his secret will and to answer in his name, "have not been able in more than seventeen centuries to establish a uniform system of revealed religion. They do not seem to have aimed at this desirable end. Divided as they have always been, they have always studied in order to believe*, and to take upon trust, or to find matter of discourse, or to contradict and confute; but never to consider impartially, nor to use a free judgement. On the contrary, they who have attempted to use this freedom have been constantly and cruelly persecuted by them."

He afterwards proceeds to speak of the history of the Church, and shows in what manner Christianity was injured and destroyed by additions and corruptions. The earliest of these he ascribes to enthusiasm and mysticism, and furnishes his proofs by a reference to the 'Epistles' and other writings of Clemens, Ignatius, and Irænæus, and to the visions of Hermes, which have so near a resemblance to the productions of Bunyan. He then passes on to the rhetorical age of the church, which he illustrates by reference to the names of Chrysostom, Jerome, Hilary and Cyril, probably because he was unacquainted with Basil and Gregory. "These were followed," he says, "by the Aristotelians and scholastics, of whom he knows as little as Voltaire and other Frenchmen, and whom he for that reason treats with the greatest contempt."

He represents the character of the Aristotelians as follows:—
"Having very few materials of knowledge and much subtilty of wit, they wrought up systems of fancy on the little they knew; and invented an art, by the help of Aristotle, not of enlarging, but of puzzling knowledge with technical terms, with definitions, distinctions and syllogisms merely verbal; they taught what they could not explain; evaded what they could not answer; and he who had the most skill in this art might put to

* Bacon's Essays.

silence, when it came into general use, the man who was consciously certain that he had truth and reason on his side." "The authority of the schools lasted till the revival of letters; but as soon as real knowledge was enlarged and the conduct of the understanding better understood, it fell into contempt. The advocates of artificial theology have had since that time a very hard task. They have been obliged to defend in the light, what was composed in the dark, and to acquire knowledge to justify ignorance. They were drawn to it with reluctance. But learning that grew up among the laity, and controversies with one another, made this unavoidable, which was not eligible on the principles of ecclesiastical policy. They have done with these new arms, all that great parts, great pains, and great zeal could do under such disadvantages; and we may apply to this order on this occasion, 'Si Pergama dextra,' &c. But their Troy cannot be defended; irreparable breaches have been made in it."

Bolingbroke afterwards passes on to consider the controversial writings of theologians, and proves that the opponents of speculative theology had obtained an inexhaustible armoury of weapons of offence, by means of the learning of its defenders, and in the thick volumes which they wrote. He treats the defence of theology by ecclesiastics, who gained their living by their craft, as destructive of their cause, because they defended it not merely as a science, but as a means of life*. This preamble is further carried out and proved by history, by which it is shown that the inventors of theology as a science, and the creators of the clergy as an order, used human and worldly means for the accomplishment of their object; councils are treated with the greatest degree of contempt. He declares in express words, "He must be very ignorant in ecclesiastical antiquity, who does not know by what intrigues of the contending factions, for such they were and of the worst kind, these decrees were obtained; and yet an opinion prevailing that the Holy Ghost, the same divine spirit who dictated the Scriptures, presided in these

* Such Theology is; and men who could make no fortune except the lowest in any other, make the highest in this; in the proof of which assertion I might produce some signal instances among my lords the bishops. The consequence has been uniform; for how ready soever the tradesmen of one church are to expose the false wares, that is, the errors and abuses of another, they never admit that there are any of their own; and he who admitted this, in some particular instance, would be driven out of the ecclesiastical company, as a false brother, and one who spoiled the trade.

assemblies and dictated those decrees, their decrees passed for infallible decisions; and sanctified little by little, much of the superstition, the nonsense, and even the blasphemy which the Fathers taught, and all the usurpations of the Church." We regard it as superfluous to dwell upon the other writings of this English statesman, because what has been already adduced is ample and perhaps more than sufficient, clearly to point out the direction which he took, and which he wished to give to the opinions of his time. From all this it will be obvious, in what way Bolingbroke worked upon Voltaire and Montesquieu, and how very profitable he was to them, by the possession of extensive knowledge and experience with respect to subjects in which they were altogether deficient.

 § IV.

ARBUTHNOT—POPE—SWIFT.

We now pass on to those writers who shook what, up till this time, had been the foundations of literature, and altered the views of life and human relations, although they were so far from having any feeling of opposition to the established order of things, that, on the contrary, and sometimes with firm resolution, they desired to defend and to maintain it; but we mention them because they followed the modern manner of the French, and sought to introduce the style as well as the rhetoric, or the wit, of a Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke into English literature.

We should here properly commence with the 'Guardian,' 'Tatler,' and 'Spectator;' periodicals, which in this respect were fashionable and classical: we shall, however, take notice of these hereafter, when we come to speak of Addison, Steele and their friends, of the defenders of the ministerial system, and to discuss the moralizing, descriptive, and ornamentally expanded prose and poetry of the time. First we have to do with Bolingbroke's friends.

We have brought the three authors above-named prominently forward, because altogether apart from our judgement of the intrinsic value of their works, the general opinion of their influence and importance has been decisive with regard to literature. They were esteemed, and are yet esteemed as classical, and there

is a belief in a progress from Shakespeare and Milton to Dryden, Pope and Swift, which was proportionate to the advanced civilization of the age; we therefore pass over the importance which these writers have for their nation, and let it be assumed that their style is worthy of all the preference which has been shown it by their fellow-countrymen; and by a reference to some of their works, shall clearly show their relation to their age, and to true mental progress and cultivation.

Were we to give an opinion of the excellence of the three writers as such, we could not overlook in the case of Arbuthnot, that he gained a high reputation by his solid mathematical writings, and by his refutation of Woodward's dreams about the Deluge, which at that time excited great attention. We shall, however, pass over those writings as well as the celebrated satirical work still much read in England, viz., 'The History of John Bull, or the Lawsuit without End*.' We cannot conceal our opinion, that to us the wit and the manner of long and tedious conversation with the English people about the English people, appears antiquated, like the jests of Rabener; perhaps it is that they cannot be appreciated or enjoyed by foreigners, who are therefore not judges. If we mention Arbuthnot, it is only because he entered the field with the arms of ridicule together with Pope and Swift, against the antiquated doctrines, studies and discipline of the foregoing century.

There was a compact entered into among the three friends, and a formal plan laid down to turn into ridicule the pedantry of the universities, and the foolish idolatry of antiquated learning, which prevailed to the detriment of living and truly useful knowledge. Arbuthnot projected and carried out this plan, which Pope and Swift afterwards extended in another way, in the 'History of the Life, Works and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus.' This little work is known in Germany from the seventh volume of the 'Translation of Pope's Works.' It was at that time regarded as Pope's work, although, as is generally known, and as Johnson indeed in his life of Pope expressly asserts, it belongs almost exclusively to Arbuthnot. Arbuthnot himself is known in Germany also by means of Lichtenberg's explanations of Hogarth's caricatures. It appears, as if Lichtenberg, however much he admires England, and however willingly

* Swift's Works, Hamb. and Leipsig, pt. i. pp. 91-281.

he praises Englishmen, must have felt that the passage which he produces does not place the wit of the writer in any very splendid point of view. The same may be said of the ‘Life of Martinus Scriblerus,’ although Lord Brougham, as well as his opponents in Parliament and out of it, at the present day, repeatedly avail themselves of quotations from this book, and allude to the ‘History’ as one which is classical and well-known to the people.

As to what relates to the contents of the book, we shall quote Johnson’s judgement in a note, because for once, we coincide with this despotic pedant*; with the exception only of the fact, that the book was not much read or known. This is most shortly confuted, by the circumstance which has just been mentioned above, which is a proof that it was, and is much read and well-known. We should never have thought of the dull and diffuse witticisms of the ‘Life of Martinus Scriblerus,’ if we did not wish to prove from the book, that even a man like Swift, who was an admirable judge of what was calculated for his worldly advantages, carried away by the spirit of the age, could be, at least for some considerable time, a zealous and unconditional opponent of what was old, and could as unconditionally approve of what was new. In this work of the three friends, universities, studies, learned men, antiquarians, grammarians, &c. were clothed in the most ridiculous vestments. The learned follies of the Latin schools and of the orthodox universities intimately connected with them—things therefore which were inseparable from the whole mental and social order of society—were distorted and displaced, and were placed deep in the shade in comparison with the teaching of sound reason, with what was obvious and profitable, with the wisdom and philosophy of the present ‘Penny Magazine’ and ‘Encyclopedias.’

That every thing which was brought forward was clothed in

* Johnson, after he has shown that Arbuthnot is in the main the author, says:—“The want of more will not be much lamented; for the follies which the writer ridicules, are so little practised, that they are not known, nor can the satire be understood but by the learned: he raises phantoms of absurdity, and then drives them away. For this reason the joint production of three great writers has never obtained any notice from mankind; it has been little read, or when read has been forgotten, as no man could be wiser, better, or merrier by remembering it. The design cannot boast of much originality; for besides its general resemblance to ‘Don Quixote,’ there will be found in it particular imitations of the history of M. Ouffle. Swift carried so much of it to Ireland as supplied him with hints for his ‘Travels.’”

the form of a poor imitation of the masterpiece of Cervantes, injured the book only in the eyes of the whole of that small public which knows how to distinguish between good wit and bad. This, on the other hand, increased the effect of the satire among the multitude, so that Pope when he was at the very pinnacle of his renown, willingly suffered the authorship to be attributed to himself. The *mediocre*, as is well known, and as Wieland well knew and often said, is surest of that amount of approbation which most enriches the bookseller and the writer.

The persons whom Arbuthnot ridiculed, the books to which he alluded, are all long since forgotten ; but the principle which he and his friends wished to introduce, has won the victory. He laughs at the ancient languages—at inquiries after things which by length of time have been wholly obliterated, ridicules every thing which has no immediate utility for life, and instead of the learned subjects of his time, wishes for others. In this respect he goes so far as to call for the dancing, music and drawing-masters instead of the old instructors, whom he rails at as pedants. Who is there that does not see the light of our age in Pope and Arbuthnot's annunciation of new subjects and modes of instruction for youth ?

What has been said of the chapter upon schools and school studies, may be equally applied also to that upon rhetoric, logic and metaphysics ; for according to these writers, the speculative or contemplative is uniformly to be regarded as of less value than the palpable and practical—pure mental activity, the creation of an inward world, and the pleasure which springs from its creation, as inferior to action directed towards what is outward, employed to gain what is substantial, and to rejoice in what is really advantageous. The sense of these smart observations, after all, can only be, that without any study whatever, sentence of condemnation may be passed upon the investigations of men who have devoted their whole lives to the consideration and observation of the operations of the human mind, in the same manner as opinions are given and sentences of condemnation pronounced without either earnestness or depth, in the soul of the educated so called. The remark also holds good with respect to the raillery and scorn against Locke's new philosophy, which, with great cleverness, is carried through the whole of this work.

However cutting and severe the wit may be which is directed

against the work of 'The Powers of the Human Understanding,' if we must assign an end and object to this scoffing and ridicule, it can be no other, than to show the triumph of a man of the world over science and solid investigation. This chapter, and another in the life of Martinus Scriblerus by Pope, in which the proofs brought forward by Collins and directed against Clarke's 'Mathematical Demonstration of the Nature of the Soul,' are, as is generally supposed, held up to ridicule according to the rules of the schools, prove very clearly the direction of the philosophy of the age to be against investigation, research, solidity and depth. Bolingbroke and his friends thereby manifestly paved the way for Voltaire and his.

Pope's poetry also belongs to the philosophy of the time, in which, above all things, easiness of comprehension and a smooth form are sought after. His versification, the clothing of his ideas, his turns are admirable and not to be surpassed; his language is pure and sustained, but his poetry altogether without invention, without individuality, without power. The refined education of high society shows itself in Pope's writings, as in Marmontel's, in its mildest and politest form; in those of Mandeville and Diderot, in its more frivolous and wanton; but the essence is the same.

The cold, weak, vain nature of Pope, who, with more than English eagerness sought after everything distinguished, who pursued the shadow of the court as well as that of aristocratic comforts, who was greedy for reputation and money, was altogether fitted to announce and recommend an unsound and sophistical education. On the one hand, he was a Catholic, on the other, a disciple and friend of Bolingbroke; on the one hand, he alleged that he had always remained faithful to the creed of his church, on the other, he announced, as we shall show, the gospel of egotism. His mind was so supple, and he knew so well how to shift his characters, that both parties, each in its way struggling for and against the *statu quo*, availed themselves of his service. We could very easily point out in his works these two directions, and his endeavour to promote two different objects; but our business is only with the progress of the efforts which were made, by the most distinguished men of the century, to break and cast off the fetters of the middle ages.

The work which established Pope's reputation, the celebrated

translation of the *Iliad*, and the subscription to which realized for him an independent fortune, and made him, what in England is before everything else, wealthy, which introduced him into the circle of men of the world, shows how the mental cultivation and literature, recommended by the age and by Bolingbroke, stood in relation to the ancient and simple, and how heavily the neglect of the study of the customs and languages of antiquity, the want of a more accurate knowledge of the learning and life of the ancient Greeks revenged itself upon the scoffing authors of the 'Life of Martinus Scriblerus.'

It was, however, altogether unworthy of a poet, who had a perception of the beauties of Homer, and who wished to place them before his fellow-countrymen in a pleasing form in their own language, even if he only undertook the task as a money speculation, to allow his name at last to be used as that of a mere trading firm. It is well enough known that Pope pocketed the subscription for the 'Odyssey,' and left the work to be done by his understrappers; he himself, indeed, openly acknowledges, that he translated the father of all European poetry, and of all pure human intellectual improvement, without any well-grounded knowledge of the Greek language and antiquities, by the help of literal translations and imperfect means, and absolutely adorned him with tinsel. The consideration of this English classical 'Iliad' itself, shows us, in its true light, the character of the age which admired such a translation.

That we may not seem unjust to the age, or to the English public, and that it may appear that this translation of the 'Iliad' was received and regarded as a master-piece—a national work destined for immortality, we shall appeal, in aid of our testimony, to the authority of Dr. Johnson, who, at the end of the eighteenth century, was admired as the greatest of critics. We infer, besides, nothing further from the unmeasured commendation of this editor, biographer, critic, and judge of taste of the whole body of English poets, than that Pope was the *beau idéal* of the English saloons, that he satisfied the demands and necessities of his age, and that his poetry was altogether suitable to the character and to the life of the good society of his time. Johnson calls Pope the first of poets, and extols his translation of the 'Iliad' with an almost ridiculous praise.

What weakness, cockering, and artificiality appears in Homer represented in Pope's looking-glass, when compared with

the highest, purest, and noblest simplicity of the poet in his own tongue!

This be-rhymed 'Iliad,' which was beautified in every line, is as destitute of nature and simplicity as were the English circles of its admirers. The poet has obliterated the colouring of ancient times and foreign countries, in order to introduce another, which might appear more beautiful to his fellow-countrymen. The ancient Greek patriarch appears as a distinguished Englishman, dressed after the newest French fashion. He comes forward with theatrical pomp; and the exclusive *beau monde*, accustomed to tinsel and paint, stand in astonishment and applaud. The small number of those really acquainted with the subject, excluded from the society of the rich and fashionable, look on this tumult of applause with contempt, but their voice is raised in vain. These remarks can only be justified by a comparison of the translation with the original; for, as a modern poem, it reads well: in order, however, to show the wholly different spirit from which the celebrated English and the German translation proceeded, as both the authors wished by this means to call forth a new kind of poetry in their respective countries, we shall subjoin two parallel passages in the notes*. The intelligent

* We begin with the first lines of the 'Iliad':

Pope.—The wrath of Peleus' son, the direful spring
Of all the Grecian woes, O goddess, sing;
That wrath, which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain.

Foss.—Singe den Zorn, o Göttin, des Peleïaden Achilleus,
Ihn, der entbrannt den Achaiern unnennbaren Jammer erregte,
Und viel tapfere seelen der Heldensöhne zum Ais
Sendete.....

The celebrated invocation, Il. ii. l. 484, runs thus in Pope:

Say, virgins seated round the throne divine,
All-knowing goddesses, immortal Nine!
Since earth's wide regions, heaven's unmeasured height
And hell's abyss hide nothing from your sight
(We wretched mortals lost in doubt below
But guess by rumour and but boast we know),
O! say what heroes, fired by thirst of fame,
Or urged by wrongs, to Troy's destruction came!
To count them all demands a thousand tongues,
A throat of brass and adamantine lungs.

Foss.—Sagt mir anjetzt, ihr Musen, olympische Höhen bewohnend,
Denn ihr seyd Göttinnen, und wart bei Allem und wisst es;
Unser Wissen ist nichts, wir horchen allein dem Gerüchte:
Welche waren die Fürsten der Danaer, und die Gebieter?
Nie vermöcht ich das Volk zu verkündigen oder zu nennen;
Wären mir auch zehn Kehlen zugleich, zehn redende Zungen,
Wär unzerbrechlicher Laut und ein ehernes Herz mir gewähret.

Sed ohe! jam satis est!

judge, from these passages, will easily be able to form an opinion, and the further development of the subject would be here out of place.

Pope's three other larger poems, which, next to his translation of Homer, gained for him renown in England and in the whole of Europe, both in substance and form show more distinctly even to the individualities of life and literature, in what manner his poetry and acquirements were the production of the modern French refined education, and how they were calculated to extend it together with the artificial, luxurious, empty, social life of the Parisian literati. In relation to literature this appears from his poetical 'Essay on Criticism;' in relation to life, from his 'Rape of the Lock;' and in relation to religion and morals, from his 'Essay on Man.'

As regards this poetry of modern social relations in general, we cannot but admire the ornamental turns, the rounding of expression, the easy flow of the verse, the purity of the language, the tone of good society, the intelligible instruction which it exhibits. Poetical creations and a high ideality will be sought for in vain. Pope's poem upon criticism contains directions for the new poetry; it announces the principles which Shaftesbury had already acknowledged as the only ones which accorded with the demands of the age, or in other words, it contains the theory of the style, which we have explained as constituting the peculiarity of the poetry of Dryden and Pope. Pope knows as little as Boileau of that heavenly inspiration which, with the materials, also suggests the perfect form; but he gives admirably composed, clever, and rhymed directions for every species of writing.

We shall not stop to illustrate the above remarks by any closer examination of the contents of this short and useful poem, which is easily impressed on and retained in the memory, and therefore highly suitable for its purpose; but shall call to recollection two celebrated verses, which have been quoted times innumerable as oracular*, which speak of adorning nature—and announce the principle of men accustomed to conventional ornaments, according to which pure and noble nature, in order to

* L. 297, 298. 'True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.

482. Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer's is, shall Dryden's be.

appear with advantage in society, required a fashionable garb, which the fashionable poet of the time must furnish. This was Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke's doctrine; Pope has only presented it in verse.

We find therefore in the works of Pope the same rhetorical skill, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes to Homer, commended with the expression that he brings new beauties out of every line; Longinus is said to be inspired by all the nine Muses, and without circumlocution *Vida** is placed in the same rank with Homer and Virgil. But the further consideration would lead us from the historical into a quite different field, and we pass on therefore to the comic poem.

'The Rape of the Lock' is, properly speaking, nothing else than a piece of convivial pleasantry, which well accorded with the offensive customs of the time; and it received the rank of a masterpiece, by means of the spirit of the age, and the reputation of originality, at the moment when Voltaire and his disciples filled all Europe with their poetical renown. The occasion of the poem is an event in those circles into which Pope eagerly pressed, as Marmontel afterwards did, and in which Voltaire moved with somewhat more self-possession and dignity. An importance is however given to this occurrence, although it be treated as a burlesque, which could not be easily comprehended, if it was not known what an absurd value is placed by the English and French upon the right of access to certain societies. A certain amount of talent, or some degree of reputation, procures admission to these societies which are still found in England; in other respects in their aristocratic sphere what is frivolous is called gallant—superficial, clever—sounding speech, ornamental, and every question, every motion, is calculated for effect. Boileau's 'Reading Desk,' the pattern which Pope had in his eye in writing 'The Rape of the Lock,' and which perhaps he has excelled, shows what kind of poetry he wished to introduce. In this he has the advantage, that no one could mistake the advance in this kind of poetry, from Boileau to Pope, in which there can be no mention of inspiration. But the vain Englishman, who was always squinting after the court at which, like

* L. 708.

And a *Vida* sung,
 Immortal *Vida*! on whose honour'd brow
 The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow;
 Cremona now shall ever boast thy name,
 As next in place to Mantua, next in fame.

Voltaire, he was anxious to play a character, fell far short of the bolder Frenchman in proper freedom of spirit. This is easily explained by the fact, that the aristocratic class which he served, had increased amazingly in haughtiness and power since the time of Louis the Fourteenth. Boileau is indeed a poet laureate; but he has only one to flatter, only his Louis the Fourteenth. Whenever therefore he wishes, and is at liberty to attack, he attacks with vigour, and becomes in fact burlesque by the vehemence of his ridicule; the anxious, cautious, weak Pope dare not venture to break with the aristocracy and good society, whose follies and silliness it was his duty to scourge, and he spares them with as much delicacy, as he afterwards, with rudeness and vulgarity, in his 'Dunciad,' heaps abuse upon his enemies and opponents of another class.

The miserable trifles which constitute the materials of his poem; the scenes in the so-called high life, their play, their entertainments, their tedious jests, their artificial and screwed-up manners, are not strongly contrasted, as they should have been, with nature and morality, but extolled and ennobled. Gods and geniuses serve as subjects of jest for polite society, and the poet of the aristocracy compels the middle classes, who read him with admiration, to busy and interest themselves with the artificial parties of polite life, from which they were excluded, instead of with their own natural connexions and affairs. In the writings of our German Zachariä, who afterwards worked in Pope's manner, it is easily seen, that the social sphere in which he moved, stood very far below the French-English one, which Bolingbroke and Pope enlivened by their talents.

Pope's 'Essay on Man,' is far more important to us in reference to our immediate object, than the before-mentioned pieces. Our only object is to show the origin and progress of the mental struggle against those traditionary and ruling principles, upon which the hierarchy or the church vested the whole social order of society, in pursuance of that intimate connexion which had been formed between the church and the state in the middle ages. In this relation the poem of the cautious and anxious Catholic has double significance.

It was impossible to bring Bolingbroke's theory into the sphere of practical life, with greater mildness, courteousness, moderation and allurements, than has been done in the 'Essay on Man.' The principle which Helvetius and Holbach at a

later period professed, is here not clearly and forcibly announced, but is clothed in beautiful versification—viz. that the glory of God and the happiness of man are not the end and object of human life, as the Christian would express himself, and posthumous renown, as the noblest among the ancients taught—but that that alone which deserves to be called truly human, has reference to our convenience and personal enjoyment—what we think or what we feel. Here in elegant verse, our duties towards our neighbours, God, the world, and all those feelings which religion, poetry, philosophy awaken in well-informed minds, are united in a circle around ourselves; sacrifices and self-consideration are reckoned as follies.

Pope admits in the poem that the notions are not his own, that he has only reduced into verse the principles which his friend Bolingbroke had taught him. How innocent Pope really was, how little he had any opinion of his own, or wished to enter into conflict with things as they were, is apparent from his letters, and from Warburton's defence of his admired friend, in which it is said openly, that Bolingbroke had led him astray, and had induced him to write poetry in an infidel strain, without being an unbeliever. In a letter to the younger Racine, the well-known archjansenist, Pope himself alleges that he is a firm Catholic Christian, and wishes so to remain.

The more Pope strives to veil the true sense of the new philosophy, so much the more does it become our duty to prove from his 'Essay on Man,' which is so celebrated and classical in orthodox England, which has been praised, commented upon, and translated in pious Germany, that it contains the very same principles which we shall afterwards again find in the writings of Parisian high life. What Pope teaches in beautiful verse, was universally, and at that time, by means of education and practice, impressed upon the minds of the youth of the rich, fashionable, privileged, and flattered classes; they were in some measure born with the conviction, that every thing revolves around themselves and their connexions, hence, that every advantage and preference belong of right to them alone.

Had Pope not acknowledged this principle, it would have been impossible for him to have called Bolingbroke "the master of the poet and the song," who had so fully and clearly avowed it in the printed letter above mentioned, addressed to Pope. Bolingbroke may still be reckoned as a man of under-

standing, talents, and knowledge: we may feel inclined to give him a place as a statesman and diplomatist among the greatest men of the kind; but as a pattern and image of a true philosopher he cannot be properly regarded. Pope, on the other hand, not only introduces Bolingbroke through his whole poem, as a pattern of that kind of religion and morality, and of the wisdom and prudence, which he wishes to teach, but he appeals to him in the very beginning of the first epistle, in some measure as his muse, and praises him at the conclusion of the fourth, as the great master of true learning. In the concluding verses of his poem, he says expressly, that he most strongly admires those scenes in Bolingbroke's life which we have called the most inglorious, and that the theory, which makes self-interest the bond of social union, was not recommended by his example*.

Pope's God and his faith in him is like Voltaire's Deism, which, as is well known, is altogether selfish. Pope, like Voltaire, recognises only one kind of religion, and ignorant of the nature of mind, he sneers bitterly at the devotion of the weak but pious, who have need of outward and sensible means to enable them to elevate their thoughts above the sensible world. Pope, for example, says directly, that the rattles and hobby-horses of children, the orders, uniforms, and dress of men, and the beads and prayer-books of old age, are all baubles alike†. The poet's view of the constitution of the whole social union of man, and of the origin of the arts and sciences, is quite in accordance with this principle.

In light and elegant verses, pleasant to read and easy to retain, he brings forward his specious views upon the probable course of the improvement of the human race. His verses are very beautiful. Meiners and most modern historians have followed them; the principles, however, cannot be combined with the remains of antiquity. It is the same theory brought forward

* "Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,
To fall with dignity, with temper rise;
Form'd by thy converse, happily to steer
From grave to gay, from lively to severe;"

Compared with l. 395, 396:

"That reason, passion, answer one great aim;
That true self-love and social are the same."

† "Scarfs, garters, gold amuse his riper stage,
And beads and prayer-books are the toys of age;
Pleased with this bauble still as that before,
'Till tired he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er."—*Essay on Man*, ii. 279.

as a fact, which D'Alembert, in his introduction to the 'French Encyclopædia,' has developed, and logically proved with distinguished logical talent and in admirable style. According to this theory, the education of a being, who, according to all the evidence of history and of the oldest architectural remains in all parts of the earth, built temples and sang hymns before he thought of houses and cities for himself, begins with the imitation of beasts; these teach him the arts, and fear furnishes him with a God. When a man has once admitted these principles, then, without a further use of facts, the whole history of human improvement and civilization follows of itself and hangs together like a novel. Neither Pope nor D'Alembert thought of their fellow-countrymen the Druids, of Mexico, Egypt, India, or in general of the peculiar period of visionary religion, or religious arts and poetry, which indeed have all disappeared before the fuller cultivation of the reason, but which, nevertheless as facts, are opposed to what might otherwise appear to be the natural course of things. The manifestation of the religious arts and poetry, before any other, recurs with too great frequency to allow the order of things to be reversed, although it by no means follows therefrom that mankind should admire this beginning as what is highest, or remain thereby.

With the explanation of the original constitution of social order, there stands in close connexion another principle advanced by Pope, viz. that despotism and freedom are not opposite principles, but manifestations of the same kind, both having their origin in self-love. By this much to be admired friend of human kind, self-love is made the mother of all the arts, sciences, and virtues, instead of crime and despotism being regarded as the spawn of all-consuming selfishness; and virtue and freedom, on the other hand, as springing from the conviction, that each individual can only find security, peace, and happiness, as a member of the community in which every man's privilege is the same*. From this it naturally follows, that in the case of Pope,

* " So drives self-love, through just and through unjust,
 To one man's power, ambition, lucre, lust.
 The same self-love in all becomes the cause
 Of what restrains him, government and laws;
 For what one likes, if others like as well,
 What serves one will, when many wills rebel?
 How shall he keep what sleeping or awake
 A weaker may surprise, a stronger take?"—*Essay on Man*, iii. 269.

as well as that of Voltaire, self-privation, religious, poetical, philosophical inspiration, that which, by a somewhat mystical or monkish expression is called self-contemplation, in short that all sociality, every thing given which is above and beyond what is immediate and sensible, every effort stretching beyond what is attainable in life, is not merely nonsense, but madness. Pope says this expressly in a passage in which he ridicules Plato and the Platonists*.

Self-love and conscience are nothing else with the poet than two springs which drive the machine of human life, the former being altogether as necessary to it as the latter, and that it cannot be conceived without both. The complete victory of conscience—an equilibrium in man—is, according to him, not as Christians say, a condition of innocence and return into Paradise, but much more a nonentity or an absurd dream†. We believe that we have now, by the selection of these specimens and remarks, pointed out with sufficient distinctness the necessary direction and effect of the philosophy spread among the people by the instrumentality of these poems; his ‘Dunciad’ has no connexion with our plan. And this poem is besides composed in the depreciating and scornful tone of that society, for which Pope wrote in England and Voltaire in France. Pope, like Voltaire, brands all his enemies with burning and malicious wit, and ridicules all that he does not understand or approve. It is true, he scares away or annihilates at the same time whole swarms of miserable bunglers, who had gained some distinction, because the fashionable public was not in a condition to distinguish the bad from the good.

To hold up his antagonist to contempt, Pope, like Voltaire, summons up all the malicious wit which is usually to be met with in the clever circles of great towns; he puts no restraint upon himself, and gives his epigrams an edge and smoothness, which impress them upon the memory; like the venomous verses of

* “ Go, soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy rounds his followers trod,
And quitting sense call imitating God.”—*Essay on Man*, ii. 23.

† “ Two principles in human nature reign;
Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain;
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call;
Each works its end to move or govern all,
And to their proper operation still,
Ascribe all good—to their improper ill.”—*Essay on Man*, ii. 53.

Voltaire, they also immediately became models of wit in every body's mouth. Whatever was serious or learned, severe or simple, became also an object of scorn; and living men, not merely as individuals, but in herds, were held up to derision. In the society of persons to whom every thing is absurd which does not wear their own colour, this poem, because it furnished materials for conversation, was much more highly valued than imaginative poetry could have been, or a wit which does not merely scratch the rind but penetrates the core. Whoever does not make an acquaintance with unimportant English authors a study, or takes perchance the part of a Cibber, Benson, or other well-known men, will scarcely even read the 'Dunciad;' but whoever does so must feel a much greater degree of resentment against the maliciousness of the philosophical moralising poet, than admiration of his wit. The same, as is well known, is the case with Voltaire, when in prose and verse he cries shame and sin against all those who are not willing to do him homage.

We name Swift along with Arbuthnot and Pope, although he, neither in his tone and language, nor in his philosophical views, attached himself to that good society which collected around Pope and Bolingbroke, but was, notwithstanding, among the number of their friends. It may be readily shown, that, like Pope, he was altogether dragged forward against his will, by the spirit of the age, to which every one was obliged to do homage, who, in the eighteenth century, wished to please, not the learned universities and pedants alone, but the fashion-setting portion of the people. Swift wrote in a proper sense for the people, and partly for such persons as wished to be entertained with low jokes, obscenity, equivoques, and ill-breeding; but firmly attached to the church and its endowments, he also struggled like the rest, for the remnants of the middle ages, and therefore justly finds a place in this review.

As it appears to us after having considered his writings, Voltaire has done Swift too much and too little honour, by calling him the English Rabelais. He also tried in vain to bring into extensive circulation a bad French translation of 'Gulliver's Travels,' because Swift's books can only have a charm for Englishmen, or those who have an Anglomania, partly because his so-called humour is not every man's affair, and partly because, along with what is good and clever, they contain so much that is flat and dull. Voltaire's views, however, in endeavouring to

recommend Swift to his fellow-countrymen, are not to be mistaken, and therefore we have mentioned him.

Swift's satires upon the doctrines of the church, as well as upon the ministry of his native country, show, that the one as well as the other laid bare what ought to have been covered. The Dean's ridicule is so much the more remarkable in consequence of the zeal which he afterwards displayed to defend those doctrines by the preaching of which he got his living. The serious, German reader, who is not accustomed to this species of humour, and has been corrupted by the ancients, on reading the letters of the English satirist, which are dull, wearisome, often vulgar and mean, often unintelligible and ill-bred, sometimes exhibiting artificial and forced wit, and who contrives to rummage through the mass of them, will often ask with astonishment, how it is possible that such a writer could not only obtain (that would be more easily explained), but also maintain a place amongst the greatest men of ancient and of modern times? The answer, that books like men, have their destiny, would be sufficient for those who comprehend its sense; the thing however may perhaps be as easily explained in another way.

Swift best served his party as a popular writer by the line which he chose, he became more practically useful by not striving after classical perfection, by expressing himself altogether in the tone and style of a rude people, and by levelling his wit precisely to their power of comprehension. We only touch upon this point in passing, because our purpose is less to form or express an opinion of the literary services of the men of whom we speak, or of the intrinsic value of their works, than of their effect upon the people and upon their time. In order to point out the nature of Swift's influence by a few hints, we select merely three from the great number of Swift's often miserable writings, and shall not dwell long upon any of them. In reference to politics and his efforts against the court and government, we select the 'Drapier's Letters.' In reference to religion and science, out of a hundred, we shall merely refer to one or two passages in his 'Tale of a Tub,' and in 'Gulliver's Travels.'

The 'Drapier's Letters' are, moreover, no satire; but an open, clear, vigorous exposition, addressed to the Irish people, on account of an act of extortion which the ministers authorized

for the pleasure and advantage of the royal favourites. Wood the contractor and the king's favourites shared the advantage. These letters are especially remarkable; because they show how admirably Swift understood how to strike the chord which met with a universal response. The ministry, relying confidently upon a bought or won Parliament, could bid defiance to the people, but they were obliged to yield to the satirist. The effect of the letters just named was so complete and instantaneous, that the ministry were obliged to withdraw their authority, and Wood to relinquish his contract.

In 'Gulliver's Travels,' or the wonderful, comical, and ridiculous narratives, written in a somewhat dull style, which bear that name, customs, arrangements, ceremonies, laws, individuals, whole classes, are not only clothed in comical forms, or rather represented in caricatures, and the whimsical, the hateful, and the ridiculous are not only exhibited, but also vehemently blamed reviled and abused without irony or allegory.

In this book, on the one hand, the great public are made acquainted with the generally prevailing prejudices, in a manner suited to the requirements of the age and of the prevailing state of mental cultivation, and to the necessities of the populace; whilst the deficiencies of the existing arrangements and regulation of states, and of general usages which partly belonged to the middle ages, and had partly come down from the end of the seventeenth century, are bitterly ridiculed; on the other hand, however, human life is considered in an altogether common and practical way. Whoever accurately examines this widely circulated work of the Dean, will find, that, like the great master of wit among the French, all his views were directed towards what was immediately beneficial, which is the characteristic of savages and barbarians, and that he flattered the modes of thinking of the multitude, who long after what is agreeable and useful, and are pleased to see their self-love exalted to a virtue. In religion and in life Swift acknowledges only what is positive; fancies, visions, fanaticism, a land of poetical dreams and inspiration of the ideal, are with him all nonentities. He attaches himself to those who seek for temporal comforts, and to whom an inward life is an absurdity. These thoughts are recommended by his wit, which in this book is used equally against the real and apparent perversity of the time.

All the English, the cleverest men among the Germans, Vol-

taire also and other Frenchmen have with one accord praised Swift's humour and wit too highly for us to venture to call in question the great reputation of the work; we believe, however, that even a cursory reader of 'Gulliver's Travels' will admit, that it owes a great part of its renown to its bold opposition to customs and usages, which till that time no one had ventured to attack. The admirers of Swift will scarcely venture to dispute that his narratives are spun out to an intolerable extent, and that the instances of his vulgarity and bad manners, the coarseness and offensiveness of his expressions, suggest to us the German satires of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In this respect, Voltaire, with great justice, called Swift the English Rabelais; but this tone was altogether unsuited to the civilization of the eighteenth century. His mean discourse exactly hit the taste of the middle and the lower classes in England, who are most attracted by fabulous stories; its political meaning heightened the relish, and the bitter, vehement, cutting, but alas! too well-founded, satire upon the court mistresses and ministers of the new Hanoverian dynasty, procured for it a universal reception. Swift worked upon the English mind after his fashion, in the same way as Kotzebue, Wieland, and others among us Germans, in theirs; he hit the point in which the common people and the fashionable vulgar meet; he drove away the great, the pure, the high, the poetic, every thing, in short, however admirable it may have been, which had been handed down from the middle ages;—and substituted for them the joyous, the generally useful, the distinct, the intelligible. It is clear, that Swift, like Kotzebue and Wieland, was the organ of his time, for of poetry and science he had the ideas of an eager friend of plum-pudding and roast-beef; he contended, however, at the same time against the prejudices and privileges of the ruling classes, and in the name of the people, required that men of learning should be dragged before the tribunal of common sense, however unjust in many cases this might be.

So much with regard to life, science, poetry; as to religion, we shall inquire of his 'Tale of a Tub*' about the direction of the jests which he there passed upon it. In the same manner as Pope calls himself a good Catholic, Swift repeatedly alleges, that he is strongly attached to the Anglican Church; and he

* Schlosser has translated this into German.—'Mährchen meiner Mutter Gans.'—[Trans.]

fulfilled the mechanical duties of his theological calling with the punctuality of a day-labourer; and, as to his astonishment, the antagonists and scoffers of the Established Church continued to increase, he wrote in favour of its doctrines and against the Deists: and, notwithstanding, not one of all the Encyclopædists has sneered with so much rudeness as Swift, at theologians and the sanctity of religious conviction, which at least a man ought always to honour, if he cannot share. The Anglican system, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, sects of all kinds, the dogmas and philosophy of these different parties and sections, are all attacked in the most ill-bred manner in a book which he himself has intitled a silly tale. It will be sufficient to prove this, to lay our finger upon one or two passages. He admits in his apology for this history of Peter, Jack and Martin (the pope, Calvin, and Luther), that he wished to ridicule and hold up to contempt the prevailing doctrines of the church, and the scholastic education, which in England was, and partly still is, closely connected with these doctrines. In what characters contempt for true science and genuine learning shows itself, and at the same time how it injures and counteracts itself, appears from the powerless enmity which Swift exhibited against Bentley in this apology, in order to favour his patron and friend Boyle (Earl of Orrery). He praises the latter (who had maintained the credit of some forged letters, and defended the genuineness of some low fables), not on account of his writings, but declares his long-forgotten work more worthy of posthumous fame than the letters of Bentley, whose learning, penetration, and strength of judgement, in spite of all his faults, will be praised and admired, as long as the ancients are read, to whom he had devoted his time and his industry*.

We shall be able to form an opinion of the tone in which Swift treats the church to which he belonged, from the following passage:—"Towards the just performance of this great work (being heard in a crowd) there remain but three methods that I can think on, whereof the wisdom of our ancestors being highly sensible, has, to encourage all aspiring adventurers, thought fit to erect three wooden machines for the use of those orators who desire to talk much without interruption. These are, the pulpit, the ladder, and the stage itinerant." Of the sacraments he

* 'Tale of a Tub.' Dedication to Prince Posterity.

speaks no less offensively than of preaching; for in the place in which he speaks of Calvin's opposition to transubstantiation, and to the refusal of the cup to the laity in the Lord's Supper, he puts the most vulgar and the coarsest expressions into the mouth of the Reformer, such as would be offensive when uttered by a mere dotard, to say nothing of a Dean, and favourite of many of the dignitaries of the High Church. We shall only quote the beginning of his long tirade of vulgarities:—"What! said Jack (Calvin), a rogue that locked up his drink, turned away our wives, cheated us of our fortunes; palmed his ——— crusts upon us for mutton; and at last kicked us out of doors; must we be in his fashions, with a pox! a rascal besides, that all the street cries out against," &c.

Calvin's doctrines of the unchangeable decrees of God, of predestination and grace, were treated with similar ridicule and insult. Thus:—"He would shut his eyes as he walked along the streets; and if he happened to bounce his head against a post, or fall into the kennel, as he seldom missed to do one or both, he would tell the gibing apprentices who looked on, that he submitted with entire resignation, as to a trip or a blow of fate, with whom he found by long experience how vain it was either to wrestle or cuff; and whoever durst undertake to do either, would be sure to come off with a swinging fall or a bloody nose."

In the same work, and in the story of 'The Battle of the Books,' which belongs, and is altogether suited to it, learning and solid acquirements are treated in the same style as systematic theology and ecclesiastical government. Bentley, Wotton, Rymer, whose merits only the few can appreciate, who know what it is to dedicate a life to the pursuit of knowledge, and not to grasp after the ephemeral applause of the passing time, are held up to scorn before the people, who are always too much disposed to despise what is serious, and not only to laugh at the wit of the writer, but also at the thing against which the wit is directed. We should, however, be wrong if we did not add, that in all this he was always the speaking organ of an age demanding light and freedom. He expresses himself as follows, putting these words into the mouths of the ancients, speaking of their commentators and imitators:—"Now for you and your skill in architecture and other mathematics, I have little to say; in that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labour and method enough; but by woful experience for

us both it is plain the materials are naught; and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter as well as method and art. You boast indeed of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast; and though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet I doubt you are somewhat obliged for an increase of both to a little foreign assistance.—In short, the question comes all to this, whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb, or that which by a universal range with long search, much study, the judgement and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax*.”

We believe these remarks will suffice to show in what way Swift exercised a powerful influence in England, and afterwards in Germany, by rousing the great public from the long slumber in which the clergy, the professors and governments sought to retain them. It will, however, be immediately perceived that the tone and manner of the innovators were as little suited in England as in France, to direct the transition from belief without conviction, and from the mere repetition of prescribed formularies, to independent thinking and free judgement, without a violent concussion. The men who have been quoted, Bolingbroke and his friends, belonged moreover to the political opposition; they were endowed by nature with a satirical vein; in order therefore to show completely and clearly, that the influence of the century and its spirit were more powerful than that of men and their wills, than bayonets and the hierarchy; it will be necessary and profitable still further to prove that the ministerial, the ornamented artificial, the tedious moral and serious writers of the time also urged on a reformation. The brief remarks which, in conclusion, we shall here subjoin with respect to Addison, Steele and others, will show, that they also wished to introduce an entirely new style, a new manner, a tone which should be in accordance with the completely changed relations of life, and wholly foreign to the dogmatism of the middle ages.

* ‘Battle of the Books’—Dialogue of the Spider and the Bee.

§ V.

ADDISON—STEELE—THE ENGLISH JOURNALS.

Addison and his friends wished to bring literature nearer, or to subject it altogether, to the cold rules of the French, with whom form was more than substance, and according to their judgement, it is not inspiration, which is inborn, or comes from above, but understanding, wit and artifice which are learned in and brought away from the schools, which constitute the greatness of modern writers. The truth of this allegation might be readily sustained from a reference to Voltaire's commendation of Addison's celebrated rhetorical tragedy, or to Dennis's still ruder and more malicious criticism of the same piece, if it were not so easily proved from their own writings. The much-commended talents of these so-called stylists, all point to this—that the reading public wished to be entertained, not roused to think; to be gently moved, not deeply excited; that a weak and rhetorical kind of mental cultivation was forcibly pressing onward. This rhetorical and sophistical character of mind is common to the Deists and scoffers with the celebrated moral and religious writers, at whose head stood Addison, who by God's grace was for some time Secretary of State, since he could neither speak in Parliament, nor when it was his duty to draw up public documents, was he able to prepare despatches in a good style and with beauty of language. This fact admirably characterises those men of the stylistic school. They were never fitted for life, and puffed up with vanity; all rhetoricians will be the same as long as the world stands. Notwithstanding this, however, Addison wrote very edifying treatises, and translated psalms; and Mandeville with wit and justice, called him a parson in a tie-wig.

If it should be asked how these dull prosaists, in whom there was not a spark of poetry, were able to prescribe laws and rules of taste to their own and to following times, and how they gained that high renown which they yet enjoy, although few any longer read, or can read, their polished artistical works, which are destitute of strength and sap, the answer is easy. The fashion came from the court and the nobility to the people, of regarding this rhetoric as poetry, and this morality as literature. King William, Queen Anne and her Ministers praised and extolled Addison; they had neither taste nor sense for anything

else than business or cabals, and by them weak and dull ornament must necessarily be more highly valued than true poetry or vigorous prose, which cannot be understood without some strong effort of the mind, and for that reason pleases the more, because it rewards the toil. Bolingbroke, Pope, Prior and others have to thank these their opponents, for travelling the same way with themselves, at least in reference to taste; Pope willingly aided to increase the reputation of Addison, because he was not deficient in that tact which is peculiar to people of his stamp, and felt sure that Addison's fame could never obscure his own.

It may be best seen from the history of the renown which Addison enjoyed, how it was with the new literature and taste to which he was indebted for his first advancement by King William, and which he himself afterwards sought to promote. He began with Latin poems, and transmitted them to Boileau, who with great justice was averse to the Latin poetising of the moderns: what else, however, could the Frenchman do, being thus flattered by the attention of the Englishman, than pay him a most polite compliment? which he did. His real or presumed opinion was duly circulated, Addison's character was made: he was held to be a poet, and celebrated in verse the peace of Ryswick, a subject which was quite suitable to his reputation as a poet, and to Boileau's commendation of him. This diplomatic poem was followed by an account of a tour, which contains nothing more of Italy than what anybody in his study can collect from books, without having ever been in the country; if we regard the article upon the republic of San Marino, as a small exception. Then came a military-political poem, 'The Battle of Blenheim,' of which his enemies said aloud, and many of his friends softly, that it was a poetical newspaper.

The appearance of his tragedy of 'Cato' afterwards excited so much attention, and the applause was so general, that it might be thought that a people who had had a Shakspeare and so many other inspired dramatists, had altogether changed their nature, because they so extravagantly applauded these meagre rules and this naked rhetoric; but it was not so. Fashion and the example of the aristocracy in England are all-powerful; when the fashion altered, they returned back to the old poets. We mention this tragedy of 'Cato' only on account of one circumstance, because we neither will nor may enter upon an examination of it as a question of taste. This piece shows that

those pious and moralising writers of the eighteenth century also rose up against the principles established and ruling in the states of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Republicanism alone gave its attraction to this stiff, rhetorical and somewhat bombastical piece, which is pressed into the French standard of unity of time and place, and interwoven with love scenes, after the French fashion—in which Cato appears in a dressing-gown with Phædo by the hand, in the same room in which the whole action of the piece is laid. The same feeling gave a charm to his verses.

The spirit, from which the violent effort sprung in France, to cast off the fetters in which Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis the Fourteenth had bound the people and its literature, showed itself so powerfully as sometimes to animate and inspire even the vain, cold, prosaic, all-calculating Addison, who was prudent in pondering even on the minutest things, and who on this very account was so much the more admired by the egotistical exclusive circles, and it called forth from him some good lines, and many splendid expressions. Even the Tories, in order not to be altogether behind the spirit of the age or to lose their popularity, were obliged to approve, commend and reward whole scenes and single phrases in which republicanism was conspicuous, and Bolingbroke was among the first who did so.

The effect of Addison's periodical papers, and of those of his friends, upon the quiet revolution, which partly was really progressive, and partly was prepared in the beginning of the eighteenth century, deserves to be here so much the more clearly pointed out, as these periodicals have attained the reputation of being regarded as classical. We believe that, in this respect, we shall attain our object most suitably and satisfactorily, by selecting some passages from Johnson's life of Addison, which bear upon the point. These passages will carry the greater weight of proof, as Johnson often finds that admirable, which we think worthy of blame, as he sets out from wholly different principles, and draws a quite different conclusion about the influence of his writings upon literature and mental improvement. With respect to Addison's influence in the propagation of general knowledge, and so called social improvement, or, in what was jeeringly called, "the reign of the blue stockings," Johnson, who had the pre-eminence in this empire, and in whose time the name had its origin, will necessarily entertain opinions very different from those of a German

scholar. In this respect, Addison, Steele, and their journals promoted a sort of mental cultivation, which had been previously peculiar to the Parisians, by the help of which persons were accustomed to carry with them into their evening circle sufficient knowledge gleaned from the morning's reading, or the periodicals of the day, to enable them to discuss and pronounce opinions upon every art and science, on government and religion, when formerly only every day affairs were treated of. By this means the modest were put to silence, and the well-grounded to shame, the ready and the witty sent forth their oracles into the world, and the ladies of their saloons were educated and prepared for their doctrine, by means of their clever periodicals. This seems to us to be a strictly just judgement, with respect to an influence of which Johnson, looking from his point of view, has given a very different description in the following words, when he says:—"That general knowledge (we add, and therefore superficial) which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance, and in the female world any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured; his purpose was to infuse literary curiosity (Johnson here adopts a most descriptive expression), by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar. When he (we add a well-known flatterer of the great) showed them their defects, he showed them likewise, that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded: inquiry was awakened, and comprehension was extended. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from this time to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged."

This passage speaks distinctly out, what we would say in other expressions, if the intelligent reader were not able, without our help, to comprehend this play of words, and others would take it amiss were we to subjoin our circumlocutions. We shall however go a little further into the examination of these periodicals, which have so greatly contributed to the difficulty ever growing with the progress of time, of distinguishing between genuine and false, superficial and solid acquirements, and by which a false glitter was made more nearly to resemble the real splendour of truth. Neither Steele nor Addison had

made any solid acquirements, although the latter at least was a good Latinist. Steele began his career as a writer, with a poem, his 'Christian Heroes,' which justified no great expectations. This poem could have little of soul or nature in it, because the contents stood in a most surprising contradiction with Steele's scandalous and dissolute course of life. He afterwards tried himself, as industrious people of the kind are used to do, in plays, and wrote a few wholly insignificant ones. The speculation of a periodical on belles lettres succeeded better.

Till Steele hit upon the thought in 1709, there had appeared in England no daily periodical of this character, but only political sheets ('Mercurius Aulicus,' 'Rusticus,' 'Civicus'), or papers in which the political or ecclesiastical events of the time were abused or contended against (e.g. 'The Observer' by L'Estrange, or 'The Rehearsal' by Lesley); he therefore successfully introduced a literary paper under the very appropriate name of 'The Tatler.' This paper was written for ladies. 'The Tatler,' as it was said, was to supply the means of agreeable and instructive conversation, such as should meet with acceptance and approval in fashionable circles. When the attempt proved fortunate, Addison joined his old friend, and aided him with such skill and art as to edify and instruct the circle in which he was quite at home, and presently the whole world of elegance and fashion became familiar with their writings. It was found advisable to change the somewhat ironical title, and afterwards under the name of 'The Spectator,' the periodical attained so high a reputation, that our German writers at a later period, both of the Leipzig and the Swiss schools, wished to write and train the German nation after this model.

The learned Germans, however, overlooked the fact, that the English attached great importance to ornamental and diffusive development in language and style, or to the fashionable form and elegance which appeared best adapted to their exclusive circles, because they are not natural but artificial. The two friends only admitted such pieces into their periodical as were worked and polished in their spirit. The form is essentially the same which yet prevails in all such English and Scottish journals. They are calculated by means of long-spun explanations and descriptions which descend to the minutest points, to keep a half-sleeping man awake, and to waste the time of one who has his hands full of useful occupation.

This model of a ladies' journal contains descriptive and rhetorical poetry, correct, lively, artificial, but uniformly moral prose; all however tread the beaten path; no flash of genius, no kindling fire, no kernel, no strength. Therein we find the image of the better side of the life of that time, but also its killing moralising wearisomeness, which was repugnant to the livelier portion of society, at whose head were Bolingbroke and Voltaire. By means of this journal Addison's tone and taste were adopted as those of the so called educated classes, or were rather the cosmetics which concealed the corruption which was silently stealing on, as were the hypocritical sweetness and mildness in Paris under Louis the Fourteenth and Cardinal Fleury.

With respect to the outward history of the periodical, we refer to the numerous literary manuals; as to the authors, Steele had more fire, Addison more industry. Addison drew, with pedantic carefulness, pictures of manners and characters, descriptions and clever representations; but the same may with truth be said of him, which was said of his master and model, Boileau, in his life and times: he smacks universally of the cruise and the lamp, of the toilsome labour of the ploughman, and the indefatigable furrowing of the drawing ox.

How far they went in this way will be better learned from Johnson, who is altogether smitten with this kind of social conversation, mental improvement, and if you will, knowledge, than from a German, who loves society less than this English Boileau. We give the passage:—

“ ‘The Tatler’ and ‘The Spectator’ adjusted, like Casa, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness, and like La Bruyère, exhibited the characters and manners of the age. The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal, they were then known and conspicuous in various stations. Of ‘The Tatler’ this is said by Steele in his last paper, and of ‘The Spectator’ by Budgell in the preface to ‘Theophrastus,’ a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised, if he did not write it. Of those portraits, which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known and partly forgotten. But to say that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and sometimes towered far above their predecessors,

and taught with great justness of argument and dignity of language the most important duties and sublime truths. All these topics were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention."

The method invented by Addison and Steele of carrying on conversation with good society by means of writing and printing, was also taken advantage of by Swift* and others, and the number of these entertaining journals so increased, that 'The Spectator' lost much of its reputation, because its smoothness and diffusiveness wearied by their continuity and repetition. Steele wrote, partly alone, and partly in connexion with Addison, other periodicals, such as 'The Guardian' and 'The Englishman,' and some others; none of them, however, excited the same degree of attention as 'The Spectator;' and at last there arose a vehement contest between Steele and his friend about politics.

The distinguished traits which Addison's eulogists celebrate, are all, without exception, of the kind which we can at once deduce from the eulogy here pronounced upon him, without going through his works, and point to a double influence of this writer upon the change which at that time was introduced in social conversation through the whole of Europe. On the one hand, conversation became more intellectual, attractive and lively, on the other, however, poetry became prose, knowledge lost in seriousness and strength; the most important events of human life were determined by the wit and eloquence of certain circles of society, according to the leading of the journals, which were the organs of the momentary spirit of the time. We cannot possibly better describe the character of these celebrated periodicals, which in our days are still published in new editions in England, and translated and extensively imitated in Germany and France, than in the words of Steele and Johnson.

"He was eminent," says Steele, "above all men in that talent called humour, and enjoyed it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful

* 'Examiner.'

than any other man ever possessed." That is, in other words, he entertained the rich and fashionable circles by exhibiting their images for their own gratification and the edification of others, in a mirror which reflected only beauties. His morality, therefore, was stiff and religious, and his truth so represented as to be suitable to every body, but neither calculated to terrify nor dazzle. This morality is the chief ingredient of his narratives and descriptions, which were clothed in all manner of forms and allegories. In order to make himself agreeable, Addison universally puts forward the claims of duty in the mildest forms, and calls that virtue which flattered delicate feeling or sensibility.

What Johnson says of his style and language altogether agrees with this description of the contents of Addison's works: "His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without simplicity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour. It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction. He is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connexions, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation. Yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude nor affected brevity; his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

We have introduced these somewhat long passages from Johnson, because it is impossible better to describe the tone and mental cultivation which Addison and Steele introduced and called forth, and which Johnson approved, than is here done. All true poetry disappeared, Glover became greater than Milton, this fashionable polish and mediocrity had permeated life and weakened it. This mode of giving instruction in and furnishing ma-

terials for social conversation by writing, called forth among the lively Frenchmen an entirely new kind of literature, whose originator was a man of genius and possessed of the most various knowledge. Voltaire was in all his proportions wholly and throughout a Frenchman, and the progressive mental cultivation of the distinguished and intellectual classes in France are reflected in him, as those of England in Addison.

CHAPTER II.

LITERARY CULTIVATION AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF THE FRENCH, OR RATHER THE MENTAL CULTURE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE HIGHER CLASSES OF EUROPE, FROM 1715, TILL SOMETHING BEYOND THE HALF OF THE CENTURY.

§ I.

VOLTAIRE.

VOLTAIRE'S literary activity and influence fall, properly speaking, within the following period. During the seven years' war, he and his friends, the Encyclopædists, D'Alembert and Diderot, Raynal, Helvetius, and Holbach, were the announcers of a new Gospel, and the creators of a new literature; Voltaire however is indebted for the importance which he afterwards attained, to the attention which he excited in this period, and the reputation which he had acquired. We consider it therefore most suitable to our purpose to place Voltaire's name at the head of those men whose works were regarded as being of a good tone, and fashionable reading, in this as well as in the following period. In the present period we shall associate the name of Montesquieu with that of Voltaire, and in the following period that of J. J. Rousseau; because both these writers, like him, produced a revolutionary effect, as we are now accustomed to say, although quite independent of Voltaire, and in a manner wholly different from him. In these paragraphs we shall show, in what way he gained for himself great importance in literature and life, as was

afterwards seen, and in the following period we shall describe the whole extent of his literary activity and influence, with reference to those peculiar departments in which it was exercised.

Voltaire brought into literature the tone and mental energy of the highly eulogised and clever societies of the last days of Louis the Fourteenth; and Condorcet, in his life of Voltaire, informs us what kind of tone and wit prevailed among the choice few, whilst the multitude were sunk in bigotry and superstition, in gross ignorance and poverty, or overwhelmed with filth and wretchedness. This eulogist and commender of a man whom he also calls his apostle, informs us of the sources from whence he drew the wit, the knowledge of men and of the world, the liveliness of conception and representation by which he was so eminently distinguished. We thus become acquainted with the tone in which the great men whom Voltaire initiated into the circles of higher life, allowed themselves to indulge, and we find the characteristics of this tone in his earliest poems. When we perceive that ridicule and scorn were poured out against every thing sacred and holy in these circles, the question first naturally presents itself, How it came to pass that that distinguished society, which could only maintain its position and influence through the prejudice of the public in its favour, did not at once see that it was ruining its own game? The answer is easy. Each member played two characters; the one within the circle, for his own pleasure; the other outwardly, and for the people: Voltaire therefore, when he was yet a very young man, wrote in secret abusive songs against the king and the nobility, whilst he composed poems for the public in praise of Louis the Fourteenth, and in celebration of the feast of the Virgin Mary, which Louis the Thirteenth had glorified by a vow. One while he composed in secret an epistle to Urania, against Christianity and its founder; and at another, odes in honour of the true God and a dying Saviour*. It never occurred to any one, that the

* We shall occasionally direct the attention of our readers to the passages which appear to us remarkable. In the 'Ode to the True God,' (1714) the last nine lines of which it consists, run as follows:—

Toi seul insensible à tes peines
 Tu chéris l'instant de ta mort,
 Grand Dieu! Grâce aux fureurs humaines
 L'univers a changé de sort
 Je vois de palmes éternelles
 Croître en ces campagnes cruelles

wantonness and the scorn of polite and fashionable loungers would ever reach the oppressed and labouring people, who were held in bonds of degradation and slavery by the priesthood, the public officials and nobility, and who seemed beyond the hope or possibility of deliverance from temporal and spiritual tyranny; and therefore these people did homage in private to the very things which they publicly persecuted with unrelenting severity.

Voltaire's contemporary, J. B. Rousseau, by his example and writings, shows us how the union of poisonous wickedness, with religiousness of feeling or expression, was at that time thought of by the higher circles of Europe. This renowned person prepared spiritual songs, psalms, and hymns, at the same time that he was composing the most scandalous, offensive and indecent poems, and was for that reason, as well as for unnatural crimes, prosecuted, condemned and banished from France; he found his first friendly reception in the midst of the darkest and most fanatical times, in the house of Prince Eugene in Brussels, afterwards in Vienna, and finally again in Brussels, from the Prince de Baudemont. The same fact appears also in Voltaire's history, only that Louis the Fifteenth was warned against him by Cardinal Fleury, and that he entertained besides, a personal dislike to him, which was greatly increased by Voltaire's friendship with Frederic the Second.

Voltaire was born in the last decennium of the seventeenth century, and was a man of extraordinary endowments and capacities; he was a scholar of the Jesuits, whose schools were at that time in high reputation for Latin and mathematics. While he was yet a pupil of the Jesuits, as the Marquis Condorcet informs us, he was introduced by a clergyman into the society of debauchees and gourmands of genius, who indulged in satire and ridicule against all that others regarded as sacred, and followed the pursuit of pleasure and were sunk in the luxury and sensuality of the regency; he was therefore born and brought up to be their instrument and organ.

This society into which, according to Condorcet, the Abbé Chateaufeuf introduced him as a boy, consisted of men of high

Qu' arrosa ton sang précieux.
L'homme est heureux d'être perfide
Et coupable d'un déicide
Tu nous fais devenir de dieux.

rank, of the Duke and Grand Prior Vendome, the Duke of Sully, Prince Conti, &c., together with ecclesiastics such as Chau-lieu, who is known as a witty and satirical poet, and Courtin and Servien. The fruit of his intercourse with these witty and clever men, was his early and short poems, which were soon in every body's mouth. At this early period also (1713), he wrote verses against the government of Louis the Fourteenth, and the abuses connected with it, which led to his being incarcerated in the Bastille.* This incarceration tended to make him better known,

* We shall here give some stanzas :—

Stanza I. Aux maux les plus affreux le ciel nous abandonne,
Le désespoir, la mort, la faim nous environne,
Et les dieux soulevés nous tant de fois,
Equitables vengeurs des crimes de la terre,
Ont frappé du tonnerre
Les peuples et les rois.

Stanza VI. Quoi verra-t-on toujours de ces tyrans serviles
Oppresseurs insolens des pupilles
Élever des palais dans nos champs désolés ?
Verra-t-on cimenter leurs portiques durables
Du sang des misérables
Devant eux immolés ?

Stanza VII. Élevés dans le sein d'une infame avarice
Leurs enfans ont sucé le lait de l'injustice,
Et dans les tribunaux vont juger les hommes
Malheur à qui, fondé sur la seule innocence
A mis son espérance
En leurs indignes mains.

Finally the last stanza of this poem, which was very ill-suited to his 'Crépinade,' 'Bourbier,' and others, runs thus :—

Le luxe à ses côtés marche avec arrogance
L'or qui naît sous ses pas s'écoule en sa présence,
Le fol orgueil le suit ; compagnon de l'erreur
Il sape des états la grandeur souveraine
De leur chute certaine
Brillant avant-coureur.

In the third stanza, the deaths of the most hopeful children and grandchildren of Louis are referred to as punishments for his sins :—

D'un monarque puissant la race fortunée
Remplissait de son nom l'Europe consternée ;
Je n'ai fait que passer, ils étaient disparus ;

In the Chamber of Justice, which was established 1715, it goes thus :—

Le délateur, monstre exécrable,
Est orné d'un titre honorable.
A la honte de notre nom
L'esclave fait trembler son maître.
Enfin nous allons voir renaître
Le temps de Claude et de Néron.
En vain l'auteur de la nature
S'est réservé le fond des cœurs,

and to increase his popularity, because he spoke out what every one thought. He afterwards wrote with equal bitterness and severity, almost in a revolutionary tone and to the tune of the Marsellaise, some very exciting verses against the regency, and particularly against the tribunal which was erected in 1716, with a view of persecuting the servants and officials of the preceding king. We have given in the note some very vehement lines, written quite in the tone and spirit of the revolution, and directed against the whole circumstances and conduct of this tribunal, in order especially to show what kind of an opposition had been got up and was carried on under the severest oppression of a bigoted government, and in spite of their police, their censorship, and their bastille.

The bitterest satires of this kind were written by Voltaire, from his twentieth till his eight and twentieth year; and no man can mistake in their tone and language the master-spirit of the witty and malicious style, as well as the perfect expression and language of the higher Parisian circles. These virulent attacks excited the more attention from the great secrecy with which they were circulated. They were communicated in manuscript, or learned by heart, and repeated in society when favourable opportunities were afforded; they were the property of good society. At last they were carried out by the servants and brought to the knowledge of the people, or they were printed in Holland and privately circulated in Paris; they were at first denied and afterwards acknowledged by the author, and they

Si l'orgueilleuse créature
 Ose en sonder les profondeurs.
 Une ordonnance criminelle
 Veut qu'en public chacun révèle
 Les opprobres de sa maison,
 Et pour couronner l'entreprise
 On fait d'un pays de franchise
 Une immense et vaste prison.

The conclusion is very remarkable for a time in which the people could only be addressed in and by songs:—

Vieille erreur, respect chimérique,
 Sortez de nos cœurs mutinés,
 Chassons le sommeil léthargique
 Qui nous a tenus enchainés.
 Peuple, que la flamme s'apprête,
 J'ai déjà semblable au prophète
 Percé le mur d'iniquité.
 Volez, détruisez l'injustice;
 Saisissez au bout de la lice
 La désirable liberté.

thus perhaps acquired an importance which they would not have attained if they had been allowed to be openly printed and circulated, like the satires of Swift or the bitter attacks of Bolingbroke. Voltaire's satire and ridicule, besides, were directed against every thing which his age, sometimes, perhaps, without good reason, was accustomed to honour. A few examples may serve for elucidation.

The Academy had offended and injured him, or rather the so-called renowned men who had the greatest influence in it and the greatest sway at court, had declared some bad verses to be good and had shut out Voltaire from the prize which he expected to receive; he revenged himself upon them in a poem, which has received the name of 'Le Bourbier,' from the filth in which he points to a place for La Motte Houdart, Dacier, and other Mæcenas of the time. He quarrelled with Jean Baptiste Rousseau, the greatest poet of his age, when he paid him a visit in Brussels. He therefore attacked him also in a poem, which was well calculated to spread the terror of his name. This so-called 'Crépinade' exceeds every thing that Jean Baptiste Rousseau ever wrote in his venomous pasquinades. This will appear from the few lines which we give in the notes*. We must speak somewhat at greater length of his opposition and enmity to Christianity, because this was the most important for the spirit of a time embittered to the heart's core against the hierarchy, orthodoxy and prevailing hypocrisy.

The celebrated or all-renowned epistle to Urania, which Jean Baptiste Rousseau regarded as blasphemous, proves that Voltaire, before his journey to England, had announced that war of extirpation against the religion of the people, which he afterwards

* We say nothing of 'Le Bourbier.' In the 'Crépinade' Rousseau is first boldly and then mentally described as a son of the devil—then the conclusion:—

Dans les cafés il fit le bel esprit,
 Il nous chanta Sodome et Jésus Christ (!!)
 Il fut sifflé, battu pour son mérite,
 Puis fut errant, puis se fit hypocrite
 Et pour finir à son père il alla.
 Qu'il y demeure. Or je veux sur cela
 Donner au diable un conseil salutaire:
 Monsieur Satan, lorsque vous voudrez faire
 Quelque bon tour au chétif genre humain,
 Prenez-vous y par un autre chemin:
 Ce n'est le tout d'envoyer son semblable
 Pour nous tenter: Crépin votre féal
 Vous servant trop, vous a servi fort mal.
 Pour nous damner, rendez le vice aimable.

carried on for more than sixty years ; he shows, however, in his first vehement attack upon the historical credibility of Christianity, a feeling of respect and a sense for what is great, beautiful and poetical in the idea of a holy and a pure church, and a society of true believers. This epistle was addressed to one of the most distinguished ladies in fashionable life, who was married to one of the highest and most respected noblemen in the Austrian Netherlands. The tone in which he thinks he may venture to address himself to this lady and to her whole circle, as well as the whole contents of the epistle, show most clearly, that as early as 1715, the monks had brought things to such a pass by their mechanical devotion, the Jesuits by their spiritual tyranny and affiliations, and the Jansenists by their dogmatics and asceticism, that all intelligent men began to be discontented with the old system.

Voltaire begins this poetical epistle with the assurance, that he recognises the necessity and the advantage of religious notions, and sees clearly, that man would sink into the gulf of sensuality, if he had no higher ideas than those which he could derive and form immediately from his sensible perceptions*. Immediately afterwards he declares, that he cannot receive the doctrines of the fall of man, of original sin, of the satisfaction of Christ, the eternity of hell torments, as consistent with his idea of the nature of that God, whom his understanding leads him to acknowledge and adore†. The attack is bitter and severe, the satire is keen ; still he acknowledges a belief in God, although he may not recognise the God of Christianity as the Being whom he worships. His words are,—“ A senseless man would blaspheme God, I adore him. A Christian I am not, because I have learned to love God in a better way than that.” He is nevertheless poet enough to acknowledge the great idea of Christ’s victory over sin and death, over the grave and hell ; the idea of his dominion over his true servants, and of his sitting at the right

* ‘ Le Pour et le Contre,’ an epistle to Urania (Mad. de Rupelmonde). v. 10.

Ne crois point qu’enivré des erreurs de mes sens
De ma religion blasphémateur profane,
Je veuille avec dépit dans mes égaremens
Détruire en libertin la loi qui les condamne, etc. etc.

† Je vieux aimer ce Dieu, je cherche en lui mon père ;
On me montre un tyran que nous devons haïr.
Il créa des humains à lui semblables
Afin de les mieux avilir ;
Il nous donna des cœurs coupables
Pour avoir droit de nous punir,
Il nous fait aimer le plaisir, etc. etc.

hand of God, not merely as poetry, but even as consolatory and elevating truth. We shall give below the line in which Voltaire, at the conclusion of his epistle, like Pope in that of his Universal Prayer, pronounces his opinion upon the system which he wished to see substituted for that which then universally prevailed, which excluded from the pale of religion, or persecuted and calumniated every one who could or would not blindly swear to the very letter of its creeds*.

At the same time as he excited the public attention by his short poems, which like his easy prose have always found the greatest number of admirers, he endeavoured to tread in the footsteps of Racine, and to enrich the French literature by a classical epic, because no one since the time of Chapelain, who had altogether failed in his ‘Maid of Orleans,’ had ventured to try his powers on a heroic poem. This heroic, which when it was first projected bore the title of ‘The League,’ and which, when it afterwards appeared in England, was called the ‘Henriade,’ was intended to inculcate toleration, and to unmask the weak side of the hierarchy, of monachism, and of priestcraft. He was acknowledged as a tragic poet after the production of his ‘Œdipus’ (1718), because he rose unquestionably far superior to the other poets of this entirely prosaic age.

The enlightenment which Voltaire announced, as well as that which Bolingbroke and his friends preached in England, was altogether destitute of the solid foundations which secure an edifice against overthrow. Every reformation which at all de-

* It first speaks of Christ and his Gospel :—

Ses exemples sont saints, sa morale est divine ;
 Il console en secret les cœurs, qu’il illumine ;
 Dans les plus grands malheurs il leur offre un appui,
 Et si sur l’imposture il fonde sa doctrine,
 C’est un bonheur encore d’être trompé par lui.

Then follows national religion, of which we give the conclusion :—

Crois que devant son trône, en tout temps, en tout lieu
 Le cœur du juste est précieux ;
 Crois qu’un bonze modeste, un dervis charitable,
 Trouvent plutôt grâce à ses yeux
 Qu’un Janséniste impitoyable,
 Ou qu’un pontife ambitieux.
 Et qu’importe enfin sous quel titre on l’implore ?
 Tout hommage est reçu ; mais aucun ne l’honore
 Un Dieu n’a pas besoin de nos soins assidus ;
 Si l’on peut l’offenser, c’est par des injustices.
 Il nous juge sur nos vertus,
 Et non pas sur nos sacrifices.

serves the name, must be founded upon severe and strict morality. Without morality and a holy zeal for truth and knowledge, all attacks upon existing systems can only lead to mischief and greater evils; nothing can be effected for reformation when the principles of the reformers are not free from selfishness and from the empty vanity of mean or courtly souls. It is evident from his conduct at that time, and especially very shortly before his journey to England, and from the sentiments which he seems anxious to disseminate, that Voltaire was very far from attacking with bitter ridicule the injurious or useful prejudices of the government and court, religion and worship. He and his friends took all possible pains to obtain permission to dedicate his free-thinking 'Henriade' to the blindly believing King Louis, and the court would probably have given another direction to Voltaire's wit if this had taken place, and he had reaped the advantages for which he hoped. The condition of the temporal government and of the ecclesiastical police in France was at that time of such a kind, that the most scandalous novels, satires and songs were in every body's mouth, and the poem in which Voltaire at a later period exceeded Peter Aretin and such writers in grossness, indecency and wit, was easily and universally circulated; but this dedication could not be accepted. Because some passages occurred in this serious poem, which were directed against religious pretences, hypocrisy and priestcraft, the king durst not show him the smallest favour, nor dare he even grant a privilege for printing the book. When he did not succeed with the king, he was not ashamed to seek for the favour of the Marchioness de Prye, who at that time conducted the scandalous government of France, under the name of the Duke of Bourbon. In the year before his journey to England, the vain man wrote a comedy (*L'Indiscret*); and in a flattering poem he recommended it to the protection of this woman without shame and morality, who then ruled France.

Voltaire's journey to England stands in close connexion, besides, with the then condition of France, with the want of all that legal order which should have protected the middle classes against the brutal insolence and oppression of the great. He fled from a country in which despotism put down the law, and superstition triumphed over religion, and took refuge in a land of freedom. This was afterwards announced in his 'English Letters.' The great man who according to the custom of

the time had caused him to be maltreated by his servants in the midst of Paris on account of some satirical verses, stood so far above the reach of the law, that neither the courts of justice nor the government could give or procure any satisfaction for the offence; he never suspected, however, what bitter fruits his insolence would produce for his grand-children: he never dreamt that the spirit of the age, which the poet, his friends and disciples announced, would become too strong for bayonets, police and obsolete rights. Voltaire, vain as he was, must have regarded a constitution under which such offences could be committed with impunity with so much the greater dissatisfaction, as he had already under the regent paid the penalty of his petulance in writing some severe verses, by a second confinement in the Bastille; and withal he was only in his element in the midst of those people who were the butts of his satire and his wit.

The brothers Walpole, after a short interval, were again at the head of affairs in England, at the time of Voltaire's temporary sojourn in that country (1726—1729). One of them had completely gone over to the French school, as his own letters and those of his son—as their stale affectedly witty and presumptuous writings fully prove, and we shall afterwards show what value and importance the name of Walpole had in Paris when we come to speak of the societies of Mesd. Geoffrin and du Deffant. When therefore Voltaire came to England, the one brother gave a hint to the other, that on this occasion it would be a prudent and politic stroke for King George, in the case of this renowned Frenchman, to come forward as a patron of the Muses; for notwithstanding the foundation of Göttingen, the king was little fitted in any way to assume the character of a Mæcenas. George the Second and his ministers headed a subscription for a splendid impression of the 'Henriade,' and Voltaire became rich, in the same way as Pope had done by the subscription to his 'Homer;' but the former, by the prudent care and management of his gains, increased his means, and by speculations of various kinds, at the close of his life, was in possession of no inconsiderable wealth. With respect to the influence upon his mode of thinking and the direction of his activity, which sprung from his sojourn in England, Condorcet says expressly, that he learned from Bolingbroke and from his friends

what he never could have learned from Bayle*, although he was not able to accomplish what Montesquieu did to excite the admiration of the people there, by praising their constitution, their patriotism, their proud feeling of independence, nor did he recommend anything similar to the French. During his sojourn in England, and immediately afterwards, he reached the very summit of his renown in Europe, and what was more, he became the national idol of the French. The pious cardinal Fleury experienced to his horror, what Louis the Fifteenth afterwards felt and could never pardon, that notwithstanding and in spite of all his state prisons and Jesuits, his hired mercenaries and officials, an organ of the popular voice and of the spirit of the age had sounded, before which, sooner or later, the monarchy and the court, however eagerly they might strive against it, would be struck dumb and obliged to give way.

Voltaire became renowned as a tragic poet by his 'Zaïre,' and by his smaller poems he won the favour of those ladies and gentlemen who made pretensions to be creators and leaders of the fashion, and even Gottsched in Leipzig began to speak of him, however much Bodmer, Breitinger and all the pious took it amiss. About this time he wrote his history of Charles the Twelfth, which, whatever the serious inquirer after truth may say as to its facts, proved to the world that history might be made available for social entertainment, and that it was possible to give it all the influence and importance of a novel.

Shortly before Voltaire's return from England, Montesquieu had gained a reputation which was continually increasing by his 'Persian Letters,' and he shone as a star of the first magnitude in the house of Madame de Tencin, who brought together to her celebrated assemblies only the choice spirits and most renowned scholars of the day. Voltaire sought to gain a similar reputation by similar means, and shortly after his return from England, he wrote his 'English Letters.' This book, like the 'Persian

* Condorcet, in his life of Voltaire, says, "L'Angleterre fut son asile. Newton n'était plus; mais son esprit régnaît sur ses compatriotes, qu'il avait instruit à ne reconnaître pour guides dans l'étude de la nature, que l'expérience et le calcul. Locke, dont la mort était encore récente, avait donné le premier une théorie de l'âme humaine, fondée sur l'expérience, et montré la route, qu'il faut suivre en métaphysique pour ne point s'égarer. La philosophie de Shaftesbury, commentée par Bolingbroke, embellie par les vers de Pope, avait fait naître en Angleterre un déisme qui annonçait une morale fondée sur des motifs faits pour émouvoir les âmes élevées sans offenser la raison."

Letters,' was directed against the system prevailing in France, whose deficiencies and weakness Montesquieu had laid open; it was secretly printed, and secretly circulated. Voltaire afterwards communicated the essential contents of these 'Letters' upon Englishmen, or of these 'Philosophic Letters,' in the various articles of his 'Philosophical Dictionary.' They had scarcely appeared under the name of the author, before the government and the courts of law publicly gave evidence of their want of power, by a fruitless struggle against the clever wantonness of these circles, of which Voltaire was the organ. The book was not merely forbidden, but it was formally condemned and burned by the hands of the common hangman.

The poor printer was the only sufferer; the real offender, friend and creditor of the great, escaped the storm which burst upon his book, but was again soon enough in Paris. The keeper of the seals soon felt himself obliged to respect and reverence the spirit of the age, which was persecuted with fanatical rage by the parliament and clergy. We shall quote the reasons alleged for the prosecution of those 'Philosophical Letters,' in a note, in the words of Condorcet*, and direct attention to the return of the same appearances in history, although under very different forms.

In their time those letters had the same sort of influence and effect, in reference to English institutions viewed with French eyes, in reference to dramatic poetry, to the philosophy of reflection and life, which Madame de Stael's have had in our own days, upon Germany. In reference to German literature, Madame de Stael had just as little penetrated into the depth of a life that was foreign to her, as Voltaire, although Voltaire understood a little more English than Madame de Stael did Ger-

* Condorcet writes :—“ La publication de ces lettres excita une persécution, dont en les lisant on aurait peine à concevoir l'acharnement ; mais il y combattait les idées innées, et les docteurs croyaient alors que s'ils n'avaient point d'idées innées, il n'y aurait pas de caractères assez sensibles pour distinguer leur âme de celles des bêtes. D'ailleurs il y soutenait avec Locke, qu'il n'était pas rigoureusement prouvé que Dieu n'aurait pas le pouvoir, s'il le voulait absolument, de donner à un élément de la matière la faculté de penser ; et c'était aller contre le privilège des théologiens, qui prétendent savoir à point nommé, et savoir seuls, tout ce que Dieu a pensé, tout ce qu'il a fait ou pu faire, depuis et même avant le commencement du monde. Enfin il y examinait quelques passages des pensées de Pascal, ouvrage que les Jésuites même étaient obligés de respecter malgré eux, comme ceux de S. Augustin. On fut scandalisé de voir un poète, un laïque oser juger Pascal. Il semblait qu'attaquer le seul des défenseurs de la religion chrétienne, ” etc., etc.

man, and did not, like her, draw all his knowledge of books and their contents, singly and alone, from the report of an ingenious scholar and sophist. In their works both were somewhat alike: Voltaire's letters were forbidden and persecuted by the government of Cardinal Fleury, which was favourable to the old darkness, almost upon the very same grounds as the work upon Germany was forbidden and persecuted by Bonaparte, who called himself a friend and protector of the new light; because the one appeared hostile to a military, and the other to a hierarchical despotism.

In his work Voltaire had treated the new English reflective philosophy and the theology of the English scholars after his fashion, for the advantage of the French, as Madame de Stael, the German ideal philosophy and the transcendental poetry of the romantic school. Voltaire remained wholly unacquainted with Shakspeare. Madame de Stael knew Göthe better, who was introduced by her along with the transcendental poets, because her interpreter* was in a situation to furnish her with the very best assistance. Voltaire, moreover, was much bolder in his language than his predecessors, or than Montesquieu; for under the protection and shadow of his English friends, he made the most vehement attacks upon the French legislation, upon the constitution of their courts, and upon the government, and that not in a learned and heavy, but in a clever and easy style. He employed the English scepticism, which taught how a man might altogether dispense with faith, in opposition to Pascal's ingenious and profound philosophy, whose objects were to lead through scepticism to belief.

These letters introduced the English religious philosophy of that time, the literature and views of life entertained by that nation, into France, precisely in the same manner as it is sought at the present time to introduce there the opposite views from Germany; and they excited the greater attention because Montesquieu had already awakened the people, and turned their attention from the system prevailing in France, to a mania for England. On this occasion the difference is strikingly manifest between the Protestant public with whom Pope had to do in England, and the species of unbelief which could be proposed to it, and the Catholic public in France, in which the reigning

* William Schlegel.

system is fully adopted, or must be wholly rejected and treated with contempt, if a man does not wish to be regarded as an oddity, which was the case at a later period with Rousseau.

When Pope was exposed to the general reproach of having preached Bolingbroke's comfortless system in his 'Essay on Man,' he immediately published a deistical confession of faith, in his paraphrase of the Lord's prayer; thereupon the English were appeased, and even the theological Warburton finds nothing to blame. Voltaire was not so fortunate; his 'English Letters' excited so great an alarm that he became afraid, and wished, by the public acknowledgement of the 'Epistle to Urania,' which had now been twelve years in private circulation, to appease the storm, and to justify his views; but this was only to throw oil on the fire. He was also so devoid of all conscience in his way, that in order to quiet the alarm raised upon his public acknowledgement of the 'Epistle,' he tried to throw the blame of it upon an entirely innocent man, who could no longer defend himself. He declared that the Abbé Chaulieu, who was long since dead, was its author. As Voltaire in this poem formally renounced Christianity, he treated the Jewish people, the Christian histories, and all that was regarded as matters of faith, with the greatest contempt, but clothed it all in admirable verse; he should at least not have laid the burthen of his sins upon a Catholic clergyman. He is however more honest in his 'Epistle,' than Pope in his 'Prayer.' What is most important for our object is, that whilst Voltaire was cursed and hated as a blasphemer at the French court, by a bigoted people, and by German scholars, to whom accidental tidings of him came; he was, on the contrary, sought after and honoured by nobles and princes. Frederick the Second, when yet Crown Prince, had entered into correspondence and friendship with him. Frederick, like his sister, the wicked Margravine of Bayreuth, admired Voltaire's wit and talents only, he thought nothing about his politics; but his intimate connexion with Voltaire was of great use to him; he raised him to be the head of that general opposition which was being carried on against the remnants of the middle ages, and it furnished the intellectual poet who was struggling energetically against the system prevailing in France, Germany and Austria, with an ally who was very powerful on account of his temporal influence. Whoever admired Frederick's deeds, could not blame Voltaire's

system. But as this intimacy between the king and the poet took place later in point of time, we shall return to the order of events with respect to Voltaire's revolutionary or reforming activity. Almost contemporaneously with this general attack upon the reigning system and upon dogmatics, he began, in a clever and witty strain, to satirise the prevailing tone of the learned. We can best judge from the Jesuitical rage with which he was persecuted, how admirably he had delineated the weaknesses and presumption of the interpreters of the ancients, who shone in the schools and academics, and had acquired great reputation by their various and copiously exhibited learning. This took place two years after his return from England (1731). These industrious gentlemen had reduced every thing to a system of rules, and they fashioned heads according to them, as gardeners in those days fashioned box-trees by their shears. Learning and mediocrity alone were praised, because these work according to rule, and can be contented with the imitation of what has been mechanically learned in the schools.

It will readily be conceived, that a man like Voltaire, with whose personal character we have happily nothing to do, because he played no political part, had also his personal views in this attack upon the pedants; his poem, however, is not on that account the less witty and striking. All able men, who knew anything of the miserably learned instruction, which was altogether foreign to life and its movements, lamented the condition to which it was reduced, and rejoiced that Voltaire had laid his scourge upon the conductors. This he did in his 'Temple of Taste' ('Le Temple du Goût,') which when compared with Pope's 'Dunciad,' shows the superiority in this species of poetry to have been greatly on the side of the Frenchman. Both Pope and Voltaire have attacked their enemies in bitter and malicious satire, and both by their poems have immortalised a great many insignificant persons; but the Englishman's satire only hit such people as would never have been known without his mention of them, Voltaire selected those who were still called great in their respective schools.

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of compilers and editors, the tasteless indicators and conjecturers, the searchers after things not worth the searching for, are nothing wiser or more prudent in our days than they were in the seventeenth century*. The case was the same with school learning as with dogmatics; they wished to impose what was ancient upon the new age; the state held upright what could no longer stand by itself, and was afterwards obliged, with discomfiture and disgrace, to relinquish one after another. As long as all the demands of the age were pertinaciously resisted, as long as no concession was made, or no point yielded, wit triumphed, how loud soever pedants and academicians lamented over the ‘Temple of Taste.’ The pedants, as the clergy had done in the case of the ‘English Letters,’ called in the temporal, or rather the military arm, to their aid; and although not with the same success as the clergy had done, yet Voltaire found it advisable to take up his residence in Lorraine, and to absent himself for a season from France.

About the time at which Voltaire found it wise to avoid Paris for a season, his tragedies were received as perfect master-pieces, [We shall return to the subject in the following division.] although when more nearly examined, all these pieces stood in direct opposition to the prevailing system of the time, both political and religious. These plays were persecuted on the one hand by the magistrates and the clergy, on the other they were demanded by the public; they were praised, and finally, after they had been made powerful by persecution, they were

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Là j’apperçus les Daciens, les Saumaises,
Gens hérissés de savantes fadaïses,
Le teint jauni, les yeux rouges et secs
Le dos courbé sous un tas d’auteurs Grecs,
Tous noircis d’encre, et coiffés de poussière.
Je leur criai de loin par la portière :
N’allez-vous pas dans le temple du goût
Vous faire dégrasser ? Nous, messieurs ? point du tout
Ce n’est pas là, grâce au ciel notre étude :
Le goût n’est rien, nous avons l’habitude
De rédiger au long, de point en point
Ce qu’on pensa ; mais nous ne pensons point.

Après cet aveu ingénu, ces messieurs voulurent absolument nous faire lire certains passages de Dictys de Crète, et de Métrodore de Lampsaque, que Scalliger avait estropiés. Nous les remerciâmes de leur courtoisie et nous continuâmes notre chemin.”

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passage in the poem may be perhaps its conclusion, but which after all contains only an admirable theory for those who seek for contentment upon earth, not beyond but in themselves*. What was the fruit of all this pious zeal on the part of the zealots? Why, the favourite of the great of that time satirized these zealots in a most virulent manner, in two other pieces ('La Défense du Mondain, ou Apologie du Luxe,' and 'Sur l'Usage de la Vie'). In these he exposed and ridiculed their theories, and proved with great wit and clearness, that the pious usually preach principles, and cause or wish them to be preached, which no one follows, and they themselves least of all.

Another effect which 'The Worldling' produced, in consequence of the attention which it excited and the circumstances which were connected with it, was far more injurious to public morality than the satirizing of hypocrites. Voltaire had no principles of his own, except the love of reputation, honour and distinction. These were his springs of action. He now began to perceive his peculiar vocation; and saw what the great world were most disposed to read, and commenced his masterpiece of poetry, a filthy heroic, worthy of Aretin himself, which was straightway disseminated in different stanzas, and read and admired by every one who made any pretensions to belong to people of good society. The poem is indeed a masterpiece of genius, the most distinguished production of a mind reverencing neither God nor man, —the contents, however, are as exciting as the first dissemination of it was disgraceful.

We must, alas! in the next period return to this 'Maid of Orleans,' who was the opposite of all that the name implies, when we come to speak of the whole extent of Voltaire's social influence, and we shall only now remark in passing, that the first dissemination of the work took place in and proceeded from French Lorraine, which at that time was not yet united with France. Voltaire studied mathematics and natural philosophy in good society, in which, however, burgher morality could form

Qu'auraient-ils pu connaître? il n'avaient rien.
Ils étaient nus, et c'est chose très-claire
Que qui n'a rien, n'a nul partage à faire.

* Et vous jardin de ce premier bon homme,
Jardin fameux par le diable et la pomme,
C'est bien en vain que, par l'orgueil séduits,
Huet, Calmet dans leur savante audace
Du paradis ont cherché la place.
Le paradis terrestre est où je suis.

no subject of discourse, and published popular writings in order to defend Newton's doctrines against the Jesuits and the Romish theologians, and to recommend them to the world. The Jesuits persevered obstinately, like some theologians of our own times, in maintaining the astronomical authority of the book of Joshua in opposition to Copernicus, Kepler and Newton, and made themselves doubly ridiculous on this occasion by attempting to defend blind faith against mathematics and experience*.

§ II.

MONTESQUIEU.

Having given some indications of the tendencies and consequences of the poetry and philosophy of the chief of the new French teachers of the eighteenth century in the years from 1720–1741, we naturally pass on to those men, who, leaning on Voltaire's influence and authority, availed themselves of the rising feelings of repugnance against hierarchy and superstition, against hypocrisy and despotism, as a mere speculation for writing, and who wrote in Voltaire's manner, although not with his ability; before we mention those insignificant names, who only acquired importance through the circumstances, and through Frederick the Second, we must first allude to Montesquieu.

We do not speak of Montesquieu here as the author of 'The Spirit of Laws;' in this relation he will be treated of hereafter: at present we refer only to his 'Persian Letters' and his 'Considerations upon the Reasons of the Greatness and Decline of the Roman Empire.' The 'Persian Letters' were written altogether in the style and manner which became celebrated through Voltaire; Montesquieu, therefore, wished at a later period to deny or at least to conceal the authorship of the letters, as Göthe wished to disown his student-wit against Wieland, and precisely on the same bad grounds. Montesquieu shone in the house of Madame de Tencin by means of the same kind of wit which

* That the Jesuits were consequent in the same way, as people in Rome a few years ago were, and that they would have nothing to do with the Copernican system, we learn from Marmontel's Autobiography, written for his children ('Mémoires d'un Père'): he states (Edit. de Paris, chez Le Doux, 1827, 8vo), when he being a disciple of the Jesuits became unfaithful to them, part 1. p. 102: "Dès ma seconde année de physique, n'ayant pu engager mon professeur jésuite à nous enseigner la physique Newtonienne, je pris mon parti d'aller l'étudier à l'école des Doctrinaires."

Frederick the Second loved and admired in his companions ; but he afterwards gained some favour among the English aristocracy and in some measure the hierarchy, and he altered his tone. He very early assumed a wholly different tone and a different position with respect to his age, from that which he had assumed in his first work. In his later writings he spared religion and morals, and renounced the fearful weapons of keen satire ; but, on the other hand, he attacked with great seriousness the whole edifice of the French state, as it had been built up since the time of Louis the Eleventh, and especially the administration of the government since the time of Louis the Thirteenth. We dwell somewhat longer on the first work, because what we have to say of the ‘*Persian Letters*,’ compared with what we shall hereafter have occasion to remark of the associates and satellites of Frederick the Second, will prove that from 1721 the old theories were regarded as wholly untenable.

Montesquieu had seen and felt the misery and oppression of the last years of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth ; and with the strong feeling of disapprobation of a noble and youthful mind, had communicated his thoughts and feelings to his contemporaries. He afterwards saw the times of the regency and its demoralization ; he wished to speak to the people and to the well-informed portion of the evils of ordinary life, and to produce an effect ; this could only be done by means of poetry, as Voltaire had done, or by a novel in prose ; a serious book would have remained altogether without influence. He chose the form of the novel as most suitable for his design, because nature had endowed him with no poetical capacities. In general, Voltaire, as a poet and a philosopher, had chiefly directed his poetical satire against superstition and the priesthood, which stood most in his way ; Montesquieu, as a learned jesuit and noble, took more the political side of the subject, and kept in his eye ministerial despotism, oppression and want of respect for the law and for legal forms.

Both these, the most celebrated men of the eighteenth century, were renowned besides almost at the same time in consequence of their satires against faith, reigning institutions, and the existing constitution of the state. The short and witty poems of the one, and the apparently easy wanton novel of the other, no sooner reached the hands of those, who gave the tone (1721), than the joy of salutary as well as disadvantageous prejudices suddenly

disappeared, and in this respect the 'Persian Letters' may be regarded as more important than any writing of Voltaire's, because they enter into almost all the relations of life, and expose before the eyes of the people everything which was absurd or unnatural in their institutions, which the people were accustomed to admire, and the courts and governments to praise, as the highest perfection of fortune and wisdom.

Under the protection of a veil which concealed nothing, Montesquieu ventured, in the time of the regency, to say what people would scarcely venture to publish in a newspaper or other political writing in our times of greater freedom. He proves, in a satirical vein, that all the celebrated institutions of the monarchy are rotten; he seeks in jest and earnest to point out the remedies which may serve to cure the diseases of the state. And this makes it necessary more minutely to examine the contents of the 'Persian Letters' in reference to the condition of the social and political relations of the century.

Montesquieu wrote these letters when he was thirty-two years old, and after he had made some previous attempts in authorship. He belonged to the best society of his age, and to the most distinguished men of his nation; it is therefore quite a mistake to suppose that he was precipitate, or that the form and materials of his work were the offspring of any youthful ambition. No! he was here the organ of his time, not the inventor of his doctrine. The clothing alone of the 'Persian Letters' belongs to its author, the substance to his age: he only speaks out what all men of understanding thought, and this indeed is plain from the applause with which the 'Persian Letters' were received, and the response which they found in every mind. As to the form of the 'Persian Letters' making Persians write about and discuss French manners, government, and the events of the day, he borrowed this from a friend of Regnard, the well-known composer of comic pieces. Dufresny, who was a chamberlain of Louis the Fourteenth, and who was celebrated* in his time

* Dufresny wrote several very good pieces, without promising anything remarkable. He wrote especially for the journals and other periodicals many witty essays and many pleasant stories, so that Auger has thought it worth while in our days (1810) to publish 'Les œuvres choisies de Dufresny.' Among these, 'Les Entrétiens, ou Amusemens sérieux et comiques,' have been much read, and in them he had availed himself of the arrival of ambassadors from Siam in France, in order to give them the title of Siamese remarks upon the life and pursuits of his time. They are indeed in quite a different tone from those of Montesquieu.

as a writer for the elegant world, had already introduced a couple of Siamese discoursing upon French customs and manners; Montesquieu put his remarks and reflections into the mouths of Persians. The story, which in these letters is connected with the satire, the narratives of occurrences without and within the harem, the pictures of Eastern life, which Montesquieu was better acquainted with than any Frenchman of his age, the wantonness which is intentionally mixed up with the narrative, the romantic issue, and in general the æsthetical or literary estimation of the work, do not come within the sphere of this work: we have only to do with its moral, religious and political character. The essential contents of the book are nothing but a sharp and bitter description of the circumstances of France at the end of the seventeenth and in the beginning of the eighteenth century, or in other words, a vehement attack upon the administration of the state, the hierarchy, the superstition, and the whole system of the principles and government of a monarchical, hierarchical government. These indeed are contents of a very serious character; and it is therefore easily seen that the only object of the light and wanton parts of the story of the 'Letters' is by their easy and playful tone to compel cursory novel readers and fashionable ladies to read the more serious materials. That which in a proper work of art would be a decided imperfection and essential failure, if we consider the object of the work, will in this case be regarded as an advantage, viz. that the dress and character of the novel are inappropriate. The Persian, by whom the most of the letters are written, writes like a Frenchman; his features cannot be concealed under his Oriental mask. But a completely Oriental costume would have shocked the reader, and the 'Letters' would not have reached their political aim.

The 'Letters' indeed give us no true picture of their time; their effect proves, however, that the author merely said what educated people thought, and what no newspaper, no periodical ventured to announce. This makes it necessary for us, at least, to vindicate the points touched upon by Montesquieu. Before we briefly state the contents of single letters we must make this general remark, that the book is especially important, from the circumstance that no one at that time had ventured to blame the church and the government in prose, and that therefore the boldness of the writer excited astonishment. Satirical novels

took their origin later, and Montesquieu had the clever tone of conversation quite in his power. He describes all the scenes of life with wit and great liveliness, the excitability and excitement of the people of the higher classes in Paris at that time. He depicts the influence of the female sex, and prepares the minds of his readers for his new theory deduced from England, of the true nature of modern constitutions, the theory of a religion without a priesthood, and of a monarchy without bayonets.

Montesquieu in his 'Persian Letters' paints the times of Louis the Fourteenth and the Regency, and the plans adopted by the Regent to free himself from his debts, in such dark colours, that a Jacobin of the time of the revolution could scarcely have spoken in stronger terms. Names indeed are not mentioned, but at the time in which these 'Letters' appeared that was by no means necessary; at present, however, a minute acquaintance with the history of the time is indispensable, in order to understand the particular allusions, and the book has in consequence lost its importance.

The clergy and the dogmas and institutions of the Catholic church, the doctrines of transubstantiation, of fasts, of the power of the pope in the church, the alarm about the Bull Unigenitus, the war between the Gallican and the Roman churches, between the Jansenists and the Jesuits, all these topics meet us almost in the very commencement of the work: we shall extract some passages from the 'Letters,' in order to make the tendency and object of the work more obvious.

From the tenth to the fifteenth letter, as well as afterwards in the 'Spirit of Laws,' and in the 'History of the Republic of the Troglodytes,' the republican constitution is represented as that of virtue and simplicity, and monarchy as the necessary restraint of the development of social life, which has become a state of demoralisation and crime. The Persian, as appears by the 'Letters,' observed in the Christian land many conscientious doubts, and wished to know the reason of many of those positive decrees which are repugnant to reason and experience. He applied to a Mollah. The Mahomedan theologian is here the representative of all the logical professors and controversial preachers, and answers as such persons are accustomed to do.

"Whoever," says he, "is a true believer, entertains no such doubts; whoever will be instructed, let him apply to the fathers of the church." He introduces the fathers, grossly abuses in-

fidelity and infidels, and relates a very silly legend. The twenty-fourth letter, combined with the twenty-ninth, carries religious irony still further. In the twenty-fourth the pope is called a conjuror, who is able to make the people believe that three persons are one, the bread we eat no bread, and the wine we drink no wine, and a thousand things of the same description. In the twenty-ninth the irony against the riches and power of the pope and the bishops is still stronger. It touches upon the dispensations granted for money, upon controversies in matters of faith, upon bead rolls and the inquisition.

With respect to the persecution of heretics, Montesquieu puts very remarkable words into the mouth of his Persian when speaking of the intolerance of his time: "Happy the land which is inhabited by the children of the prophets! these sorrowful exhibitions are there unknown; the holy religion which was brought from heaven by angels, maintains itself by its own internal truth." In the thirty-fifth letter a parallel is drawn between the Mahomedan and the Catholic religion, which is sustained with great ingenuity and wit. In the thirty-seventh letter, Montesquieu, after having in a few short but striking touches drawn a very different picture of Louis the Fourteenth from that which dare be given of him in the official history of his time, and of the splendour of the monarchy, returns in the thirty-ninth letter to the subject of religion and its doctrines. The bitter irony of this letter which touches upon the very foundations of the Gospel is wholly written after the manner of Voltaire. He tries to show that the Gospel history is not more authentic than that of the Koran, by placing the legends of the Mahomedan theologians in juxtaposition with the traditions imposed upon Christianity. The Capuchins, their mode of life, and that of all other monks, are afterwards attacked in very free language; and father confessors, as well as casuists, who knew how to benefit themselves and their churches by the sins of the rich and the noble, receive a quick dispatch.

"If my Sophi," says the ill-disguised Persian, "had a man at his court, who treated him as your confessors treat their God—if he invented some subtle distinction between different commands and laws, and instructed his subjects in what sense they might violate his commandments, and in what sense they must thoroughly follow them out, he would immediately cause him to be impaled."

The doctrines of the natural freedom of the will, of predestination, and the controversies which have been carried on with respect to them in the schools, are treated in the sixty-ninth letter, with the light of a clear and sound understanding; the doctrine of Paradise and of the fall of man are ridiculed, in passing, as Jewish fables. The reigning literature of the French comes in also for its share of criticism and condemnation. The *Académie Française*, or the knightly order of forty flatterers and rhetoricians, which was founded by Richelieu and protected by Louis the Fourteenth, is no better spoken of by Montesquieu in his seventy-third letter than it had been by Voltaire in his ‘Bourbier.’ “It has been founded merely for chattering,” says the writer. “Flattery is the element of the speeches of its members, and of the never-ceasing prattling of the gentlemen academicians; the spirit of eulogism is infused into each at his initiation.” How correctly Montesquieu conceived the spirit of this much-praised art of eloquence, how strikingly he judges of the value of this monarchical forcing-house of literature and of science cherished merely for ostentation, will be best learned from his own words. He says:—

“This corporation consists of forty heads, which are full of figures of speech, metaphors and antitheses. The mouth of each of the forty speaks only in exclamations; their ears must always be tickled by rhythm and cadence; nothing can be said of their eyes, for the whole bodies of the members seem made only to speak and not to see. The corporation does not stand firmly on its feet; for time, which is its plague, bends it hither and thither, and always destroys what it has accomplished.”

In the seventy-sixth letter, the Christian view, with respect to self-murder, is unfavourably compared with the more indulgent principles of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

In these letters Montesquieu expresses his opinion in a much more becoming and worthy manner, with respect to the prevailing and perverted principles of political administration, than he had done upon religious subjects. He puts his obvious and palpable objections to the form of an absolute monarchy, into the mouth of his Asiatic, whose position and character do not render him the most suitable vehicle for such opinions. In his eighty-third letter he develops the form of a limited monarchy as opposed to that of autocracy, against which he had stated his objections in the eightieth letter. This theory is elucidated

in the ninety-second letter, by some brief remarks upon the concluding events of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, upon his death, his will, and the history of its abolition. In the ninety-fourth letter, Montesquieu declares distinctly that the foundations of the various institutions of the European states were tottering at his time and incapable of undergoing any severe trial. We shall quote the passage itself:—

“ People,” says the Persian, “ speak more about the rights of the state and the rights of the people in Europe than in Asia; it may, however, with truth be alleged, that all principles on these subjects have either disappeared or been displaced by the passions of the rulers, the endurance of the people, or the flattering sophistry of writers.” The following letter is properly didactic; we pass it over, therefore, because our object is to touch only upon what relates to the struggle of talents and genius with force, or to that in which the efforts of the higher classes show themselves, in connexion with their desire to free themselves from those prejudices which were in other respects profitable to them.

In the same manner as Voltaire, in the poem already referred to, attacked the tribunals of the Regency in verse, Montesquieu satirises them in his ninety-eighth letter in prose. On this occasion he points out, at the same time, the way to honour in his days, and holds up to scorn the pride and insolence of the nobility. It would appear as if he referred to the contents of the writing directed against them by the parliament. We give the commencement of the passage, from which a conclusion may be easily drawn with respect to the contents of the whole (*ex pede Herculem*). “ The body of lacqueys,” writes the Persian, “ is in greater esteem in France than elsewhere; for it is the nursery of great gentlemen, and serves to fill up the vacancies which exist in other stations,” etc. etc.

With the hundredth letter, the author begins to give his views of a state, which was precisely the very opposite of that which was generally existing and approved of. The exposition of his theory is given in such an easy style, is so clear, so agreeable, so short, the subjects rather touched than dilated upon, that we have no difficulty in conceiving, that the rigid and irrational theories of the schools must have yielded before the verses of Voltaire, and Montesquieu’s easy prose. We call the attention of our readers to the fact, that in this way the theories of the

Romish theologians and jurists were destroyed among educated persons before the appearance of the 'Spirit of Laws;' and the nature of Roman and German legislation, as well as the unhappy consequences of the mixture of both, were made plain to mere novel readers. In the same manner, in the hundred and second and hundred and third letters, the proper condition of the European governments, and the nature of their modified and tempered constitutions are explained. The predilection in favour of the English constitution, which reigns through the whole 'Spirit of Laws,' clearly shows itself in the hundred and fourth letter, in which the principles of this constitution are explained in a comprehensible and easy manner.

In this letter and in those which immediately follow, in which the principles of administration and the relation of luxury and industry to civilization, are discussed, the germs of that philosophy are visible which has since pervaded the whole of the French people; but which had at first slowly and unobserved given an entirely new colour to literature. This is the most remarkable feature in the activity and influence of Voltaire and of Montesquieu. These two, who were the greatest writers of the nation, both availed themselves of poetry and morals, of the forms of confidential correspondence and songs, in order to place in a clear light, and to hold up to the public contempt, the meanness and degradation of courtly, flattering and mercenary writers. Those alone can judge how important a service this was, who are well acquainted with the condition of literature at that time.

As to political economy, Lord Brougham and Miss Martineau, as is well known, have tried to recommend their theories in England, in the same manner, to a public which was not at all accustomed to discuss such subjects, and very well-known and learned theologians in Germany have treated the deep mysteries of religious philosophy in novels; Montesquieu preceded and pointed out the way to them all. And it appears to us, that the two short letters in which he has characterized the two systems of domestic and social life, both of which are opposed to the prevailing system, and to the teaching of the church, are more to the point and more comprehensible than all that his imitators have produced of the same kind. The question is thus thrown out which Voltaire, in 'The Worldling,' dispatched with a witticism:—"Are luxury and the arts advantageous or

injurious to man?" The Persian Rhedi, in a very clever and ingenious manner, defends a principle with respect to the object of human life, which has great similarity with the paradox, afterwards so splendidly defended by Rousseau. According to this principle, as Rousseau afterwards seriously maintained, the arts and sciences, as well as luxury, are consequences of degeneracy. Another principle is opposed to this, which is put into the mouth of the Persian Usbeck. As to Rhedi's theory, propounded in the hundred and fifth letter, it will be seen that Montesquieu, as well as Rousseau, must take his stand upon morality, in order to justify it. To show how near he comes to Rousseau, and how sharply he criticises his age, we shall bring forward some unquestionably correct political remarks.

"I have heard," writes Rhedi, "that the invention of bombs alone was the means of destroying the freedom of all the European nations. Princes could no longer entrust their fortresses to the citizens, because these would surrender upon the bursting of the very first shell. This furnished them with a pretence for maintaining large standing armies, by means of which they afterwards oppressed their own subjects." In the same way, the discovery of the new world, and the increased mass of gold and silver thereby brought into circulation, are represented as a means of annihilating freedom and independence. In the following letter, on the contrary, Usbeck employs Voltaire's doctrine, brought forward in 'The Worldling,' which lies at the foundation of all the modern works upon political economy, and which is generally followed in life.

The contents and manner of the hundred and seventh letter will be readily deduced from the conclusion, which we here present. "Above all, my dear Rhedi, what I have before said is plain, that a prince who will be powerful, must be careful that his subjects be well protected and prosperous, he must strive that they should not only be well supplied with the necessaries of life, but that they should have every superfluity of luxury."

The hundred and seventh letter again returns to the criticism of particular points, and contrasts the government of Louis the Fourteenth with that ideal constitution which he had sketched, and what is actual and existing with what is true. On this occasion a remark is made which will find its confirmation in the first division of this history—that no opinion can be formed with respect to a governor in the West, till he has risen above the power

of his father confessor and his mistress. This naturally leads to the history of Maintenon. In the hundred and thirteenth letter, there are some general considerations in the first edition, which were omitted in the following ones, and among others a very bold proposition for those times, though not for ours, with respect to the chronology of the Bible:—

“The years of the world’s age cannot be numbered; the sand on the sea shore, when compared with them, is but as an instant.” In the following letters there is found the germ of all those ideas from which the ‘Spirit of Laws’ took its origin. The greatest part of the contents of the following letters is serious and instructive, although even in these a certain degree of lightness was necessary in the form, for the class of readers for whom the book was calculated; but the author was obliged, from the nature of his object, to avoid going too deeply into particulars. In these parts of the book also, the whole pervading system of the age, the government of the church, as well as the administration of the state, are seriously blamed, and the degradation of the whole race of the people, which was so much censured, is attributed to the evil of the systems by which they are ruled. This appears in letters one hundred and sixteen and seventeen, in which monogamy and polygamy are discussed. We shall elucidate the tendency by the quotation of a single sentence:—

“The prohibition of divorce is one cause of the depopulation of Christian Catholic countries, and the great number of those who are not allowed to marry is a second.” Montesquieu adds expressly, that by those who are not allowed to marry he understands the priests and dervises, nuns and monks, who are restrained by vows of perpetual celibacy. His Persian exclaims, “How Christians can call this pre-eminently virtue I do not comprehend, because I can form no notion of a virtue which has no useful effects.” This serves for an introduction to a very vehement attack upon monasteries and cloister life.

After a popular explanation of the principles of political economy, with respect to the increase of population and the possibility of providing for the support of a greatly augmented body of people, there follows, in the hundred and twentieth letter, an investigation on the subject of colonization, with respect to which, principles are brought forward and opinions stated which properly belong to the close of the eighteenth century. In the hundred and twenty-second letter the absolutely governing

states of Switzerland and Holland are very vigorously assailed; a few sentences will show clearly the view which he took of the subject:—

“The equality of citizens itself,” he says, “usually produces a certain equality in their prosperity, because it brings redundancy and life into all parts of the body politic, and spreads in all directions. This is not the case in countries which obey an absolute power. The prince, the courtiers and a small number of private persons possess all the wealth, whilst all the rest are sunk in the deepest poverty.” In the following letter, the hundred and twenty-third, a pretended decree issued by princes in favour of the court is promulgated, which is so bitterly ironical, that its publicity could be attributed in our days only to a Cobbett or an O’Connell. The following keen remark serves as an introduction to this outbreak:—

“When I think of the situation of princes, who are always surrounded and besieged by covetous and insatiable men, I cannot do otherwise than pity their condition, and this I do the more as they have not strength enough to withstand the requests of people, to whom all acts of favour and privilege granted, necessarily cause additional burthens to be laid upon that portion of their subjects who ask for nothing. Whenever I hear persons speak of princely presents, of liberality, of testimonies of grace, of the salaries which they bestow,” etc. etc.; then follows the pretended edict, whose contents will readily be guessed at from the words which have been introduced. The hundred and thirty-first letter is naturally connected with that which has been partially quoted, because in it the nature and condition of the European republics are discussed, and these are linked to the history of the irruption of the northern tribes into the despotically governed provinces of the south of Europe, and to the notion of a freer constitution and government, which this irruption brought with it. The fact of the dreadful consequences of Law’s scheme, and of the paper speculations of the Regency, being immediately afterwards described in the darkest colours, is a piece of tactics, of which perhaps the author of the ‘Letters’ was not himself conscious, but only instinctively adopted.

In the following letters, the ignorance of the monks, the insipidity of the whole theological literature and of the useless wisdom of the schools, is mercilessly ridiculed. These letters are

quite in the manner of Voltaire. The following passage of the hundred and thirty-fifth letter presents, in prose, almost a copy of what we have quoted above in verse from Voltaire's 'Temple of Taste,' which appeared later than the 'Persian Letters.' The librarian of an institution, who is represented in this letter as showing his treasures to the Persian, speaks to him as follows:—

“‘There stand the grammarians, glossarists, and commentators.’ ‘Father,’ replied the Persian, ‘might not all these people have been destitute of a sound manly understanding?’ ‘Yes,’ answered the librarian, ‘understanding does not appear in their books, and they are nothing the worse on that account; that is very pleasant for them.’ ‘True,’ replied the Persian, ‘and I know philosophers enough who would do well to betake themselves to such studies.’” On the conclusion of the letters, and the remarks which are appended in order to unravel and bring out the *dénouement* of the events involved in the story of the novel, we cannot delay, but must pass on to other works written by the same author.

In what has preceded we have endeavoured to make it obvious, that Montesquieu was in error when he supposed that his 'Persian Letters' had had a social influence as an historical creation, and not as a political and religious satire. His whole strength lay in being the organ of the spirit of his age, which was giving evidence of its existence by several other signs; after, therefore, he had made several attempts upon the æsthetic field, he soon turned back to the political. The attempt in a department which was altogether strange to him, and which he made merely for the pleasure of the society which assembled in the house of Mad. de Tencin, need only be mentioned in passing, in order to dwell somewhat longer on his 'Considerations upon Roman History.'

Immediately after his 'Persian Letters,' Montesquieu wrote a prosaic poem, or if you will, a novel, called 'The Temple of Gnidus,' in which he says and describes all sorts of agreeable and pleasant things; the whole, however, like his attempt at a work of taste, is without philosophy properly so called, devoid of vigour and life. This book was, indeed, very much read, and circulated in several editions; but the author himself felt that the great public had been unaffected, and that he had given delight only to the numerous circle of his friends and the academic world. He drew back and disowned 'The Temple of Gni-

dus,' as he had done the first unmutilated editions of the 'Persian Letters,' but upon entirely different grounds.

Montesquieu's journey to England, and his close intimacy and intercourse with Englishmen, which even extended to finding a market for the wines of his estates, produced a great influence upon his remaining writings, and especially upon his 'Spirit of Laws.' This may be readily traced in his 'Considerations,' but still more in his 'Spirit of Laws,' which it will be the more necessary to mention expressly in the following period, as its appearance immediately preceded the proposal and elucidation of the entirely new system of absolute democracy, which was brought forward by J. J. Rousseau. Montesquieu, at this time, had become a member of the Academy, he had travelled through France, Italy and the Netherlands, and sojourned for a time in England, almost contemporaneously with Voltaire; and it will therefore be easily perceived, that the friend and confidant of Lord Chesterfield no longer altogether agreed with the author of the 'Persian Letters.'

The legal order of the English, the use which they made of their state religion and their livings, the life and active movement in England, reconciled him to many things which he had bitterly and hostilely attacked in his 'Persian Letters;' and on the other hand he entertained a more lively feeling of the degradation to which the people of the Continent must submit for that quiet which results from a vigorous police under the protection of power, and he felt that moral death must be the result, the necessary consequence, of their want of participation in all public affairs. England was at that time comparatively free from the evils which have since grown out of the unhappy distinction between immense wealth and almost indescribable poverty; and the strong impression which in the very bloom of its prosperity it made upon the mind of a nobleman who saw his native land given up as a spoil to the arbitrary will of ministers and courtiers, is apparent in every part of his 'Considerations.'

The 'Considerations upon the Causes of the Greatness and Decline of the Romans and their State,' appeared in 1734, and therefore at a time when history was entirely in the hands of theologians, jurists and transcribers, or of learned tasteless compilers, from which it was first freed by Voltaire and Bolingbroke. We must not however forget that Beaufort in his 'Roman Republic,' which first appeared in separate treatises in the Memoirs

of the Academy, had shown no less ability in the political treatment of history than Montesquieu, and that he far exceeded him in solid inquiry and learned knowledge of the subject. Moreover Gibbon stood wholly upon Montesquieu's shoulders, and follows his traces minutely in his 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:' since the appearance of this book, the whole treatment of history has assumed quite a different form.

The great effect of the 'Considerations' must not however be attributed wholly to the pleasant and oratorical manner, or to the peculiar ideas of the author, but also to the spirit of the age, and especially to Montesquieu's position, who was quite as much an object of regard in England as in his native land. We could furnish not a few examples from our own times in which many important men have been very largely indebted for reputation as writers to their personal importance, or have been helped forward by means of their French or English celebrity. This remark does not deprive the work itself of any of its merit, but we speak only of the effect, which, as is well known, depends far more upon the accidents of public opinion than upon real worth, of which only a very small number of persons are in any condition to form an independent opinion.

We neither can nor will allow ourselves to enter upon a criticism or minute analysis of this important book, though but small in size: we must not, however, pass over the fact that it merely contains the results of Montesquieu's study of history, his opinions and conclusions, but no investigations or weighing of particular or single facts, on which in the end the whole matter rests.

The confident tone, the pointed epigrammatic sentences, the definite certainty, with which opinions are pronounced on whole masses of facts, were all calculated for the public, with whose wants he became acquainted through Mad. de Tencin: a great object however was incidentally gained; the tedious and pious diffuseness of Rollin, and the Jesuitical historical learning of Catrou and Rouillé were banished into the dark schools, where obsolete knowledge alone was cultivated and pursued. It was at this time very easy to bring together the results of Roman history, so far as was needful for intercourse, and Parisian conversation, as at a later period, may be learned from the well-known work of President Hénault. A very slight acquaintance with

the history of their own country was quite sufficient and suitable to the new tendency of literature and conversation.

Montesquieu's little book can be regarded only as a collection of oracles, and a catalogue of the sins of an absolute and military empire. This may be judged of from the fact that the whole Roman history, from the first origin of the people till the time of the crusades, is treated of in a few sheets, which are most prodigally printed, and which notwithstanding only make a small octavo volume of 200 pages. Montesquieu can neither be regarded as a philosopher nor an historian, he is an admirable orator upon history considered from a political point of view, precisely as Bossuet is admirable, if the whole of mankind and history be viewed with ecclesiastical eyes. Montesquieu had the English history and constitution always before him; Bossuet, the Jewish prophets and the Christian fathers.

We are not, therefore, to seek for any learning in Montesquieu; we must not ask what connexion his book had with other books which accident brought into his hands, and which he hastily read; we must not inquire whether what he alleges be true or to be relied upon; the question is quite of a different kind. The allegations therefore of such a work should never be considered, as is sometimes done, as the authority of a great man, or as oracles; on the contrary, the inquiring historian must always be led by Montesquieu's most distinct allegations to inquiry, in order that his investigations may be fruitful; so Gibbon at least thought, whom, however, we by no means reckon amongst the number of those men whom we should characterize as inquirers.

Persons scarcely ventured at this time occasionally to insinuate a remark upon the effect of a constitution or the abuses of a government; old Mezeray gave great offence by having ventured so to do; and the world was the more surprised that Montesquieu had dared to use history as a political means. A distinguished man and an ecclesiastic renowned as a writer, ventured to raise up the oppressed minds of his fellow-countrymen in that dark and despotic age, by the example of the greatest and the most powerful nation; and this alone would entitle his work to immortality. His nation, at least those educated men whom he had in his eye, were brought up by ecclesiastics: slavish fear and monkish humility were so deeply imprinted in their souls, that despotism everywhere found slaves, and the country nowhere citizens; in his Roman history, Montesquieu taught the

meaning of patriotism and of the consciousness of inherent power and unalienable right. In the description of the same nation, and in opposition to this, he showed how the people had been degraded by despotism, and finally, how they altogether sunk.

The 'Considerations upon Roman History' had the same object as Machiavelli's 'Discourses upon Livy;' but they did not remain, like these, wholly without fruit. Besides, Montesquieu was not a blind admirer of the Roman state, its religion and aristocracy, as Machiavelli was. He is so far removed from blind and unconditional admiration, that he does not even once represent the Roman state as the greatest and best, as the patriotic Florentine did. No love of military pomp or glory dazzled his sight, and Livy does not carry him away by the torrent of his eloquent discourse.

In the plan and development of the 'Considerations' we recognise the idea from which the 'Spirit of Laws' sprung. On the one hand, Livy had no such influence upon Montesquieu as he is accustomed to have upon the learned or blind admirers of antiquity; on the other, Montesquieu carried with him into history no mere dead learning, or even theology and Christian morality, as the Jesuits and Bossuet did; nor loose judgements, light and clever conversation and frivolity of mind, like Voltaire. Montesquieu and Bolingbroke by their writings have given to modern times quite a different idea of history from that which the older writers entertained. They proved from history the continually growing opposition against spiritual and worldly prejudices, and showed that a newly awakened and living patriotism alone could compel those reforms which were demanded by the intelligent of all classes and refused by governments and the clergy, and could become means of deliverance to the torpid generations of their time.

From the previous remarks it will be obvious that the 'Considerations upon Roman History,' as well as the 'Persian Letters,' were directed against the existing order of things in France, and the prevailing priestcraft of the age; but we must add, that they indicated views which were quite as much opposed to the wantonness of the enemies of every system of monarchical administration, as to the barbarity of parliaments and the despotism of ministers. The work therefore cannot, properly speaking, be regarded as an historical one, but merely as a means of awakening the world out of its theological slumbers by a philo-

sophical consideration of history, to withdraw its attention from such books as Bossuet's well-intended 'Discourses upon Universal History,' the products and representations of the hierarchical principle, and to destroy the influence of those learned school-books which were intentionally prepared and upheld at the charge of the various governments for the maintenance of their own views. These objects were fully attained.

We shall introduce merely two or three passages from the 'Considerations,' in order more exactly to point out the connexion of this important book with its time, and its probable influence upon the public, and to prove that Montesquieu, by his method of considering history, became in some measure a political prophet. The first passage which we shall quote is admirably suited to the last years of the French republic. He takes occasion to allege that the cause of the decline and fall of Roman freedom is not to be found in the restlessness or even tumults of the people, but in the greatness and extension of their dominion, and in the splendour of the capital. He observes:—

“As long as the Roman people were only stirred up by their tribunes, on whom they had nothing to bestow, except that power which they themselves possessed, the senate was easily able to defend itself against popular tumults; because its power and authority were permanent, whereas that of the masses generally passes from the greatest vehemence to the greatest weakness: but all this immediately changed as soon as the people were in a condition to confer on their tribunes great powers beyond the bounds of the city. From this time forward all the wisdom of the senate was fruitless, and the republic was lost. The reason,” he continues, “why free states are not so enduring as others is chiefly to be found in this, that the great success as well as misfortunes which they experience are destructive of their freedom; whereas, in states in which the freedom of the people is annihilated, success as well as misfortune only makes slavery more oppressive. A wise republic, therefore, should never, properly speaking, undertake any thing by which it runs the risk either of extraordinary success or probable failure, but should always seek after the firm maintenance of its position and circumstances as its chief good. The extent of its dominion, therefore, destroyed the Roman republic, and the greatness of the city did not a little contribute to the consummation.” This is afterwards proved at length.

In the same manner as we have applied this passage to the recent history of France, Montesquieu himself has directed one of his observations immediately against the then miserable unlimited government of his country; for he actually refers to France, although he pretends just before to be speaking of the East alone. "If," says he, "any one requires that the citizens of a free state should be at the same time bold in war and timorous in peace, he seeks an impossibility, and it may be taken as a general rule that freedom has altogether disappeared from a state which calls itself a republic, as soon as every man in the state remains in a condition of quiet repose. The word unity, when spoken of a political body, is very equivocal; true unity is that agreement, by virtue of which all the parts of a whole, however opposed to each other they may appear, contribute to its well-being, as dissonances in music to the harmony of the piece."

"There may therefore," he continues, "be the most perfect harmony in a state, in which externally nothing is seen but disquiet, i. e. a harmony from which that kind of success proceeds, which alone is true peace. But in the accord and agreement of Asiatic despotism, i. e. of that species of government which is unlimited, there is always true disunion. The peasant, the soldier, the official and the nobleman have that sort of union and connexion between them only, in which the one can oppress the other, without fear of resistance or controul." It will be seen from these words, what was the opinion entertained by one of the most distinguished nobles and landowners in France (about 1734), with respect to the constitution and government of his native country. We shall add still another passage, which has received a splendid confirmation in the history of the French revolution. "There is no state," says Montesquieu, "which more strongly threatens others with conquest, than that which experiences the horrors of civil war. Every man,—noble, burgher, peasant, artisan,—becomes a soldier; and when the parties have made peace, and united their strength, they have great advantages over those states in which every man is a citizen, and follows his peaceful occupation. Besides, it is precisely in such disturbed states of society, as during the existence of civil wars, that the greatest men are formed; because in the general confusion, men of talents and merit pave a way for themselves: for in such times every man finds out and assumes the

place most suited to his powers, instead of having his place and sphere, as in ordinary times, pointed out to him by other persons, or constrained by circumstances, when he usually occupies the wrong position."

These passages will show the way in which Montesquieu, in his work, makes history of an importance in the life and administration of the state, of which the French, till that time, had not the slightest conception. He shed a new light upon politics, which afterwards enlightened all those persons in the different states of Europe, who sought to substitute a new principle and a new order for that obsolete and untenable one, which could only be upheld by force. We shall speak of the 'Spirit of Laws' in the following period; for when this work appeared, the new doctrine had already made great advances, and was loudly announced in the tone-giving societies of Paris, and at the court of Berlin. We pass on therefore to speak of the first apostles of the system preached by Voltaire, or the scoffers whom Frederick the Second invited to come to him from Holland, and in connexion with them, in the following paragraphs we shall refer to the history of the so-called *bureaux d'esprit* in Paris, in order to avoid the necessity of returning to them in the next period, to which they both properly belong.

§ III.

WRITERS IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE, WHO, IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, WERE PROTECTED BY FREDERICK THE SECOND.

As we wish to bring all that relates to the men with whom Frederick the Second surrounded himself from 1740–1760 within a short compass, we depart from the strict order of time, as we shall also do in the history of German mental culture and improvement, in order fully to explain these points here; because we shall not frequently return to them, as it is necessary for us to do to the great writers of the age.

The Berlin Frenchmen were for the most part called from Holland, where they had taken refuge, as in very recent times many admired German writers in the lighter departments of literature have taken refuge in Paris; their works, however, notwithstanding all the prohibitions of the government, were ex-

tensively circulated in France, because the Dutch booksellers made their prohibited works a matter of formal and systematic speculation. A hierarchical and hypocritically religious tone prevailed in France under Fleury's administration; every man who looked for public employment was obliged to fall in with this tone, and multitudes sought to compensate themselves in secret for this public restraint*. Every free mind, every man of intelligence, hated this compulsory hypocrisy, hated the oppressive bonds which made every free expression of opinion either impossible, or subjected it to grievous penalties, and people soon learnt to abhor every thing connected with a system which could be so abused. This circumstance gave an importance to the writings of such men as La Mettrie, De Prades, D'Argout, D'Argent and others, which they could never otherwise have had. The writings of these men, which had been otherwise quite unimportant, received also some weight and influence from their authors having been encouraged and honoured by the greatest man of the century, and from having been exposed to the opposition and clamour of the dull, learned, orthodox scholars in Germany and France. The circumstances of their abuse and attempt at refutation first really awakened the attention of the people to the subject. The weapons of the schools, the abuse, and the dead learning of the official defenders of the reigning system, never reached the light-armed scoffers; their public, like themselves, laughed at the learned, their artificial and cumbrous phraseology, and their folios.

It is worthy of remark in reference to the least estimable class of the writers about to be mentioned, that they, as well as their favourers in Prussia, sprung from the very bosom of the affected piety, hypocrisy and severity of the old theological schools. The rudest and boldest of the scoffers, La Mettrie, had been strictly brought up and educated by Jesuits and Jansenists, as Frederick and his sister in Bayreuth had been by a most pious and orthodox father. We cannot more clearly show how powerful the voice of the opponents of Christianity, the enemies of all the remnants of the middle ages, had already become in France in the first half of the eighteenth century, under the government of the pious and just Cardinal Fleury, than by introducing what the Abbé Ranchon, in his

* ' Prussia at the present Time.'

‘Life’ of the cardinal, has extracted from his memoranda, and has given as his own words*. The substance of the words, which we borrow from the abbé’s manuscript history, is, that the abbé and his cardinal foresaw a revolution in all existing institutions, as a thing unavoidable, which the cardinal denotes, by a christian and biblical expression, as “the end of the world.” The event has, however, proved that it was only the cardinal’s world which came to an end, the other is become neither better nor worse than it was before. This leaves our minds little disposed to fall in with the theological lamentations of the cardinal and his abbé. We have a firmer trust in the Divine Providence than these ecclesiastical gentlemen had. We are therefore full of confidence even in our days, that the same fate will overtake the foolish men and demented governments, who wish to reconstruct the world, which by God’s indignation was destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century, as befell the builders at the tower of Babel. As to the complaints of the prime minister, the Abbé Ranchon assures us that the cardinal had written in his memoranda;—“The time of the Regency was a period of the spirit of dissoluteness and irreligion, which had spread over all France; the glory of the Duke of Orleans removed these stains.”

“In those times there appeared those licentious and destructive writings, on which a poison prepared by the most skilful hands was shed, which destroyed the morals of the people, and in consequence, a memorial of dissolute life and of ruinous demoralization will be handed down to future times and centuries. Pomp and pleasure drew Frenchmen and strangers from all quarters to Paris. The sinful splendour of the theatre and of public exhibitions almost exceeded those of the times of the greatest heathen licentiousness and demoralization, as the pride of architecture and the astonishing splendour of decorations were almost boundless; the maddening passion for gambling ruined thousands of families; luxury increased and became burthensome even to those who had introduced it, in consequence of the continuance of intolerable customs.” Then follows the

* Ranchon’s ‘Life of Cardinal Fleury,’ dedicated to the pope, which, in accordance with his holiness’s desire, was not printed, contains, verbatim, the memoranda of the cardinal. These two beautifully written folio volumes, which in other respects were of little use to us, will be found in the *Archives du Royaume*, Carton K. 163.

passage, on account of which especially we have introduced this altogether lamentable discourse :—

“Long before this time, people had published works in England which introduced infidelity into the system ; works in which the appearance of uncertainty was intentionally given to the truths of Christianity, which are universally believed and acknowledged as well-grounded. In other writings a surprising and ridiculous exhibition was made of our discourses upon revelation, and our belief in mysteries, and that in the boldest language. Appeals were made to the rights of reason and of a sound understanding, people built systems of godliness according to their own notions, and set forth propositions which were full of error and deceit, which therefore deserved the name of decrees for the annihilation of religion. Precisely in the time of the Regency a multitude of these offensive and irreligious books were brought over the sea, France was deluged with them, or rather all the minds of those were poisoned, who amongst us made any pretensions to strength of mind or to comprehensive views ; for by such persons these works were most greedily swallowed.”—It is difficult to conceive how it was possible for an intelligent man like the cardinal, or even the abbé, not to see what must follow from all this if it had been really true.—“Soon afterwards,” he continues, “great numbers, misled by the charm of ungodliness, and almost all the brilliant minds, almost all our contemporaries who in respect to mental culture and tastes approximated to the ancients, studied the books of the English, which announced Deism ; and this because the French were captivated by the pride of an unbending mind, which unreasonably despises all subjection and rises up in opposition to the existing state of things. From this time forward the so-called philosophers contended against all divine and human laws, sometimes under one pretence, and sometimes under another, and often without a pretence at all. These books allured readers by the charm of pretended freedom, and cast doubts upon every thing which for two thousand years had been acknowledged as fact. They released minds and hearts from all feelings of reverence for the Most High, and from all respect for existing powers (*puissances*). These books, in which religion is openly attacked, recommend at the same time that the will and the views, the rights and the claims, of unlimited monarchs should be subjected to close examination.” These last words are important for our purpose,

and quite decisive as to the views of both these men; we shall only add thereto, what the cardinal (as the abbé reports) is said to have recorded in his memoranda, on the subject of the progress of irreligion.

He announced to the French prelates, that "The end of the world was near, because this infidelity and demoralization had become general; people are now to be seen only who are given over to the presumptuousness of their pride, or to the consequences of the errors into which their passions lead them. Never was so much luxurious pomp exhibited, never such an insolent opposition to virtue. Luxury lives only by injustice, the condition of irreligious excess into which every man has plunged, destroys the foundation of all morals. No one," he adds, "raises his voice against it, no one finds it strange that all our contemporaries should suffer themselves to be carried away by the stream which leads them to adopt the generally prevailing prejudice, so that it is of no avail to live better than others, because after this life nothing remains of us. Passions have led astray the heart and understanding, have extinguished in us the light of reason, or at least obscured it. We seem indeed to have come to the last day, in which Christian love has grown cold, in which ungodliness reigns, and when the son of man appears shall he find faith upon the earth?"

In order in some measure to justify the cardinal and his biographer in their complaints, which appear to show but little confidence in the divine government of the world, we shall remark, that the most scandalous man of his age, to whom Frederick afterwards extended his protection, was at this time pursuing his course in Paris. The physician La Mettrie lived and compiled his immoral books in Paris, till he wrote his Machiavellism of physicians against the first court doctors, Helvetius, Astruc, Moulin, Marcot, Sidobre and others; as soon as this was published, he was obliged to fly to Holland, and there he composed his comedy 'La Faculté vengée.'

La Mettrie's example is one of the best proofs of the near connexion between blind faith and mad infidelity, and how short the passage from the one to the other really is. He changed the wit of Voltaire and the fine satire of others, into a formal system of wickedness and ungodly sensuality. The Jesuits and Jansenists had imbued him with their blind faith and theological learning; he soon threw off the mask, and like Rabelais,

who was also an ecclesiastic, fought them with their own weapons. He turned his attention from theology to medicine, and filled the world with miserable books, full of shocking immoralities: with his shameless ignorance he combined the greatest boldness in giving out for his own other persons' inventions, discoveries and observations. We do not think it worth while to speak of the contents of his contemptible works: they will be readily surmised from the titles*, which we subjoin in a note. The Marquis d'Argent, who was also one of the idolisers of Voltaire, said of him, with justice, that "he preached the theory of sin with the shamelessness of a fool." The parliament of Paris and the magistrates of Leyden caused his book to be burnt: the young king of Prussia however invited him to Berlin, kept him about him as his companion, and endured his gross manners till 1751, *i. e.* till his death.

The works of this dissolute and sensual reviler of every serious principle and of every higher effort, which perhaps no one in our times would notice, found a rapid sale in that dark age, because he directed his attention to a public who took delight in scandal and sensuality. He compiled and mutilated other persons' works, abused Haller and Boerhaave, and filled his writings to loathing with the comfortless doctrines of sin, which he announced and propagated with a vehemence approaching to madness: notwithstanding all this, they were collected twice after his death, and were read with eagerness and curiosity by the higher classes; for at that time and on many grounds such books never came into the hands of the lower †.

As to Frederick the Second, it never occurred to him to disturb the faith of his simple Germans; on the contrary, whilst he himself was praising and ordering La Mettrie's French ini-

* His medical writings, good or bad, do not fall within our sphere; we shall not for a moment think of his abusive satires against physicians and medicine, because they may be sought out in literary works; we remark only in passing that the book 'La Politique du Médecin de Machiavel,' was that which was burnt by command of the Parliament. His worst and most singular works are those which contain his atheism, materialism and theory of sin, &c. The 'Histoire Naturelle de l'âme' (1746), and 'L'homme machine' (1748) were printed in Holland; the latter however was burnt in Leyden. 'L'homme plante,' 'Les Réflexions sur l'origine des animaux,' 'Art de jouir,' 'Vénus Métaphysique,' were published in Berlin, although printed, or some of them at least, in Holland.

† They were first collected by command of the king, or some other high personage, and printed in 4to, 1751: a second time in 1774, in two places. The Amsterdam edition was intended for France.

quity to be printed, he prohibited Gebhardi's German scruples *; his intercourse besides with La Mettrie was greatest at a time in which his hatred against hypocrisy, pedantry, affectation of piety, and narrow-mindedness, from which he had suffered so much, was most vehement. He thought himself obliged to root out these enemies of the progress of human improvement, though it should even be by ungodliness; and moreover, he now compensated himself in the clever society of his French wits, for the tedium which he had been obliged to endure as Crown Prince. Frederick might have the same opinions with respect to La Mettrie and like-minded men, as the cardinal and his biographer had; but what appeared to the latter the last day of the old world, must have been regarded by him as the creation of a new one. In this way alone can Frederick be excused for having caused to be read in the Berlin Academy, by his own secretary, a eulogy upon La Mettrie composed by himself. It must at the same time be known that La Mettrie was a flatterer of the great, a spunger at their tables, and willingly admitted as a vulgar jest-maker for company, from which he was never absent, and that he died of indigestion which was brought on by indulgence at the table of the English ambassador in Berlin †.

Next to La Mettrie, we shall mention De Prades, and D'Argent; but we do not venture to allege that their writings had any influence; besides, we must again allude to the former, in the following period when we come to speak of the encyclopædists. The Marquis d'Argent however must be introduced on this ground, that before he came to the court of Frederick he had pushed a regular trade in books, founded on the spirit of speculation, and written from Holland after the manner of Voltaire and Montesquieu, although not with their talents.

D'Argent had served in the army which the Duke of Berwick had led to the Rhine; dissipation, debts and quarrels with his

* Gebhardi, a contributor to Gottsched's magazines, caused two treatises of a rationalist cast to be printed in Berlin, 1743-4. (1. 'Rational Thoughts concerning the mathematical Mode of teaching Theology.' 2. 'Concerning Miracles.') They were forbidden by royal command, and Sulzer writes to Gleim, March 30, 1748: "Do you know that young Rüdiger is sent for six months to Spandau, because he has printed a work in which the Christian religion and its heralds are attacked? The ecclesiastical Sancho Panza, Dr. Pott, is its author; people are curious to know what will happen to him."

† Much may be read of this man in the numerous writings about Frederick the Second, in Thiebault, de la Vaux, &c., most frequently and often unjustly in Denina.

family who were of note in Provence, had driven him to Holland, at the time in which many of his fellow-countrymen sought to maintain themselves there by writing. About this time Montesquieu's 'Persian Letters' commanded a large sale, and found a very numerous body of readers; D'Argent therefore gave his books the form and clothing of the 'Persian Letters.' There appeared a long series of volumes of 'Jewish Letters,' from his pen, then a series of 'Cabalistic,' and a third of 'Chinese Letters,' in which the traditionary opinions and the ruling systems of the time were attacked with great freedom. This kind of writing was exclusively honoured in his time with the name of philosophy, and by this sort of philosophy the young writer recommended himself to Voltaire, who had about this very time formed his acquaintance with the then Crown Prince of Prussia. Voltaire afterwards recommended to his friend the Crown Prince, this new and bold announcer of a doctrine which he himself had only secretly circulated, concealed under the form of poetry, and in books to which he did not venture to prefix his name. Frederick the Second immediately invited the Marquis d'Argent to Berlin; but the latter, on account of the remarkable size of his stature, did not dare to put himself in the power of Frederick William, and visited Berlin after his death only.

We must cast a glance upon the whole literary career of the marquis, who was of great importance in Germany, in consequence of his connexion with Voltaire and Frederick, but especially from the influence which the latter gave him in connexion with his Frenchified academy in Berlin, because he was there the apostle of a new gospel. Whilst he was known in France by name only, he first became a man of note in Berlin, as the author of some rather wanton novels and apocryphal memoirs, partly feigned, and partly of real persons. To the latter class belongs Count Bonneval, who has been mentioned as a Turkish pasha. Then follow the 'Jewish Letters,' which are merely articles such as were then in demand by the Dutch booksellers, and which were introduced in multitudes into France.

Among D'Argent's earlier sceptical writings, the 'Jewish Letters' are the best, although they were spun out to the length of eight volumes, and are now no longer readable. The six volumes of Chinese, and the seven volumes of cabalistic letters, are still weaker. There is, however, in all these letters, that variety and multiplicity of knowledge which is so import-

ant for conversation, and which is the more amusing, in proportion as it is superficial. He afterwards propounded his philosophy in a connected form in a book, to which he gave the title of ‘*La Philosophie du Bon Sens.*’ He was well acquainted with life, he had served in the army, been connected with the law, travelled in France, Spain, and as far as Constantinople, before he came to seek his fortune in Holland. He must therefore necessarily have had the advantage of great experience, he had collected many anecdotes, and drawn various knowledge from a great variety of sources; but we seek in vain in his manufactured articles for the liveliness and originality of Montesquieu’s ‘*Persian Letters,*’ or for the richness in turns of expression and taste, which characterise the ‘*English Letters*’ of Voltaire. His books also only excited a passing attention at the time of their appearance, and were very soon forgotten. Voltaire makes his scepticism and satire attractive, by his style and manner; but D’Argent and such like people, were not only deficient in individuality and taste, but also in industry.

If it excites our wonder that Frederic chose such a man as an intimate friend, and made him director of the fine arts in his academy, we should remember, as respects the former, that the ‘*Jewish Letters*’ had given great pleasure to the Crown Prince; and as to the latter, that D’Argent was by no means wanting in ill-digested knowledge. Before he came to Berlin, he had carried on a successful controversy with the orthodox and dark Paris academician and grammarian, D’Olivet, with respect to Cicero’s treatise ‘*On the Nature of the Gods,*’ and his ‘*Philosophy of Sound Reason*’ had already gone through two editions in 1740. He sought in Germany to gain reputation for himself by his Greek learning, and to bring forward the oldest writers in favour of his new system.

D’Argent wished to work upon the learned Germans, by means of learning, and Voltaire, who in other respects laughed at and ridiculed the man who combined the most absurd fancies and ridiculous superstition with the most complete unbelief, availed himself of him, in order to collect from the old Greeks, materials to carry on the struggle against Christianity.

The activity of the Berlin Frenchmen had, moreover, a very beneficial influence in relation to German writers, who at a later period carried on war against what was ancient, under the standard of Nicolai. D’Argent’s influence, his superficial reading,

his sophistry, the leading which he had in the Berlin academy, roused up a party among those Nicolaitans, who strove most eagerly against every thing old and antiquated, and this party became the protectors of German seriousness, in opposition to French wantonness and shallowness. We need not in this respect appeal to Mendelssohn or Lessing, but only direct attention to the fact, that Nicolai himself was the publisher of Mozer's minor writings, which for the most part are directed against the immoral tendency of the French writers.

It is no part of our purpose to pass any judgement upon the value of the publications, modifications, translations and explanations of the primitive Pythagorean philosophers, which D'Argent transformed and worked up after his own fashion; we must leave all that to the properly learned philosophers and Hellenists; we shall not attempt to deduce from his far-fetched, bold and superficial publications, what system he wished to introduce to the German public, by means of his translated Pythagoreans; this will all appear in the next period. When we come to speak of the Parisian school, we shall only mention in general the books of the marquis, which he published in Berlin, and direct attention to their contents.

The books from which the marquis sought for his theory, were at least works of a philosophical nature; but before he published his theory he had translated and published an abusive treatise against Christians and Christianity. This was the well-known discourse of the Emperor Julian, in favour of the state religion of the Greeks and Romans. Voltaire accompanied this translation with notes, in his manner. As Julian's vehement enmity to Christianity, and Voltaire's eager zeal to render it absurd and hateful, are well known, it will be obvious that the marquis was only a tool in the hands of the latter.

The treatise of Ocellus Lucanus, 'On the Nature of the Universe, and the Eternity of Matter,' shows by its title the object for which D'Argent wished to use the translation of it which he published. The book itself belongs to the most remote antiquity, and as it is said, served Plato for the basis of his philosophy, which he founded upon the Pythagorean. The same treatise was recast and published by a Parisian academician, at the same time as it was given to the world by D'Argent. The Parisian translator was the serious, worthy, and learned Batteux, who was so far from wishing to use the work against the Chris-

tian philosophy, that he had a scientific object always in his view. Batteux's translation appeared in the 'Memoirs of the Parisian Academy.' D'Argent, on the contrary, made it no secret in Berlin, that his translation was published chiefly with the view of opposing the learned heterodox investigations of a Pythagorean, or at least of an old Doric Greek, to the orthodox metaphysics of Leibnitz and Wolf. The idea of a primitive creation, which was entertained by philosophers, in which the agency of a God was not needed, and his notions upon the eternity of matter possessed of an eternal self-moving power, were quite in accordance with the fashionable philosophy of the Parisian circle, and also received the stamp of currency in Sans-Souci. Ocellus Lucanus, moreover, like D'Argent and Voltaire, discoursed about a morality which was not founded upon any feeling of reverence or fear for the name and power of God. This work was followed by a translation and explanation of the treatise of 'Timæus of Locris, upon the Soul of the World.' On this point also D'Argent and Batteux came into collision, for the latter also translated 'Timæus,' and incorporated his treatises in the 'Memoirs of the Academy.' The learned differ in their opinions with respect to the antiquity of this book, which was translated by Batteux and D'Argent. Some imagine that Plato made it the foundation of his dialogue, attributed to Timæus, in which the doctrine of the soul of the world is treated of; others say that it is only an extract or summary of the Platonic Timæus; and many altogether deny the antiquity of the work, and regard it as the fabrication of a much later period. We may leave all this undetermined, since it appears from the very title of the work, that the book itself, or at least the translation of it, had a similar object with all that D'Argent and Voltaire undertook. D'Argent has also appended remarks and dissertations to this translation, which are full of undigested learning, collected indiscriminately from all quarters, and mixed up with the boldest sophistical observations. If D'Argent's work be compared with what Batteux has done, the conclusion will be arrived at, that the Berlin academician has dealt with the ancient philosopher as a sophist, and the Parisian as a man of solid learning. This may be regarded as sufficient for these insignificant people, to whom the friendship of the King of Prussia has given some historical importance.

§ IV.

LEARNED COTERIES IN PARIS.—(*Bureaux d'esprit.*)

If we venture to bring the Parisian evening, dinner and supper parties into connexion with the general history of Europe, and the ladies also at whose houses these parties took place, we can neither be blamed for scrupulous severity, nor for paradoxical frivolity. It belongs to the character of the eighteenth century, that the historian who wishes to bring the true springs of conduct and sources of action to light, must condescend even so far. It must also be borne in mind, when the clever women and societies of Paris are spoken of, that the demands of the age and progressive improvement and culture were altogether unattended to at the court of Louis the Fifteenth, as well before as after the death of Cardinal Fleury, and that all which was neglected at Versailles was cultivated in Paris. The court and the city had been hitherto united in their wants and in their judgement; the court ruled education, fashion and the general tone, as it ruled the state; now, however, they completely separated. Afterwards the voice of the city was raised in opposition, and the voice of this opposition became the organ of the age and of the country; but it was felt and recognised in Versailles only when it was too late. How easy it would have been then, as Marmontel had shown very clearly in his memoirs, to fetter Voltaire, who was offensive to the people, and how important this would have been for the state, will appear in the following paragraphs, in which we shall show that even the Parisian theatre, whose boards were regarded as a model by all Europe, freed itself from the influence of the court, became dependent on the tone-giving circles of Paris, and assumed a decidedly democratic direction.

As early as the time of Louis the Fourteenth, the court had separated itself from the learned men of the age; and at the end of the seventeenth century the houses and societies could be historically pointed out, in which judgements were pronounced upon questions of literature in the same manner as the pit became the tribunal to which plays and play-actors must appeal; we shall not, however, go back so far, but keep the later times always in our view. We have shown above, when speaking of Voltaire's youthful education and training, what kind of societies

those associations were, in which the Abbé de Chaulieu and other friends of Vendome and Conti led the conversation. Literature was brought wholly under the dominion of audacious pretension and immorality, in the time of the Regency and during the minority of Louis the Fifteenth. In reference to the leaders there needs no proof. What could a Philip of Orleans or his Dubois take under his protection, except what corresponded with his ideas and mode of life?

The time of the minority of Louis the Fifteenth and that of the administration of Cardinal Fleury was for several reasons highly favourable to the formation of private societies, which entertained themselves with wit and satire, and carried on a quiet but continual contest with the persons and systems which were protected by the government and the clergy. Fleury regarded every thing as sinful which had the appearance of worldly knowledge, or partook of the character of jests, novels, or plays; Louis, as he grew up, showed himself quite indifferent to every thing which had no connexion with religious ceremonies, hunting, or handsome women. Fleury spoke and wrote in that ecclesiastical phraseology which was laughed at in the world: he favoured the clergy, school learning, the tone of the times of Louis the Fourteenth; but the spirit of the age demanded something different from this. All that was regarded with disfavour by Fleury assembled around those celebrated men, who held their reunions in Paris, and this court soon became more important to the vain than the royal one itself, and it was proved by experience that reputation and glory might be gained without the aid or protection of the court at Versailles. This no one could have previously believed, but the public soon learnt to do homage to the tone-giving scholars, to the ladies and gentlemen who fostered them, as it had formerly paid its homage to the ministers of the court. This gave to the ladies, who collected around them the celebrated men of the time (for reputation was much more the question than merit), and who protected and entertained them, a degree of weight in the political and literary world, which made them as important in the eighteenth century as Richelieu and Colbert had been in the seventeenth.

The queen, on her part, might have been able to exercise a beneficial influence, however little power she had in other respects, when compared with the mistresses of the king; but the daughter of Stanislaus Leckzinski was a gentle admi-

rable woman, although somewhat narrow-minded, and wholly given up to irrational devotional exercises and bigotry. Like her father, she was altogether in the hands of the Jesuits, blindly and unconditionally their servant; such an attachment to a religious order, and such blind devotedness as hers would be quite incredible, if we did not possess her own and her father's autograph letters, as proofs of the fact. We shall present our readers with some extracts from these letters, which are preserved in the archives of the French empire, when we come to speak of the abolition of the order of Jesuits.

As to the enlightened mistresses who had much more power and influence than the queen, Pompadour seemed, as we learn from Marmontel, desirous of participating in the literature of the age and of doing something for its promotion, when she saw how important writers and the influence of the press had become; but partly because both she and the king were altogether destitute of any sense for the beautiful in literature or art, and partly because the better portion of the learned men at the time neither could nor would be pleased with what a Bernis, Düclos and Marmontel were disposed to be, who undoubtedly received some marks of favour from her. Voltaire is therefore quite right when he lays upon the court the blame of allowing the influence which literature then exercised upon the people, to be withdrawn altogether from the king and his ministers, and to be transferred to the hands of the Parisian ladies and farmers-general, &c. Voltaire, in his well-known verses*, admits, with great openness and simplicity, that he attached much importance to the applause of a court, although it neither possessed judgement nor feeling for the merits of a writer, nor for poetical beauties; and he complains at the same time that this court had neither duly estimated his tragedies nor his epic poems. It is characteristic both of the court and of Voltaire that he eagerly pressed himself forward for admission to its favour, and sought to attract attention by a work which he himself called a piece of trash, and that the court extended its approbation and applause to this miserable and

* Mon Henri quatre et ma Zaire,
Et mon Américaine Alzire,
Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi;
J'eus beaucoup d'ennemis avec très-peu de gloire.
Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
Pour une farce de la foire.—*La Princesse de Navarre.*

altogether inappropriate piece ('*La Princesse de Navarre*'), which he composed on the occasion of the Dauphin's marriage with the Infanta of Spain, whilst it entirely neglected his master-pieces.

The Paris societies had got full possession of the field of literature, and erected their tribunals before the middle of the century, whilst at Versailles nothing was spoken or thought of except amusements and hunting, Jesuits and processions, and the grossest sensuality prevailed. The members of the Parisian societies were not a whit more moral or decent in their behaviour than those about the court at Versailles, but they carried on open war against hypocrisy, and all that was praised and approved of by the court.

We shall now proceed to mention three or four of the most distinguished of those societies, which have obtained an historical importance, not merely for the French literature and mental and moral culture of the eighteenth century, but for Europe in general, without however restraining ourselves precisely within the limits of the half century. The minute accounts which Grimm has given, for the most part affect only the later periods; we turn our attention therefore the rather to what the weak, vain, talkative Marmontel has related to us on the subject in his '*Autobiography*,' because Rousseau was by far too one-sided in his notices, and drew public attention to the most demoralized and degraded members of the circle only.

The first lady who must be mentioned, is Madame de Tencin. She belonged to the period within which we must confine ourselves, and she gained for herself such a name, not only in Paris, but in all Europe, that she was almost regarded as the creator of that new literature which stood in direct and bold opposition to the prevailing taste, inasmuch as she received at her house, entertained and cherished, those who were really its originators and supporters. This lady could not boast of the morality of her early years, nor of her respect even for common propriety. She is not only notorious for having exposed, when a child, the celebrated D'Alembert, who was her natural son, and for regarding with indifference his being brought up by the wife of a common glazier as her own son; but stories still worse than even these are told of her. She enriched herself, as many others did, in the time of Law's scheme, by no very creditable means; and fell under such a serious suspicion of having been privy to

the death of one of those who had carried on an intrigue with her, that she was imprisoned and involved in a criminal prosecution, from which she escaped, not through her own innocence, but by means of the powerful influence of her distinguished relations and friends.

All this did not prevent Pope Benedict the Fourteenth, who, as Cardinal Lambertini, had been often at her house, as a member of the society of men of talents who met there, from carrying on a continual intercourse with her by letter; he also sent her his picture as a testimony of kind remembrance. This lady succeeded in procuring for her brother the dignity of a cardinal, and through him had great weight with Fleury, with the court, and with the city in general; she is also known as an authoress. As we are not writing a history of literature properly speaking, we pass by her novels in silence, with this remark only, that people are accustomed to place the 'Comte de Comminges,' written by Madame de Tencin, on the same footing with the 'Princess de Clève,' by Madame de Lafayette.

The society in the house of Madame de Tencin consisted of well-known men of learning, and some younger men of distinguished name and family; she united, in later years, a certain amiability with her care for the entertainment and recreation of those whom she had once received into her house. This society, after the death of De Tencin, assembled in the house of Geoffrin. It appears, however, that Madame de Tencin, as well as the whole fashionable world to which she belonged, could never altogether disavow their contempt for science, if indeed it be true, that she was accustomed to call her society by the indecent by-name of her *ménagerie*. Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Mairan, Helvetius who was then quite young and present rather as a hearer than a speaker, Marivaux and Astruc, formed the nucleus of this clever society and led the conversation. Marmontel, who was not well suited to this society, in which more real knowledge and a deeper train of thought was called for than he possessed, informs us in the passage quoted below, what the tone of this society was, and speaks of their hunting after lively conceits and brilliant flashes of wit, in a somewhat contemptuous manner*. Marmontel, however, himself admits, that he was

* Marmontel,—'Mém. d'un Père,' vol. i. liv. iv. pp. 206–207. "J'y vis..... je ne sais qui encore tous gens de lettres ou savans, et au milieu d'eux une femme d'un esprit et d'un sens profond, mais qui, enveloppée dans son exté-

only once in the society, and that in order to read his ‘Aristomenes,’ and that greater simplicity and good humour prevailed there than in the house of Madame Geoffrin, in which he was properly at home.

Madame de Tencin’s influence upon the new literature of the opposition party, or rather upon the spirit of the age, may be best judged of from the fact, that she largely contributed to the first preparation and favourable reception of Montesquieu’s ‘Spirit of Laws.’ It is certain, at least, that she bought a large number of copies and distributed them amongst her friends. Madame Geoffrin went further; the society which had previously met at Madame de Tencin’s, no sooner held their reunions in her house, than she drew together the whole literary and the fashionable world, foreign ministers, noblemen and princes who were on their travels, etc. Marmontel also says, that the aged Madame de Tencin had guessed quite correctly the intentions of Madame Geoffrin, when she said, that she merely came to her house so often in order to see what part of her inventory she could afterwards make useful.

Madame Geoffrin became celebrated all over Europe, merely by devoting a portion of her income and of her time to the reception of clever society. She had neither the knowledge, the mind, nor the humility of Madame de Tencin, which the latter at least affected towards the close of her life; she was cold, egotistical, calculating, and brought into her circle nothing more than order, tact and female delicacy. Geoffrin also assumed the tone of high life, which always treats men of learning, poets and artists, as if they were mantua-makers or hair-dressers; and which must ever value social tact and the tone which is only to be acquired in good society, higher than all studies and arts

ricur de bonhomme et de simplicité, avait plutôt l’air de la ménagère que de la maîtresse de la maison, c’était là Madame de Tencin..... et en effet, je m’aperçus bientôt qu’on y arrivait préparé à jouer son rôle, et que l’envie d’entrer en scène n’y laissait pas toujours à la conversation la liberté de suivre son cours facile et naturel. C’était à qui saisisrait le plus vite et comme à la volée, le moment de placer son mot, son conte, son anecdote, sa maxime, ou son trait léger et piquant, et pour amener l’apropos, on le tirait quelquefois d’un peu loin. Dans Marivaux l’impatience de faire preuve de finesse et de sagacité perçait visiblement. Montesquieu avec plus de calme, attendait que la balle vint à lui, mais il l’attendait. Mairan guettait l’occasion. Astruc ne daignait pas l’attendre. Fontenelle seul la laissait venir sans la chercher, et il usait si sobrement de l’attention qu’on donnait à l’entendre, que ses mots fins, ses jolis contes, n’occupaient jamais qu’un moment. Helvetius, attentif et discret, recueillait pour semer un jour.”

upon which any one possessed of these properties is in a condition to pass judgement without having spent any time in their investigation. Marmontel is therefore honest enough to admit that he and his friends, as well as Madame Geoffrin herself, were accustomed to make a full parade when foreign princes, ministers, and celebrated men or women dined at the house. On such occasions especially, Madame Geoffrin displayed all the charms of her mind, and called to us, "now let us be agreeable."

Geoffrin's house was the first school of *bon ton* in Europe: Stanislaus Poniatowsky, even after he became King of Poland, addressed her by the tender name of mother, invited her to Warsaw, and received her as a personage of high distinction. All the German courts which followed the fashion, paid correspondents in order to be made acquainted with the trifles which occupied that circle. Catherine the Second had no sooner mounted the throne than she began to pay a commissioner at this literary court, and even Maria Theresa distinguished Madame Geoffrin in a remarkable manner, on her return from Poland. Besides, we are made acquainted by Marmontel, who ranked his hostess among the gods of this earth, with the anxiety and cautiousness of this lady of the world, who afterwards broke altogether with the chiefs of the new literature, and most humbly did homage to the old faith, because she had never wholly forsaken her old prejudices.

The able writers of the time were used by Geoffrin only as means to promote her objects, to gain a reputation for splendour, and to glorify France. The King of Prussia sought her society, in order to refresh and cheer his mind when he was worn out with the cares and toils of government.

Madame Geoffrin opened her house regularly on Mondays for artists, and on Wednesdays for men of learning; but as she neither understood the arts nor sciences, she took part in the conversation only so far as she could do so without exposing her weak side. She understood admirably how to attract the great men to her house, to whose houses she herself very seldom went; and as long as the appearance of fashionable infidelity and of scoffing, which was then the mode in the higher circles, was necessary to this object, she carefully concealed her real religious opinions*.

* We shall here quote the passage from Marmontel, who is the best authority on the point. 'Mem.' etc. vol. i. p. 335. "Pour être bien avec le

The weak Marmontel, who, according to his own description, was only fitted for superficial conversation and writing, boasts of the prudence, foresight and skill of his protectress, and shows how she understood the way to gain the confidence of others without ever yielding her own. This distinguished art made the house of Madame Geoffrin invaluable to the great world, and to those learned men who wished to shine in this kind of society, and to cultivate and avail themselves of it, for such people must learn above all things neither to say too much nor too little. This society, indeed, was not calculated for any length of time for a Rousseau or a Diderot. Even the great admirers of Geoffrin admit that *savoir vivre* was her highest knowledge, she had very few ideas with respect to anything besides; but in the knowledge of all that pertained to the manners and usage of good society, in the knowledge of men, and particularly of women, she was deeply learned, and was able to give some very useful instructions.

It would lead us too far into the history of the following period, to enumerate and characterize the members of these regular societies. It may suffice to mention, that in addition to all the guests who frequented Madame de Tencin's, all the friends of Voltaire's school, and at first also Rousseau, made a part of the society at the house of Madame Geoffrin. We have already remarked that no prince, minister, or distinguished man of all Europe came to Paris who did not visit Madame Geoffrin, and think it an honour to be invited to her house, because he there found united all that was exclusively called talent in Europe.

Kaunitz also, who was then only a courtier in Versailles, came to Madame Geoffrin's parties. He was a man who combined in a most surprising manner true philosophy and a deep knowledge of political economy, with the outward appearance of a fop and a trifler. Among the other distinguished men who lived in Paris, Marmontel names with high praise the Abbé Galliani, Caraccioli, who was afterwards Neapolitan ambassador, and the Swedish ambassador, Count Creutz.

Marmontel was so much delighted with this society, even at

ciel, sans être mal avec son monde, elle s'était fait une espèce de dévotion clandestine : elle allait à la messe comme on va en bonne fortune ; elle avait un appartement dans un convent de religieuses, et une tribune à l'église de Capucins, mais avec autant de mystère que les femmes galantes de ce tems là avaient des petites maisons."

a very advanced age, that he gives us also accounts of their evening parties: "As I was in the habit of dining with the learned and with the artists at Madame Geoffrin's, so was I also of supping with her in her more limited and select circle. At these *petits soupers* there was no carousing or luxuries,—a fowl, spinach and pancakes constituted the usual fare. The society was not numerous: there met together only five or six of her particular friends, or even persons of the highest rank, who were suited to each other, and therefore enjoyed themselves." It appears distinctly from the passage already quoted from Marmontel, how the high nobility on these occasions treated the learned, and how the learned demeaned themselves towards the nobility. It appears, therefore, that Rousseau was not in error when he alleged that emptiness and wantonness only were cherished in these societies, and that the literature which was then current was only a slow poison.

Madame du Deffant appeared on the stage of the great world contemporaneously with Geoffrin, and attained so high a degree of celebrity, that the Emperor Joseph paid her a visit in her advanced period of life, and thus afforded her the opportunity of paying him that celebrated compliment which is found related in every history of France. With respect to Deffant, however, we must not listen to Marmontel; she stood above his rhymes, his love tales, his sentimental wanton stories, and besides, he knew her only when she had become old. What we Germans name feminine and good morals formed no part of the distinction of Deffant, but talents only. Like Tencin, she was ill-reputed in her youth on account of her amours, and reckoned the Regent among her fortunate wooers; at a later period she turned her attention to literature.

Deffant brought together at her house all those persons whom Voltaire visited when he was in Paris; among these the President Hénault, and, at a later period of which we now speak, D'Alembert attracted to this circle distinguished foreigners and Frenchmen, who made any pretensions to culture and education. Deffant assumed quite a different tone among the learned from that of Geoffrin. She set up for a judge in questions of philosophy and taste, and carried on a constant correspondence with Voltaire. Among celebrated foreigners, the Englishman Horace Walpole played the same character in this house which the Swede Creutz had assumed in that of Geof-

frin. Deffant and her Walpole became celebrated throughout Europe by their printed correspondence, which, on account of its smoothness and emptiness, like all books written for the great world, found very numerous readers.

Deffant, moreover, like Geoffrin, was faithless to her friends; she wished indeed to enjoy the most perfect freedom in their society, but she was unwilling that they should publish abroad this freedom. And she strongly disapproved of the vehemence with which her friends assailed the existing order of things.

When she afterwards lost a considerable part of her property, and became blind, she occupied a small dwelling in an ecclesiastical foundation in Paris, but continued to receive philosophers, poets and artists in her house; and in order to give a little more life to the conversation, she invited a young lady whose circumstances were straitened to be her companion. This was Mademoiselle l'Espinasse. L'Espinasse was not beautiful, but she was young, amiable, lively, and more susceptible than we in Germany are accustomed either to allow or to pardon. Deffant, on the other hand, was witty and intelligent, but old, bitter, and withal egotistically insensible. The boldest scoffers assembled around L'Espinasse, and there was afterwards formed around her a circle of her own. Deffant turned day into night, and night into day. She and the Duchess of Luxembourg, who was inseparable from her, received learned distinguished personages and foreigners, from six o'clock in the evening during the greater part of the night.

The importance in which such ladies and such societies were held, not merely in France but in all Europe, may be judged of from the fact, that the breach between Deffant and her young companion was treated in some measure as a public European event. The French minister and foreign ambassadors took part in it, and the whole literary world felt its effect. After this breach there were two tone-giving tribunals for the guidance of public opinion in matters of literature and taste, and their decisions were circulated by letter over all Europe. Horace Walpole, Hénault, Montesquieu, Voltaire, whose correspondence with Deffant has been published in the present century, remained true to her cause. D'Alembert, whose correspondence with Deffant, as well as that of the Duchess of Maine, have also been published in our century, went over to L'Espinasse. This academician, whose name and influence was next in importance to

that of Voltaire, formed the nucleus of a new society in the house of L'Espinasse, and was grievously tormented by his *inamorata*, who pursued one plan of conquest after another when she saw one scheme of marriage after another fail of success. It appears from the whole of the transactions and consequences connected with this breach, however surprising it may be, that this formation of a new circle in Paris for evening entertainment may be with truth compared to the institution of a new academy for the promotion of European culture and refinement. The Duchess of Luxembourg, who continued to be a firm friend of Deffant, took upon herself to provide suitable apartments for the society, whilst the minister of the day (the Duc de Choiseul) prevailed upon the king to grant a pension of no inconsiderable amount to L'Espinasse.

This new circle was the point of union for all the philosophical reformers. Here D'Alembert and Diderot led the conversation; and the renowned head of the political economists, Turgot, who was afterwards minister of state, was a member of this bolder circle of men who became celebrated and ill-renowned under the name of Encyclopædists. We shall enter upon a fuller consideration of the tone and taste which reigned in this assembly, as well as in the society which met in the house of Holbach, and of the history of the Encyclopædia, in the following period, and shall only now mention at the conclusion of the present, and that very slightly, some of the other clever societies of Parisians who were all in their day celebrated in Europe. It is scarcely possible for us to judge of the charm which these societies possessed in the great world. This may be best learned from their own writings and conversation, a specimen of which may be found in Marmontel's 'Memoirs,' and formed the subject of a conversation between him and the Duke of Brunswick (who fell at Jena in 1806) and his duchess.

The society of *beauz esprits* which met at the house of Madame de Poplinière, in the time of Madame de Tencin, was only short-lived, like the good fortune of the lady herself. In her house there assembled members of the great world who were addicted to carousing and debauchery, and learned men who sought to obtain their favour and approbation. The same sort of society was afterwards kept up in the house of Holbach. A smaller society, which frequented the house of the farmer-general Pelletier, consisted of unmarried people, who were known as

persons who indulged in malicious and licentious conversation. Collé, the younger Crébillon and Bernard, who, notwithstanding his helplessness, was called *le gentil*, played the chief characters in this reunion, and the Gascon nature of Marmontel, which was always forward and intrusive, helped him into this society also. Baron Holbach, who was a native of the Palatinate, and the able Helvetius who was wanton merely from vanity, brought together expressly and intentionally at a later period, around their well-spread table, all those who declared open war against religion and morality*. We must, however, return to these men in the following period.

Holbach for a whole quarter of a century had regular dinner-parties on Sundays, which are celebrated in the history of atheism. All those were invited, who were too bold and too outspoken for Geoffrin; and even D'Alembert also at a later period withdrew from their society.

Grimm, whose copious correspondence has also been published in the nineteenth century, gives minutes and notices of all the memorable sayings and doings that served to entertain and occupy the polite world in Europe. Grimm also entertained and feasted these distinguished gentlemen. He was not at that time consul for Gotha, or employed and paid by that court or the Empress Catherine to collect Parisian anecdotes, neither had he then been made a baron, but was merely civil secretary of Count von Friese. Both J. J. Rousseau and Buffon belonged at first to these societies; but the former, in great alarm, broke off all intercourse with the people who then played the first parts in Paris, and the other quietly retired. Of this we shall speak further in the following period.

§ V.

THEATRE TILL THE PUBLICATION OF DIDEROT'S 'FATHER OF A FAMILY AND NATURAL SON.'

In a history of Europe, a criticism upon the French theatre in general or upon single pieces, is not to be expected, and

* Marmontel, when converted, denied all this. We shall, however, afterwards prove his error, when he says:—"Dieu, la vertu, les saintes lois de la moral naturelle, n'y furent jamais mis en doute:"—he adds merely, "du moins en ma présence."

the more especially as abundant information may be gained on the subject in German and French works on the history of literature; our business and duty here are only briefly to advert to the influence which the theatre had upon the social condition of life, and to the connexion into which it can be brought with the prevailing philosophy. In this respect the department of comedy, which is more deeply impressed with the spirit and features of society, is more important than tragedy; we shall therefore first premise a few remarks upon the latter, in order afterwards to bring down the history of comedy to the period in which Diderot endeavoured to win possession of the stage, in order to promote his so-called moral objects. The origin of Diderot's mongrel species is particularly important for us in Germany, because that kind of affecting drama so much praised by Diderot, and among us called play, had far greater success in Germany than in France. Heine, Jünger, Kotzebue, Iffland, and such writers, have had, and continue to have, far more influence upon the multitude among us, than Lessing, Göthe or Schiller could ever attain.

We see, moreover, from the dress of the players and the arrangements of the stage, that the customs and usages of ancient times still ruled, even in Paris, in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the people had a quick perception of the ridiculous, and their sound understanding was not easily mystified or blinded, and when power and skill must both be used, in order to destroy the absurd prejudices of the seventeenth century. The subjects of their tragedies, for example, were for the most part derived from Greek and Roman history, from the East, or from the middle ages. Voltaire selected a subject from America, but, notwithstanding all this, the dramatic personæ, even till the middle of the century, appeared in the most splendid and costly court dress of their own times. The actors appeared upon the stage in full-dress wigs, with feathers in their hats, with frills and ruffles, coats and waistcoats with long flaps, whether their object was to represent Agamemnon or Ninus. The actresses appeared with trains and hoops, whether they played the character of Electra or Zaire. Moreover, some of the most distinguished gallants of the day, who were able to pay for the privilege, took their seats in a long row upon the stage, and by their presence utterly dispelled from it the

small lingerings of probability which the costume of the heroes and heroines had left remaining.

The chairs of these gentlemen were banished from the stage as soon as Voltaire's 'Semiramis' had been made ridiculous by their presence, because the shade of Ninus was obliged to pass in front of them as they sat upon the stage. The actors showed the greatest degree of aversion to the adoption of a proper costume. This important change, which Marmontel compares to a revolution, was first effected at the end of the seven years' war. Clairon, who had some celebrity as an actress, and who is known among us, partly by her memoirs and partly as a favourite of the last Margrave of Anspach and Bayreuth, ventured to undertake and to carry through this revolution,—to introduce a style of decoration and dress which was suited to the customs, relations and times of the persons to be represented. It excited attention in all Europe, when this actress for the first time in the character of Electra, appeared on the stage without a hoop-petticoat, and in that of Roxana in a Turkish costume.

Marmontel, who shows himself anxious to claim for himself some share in effecting this great change, assures us, that it had cost him much trouble to persuade Clairon to adopt this resolution. She told him the change would involve her in debt, that they would be obliged, not only at present, but in all future times, to appear in costume in all characters; that her whole theatrical stock of apparel must be completely changed, and that she should thereby lose above ten thousand crown-dollars in dresses alone.

As to the tragedies themselves, Corneille and Racine had already pretty well exhausted the range of so-called classical subjects; and if Voltaire succeeded after them, his success must be explained by his announcing and bringing forward on the stage strong truths or bold allegations, which no one dare put into circulation in any other way, and by clothing these truths in admirable verse. Many of Voltaire's opponents, sometimes even Pompadour and the court, sought to elevate and uphold Crébillon: but Voltaire, in consequence of his versification and his refutation of the prevailing systems, found a continually increasing public among the enemies of the clergy, the opponents of fanaticism, and the arbitrariness of the government. We can, however, touch only very slightly upon these points, and

must leave the comparison and estimation of the merits of Voltaire and Crébillon to the French themselves. The French criticism may be found discussed in such a way in La Harpe's 'Cours de la Littérature,' as to raise a smile in the foreign reader, whether he be German or English.

In relation to the spirit of the century, we see in Voltaire not so much a tragic poet, as an orator, who by means of the personages of his plays defends, in good and easily remembered verses, those principles which were oppressed and persecuted by the state. No one can ascribe to Voltaire a creative mind or the highest description of poetry, but such poetry was neither called for by the spirit of the time, nor by his nation. We cannot here enter upon an analysis of single pieces, in order to prove that Voltaire's object was a defence of the cause of the public, and a zealous and eloquent opposition to fanatics and scholastics, to slavish feelings and despotism; the mere enumeration of the titles of those pieces which received the most enduring applause of the public, is in itself a sufficient proof of the fact.

Considered in this point of view, Crébillon could be no rival of Voltaire, and if Marmontel obtained a short-lived reputation by two pieces of very little merit, his 'Aristomenes' and 'Dionysius the Tyrant,' which were written in the manner, and with the assistance of Voltaire, he owes it entirely to the tone which he adopted; for as soon as he took another direction, he no longer found readers or admirers. We perceive, moreover, with astonishment, how admirably Voltaire understands the manner of feeling the pulse of his nation, and of leading at his will the whole higher classes of Europe, who had been brought up and educated after the French fashion, since he showed himself able, by mere pomp of language, by versification, and the talent of some good actors, to uphold for a long time the classical tragic style of Corneille and Racine, which belonged to very different times, and were suited to different customs.

Molière had treated comedy in such a masterly style in the seventeenth century, that Regnard, as well as Destouches, were obliged to choose quite a different field in the comic territory, in order not to risk or lose their reputation, by being compared with him. Neither of them durst venture to portray the contrasts of human nature and social customs as exhibited in individuals, they were therefore obliged to draw nearer to the real scenes of actual life, and to borrow from that source. They took

their materials immediately from life ; did not, properly speaking, create a poetical work of art, but contented themselves, like novel writers, with describing, with wit and art, what they had observed in life, or in drawing pictures of real life, in a caricature style, in order to excite laughter. The more the philosophy of the time was disseminated, which was unfavourable to every thing purely ideal, and demanded only what was real ; the more the public of the so-called educated classes increased, who wished to avoid all such exertions as the comprehension of a true work of art demanded, and merely to be made merry without any concealed seriousness of purpose ;—so much the more prevailing immorality and licentiousness drove true poetry from the stage.

After the time of Regnard and Destouches, comedy departed more and more from poetry, became mere social entertainment, and represented only the usual witty or demoralized society of the saloons upon the stage. Old historical acquaintances, drawn from daily life, are met with in the highly eulogised pieces of Piron and Gresset, but still more in *Le Sage*. Long after the appearance of his most distinguished piece, the last-mentioned writer gained an extraordinary renown as the author of ‘*Gil Blas*,’ for which reason we must here mention his novels in passing, although novels perhaps, on account of their great number, had a much smaller influence in France than in Germany, at least till it occurred to Rousseau to embody and disseminate his philosophy and visionary notions by means of such writings.

One of Piron’s pieces only has kept its ground upon the stage till the present day, his ‘*Métromanie*.’ The subject of this piece represents a trait, or scene, drawn from life ; cleverly conceived, and handled with that tact which is peculiar to the French, so as to give value and interest to a trifling and insignificant jest. The same may be said more or less, of all those so called ‘stock pieces,’ which Piron and Gresset composed, and which were calculated only for the moment. It would be as precipitate to bestow that ridiculous admiration which *La Harpe* metes out, as it would be unjust to concur in the severe and sharp reproaches of our countrymen. In works of this kind, in which poetry does not so much appear as national peculiarities, these peculiarities have their rights. In forming a judgement in such cases, national distinctions must be always kept in view more than a system of æsthetics. It is

also said that the 'Métromanic' is better fitted for reading than for representation; it has to do besides with an accidental absurdity, which stands in no relation to the character of the time of which we speak.

The most renowned piece of the wanton Gresset, who was a poet and composer quite suited to the customs and morals of his time, and who was, in consequence of his 'History of a Travelling Parrot' (Vert-Vert)*, admired, imitated and translated in Germany, is much more nearly connected with our object. This piece is 'Le Méchant,' which was so much admired by La Harpe, that he exclaimed in despair, in the last decennium of the eighteenth century—"We have now waited fifty years in vain for a piece in five acts, which can be compared with this comedy."

'Le Méchant' is particularly deserving of notice, as containing a description of the morals of the time of the Regency and of the early period of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth. [It was played in 1747.] The whole piece consists of single and detached scenes, conceived with great truth and liveliness, and drawn after life with a masterly hand. We shall not allege that the tone and wit, or that even the verse, is natural; but it was precisely this artificially natural tone which was best calculated to draw the lineaments after life of a time, from which, according to Marmontel and the eulogists of the day, all nature had entirely disappeared. We do not mention Rousseau's opinion, because he was an opponent of the customs and morals of the age.

In order not to lead our readers astray by remarks which might appear partial and unjust, as proceeding from a German, and from a serious point of view with respect to a piece of pleasantry, or unreasonable, as made from the study, upon the active scenes of life, we shall have recourse to a Frenchman, who lived in Paris itself at the close of the eighteenth century, and mixed in the scenes of active life. Whilst pronouncing his opinion

* La Harpe, in the words about to be quoted, admirably delineates the tone and the morals of the times, whose condition we wish to explain, and the views of the world to which he belonged: we shall therefore subjoin the passage for the benefit of those who may not have his work at hand:—"Vert-Vert' est plutôt un conte qu'un poème. Mais il a paru sous ce dernier titre; et quoiqu'il en soit du titre, il n'est pas possible de passer ici sous silence, ce qui n'est, si l'on veut, qu'un badinage, mais un badinage si supérieur et si original, qu'il n'a eu d'imitateurs comme il n'avait des modèles. Il produisait, à son apparition dans le monde, l'effet d'un phénomène littéraire: ces sont les expressions de Rousseau dans ses lettres, et il n'y a pas d'exagération," etc.

upon this piece, he at the same time gives his views of the tone, morals and life of the European society which is therein represented. “ ‘Le Méchant,’ ” says La Harpe, “ who is more a man of the world than any other in the piece, is a man of talents, as such persons are called in the world. His tone is that of scoffing pleasantry which afterwards became the fashion, and which is distinguished by this characteristic, that whosoever is complete master of it, knows how to turn all serious things into jest*.”

The same French judge of art, in order to prove how admirable the tone of that clever society was, of which we have spoken in the preceding paragraph, and which has been imitated in this piece and put into the mouths of its characters, says, in another passage:—“ It exhibits a charming *aisance*, an ornamental definitiveness of expression, a quick view of things of various kinds, which is especially gained by individuals who can readily appropriate to themselves the minds of others. Such opportunities of appropriation were numerous in the social intercourse of these societies, and warranted by their usage. In every dialogue many ideas were only hinted at, because it was contrary to the fashion to go deeply into anything; witty sketches, or flashes of thought, were regarded as reasons; and some pleasant or agreeable turn or application was given to a trifle. Such is the style of conversation in this society, in which people are assembled without choice, in which they speak without interesting themselves about anything; a tone of which Gresset was a complete master.”

Le Sage, from another point of view, had seized upon and described this same good society and real life, but not its practical form. He had brought the circumstances of the last times of Louis the Fourteenth's reign upon the stage in ‘Le Turcaret,’ and drawn its features with a strong hand. In Le Sage, whose piece appeared in 1709, we find the usurious society of the Spanish war of succession; in Gresset, whose ‘Le Méchant’ appeared in 1747, the philosophical society of the Austrian war of succession.

La Sage is less known among us by his ‘Turcaret’ than by his novels, in which he also describes the life of his age with liveliness and truth. In Germany, at that time, every one read

* The same Gresset, who was so complete a master of this tone, like La Mettrie, had been previously a good orthodox Jesuit.

the numerous and very thick volumes of the novels written by the brothers D'Urfé and the family of Scüder; in France Tencin and La Fayette had introduced quite a different manner. Le Sage returned to the not very delicate but witty manner of Scarron, and availed himself at the same time of the imaginative faculty of the Spaniards. His 'Devil upon two Sticks' is nothing else than a collection of stories of all sorts, founded upon a Spanish novel of Louis Velez de Guevara, 'El Diabolo Cojuelo,' to which, however, Le Sage gave a Parisian physiognomy. He substituted histories of his own times for those of the Spaniards; and selected such as were sufficiently known to render it unnecessary for him to name the parties concerned. One of the chief persons who plays a conspicuous part, is, as is well known, the celebrated and clever Ninon de l'Enclos, ill-renowned for her morals; Baron the actor, and Dufresny, who was a writer on *belles lettres*, are also introduced. From Dufresny's 'Siamese,' Montesquieu borrowed the plan of his 'Persian Letters,' together with the story of his marriage, and similar well-known anecdotes and histories of the time. These Parisian stories and this Parisian life had at that time the same relation to the whole of Europe that the life of its own metropolis has now for every country, and therefore the reason is obvious why this book was translated into all the European languages.

Le Sage's second novel, which appeared some eight years later, 'Gil Blas of Santillan,' has acquired a species of classical celebrity; we can, however, only take a passing notice of it, as it stands in no express relation to the time of which we speak. Voltaire was quite wrong, in attempting, from feelings of envy at the success of the book, to spread the report, that Le Sage had merely translated Don Mark Obregon's life of the Spaniard Espinel: this has been fully proved in our century, in a treatise written especially on this subject, and read by its author, François de Neuchâteau, before the French Academy; although it is true that the real contents of Gil Blas are Spanish property. The truth and life which are found in 'Gil Blas' belong to the Spanish writers, of which Le Sage availed himself; but the form and style, that of which the French especially boasted, belonged to the Frenchman. The Spanish elements from which the book is composed, form a picture of the different ranks and of the individuals of which they consist, painted with the boldest hand and with the most striking colours from

immediate personal observation. 'Gil Blas' is distinguished by wit, entertainment and a moral such as *Le Sage* thought was suitable for the time. It cannot be at all compared with 'Don Quixote'; 'Don Quixote' contains ideas and poetry—'Gil Blas' is only the vehicle of palpable morality and a strong and vigorous delineation of the realities of life.

'*Le Turcaret*,' which was written long before 'Gil Blas,' shows its author to be the same master of style, the same fine judge of the middle classes of society, of their morality and their wit, as he appears to be in his novels. In '*Le Turcaret*' the dark side of the splendid and eulogised government of the great king is represented in a more lively and vigorous manner, and in this way more bitterly and severely blamed, than in all the pasquinades of the time which were secretly circulated. The whole piece, which has been condemned as deficient in development, or in the poetic and creative art of the true poet, consists of a representation of a number of the detached scenes of the life of that age. The blood-suckers against whom a commission of inquiry was issued in the time of the Regency, and along with them intriguers, knaves and cheats are represented. It has also therefore been made an objection to the piece, that bad characters and wicked stratagems alone occur in it; but however this may lessen the poetical value of the work, it increases precisely in the same proportion its historical importance, with which only we have here to do. *Le Sage*, in '*Le Turcaret*,' paints life as it was, as he had seen and experienced it; that it does not appear better is no fault of his. This piece was very properly written in prose as a mere image of the life which it represents, and belongs to the great works which we respect, as standing nearer to life than to poetry. The money speculators of the last years of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth have been sufficiently described to render it unnecessary to illustrate their relations to one another, to show with whom they were more immediately connected, and their relations to society by selections of scenes from '*Le Turcaret*'; whoever wishes to become acquainted with that degraded fashionable generation which sunk still deeper in the time of the Regency, must read the piece for themselves.

The whole historical result of what has been said may perhaps be summed up as follows: The religious feelings which must have been taken for granted as existing in the great public, when a tragedy is presented to it, as well as the moral feelings

which give a poetic character to comedy, were weakened: the theatre therefore remained for a long time stationary. During this period of repose, a new element came into life instead of the religious and moral one. A great portion of the men who were not contented with the old, serious, severe and often cruel principles, laws and religion (even Voltaire), sought to substitute an indefinite feeling of humanity, or sentimentality, for the duty of obedience to law or even to religious command. The public, so far as it was represented in the theatre, showed clearly that it felt the necessity of being moved and stimulated, but not of being violently affected; there arose, therefore, a species of poetry which corresponded to their feeling and desire, in the same manner as the romantic has sprung up in our days, in which the public wish to be filled with horrors.

We shall show, in the following period, how quickly this sentimentality was diffused, and what were the general effects of its diffusion, when we come to speak more fully of the Encyclopædists and of Rousseau; we shall here limit ourselves to the traces of this influence which may be seen in the theatre. Madame Quinault, one of the most distinguished actresses, on the representation of a small comic piece, first made the remark, that sentimental scenes had a much greater effect upon the public than either high tragedy or pure comedy. Voltaire was then in the full bloom of his reputation; Madame Quinault communicated the remark to him, and advised him to become the creator of a new species of play, a touching comedy. The poet for a long time turned a deaf ear to the remark, till at length another poet, whom Quinault brought forward, proved its justice by the effect which his piece produced, and at the same time awakened Voltaire's envy.

The poet who had followed Quinault's hint was La Chaussée, who had gained great reputation not long before by his short epistle to Clio. This epistle attacked bitterly and with cutting severity the organ of the Academy and the favourite of the government, the same La Motte, whom Voltaire had already satirised. This La Motte had, at that time, proposed a highly prosaic thought of his own as a rule of taste, and pretended to be a judge of poetry, without having any knowledge of the subject or inspiration for its beauties. By following the hint thus given him, La Chaussée became the inventor of the so-called mixed drama, or of the affecting play, which the scoffers called *Une*

comédie larmoyante, because they wished for no new species, and alleged that the middle path was merely the path of wretchedness and weakness.

La Chaussée afterwards wrote a number of pieces, which it is not necessary for us to enumerate, because the reader can readily find them in every literary manual; the applause of the public, which he earned, was so great, that Voltaire became envious, and wished also to make himself master of this species, as he had become so of all the other departments of poetry. He wrote an affecting play, 'L'Enfant Prodigue,' which was brought out in 1736. This piece met with little applause; Voltaire thereupon became indignant, and associated himself with the friends of the old school, in order to cry down this new species of drama and to make it ridiculous. The result, however, in this case proved that Voltaire himself was not the creator but only the creation of the spirit of the age, for he immediately made shipwreck as soon as he attempted to sail against the current of opinion. He afterwards did homage to the public, and wrote several pieces in this very manner, which had been so much abused and satirised by himself.

La Harpe's observations upon this mixed species have a bearing also upon the German theatre, and we shall here quote his words:—"Some of the scenes," he says, "of these so-called plays are formal moral treatises, brought into the form of dialogue. The style, indeed, abounds in moral sentences, but is withal very monotonous. The ideas, upon which the whole turns, are of a low description, and therefore afford no compensation for the monotony of the style. The number of persons who prattle about virtue is too great, and they say too much about it." We must now break off, because in the next period we shall use the words of the French author, as the connecting link of our history of the complete transformation of dramatic literature by Diderot. This transformation was only apparent in France, and without important influence; in Germany, on the contrary, it was continuous and extremely important, because the sensitiveness preached upon the stage corresponded to the spirit of the age and the character of the people, and the fashionable education of the time favoured the racy morality of a Kotzebue.

CHAPTER III.

STRIVING AFTER LIGHT AND AFTER A LITERATURE COMMENSURATE WITH THE MIND OF THE REST OF EUROPE IN GERMANY, TILL THE LETTERS UPON LITERATURE.

§ I.

INTRODUCTION—THE PIETISTS—CHRISTIAN THOMASIIUS.

IN the beginning of the eighteenth century, the light of the new age had not begun to dawn in Germany, although the want of an entirely new literature was sensibly felt, as it had also been in France, England, and even Holland. The people were in no respects upon a level with the times of Louis the Fourteenth; they tormented themselves, however, with the taste of Marini, d'Urfé and Balzac, and had even forgotten the right use of their own language. The German people of rank read either no books or only French ones; the common people, the Bible, collections of sermons; and a portion of them, 'Simplicius Simplicissimus,' Til's 'Merry Jester,' 'The Emperor Octavianus,' 'Genovesa,' 'Fortunatus's Wishing Cap,' &c. And however high a value some friends of the German language and nationality in the present day have attached to these books, they have yet so little connexion with the progress of that mental improvement of which we speak, that we should pass over the first forty years of the century altogether, if the slow progress of German literature did not in itself appear to us to offer something characteristic of the history of the people.

The literature of which we shall first speak is particularly important, in relation to its connexion with some very highly estimable properties of German life, and with some of its striking peculiarities, by means of which a great gulf exists between the different classes of the people and the men of education; a separation which does not exist in France, and is little apparent in England. An inquiry into the reasons why the German nation remained so far behind others, does not appear to us to belong to our present design; certain it is, however, that in proportion as enlightenment was slow and gradual in its progress, it the more thoroughly pervaded the people. There are two points which bear upon the history of mental development until

the reign of Frederick the Second, which we must not pass over in silence. First, that all education was limited to the Latin schools and to the universities, which rather promoted rudeness, vulgarity and barbaric learning than mental improvement; against the evils which flowed from this source the zeal of the pietists was particularly useful. Secondly, that there was a total want of all freedom of speech, of instruction, and writing; every man was subject to a strict police, exercised in the name of the state, by those barbaric jurists and theologians, to whom every innovation would have been disadvantageous. The barbarism which prevailed in the schools and the universities, the mean spirit and the tradesman-like envy in the learned corporations, the coarseness and vulgarity of the students and their instructors, produced much worse effects in Germany than in France or England, because there exists among us no great metropolis, no proper central point of national life.

It may be seen from the lives of the genuine christian, Spener, and of the enlightened jurist, Thomasius, and particularly from the persecutions which they suffered, and the calumnies which were heaped upon them, how difficult it was for a single beam of sound reason to penetrate the thick darkness of the learned writers of quartos and folios, of symbolical books and legal formulas, how much it cost to maintain pure and true righteousness of life and feeling, against the faculties and consistories, against the police of the state and the zeal of blustering preachers. The taste of German readers and writers at the beginning of the eighteenth century was of the very worst kind. The few educated persons among them read and wrote French; those who read German had departed far from the simplicity of the sixteenth century, and enjoyed the bombast of a Lohenstein and a Hoffmannswalden. The efforts of the pietists in this respect were highly salutary, for they brought back and accustomed the people to the simple and dignified language of Luther and Arnd.

The so-called pietists directed their attention, as Luther had done before them, to the well-disposed portion of the nation; and the consequence of their efforts was, that they induced the people and a number of the smaller courts to renounce the false taste of the degenerate Italians and of the court poets of Louis the Thirteenth, and again to do homage to the simplicity of the Gospel and of the first reformers, its zealous defenders against

Romish priestcraft. Spener, Franke, Gottfried Arnold, and such men, were indeed somewhat visionary and fanatical, but they earnestly recommended the study of the poetical writings of the Old Testament, and of the religious ones of the New, which had almost fallen into a state of neglect by the dogmatics and catechisms of the Lutheran and Reformed Jesuits; and they showed, by their own example, that there was something else to learn from Luther and Arnd, besides piety and faith. The first and better class of pietists, if their disciples had been like them, would have been successful in leading the German people to form themselves and their language, as well as a suitable literature and plan of mental improvement, from their own resources, and then they would have no need of the principles of a Bolingbroke and a Voltaire.

There were, alas! very few among the pietists who at all resembled a Spener and Gottfried Arnold; and as pietism spread, as usually happens in such cases, the mere form of Godliness was speedily substituted for its power; and this placed these hypocrites as much at variance with the spirit of the age as the systematic theologians of the schools, whom they opposed. Pietism, besides, had a great influence even upon those who kept themselves apart from the sectarian and conventicle spirit of the pietists, in as far as it awakened and roused up a national disposition. This may be shown by its regeneration in our own times. The inclination to mysticism, which is peculiar to our nation, may be everywhere traced out and observed in the whole of the eighteenth century down to the latest and most splendid regeneration of fanaticism. We perceive a hearty enmity to reason and its pretensions in the bitterness of the friends of Klopstock and Bodmer against the Berlin school, and against Wieland, who was an offshoot from the Swiss; we perceive it in the war which Claudius, the followers of Hamann, Lavater and the North German fanatics carried on with Lessing, Woss and their friends; we perceive it in the struggle of the mystics, since the time of Novalis, against the so-called rationalists.

As to the German literature of the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, Leibnitz, as is well known, either disdained, or at least did not venture, to create a German public by the use of Luther's language, as Locke had created an English one. Leibnitz, doing homage to the spirit of the age and to the aristocracy, either would not or dared not

require the French and English to come to him into Germany, but he went to them into a foreign land, or in other words, he wrote in a foreign language and not in his own. Leibnitz wrote in a Latin, full of gallicisms, and in a French, full of Latinisms, so that Bolingbroke, not without good reason, accused him of writing in a style which was barbarous and unintelligible; Gottfried Arnold and his friends, on the contrary, drew their language from sources where it could be found undisturbed by the mud of their neighbours, and by the Latin barbarisms of the middle ages. Their prose was at least unartificial, many of their disciples composed original visionary poetry, although their hypocrisy was destitute of the freshness of life.

We must leave it to others to pursue and follow out the efforts of pietism and of the inclination to research and systematising, as a German national peculiarity; we shall only remark in passing, that the whole nation, six times in this century, has been so deeply absorbed in the creation of a new system of scholastic philosophy, that they have entirely forgotten themselves in its formation. As to pietism, we shall merely show, that the pietists, at least in one point, quite fell in with the philosophy of the scoffers.

The pietists, like the sceptics, struggled against the consistories and their legal presidents, who wished to acknowledge nothing except what was positive in theology, and to regard and treat it as they did the *Corpus Juris*, and the penal decrees of the criminal courts of the Emperor Charles the Fifth; they struggled against the theological faculties and their learned systematic absurdities; against the clergy, who, like the Capuchins, thundered in the pulpit against heretics and unbelievers, instead of proclaiming to the world their Master's message of peace, or who assumed, in the confessional, the binding and absolving power of the pope, in order, with sufficient hypocritical humility, to deliver over into the power of Satan those who refused to acknowledge or repeat their forms, and to doom them to torments for their own benefit or that of their fellow-men. The pietists, as well as the Deists, in the spirit of the new age, were zealously opposed to dependence upon arbitrary will, and the mental oppression which was everywhere exercised; both appealed to the New Testament against the decisions of councils, which, in every case, the authorities of the states desired to maintain.

The assemblies of the pietists in Leipzig were, as is well known, nothing else than meetings of teachers who appealed to the original text of the Bible from the lectures and decisions of an Alberti, or a Carpzovin, or by whatever other names these barbarically learned and absolute systematic professors may have been called. As they mutually supported and encouraged one another in the study of the original languages of the sources of their religion, they found, to their astonishment, light, truth, spirit, life and poetry, instead of the scholastics and trash of their professors, of all which they had not the slightest idea, so long as they merely helped to thresh the mere straw of the dogmatics of the schools. The new school, which was formed of those who perceived that the day-labourers of the pulpits and chairs of their time, were wholly destitute of that noble and truthful inspiration, which Christianity makes dear and valuable to him who has never believed in miracles and legends—this new school proved mighty, as long as, in conformity with the spirit of the age, it preached freedom and deliverance from the tyranny of reigning schools and churches, from authoritative judgements, from public officers, and from demoralized courts. As soon, however, as the pietists became sufficiently numerous and influential as a sect, then affectation of religion and fanatical zeal were used as mere cloaks for the concealment of their worldly views, and they were deserted by the age in the same manner as they had previously deserted it.

We must not here enter upon the edifying literature, lest we should discourage mere worldly readers; in order, however, to support the bold assertion, that the pietists were the fruit of the spirit of the age, yearning after knowledge and freedom, we need only refer for satisfactory proof to one well-known book. We derive this proof from a work which we regard as the most important which appeared in that time, and which proceeded from that school—we mean Gottfried Arnold's 'Impartial History of Churches and Heretics*,' a work which we must mention, also,

* We can neither here, nor in what follows, enter upon the inquiry of the importance of the pietists and of Thomasius, Gottsched and others, to German literature in general, but only touch upon the point incidentally, as one lying beyond the range of our objects. We shall therefore observe, that among the multifarious writings which Arnold published (between fifty and sixty), even until he was eighty years old, there are several which were highly serviceable to the German language and literature, although this cannot indeed be said of his 'History of the Church,' the language of which is very impure, however different soever it may be from the barbarous language of his contem-

on account of the peculiar manner in which history is therein treated. In this work, the then-existing system of the church and the prevailing dogmatics were attacked and contended against, as vigorously as by Bolingbroke himself, but upon different grounds and from a different starting-point. This will be immediately perceived, upon a comparison of Arnold's explanation of the nature and objects of his still very interesting work, with the complaints which were made, and the accusations which were brought against the author by the learned men and ecclesiastics of the time.

It is no part of our business here to examine what share Thomasius took in this history of churches and heretics; we assume it to have been the work of the man who was obliged to defend it. The notice which it excited may be deduced from the fact, that in the most complete edition of the work, the whole of the third volume folio is filled with writings for and against it, and that it would be easy to write a whole book upon the controversies which arose from, and were written about this 'History of Heretics*.' As to Gottfried Arnold's community of views with Bolingbroke, this will be seen by a comparison of Chap. ii†. § 3. of 'Bolingbroke's Letters to Pope,' with the following explanation given by Arnold of the particular character of his work:—

He says,—“That, instead of following the example of the church historians by whom he had been preceded, in employing all their skill and using all their endeavours to justify the deeds of their own party without distinction, and to blacken in the grossest manner those of other sects, he will be on his guard against flattering any party. He will therefore neither conceal the faults of those who are honoured as the defenders of the true faith, nor the virtues of those who are described as enemies of the truth. Instead of attaching credit, like others, to the narratives of church historians, which are often untrue, and believing

poraries: his writings, best worth notice, are:—'Seine Wahre Abbildung der ersten Christen im Glauben und Leben 1696,' 'Seine Reisen des Apostels Petri 1702,' 'Seine Ausgabe (1701 und 1713) von Johannis *Angeli* Cherubimischen Wandersmann,' 'Seine in Joh. Arndts Manier geschriebenen Erbauungsbücher.'

* It will not be expected from us to lose ourselves in the special church history of the eighteenth century; but although our chief object must always be the general part, we shall occasionally notice it also. The edition here alluded to, is that published in Schaffhausen, 1742, 3rd vol. folio, pp. 1100.

† The passage referred to in the 'History of English Literature.'

the accusations which both in ancient and modern times have been brought against the so-called heretics, without any suitable examination, and by means of which many holy and good men have been enrolled in the catalogue of heretics, he will always pursue the course of serious examination. This he regards as the more necessary, as the lists of heretics are wholly incorrect, and great pains have been taken to enlarge them. And further, instead of following other historians, in exalting to heaven the old bishops and teachers of the church by the most fulsome eulogiums, and expressing an unconditional approval of all their actions, particularly those which are connected with their ecclesiastical assemblies and councils, synods so called, he will regard it as the duty of impartiality to describe the nature and qualities of the old ecclesiastical instructors, according to truth. He will praise the deserving according to their merits, fearlessly disclose the faults of the others, and show that those people have often proved themselves the bitterest persecutors of Christians, have accused and cruelly persecuted the innocent, who were at least conscientious and convinced, and at the same time have been the means of the most unhappy divisions in the Christian church.

“And finally,” he continues, “because it has been hitherto the custom to judge of the flourishing condition of the church of Christ, rather from its outward splendour and possessions, than from its inward condition, and therefore to regard those periods as the most prosperous, in which the confessors of the true faith of our Redeemer were delivered from the persecutions of their enemies, and were established in ease and security, he shall regard it as necessary, to form his judgement of the flourishing or rotten condition of the church in every century, according to its inward life and purity. He will show that the true church of Christ was at all times in its highest state of vigour and purity, when its members were obliged to take up their cross, and that in their prosperity so called, the church fell into decay; moreover, that the true church has never consisted of the numerous great and the persecutors, but of the little and persecuted flock.”

These passages, which have been given in the words of the author, prove that he fully coincided with Bolingbroke, in reference to the prevailing theology of the schools and the established systems of religion. Christian Thomasius, in his public announcement and recommendation of the book, regards this as

its chief feature and highest recommendation, even in these dark and persecuting times.

“Arnold,” says Thomasius, “is the only man, or at least the first, who has avoided the follies into which others have fallen, and discovered and fully exposed the errors which have been especially committed by the Englishman, Cave; he has maintained that the church of Christ, with respect to life and conduct, had begun to fall into decay immediately after the ascension of our Saviour, and still more after the death of the Apostles, and that this degeneracy had enormously increased since the age of Constantine the Great.” Thomasius adds, “that is the reason, for which Arnold, without any good ground, has been so bitterly attacked by those who were most obnoxious to the reproach of having neglected all those precautions to which Arnold had had recourse. His opponents therefore alleged, that he had defended all heretics and visionaries, even the atheists, that he had reviled the church of God, and defamed the true instructors of the first Christian emperor,” &c.

There was indeed, in other respects a great distinction between the pietists and the Deists. The one wished to build up a new and a purer church instead of that which existed; the others, utterly to destroy it. The tone of the two parties, who were inimical to the existing condition of the church, was as different as that of the portion of the public with whom they had respectively to do. The English Deists, such as Bolingbroke and the French scoffers, addressed themselves to courts and courtiers who had outrun the age,—to the more refined and cultivated circles of metropolitan cities,—to the good society of their time. The German pietists had influence among the people only, who, in contradistinction to the others, would be called bad society. It was just the reverse of what it is in our days; and for that very reason, there was a great deal more simplicity, strength, and truth among the old pietists, than amongst their modern successors. Who was their public?—the German townsman, the country squire, the old courtier, the stiff jurist, the ecclesiastical functionaries and preachers, and eventually Frederick William of Prussia, the whole of whom had no taste for, or acquaintance with, the refinements of great cities, or the dazzling and fashionable wit of the English and French. To whisper in the ear of such people was not sufficient; those who addressed them must cry aloud.

In the same manner as the miserable condition of German instruction in the Latin schools and universities leads us to the pietists; the want of political freedom, the oppressive rule of corporate bodies, and the tyranny of scholastic language and systems lead us to Christian Thomasius; because he alone, as early as the seventeenth century, had done more than any of his contemporaries to burst the fetters of the middle ages. That he knew well the difficulties with which he would have to contend, we shall prove from his own words, which we quote with the greater satisfaction, as they explain in an admirable manner his relation to his age. The passage will be found in the introduction to a treatise by Thomasius, upon ‘The Art of divining Men’s Thoughts from their Conversation*’; and in a defence of this treatise against some objections of Tenzel, he returns to the topic of want of freedom. On this occasion he gives a good description of the still existing abuses of the schools and universities, and of the total want of zeal for human improvement and mental culture, properly so called. In this passage, to which we wish to call particular attention, he enumerates the reasons of the slow progress of the Germans, and then especially insists upon the fact, that they were far behind the English and Dutch, with respect to freedom of thinking and speech, even behind the French before the expulsion of the adherents of the Reformation†. He says:—

“Reason acknowledges no master but God, and therefore the yoke which man imposes, when he prescribes human authority as a rule of judgement, is intolerable; but if it must be under this yoke, or will voluntarily subject itself to it from the desire for empty honours or love of gain, or from any vain fears, then the understanding is no longer fit to be the instrument of any true knowledge. It is freedom alone which has given to the English, to the Dutch, and even to the French (before the banishment of the reformed) so many learned men; whereas, on

* ‘Die Kunst der Menschen Gesinnungen aus ihren Gesprächen zu errathen.’

† “Christian Thomasius, &c. Weitere Erläuterung durch unterschiedene Exempel des unlängst gethanen Vorschlags wegen der neuen Wissenschaft, anderer Menschen Gemüther erkennen zu lernen, nebst der nöthigen und gründlichen Beantwortung derer vielfältigen und über drei Jahr hero continuirten Zunöthigungen Herrn M. W. E. Tenzels, Halle, 1692, S. p. 139—186. 186—281.”

“Christian Thomasius nach seinen Schriften und Schicksalen dargestellt von H. Luden, Berlin, 1805, p. 206.”

the other hand, the want of this freedom has oppressed and destroyed the quick genius and penetrating judgement of the Italian, and the noble minds of the Spaniards.”

The whole life of this learned and philosophic jurist was devoted to a struggle with the barbarism of the schools, of the laws and of the courts, and on his first appearance as a tutor in Leipzig, as well as in his splendid career as director of the new university in Halle, he laboured constantly to stir up his countrymen to emulation, by making them acquainted with the progress of the English and the French. His writings, the legal ones excepted, which do not fall within our views, were indeed only calculated for the moment, and are now wholly without importance; in their time, however, their influence and effects were great. We regard it, indeed, as one of the absurd exaggerations into which Schlözer often allows himself to run, when, not quite master of himself, he affirms that Thomasius has deserved better of the human race than all the Greek philosophers together; we admit, that he must, and ought to be reckoned among the greatest men of modern times. He was neither distinguished as an orator, an inventive genius, a discoverer, nor by the extent of his knowledge; but as an organ of his time, as a skilful advocate of the requirements of the new century, which he had learned from the English and French, and, according to their circumstances, wished to make good to the Germans, he was of more service to the nation than all their numerous metaphysicians and theologians.

He began his career by encouraging the Germans to emulate the French, and to make themselves acquainted with the French language and literature, instead of wasting their time upon the miserable scholastic Latin, which at that period it was the custom to study; then he zealously interested himself for the German language, for its purification, and its use in life. These were at that time the chief demands of the age, which Gottsched also afterwards endeavoured to forward and to meet, and by means of which this pedant, who was not worthy to lose the latchets of Thomasius' shoes, has obtained a great reputation and a species of immortality, which, however, few will envy him, even of those whose opinions are carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine. With these views, with this zeal for the advancement of the German language, and for some sort of national culture, it was quite natural that Thomasius should attach himself to the

pietist party, should go over to them, and work so industriously on Gottfried Arnold's 'History of Churches and Heretics,' that he might almost be regarded as its author. This German direction stood only in apparent contradiction to his previous and earnest recommendations of the French. This was manifest when the pietists afterwards entirely turned away from the spirit of their age, and all their practical contemporaries who were not favourable to visionary or fanatical views, withdrew from them; for from this time forward, Thomasius altogether forsook them.

If, after this general remark, we turn our attention to the special evidences of his great influence, it will be seen, first, what considerable progress had been made in Germany towards a great change in manners and customs as early as the first decennium of the century; and secondly, how far our people, at the close of the seventeenth century, fell short of that progress which, at its commencement, it might have been reasonably expected they should have made. All scientific instruction, all books not merely on the sciences connected with the usual faculties, but also upon philosophy and history, were written in the Latin language; and even mathematics, physics, natural history and geography were wholly inaccessible to the people. These sciences treated in a learned language, were altogether separated from life, to which they belong, and from any examination of their utility and application which was so necessary to their advancement. The so-called philosophy of the schools, holding on in its absurd course in obscurity and darkness, never experienced the disgrace of being shattered by coming into collision with the common sense of the people, unskilled in its barbaric Latin, and therefore at the cost of the nation built up its houses of cards, fit only for the habitation of dreaming philosophers. With respect to the manner of communicating instruction, it is obvious, that it must either have been confined within the limits of the knowledge which existed in the times of pure Latinity, or otherwise must have been conveyed in a barbarous dialect. Animation, spirit, inspiration, the eloquence of the moment, were things not thought of.

Under the circumstances which have just been stated, it was an act of no ordinary boldness in Christian Thomasius, as a tutor in Leipzig, in 1688, to put up a notice upon a black

board, written in the German language, and announcing a course of lectures to be delivered in that tongue. By such lectures he meant to show to the members of the university, how the sciences might be introduced into life, and treated according to the French plan. This was truly the only thing which he wished to learn from the French, for we see from his own writings, he had neither derived any acquirements in taste from the ancients, nor from the French, whom he so highly and frequently praised. The outcry is almost incredible, which was raised against Thomasius on account of this innovation; his zeal, however, against the Latinity of the schools and their compounds (for we do not here speak of the classics), was so much in accordance with the spirit of the age, that he not only from that time read all his lectures in German, but his example was imitated by others in Leipzig, as early as the first decennium of the eighteenth century.

The introduction of the language of the people as the instrument of public learned instruction, is an event of so great importance in the history of its improvement and mental culture, that the full consideration of it would lead us too far; and we must satisfy ourselves with a notice of the fact. We cannot, however, overlook the circumstance, that Thomasius sought protection from the people, when the whole corporation of learned professors, and particularly the theologians, rose up in arms against him. This circumstance gave occasion to the establishment of a learned periodical in the German language*. This satirical and critical monthly review was undoubtedly written in German, in order to induce the nation to take an interest in literary affairs, about which hitherto those only who were learned by profession and by trade troubled themselves, and to call in the aid of the people against the pedantry and the pedants of the age. The attempt succeeded, although the periodical was only carried on for three years.

The path for the reformation of the people by means of periodicals was now opened, and the thing itself was so much

* The title was twice changed—1st. ‘Scherz und ernsthafte vernünftige und einfältige Gedanken über allerhand nützliche Bücher und Fragen.’ 2dly. ‘Freimüthige, lustige und ernsthafte, jedoch Vernunft und Gesetz, mäszige Gedanken oder Monatsgespräche über allerhand vornämlich aber neue Bücher, 1688—1690.’

a necessity of the age, that in the very beginning of the eighteenth century, there existed a number of German magazines, upon theological, philosophical, and historical subjects, which are proofs of the interest taken in literature and science by the people themselves, and not merely by the learned. In Thomasius' magazine alone, however, is to be found any freedom of mind, or any zeal for the cultivation and promotion of those sciences which belong to life, all the rest are as dark as the age itself; it was still however much, that the people had once more gained the privilege and right which seems to have been lost since the death of Luther. The contents of Thomasius' periodical do not fall within our view, but we cannot altogether pass by the fact, that immediately after its appearance, he took other steps, in order to deliver the German people from the learned and corporate barbarism of stupid pedants.

He attempted also to treat philosophy for Germans in their own language. This attempt appeared to the learned in Leipzig either so unnecessary or so injurious, that his work upon logic was not allowed to be printed there. It was not sent to the press and published till the author was a teacher in Halle, in that school of learning where he trained many eminent jurists according to his new method. We must leave to others the task of pointing out the relation of this first German logic to the sciences; the manner in which it was connected with the people, and with the necessities of the age, may be concluded, from the great number of editions of this so called 'Court Philosophy.' A fifth edition appeared as early as the year 1719. In the pursuit and study of philosophy itself Thomasius remained true to his design of calling the Germans forth from the dust of the study into the freshness of practical life. He appended to his so called 'Court Philosophy,' or logic, a guide to practice, or what might be called in other words, the 'Theory of Method,' and in his lectures he led on the students from mere learning and remembering, to reflection and to the formation of right views of life.

The fact of Thomasius being obliged to read lectures upon German style, and to exercise his hearers in German composition and declamation, is one of the best proofs, that those schools in which Latin only was learned, were far indeed behind their age, when it became necessary for one of the most distinguished academical teachers of the age to give up his time to such

instruction. Thomasius' high reputation as a teacher of legal science, and as a practical jurist, contributed eminently to increase his influence upon the nation, and by writing works in German upon learned subjects, he promoted the advancement, and led to the improvement, of the national language.

In Thomasius' view, pietism was a means of civilization, because he had to do with rough students, and not less rough colleagues. The pietists struggled against mere memoriter learning, love of system, school dogmatics, and the passion for quotation, as much as he did himself; but, as the early Christian missionaries wished to curb and keep in subjection the wild inhabitants of the northern nations by means of ceremonies, penances, and a hierarchy; the pietists, by means of the forms of external devotion, wished to ameliorate and soften the rude characters of the students, which were encouraged by their teachers for the sake of humble gains. Thomasius, whose efficiency and influence were altogether worldly, had besides no need either of pietism or the pietists—he stood quite independent. We shall point out his merits in reference to enlightenment in a very few words, because the nature of the mental culture of his contemporaries may be gathered at the same time from the titles of the books, and from hints about his struggles with prevailing prejudices, and with legal injustice.

Immediately after his work upon logic, he wrote a book upon moral philosophy, also in the German language, which was reprinted eight times from 1692 till 1726. Upon the contents of this work we shall not enter, of the value of which we shall draw no conclusion from the number of times of its being reprinted; we quote it merely as a fact, in order to show that authors did not delay to profit by the demands of the age, which was manifested by the reception given to the works of Thomasius; and that the professors of other universities followed the example of those at Halle, whose lectures and expositions in the German language allured a large concourse of hearers. We shall make no further mention of the numerous books and treatises which Thomasius at a later period wrote in German, because they have in themselves very little importance or value, but merely say, that they were all written in opposition to the prevailing perversity of his age, or directed against the universities and their faculties.

Among the writings of Thomasius, which had an exciting and

improving influence upon the learned officials and jurists, whose number in Germany, as is well known, is very great, in consequence of the union of administration and justice, may be reckoned his various instructions to lawyers, in reference to the proper direction of their studies, and his earnest advice and encouragement, that they should aim at a much more general, and properly speaking, human culture, than they had previously done. Among his works which were in the highest degree serviceable for the enlightenment of the greater public of his time, we reckon his 'Image of a Philosopher without Pedantry*,' taken from the French of Charpentier, and his 'History of Wisdom and Folly.' The latter should properly have borne the title:—Three parts of a Miscellaneous Collection of Treatises and Histories, for the promotion of that Enlightenment which is a Necessity of the Age.

This 'History of Wisdom and Folly' led to a struggle after the German manner, in favour of the dawning light, and sometimes for the principles of the pietists, against pedants and system-mongers, of the same kind as that in which Bayle, who was contemporary with Thomasius, contended in the French manner, against dogmatics and theological morals, in Holland. Bayle, like Thomasius, fought with foreign weapons; the latter, as well as the former, introduced foreign words and actions, and by selection, position and use, gave them significance.

There were two prevailing prejudices which made the law courts of that time the battle-field of wild superstition, and the judges the instruments of that cruelty which was the result of a most absurd prejudice; and it was only a person like Thomasius, who was equally distinguished as a man and a philosopher, as a theologian and a jurist, who could venture in those dark times to enter the field against them, and subdue them. Thomasius was the man who first raised his voice in Germany against prosecutions for witchcraft, which were at that time common, and against the application of torture in criminal trials. Legislation indeed remained as barbarous as it had previously been, but these abuses were greatly diminished in practice. Torture still continued to be the letter of the law in some states of Germany, till the fall of the German empire,

* Ebenbild eines ohnpedantischen Philosophen, 1693.

and Schlözer, in his statistics, is obliged to notice cases of prosecution for witchcraft, in some parts of our country, and especially in the small ecclesiastical states, as late as the end of the eighteenth century.

Thomasius, as a member of the court of awards in Halle, was at first at issue with Stryk, who presided in the court, on the subject of prosecutions for witchcraft, but he was soon led by experience to adopt the better and clearer views of his colleague, and then undertook to come forward as the opponent of this absurdity. His having conquered his prejudice, and renounced an opinion which appeared to him to be a consequence of belief in the Bible, shows his pure love of truth, as clearly as his having never sunk so deep in pietism as to lose a clear insight into the relations of life. And here we must remark, that he forsook the degenerate pietists as soon as their piety led them to be guilty of calumny and persecution. This he made known in the preface to a work published in 1708. After that time he studied Locke, adopted his system, and wrote after his manner, and in accordance with his principles.

With respect to his views of prosecution for witchcraft, Thomasius had been preceded by two Dutch writers, Van Dale and Bekker; but Thomasius did not venture, as those writers had done, altogether to deny the existence of the devil. He satisfied himself with proving the absurdity of the accusation, of any one being in league with this spirit of evil. Bekker's work* against a belief in the devil, ghosts and witches, has been translated, as is well known, into all languages, and therefore into German. In this treatise it is shown to be both cruelty and folly, to condemn, torment, prosecute as allies of the devil, and finally to execute in a horrible manner, wicked or unfortunate women, or persons afflicted by nature, or borne down by age or poverty, who appeared to the ignorant to do supernatural things. What Bekker had illustrated and conceived in a theological and philosophical point of view, Thomasius examined and established as a lawyer from his own experience in trials, without breaking or interfering with the clergy, who wished still to retain the devil, as a useful pulpit topic and auxiliary. As soon as, in the court at Halle, he had gained a proper in-

* 'De betoverte Wereld.'

sight into the subject, he wrote his Latin treatise ‘Upon Witchcraft, regarded as a Criminal Offence*.’ This treatise was afterwards translated into German, and made the most of by his numerous disciples.

It will be seen from ‘Thomasius’ own words how bitterly he was reviled, in consequence of his attacks upon the prejudices of his age; how dark every thing appeared at that time in Germany; and how zealously he emulated the example of Bayle and other antagonists of superstition; and the passage introduced in the note, may serve, at the same time, to give some notion of his manner of treating his subject, and of his not very agreeable style†. The passage quoted is extracted from a book written in German, in which Thomasius proves, not merely to lawyers, but especially to the great German public, the absurdity of prosecutions for witchcraft, illustrated by three cases of such prosecutions, extending to four hundred and thirteen pages.

* ‘De Crimine Magiæ,’ 1701.

† The passage which follows is extracted from a preface to the first part.—“Der 1723, bei Renger in Halle in Octav erschienenen Vernünftigen und Christlichen, aber nicht Scheinheiligen Thomasischen Gedanken und Erinnerungen über allerhand gemischte philosophische und juristische Händel. Dort heisst es: Was endlich den 11ten, 12ten, 13ten Händel anbelangt, so becheide ich mich zwar (man bedenke, dasz Thomasius damals schon 22 Jahr lang gegen Hexenprozesse geeifert hatte), dasz viele, die denen Hexenprocessen und denen Fabeln von Kobolden noch so herzlich ergeben sind, sich über diese Händel ärgern und wohl gar mit verkehrten Augen über mich seufzen werden, dasz durch diese Händel die *autoritaet* derer berühmtesten Lehrer (auch auf denen Protestirenden und zwar auf den meist annoch diese Stunde seyenden *γρηγοριωσ* Lutherischen Universitäten) bei vielen (die spitzige Vernunft allzu hoch treibenden und nicht unter dem Glauben nehmen wollenden) Neulingen immer in noch mehrere *decadenz* kommen dürfte. Aber ich hoffe auch, es werden viele andere von der vernünftigen Parthei diese drei Händel mit Vergnügen lesen und dadurch in ihrer durch Gottes Gnade allbereits erlangten Erkänntnisz der noch bei uns leider sich befindlichen groben *reliquien* des Politischen Pabsthums immer mehr und mehr gestärkt werden. Indem ich diese Vorrede schliesze besinne ich mich, dasz für wenig Tagen die Zeitungen aus Turin vom 29 Aug. folgendes gemeldet: ‘Die der Zauberei überführte und nunmehr zum Tode verurtheilten Personen in dem Thal Aosta haben an den Senat zu Chambéry appellirt: es hat sich aber selbiger wenig an ihre *Appellation* gekehrt; vielmehr das wider sie ausgesprochene Urtheil nicht nur bekräftigt, sondern auch noch geschärft und dabei verordnet, dasz alle Acten dieses peinlichen Prozesses verbrannt und dadurch denen Nachkommen das Andenken dieser schändlichen That benommen werden solle.’ Das Letzte meint er, würde seinen Gegnern erwünscht seyn, sie würden schreien: ‘O! dasz doch Thomasius dieses läse und sich bekehrte!’ oder auch, ‘O! dasz doch alle Schriften des Thomasius verbrannt und dadurch Nachkommen das Andenken seiner gefährlichen und *heterodoxen* Meinungen benommen würde!’ Oder ‘O! dasz doch der Mann selbst verbrannt würde.’ Wir wollten Gott auf den Knien danken, wann wir dieses erleben sollten, und dadurch die zur Ehre Gottes *dominirende Orthodoxie* gerettet sähen, u. s. w.”

The first case quoted is that of an action brought by the parents of a girl thirteen years old, against the parson of their village, who had accused their daughter of being able to make mice by magic. The second case, which caused a collision between two law courts, and occupied the supreme court of the empire and two faculties, together with the senate of an imperial city, for three years (1718-1721), was caused by the wantonness of a young and vagrant girl, who was accused of witchcraft. The third case, in which a boy of fourteen had involved his family in a long prosecution for witchcraft, by playing the hobgoblin, and acknowledging that he had entered formally into an alliance with the devil, furnished Thomasius with an opportunity of remarking, with a sneer, that he was about to narrate a history which it would be very useful for the patrons of prosecutions for witchcraft, and the favourers of hobgoblins and ghosts to read; and he adds, that a short time since, Mr. Jeremiah Heinisch, a preacher at Gröben, had published a so-called testimony of the truth of the doings of a goblin in the parsonage-house itself, in which he took great trouble to persuade the people that it had so tormented him in his said parsonage, that he had been almost compelled to leave the house.

The deep-rooted superstitious belief in wandering spirits, which is intimately connected with a rude faith and with a mystical philosophy, suited to female or eccentric minds, or to weak-minded men, which spirits appearing and acting so as to be objects of sense, as neither souls nor bodies, could not indeed possibly be destroyed by the weapons of sound reason. What has been stated by three men distinguished for piety in our own days, the one in a 'Theory of the Nature of Spirits,' the second in 'Leaves in Favour of higher Truth,' and the third, in 'The Story of the girl Von Prevorst,' is much more absurd than the story of the simple parson at Gröben; but Thomasius fully succeeded in banishing altogether from our courts such cases of the freaks of visionaries and old men.

We may also learn from Thomasius himself, how difficult the struggle was, which he was obliged to maintain on this point with the ignorant friends of old superstitions. The whole of the second volume of the 'Thoughts and Recollections,' already quoted, confirms this assertion, by a diffuse, ample, and formal

legal narrative of all the persecutions and calumnies to which he had been subjected during the course of his life.

Thomasius was less fortunate with regard to the torture than he had been with respect to prosecutions for witchcraft. The treatise* in which he urges the total discontinuance of this practice, because he declared it to be a useless cruelty, and unworthy of a Christian judge, affected first only those judges, who, being trained in these new principles, either prevented or mitigated its application. But legally the torture was abolished only in a very few states, till the end of the eighteenth century. The noble Charles Frederick of Baden, together with the King of Denmark, gave the first examples of its abolition. In Hanover, torture, which had been abolished, was again re-introduced by law, together with all other abuses, in 1814; it is however to be hoped, for the honour of humanity, that though legally permitted, it is never applied; and that it will at some later period give occasion to an ordinance for its legal abolition.

§ II.

GOTTSCHED AND THE CHANGES IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE WHICH PROCEEDED FROM LEIPZIG.

However little it will occur to any one to compare Thomasius with Gottsched, it is undeniable that the latter completed for Leipzig, what the former had begun in Halle; his influence indeed was altogether of another kind, operated in another direction, and upon very different subjects; it originated from other motives, and from a very common mind. Gottsched and Thomasius both laboured to expel barbarous Latin from the schools and universities, and together with the German language to bring the spirit of the new age into the affairs of life; their springs of action however were wholly different. The mind of Gottsched never felt any regard for, or was in the slightest degree animated by, true inspiration; he was not urged onward by the eager and noble motive of freeing his country from barbarism and mental oppression, but merely speculated upon the

* 'De Tortura e Foris Christianorum proscibenda.'

spirit of the age. In order to gain a short-lived renown, university influence, and the outward advantages connected with it, he laboured with assiduity to aid in introducing the light of the new century, by means of unwearied literary activity, and to diffuse it by all the arts of a narrow mind. We remark, however, that the circumstance, that the mere trading speculation of a university professor could be founded upon the spirit of the time, awakened by Thomasius and others, clearly proves how powerful this spirit was. Gottsched was precisely the very fittest man to open and prepare the way; for one kind of vulgar zeal and activity is the best calculated to weaken and destroy another. What is dull and vulgar must be met with its own weapons, and upon its own field. Genius, in and for itself, is nothing with the multitude; and the fact can have no more striking illustration than that which the history of German literature affords to all who are sufficiently acquainted with its course.

It may be seen from Gottsched's works, how great the darkness and learned barbarism still were in Germany at the end—to say nothing of the beginning—of this period, the history of which we are now writing. When speaking, in the year 1742, of the difficulties which hypocrites and pedants laid in the way, in order to prevent the introduction of the language of the people and the enlightenment of the unlearned, he says, in his preface to his translation of Bayle's dictionary, that this undertaking was obstructed from three quarters. First, all zealously religious men were dissatisfied, who could not in general endure the writings of Bayle, because he was a confessed friend and advocate of scepticism, or a defender of the Manicheans*. The second class of opponents consisted of the enemies of all German books, who could not contemplate, without indignation, the notion of desecrating the arts and sciences, by expounding them in the modern languages, and making the unlearned acquainted with their secrets. The third class of opponents, as he regards them, consisted of those who were sworn admirers of the French language, to whom all that is strange, unusual and even obscure, which so often occurs in foreign books, appears to be merely *esprit*, and to include in itself a certain *Je ne sais*

* Our readers will be astonished to find that the Abbot Mosheim belonged to this class. See the Preface to Nolten's 'Lexicon Latinæ Linguae anti-barbarum,' 1740.

quoi, which it was impossible in German to express in so intellectual, polite and graceful a manner.

We have introduced the passage in Gottsched's own words; because, in consequence of the feeling of dislike which is entertained towards his person, the great services which he rendered to the country as the organ of his time, and as the reformer of school instruction, have been too frequently overlooked or forgotten. When it appears that the difficulties were so great with respect to the use of the language and the enlightenment of the people in 1742, it will be obvious that in the second decennium of the century, at which time Gottsched came to Leipzig, German literature had no existence. We shall, however, justify this allegation also, by an irrefragable proof. For this purpose, we select the heart-breaking rhymes*, in which Triller enumerates the names of all the men who had gained distinction and renown in Germany as poets, since the time of Opitz. And in order to form a correct judgement of the verses, it must be known that this Triller was one of those who were eulogised by Gottsched; for the Leipzig professor carried on a ridiculous contest with Bodmer about Triller's miserable fables.

If Triller was a renowned poet, and Opitz, according to his judgement and extravagant praise, was a Pindar, and that in

* 'Triller's Edition of Martin Opitz's Poems.'—Frankfort, 1746, 4 vols. 8vo.

Hofmannswaldau liesz Dich liegen,
Lohenstein ward ungetreu,
Hallmann stimmte diesen bey,
Alle wollten höher fliegen,
Keiner hat Dich doch erreicht,
So an Worten als an Sachen.

* * * * *

Gryphius nebst seinem Sohne,
Tscherning, Abschatz, Schoch und Dach
Gingen Deinem Vortritt nach
Strebten straks nach Deiner Krone.
Flemming aber hat Dir gleich
Oft auch noch zuvorgesungen.

* * * * *

Canitz, Neukirch, Pietsch und Besser,
Richey, Brockes und Zimmermann
Haben Dir es nachgethan,
Werden durch Dich täglich grösser;
Haller steigt durch Dich empor,
Günther brennt von Deinem Feuer,
Böhlau stimmt nach Dir sein Rohr,
Gleichwie Seidel seine Leyer,
Gottsched singt und Lindner spielt,
Wie es Deine Kunst befiehlt.

1747, how advantageous and important must we consider Gottsched's merits to have been in the second decennium of the century, who succeeded in causing the German language to be made a regular branch of study and instruction in the public schools; wrote grammars, dictionaries, books of instruction, pamphlets and poems, which were suited to the degree of mental culture then existing among the mass of the people! What great mind could have understood or accomplished such a task? or what would have been its influence upon the people? In order to form an impartial judgement of Gottsched's importance, and of his influence upon literature, we must be well acquainted with the condition of both prose and poetry, from the beginning of the century till 1740. This could only be effected by enumerating the names of all the celebrated men; but we shall not venture here to introduce the long catalogue of miserable writers, whose names have long since sunk into oblivion. The names of the great mass of poets, from Opitz to Triller, may be seen in the rhymes, which for this reason we have quoted at greater length than was necessary, in order to enable our readers to judge of their merits; we shall merely add a very few observations. From what has been already said of the prose writers, and of some of the most celebrated of the poets mentioned by Triller, we must be convinced that, in the time of Gottsched, all men of talents such as Frederick the Second, ladies, and all those who had seen anything of the world, had no other resource than that of French books and French society.

With respect to pulpit eloquence, Gottsched, in the fourth edition of his 'Art of Oratory,' written in German, mentions only the names of Scriver, Lassenius and Müller; it must be added, however, that Jerusalem and Mosheim were celebrated for their talents in this way, as early as 1740—1743. We must not here be led aside to pulpit eloquence, when our discourse must turn upon novels, poetry, letter-writing and the eloquence of political or common life. As lay prose-writers, Gottsched names first, Ziegler, Puffendorf, and Fuchs. With respect to the first-mentioned, (the well-known author of the Asiatic 'Vanise,') Gottsched is obliged to admit, that he, as well as Puffendorf and Fuchs, whom he classes along with him, was accustomed to disfigure his language by the mixture which he introduced of Latin and French words and phrases. Puffendorf's merits as a teacher of the law of nations, and a

learned historian, do not here fall under consideration; but the first glance at the introduction to the history of the most celebrated nations of Europe, will convince the intelligent reader, that a history composed in such a manner, could be read much better in Latin than in German, and that Puffendorf wrote the one far better than the other.

Gottsched has singled out three others as pre-eminent, from the names which have been mentioned, viz., Thomasius, Canitz, and Besser. The language of the first, however, is deficient in purity, dignity and strength; and although Canitz and Besser have the advantage of Thomasius in purity and art, they are on the other hand wholly devoid of simplicity and nature. In every line they betray stiffness and pedantry, and especially the oppressive servile disposition of courts. Thomasius always speaks with candour and freedom, though wholly without ornament. His writings, moreover, still possess value from their contents; but who in our days would take in his hand Canitz's 'Funeral Oration upon the premature Death of the Princess Henrietta Elizabeth of Brandenburg,' and such like bombast? Who expects from the chief master of ceremonies of Frederick the First, and Augustus of Poland (Besser), and from his state and personal eulogiums, anything else than what was fit for the atmosphere of courts, where taste was sought for and centred in pomp and magnificence?

In poetry, Gottsched brings forward Fuchs, Canitz, Besser, Neukirch, and Postel, as his models. Matthison's 'Lyric Anthology' contains, as specimens, some good pieces of Fuchs and Besser; but when these are compared with the originals, it will be seen that Matthison has recast them greatly to their advantage. Canitz is a mere echo of Opitz, who was himself by no means original; he was pious according to the stiff manners of the age, and whatever is at all tolerable in his satires belongs to Boileau. Besser has shown what the nature of his poetical powers was, in his heroic poem of 'The Great Election,' in which the finest passage, the description of the battle of Fehrbellin, is nothing better than miserable prosaic rhyme, and cannot bear the slightest comparison with the worst of such productions of the same age in England and France. As to Neukirch, who is extolled as a poet by Gottsched, the case is pretty much the same as that of those male and female poetical writers who were crowned almost every year, from 1737 to

1747, by the Protector in Göttingen (when a Haller too was a teacher). We have only to read the verses of the lady-poets, whom the Protector adorned with the laurel, to perceive how utterly destitute of taste the judges of it at that time were. This is confirmed by the fact, that Neukirch's heroic poem, composed from Fénelon's 'Telemachus' rendered into rhyme, actually appeared twice in folio, in all the magnificence of typographic pomp (1727—1729, and 1738, 1739). We must speak of Postel a little more at length, because the renown of this man, and the manner in which he attained his celebrity, indicate the taste of a period in which all poetry had disappeared from the life and intercourse of men.

Postel was first indebted for his reputation to operas and musical entertainments, which he prepared for the Hamburg stage. This is particularly worthy of notice, because it gives us the opportunity of incidentally remarking, that the spirit of the age began to show its influence and effects, about the same time, at the two extremities of Germany. In Halle, Zürich, Leipzig, and Hamburg, all was awakened to new life. Thomasius urged on the reform in the departments of learning; Gottsched was active in language and *belles lettres*; and the Hamburg theatre was used as an instrument of public improvement, by Postel, Brockes, and Hagedorn. Postel desired to be simple and natural; he did not wish to lose himself in allegories, metaphors, and other bombast, like Lohenstein and Hoffmannswaldau; but for that reason sunk far below the language of well-informed and educated men. We have only to read the title and the invocation of his 'Artful Juno*,' published in 1700, to comprehend why D'Argent and Mauvillon, some thirty years later, condemned the Germans as destitute of all taste. The Swiss, who were bitter opponents of Gottsched, did not omit to avail themselves, in the spirit of triumph, of Mauvillon's words, in order to repay insult with insult, when they were ridiculed on account of the roughness and Helvetism of their language. The German pub-

* The title runs thus:—'Die listige Juno, wie solche von dem groszen Homer im vierzehnten Buch der Ilias abgebildet, nachmals von dem Bischof Eustathius ausgelegt, nunmehr in teutschen Versen vorgestellt durch. C. H. POSTEL.' The Invocation:—

Dich grosze Königin der Götter will ich singen

* * * * *

Dich selber ruf ich an, lasz meinen Hals erschallen
Mit Reimen solcher Höh', als Deine Gottheit werth.

lic, to their disgrace be it said, because the ancients were still read in the schools, not only delighted in this ‘Listige Juno’ (artful Juno), but after the death of Postel, received with great favour his heroic poem ‘Der grosze Wittekind’ (the great Wittekind), in ten cantos, the last of which was unfinished. Why this should be called a disgrace, and of what was regarded and esteemed as poetry among us about 1724, the reader will be able to form an opinion, from the four lines given in the note, which are selected from the invocation to the Muses in the poem of Wittekind.*

Günther, Wernike, and above all Hagedorn, to whom we shall return, felt some of the influence of their century; but their merits were only first acknowledged, when Gottsched had improved the nature of instruction, and had awakened a feeling in favour of general improvement among the middle classes. Some of Günther’s songs and satires are still, in cases of necessity, readable; but his course of life and destiny prevented him from acquiring that mental culture, which alone can secure to a poet a lasting influence upon the people. Wernike, as an epigrammatist, has been treated precisely in the same manner by Rammler, as the old German lyric writers have been by Matthison; and no reliance therefore can be placed upon Rammler’s collection; his satirical poem, ‘Hans Sachs,’ is here and there very tolerable; but as our concern is with its influence upon the people, we must say it had none. Brockes, on the contrary, exercised no inconsiderable influence upon his time and upon the public mind; his poems were composed altogether in the tone of the prevailing piety and of the traditionary faith, and their spirit and contents belonged more to the time of the past century than to that of the new one. This will be obvious, from the title of his chief work, a closer examination of which does not fall within our plan. In 1712, he wrote a so-called oratorium, entitled ‘Jesus crucified and dying for the Sins of the World, taken from the four Evangelists, and represented in Verse †.’ This poem excited great attention, not only in Hamburg; but throughout all Germany. He further

* Auf Göttheit, die du hast vom Sinai geblitzet,
Lasz meine Geister seyn von Deinem Trieb erhitzet,
Durch Deinen Geist gestärkt, lasz sich von Dir allein
Die recht erleuchtende Entzückung stellen ein.—Sed ohe.

† ‘Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus, aus den vier Evangelisten in gebundener Rede vorgestellt.’

translated, in 1727, Marini's 'Slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehem,' which was taken as a model by Lohenstein, who is notorious as the introducer of the utmost artificiality in verse and prose.

The chief work of the Hamburg poet is his 'Earthly Pleasure in God, consisting of poems upon the works of Nature, and upon Morals*,' which ultimately extended to nine parts. In these poems, which are mostly descriptive, and wholly unconnected, there is something good, and others, with slight alterations and omissions, may be reckoned admirable even in our times; and yet, if it were worth the labour, we could very easily prove, that Gottsched's unpoetical influence and his dull prose were more profitable, and in better accordance with the spirit of the age, than Brockes's admirable poetry.

Gottsched, provided with good certificates of learning, and already well known by some occasional poems written in the taste of the age, came to Leipzig in the year 1723, when at first he was supported by the magistrates of Königsberg, because he had fled from the recruiting officers of Frederick William. He was indebted to his connexion with Menken for his earliest celebrity. The Leipzig scholars had also felt the influence of Thomasius, and now published 'Acta Eruditorum,' in German as well as in Latin, and Johann Burkhard Menken employed Gottsched as an assistant in the composition of his German Magazine. Under Menken's protection, Gottsched first attained celebrity, merely by a little ingenuity, without any true merit, in the same way as many miserable writers and instructors still become great. He made a party, praised mediocrity, and sought for the reward of his mental labour, not in himself, but in what was external in reputation and name; by cringing and praising the poor and the contemptible, he secured a number of followers, who would swear to his words; he reviewed, made a noise, and gained celebrity. We have already remarked, that he was more profitable to the nation and to its culture, by his littleness and meanness of character, than a great mind, under the then circumstances, could possibly have been; because such a mind must have yielded to the ruling mob. In order to comprehend this, we have only to cast a glance upon the educational institutions of the time.

* 'Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott, bestehend in physikalisch moralischen Gedichten.'

Leipzig was the only university in Germany in which a general education could be obtained; for Göttingen did not reach any degree of reputation till about 1740. In Leipzig, the abuses and scandal of student-life were mitigated by the size of the town, by the prevailing manners, by the number of gentlemen of rank who were pursuing their studies in that university, under the direction of their private tutors; and hence the same sort of influence was gradually spread from thence in the first decennium, as that which proceeded from Weimar in the last decennium of the century. Gottsched perceived and profited by this, with an instinct which never fails people of his kind, and with which he combined that prudence in the selection of means suitable for the attainment of his end, which vanity and the love of reputation confer upon the learned as well as upon courtiers.

Gottsched wished to be a reformer according to the rules and the example of French poetry and prose; Addison and Steele were his models. In order to bring forward a new literature, he chose the way which down to our own days the reformers of German taste have always trodden. He read lectures upon the fine arts, in the German language, and by rules and examples sought to bring back poetry, which had been lost in bombast by the imitation of Lohenstein, to simplicity, which indeed was sometimes changed into dulness. With the design of destroying prejudices without raising an outcry, he had Bayle's 'Dictionary' translated by his wife and his disciples, and added remarks and annotations on all subjects, which might appear as refutations. If, on the one hand, he celebrated and imitated the French—if he was one of the first among the Germans who recommended, applauded and idolized Voltaire; he opposed, on the other, the perverse spirit of the age, and sought eagerly to root out the ruling prejudice, that it was unbecoming a person of rank to employ his own mother-tongue in letters*.

* We consider it due to Gottsched and to history, to point out his true merits, since he himself had almost caused them to be forgotten, by wishing to be more than he could be, and by not retiring when his time was gone by. With respect to his zeal for German speaking and writing, we have accidentally fallen upon a decisive passage in one of the letters of his betrothed, who afterwards became his wife. ('Letters of Mrs. Louisa Adelgunde Victoire Gottsched, born Kulmus. Dresden, 1771.' 2 vols. 8vo.) She writes, October 1730, 1st vol., p. 6:—"But why not allow me to write in French? You say it is unjustifiable to write in a foreign language better than in one's own, and

Gottsched had no sooner gained some reputation as a teacher and writer, than he appeared as a journalist, and as the founder and head of a learned society, and thus made for himself clients and allies. Such have been the tactics of all the heads of literary parties, from that time onward. Gottsched was the more successful in this plan, as it was easier in a time when all was new, to accomplish much by the distribution of eulogiums and diplomas, which can now no longer be effected. His society, which was founded in Leipzig, was first called the 'Poetical Society,' which for a Gottsched was not a little ridiculous, but he afterwards adopted the more suitable denomination of 'German.' Gottsched's Magazine of Taste, which was first called 'Die Tadlerinn' (the female faultfinder), and afterwards 'Der Biedermann' (the gentleman), by no means equalled the English, which were his models; but he had also quite a different class of readers from Addison and Steele. His magazines were intended for the German middle classes, and the language, wit and modes of thinking of himself, his Kulmus, afterwards Mrs. Gottsched, their clients and friends, were far better fitted to their circle of readers than a more refined and higher culture, which would have been altogether foreign to them. His reformation of literature was truly useful, because it mounted from below upwards, instead of, as in France, descending from above downwards; for in this way it worked beneficially and peculiarly upon the middle classes—the best part of the German people.

The school tyranny of Gottsched and his followers continued only so long as it could be useful; there were voices early raised in opposition to it, but their objections rested upon no firm foundation. In Berlin, in Hamburg, in Switzerland, the Leipzig taste was not acknowledged; there arose bitter strifes and contests, and as is usual in Germany in learned quarrels, abstract philosophers are never wanting. The followers of Wolf, Baumgarten, and his shield-bearer, Meier, demonstrated, after their mathematical method, that shallow is shallow. In this manner Germany was excited on the subject of literature,

yet my teachers have assured me that there is nothing so vulgar as letters written in German, and that all well-bred people write in French. I know not what induces me to put more confidence in you than in them; but this I know, that I have proposed to myself always to write in German."

in the early decennia of the eighteenth century, as it was on that of religion in the sixteenth. Pamphlets, magazine controversies about poetry and language multiplied till all Germany was in commotion, a fearful war of parties commenced, and what the friendly and peaceful Muses could not effect, the dreadful Furies accomplished.

Gottsched's 'Critical Art of Poetry,' which appeared in 1730, and in its fourth edition had grown to 800 pages, consisted of rules borrowed and diluted from the French; but Gottsched, like the Frenchmen whom he followed, had the false taste to attack the bombast of Marini and Lohenstein; they could only do that by cool reasoning. Gottsched's 'Critical Art of Poetry' moreover begins most unfavourably, with a very bad translation of Horace's 'Letter to the Pisos,' turned into rhyme, and in the progress of the work, French examples are given, and specimens from Neukirch and Günther, but chiefly from Opitz, together with some of his own. He thinks, however, still upon the ancients. Judging from the specimens, one must believe that he could have produced no effect, if he had not had a party to sustain him, and we must remember that no one would have read his book if it had not been plainly written. The misuse of foreign words and terminations fully deserves all the blame which it has received in Gottsched's 'Art of Speaking,' which appeared in 1736, and was reprinted as often as his 'Critical Art of Poetry.' A jumble of languages was regarded as so ornamental and commendable, that words and terminations were distinguished by the type, and the mixture of German and Latin letters gave the books of that period a complete patch-work appearance.

The influence which Gottsched had obtained as the organ of his age, by means of the services rendered to the language by his collections, by his manuals of poetry and eloquence, led him to deceive himself altogether as to his proper sphere. He was bold enough to force himself upon the public as a poet, as an orator, as a translator, without having any pretensions to such distinction; this was injurious to himself, but the nation gained by his failures. We believe, indeed, that it was very useful, that by creditable and discreditable means, by writing many books, by journals, by occasional poetry, by mean party tactics, by confident forwardness and flattery, by praise and abuse, he gained for himself a distinction, such as is sometimes called

a European celebrity, and therefore an importance in Leipzig with the idols of the pedants, and with professors who taught the science of bread-winning. This distinction was useful to the German language and literature, for Gottsched's splendour was reflected upon these. An outward interest in the language and literature must have preceded mental improvement and culture among the middle classes of the Germans, who consist mostly of persons of learning, scattered about in the little towns and in the country; this Gottsched awakened, in his way, in one part of the public; and Wieland, at a later period, after his manner, in another.

From the favourable reception which was given to Gottsched's 'Dying Cato*,' on its first appearance, we may form an opinion of the taste of the German public, for whom he wrote his manuals. This tedious and dull piece, which was founded upon Addison's 'Cato,' in which French ingredients, treated according to French rules, are mixed up, was not merely everywhere favourably received, but reprinted ten times in rapid succession. Even his most miserable pieces, translated from the French by the aid of his wife and his adherents, were on their first appearance not unfavourably received. In our days the whole of the pieces written by Gottsched and his wife, which are to be found, in six parts, in his 'German Theatre,' would be regarded as absurd and ridiculous as they are bad; but at that time they awakened an anticipation of something better in the minds of the freer part of our nation, particularly of the citizens of the free-trading imperial cities.

Gottsched tells us himself, that his dramas were played only for want of better, and in those cities in which there was no court, by whom French and Italian actors could be maintained, and operas introduced and performed at the expense of the people. He boasts in the prefaces of his 'German Theatre,' that his pieces were played in Leipzig, Frankfort on the Main, Hamburg and Danzig, by the theatrical companies who at that time moved about from place to place. This gave him boldness to attempt to be the reformer of the stage also, and to mark the year 1737 as the commencement of a new era, when he drove a Jack-pudding from the stage with ridiculous pomp and solemnity before the eyes of the Leipzig public.

We will not deny that the ceremony was ridiculous, and Gott-

* 'Der Sterbender Cato.'

shed's pretensions intolerable; and even admit that what was substituted for the pieces, was duller and more stupid than the old popular plays, in which a clever actor such as Hanswurst brought out many an admirable flash of wit, the suggestion of the moment; nevertheless the time was well-chosen to procure for play-actors in Germany also some claim to the respect which, as artists, they already enjoyed in France and in England. The company of Neuberinn, which played at that time in Leipzig, must have been good; the pieces were well suited to a monarchical age, such as that was, and the public had a stronger feeling for the stiffness and regularity of the monarchical stage of Louis the Fourteenth, than for the rude and bitter wit of the citizens of the free towns of the fifteenth century, or the religious dramas of the seventeenth. Hanswurst was a remnant of the time of the minstrels, and the celebration of his expulsion seemed to announce the introduction of something foreign, at the expense of what was of home growth; but in the then state and circumstances of mental culture, even that was advantageous. It gave rise to violent opposition and commotions, which were favourable to national literature.

Gottsched's translations, such as that of Fontenelle's 'Discours sur la Pluralité des Mondes,' and others, had an object of the same kind as his theatrical pieces; they made the Germans acquainted with the so-called classical time of Louis the Fourteenth, and gave the citizens, or middle classes in general, some notion of what was going on amongst the noble French reading, writing and speaking societies, and of what was expected from German writers. Along with these sometimes extremely bad translations, Gottsched's historical notices of the German stage, and his collections for the history of our theatre, deserve particular mention; and he was also honourably and assiduously active in the diffusion of the results of philosophy among the people.

If the philosophical writings of Gottsched and his school are compared, in reference to their language and style, with the best of what Thomasius has written, or with the rudeness of a Bodmer or Meier, their weakness and insipidity will be readily forgiven. The wisdom of the schools, which had been hitherto inaccessible and unintelligible, was at least made by him attainable by the people. It was either conveyed in Latin,

of which Brücker's celebrated 'History of Philosophy,' in six volumes quarto, is a specimen, or in German, such as that written by Wolf's disciple Meier, whom we shall hereafter mention.

Gottsched's 'German Manual of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy' (fifth edition, 1749), in relation to science, is of no value; but with respect to language and mode of exposition, has a great advantage over his pedantic discourses and translations, which are wholly without substance. By this book, moreover, the essence of what was at that time taught and cultivated in the learned schools was brought under the notice of the people, instead of which it had been previously customary to publish only books of prayer and devotion, or dialogues of the dead, by whose composition Faszman, the author of 'The Life of King Frederick William and Frederick Augustus,' gained great reputation.

We cannot place Gottsched's influence upon schools, teachers, and schoolbooks in a clearer light, than by the mention of a school essay and oration, written by one of his most zealous partisans and most grateful disciples, who had been for forty years rector in a little town, which at that time—the period of the Danish rule—was not a capital, and which lies in a very dark corner. In his speech he calls attention to Montesquieu's 'Spirit of Laws,' and in his school program urges earnestly a reform in the mode of instruction in the Latin language. Rector Herbart, in Oldenburg (the author in question), wrote a program in 1744, entitled, 'Some humble Thoughts upon the Method of Teaching hitherto practised, in giving Instruction in the Latin Tongue*.' In this pamphlet of a sheet and a half, written in German, he urges strongly the adoption of a method of instruction, which Montaigne, Leibnitz, and Comenius had already recommended, and which was actually afterwards introduced by Basedow and Campe. The same person pronounced 'An Oration on the Occasion of the Danish Jubilee' (in 1750), and treated with great skill the question of the three different forms of government, which Montesquieu had proposed and explained in his 'Spirit of Laws,' which had just then appeared in Paris (1750).

In the seventh decennium of the last century, Gottsched's

* 'Unvorgreifliche Gedanken von Verbesserung der bei Erlernung der lateinischen Sprache bisher gewöhnlichen Lehrart.'

abridgements, as well as the writings of Gellert and Rabener, were found in the houses of citizens and peasants, in Saxony, Thuringia, Prussia, and Northern Germany, along with the Bible and the Prayer-book. No man can dispute that Gottsched was very popular; at a later period, however, he mistook his sphere, and neglected to retire from his labours, and relinquish his claims, when his time was gone by. The poor man imagined, because he was everywhere named and celebrated, that he was a poet, and that he could raise up poets for the nation, in the same manner as he had been instrumental in Leipzig in furnishing it with teachers; he wished to create a literature of weakness and dulness—this made him ridiculous. From this time forward, it was in vain that he brought ‘Reynard the Fox’ again into circulation, and published it in folio; in vain that he increased his treasury for the history of the German dramatic art of poetry; these works, as well as his dictionaries, were coldly received; his reviews were laughed at, his entertainments of understanding and wit were at last forsaken even by Kästner and Gellert who had given him frequent contributions, as they had been previously abandoned by others.

About the end of the year 1740, Gottsched’s influence was altogether lost, because he could not venture to follow the movement which he had originated, or to give way to younger and to abler men; he became utterly ridiculous, when he attempted seven times in 1752–1753, by his condemnatory judgements to put down Klopstock, who as a young man had already shown great and surpassing poetical powers. Gottsched published a treatise, intitled, ‘Reasons why the Poem of the Messiah has not met with general Applause*,’ in which there are here and there very judicious remarks and well-grounded objections, both against the matter and the manner of the poem; but no one listened to him. It was regarded as intolerable, that a tasteless pedant should place the first German, who, notwithstanding his visionary and fanatical notions, appeared as a great poet, in an inferior rank to two Saxon landowners—the one a baron and the other belonging to the middle classes. Gottsched and his fraternity in Leipzig, and the emperor in Vienna, had crowned Naumann and Schönaich as epic poets; the nation, however, had set the crown upon Klopstock, and on this occasion at least it

* ‘Bemerkungen, warum das Gedicht der Messias nicht allgemeinen Beifall erhalten hat.’

bore off the victory*. Gottsched's manner and tone in criticising and condemning Klopstock, were unbecoming and presumptuous; but the validity of his objections has been ratified by time. He ridiculed, and not without reason, Klopstock's extravagance, or what he called his "seraphic spirit of fanaticism †," and censured his scholastic dogmatic matter, his effeminate and weak tenderness, his melting and weeping and exaggerated feeling. All Germany was embittered and indignant, that Gottsched and his Schwabe should set up the art of poetry and the eloquence of the Leipzig professor as a standard of German culture and taste, and that they should venture to name their own miserable rhymes, the production of a Neukirch, Naumann, and Schönaich, along with the inspired poetry of a Klopstock.

§ III.

SOME SAXON POETS OF GOTTSCHED'S SCHOOL.

ZACHARIA, RABENER, GELLERT.

We shall here name first those men, who sprung from the Leipzig school, who remained long faithful to their teacher, and even when they at length forsook him, took no higher flight than he had done, but continually kept near the ground, and never soared above the view of the class of ordinary minds, to whom their well-meaning diffuseness was very necessary and useful. In the following paragraphs we shall allude to those men who wished to found a better system of mental culture and taste, without enmity or quarrel with Gottsched, and afterwards we shall advert to those who were his antagonists and enemies.

Because we are not writing a detailed history of literature, we pass over Schwabe and other insignificant creatures of Gottsched, whom he either praised himself in his numerous reviews in the 'New Library ‡,' or in the 'Latest News of Polite Learning,' or encouraged others to praise; and mention only such as rendered indisputable services to their age and to German civilization.

* Gottsched's two poets have been again called to recollection in new editions in the present century; Naumann, Leipzig, 1802; Schönaich, 1805; Naumann's 'Nimrod,' twenty-four books; Schönaich's 'Satires.' Also 'Henry the Fowler,' and 'Hermann, or Germany Delivered,' twelve books.

† 'Seraphinischen Schwärmergeist.'

‡ 'Neuen Büchersaal.'

John Elias Schlegel and Adolph Schlegel, Zachariä, Rabener, Gellert, must be named before others, and particularly Kästner, who never openly separated from Gottsched, and who yet maintains one of the first places among German epigrammatists.

The two Schlegels merit an incidental notice only, because their prose possesses little more strength and dignity than that of Gottsched; their poetry, or the pieces of the one which form a part of Gottsched's 'Theatre,' are indeed superior to the dull verses and miserable prose of the Gottsched 'Man and Wife,' but it is still of a kind which could have no influence upon the literature or upon the civilization and mind of the nation, however kindly it was at the time received. Zachariä deserves more attention, not so much on account of the contents as of the influence of his writings, because he descended so far beneath the excellence of Pope and others, whose style he imitated, that in our youthful days he was widely circulated among the class which stands a little below that of ordinary novel-readers, as Rabener's satires were in Saxony. How admirably Zachariä had hit the taste and tone of certain classes may be gathered from the fact that an edition of his poems, prepared and published when he was in his seventeenth year, not only found ready sale, but was reprinted in South Germany. Of the poems which are contained in this last edition we do not here speak, because they consist of the translation of Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' and some later poems; we have in view only his early and facetious writings.

In the estimation of Zachariä, and all the German writers who preceded the bards of the Göttingen Union—Herder and Göthe, who created an entirely new school of poetry, Pope was regarded as a great poet and an unattainable model, and, in fact, Zachariä gained the highest renown among us by his burlesque poems written after the style and in the taste of the 'Rape of the Lock.' If Zachariä's 'Pocket Handkerchief*,' his 'Cat in Hell †,' his 'Bullies ‡,' be compared with the 'Rape of the Lock,' it must be admitted that the German poet stands as far below the English one, as the vulgar company to which Zachariä introduces us is inferior to the rich and fashionable circle from which Pope drew his materials and his scenes. We shall not however be so unjust as to condemn German social intercourse and society, upon the representation of a young man, who also at a more advanced age

* 'Schnupftuch.'

† 'Murner in der Hölle.'

‡ 'Renomisten.'

neither would nor could alter any thing essential in a work which had once been acknowledged; the absence of all delicacy and refinement of tone, however, cannot be denied.

In language and versification Zachariä is indeed superior to the miserable rhymers of Gottsched's school. But what a public, what village scandal and what gossiping do his comic poems place before us! What rudeness, vulgarity, dulness, must men have brought with them from the universities to endure the reading of his 'Bullies!' When we only think of the men who could take pleasure in the reminiscences of the 'Bullies,' of the gossips who could admire his 'Cat in Hell,' of the ladies in hoop petticoats who were delighted with the 'Pocket Handkerchief,' when we only think of such people united in a society with those sensitive souls for whom Zachariä's pensive and visionary or stiff descriptive poems, which occupy the next place to the burlesque, were intended, we are horrified, and can readily pardon a man who had received his education from and among the French, for regarding German society as ridiculous.

Hence it appears how difficult it must have been, under these circumstances, to amalgamate the two different classes and societies,—the noble and French, and the ordinary or dull to which the people in Germany belonged, into one common third. Nature had deserted them both. There were rudeness, vulgarity, meanness on the one hand, on the other scorn, insolence and an ever-ready contempt for the well-disposed but stupid people. We shall see that the point of union of the two classes was first sought in religious affairs, and the well-meaning pietists even wished to make the chief of the fashionable and scoffing party, Voltaire, during his sojourn in Berlin (1751), the announcer of 'Klopstock's Messiah;' but the answer which Voltaire gave to Sulzer, who brought the book under his notice, shows how absurd and impossible such a plan really was*. Wieland, when he threw away his pious mask, knew how to conceive the matter better. He adapted the French and the Greek to the necessities of the higher classes, created a French-German literature in a

* Gleim's 'Literary Remains,' by Körte. Zürich, 1805. 1st part, p. 156. Sulzer communicates to Bodmer, June 30, 1751, how the attempt had failed. Voltaire said, "Je connais bien le Messie, c'est le Fils du Père Eternel et le Frère du Saint Esprit, et je suis son très-humble serviteur; mais profane que je suis, je n'ose pas mettre la main à l'encensoir."

Greek clothing, and forced the people to appropriate this kind of culture.

Rabener, although he writes better prose than Gottsched, and might have had great influence as a satirist, will serve us as a proof and example to show how difficult it was in the political and social relations in Germany, at that time, to bring truth into the affairs of life, without which poetry or any other species of pure human culture and civilization is not to be thought of.

In Rabener's satires, however useful they might have been in elevating the class for whom Gottsched wrote, one or two degrees in the scale of taste, and awaking them to a participation in German literature, we see no element of life which goes beyond Gottsched more than in the writings of Zachariä and Gellert. We should not indeed expect to find any bold philosophy in such a man as Rabener, who was a surveyor of customs under Brühl, who played the same character in the times of Augustus the Third, in Saxony, which Fleming had played under Augustus the Second, and who therefore pushed his fortune in these melancholy times and in this miserable department. But what is satire without comprehensive views of life—without bold flights of poetry? It should always spare the mean, the low, the vulgar, who are to be improved by means very different from satire; but should, on the contrary, ridicule with bitterness and severity that pride and glitter, false presumption and empty and vain ostentation, which dazzle the multitude.

Rabener's satire spared, what it was very advisable for him to leave untouched at that time in Germany, and especially in Saxony, the worst enemies of mankind, the people who, without remorse or shame, despised and scorned popular opinion; because no one, like Swift in England, or Voltaire in France, durst venture to disturb their quiet: his satires have only to do with old gossips and their cousins. We hear nothing in Rabener of the things which brought misery upon Saxony, whose authors were ridiculous in their lives and contemptible in their conduct. The people, with whom this prudent and lame satirist meddles, firm to their nature, can never possibly become subjects of poetry; because, in their wearisome sphere of life, they are far removed, on the one hand, from simple nature, and, on the other, from all true independence and free prosperity. Arts, science and free action only begin when there is pure nature without vulgarity, or in that condition of prosperity in which the first rude necessities are satisfied.

The life which Rabener drags to light does not at all belong to publicity, but to coffee-houses, beer-shops, or at the highest to the *casinos* of his time; it is a life determined by circumstances and relations, and to be improved by no amount of ridicule. Parsons, now and then a country squire, pedants, people who have remained long behind their age, schoolmasters, old-fashioned mad-women, are made the butts of his wit, in a style which one observes in every line is intended to be witty, but which is in reality very wearisome. It appears remarkable to us as a sign of German life and culture, that Rabener's satires as well as Zachariä's poems were published in Leipzig so late as the year 1777, in a new and ornamental edition.

Besides, before the time of Rabener, and contemporaneously with him, Germany possessed in Liscov a much better satirist than he was, who did not write like Rabener according to the rules laid down for his art, but was a satirist by nature. The fortune of the two men under the same government shows how dangerous it was for German men of talent to say anything either in prose or verse, similar to what the Frenchmen said, who on this very account were caressed at all courts; Liscov died in a fortress in consequence of the displeasure of the bloodsucker of the Saxons; Rabener consoled himself under Kästner's very true epigram by the 'Conceit,' which is an exposition of his views of life that Kästner played against him, the advocate of the tax-paying peasants and fools.

We cannot overlook Liscov, if it were only that, in the spirit of the English and French, he challenged and called upon the German nation to cast off the fetters of the middle ages, and to aim at an entirely new species of culture. In his biting satires, therefore, against a Sievers, Philippi, Hillige, Manzel and Rodigast, we perceive a totally different character under the appearance of personality, than that which exists in the sour-sweet discourses of Rabener. The persons upon whom Liscov's scourge falls, had been long since forgotten if they had not been mentioned in his writings, because the reader must know their names in order to have some perception of the struggle of the dawning light with the thick and almost impenetrable darkness, in Liscov's strife with them. We see how necessary such a struggle was in the fourth, nay even in the fifth and sixth decennia of the last century, among other circumstances from the prosecution of the sceptic Edelmann about the year 1740,

from the number of thick volumes which were written against him, and from the violent abuse which was thrown out against him from every pulpit and chair, and in all the learned reviews, even in those of Göttingen. How far this ignorant zeal for orthodoxy went may be concluded from the fact, that even Moheim himself came forward as an advocate for the eternity of hell torments, and that his relation and shield-bearer, Meene, wrote thick volumes of controversies against the defender of the finite nature of future punishments, and in favour of the mercilessness of his theological god*. What Liscov accomplished in this case may be learned from his most celebrated writings, which were published in an enlarged and improved edition in Hanover (1795).

This work, which is the most deserving of being read of all those which appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century, was printed for the first time in 1734 under the title ‘A Treatise concerning the Value and Necessity of miserable Scribes †;’ we refer to it with no view of estimating its value as a work of taste, which is no part of our business or of our plan, but on account of its relation to the state of literature and of life at that time. Liscov ventured in print, in the darkness which prevailed, and under the rule of princes such as we have already described, to lay his lash upon the enemies of light, and hold them up to well-merited scorn. He attacks with seriousness the blind orthodoxy of his age, and the folly and the temerity of those who would allow reason no right in matters of faith.

We learn from this treatise of Liscov the reason why so good a writer as he vigorously took the part of Gottsched against the conspiracy of the hypocritical Swiss party, with whose pretensions to piety even Haller was dissatisfied. He desired to keep within bounds the immoderate admirers of a sentimental orthodoxy, which was at variance with the spirit of the demands of the century. It was his wish to protest against such men as J. A. Cramer, Klopstock and Bodmer, and to maintain the rights of reason against the pretensions of the soul. Rabener always

* He was a member of the consistory in Quedlinburg, and afterwards superintendent in Jever. If the author is not sufficiently orthodox, it is no fault of Meene’s Catechism, which he learned in his youth, and which contains almost 1000 pages.

† ‘Abhandlung von der Vortrefflichkeit und Nothwendigkeit elender Scribenten.’

confined himself to the indefinite and general, like all those who conceal their ignorance or their cowardice under the shield of sparing and merciful views, and hide it the most when they pretend to struggle on behalf of darkened, oppressed and betrayed humanity : and if ever he had definite persons in his eye, they were the imbecile and pitiful creatures of the Saxon villages whom he satirized, and who would have been blotted out by time without his aid. Liscov was quite different—he always fixed upon well-known persons : his satire however did not so much affect the person ; but in and through individuals he made the general vices or deficiencies of the age and of society matters of observation, ridicule, or hatred, as Lessing afterwards did in his personal controversy with Melchior Götze. Liscov's writings were again printed and brought into notice at the close of the last century, with good reason, because they are still applicable and important.

As to the last and best of the followers of Gottsched, Gellert, it is much more difficult, from our point of view, to determine his relation to the nation and its civilization, than that of the others ; for he continued, for a long series of years, to be really a writer for the people, and is even yet a popular author in several of the smaller countries of Germany : we shall express our view without going into a further analysis of his writings. Gellert appears to us to be a link of connexion representing the transition from the old tone of the middle classes, to the bold French one of the circle for which Wieland wrote ; from the dull and uninteresting language of Gottsched, to the pithy and vigorous style of Lessing ; from the pedantry of Gottsched's school, to the easy confidence of the French scoffers.

J. A. Cramer, in his life of Gellert, seems, or wishes, to know nothing of the connexion of his pious friend with Gottsched, and never even mentions his name. This may be called pious and gentle ; to us it appears sneaking, hypocritical, mean and pitiful. Gellert not only worked in the translation of Bayle, but at the end of the year 1740 we find articles of his in Gottsched's 'Entertainment for the Understanding and Wit,' even after almost all the other men of talent had withdrawn their countenance and aid, and when Kästner alone, who in general did not mix himself up with the opposition against Gottsched, furnished contributions.

With respect to Gellert's direction and tendencies, we learn

from Cramer from what point he started, and ten volumes of his writings show to what point he reached. Cramer tells us that Günther, Neukirch and Hanke excited Gellert's admiration, that he imitated them, and in fact regarded them as great German poets. The highest point which he reached was his fables, with some popular odes and songs; for we quite agree with the truth of what was said of his works as early as 1748 in the Göttingen Notices of Literature, that such tales as, for example, 'The Tartar Prince*,' the 'Misfortunes of Woman†,' the 'Woman and Ghost‡' and 'Anatomicus,' were destitute of all wit. The praise which he bestows upon 'The Swedish Countess,' which was highly eulogised in the Göttingen papers (1749) when it first appeared, might be almost regarded as bitter irony, when we remember that the question is about a novel; and yet the author was quite right. "The events," says the good man, "are to be regarded as the least important part of a book of this kind; it is enough for him if the love of virtue, of what is tender, natural and attractive, is predominant." Gellert's comedies were calculated to delight only Leipsig gossips and dominies, Messrs. Orgon and Damon and Mrs. Richardin, who also constitute their chief characters. This was already felt in 1748, but no one ventured to say it §. His letters, both those which were published by him as models during his life, and those which were printed after his death, betray no spark of genius; they are written with the same dull and artificial ornament which was formed in the school of Addison and Steele, of which they were imitators, as well as his lectures, which in our age would weary one to death.

If it be asked how it came to pass that, after all this, Gellert shone as a star of the first magnitude, and was in the hands of almost every educated person in Germany, that he continued, for above a quarter of a century, to be regarded as one of the first authors, and is still sought after in Saxony and other neighbourhoods by citizens and peasants; the answer is not difficult, and the matter itself is in the highest degree honourable to those Germans in all quarters of our country, of whom Gellert was the favourite author. Of genius, poetry, phi-

* 'Der Tartarfürst.'

† 'Der Unglück der Weiber.'

‡ 'Die Frau und der Geist.'

§ 'Anzeige in den Göttingischen Zeitungen, von gelehrten Sachen,' Febr. 1748, p. 108.

losophy, of keen wit and sarcastic humour, the happy, simple and domestic societies of the middle classes had not a shadow of an idea; poetical flights and imaginative power would have been altogether wasted on Gottsched's contemporaries; they sought after writers who were timid, prudent, humble, credulous, and among other things pedantic and gossiping like themselves. Gellert, with his humility and weakness, with his morals which exacted nothing more than any man could reach, with his discretion with respect to every thing which was fashionable and outwardly distinguished, gave them nothing more than they were capable of understanding. His timidity of character was suitable to his time and its relations; men of like character have had more success in our own days in Germany than greater minds; we naturally think of the fate of Count von Platen. Besides this mediocrity, which enabled the multitude to keep pace with him, Gellert had, however, other qualities which made him a popular writer.

Gellert's language was much purer and nobler than that of the writers recommended by Gottsched; and by the style and manner of his poetry he did not run counter to the spirit of the age, like Klopstock, Cramer and Bodmer. He was a reformer also in his way; but his reformation frightened or alarmed nobody, because he laid stress rather upon conduct and morality than upon faith, dogmas and orthodoxy. As he took very little notice of the ancients, and was a stranger to their vigour, he was obliged to lean upon and attach himself to the Silesians, French and English; this brought him nearer to the well-educated higher classes in France; his orthodox, good-natured, moral discourse, which was suited to the then respectable middle classes, recommended him to those from whose sphere he came, and for whom his innocent wit was intended. His fables, and occasionally also his tales, became a people's book. We could give no more advantageous description of the condition of our middle classes, who in our youth caused their children to learn Gellert's fables by heart, than by comparing the influence of one of Gellert's fables with those of La Fontaine, which French children were accustomed to learn in the same manner; of the tales we say nothing.

§ IV.

THE BREMEN LITERARY NOTICES—HAGEDORN—HALLER.

When the vehement and bitter controversies, carried on between Gottsched and the learned men of Zürich, and others afterwards, who were unwilling to submit to his dictation, had shown the Germans that he was destitute of taste, the best of his disciples and followers who had previously aided him in his translations and furnished articles for his magazines, separated themselves from him and formed a poetical society, which has become important in the history of German culture and civilization. Cramer, Ebert, Gärtner, Gellert, Rabener, J. A. Schlegel, Zachariä, and others, about the year 1740, united and formed a society in Leipzig, almost in the same manner as the so-called Bard Union in the year 1770, in Göttingen. They held regular weekly meetings, and submitted their productions to mutual criticism; and at a later period they resolved to publish select pieces from their works. Several of the younger men had contributed articles to Gottsched's magazines, but they soon became ashamed of their miserable fellow-labourer and of the tasteless pieces which he received. The best critical head among them (Gärtner) was solicited by them to conduct a well-chosen selection of essays by his friends, with a view to the formation of the German taste; and in this way originated the periodical so celebrated in the history of our literature, under the name of the 'Bremen Literary Notices.'

The plan of the new periodical, which was to contain essays and papers only which might afford entertainment to the whole educated public, and whose title, 'New Essays with a View to promote the Pleasures of the Understanding and Wit*,' recalled Gottsched to mind, was projected by Cramer, Gärtner and Adolphus Schlegel; Rabener afterwards joined them; Arnold Schmidt, Ebert and Zachariä followed; Gellert, Giseke and Hagedorn took part in the second volume; and finally came Gleim and Klopstock. Klopstock in his ode 'Wingolf' has immortalized these friends, who had quietly separated from the miserable rhymers of Gottsched's school, and who as early as 1747 had recognised him as a poet who was able to sing a loftier strain, and to create a new poetry; for this reason we shall quote the various passages which contain their names in the notes, and there we

* 'Neue Beiträge zum Vergnügen des Verstandes und Witzes.'

shall find Gärtner's actual merits highly extolled. The three first cantos of Klopstock's 'Messiah' first appeared in the fourth and fifth Numbers of the fourth volume of the 'Literary Journal,' and this alone would show that they were regarded as the harbingers of a new literature*.

* 'Wingolf' was written 1747. As it may not be accessible to every reader, we shall quote the passages in which Klopstock delineates his friends according to their literary characters; and if these are compared with the reference already made to Triller's enumeration, it will be seen how far Gottsched and his time stood below these noble and pure young men.

Wingolf. First Song. 30th Strophe.

Wie oder zürnest Du von des Albion
Eiland herüber? Liebe sie, *Ebert*, nur!
Sie sind auch deutsches Stamms, Ursöhne
Jener die kühn mit der Woge kamen u. s. w.

Second Song. 1st Strophe.

Sie kommen, *Cramern* gehet in Rhythmustanz
Mit hochgehobener Leyer Iduna vor!
Sie geht, und sieht auf ihn zurücke
Wie auf die Wipfel des Hains der Tag sieht u. s. w.

6th Strophe.

Nimm diese Rosen, *Giseke*, Velleda
Hat sie mit Zähren heute noch sanft genetzt,
Als sie Dein Lied mir von den Schmerzen
Deiner Gespielin der Liebe vorsang u. s. w.

10th Strophe.

Der Thorheit Hasser, aber auch Menschenfreund
Allzeit gerechter *Rabener*, Dein heller Blick,
Dein froh und herzenvoll Gesicht ist
Freunden der Tugend, und Deinen Freunden
Nur liebenswürdig, aber den Thoren bist
Du furchtbar! Scheuche wenn Du noch schweigst, sie schon
Zurück! Lasz selbst ihr kriechend Lächeln
Dich in dem rügenden Zorn nicht irren u. s. w.

Third Song. 7th Strophe.

Der Du uns auch liebst, *Olde*, komm näher her,
Du Kenner, der Du edel und feuevoll,
Unbiegsam beiden, beiden furchtbar,
Stümpfer der Tugend und Schriften hassest!
Du, der bald Zweifler und Philosoph bald war,
Bald Spötter aller menschlichen Handlungen
Bald Milton's und Homerus Priester
Bald Misanthrope, bald Freund, bald Dichter,
Viel Zeiten *Kühnert*, hast Du schon durchgelebt,
Von Eisen Zeiten, silberne goldene!
Komm, Freund, komm wieder zu des Britten
Zeit und zurück zu des Mäoniden.
Noch zwei erblick ich. u. s. w.

This journal, into which the first essays of Götz, Uz and Gleim were received, was of especial importance for the advancement of national culture, and particularly by Gärtner's selection of pieces, at a time when there was no sound criticism. Those articles only were received which were calculated to promote and advance that improvement in taste which had commenced, however imperfect it must still have been regarded. The views and plan of its projectors were altogether calculated for the then circumstances of life, literature and society, at a period when authors could never think of the speculation of mere pecuniary gains. We shall first point this out, and afterwards mention some of the names of those writers who were connected with this journal; and thus it will be most clearly seen what a great change was quietly taking place, and what participation the nation gradually began to have in the national literature.

Gottsched's school, Schönaich, Triller, Dominie, Schwäbe (whom the Leipzig bookmaker not only promoted to be a professor

Schmidt, der mir gleich ist; den die Unsterblichen
Des Hains Gesängen neben mir auferziehn!
Und *Rohte*, der sich freier Weisheit
Und der vertrauteren Freundschaft weihte.

Fifth Song. 7th Strophe.

Der Du dort wandelst, ernstvoll und heiter doch,
Das Auge von weiser Zufriedenheit,
Die Lippe voll von Scherz (*Es horchen*
Ihm die Bemerkungen Deiner Freunde
Ihm horcht entzückend die feinere Schüferin)
Wer bist Du Schatten? Ebert! er neiget sich
Zu mir und lächelt. Ja er ist es!
Siehe der Schatten ist unser Gärtner!
Uns werth, wie Flaccus war sein Quintilius,
Der unverhüllten Wahrheit Vertraulichster,
Ach kehre, Gärtner, Deinen Freunden
Ewig zurück! Doch du flichst fern weg! u. s. w.

Sixth Song. 1st Strophe.

In meinem Arm freudig, und weisheitsvoll
Sang Ebert: Evan, Evoe *Hagedorn!*
Da tritt er auf dem Rebenlaube,
Muthig einher, wie Lyäus, Zeus Sohn! u. s. w.

Seventh Song. 1st Strophe.

Er sangs. Jetzt sah ich fern in der Dämmerung
Des Hains am Wingolf *Schlegeln* aus dichtrischen
Geweihnten Eichenschatten schweben
Und in Begeistrung vertieft und ernstvoll. u. s. w.

but a poet), all the protégés of the composer of Leipzig reviews, were kept at a distance, and the reception of all the dull and vulgar materials, such as had been admitted into former literary journals, was strictly refused. Gellert's comedies, which are to be found there, may well indeed be considered as an exception; and it is also to be observed, that Cramer and Klopstock's tone was not unexceptionably favoured. In the correspondence of the Swiss writers, which has been given to the public by Körte, we find also a hint, that it was a matter of doubt and consideration with the conductors of the journal, whether they were altogether true to their great object, viz. that of bringing in an entirely new age, by admitting the first cantos of the 'Messiah.'

The friends of Cramer and Klopstock saw and felt that they possessed far more true inspiration than Opitz; they approved of their sacred poetry as such; still, judging from some passages in the preface of the first part, which we shall quote, they seem to have felt that the nation could neither be materially assisted by mere piety and learning, nor exclusively by elegies. The truth of this opinion was subsequently established, for neither did Klopstock, the Swiss school, nor all the favourers of piety and sentiment, who adopted their tone, succeed in bringing our country at large to a level with other enlightened and educated nations of Europe; but Wieland first, then Lessing, the new Berlin school, and finally Göthe.

In the preface to the first part of the Bremen Journal it is said, with a delicate allusion to the numerous miserable productions with which the public was deluged, "Our view is, to make a love for works of poetry and eloquence more common, and in so doing to improve the taste and please the fancy of our readers." It is afterwards added, "We shall especially endeavour, by our papers, to be useful to the fair sex, and therefore we propose to be amusing. If there be any who feel offended at this spirit, who are jealous of a little pleasantry, because it is beyond their own reach, they have the liberty. Intelligent readers know well that a man cannot be pleasant, in a certain sense, if he has not previously spent a great deal of time seriously in his study."

The first part opens with a pastoral of Gärtner's *'Tried Fidelity,'* of the contents and value of which we have nothing to say, but the language and versification are so pure and excellent, that we are disposed to overlook or forget the wearisome rhyming Alexandrines. The tone of this piece is quite in accordance with the

words of the preface which have been quoted. Of the other contributors we shall have frequent occasion to mention Cramer and Klopstock, and we have already spoken of Gellert and Zachariä. Ebert, by his knowledge of the English language, was very serviceable to this new generation, which had outgrown the discipline and education of Gottsched; but, alas! he promoted the visionary, dogmatising, sentimental tone of Cramer's and Klopstock's friends, by his translation of Young's 'Night Thoughts.' The melancholy tone of these 'Night Thoughts,' and of Klopstock's muse, was too nearly related to the old system; and German literature could never have been regenerated, if there had not been some participation in the new European life, and some approximation to the Berlin school. Ebert, indeed, also translated Glover's 'Leonidas;' but Glover had become a sort of court poet by his connexion with Frederick Prince of Wales (the father of George the Third). His epic poems, drawn from the historical times, might indeed please some admirers and persons acquainted with the art and his subjects, but they were of no use as a guiding star to the German nation.

We may pass over Gieseke altogether, since he, as well as Gotz, Uz and others, have only been named because they, each on his own part and in his own way, prepared a portion of the nation for true poetry, and awakened a feeling and sense of it in their minds. Gieseke, as a native of Hamburg and a clergyman, remained true to the model of Brockes, who had been his guardian in his youth, and whom he had succeeded in his office. Gieseke and Uz just as little trod a new path as Schlegel, who, with great justice, was parodied by Cronegk in his satire upon Gottsched's epic poet Schönaich; all these men belong to the former era and to the older culture and civilization.

The only one of the contributors to the Bremen Journal, who, together with Gleim and Klopstock, had not merely a momentary but future and permanent influence upon the new German literature and men, was Frederick Hagedorn. He worked, not only by his influence in Hamburg, with great and beneficial effect, in awakening an educated and at the same time a cheerful and pleasant life and tone, but his poems also formed a most favourable and beneficial contrast with the somewhat fanatical, heavy and dogmatic writings of Cramer and Klopstock. They wished to support and retain the old age, but in a new manner; Hagedorn announced a new and a freer one.

Hagedorn lived from 1708—1754, and therefore belonged altogether to the period of which we treat; like Haller, he remained totally a stranger to the pitiful quarrels of the Leipzig and Zürich pedants, in which even Gleim was somewhat though not openly involved; like him, also, he had seen more of life. The Zürich citizen Patriarch, who had grown up in the midst of humble connexions, prejudices and quarrels, and who was under the influence of the meanest passions, and the Leipzig Professor who strove for Parnassus, stood equally far below him. He was not blinded by vanity like Bodmer, and was especially distinguished by admitting and yielding to the criticism of his friends. And when the different editions of his poems are compared, it is remarkable to see the changes which had taken place, and the giant strides which German culture had made between the earlier and latest editions. It is seen how rapidly the language assumed a graver and a nobler form, and how the tone in individual circles of certain German towns changed, in spite of hindrances and obstructions.

Hagedorn had not, indeed, like Lessing and Rammler, or at a later period Voss, studied the ancients with a view of opposing the elasticity of a free and cheerful intercourse to the leaden oppression of German social life, to schools and pedants; but he had, on the other hand, fully mastered and appropriated the spirit of the better French and Italian writers. Hagedorn did not seek in their writings merely for letters and rules, as Gottsched did; he did not condescend to dull and every-day society, like Gellert and Rabener; he neither gave way to imagination and theological fanaticism, like Klopstock; nor was an imitator of Petrarch, as Klamer, Schmidt and Jacobi were; nor was he, like Rammler, inaccessible and unintelligible to the unlearned from his arts, versification and language.

The delicacy and refinement of Hagedorn's expressions, the modesty of his subjects, especially as he had La Fontaine often in his eye, are the more honourable distinctions, as the language and tone of one party amongst the authors was dull and vulgar, and that of the other visionary and spiritual. It must be observed he well understood how to confine himself within the just limits of raillery and of innocent pleasantry, that he was never obnoxious to the charge which serious friends of sound morals brought, at a later period, against Wieland. When he was yet a young man, Hagedorn rendered better ser-

vice to the cause than all the innumerable rhymers of his age; he revived the popular music, which for a long time had taken refuge in the Protestant churches, and was the only man of his time who composed social songs which were fit to be sung. These songs were set to music, and were soon in every body's mouth, among a people which is more musical than any other in Europe. This has made Hagedorn, and with justice, immortal in Germany, although he was neither a Klopstock, a Göthe, nor a Schiller.

We perceive the remarkable progress of the development of German culture, in other respects almost unobservable, in the different editions of his poems. In the edition which appeared in 1729, there is every where the language and tone of his friend Brockes, of whose 'Earthly Pleasure in God' he had also brought out a successful abridgement, or more properly, the marrow of some successful pieces. If this edition be compared with the following one, or with his attempt in poetical fables and tales, which appeared in 1738, it will be found that the tone, language and expression have assumed quite a different form, and that a new age is indicated in them. The songs, in like manner, as early as the edition of 1747, received a form wholly different from that which they previously had. This brief notice may be here sufficient; the fuller development and prosecution of the subject does not belong to a general history. His letters also, which are found in the fifth part of the edition of Hagedorn's works prepared by Eschenburg in 1800, show the author to have been a man of great refinement and delicacy of style and tone, and free from pedantry; and this appears very obviously when they are compared with the letters of Gellert, Rabener and other contemporaries. We shall incidentally remark that the letters of Mrs. Gottsched, published about the year 1770, are also much better than those of her husband, and better than could have been expected from the writer of the tasteless berhymed translations of French plays.

We place Haller along with Hagedorn, because like him he kept himself altogether apart from the unworthy strife of the literary men of Leipzig and Zürich, who contended for reputation not for honour; and having lived in a greater world and in the midst of truer knowledge, he shared neither the absurd conceit and tasteless orthodox faith of a Bodmer, nor the dull and vulgar admiration of a Gottsched for Voltaire and the French. As a didactic poet also we may justly place Haller beside Hagedorn,

and speak of the important influence which he exercised as a public teacher in Göttingen, and as a contributor to the Göttingen literary periodicals which appeared from 1738 forward; but this would lead us too far into the history of science, whereas our object here is to treat of its relation to general mental culture and improvement, and to life.

Haller is especially remarkable for his tact, or for the correct views which he took of his relation as a poet to his age, of which Bodmer and others were altogether destitute. We shall not decide whether it was tact or accident which led him to withdraw some of his earlier writings from the public, when he had continued his poetical labours only till 1748, till the very moment in which Kleist, Hagedorn, Klopstock, Gleim and Gerstenberg rendered his poetry a redundancy; but certain it is that he intentionally pursued this course, and in the later editions of his poems omitted more and more of his earlier compositions; and he expressed his great dissatisfaction in the Göttingen journals, when the lovers of literature in Zürich, without consulting him, caused all that he himself had cast away to be collected and printed. Haller's novels belong to the following period, in which we shall take notice of them: we mention his odes, satires, and other poems now, in order to remark that by a comparison of the different editions it may be seen how he, without the aid of Gottsched, left the path which had been earlier trodden by the Lohensteins and Hoffmannswaldaus, and gradually turned back from bombast to simplicity. Hagedorn and Haller, therefore, by their example and their works, the one in the north the other in the south, announced a better era. Haller's poems, however truly pious and moral they are, are especially distinguished by being altogether free from the blindness of Bodmer, and the dogmatism and fanaticism of Klopstock. They teach an admirable philosophy, which springs not from books or universities, but from the mind and deepest and holiest convictions of the poet.

It is true Haller is here and there not free from Helvetism and from the remnants of the taste of Lohenstein; and we must draw no conclusions with respect to the later editions of his poems from an examination of the earlier ones. From 1730-1777 there appeared eleven legitimate editions, each with considerable alterations. In the works of a creative genius alterations would be no recommendation, but it is otherwise when we

speak of a man who by vigour of thought, by his own skill and observation, by good heart and feeling, had to contend against the dull, watery and pedantic poetry and language of Gottsched. We must never lose sight of the fact that Haller effected more by didactic and descriptive than by imaginative and creative poetry. By means of a true and faithful description of Swiss scenery and customs, he won those classes of his countrymen, and of the Germans also, who had no great perception of poetic beauties : by means of mingled philosophic and popular instructions, suited to the age, he recommended the new culture precisely to such people as would never have taken into their hands the books of Gottsched, Gellert, Hagedorn, or Klopstock.

The longest and at the same time the most important of Haller's poems are the 'Alps' and his didactic poem 'On the Origin of Evil.' Both these philosophic didactic poems still attract occasional readers, the one by its descriptions, the other by the satirical traits which are here and there to be found ; but the period of didactic and descriptive poetry (a somewhat doubtful kind) had not then arrived among us Germans. Neither of the poems can be regarded as a whole or a unity ; their value depends upon single passages which they contain, and which show that Haller was a man of highly cultivated mind and possessed of various knowledge. These pieces contain either descriptions of the natural beauties of Switzerland, representations of the life of the Alpine inhabitants, of the pure enjoyment of nature and of innocent and simple pleasures, or the philosophy of an educated and thinking man, sworn to no school, thoughtful about life and its general wants, not about schools, chairs and sects.

Much of the contents of both poems would have held its ground among us were it not for the wearisome form of their rhyming ten-lined stanzas, which are intolerable to an ear accustomed to the more agreeable versification of later times, or to the variety and flow of the Greek metres.

§ V.

EFFECT OF THE DISPUTES ABOUT GERMAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE, BEGUN BY THE ZÜRICH SCHOOL AND THE ADHERENTS OF WOLF, WITH GOTTSCHED.

The services rendered to German literature by the writers whom we shall mention in these paragraphs is in and of itself very

unimportant ; but it is remarkable, because in their labours we perceive the first traces of the influence of the prevailing scholastic philosophy upon general literature and upon the tone of society, which influence has been afterwards again and again visible, so that every new system of philosophy has brought about a new form of literature. The followers of Wolf, who honoured Baumgarten, professor in Halle, as the chiefs of schools are accustomed to be honoured in Germany, looked upon him with that stupid astonishment with which the learned and studious men of every German university are accustomed to regard their idol. In their eyes the reputation of the weak Leipzig admirers of French philosophy was an offence, and they formed a reunion with those like-minded in Zürich, who were also influenced perhaps by passion to attack Gottsched, because they had a somewhat better taste than he.

Bodmer, who may be regarded as the Zürich Gottsched, had, moreover, so much the higher opinion of Leibnitz and Baumgarten, as Gottsched was a loose rogue, because both these philosophers received into their system the rigid orthodoxy which Bodmer maintained, and philosophically demonstrated the Christian faith. Bodmer and his Breitinger did not, however, draw their rules from Baumgarten, who followed them in point of time. These demonstrations of the Wolfians were soon obliged to give way to the vigorous and tastefully expounded theories of Mendelssohn and Lessing. Sulzer afterwards brought with him the principles of the Zürich school to Berlin, and his 'Letters,' which have been given to the world by Körte, prove that he exhausted all the pitiful resources of the learned,—that he disdained no secret means to secure the victory for his little cabal of pietistic Zürich literati. All this, in the long run, was indeed in vain. Before we speak of the Zürich party we shall allude to the followers of Wolf.

Baumgarten was the inheritor of Wolf's reputation and of his professor's chair in Halle, who, although he was unacquainted with works of art and of poetry, and, if we make somewhat of an exception of the Latin poets, had neither had time, desire, nor opportunity even to see, much less to examine, the master-works of all centuries and people, was nevertheless admirably suited to deliver, *ex cathedra*, a theory of the beautiful in words of art and in syllogisms, to students and to learned Germans who had never made, seen or read, anything that was beautiful.

Germany triumphantly exulted that the system was now complete; because Leibnitz, as well as Wolf, had forgotten to extend their mathematical method to the arts and poetry. Baumgarten wrote a goodly quarto upon the science which he had discovered, to which, according to custom, he gave a Greek name, and called it *Æsthetics**. We should not have mentioned this Latin treatise upon taste, as it is no part of our plan to speak of schools and their systems, and therefore of philosophy as a science, if one of Baumgarten's disciples had not introduced this new science to the people.

Meier, who, in conjunction with Pyra, conrector in Berlin, and with Lange, clergyman in Laublingen, two very insignificant enemies of rhyme, had previously attached himself to the Zürich party in order to annihilate Gottsched's reputation, made this new wisdom known in the German language, in three octavo volumes, even before Baumgarten's Latin quarto appeared. At that time Gottsched, by his repeated editions of his 'Critical Art of Poetry,' was the arbiter of taste. Meier, therefore, armed with his master's weapons, took the field against Gottsched's 'Art of Poetry,' at the same time as he was publishing his single volumes of his new science. There appeared successively, from the year 1747-1749, six pieces written in condemnation of Gottsched's 'Art of Poetry,' which extended to somewhat more than 200 pages. Meier follows the Leipzig professor with a running censure through the whole of his book, without himself exhibiting any better taste than that which he condemns. About the same time, 1748-1750, there appeared also 'The Principles of all the Fine Arts,' by Geo. Freder. Meier†. In the preface to the work the author expressly declares, that, with the permission of his instructor Baumgarten, whose notions he had clothed in his own language, and put together in his own fashion, he expounded the subject to the great German public‡.

In the conclusion of the third part of his book, with a presump-

* Baumgarten's '*Æsthetica*' appeared in 1750, 2 vols., and a new edition, 1754.

† Georg Friedrich Meier, '*Anfanggründe aller schönen Wissenschaften.*'

‡ His words are the following:—"He himself (viz. Baumgarten) is so favourable to me that I know he will be pleased to see that I have mingled together his thoughts and mine, in such a way that no reader shall be able to say whether he is or I am the proper author. I must admit, however, without any compulsion, that the professor is the chief author of the '*Æsthetics.*'"

tion which is peculiar to those people who prove every thing *a priori*, Meier says, with great ingenuousness, that when he and his instructor had remarked the great and rapid progress of German literature, they had thought of the necessity of introducing a knowledge of the fine arts and of poetry into the system, and had therefore devoted themselves with industry to the study and development of the principles of the beautiful*. Knowledge, in Germany, had only a species of corporate value, because it was the custom to seek for the higher sorts of culture in the universities only; it was therefore certainly of importance that a new, refreshing, and nobler species of mental training should be received into the exclusive circle of academical instruction among the sciences of the faculties and the learned craftsmen,—and that the German plodders should direct their subtlety to the *belles lettres*; by such means it became possible to put to silence Boileau, Rollin, and Batteux, and those who swore allegiance to their rules, as, for example, Gottsched, and even Ramler. On this occasion, at least, it was advantageous to Germany, that the clear and the intelligible are always contemptible to her learned sons; for now they forsook the superficial because something more difficult was offered them.

With respect to the good Meier, the nature of his taste may be inferred from his intimate friendship with Bodmer, with the then celebrated and prolific Lange of Laublingen, whose translation of Horace Lessing utterly annihilated by his severe but well-deserved criticism: his own writings more than justify the inference. The barbarous and rugged German of the scholar is more unpleasant and more difficult to read than the scholastic Latin of the master, and the models which he quotes are wretched. Meier either knew nothing, or at least very little, of the Greeks†, Italians, English, or even French: he is strong only in theory and demonstration. He refers, indeed, to Virgil and Horace, but the passages from the latter are appended at the end, for the advantage of the German reader in the translation of ‘Dominie Lange.’ This Samuel Gotthelf Lange, whose

* Third part, p. 383:—“I cannot pass by the opportunity of remarking the improvement in taste, which does peculiar honour to our Germany, and that so many admirable poems have appeared in our days. I need only mention the ‘Messiah,’ the ‘Spring,’ the ‘Lyric Poems and Songs,’ which have all lately come before the public.”

† He names Homer, indeed, sometimes: but (1st part, p. 833), he compares the manner in which he introduces Achilles, in the Iliad, with Mrs. Langin’s ode, in which she describes Switzerland. He quotes the ode,—that we spare our readers.

miserable translation of Horace Meier afterwards published with a preface on the value of rhyme, plays moreover an important character in this theory of the art of fine writing, along with Mrs. Langin, as the man of taste calls her, because this poetical couple are every where quoted. It was this circumstance which enraged Lessing, and led him to compose that vehement and bitter article, which has been left out of the latest editions of his works, as somewhat too violent an outbreak of youthful sarcasm.

Meier's enmity to Gottsched, and his close connexion with the miserable hunting and caballing of the Zürich faction, may be best learned from Sulzer's letters. Lange and Pyra belonged to this pack. Gleim, who had published his attempt at comic songs about 1745, played a somewhat equivocal character in these transactions. We learn from Gleim's Life, by Körte*, that he secretly aided the Swiss party, and was instrumental in having their pasquinades printed in Saxony, in order that they might fall into the hands of those who would have been deterred from reading them by finding Zürich on the title-page; whilst he pursued this course he publicly sent contributions to the very last to Gottsched's 'Latest from Polite Learning,' for which the latter thanked him in a long paper. At the suggestion of Bodmer, and in order to advance the cause of orthodoxy, which Bodmer took every means to promote, Meier, even before his 'Æsthetics' was quite completed (1749), wrote his 'Condemnatory Judgment of the Epic Poem the Messiah,†' which Lessing ridiculed by an epigram, also applicable to the greatest part of the writings about Göthe:—

Sein kritisch Lämpchen hat die Sonne selbst erhellet,
Und Klopstock, der schon stand, von neuem aufgestellt.

Pyra, of whom we must make incidental mention, is better known by his violent diatribes against Gottsched and his school than by his own zeal for verse or rhyme, or by his odes. His poetry, and its character, may be judged of from the fact that Bodmer, who afterwards as vehemently abused and persecuted all the poets of the newer and better schools, as he had previously abused Gottsched, published Pyra and Lange's poems bound together.

Bodmer, Breitinger, and their Swiss ally Gessner, whom we

* Halberstadt, 1811. pp. 46-53.

† Beurtheilung des Heldengedichts der Messias.

distinguish from them, would scarcely be regarded as worthy of notice, either as writers or for their influence upon the progress of German literature, had they not been sometimes distinguished by their industry as collectors, and had they not sometimes, in the reformation of literature, renewed the scenes which had occurred in the sixteenth century in the reformation of the church. The movements against corrupt taste in the writings on *belles lettres*, precisely in the same manner as those against the abuses in the church, began in a similar manner, altogether independently of one another, but about the same time, in Switzerland and in Saxony; the originators of the respective movements, whilst pursuing the same object, in both cases, fell into the bitterest enmity against each other.

However fast Bodmer clung to the prejudices of the olden time, and to his rude views of Bible antiquities, as appears from his correspondence with Sulzer, yet he had been trained in a very different way, and stood upon much more independent ground than German professors usually stand, who are accustomed to mark every hint of the students, and to obey every indication of their governments or patrons. Bodmer and his friend Breitinger had made themselves acquainted with philosophy, with English and French writers, and, contemporaneously with Gottsched, proclaimed war against the reigning taste. The two Zürich friends hit upon the same thought as Gottsched; they also wished to form a society amongst their fellow-countrymen, whose particular object should be the improvement of the language and of taste. This Zürich reunion was indeed called a learned society, but its object was merely intellectual conversation, such as had made certain private societies in London and Paris at that time renowned. This union of men, whom accident had brought together in Zürich, for the purposes of intellectual and scientific conversation, and for the extension of that species of literature among the people which was recommended and prepared to their hands in the English periodicals which have been already mentioned, took place at the same time as Gottsched first appeared upon the stage in Leipzig (1719–21), and the Zürich journal served as a model for the Leipzig one. The Zürich writers, following Addison and Steele's example and model, wrote their 'Conversations upon Customs*,' of which four volumes appeared (1721–1723); Gottsched's 'Tadlerinnen'

* 'Discourse der Maler.'

and the Hamburg ‘Patriot’ were imitations of this Zürich periodical, and therefore roused Bodmer’s indignation.

The society in Zürich had, it is true, been broken up, because many of the members had changed their place of residence; Bodmer however persevered in his project of being a judge of taste, and what was worse, of being a poet also, to which he had as small pretensions as Gottsched and his Dominie. The warfare which arose between the Swiss and the Leipzig factions about these periodicals, was carried on in such a way, that it is impossible to describe in sufficiently mean language, the tone and mental culture of a time, in which such rude and tasteless controversies were carried on for years. The history of these miserable quarrels fills all our German manuals of the history of literature; but Manso, in his ‘Supplements’ to Sulzer’s ‘Theory of the Fine Arts,’ is especially discursive on this subject; we can only notice them here in one particular relation. The warfare of the learned about eloquence, poetry, morality, philosophy and language, roused the attention of the whole people. Had the controversy not been carried on in an ill-bred tone, which contributed to awaken and keep up a feeling of curiosity and love of mischief in vulgar minds, the great public of that day would have remained wholly uninterested in the dispute.

The people, who were invited to take part in the strife, learned immediately and incidentally, from this mutual abuse and defamation, what was passing in literature, and the younger and better generation found the way paved for them, because the behaviour of those quarrelling pedants made them both ridiculous and contemptible, and showed more clearly the necessity of a complete reformation, than any other demonstration could possibly have done. We shall pass over the particulars of these controversies, and shall merely quote* a passage in a note, as

* As late as the year 1744, there was published a pocket and desk almanack, in which there were not only to be found in prose, “Memorable and true histories of the victory gained by the Swiss over the Saxons in the war of criticism, written with a poetical historical pen, according to Breitinger’s rules and quantities, in the Zürich Art of Poetry,” but also such verses as the following:—

Nun hört, ihr Kunstricht’r allzumal
 Ich sing vom krit’schen Feuer und Stahl,
 Und von mannicher krit’sch’n Schlacht,
 Die viel in Jamm’r und Noth gebracht.—

an example of the mean and vulgar tone by which they were pervaded, in order to mention the services of Bodmer and Breitinger, with respect to general culture and mental improvement. The Zürich society gained great merit, by calling attention to the need of a severe spirit of criticism, by showing, that this was not to be expected from Gottsched, just as the Leipzig Society, in their turn, showed that Bodmer and Breitinger were wholly incompetent to the task of a reformation in language and literature. The people perceived therefore that they must wait for another—and that other was Lessing.

Bodmer and Breitinger prepared abridgements and compendiums, which show a little more knowledge of fine literature, or at least more acquaintance with the better poets, than Baumgarten and Meier's empty speculations, and somewhat more philosophy than Gottsched's rules compiled from Rollin, Batteux, and other Frenchmen. This is the chief merit of the Swiss school. We shall therefore only touch upon Bodmer's writings in passing, whose numbers we may set down at five dozen at least; we must however call attention to the fact, that the Swiss and Leipzig factions resembled each other, in both wishing to be great poets, and in being equally destitute of a poetical vein. Bodmer is simple enough to intimate to a friend, who thought he saw in him in fact, a modern Homer, that he had first written down a number of poems in prose, and then applied himself to the task of reducing them into verse. The Zürich dictator, who was an able, pious, but coarse, substantial, honest man, full of Swiss vehemence, and of low and limited views of life, such as that with which his relations in his little republican city brought him into contact, wished to be a great epic poet, as Gottsched desired to be a dramatic one. What could be more ridiculous? Gottsched, as a tragic poet, wrote his 'Cato;' Bodmer, as an epic one, his 'Noah.' The latter met at first with more opponents than Gottsched's 'Cato,' and

Maister Bodm'r und Braiting'r hübsch und fein,
 Thäten grosse Kunstrichter seyn.
 Sie han mit Verstandsmässigkeit
 Gekunstrichtert vor langer Zeit,
 Die Discursen der Maler gar
 Han sie längst geschrieben, das ist wahr,
 Als die Tadlerinnen und Patriot
 Sie bracht'n in Jammer, Angst und Noth.

Sulzer, a member of the Berlin academy, and a renowned judge of taste in his day, in conjunction with all the numerous friends of the Zürich patrician, in vain extolled the absurd prose which his countryman and patrician (Sulzer was a native of Winterthur) published in hexameter, with an amount of praise, which he did not lavish so abundantly on Klopstock himself*. It was all in vain that he continually quoted 'Noah,' along with Homer, in his 'Theory of the Fine Arts,' which was widely circulated in the whole of Germany, and very often re-published; time has pronounced its judgement upon him, and he rests in peace along with Gottsched's mortal 'Cato.' We cannot here speak of Bodmer's deserving collections of the poetry of the middle ages, because we have only incidentally mentioned Gottsched's renowned labours on the history of the German drama. His critical works alone are of some importance for German life, and in reference to the culture and mental progress of his age.

When Bodmer had carried on the contest with Gottsched, for several years, about the principles of taste, of which they were both destitute, he at length, and with continual reference to Gottsched, whose 'Art of Eloquence,' appeared about this time, published his Theory, in a work with the following title: —'On the Influence and Use of Imagination, for the Improvement of Taste; or a Careful Examination of Descriptions of all Kinds, in which the Choicest Passages of the most Celebrated Poets of the present Time are judged with well-grounded Freedom †.' This work is usually ascribed to Bodmer alone, Brei-

* Sulzer, in a letter to Bodmer ('Letters of the German Literati,' &c. First Part, p. 175), writes as follows:—29th April, 1752. "I count every hour, together with the ladies, till the arrival of 'Noah,' and rail at the slowness of the people. I congratulate you, from my heart, on this production of your declining years, which will bear you on safe wings through all future years, and make them blessed. And I congratulate myself that I have lived in the days of 'Noah,' seen its author with my eyes, and greeted him as my friend. The present time, as I have already remarked (some specimens had appeared), will not do you universal justice. But you need not fear to have the destiny of Homer and so many great artists, who only ascended into the temple of universal glory after their death. Our posterity will honour your memory; tender fathers and mothers will think of you when they wish to present a work to their sons and daughters, in which they may be able to find knowledge, spirit, taste and charming beauties, combined with the purest virtue."

† 'Von dem Einflusse und Gebrauche der Einbildungskraft zur Ausbesserung des Geschmacks, oder genaue Untersuchung aller Arten Beschreibungen, worin die auserlesensten Stellen der berühmtesten Poeten dieser Zeit mit gründlicher Freiheit beurtheilt werden.' 'Frankfort and Leipzig anonymous,'

tinger however, had aided him in it to such an extent, both by his advice and labour, that both may make equal claims to the merit of the book. It was to be only the forerunner of a 'General and Comprehensive Work upon the Principles of Taste.' It was therefore dedicated to the philosopher Wolf; but before the Zürich gentlemen had prepared the great work, of which this was to be the forerunner, Gottsched had baffled their purpose by his 'Critical Art of Poetry.'

Bodmer knew nothing better than Addison's wisdom. The latter, or his friend Steele, had called upon his fellow-countrymen, in the English 'Spectator,' to determine the beautiful in poetry and eloquence, with mathematical certainty, and to establish infallible rules for its production. This accorded altogether with Bodmer's views of poetry. The great work therefore was to be brought out in the German language, which no Englishman, following 'The Spectator's' advice, had attempted, and at this very juncture again, the unsanctified Gottsched crossed his path; for schools and schoolmasters, the whole great public pronounced in his favour. Gottsched's books had that sort of breadth, utility, and obviousness, by which in our days Meidinger's grammar, and many manuals for the Arts of 'Cookery and Education,' are recommended; neither were the Swiss writers any very deep thinkers, as the book which has been mentioned abundantly proves; they do not however range rule after rule, as is done by Gottsched, or in Langen's 'Latin Grammar,' but draw their materials sometimes at least from the able work of Longinus, and not merely from the French.

The examples, alas! are so chosen, that contemptible flatterers of the great time-servers and rhyme-cobblers are mentioned along with men who at least have rendered some service*. By such a work as little service could be done as by Meier's introduction

1727. The first edition of Gottsched's 'Art of Poetry' appeared in 1730. In the second edition he assailed Bodmer, who had in 1732, published a most wretched translation of Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' in Swiss prose. Gottsched attempted to show, that Milton's poetry was not much better than Bodmer's prose. In reply, Bodmer wrote a thick volume, 1740. On this occasion we may again remark, that books have their destiny, as well as men. Bodmer's miserable translation was published for the fourth time, 1780.

* These German poets are Postel, Brockes, Opitz, Paul Flemming, Lohenstein, Von König, Günther, Besser, Heräus, Rachel, Gryphius, Hoffmannswaldau, Canitz, and others still less known. The only one who possesses any real interest among them is Fischart.

of the Langes husband and wife. We pass over what Bodmer afterwards wrote upon tragedy, as well as his treatises in defence of Milton, of the devils, angels, and whole machinery of the 'Paradise Lost,' in order to pass on to Breitinger's work, because Bodmer had a share in its production, and after his fashion appears with intolerable presumption as the patron and chief judge of art. This book is entitled 'Critical Treatise upon the Nature, Intention and Use of Allegories, &c. by J. J. Breitinger. Zürich, 1740.' We shall quote a passage in a note from Bodmer's preface, from which the style of the Zürich Dictator may be judged of. It may be seen what a high opinion of himself he entertains, and what was to have been expected if he and his friends had been able to realize their views*. We shall also have an opportunity of incidentally remarking how admirably calculated Bodmer was to meet the Leipzig school monarch and his reviewer's presumption with scorn, insolence and rude self-reliance. The high opinion which Bodmer entertains of himself can moreover only surprise those who have not read the letters addressed to him by Sulzer, Gleim, and many others, who do not know of Wieland's early intercourse with him (before Wieland had taken his leave of pietism), and are not acquainted with the relation in which Klopstock and the tender J. G. Jacobi stood to him.

Breitinger's book is written in the same heavy and labouring style as Bodmer's preface; nobody, however, can deny that there is more taste and more philosophy in this work than in all that Gottsched ever wrote. The best part of it, particularly for that time, appears to us to consist of the frequent introduction of passages from Homer, and the intimation of an opinion which neither Clarke nor Heyne ventured to deliver, that a tendency to bad taste is apparent in Virgil in those passages in which he

* "I regard myself as the godfather of this critical work; and that still more when I consider that this production of a sharp judgement would have been strangled in the birth without my aid, or interrupted by other works, or at least not brought to the perfection which it has now reached. Little is wanting to justify me in appropriating to myself in some measure the glory of the ancient Socrates, who has often said that he followed the trade of his mother and had no power to deliver himself, but that he could assist the birth of others," &c. At the conclusion he says, to the praise of Breitinger, "The rules which the most distinguished writers have concealed in the form of examples, have been discovered by him, and whoever has once well understood them, will be able by their skilful use to enjoy the same pleasure which they have given us in those first examples and models, which, without doubt, is sufficient to secure the author the approbation of the intelligent, and to set him free from all uneasiness about the future destiny of his work," &c. &c.

believes himself to have improved upon the imitated verses of his master. His treatise upon the exaggeration and foolery in which Lohenstein and Hoffmannswaldau took the liberty to indulge, is also very useful—we recommend particularly this last division, which treats of Lohenstein, Hoffmannswaldau and Amthor, to those who wish to become acquainted with the false taste of these imitators of a degenerate Italian school without reading through the numerous volumes of their novels or their poems. The poems, writers and passages which are praised and recommended by both the Swiss critics are, however, nevertheless, still further removed from true poetry than even Lohenstein and Hoffmannswaldau, in whose bombast a striving after higher excellence and a poetic spirit must be recognised. The specimens of German allegories are selected from Opitz, Pietsch, Günther, and magnanimously enough, sometimes from Gottsched; but the whole question is only about invention according to rules, and of arrangement according to sample.

Sulzer, in Berlin, who never went beyond the wisdom of his patron, shows us to what Bodmer's æsthetics was capable of leading. He separated himself more and more from Ramler, in proportion as the latter attached himself more to those who contended for the light of the new century, despaired of the age, and abused the men whom we have named as the originators and promoters of a better taste in Germany*. How could any deliverance spring from Bodmer and Breitinger's wisdom? In fact Bodmer showed himself in the year 1769 to be one of the most zealous defenders of the old rigidity, because in his abusive satires, he reviled as enemies of taste, Gleim, who used his arts to make and keep friends with all parties, and whom he had even greeted, in 1767, as Tyrtæus Gleim, and J. G. Jacobi who had glorified him in the same year in one of his tenderest songs. In the year just mentioned he published his miserable paper entitled 'The Graces of the Little, in the Name and for the Benefit of the Lovers of Anacreon †,' in which he sought to wound Jacobi, Gleim, Lessing, Weisse, Gellert, Nicolai and Wieland, who had just then

* Sulzer to Bodmer, 1761. ('Lett. of learned Germans.' Part I. p. 342.) I flatter myself, after these principles, to be able to give some hard hits to the bad taste of the newest Germans, the Nicolais, Lessings, and Ramlers. But to say the truth, I cannot possibly expect anything from people among whom Abbt is a classic writer, Ramler a Horace, Weisse a Shakspeare, and Herder a Michael Angelo.

† 'Die Grazien des Kleinen, im Namen und zum Besten der Anakreon-tischen.'

forsaken him, with the weapons of his wit, however leaden the arrows of the pious man were.

Breitinger, in his book upon allegories, ever faithful to his master, finds the true examples and models of German poetry in Postel, Von König and Brockes. Breitinger not only calls Brockes and Von König the most celebrated poets in Germany, which might be true at the time in which he wrote; but he adds, that Brockes was admirable in his descriptions of the works of nature and Von König in the lively representation of the magnificence and pomp of a royal court.

Almost simultaneously with the work upon allegories just mentioned, there appeared another in two volumes upon the different kinds of poetry, which is indisputably better grounded and more thoroughly weighed than Gottsched's shallow notices, and more practical than Baumgarten and Meier's definitions and demonstrations. This book, whose ample title we subjoin*, was intended to reduce every thing, as accorded with Bodmer's severe nature, to the standard of strict rules, in order that any able, vigorous, industrious tradesman, relying upon these principles, might hereafter compose German poetry. The author of 'Noah,' trusting to these rules, attempted also the dramatic department, and gave himself out for a master therein, which was also here and there believed. Bodmer accompanied this work of his friend with a remarkable patronising preface, in which he sought to justify the method of first laying down and afterwards constructing works of art according to established principles.

What Bodmer says in favour of the philosophy of art and poetry, and of the necessity of rules and principles, may be read with pleasure and advantage; but the experience of all ages stands opposed to his plan. All nations, where poetry deserves the name, according to historical testimony, have first had masterpieces of genius and afterwards deduced their theory of the beautiful from the different species of poetical compositions; just in the same manner as nature and all her productions existed before natural philosophy. The Leibnitz philosophy of the Zürich friends is indeed more vigorous and manly than the Leipzig rules,

* 'John Jacob Breitinger's Critical Art of Poetry, wherein Poetical Delineation in reference to Invention is thoroughly investigated, and illustrated by Examples from the most celebrated Ancients and Moderns, with a Preface by John Jacob Bodmer: Zürich, 1740.' Immediately after the same subject is continued, and treated in reference to expression and colouring by the same author.

and is also upon the whole more worthily expressed; the examples and specimens, however, are the same as those which we have mentioned in the work on allegories; of the effect and influence of the Swiss theory we do not speak. The influence of Bodmer and of all those who, like him, Breitinger and Sulzer, confined themselves within the old and narrow circle and the ancient usages, and wished to set limits to the commenced progress of the century, must necessarily have been limited to teachers and writers, whose services were no longer regarded, because they lingered behind the spirit of the age.

§ VI.

FIRST TRACES OF THE MOVEMENTS WHICH COMPLETELY ALTERED GERMAN LIFE AND LITERATURE IN THE FOLLOWING PERIOD. WEISSE, RAMLER, NICOLAI, LESSING, KLEIST, ETC., TILL THE 'LETTERS UPON LITERATURE.'

We cannot conclude without indicating where and how it came to be seen and felt in Germany that Klopstock and Gellert's mode of promoting mental improvement did not correspond to the demands of the age, and that a style of writing must be adopted entirely different from that which authors had hitherto employed, in order to meet the views of a different and more enlightened public. We are able to form a correct notion of the public of a German writer of that period from the expressions of Sulzer, from whom we should least of all have expected a complaint such as that which we quote below*. The case however is so completely altered, that the very opposite complaint may now be made. In the next period we shall see that the new generation wholly forgot the tracks of Bodmer and Gottsched; and consisting mostly of young men animated with the noblest zeal, they followed partly

* "So long as books are only in the hands of professors, students and journalists, it appears to me scarcely worth while to write anything for the present generation. If there be a reading public in Germany beyond the circles of professional life, I must acknowledge that I have not become acquainted with it. I see only students, candidates, here and there a professor, and as a rarity a preacher, trouble themselves with books; the great public know not at all what literature, philosophy, morals and taste mean." The editor adds, "Since this time the very reverse has made things infinitely worse. We have an immense reading public, whose favour authors, to their great disadvantage, court."

the leading of Wieland, some that of Lessing, and others that of Herder, and their first and complete reformation in literature and mental culture was effected. These heralds of a new and better age saw that Bodmer's calvinistic severity, his attachment to his kind of religious social order, his orthodox love of ecclesiastical rule, were as unfriendly to the free movements of the mind, to the pleasantry and poetry of life, as the Lutheran, sentimental—poetical it is true—but dogmatically religious fanaticism of Klopstock. All the poets who had admired Gottsched, and from whom Bodmer and Breitinger selected their specimens and examples, were characterized by them by the name of the “common poets.”

As the fate of all writers at this time in Germany depended on the reviewers, the men who felt the deficiencies of the previously existing literature, and were desirous of carrying out their own views, were necessarily obliged to erect some critical instrumentality to make a party, and to set themselves up as its confident organs. All reformers of German literature have since followed the same method. Sulzer and Ramler sought in vain to overthrow Gottsched in a critical way; for both were deficient in cutting wit and confident assumption, and sometimes it appeared that the two Berlin friends differed in their views and in their taste.

Ramler was distinguished by his odes, which he either translated from Horace, or composed himself after his model. The language, versification, and manner of the ancients were first introduced into Germany by this friend of Gleim and Lessing, although the learned alone were able justly to appreciate the service which the learned critic rendered to style, the art of poetry and its external form. Sulzer and Ramler had come to Berlin almost contemporaneously (one in 1748, the other in 1750), and both had united with some other learned men, in order to assert and justify their judgements in matters of taste by means of a critical periodical.

This first attempt at a new school of criticism is here worthy of mention, because it was the first step on the way which led to the publication of the ‘Letters upon Literature,’ and afterwards to the ‘Universal German Library.’ These papers, which however are far removed from the confident boldness and from the occasionally wanton wit of the ‘Letters upon Literature,’

were undertaken by Sucro, Sulzer*, Langemak and Ramler, under the sanction of the Berlin Academy ; but they came to an end, without leaving a trace behind.

Before we proceed to speak of the new attempt which was made in Berlin of contending with youthful vigour against the ruling pedantry, and of its successful execution in Leipzig, we must mention the names of some young men who at that time first entered the field of literary contest and fame. They adopted and wrote in a very different tone from Rabener and Gellert, and the combination of their very dissimilar talents, plans and views effected more for the mental culture of the German middle classes than could have been accomplished under the then existing circumstances by one superior mind. Among them we mention Weisse first, because he erected the first new critical tribunal at Leipzig.

Weisse could and must follow the way which his friend Lessing pointed out to him ; and with so much the more attention to the necessities of the great public, because he was deficient in genius for a higher effort. He possessed that fortunate mediocrity, that gift of expressing himself and communicating his thoughts with ease and not without taste, that kind of variety of powers which satisfies the multitude, that unceasing activity and readiness which in the end infallibly secure a great public in Germany. He has never, indeed, produced a work which may be called classical. Weisse had much more poetical ability than his friend Nicolai ; for with the latter inspiration and noble fancies were not only on an equal footing with superstition, fanaticism and light-headedness, but all that went beyond the palpable and obvious was a subject of deadly hate, and in all his literary undertakings he never overlooked or forgot his tradesman-like gain. Moreover Lessing lent the aid of his great mind to promote the critical plans which these two devised.

Weisse and Lessing, although very different with respect to the regularity and propriety of their general conduct, had devoted their attention to the theatre, when they were students in Leipzig, and had had frequent intercourse with the most distinguished actors of the time. They had given up the learned stiffness then in vogue, and Weisse had drawn great attention to

* 'Critical News from the Empire of Learning, 1750, with the Approbation of the Royal Academy of Sciences.' Berlin, 4to.

himself by a theatrical piece, in which he brought upon the stage the abusive quarrel between the Zürich and the Leipzig factions with respect to the right of dominion over the German Parnassus. Weisse stood in close connexion with Schlegel, Rabener, Gellert and other contributors to the 'Bremen Notices : ' but it may be observed from the commencement, that Lessing was at his side ; that he sometimes directed him to Shakspeare, and sometimes showed him that the rigidly moral anxiousness of the best writers of those times could not be combined with high mental culture, and with the free soaring of the mind. Lessing justly thought that true poetry, by ennobling the whole of nature, would heal the wounds which it had inflicted.

The earliest works of Lessing which appeared in Leipzig, under the title 'Trifles,' were nearly of the same nature, and calculated for the same object that Weisse's 'Amusing Songs,' which appeared almost contemporaneously, were intended to promote. Lessing and Weisse wrote for the same theatre, from which, when under the management of Neuberin, Gottsched had driven away Hanswurst. The company in Leipzig was then led by Koch ; and Eckhof, who has been rendered immortal by Lessing's dramaturgy, was a member of it. About 1756 Weisse caused the pieces which he had written for this company to be collected in the first volume of his 'Essays upon the German Theatre.' Had these pieces appeared at another time, they would not have been deserving of notice ; but at that time they contributed more to rouse the people than all the Messiahs. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the value of Weisse's plays, they come nearer in tone and language to the French, which enjoyed the favour of the public, than those of the Gottsched family or those composed by Gellert and Schlegel ; the people also received them with great applause, which cannot be said of Lessing's first attempts in the same line. We leave to the historian and critic of German poetry, or to the historian of literature, the estimation of the tragedies contained in Weisse's contributions to the German theatre ; but we cannot, in reference to our design, omit the notice of the fact that these contributions fill five Parts, and that the most of the tragedies contained in them met with the approbation of the people, and were several times reprinted. Two comic pieces contained in these contributions, of which only one belonged originally to the German writer, deserve particular mention ; because they, for the first time, gave some com-

pensation to the great public, the proper mass of the people, for the banished Hanswurst. One is the farce already mentioned, 'The Fashionable Poets,' in which the rude and ridiculous strife between the two tasteless parties about taste in the fine arts, to which both were strangers, was ridiculed upon the stage. This piece appeared in 1756; but the fact that it had only a momentary and accidental interest, that it was forgotten as soon as Gottsched and Bodmer ceased to have any weight or influence, proves sufficiently that Weisse was destitute of that creative power of genius, which insures a lasting renown to poems which owe their existence to accidental circumstances.

The second comic piece to which we have referred, has maintained its ground till our days, as a carnival amusement; its merit however belongs more to the English original than to the German imitation. We speak of the 'Travelled Women, or the Devil is loose,' together with the second part or 'The Merry Cobbler;' both, as is well known, being drawn from English sources. Weisse's talent of accommodating himself to the numerous middle classes, without sinking to what is dull, of not offending good manners or moral feeling, without falling into seraphic feelings with Cramer and Klopstock, caused him to be generally admired; and a number of writings flowed from his fruitful pen, written in a tone which good society could acknowledge as its own, in preference to that of the whole Leipzig and Zürich schools.

Lessing, who was born and educated to be a perfect critic, before he united with his friends in an undertaking for the critical purification of German literature, had given evidence by his own publications that he was in a condition to render some better services than those of a Lange and a Dusch, whom he afterwards so indignantly lashed. He had not only published his earliest productions in six parts of the first, but afterwards forgotten, collection of his works, but in connexion with Moses Mendelssohn, had composed the only solid, well-considered and universally readable philosophical writing, because free from all scholastic language, to which we in Germany can refer. This work had the form of an answer to the question, by which the French Berlin Academy had at that time made itself ridiculous. This little work, entitled 'Pope a Metaphysician,' which is contained in the second edition of the latest collection of Lessing's writings, contains a very fine, but at the same time bitter strain of

irony and ridicule directed against the Berlin Academy, its philosophy, shallowness and narrow views, which were displayed in the question, in its attempt to deduce a system of philosophy from the work of a poet, and the ignorance which it manifested, in seeking for originality of invention in the works of Pope, as the academicians had done.

In this paper, moreover, the two friends also entered into an admirable Scriptural examination of the common theory of Providence, and of the coarse style in which the adherents of the theological school of Wolf wished to justify the Godhead on account of the apparent want of moral and physical contrivance in the arrangements of the universe. These theologians were not satisfied with proving that this arrangement is good, wise, or what is more, necessary and founded upon the reason and connexion of the whole, but they boasted of having proved that no other contrivance was possible. This, as is well known, afforded Voltaire an occasion for writing his indecent and wanton novel, in which he ridiculed this best world of the philosophers.

This remarkable piece, in which philosophy appears free from its terrific artificial language and from system, contains at the same time an explanation of the relation of the poet to the philosopher and to philosophy, together with an exposition of the nature of didactic poetry, which has yet been replaced by nothing better. The style and language are probably Lessing's, the matter Mendelssohn's, and here are found the merits which give Lessing's writings a value to the Germans above those of all others. Here is clearness and strength, life and motion; here is true poetry; no bombast, no rhetoric upon stilts, no mad pathos, or poetry in irregular metre; no Oriental pomp.

The friend of Lessing, Weisse and Ramler, Nicolai of Berlin, whom we shall hereafter see always appearing as the representative of rude and interested partiality, had come forward at this time in a very different character, it is true, but with all that zealot's eagerness which was peculiar to him, and which in consequence made him often ridiculous, when he thought to make others so. He had become the organ of those who thought themselves obliged to declare aloud that the new literature had nothing to expect either from the disciples of Gottsched, from the exclusive admirers of Bodmer, or from the visionary notions of Klopstock; and this time his active meddling was well applied. The work in which he thus delivers his opinion upon the con-

dition of literature, appeared about 1755, and excited at that time great attention. Nicolai's name was unknown, the work therefore appeared anonymously, introduced and recommended to the public by a preface from J. G. Nicolai, Prof. at Frankfort on the Oder. This treatise bears the title of 'Letters upon the present Condition of the Fine Arts in Germany.' In these letters, Gottsched and his extracts from Batteux were first held up to ridicule; the author then directs his attention to the Swiss school, whose earnest endeavours to recommend an imitation of the Greeks, to lead back to a taste for simplicity, to promote the cause of religion and virtue, he praises and honourably acknowledges, before he proceeds to show their weakness and inefficiency. He says with great justice,—“Those gentlemen who value themselves highly upon this particular taste, appear to me to resemble the aldermen of some little borough where they themselves are the chief people; the forced hexameters, the Latin letters (these German books were printed in the Roman character), and an affectedly simple and horribly bombastical style of writing, are nothing else than the full-bottomed wig, ruff and stiff stock in which these honourable and resolute dictatorial gentlemen make their entry.” Sulzer, who had just published a tract which he intitled, 'Thoughts upon the eminent Worth of M. Bodmer's Epic Poetry,' is first treated of and his merits exhibited in a very courteous manner, but afterwards some very bitter and cutting remarks are made upon him, as one of the Swiss band, who recommend the good quality of the Swiss wares (their morality) because they cannot boast of their beauty. Ramler, whose odes had just then appeared, is highly eulogised, and another and different kind of criticism from that which then prevailed is earnestly promoted.

Nicolai was not alone in his efforts. In the same manner as in the letters just mentioned he pointed out what was deficient in the prevailing culture and literature, so did Lessing also in the literary articles, which, according to the custom of the time, were appended to Voss's newspaper, of which he was the editor. The carrying out the idea on a great scale was however due to Nicolai. He had already entered into an agreement with Weisse in Leipzig to set up a critical tribunal. This scheme, after some delays, Weisse alone carried forward in the year 1757, by establishing the 'Library of the Fine Arts and Sciences.' His friend Lessing, who had the chief share in the two first pieces of

the 'Letters upon Literature,' which were commenced two years later, contributed only a single criticism to the 'Library;' Mendelssohn, on the contrary, took part in both in a similar manner. The object which Nicolai, Weisse and Lessing proposed to accomplish by establishing two new critical tribunals, whose tone and contents belong altogether to the succeeding period, may be fully learned from their friendly correspondence. In all their letters they complain of the ridiculous and pedantic imitators of the ancients as well as of the English and French, of dull, moral sermonizing, of diffuse and weak descriptions, of expounding and detailing, of bad translations, and a want of genius and originality.

We shall now, in the conclusion of this section, direct attention briefly to the three first years of the new critical journal, and the condition of literature and criticism till the year 1759, because in this year the new 'Letters upon Literature' appeared, with which we shall commence the following period. We shall not return to the 'Library,' partly because it did not embrace the whole circle of literature, as the 'Letters' did, and partly because it remained far behind them in reforming zeal, or, if you will, in revolutionary vehemence. As to the latter, the good Sulzer was afterwards so much alarmed at its tone, that he not only never contributed an article, although the directors were his best friends; but he went so far as to express a malicious pleasure, that a writer without influence or importance had effected the discontinuance and confiscation of the paper in Berlin*. In the time of Frederick the Second, it was not indeed possible to carry through such a project in Berlin. In Saxony things were on a different footing, and it is therefore obvious why Weisse dare not too strongly excite the rage of the Saxon writers.

With respect to the 'Library,' a detailed account of the author's object was previously published, in which essays on particular departments of the fine arts and sciences were promised, together with criticisms. In this prefatory publication, Breitinger's labours are spoken of with respect, whilst the jour-

* Sulzer, in a letter to Gleim, 20th March 1762, writes, "The Council has forbidden Nicolai to proceed with the 'Letters upon Literature,' and even refused permission for the sale of those already published. This trick, no doubt, comes from Justi, whose 'Psammetichus,' has been lately somewhat sharply handled." He feels however that his rejoicing is a little unreasonable, and adds,—“But where are we, when such a man can obstruct criticism?”

nals of Gottsched and his clients are treated with contempt. It is intimated, that the multitude of bad writers in Germany imperiously called for a sharp and satirical criticism; and the younger generation are especially threatened with the scourge.

What is said in reference to style and language appears to us so important for the history of the progress of German culture and civilization, because the influence of the 'Library' and 'Letters upon Literature' was so great, that bad German writers, from this time forward, were obliged to alter their style, that we shall introduce the words of the writer:—"Because (he writes) we regard purity of language and justness of expression as two things, which have in various ways not only been interchanged with one another by our German writers, but which have been neglected to an almost incredible extent, we shall be careful not merely to observe upon those important parts of fine writing, but, in the works which we criticise, shall pay particular attention to these subjects, and will therefore give our judgement upon many works, whose contents do not fall within our province, with respect to their style only, in order to root out the still-existing prejudice, that it is not necessary to write well, even in works whose chief object is the cultivation of the fine arts."

In the first volume of the 'Library of the Fine Arts,' one of the numerous celebrated mediocre writers who had raised themselves upon the ruins of Gottsched's reputation, is treated with merited severity. This was John Jacob Dusch, then celebrated as a miserable translator, as a poet in the style of Pope and Thomson, and afterwards as a novel-writer. The public, and the king of Denmark, took him for a great man. In the first volume he is criticised as a writer, and in those which follow exposed as a shameless and ignorant translator. He was not however deterred by Lessing's severe criticism from writing largely in the 'Letters upon Literature;' and we see how true the observation is, which was made on this occasion in the 'Library,' that mediocrity must be put down by force, because it was a universal bar to genius in Germany. Cramer and Klopstock are indeed spoken of with respect in this volume; but the deficiencies of their style and their materials, the exaggerations of their devotion and sentimentality, are with modesty and care noticed and censured; with respect to language and versification, every thing is here intimated which time has since confirmed.

In the very commencement of the second volume there is found a translation of a paper of Shaftesbury's, which appeared to the author of the 'Library' important. In a criticism upon Klopstock's 'Death of Adam,' which appeared about this time, the writer has made the judicious and clever remark, that Klopstock's name indisputably adorns this prosaic tragedy, although the work is no ornament to his name. The volume is wholly dedicated to the drama; for it contains not only very extended notices of Goldoni's pieces, but Croncgk's 'Codrus,' together with the 'Free Spirit,' are printed in it, and accompanied with a critical examination. Both pieces, as is well known, are only distinguished as being some steps in advance of Schlegel's productions, and we only allude to them to show the slow progress of German improvement; because this must be known, to enable the reader to appreciate the influence and activity of Lessing, Wieland, and Herder, which will be illustrated in the commencement of the following period.

We have not taken any very ample notice of Kleist, whose 'Spring' then attracted great attention, along with the 'Messiah' and the poems of Gleim and Hagedorn; because this poet died at the very moment in which he had perceived that the new literature of Germany could be in no respect advanced by descriptive and didactic poems in the manner of Thomson and Pope. The faithful friends of the able Kleist, *i. e.* all friends of the dawning light, of general enlightenment and of the true improvement of their native land, Ramler, Lessing, Gleim and others, felt a double regret for his loss, because he was snatched away in the very midst of his career. Lessing has declared, in his 'Laocoon,' what his opinion was with respect to the connexion of Kleist and his 'Spring' with the newly formed poetry of the German nation; and, by the quotation of his words, we shall place our readers in a situation to form a judgement for themselves.

"Kleist was far from believing, in common with his eulogists," says Lessing, "that the descriptions in which he took particular pleasure, and by means of which, like Brockes and the modern English, he had obtained the applause of the public, were true poetry." Lessing even assures us that his friend had attached but little value to his 'Spring,' and adds, "I can say with certainty, that if he had lived, he would have given it quite a different form. He had thought upon constructing a plan, and considered about the means by which he might present, in

natural order before his eyes, and reduce to a just succession, the multitude of images which he appears to have snatched up, sometimes here, sometimes there, by chance, from the boundless compass of renovated nature."

In the second volume of the 'Library' is to be found the only contribution which Lessing made, and by which he raised the same terror in the minds of the pitiful translators of the Greek poets which he had excited in the wretched translators of the Latin ones, by his annihilating criticism upon Lange's translation of the 'Odes of Horace.' This criticism is directed against a Mr. Lieberkühn, who, relying upon the eulogy of his friends and of Gottsched, tried to translate the 'Idyls' of Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion, without having any other notion of poetry than might be drawn from Gottsched's books, and even without any correct knowledge of the Greek language.

We follow the publication of the 'Library' no further; because these notices of the three first parts are sufficient for our purpose, as the others fall within the period of the 'Letters upon Literature.' From the year 1759, Weisse, his Sulzer and other friends lingered behind their age. Their weakness, and the middle path which they sought to tread, could only lead to mediocrity, but neither awaken nor encourage genius. The 'Library,' in its criticism, never went beyond the theoretical system erected by Sulzer and Ramler, with the aid of French and English rules, as will be seen from the first look cast upon the third and fourth volumes of the work. The lengthy and dull essays upon the theory of particular parts of the fine arts and sciences, the translation of the Abbé Dubois's remarks upon the nature of the genius of poets and painters, the selection from the 'Principes pour la Lecture des Orateurs,' and other materials, were little, if at all, calculated to render any service to the Germans. We were in want of vigorous serious prose; and were we to substitute French rhetoric for the poetical or crawling prose of that age? The notices in the three thick volumes of Ramler's German Batteux only point to the plain and dull middle way, and to academic regularity.

Thus far had German culture, language and literature advanced, before Lessing, and, after him, and partly against him, Herder, endeavoured to lift up their voices, and to prove that both the Leipzig and the Berlin reformers had entered upon a wrong path. About this time, also, Wieland turned away from

his former pietistical and Swiss direction, and became an especial favourite with the great, and particularly with the fashionable public, by the tone, manner and style of a half French and half Greek education. The greater number of readers of *belles lettres* seek for amusement, and not application of mind; they know only half the value of poetry; the pure pleasure of mere mental activity is to them only a means, not an end; they look for no mere mental enjoyments, but search only for means of dignifying, exalting, increasing and seasoning their sensual pleasures; Wieland precisely met the taste and the demands of such readers. We shall therefore find, when we take up the thread which we have for a moment dropt, the different parts of the German public, and from different sides, not only roused in a different, but in an altogether opposite manner. Klopstock, Herder, Lessing, Nicolai and his friends, each formed his own circle, his peculiar public. The whole nation, however, took part in the strife with respect to the essential nature of poetry, and the value of the individual writers of the younger generation; the elder were soon forgotten.

An entirely new and purely classical literature took its origin from the year 1770, in consequence of the movements which were caused by Lessing, Herder, Nicolai and Wieland, from 1759–70. We believe, therefore, that we can best conclude our remarks upon the history of German culture and mental improvement, and its slow progress during the first half of the eighteenth century, with the notices which have been just taken of the reforming labours of the Weisses, Sulzers, and Nicolais. We shall commence the history of the next period with some account of the earliest works of Lessing, Wieland and Herder; and immediately direct attention to the honoured men, who, in that dark and despotic time, when no man raised his voice in favour of the oppressed citizens and peasants of Germany, ventured courageously to defend the rights of humanity, and particularly of the oppressed, against the presumptuous claims of the hierarchy and against military power.

CHAPTER IV.

FRANCE. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS UPON SOME OF THE
MANIFESTATIONS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

§ I.

[THE portion of the view of English literature already given, will be found in the first volume of 'Schlosser's History.' The present chapter alone appears in the second volume, and all those which follow, in the first part of the third volume. This remark is necessary, in order to enable the reader to carry on the connexion, and to explain some allusions which occur in the text, which the translator has deemed it best to retain, in order to preserve the complete integrity of the work, and to present it precisely as the author himself has done, as well as to enable those who take an interest in the subject or the work, hereafter to connect it with the histories of French and German literature, to which it refers. The following chapter is given in the introduction to French literature, p. 436, vol. ii.]

In the present volume we shall not enter upon English literature, partly because we shall require considerable space to show in what way the Parisian literature became the general fashion in Europe, and partly because we shall give in the following volume whatever may be wanting here. We shall, however, introduce some English writers before we enter upon the French, —authors who though entitled to no particular notice on account of the solid or intrinsic value of their works, have gained a great reputation and innumerable imitators in France and Germany, by means of the fashion and the adoption of the spirit of the age.

Among these men Lord Chesterfield unquestionably merits the first place, who, as often happens and has happened in our times, by means of his rank and his activity as a man of the world and a statesman, procured a great number of admirers of his writings in the whole of Europe, and impressed upon them that mark of distinction which gives sometimes an English and sometimes a French character to fashionable reading from one end of Europe to another. Chesterfield was personally, and afterwards as a writer also, as well known and as much admired in Paris, Berlin and the Hague, as in London. He occupies

one of the first places among the writers who, after the example of the French, laboured to create a fashionable and general literature of the higher classes, which as being common to all Europeans, is destitute of all national, individual, vigorous character, and softly melts into egotism. His chief work describes and delineates a man whom, as the ideal of a genuine statesman and man of the world, he places in opposition to those who have only received the common education of a citizen, and with this book in our hand, we understand much more easily the tendency of Rousseau; because the man whom he would represent as the ideal of a genuine human being, is the very opposite of Chesterfield's man of the world. This celebrated work is 'Chesterfield's Letters to his Son.'

Chesterfield was a friend of Voltaire and Montesquieu, he had begun and in 1748 he closed his diplomatic career under Walpole; and from this circumstance alone, we might well conclude that he attached very little importance to social morality. To the honour, however, of the English of that day be it said, that they were far indeed from yielding unconditional homage to the doctrines of worldly wisdom, or from regarding the perfection of form, for which Lord Chesterfield's letters were celebrated and which gained for them a classical reputation, as a compensation for the great deficiency in the seriousness of their contents. In order to prove, without going into an analysis of his writings, that Chesterfield, like Hume in reference to the form, had altogether gone over to the French school, we need only mention the testimony of the Frenchman Süard, which has so much the more weight, as those Englishmen also who admire their celebrated writers of the eighteenth century more than those of an earlier period, altogether agree with his opinion. Süard says expressly, that there are few books in the English language whose style so nearly approximates that of the French as that of Chesterfield's 'Letters;' he adds what has been already stated, that this results from Chesterfield, like Hume, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon being intimately acquainted with the French literature and language. This further appears from the numerous and high eulogiums which are to be found in the French writers.

The contents of these letters altogether correspond to their sophistical and rhetorical form. Chesterfield, like many of the imitators of our Göthe, boldly affirms, that manner and external courtliness are far more essential in the world than seriousness and virtue. The instruction which was formerly imparted only in

secret and impressed upon the minds of young people of rank, is here systematically given, viz., that the mere external form, altogether without inward substance, gives a superiority to the distinguished men of the world in the intercourse of life, and that his only science is, never to lay himself open, and to have his words, as well as his features and the movements of his body, always completely under his control, &c.

All this would, however, by no means apply to that school of clever rhetoricians, who in eloquent language so wonderfully misrepresent religion and morality, that the simple and humble mind, confounded by their logic, poetry and rhetoric, is no longer able to distinguish right and wrong, it is no other than that principle which has always, and will always be regarded as valid in the circles in which Chesterfield moved, because Platonic philosophy and Christian social morality would there be absurd; Chesterfield has gone still a step further, and in this way has approximated nearly to the frivolity of the school of Holbach. His own good friend, Johnson, has reproached him in the rude manner which the learned English ladies admired in their oracle, when he declares that Chesterfield's book was merely fitted to teach the morality of the most degraded of the female sex, and the manners of a dancing-master.

This is indeed somewhat strongly said; but in order to comprehend this judgement, we must know that Chesterfield in this respect was only an imitator of the French writers of his time, and that his peculiar characteristic consisted in having systematized the art of simulation for the benefit of fashionable and dissolute society. Chesterfield teaches his son not only the manner in which particular classes of the female sex are to be seduced from the paths of virtue, but how every female virtue, of which chastity is the foundation and corner-stone, may be utterly destroyed. Chesterfield, moreover, teaches this art of seduction only as it bears upon the diplomatic skill of a man of the world, who looks upon the female sex as mere instruments for accomplishing his political objects, or satisfying his ambitious or sensual necessities.

Hume, who was less read and admired in Germany than in France, because in the former he was accessible to the learned alone by means of a very bad translation, has rendered the proof easy, that he has only clothed in an English dress the theories and principles of the men, of whom we shall speak in the following paragraphs, by his own express declaration, that the judge-

ment and taste of his Parisian friends, the exclusive so-called philosophers, had entirely guided him in the composition of his history. It will be readily seen besides, that this age required a species of history quite different from the former, and that after Voltaire and Bolingbroke had spread the light of a sounder criticism or bold negation over the dead masses of historical knowledge, dialectics, rhetoric and sophistry must necessarily be called in to aid, if the distinguished public which had been instructed by their writings, was to be addressed.

We cannot here enter upon the discussion of Hume's philosophy or his scepticism, or their relation to those of the French, because we are not writing the history of science but of the affections and principles of life; and we shall therefore only point out in its outward manifestations, the intimate connexion of modern history with the impulses and leading which were given by the Parisian literati. Every one who is acquainted with the history of Hume's life, as well as of Gibbon's, knows also that both were quite in their element among the men whom we are about to mention, that they lived in the midst of the French literature and language, and, seized with the desire to gain reputation by means of effect, like the Parisians, they durst not undervalue or neglect French rhetoric and sophistry. This will be readily perceived, if the chief works of these two great masters of a new school, which are not on that account less distinguished, or less worthy of permanent renown, are only slightly examined.

Besides Hume was regarded, by Diderot, Marmontel and Holbach, as a member of the alliance for the propagation of the principles of wisdom, which they wished to see prevailing in the distinguished literary world, as at a later period were also Gibbon, our German Grimm, and the Italian Galiani; and even Rousseau, by whom all these principles were regarded as folly and wickedness, and to whom the life of their originator was a scandal, was and remained on terms of intimate friendship with Hume, till, in one of his fits of unfortunate hypochondria, he believed himself to have been betrayed by him. From the manner in which Marmontel, in his Memoirs, represents this disagreement between the unhappy Rousseau, afflicted by the creations of his own imagination, and Hume, it distinctly appears that the society which frequented the house of Holbach, regarded Hume as their best ally, whilst the Genevese democratic defender of common truth regarded him as their bitterest enemy.

Hume therefore came forth, a little too early in England, with his historical work, with his bold scepticism, his keen criticism, his art of using facts for the purpose of building up a particular system, and for a definite object, and the first reception of his work was by no means encouraging. The new kind of history only first triumphed over old prejudices, together with the extension of the new principles of mental culture, when the Parisian views of life had become the fashionable views of the polite and fashionable world. We infer this from Hume's own words, in which he triumphantly states, how incredibly small at first the sale of a work had been, which was afterwards circulated like the newspapers. If we could dwell longer here upon the subject of English literature, these general notices might be abundantly confirmed by a closer examination of many passages of Hume's history, in which he speaks of Christianity and its institutions, of the middle ages, their customs, and the nature of their religious observances, but what has been already said will amply suffice as an introduction to the following paragraphs*.

It cannot be alleged of Fielding and Richardson's novels, which are more important as regards the German general literature of the close of the eighteenth century, than either the writings of Chesterfield or Hume, that they were calculated for the sphere of the highest classes, and therefore there will be found in them no traces of the modes of thinking and of mental culture which came from Paris and from Voltaire; yet it is impossible to mistake also in these writings the mighty influence of a new age. Fielding has described English life and English manners, from the same point of view from which Hogarth has given his masterly delineations with the aid of his pencil and his graving-tool; but he also exhibits the mechanical religion and hypocrisy of the hierarchy in the same light as the French scoffers; Richardson's style, on the other hand, was recognised by the French themselves as their own.

Fielding, in his 'Tom Jones,' exhibits the old method of education, the religiousness of orthodox belief resting wholly upon forms and formulas, in as strong and unfavourable contrast with natural feeling, with the inborn sense of right, and with the religion of a pure mind, as Rousseau himself. Richardson, on the other hand, wholly falls in with the moralists of the Marmontel

* The paragraphs upon French literature from the time of Voltaire.—Trans.

school. 'Pamela,' 'Clarissa Harlowe,' 'Grandison,' are all written with the admired art and diffuse ornamental style of the rhetorical and sophistical schools, which, on the one hand are wearisome by their sermonising, and, on the other, are charming by their descriptions calculated to suit the taste and please the fancy of the multitude. This is the style which was so much admired in Addison, and which is characteristic also of those Encyclopædists, who desired to recommend themselves, not so much by their wit, as by sentiment and morality, to whom no man can deny an uncommon talent in representation, great clearness of expression, and liveliness of style.

As regards the morality of Richardson's celebrated moral novels, it awakens no very favourable feeling of its inward soundness, or of the truth and depth of conviction, from which alone good principles or true representations of life can spring, that its original was as little distinguished for the purity of his morals as Fielding himself. In the admiration bestowed on such a writer there may be recognised the character of the modern schools, which are rich in morals and poor in morality, which assign nothing to nature and every thing to art. This spirit passed over from the Parisian life, from the tales of Marmontel and the domestic dramas of Diderot, to our Kotzebues, Ifflands and Jüngers. The justice of this remark cannot be better established than by a reference to the circumstance, that Diderot lavishes the highest eulogiums upon those very parts of Richardson's novels, which, as is well known, Fielding in his had treated with bitter and well-merited scorn. Rousseau also, at a time when he was only a rhetorician and sophist, was attracted by the English rhetorician, and by his imitations of him has shown what a man like Rousseau, who glowed with a true fire, can accomplish with the discoveries of Richardson, when he has first received them as truth, as he did, and has convinced himself of that of which he wishes to persuade others.

Richardson, because he understood how to flatter, had however a degree of success which Rousseau, with all his truth, never had. He was at the same time idolized by the pious and orthodox Germans of that age, notwithstanding the miserable translations which are usually prepared in Germany. He was praised in English pulpits as a moral teacher, and earnestly recommended also at the same time by those Frenchmen, who were called atheists and enemies of religion. In all this we re-

cognise the signs of a time which was weary of old forms and formulas, and sought in this way to release itself from their influence.

In the preceding chapters upon German literature, we have already remarked, that Glover's new species of epic poetry in his 'Leonidas,' Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey,' and Johnson's celebrated criticisms, appear to us to be a proof that there was a tendency in all the countries of Europe to substitute what was universal, polished, artificial, for what was national, old, solid and vigorous. This will justify us in once again placing Voltaire and Montesquieu, as leaders of the ton, at the head of the history of the formulas of wisdom, which regulated the life of the distinguished and educated society of the whole of Europe; we shall immediately pass on from them to Rousseau, because he and his school, although vigorous opponents of the then existing state of things, pursued a wholly different object, and were influenced and guided by a notion which had nothing in common with the principles and the life of the Parisian philosophers.

Voltaire's whole being, his wit, his philosophy of life, the nature of the refinement and mental cultivation which he recommended, were only suitable for the most wealthy classes, and for the life of the high circles of monarchical countries and their courts. Montesquieu found his ideal in England, and knew how to give a new philosophical splendour to the aristocracy and to the distinguished gentlemen, who are usually called the High Church party. Rousseau alone ventured, in the midst of the French nobility, in military, hierarchical, despotic, aristocratic Europe, to announce and preach the democracy of an ideal world.

The three men just named had each his distinct sphere of operation and influence, which might be very easily historically delineated by particulars, if this did not lead us too far from our design. And in order to show that such a review of particular circumstances would produce this effect, we have only to call attention to the case of Voltaire, because, in order to define his circle of influence, and the extent of his instrumentality, we must mention all the courts of Europe, and show how, from Choiseul to the Crown-prince of Brunswick, Prince Henry, King Frederic and Catherine II., every one sought his correspondence, and paid him homage. The history and the contents of his particular writings alone prove that he ruled in Europe with unlimited sway for above sixty years. We shall, however, take

all this as acknowledged and proved, and limit ourselves to pointing out the tendency of particular works of Voltaire, which may be done with so much the greater boldness, as any error with respect to writings which are in every body's hands, or which at least can be readily examined, is easy to be observed. In the following paragraphs we shall treat of Montesquieu's 'Spirit of Laws,' having already noticed his other works. We shall not pass on immediately to the school of Voltaire, or to that of D'Alembert and Diderot, but shall first speak of Rousseau, especially because he mediately effected a complete change of the whole German method of public instruction and private education in the three last decennia of the eighteenth century, and exercised immediately as great an influence upon the life of the higher classes of the inhabitants of towns, as Voltaire did upon the highest nobility.

§ II.

VOLTAIRE IN HIS WHOLE SPHERE OF ACTIVITY.

In the former part of this history we have followed chronologically the course of Voltaire's activity; it now remains to us to group his writings together according to their different species, and to show in what way he succeeded in extending his influence over the field of literature, and consequently over the whole life and intercourse of all the educated classes in Europe; we must, however, first premise one remark upon his sojourn in Lorraine. During his sojourn in Lorraine, in the house of the Marchioness du Châtelet, Voltaire tried to give currency to the study of the so-called exact or mathematical and physical sciences, to confer a charm upon the pursuit by his talent for representation and wit, and even in those departments to recommend a new and a freer method, in opposition to the old one practised by the Jesuits. It will be only possible to comprehend the manner in which he carried on war also in these departments with the Jesuits and with blind faith, when we know that not very long ago, even in our days, the Copernican system was not allowed to be publicly taught in Rome.

Scientifically considered, the labours of Voltaire and his friend the Marchioness, as they pursued mathematics together in Cirey,

are very unimportant, because both were merely dilettanti; but they served notwithstanding to give a new and quite different importance to the calculating and measuring sciences, in consequence of the consideration which the one enjoyed from her rank, and the other from his wit and talents as a poet. The old school sciences and contemplation were now to sink in the scale; observation of nature and the outward movements of life to rise. Voltaire only gave the tone, his friend D'Alembert and others completed the work: and no one can deny that this whole school, as well as the French in general, have their chief strength in the exact sciences, and in all cases in which the question depends upon experiment and observation; neither must it be forgotten that Buffon and Lalande belonged to this school. Although we propose to mention the various species of Voltaire's writings, we do not propose to enumerate them fully and individually, but shall only indicate their tendency and probable effect. It will be, therefore, quite sufficient to select two or three of those which were produced in Cirey. In his writings upon Newton's 'Philosophy of Nature' ('Elémens de la Philosophie de Newton'), Voltaire slyly took the English philosopher under his protection as being opposed to the Jesuits; or, in other words, he availed himself of the name and works of this celebrated Englishman, in order to provoke the Jesuits; for Newton's ecclesiastical theological direction had no interest for Voltaire, and he laughed at his apocalyptic dreams. In another work he took the part of Leibnitz against Newton, believing that by so doing he could most effectually shatter the scholastic system which was maintained by force in the schools and academies that were favoured by the government, and left altogether to the superintendence of the clergy. We can only bestow a passing notice upon his essay on the 'Nature of Fire,' because the little book was written with that self-confidence which Voltaire satirizes with so much bitterness and severity in others. It is also certain that he lent the aid of his pen to the Marchioness du Châtelet in her mathematical and physical writings, for which she continued so long celebrated; and if we might venture to put confidence in what seems to us a very suspicious authority—the instructress of the present king of the French, the Marchioness was entitled to a very small portion of the merit of those works to which she owed her reputation. Madame de Genlis relates in her memoirs, that her grandfather, Monsieur de Mezières, who

was a near neighbour of the Marchioness, and deeply versed in the mathematical sciences, had furnished the materials for the treatises which Voltaire had assisted to reduce into form. This report is not to be relied upon, neither is the source from which it comes ; it is however not the less true that both the celebrated writers in Cirey largely contributed to make it fashionable to speak about physics, mathematics and natural history. Scholastics, theology, philological and antiquarian sciences were presently obliged to yield pre-eminence in the world to the experimental sciences and to mathematical demonstration. Since, moreover, Voltaire reached the summit of his fame precisely during the time of his sojourn in Cirey, as he then entered into an intimate connexion with Frederick the Second, and commenced a correspondence with him, which, with very slight interruptions, continued till his death, this is the most suitable place to enumerate the various species of his writings, both those which were written at, as well as those written after this time.

If we first compare the opinions of the best judges of art and taste (in order that we may not ourselves arrogate the right of deciding), they all agree in this, that Voltaire was most distinguished and greatest, both in poetry and in prose, in those light, witty and agreeable compositions which relate to the connexions and condition of social life, which no one knew better than he did, although he had most reliance upon himself in the dramatic department. He wrote, therefore, twenty-eight pieces, but not one of them could be declared to be perfect even by those among whom he was so much admired and honoured ; since all admit that his lively and volatile mind abhorred long application and continuous labour. As a tragedian he was deficient in depth of mind, seriousness, and true inspiration, and also in that profound philosophy which elevates the mind above the lower circles, and which could only be compensated for by that religiousness of feeling, whose soft and childlike impressions his soul had lost in early youth, in the midst of that witty and scoffing society into which he had been introduced, where every thing sacred was treated with ridicule or contempt. Whoever is able to distinguish the gold of true poetry from rhetorical and shining spangles (which is more difficult than many may imagine, because whole nations and generations have been mistaken and deceived), will be convinced, with us, that no talents and no art can beget true inspiration, and that tragedy must necessarily rest upon a serious contemplation of human life, and upon moral

principles. In our opinion, and in that of another, in which, as a national judgement, we put more confidence than in our own, in matters of taste, we should give the preference to 'Zaire,' 'Alzire,' 'Mahomet,' and 'L'Orphelin de la Chine,' because in these pieces he does not undertake to portray the life of antiquity, which was entirely foreign to his modern and perverted tendency. Voltaire's 'Œdipus' could be very well represented on the Paris stage, on which Sophocles's piece of the same name would have been a failure. When the life and the poetry of the two pieces are compared, it will be readily perceived that they differ as much from one another as Athens in the time of the Persian war from Paris in the time of the Duke of Richelieu, Voltaire's patron. Corneille, although in like manner a Frenchman, and contemporary of the reigning taste of a Voiture and a Balzac, was better acquainted with Roman life, and had enriched himself with more tragic poetry from the Spaniards. This is the reason also why Voltaire, in Brutus and in the death of Cæsar, is so far inferior to Corneille.

If it were not certain that true comedy, which, as is well known, has now altogether disappeared from the stage, demanded quite as much seriousness, and as deep a comprehension of life, as tragedy, it would excite our wonder and surprise that this most witty of men, who was inexhaustible in happy conceits, could never once succeed in satisfying his countrymen who worshipped him, in a comedy. The French critics admit that his characters in comedy are caricatures, their jests and their wit are often merely broad farce. The comprehension of the good and the bad sides of mankind, the laborious study of the characters of all ranks and conditions, in order slowly to improve the morals of the age, as Molière had done—all this was quite beyond the power of Voltaire, and not worth his labour, because he saw a much nearer way than this to reputation and distinction in the world. Inspiration for the simple and the good he had never felt; but his cold and clear understanding, his biting satire, his incomparable power of language and versification, made him a fearful enemy of traditionary prejudices.

Voltaire knew only one life, only one time, and only one kind of mental culture; only one class of men was worthy of his attention; but for this reason, he knew this class well, he was acquainted with their characters on all sides, and no man has better laid bare their defects than his incomparable head. It was only a mind like his which had the power to give the deathblow to the

prevailing hypocrisy and sophistry, to the silly unction and the mad scholastics of the Jesuits and Jansenists, and their jurists and theologians. We believe, therefore, that when his fellow-countrymen prefer his plays, such as 'Nanine,' 'l'Enfant Prodigé,' 'L'Écossaise,' to his comedies, it is because he is only in his element in those scenes in which the usual conversation of people of fashion is introduced, or in which moderated seriousness and intelligible feeling win readers and spectators. This indeed Voltaire himself would never acknowledge; he never perceived that the play or novel in dialogue was a child of the time which he praises so much; on the contrary, he always despised it, because he was not the first in this line of writing, or was not at least, as in tragedy, a giant among dwarfs.

By all those who value flowing versification and wit more than inspiration, by all those who had the same sort of views of mental culture and life as Voltaire, he would be ranked, as a dramatist, among the first poets; but he ought with much more reason to be ranked high as a didactic poet. As we are neither writing a history of literature, nor proposing to give an æsthetic examination of the works of the French poets, we think it better altogether to pass over his 'Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne,' as well as that 'Sur la Loi Naturelle,' and his 'Sept Discours sur l'Homme.' His element was the lighter kinds of poetry, and his fugitive verses, his sharp wit, his bold opinions, produced effects in his time, like flashes of lightning; for they illuminated at the same time the night of Jesuitical superstition, and struck and shivered to pieces the majestic towers and Gothic domes of the middle ages.

The so-called fugitive pieces alone, if he had written nothing else, would have been sufficient to secure Voltaire's immortality; for in these he is altogether in his sphere; he has only to think of the people whom he calls exclusively the world, and he can direct every spark of his genius to the production of instantaneous effect, delight his reader by his fancy, and surprise him by his wit.

As to his celebrated serious poem, which he and his fellow-countrymen regarded as an epic, the French writers and judges of taste in the nineteenth century appear to have declared themselves against this once generally praised 'Henriade.' A generation which calls for and admires romantic nonsense, has become unjust with respect to the great merit of this work, in

reference to toleration, enlightenment, and true religion; because in the giddiness of its retrogradation to the old, it has forgotten how it looked when the old still stood altogether fast. With them, indeed, we find it dry and cold, and we may add, that Voltaire could in no respect give that charm to his rhetorical work of art, whereby Virgil and Tasso reconcile us to the imitation of Homeric poetry, in times in which all sense for Homeric simplicity was wanting. We do not speak of the music of the language, of the inimitable ornament and euphony of the versification and rhythm, which are admired in the Italian and the Latin poets; we leave it to the æsthetic critic to determine what Voltaire has done in this respect for French ears—we speak only of materials.

In both those poets there is presented to our mind a definiteness of time and place, with which we have leisurely and prosaically become acquainted; or, in other words, particular times and places are pointed out and described: whereas in Voltaire all is generality, and his accounts and descriptions, with slight changes of names, might be easily adapted to any time or place whatsoever. Delille probably meant to say something of this kind in his epigrammatic and affectedly witty manner, when he alleged, that in this heroic poem, so full of war and chargers, not a single morsel of hay to feed the horses, or any water to give them drink is not to be met with.

The scandalous and ungodly narrative burlesque poem, the first part of which was put in circulation from Cirey, is much more distinguished in its way than this serious heroic. This poem ('The Maid of Orleans,') was secretly communicated to all his distinguished acquaintances in all parts of Europe, in reply to their earnest entreaties. This was at first done in single cantos, which afterwards underwent innumerable alterations, so that the latest editions in which all these varieties are collected, give us a complete idea of the kind of entertainment and wit which Voltaire's distinguished friends sought for and approved. The 'Maid of Orleans,' with all its indecency, and with all the ungodliness of an ungodly generation, is, and, alas! remains, a master-piece of delineation of the modes of thinking, and of the clever and audacious conversation of the circle for which it was intended. Peter Aretin, as is well known, wrote in the same strain in which 'The Maid of Orleans' is written, for popes, cardinals, princes and lords, for artists and the highly educated,

classical, learned Italian men of genius, and that in the time of the highest bloom of the arts and sciences, and of outward prosperity in Italy; and we do not venture to determine which of the two has come nearer to the summit of perfection in a department in which they both strove to excel.

The book has less importance as a poem, or as a comic narrative in verse, because it can be recommended to no modest person—to none who are unacquainted with the malicious wit and gross immoralities of the courts of those days—to read; but as a proof and evidence of the tone, of the life, of the mode of feeling of the European aristocracy, it is, on the other hand, of so much the greater value. It not only contains, brought together within its small compass, all that was, or could be thought of by the most audacious wit, or the most malicious wantonness, against religion and morality, against all which had been previously regarded as reverend or sacred in the eyes of the people, but personal and political lampoons upon authors, written in the spirit of revenge and with the greatest bitterness. King Louis, Pompadour, the first nobles of the empire and the best friends of the poet, are treated with the bitterest scorn, his enemies are described as people worthy of the galleys, and La Baumelle is described as having been actually subjected to this infamous punishment.

The manner in which the Christian religion itself—not merely dogmatics and priestcraft—is here treated, exhibits in its most disadvantageous light the philosophy of those fashionable circles for whom Voltaire wrote. In this case the lords and ladies of the saloons showed themselves wholly deficient in that worldly wisdom in which, on other occasions, the most stupid among them rarely fails. They never suspected how soon this new wisdom, which they regarded as the privileged property of their rank, would find its way among the populace whom they so heartily despised. It may be confidently asserted with respect to the ‘Maid of Orleans,’ that the effect of this poem upon the European world of fashion has been much more injurious and demoralizing, than the short-lived madness of the democrats of the French reign of terror. Voltaire himself became ashamed of the work in its original form; he pretended that it had been corrupted and falsified in the transcription, and presented a new and transformed edition in 1762, in which he omitted what appeared to him most dangerous. But as there yet remains in

this improved edition much, very much, that is shockingly immoral and utterly hostile to religion and to the commonest decencies of life, we may have some idea of the original form which it presented when it was secretly sent to courts and to distinguished lords and ladies for their perusal. In the numerous editions of Voltaire's works which have appeared in our nineteenth century, the old obscenities and different readings have been all carefully collected, every sally of wickedness or blasphemy has been given in an Appendix, so that the poem and its additions form a thick volume.

With reference to form and contents, his satires in prose and his novels stand in most immediate connexion with this narrative poem. The wanton poet first tried himself, but in vain, in the more serious satire of Horace and Persius; but in another species, in which success only depended upon wit, upon an observation of the superficialities of things, upon a just conception of the life and motives of the men of his age and of his acquaintance, he is quite in his sphere. Voltaire must have altogether gone beyond himself, in order to treat poetical satire, properly so called, with success, and that he had no power to do: in the prosaic, however, in which he made his enemies ridiculous, and in which he could speak in a tone that was natural to him, he always attained his object, although the reader often feels the deepest contempt for, and even indignation against the author. Among these satires, that which was directed against Maupertuis, the president of Frederick's Berlin Academy, and which is intitled 'Diatribes du Docteur Akakia,' is in several respects the most important, but especially because it caused an interruption of friendly relations, for a long time, between him and the king by whom he had been invited to Berlin, and compelled his return to France. On this occasion, as is well known, Voltaire poured out the stream of his satire upon Frederick and his father, Frederick William. Voltaire, however, lost so little by the strife, that he and the king were, not long afterwards, reconciled. The one as well as the other was under the influence of a ruling and scornful nature, and they could not therefore well live together. He called these satires upon king Frederick William and upon the king, memoirs of his life. Some manuscript letters of the poet, which Napoleon carried away from the Vienna archives, and which remained behind in the French archives when the other plundered articles were restored, furnish more

attractive accounts than those which he has given in his printed memoirs of his flight from Berlin in the middle of the year 1753, and of his anxiety of mind when he was seized and detained in Frankfort on the Main; these accounts are no doubt much truer than those which he thought it good to present to the public. We there learn with astonishment, that in his anxiety and fear, he applied by letter to Kaunitz and to the court of Vienna, in the most pitiful style of entreaty and supplication, and promised to make discoveries, which Frederick might despise, as they were despised in Vienna*.

Voltaire's novels are without importance as poetical inventions; as peculiar conceptions of daily life in certain relations of the present and the past forced into arbitrary connexion, or even as love stories, they are for the most part merely cast after some English original, because he did not wish to invent, but only to arrive at a certain object; in another point of view, however, they are incomparable. The chief aim of each one of Voltaire's small novels is, the overthrow and refutation of some ruling opinion, and this object is admirably attained by the story itself, and by weaving in sarcasms, because this rendered all reply and refutation impossible. Seriousness could never have reached the readers of these novels, or would immediately weary them; and every attempt to rival Voltaire, in a strain of pleasantry and satire, would have been a folly. These novels contained their chief charm for the great public, like the 'Maid of Orleans,' partly in their wanton scenes and narratives, and partly in the boldness of their attacks upon the pulpit instructions and doctrines of the time. Because these novels are to be regarded in some measure as the nucleus of that wisdom which the rich and the exalted, as well as the high clergy, living upon endowments and tithes, regarded as their peculiar property and privilege, whilst they strove with fire and sword to preserve

* A literal copy of these autograph letters (probably not yet published), which the author took from the documents in the French archives in the year 1834, is at the service of any one who wishes to use it. The letters there lie in Carton, K. 151, and it is said of them in the register of the archives;—"Ces papiers proviennent des archives de l'empire d'Autriche, et ils faisaient partie de ces archives, qui ont été déposés dans celles de l'empire Français en 1810, au mois d'Avril." This remark is prefixed to the papers,—“Neuf pièces à ne plus rendre, comme appartenant à un Français.” The first piece is a naked and true relation of the story, and a sketch of a letter of Voltaire's about his adventures in Frankfort. Then follows a letter in his own hand. The earliest, of the date of the 7th June 1753, from Frankfort.

among the people the old doctrines and forms, which had long lost their value, and believed it possible, either to deceive the world by hypocrisy, or to constrain them by police, we must necessarily dwell somewhat longer upon the subject. These novels are too important for our object, that of representing the connexion of the greatest genius and most popular writer with the revolution of modes of thought, doctrines and institutions, which took place in one part of Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, to allow us to proceed without mentioning some of them, and pointing out their relation to the ruling principles of the time.

In 'Zadig' the writer shows palpably and obviously how entirely devoid of reason and taste the usual moral and edifying considerations upon the way of Providence, upon a God who thinks, counsels, acts, and conducts the affairs of the world as a man, must appear to the bold scoffer. Voltaire, we would say, confined and limited the doctrine of an immediate guidance of human affairs by the hand of Divine Providence, wholly to the church and to the faith of the people; he rooted it out of higher life and out of science by means of his dreadful ridicule. By his narratives he made that obvious, which indeed is easily made palpable enough, because it is undeniable, that the theory of a palpable guidance of human affairs by an ever-manifesting interposing Providence, may be just as easily refuted as proved by history and experience. 'Candide' is an indecent and sorrowful picture of human life, sportively represented as a caricature, with wanton humour, and also at the same time with dreadful malice, in order to expose to ridicule the singular presumption of those philosophers, who not only wished to determine and establish definitively what is necessary, or eternal and fixed laws in real things, but also to define the unlimited field of possibility. Voltaire holds up to scorn those who, in their chairs or at their writing-desks, consider the whole incalculable number of worlds in the universe as candles and lamps set up on their behalf; he scoffs at those who refer every thing to man, as to a central point of the whole creation, and who oracularly announce that it would not have been possible for God to have made a world, in which their demi-god, who often resembles the ape, and oftener the tiger, could have been happier than he is in the present.

'Memnon' contains the proper wisdom of life of the so-called

good society, whose members, like Voltaire, call themselves, with a conscious greatness, exclusively men of the world, or in a word, of the classes of whom Voltaire was at that time the prophet, and among whom he is now called the ambassador of Belial, because from fear and anxiety they wish to restore piety or its substitute. The bitter satire of 'Memnon,' however, may be also very profitable to the truly wise, and warn them of the folly of propounding that to fashionable company, which they esteem as true wisdom. In 'Memnon' is shown, in an admirable manner, how the multitude are enamoured of their prudence, and laugh at nature and its feelings—the inspiration and zeal of martyrs for the truth. Voltaire proves, beyond the possibility of refutation, that the greatest philosopher, as soon as he mixes among the society of the great world, in the best view of the case must be regarded as an oddity, but will generally be considered as a fool, if he does not possess that polite coldness which our age has admired in Göthe more than all his really great qualities. In this novel, Voltaire, as a good and clever man of the world, amuses those who are of his own way of thinking, by ridiculing the man who is Rousseau's ideal of perfection. The wise man of the Genevese philosopher alleges, as is well known, that it is a duty, and what is much stronger, that it is possible, in all the relations of this involved, and often perverted and unnatural social life, to follow the principles of reason alone and its laws; and it was therefore by no means difficult to exhibit him for the amusement of fashionable, and of very vulgar society, as a fool who was only fit for Bedlam. We pass over 'Les Voyages du Scarmantado,' 'Les Visions de Babouc,' 'Micromegas,' &c. In the 'Ingénu,' there is no chief leading notion, but the witty man yields himself up wholly to his humour and to accident, and brings forth a rich abundance of wit and flashes of genius with respect to the most various subjects.

Voltaire was not in a condition to treat philosophy or history as a science; for his notion of science was that which was traditional in the great world, and besides, his soul was destitute of all those feelings by which history may be made an instructress of mankind. What is history better than a novel or learned trash, if it be without earnestness and industry, and steadiness and repose, depth, esteem for eternal truth, holy

confidence and belief in the nobleness of the soul in the midst of all the demoralization of the civilized world? All this was a subject of scorn and ridicule to Voltaire; he was nevertheless profitable both to history and philosophy, in a way peculiar to himself. In history and for its study, Voltaire was peculiarly important, and did more than a hundred mere collectors could effect, although the men of the department are very unwilling to acknowledge him as a fellow-labourer.

If any one wishes to see and understand all that Voltaire has done for history, although he has been blamed and abused on all sides on account of his boldness and want of truth, he must remember that he came forward at a time when the whole nature of history had been altogether forgotten, and when all true knowledge had been smothered by learning. And it was only a man of Voltaire's wit and talents, who could throw the light of an entirely new criticism upon the darkness of those grubbing and collecting pedants; who could vindicate the rights of a sound understanding against the authors of immense extracts and compilations, against the genealogical writers of quartos and folios; and who could show that industry and memory are not to be regarded as the only qualifications of a historian. Voltaire showed, in a manner which even astonished the pedants themselves, how thoughtlessly one writer always imitated the greatest absurdities, and copied the grossest errors of another; and how absurd it is to wish to get an acquaintance with life, the histories of men and the true relations of things, from records and diplomas, from medals and pedagogues, from decrees and official histories. It was Voltaire who procured a general recognition of the principles which had been propounded by Bolingbroke with respect to history, its proper advantages and use. History properly so-called, no one will seek for in Voltaire; he deals with facts as with men, but he teaches, at the same time, how facts should be treated, in order that the life of the present time may be enlightened and profited by the knowledge of the past, and in order that at least the truth of history may assist the poor and the oppressed against the rich and the powerful. He himself, alas! was a sophist, and used history also sophistically, to forward his own objects and those of his school, to please the vanity of men whose favour he purchased at any price, and whose commendation was more valu-

able in his eyes than that great and good consciousness which consoles and supports the friends of truth, under the abuse of sophistical liars.

Every historical work which was the production of Voltaire's pen, had a calculated object; and whoever is acquainted with this object, and also does not seek for the usual historical fidelity and accuracy, may read his works with great profit, and in his history a practical guide will be found to his method of applying his mode of thinking and judging to all times, persons and events. By his method of treating history, he brought his notions among the people through the whole of Europe, and compelled even those who regarded him as an atheist and scoffer to read his works; because he was the only man, for a long course of years, who understood how to treat history in an easy, clever and entertaining manner. It will of course be obvious, that as soon as other historians appeared, who, with criticism and taste, wrote historical works which were readable and useful, Voltaire was no longer sought after.

In this department, also, we shall dwell for a little on some of his works, and pass over others altogether, because it is not our design either to give a catalogue of his writings or a complete criticism upon them. We therefore pass over his *Charles the Twelfth* and *Peter the Great*, which are little better than novels, and his '*History of the Parliament of Paris*,' which had little, if any, influence. His '*Annals of the German Empire*' best prove to what a condition our history had been reduced, and how very little the few clever princes and princesses of our nation thought of their countrymen. These annals, for example, were written at the request of a German princess, who therefore expected a history of her native country from a man who might be looked upon as the representative of every thing that was French. As such he was better suited than any other man to be the historian of the time of *Louis the Fourteenth*, and his work upon this time of splendour, which may be regarded as the source of unspeakable misery, is the only one among his historical works, from which anything can be borrowed with a proper regard for facts and historical observations. It is considered by the French as one of their most distinguished historical works. His '*History of Louis the Fourteenth*' shows how much history may be abused, and how dangerous genius, wit, talents and skill may become in the treatment of given

materials, when they are applied to history, by a man without moral earnestness, who is merely hunting after favour and applause.

We are quite ready moreover to admit, with regard to all the histories just mentioned, that their influence was limited to furnishing a species of passing agreeable entertainment, by means of history, to the fashionable and common world of men, who abhor all effort and trouble of thinking about what they read. It was however very different with his 'Essai sur les Mœurs et sur l'Esprit des Nations.' We reckon this work one of the most important productions in historical literature in the eighteenth century, not only because it is the first philosophical universal history, for it was published by a Dutch bookseller in 1754, under the title 'Abrégé de l'Histoire Universelle, par Voltaire,' but for quite different reasons. This book exhibits the whole of history in the light of the worldly philosophy of the eighteenth century, in striking contrast with the universal history of Bossuet and other pious rhetoricians of the seventeenth. Voltaire commences his history at the very point at which Bossuet had ceased, and considers the whole from precisely the opposite point of view.

Voltaire and Bossuet were both masters of language and of style, and at the time when Voltaire wrote his work, Bossuet's was regarded in the whole of Europe as a master-piece. Bossuet had commenced his history with the Jewish faith, and brought it to a conclusion with the Christian, and referred every thing to this faith alone; Voltaire, on the contrary, commences with philosophic scepticism, and employs every thing for the confirmation of these doubts and of distrust in poetry of all kinds, derived from his knowledge of mankind; he would admit no poetry to intrude as an authority into the prose of social life. Bossuet, by rhetorically praising Providence, and referring every thing in the world to the Christian religion, not only does injustice to the Egyptians and Greeks and their primitive wisdom, but also to Buddhism and Brahminism, which are older than Judaism, and reckon a much greater number of adherents, as well as to the claims of Mahomed, who drew his followers from the very midst of Christendom, and whose religion is now as powerful in the South and East, as Christianity is in the North and West; and he wholly forgets that he has no longer to do with a public to whom the fathers of the church and such

like scholastics, might speak with confidence. Voltaire, whose keen glance no weak points of his adversary ever escaped, understood admirably how to avail himself of such weakness; he tries therefore, like Machiavell, to fix all the misfortunes of the middle ages upon the Christian religion, and upon the crimes and follies of Christian ecclesiastics. Bossuet, as a bishop, considers all that men have done and suffered, as the consequences of original sin, and regards the whole course of history as the way of grace, and altogether independent of human wisdom or folly, because the Godhead uses both for the promotion of the final objects of the church. Voltaire, as a man of the world, deduces every thing from accidental causes, or from the reasonable or unreasonable conduct and actions of men; when therefore the writings of these two able men, on the course of Providence, are compared, both sides of the question are fully before the mind; because, when life has been considered and properly understood, both have a foundation of truth.

Bossuet is everywhere and always an ecclesiastic; Voltaire always a witling, and enemy of every thing serious. Bossuet continually betrays his ecclesiastical prejudices and views; Voltaire unceasingly exhibits his bitterness against a church which treated him as an enemy. He never appears free from the prepossessions of the society in which he had lived from his youth; he is indeed altogether exempt from the prejudices of his age; but for that reason also, he passes judgement upon every other age, in the sober discretion of his own. One of the most accurate and industrious German 'Instructors in History,' Schlözer, therefore thankfully acknowledged how very much he and all others like him, who had been accustomed to estimate external greatness alone, to call Miltiades a mere village bailiff when compared with Attila and Zinghis Khan, and Athens a little nest, must ever remain indebted to Voltaire: others of us are indebted to him; because by his biting satire he restrained within some moderate limits, the absurd conduct of collectors, compilers and folio-makers.

The last-mentioned has been unquestionably the most striking and important effect of Voltaire's 'Universal History.' He brought such thoughtless collectors to see how absurd and insipid their chronicles must appear to a man of the world; and that if they would write for the public, and not merely for the learned, they must draw up their histories in a manner suitable

to the notions of the time. The historian therefore who attends to Voltaire's hints, will be obliged to subject those narratives, which ecclesiastics and the people piously believe—which scholars faithfully transcribe and present as a true copy of what is found in the sources from which they draw, to quite a different kind of criticism, in order to protect his history against the scorn and satire of the men of the world. It was only a man like Voltaire, who durst venture to light the way for all future historians, with the torch of bold criticism, and with a sound, vigorous and unbiassed judgement. The more one-sided he shows himself to be, the more readily we become aware when he is too vehement and too cutting; when his enmity to Christianity, which he never conceals, makes him deaf to the counsel of that same sound understanding, which he so eagerly and zealously protects against the fancies of the learned.

His philosophical works may be compared with his historical, in as far as they enlighten the system of the schools with the light of a sound understanding, and protect the common worldly prudence of those who wish to enjoy life, against the proud wisdom of great thinkers. Voltaire, as a philosopher, with the wantonness of the world, defends the theory of a comfortable life, of the combination of the enjoyments of sense and of the mind—of society and of common pleasures. It would be quite superfluous here, to go through his philosophical writings according to their contents, since we only wish to make our readers observant of the extension and the influence which the renown and distinction of the author procured for them; we shall, on the contrary, point out their tendency. All his philosophical writings are either directed against Christianity, or against those thinkers who, like Mallebranche and Pascal, wished to use philosophy and its necessary antinomy, or the dialectic proof of the uncertainty of every philosophical allegation, as a means of establishing the necessity of a Divine revelation; or their contents are purely sceptical.

Voltaire's philosophical writings, scientifically considered, are by far less important than his historical, as he has not even once drawn his knowledge of the philosophy which he pretends to contend against, from its sources, or ever studied Plato, to say nothing of Aristotle. The greatest part of these writings make no claim to instruct the philosophers of the schools; because Voltaire's liveliness of mind and character did not permit

him to study and to treat any subject consecutively and systematically. He always writes in the manner of conversation; by snatches, positively and scoffingly. We would therefore place the whole value of these writings, as a means of freeing mankind from the chains of the middle ages, in this, that the common mass of men are instructed by the keen and penetrating glance of a great and able man, gained by his experience in life; and by this we are taught to know, that amongst the crops harvested by the learned and the philosophic, there is as much chaff as corn.

It is no part of our business to prove here, where we only speak of facts, that this last-mentioned effect cannot take place, without the greatest danger to the morals and seriousness of a whole nation—that Voltaire's sceptical and scoffing views of and into things, although suited to the higher classes universally and in all times, as soon as they make their way beyond the circle of the saloons and of books; and penetrate the proper mass of the people, become a fearful pest, and poison the elements of life. Voltaire was of a very different opinion; and in order to bring his philosophical thoughts as much as possible into every body's hands, he had recourse to a means which served him more effectually than a magazine or a newspaper could have done. He brought his philosophical thoughts into the form of a dictionary, which he afterwards caused to be printed under the title 'Raison;' at a later period however, he added other essays of the same species, under the title 'Questions sur l'Encyclopédie.' Both these books were afterwards combined with the articles which he had written for the great Encyclopedia, and united into one work. This work, under the title of 'Dictionnaire Philosophique,' contains in alphabetical order, his thoughts upon philosophical subjects; all his suppositions and theories in this way are made accessible to every one. The titles of his other works are 'Philosophie de l'Histoire,' 'Bible commentée,' 'Examen important de Milord Bolingbroke,' 'Histoire de l'Établissement du Christianisme;' and these titles of themselves show that the works are merely productions of his hostility to Christianity.

§ III.

MONTESQUIEU, AS AUTHOR OF THE 'SPIRIT OF LAWS.'

We have not spoken of Montesquieu's chief work in the preceding period, partly because in order of time it falls within the present, and partly because it was calculated for a different public, and was written quite in a different style from the 'Persian Letters,' and produced a very different effect. The effect of the 'Spirit of Laws' was so much the greater, in proportion as the author appeared neither with boldness nor satire. He drew the learned to his side, and convinced the ladies and people of the world, that they had only to run through his short chapters, his easy paragraphs, and entertaining volumes, in order to gain a solid acquaintance with history and philosophy, legislation and politics, constitutional theories and financial science. On the appearance of the 'Spirit of Laws,' legislation and the theory of constitutions became subjects of daily conversation in the Parisian saloons, and the old constitutions of the continent lost their ancient splendour in the fashionable circles, because military monarchy had not been more favourably treated in the 'Spirit of Laws' than in the 'Persian Letters,' although quite in a different manner, a different tone, and a different language. The question here can have nothing to do with scoffing or satire, although solid earnestness is kept as far away as possible, in order that the book might be read like a novel. The Church occupies a tolerable position in the new structure which Montesquieu built up, in opposition to the old; and the fashionable and clever world, and the ladies could have nothing but gain by the introduction of an English aristocracy, by which the saloons and the sophists of the society obtained political influence, whilst the exclusive circle, and at the same time the barons maintained their importance. An Anglo-mania immediately began to prevail, and the English, and especially Montesquieu's intimate friends, were first obliged to make a great noise, before the work excited so much attention in France as to awaken the envy of Voltaire.

The English, with whom Montesquieu stood in close union, felt their national pride flattered in an uncommon degree, and received the work, immediately on its publication, with the greatest applause. The French, on the other hand, at first re-

garded it as a kind of satire upon their existing constitution and government, and felt their national pride wounded. For very obvious reasons it altogether passed by Frederick the Second. Tencin, Geoffrin, Deffant, and their aristocratic circle, as well as De Staël, Segür, Narbonne and others, at a later period, were obliged to recognise in the 'Spirit of Laws' an announcement of the exclusive dominion of a certain kind of mental culture; the work therefore became the gospel of political economy. Because we are neither writing the history of politics nor of political economy, we cannot go into a full or a minute examination of the contents of this work; we must, however, take notice of those points which appear to us particularly important, because the book has been more influential than any other, in relation to the forms of administration which have been here and there introduced in our century, and the views which, since its appearance, have been taken of the nature of a state. This holds good, not only of France, and of the states which have been reformed according to its model, but also of those which have been governed, at least in form, as absolute monarchies; for in these also there has been a desire to gain over public opinion, by falling in with the representations which were given in this very extensively circulated work.

Before we proceed to notice the contents of the book, and to refer to those points which appear to us of special importance, we must necessarily mention some outward circumstances, which perhaps are not present to the minds of all our readers. First, it should be known, that the work appeared as early as 1749; but that the new edition, or more properly, the newly prepared work, which was printed nine years afterwards, is to be regarded as the proper work. Further, it appears from the printed friendly correspondence of Montesquieu, that all moderate men, that all those who were animated with a noble zeal for the improvement of the miserable condition of their native land, that all those who were peacefully and quietly labouring in favour of true science, English, French, and even Italians, all important men who were thoroughly acquainted with those branches of history and of political economy, and of which Montesquieu had only acquired a hasty and superficial knowledge, assisted and supported him in his new edition, and suggested to him alterations and improvements. The 'Spirit of Laws,' therefore, may be in some measure regarded as the con-

tents or as the result of all the labours of the noble friends of moderate freedom, who wished for a change of the prevailing police and government regulations, without being merely negative and destructive, like Voltaire and his school, or desiring to depart altogether from what was historical and real, like Rousseau and his followers.

In this way Montesquieu became an historical and political oracle; the best among the so-called philosophers swore allegiance to his cause, and by means of their known dialectics, applied his propositions to the promotion of their ends. Voltaire tried in vain to injure the work by ridicule and satire, and even a renowned academician of the old school summoned up in vain the learning acquired in the schools and universities, the history and knowledge of the ancient languages ruling in the academy. As to Voltaire, it is ridiculous enough, that a man who projected his own historical works with so little attention to truth, who laughed at every man who accused him of gross errors,—should complain of Montesquieu's superficiality. At any other time, Crevier, who was on this occasion the champion of the schools, would have been a fearful opponent of Montesquieu. He was deeply versed in the ancient languages; he possessed all that sound knowledge of history of which Montesquieu was destitute, who was only well-read in voyages and travels: but the time was in favour of Montesquieu; it was far better disposed to listen to the announcer of a new and freer knowledge of life, than to the defenders of the ancient wisdom of the schools, to whom Crevier attached himself.

Crevier was not known indeed as a philosopher and thinker, but as a man of solid learning, and had gained great and deserved reputation by his learned historical collections. He felt unwilling and dissatisfied that wit, keenness of perception, and eloquence, by means of Montesquieu, should triumph over solid learning, and he therefore wrote, in 1764, his remarks upon the 'Spirit of Laws.' In most points he was indisputably right; but Montesquieu had secured the public voice, and the judgement of the learned never reached, and could not reach, his public. He accused the fashionable writer, and not without good reason, of vanity, of a love of phrase-making, and of deficiency in solid knowledge and laborious studies; but he wished, at the same time, to throw his protecting shield over a condition of the constitution, and of social order, which had become altogether anti-

quoted; he wished to defend, and deliver from the hands of the spoiler, forms of religion and of worship, which could neither be defended nor saved: this learning of the schools was struck dumb before the voice of the world.

Because the new school afterwards represented the 'Spirit of Laws'—by means of D'Alembert's well-known cunning analysis of its contents,—as favourable to their objects, and in unison with their principles, we shall adopt this analysis as the guiding thread of our remarks, in order to show clearly, what notions of the nature and constitution of states became prevailing, in consequence of the incredibly extensive circulation of this work among the tone-giving classes, notions which were wholly inconsistent with the system of government in France, and in all the countries of the continent. Montesquieu no more recognises a state of innocence, a theocracy, an original, and in some measure a revealed constitution, established by laws written by the finger of God, than Rousseau does; but like the latter, he has no dreams about a holy condition of animal life, which he calls original purity. Montesquieu assumes as his foundation, a universal condition of war caused by the operation of human passions, and shows that the necessity of social union and compact was thus made evident, and hence government had its origin. This compact, according to him, is extremely different among different races, and hence it follows, that as the races and families of the human race are innumerable, so are constitutions also; Montesquieu, however, distinguishes especially only three fundamental forms, which are never met with altogether pure, but rather in the most singular and manifold intermixtures.

As we shall enter more minutely into the 'Spirit of Laws,' in the history of the next period, we do not dwell at present on the definitions of those three fundamental forms—a Republic, Constitutional Monarchy, and Despotism; but only point out in what way they are here presented to the reading public. The republican form is represented as splendid and brilliant, unattainable and ideal; its principle, pure virtue, and its characteristic, the love of perfect equality. Constitutional monarchy is represented as the last refuge of our European races as they are and may become, because they are deficient in that virtue which Montesquieu good-naturedly ascribes to certain ancient republics; the principle and foundation of this form of government is, according to him,—honour. Despotism, on the other

hand, which, according to Montesquieu's express declaration, is that which prevails in most of the absolute monarchical and military states of the continent, is represented as the pest of mankind, as the abyss of morality, and its principle—fear.

We cannot allow this opportunity to pass, without touching shortly upon the object of the analysis of the works of which we treat in this division, and showing that the public of the eighteenth century made it very easy for the author of the 'Spirit of Laws,' and for the most of those who followed him, historically to trace the proof of the relation of these three constitutional forms to their fundamental elements. This has been done by means of individual examples, violently separated from their connexion, and rhetorically applied—examples which often have no historically critical foundation, and which if they had are still destitute of all value as evidence, when separated from their connecting circumstances and events. He, moreover, lays great stress upon the assertion, that every constitution in which the three powers—the legislative, the administrative, and the judicial—are not strictly separated, must necessarily degenerate into a despotism, and he very cunningly avails himself of this allegation, to cast the severest censure upon the system of the continental monarchies, whilst he only appears to be praising the English constitution. He first directs attention to law and its administration, and it will be seen, on the first glance, that his praise of the English institutions is so bestowed, and conceived in such a spirit, that every trait conveys a reproach upon the nature and practice of the institutions in France. The cruel and horrible judicial conduct of the parliament towards the Calvinists, and towards all those who could not unite with the majority in their principles of faith, is blamed with the greatest severity. "Offences against religion," says the author, "should only be punished by the exclusion of the offender from all participation in those advantages which are or may be connected with the confession of a particular faith. Offences against morality should only be punished by the disgrace which attaches to the offence itself," &c.—"Writings," he continues, "should be prosecuted with less legal severity than actions—thoughts, never." A single proposition from amongst the number of those oracularly conceived and impressed upon the memory of his contemporaries, condemns the whole system of police, of criminal jurisdiction, and of government. The sentence runs thus:—

“Extra-judicial accusations, espionage, and anonymous letters, are means of governing, which tyrants alone employ ; they are as disgraceful to the people who use them, as to those who are made the tools of their tyranny ; they ought and must be wholly banished from every good monarchical state.”

The continental system of taxation fares no better than its system of government, and a point is here immediately raised which was of great importance for France, not only with respect to administration, but also in reference to life and morals ; he declares himself to be vehemently opposed to the whole system of general farming, and to the influence and distinction which attached to the person and office of a farmer-general. Montesquieu first lays down the principle, that heavy taxes are least enduring in a monarchy ; and that in a democracy the taxes may be more oppressive, because every citizen considers what he pays as an impost for his advantage, and paid to himself ; and farther, because it is easier, in a government in which all take part, to watch over the faithful and equitable expenditure of the public money. He then speaks of the taxes exacted in a monarchy. “Customs,” he observes, “are the best kind of taxes for a monarchy, and their immediate collection is by far preferable to the mode of farming ; but the total and manifest destruction of a monarchy is near at hand, when the place of a tax-gatherer becomes one of extraordinary honour (this was so in France), which will infallibly be the case as soon as luxury increases, and becomes generally prevailing.” On this occasion also he pronounces his opinion about that necessary evil of his native country, and of all absolute monarchies—a standing army. “A very numerous standing army,” he observes, “is a pretence for immoderate taxation ; a means of emasculating the state, and of enslaving the people.”

He takes his stand upon experience, in opposition to the ecclesiastical severity of the Christians and Mahomedans of his age, in opposition even to the principles of Mahomedanism and of the Christian middle ages, of founding certain fixed forms of states and laws upon a definite revealed faith, or what is presumed to be such, and of suffering only a regulated species of morality. He shows that different places and relations demanded different kinds of government and morals. He appeals to the different conditions of customs and laws resulting from climate, to the accident of the determination of what may or may not

be permitted or allowed under the most different circumstances : and here differences of soil, of natural temper and constitution of various races of men, are brought under consideration, and the whole expressly applied to France, and it is shown, that all the changes which have taken place in that country, will be seen to have reference to, and in some measure to have been influenced by, the hints given by Montesquieu. Among these hints may be particularly mentioned, what he cleverly says of the then relations of the nobility and citizens:—"That vanity, which makes things greater than they really are, is a good lever for a monarchical government; that pride, on the other hand, which despises them, is a very dangerous one." In his chief piece, in which he declares himself against Constantine's laws in favour of celibacy, and recommends an unconditional increase of population, he is the forerunner of the school of political economists; because he brings into connexion with this chapter upon the favourite theme of the eighteenth century,—the artificial increase of population—others upon trade and industry, upon money, exchanges, national debt and rents.

Christianity is here presented altogether in another point of view from that in which it had been presented in the 'Persian Letters;' and for this very reason, the 'Spirit of Laws' was more destructive to the universally reigning abuses in the Church, than the scorn and ridicule of the 'Letters.' In his 'Spirit of Laws,' Montesquieu recognises the political importance of Christianity, as Rousseau does its moral value; the zeal of both therefore against superstition and the hierarchy was far more an object of dread to those who had an interest in ecclesiastical abuses, than the abuse of Voltaire, which could only be acceptable to those who were already apostates, or were about to become so. Montesquieu apparently attaches himself to the English, who, as is well known, have not allowed themselves to be led away by their blind attachment to ecclesiastical policy, who constantly cause manuals to be published, in which what they mechanically and traditionally believe is philosophically proved, and for whom their Bucklands accommodate geology to the books of Moses. Montesquieu expresses himself as opposed to Bayle's malicious proposition, that a state composed merely of true Christians would be an impossibility; but he deviates also from the mechanical religion of the English; his polemics here against the existing order of things are as fine

as his conversation was. In order that it may be seen how irrational the theologians of all countries were, how obstinately they persevered in teaching in the spirit of the sixteenth century, we shall more exactly point out and explain the contents of the twenty-fourth book of the 'Spirit of Laws.'

The book commences with a short general observation upon religion in general, and then introduces that preservative which in the Catholic church is a protection against the indignation of the clergy, and which the Protestant, who does not agree in opinion with the theologians of his church, can get rid of by no spell. He says, namely, that "he speaks of religion only in a political, not in a theological sense, and that therefore, humanly speaking and thinking, many things may be true which may appear erroneous when they are brought into combination or comparison with higher truth." After having rejected Bayle's proposition, as we have already stated, he gives a turn to his remarks, the bitter meaning of which we shall not bring conspicuously forward. He shows that, as a state religion, Mahomedanism was better fitted for despotic governments than Christianity for a limited monarchy. Religion should never give commands, but only counsel, and must never be at issue with morality. He takes his examples, indeed, from Pegu; but every body readily perceives that the religion of Pegu was not intended.

The eleventh chapter, which is short, bears upon the prevailing monachism of his church, although he wisely introduces only Mahomedans, the old and the new Persians, as a vehicle for his zeal against a contemplative life. The propositions upon repentance and penance, however, are openly applied to the church. "The idea of labour," he says, "must always be connected with that of penance, if this is to be salutary, and not that of idleness; the supposition of something saving, and not merely extraordinary; thoughts of moderation and humility, and not of avarice." With this is connected what is very obscurely and indefinitely said afterwards against ecclesiastical absolutions and repeated forgiveness of gross sins. In order to point out to his contemporaries how the operation of bad religious opinions upon the morals and actions of the people may be prevented without making a direct assault upon religion, how religious opinions which are altogether false, and also sound ones, may be used in order to correct deficient constitutions or

remedy unsuitable laws, he afterwards adduces a variety of examples and illustrations, which are intentionally borrowed from the most distant countries.

Montesquieu gives it here distinctly to be understood, that he is not speaking about religion, but only about the opinions of the people, since he treats the most unreasonable of these opinions much in the same way as he does the Christian, so that to judge according to what he brings forward in the nineteenth and following chapters, and according to the keenness of his expressions, it might be almost believed that he was indeed not quite in earnest in his reverence for the Christian religion. He alleges that "in civil society, and as far as regards civil society, it is of very small consequence, whether the opinions of the people be true or false, that injury and benefit to society result altogether from the good or bad use which is made of their principles of belief." In this way he very cautiously and prudently attacks and contends against the theory of a state religion, and assails the intolerance of his contemporaries and their abuses of the numerous holidays, whilst he pretends always to be speaking of Mahomedans, Indians and Mexicans. The words in which it is impossible to mistake a reference to the Christian religion, run as follows in the twenty-third chapter:—"The adherents of that religion which forbids work on certain days, ought to remember that it is quite a perversion to think more of the greatness of the Being whom people wish to honour, than to regard the claims and necessities of men." We pass over the chapters upon the locality of religion, upon the clergy and their worldly possessions, upon the pontificate and papal influence, as well as those upon the inquisition; because we think it sufficient to have shown the relation and tendencies of this work, which for thirty years after its appearance was regarded as a general manual of political and of worldly wisdom.

It appears in addition, that the immediate effect of the 'Spirit of Laws' in Germany and in France was proportionally insignificant. In both countries it was too much the custom to despise the people, and to regard it as an offence for men who were not officials, to trouble themselves about state affairs, or even to think about constitutions and freedom. In France the people was most embittered against the aristocracy, and in the first burst of the revolution a mighty party fell, because they insisted upon Montesquieu's principles; at a later

period he was used as an ally against the democracy. When the feudal nobility at length perceived that they were lost beyond all deliverance, Montesquieu became the anchor and oracle of the new baronial order about to be formed in France, and of the former nobles of the empire in Germany; and when they condescended to reason or write books, both quoted the 'Spirit of Laws' as if it were the Bible.

In England a foreign book has rarely worked more strongly upon the nature of the state, the theory of the constitution, and even upon legislation, than Montesquieu's work. The case of Gibbon shows most distinctly the influence which it had in England upon the treatment and application of history. Moreover, Montesquieu's book, interspersed with passages from travels, with single facts and anecdotes, written in a style as entertaining and as easy as a novel, brought the new science of speculation upon government and laws into life and daily conversation, and even those who took no interest in the affairs of mankind were obliged to enter into this fashionable conversation. The effect which this produced in France may be learned from Segür's memoirs, in which he entertains us with accounts of himself and of other noble officers, who, verily, were no philosophers.

§ IV.

ROUSSEAU, HIS MORALS AND SENTIMENTALITY.

Although Diderot, D'Alembert, Holbach, and Helvetius, to whom we shall afterwards refer, in a time in which more was thought of pulling down what was old, and preaching up the enjoyment of life, than of erecting a new moral structure, may have found a more ready hearing than Montesquieu and Rousseau (who required an impossible amount of virtue from a demoralized and self-seeking generation), we think ourselves obliged to speak first of the last-mentioned. The time of which we are now speaking, was a time of passion, of movement, of transition; in such times passion alone finds adherents, every one who attempts mediation makes shipwreck, the extremes alone form parties, and whoever takes a middle course or remains neutral, falls to the ground. This explains the reason why Rousseau, who started with an admiration of Voltaire and

his school, who was brought into notice by Diderot and his friends, and introduced into the tone-giving society of Paris, was, nevertheless, afterwards bitterly treated by both, and cruelly persecuted with irony and scorn.

As Rousseau's autobiography belongs to that part of his works which is most generally read, we may take for granted that our readers are acquainted with it, and thereby the difficult task will be greatly facilitated, of pointing out his relation to his time and to its mental culture; we may therefore immediately pass over the greater part of his mere outward history, or of his circumstances in life, and shall only touch lightly upon a few points. Besides, we shall by no means go through the works of this most fruitful writer, but merely refer to a few of them, and deduce what may either readily be more fully and accurately deduced from the remainder, or, if erroneous, be easily refuted by them.

In order to arrive at a correct judgement with respect to Rousseau's relation to his time, and his tendencies, which were so different from those of the most renowned Parisian scholars and sophists, all thoughts and reference to his private character, which his opponents maliciously enough always brought conspicuously forward, must be laid aside, and this alone must be borne in mind, that he was born in Geneva, received his first education in a Protestant republic, in which at that time, morality, domestic happiness, and a life according to nature and in nature, was maintained by means of custom, strict religious education, simple social order, and by remoteness from that luxury which accompanies great wealth. The recollections of early virtue, which are the stronger in every man's mind, the stronger the contrast is, which the impressions of later life, be they good or evil, form with those of earlier years,—these recollections must have made so much the stronger impression upon Rousseau, and so much the more affected his character, because even the peculiar kind of vanity, of which he was so often accused, and the tendency which became natural to him after the time of his first prize-essay, made it impossible for him to keep pace with the parasites and talkers of the great world, of whom the greatest number of the so-called philosophers of genius at that time consisted.

As to the effect of these recollections upon his writings:—In a mind constituted like his, this early life had become an ideal

perfection, which perfectly corresponded with the singular idea of human happiness and of human destiny, which he attempted to defend, and sought to represent in the most splendid colours. With respect to Parisian life, his disinclination towards its splendid society, and the charms which nevertheless this society had for him, there were many reasons which restrained him from listening to the voice of the siren song, which is far more alluring to educated men than rude and sensual enjoyment. The Genevese republican had at first no position in the Parisian circle, no profitable literary activity, as Diderot and Marmontel had, to induce him to demean himself with servility among the rich; and he was too independent, had too much noble pride, and, if you will, too much vanity, to become a merely tolerated spunger, who pays his score with wit, conversation and talents. For this reason Rousseau avoided a rock on which the noblest minds have made shipwreck, and became acquainted with the so-called high life, with the fashionable world of distinguished men, without becoming a man of the world. He was thus in a condition to sketch with fidelity the dark side of that life which De Staël and Segür, and innumerable others, have described as so enchanting; for this purpose he must indeed employ, as was unavoidable, colours of the darker hues. The stirring intellectual life of rich and noble loungers, united with all the most refined sensual indulgences which riches can procure, had the same effect upon all those who elevated this life and its enjoyments to a system of *vertu*, which the Circean draught had upon the companions of Ulysses, the one only changed them into a different species of animals from the other. Rousseau escaped the effect of the enchanting facility of being able to move with ease in this, which is called by some an intellectual, by others an aristocratical exclusive society, as well as the excitement and torture which beset those who have important affairs to manage; but he was endured among men of both these kinds: he therefore saw the impulses and motives of the creators of our new, clever, but by no means moral world; and this gives him and his testimony the greatest importance for our history and views of life.

We shall premise one or two remarks upon his outward relations in Paris, and to the Parisian literati; and then select and refer to half a dozen of the eighty-four works and treatises which he published from 1734 till 1778. In reference to the

direction of his talents and his repugnance to those who had either received a political education or were members of any of the learned faculties, it must be remembered that he himself had never enjoyed a regular academical education directed in the old manner, such as all the other philosophers and writers upon *belles lettres* of his time had had. All, from Voltaire to Marmontel, had been educated according to the ancient method. He drew his history from Plutarch, his poetical training and elements from novels, studied all possible variety of subjects with the most persevering industry, had the most singular fate and adventures, and lost in early youth that simplicity of morals, virtue and innocence, of which he became in very advanced age one of the most zealous and brilliant defenders.

After many adventures, the Genevese self-taught scholar, who had gone over from Protestantism to the Romish church, and had returned to Protestantism again, came to Paris (about 1745); and like all literary men who made their way to the French capital, especially poets, he sought the protection and patronage of Voltaire; he was, however, not so successful with his operas as Marmontel, who was also a protégé of Voltaire, shortly afterwards was with his miserable tragedies. The philosophers acknowledged his great talents, looked upon him as a good ally, and sought to bring him into notice, for they were undoubtedly well-disposed and ready to do him service, a virtue which he afterwards sought in vain to deny them. He undertook the musical articles in the Encyclopædia, and wished to gain himself a place in the saloons which he visited along with his friends, and a claim to literary reputation by his reply to a prize-question which had been proposed, when a complete change in the whole nature of his modes of thinking and life suddenly took place.

No one will deny, that the ideas which Rousseau conceived and illustrated in the case of the prize-question proposed by the academy of Dijon, guided his whole future life and labours, and became to him truth, even if we grant to his opponents and accusers that these ideas were at first taken up and defended, in order to excite greater attention by a clear-sighted, ingenious and eloquent illustration and support of a principle opposed to the common opinion. Rousseau not only propounded the principle, which classes scholars with sophists, and against which the whole writing world, decorated with their

academical uniform, rose up in arms. He not only propounded this principle, but preached it in all his writings, with the fire and enthusiasm of an apostle of his own, and of a true conviction; but he carried out his ideas, even to folly, into life, and freely sacrificed for their maintenance, what men in general most eagerly seek for. This last circumstance distinguished him most favourably from the Parisian philosophers, who, like their master, were all good men of the world, and sought by diplomacy and sophistry to give currency to their opinions; but always veered according to the wind of the prevailing fashion.

The academy of Dijon had proposed a learned question upon the influence of the revival of ancient literature upon morals. Rousseau took a philosophical view of the question, and answered it with such eloquence, clearness, and power, and in such language, that the academy, without concurring in the main in his opinion, crowned his reply as a master-piece of eloquence and art. Rousseau had turned the question of the academy, as if they had asked, whether men in general are morally improved by a scientific education, and to this question he replies in the negative. It may readily be conceived how much the world was astonished at the applause and the academical prize, which was awarded to his treatise*.

This event, unimportant in itself—Rousseau's obtaining the prize in Dijon—became one of very great importance, first to himself, then to the history of Geneva and France, as well as for the ever-growing democratic tendency of military Europe. As to himself, it will be seen by the observations prefixed to this prize-essay, in the latest editions of his works, that he connects the whole relations of his writings to their times with this essay†; as to the world, it so happened, that the direction which he took was so completely in accordance with the universal necessity of radical improvement, which was becoming generally felt, that he must necessarily become the prophet of his age.

* The question runs thus:—"Si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épurer les mœurs?" Rousseau, on the contrary, answers the question:—"Les progrès des sciences et des arts a-t-il contribué à corrompre ou à épurer les mœurs?"

† His words are:—"Qu'est ce que la célébrité? Voici le malheureux ouvrage à qui je dois la mienne. Il est certain, que cette pièce, qui m'a valu un prix et qui m'a fait un nom, est tout au plus médiocre. Quel gouffre de misère n'eût évité l'auteur, si ce premier écrit n'eût été reçu que comme il méritoit de l'être!"

The leading point in all the writings of the Genevese philosopher is indisputably the carrying out into human life in all their tendencies, consequences and applications, the principles which he had laid down and defended in his first and second prize-essays. Rousseau illustrates his hypotheses in the most splendid manner; he clothes them in the charming apparel of overpowering representation, supports them with the fiery eloquence of lively feeling and sincere conviction, and brings them directly home to that public, which the outcry of the learned about paradoxes never reaches. The learned did not neglect to summon to their aid all that the spirit of their corporations could yield or the pride of knowledge teach, to overwhelm the new sophist with the arms of ancient wisdom; they sought advantage from knowledge of all sorts, and as is usually the case, they completed by insult and abuse whatever was deficient in argument and reason; but they did not grapple the subject by the roots.

Rousseau was great in his dialectics, as Schleiermacher was in our own time; as soon as he succeeded in establishing the first proposition of what he wished to prove, he could calmly allow his opponents to toil and moil: they reached him no more. His first principle, in reference to the disadvantage of scientific culture, is his idea of the natural man and of the condition of nature, as he explains and illustrates it in his second prize-essay; and if all that he says in relation to savages and barbarians, Hottentots, inhabitants of the Ladrões, Spartans and Romans, be not previously shown to be unfounded, unhistorical and untenable, his conclusions must be necessarily granted. His first celebrated prize-essay may be compared in all respects to the so-called declamations of the later Grecian sophists; it persuades the multitude, who have lost all inward sense of truth, and that pure and deep feeling from which it springs, and who therefore can be persuaded, but are incapable of conviction.

Rousseau's language and rhetorical skill, and his boldness, compared with the vain and slavish business-like writing of the learned, give the highest charm to ideas which were then new; the reader is overpowered and carried forward by liveliness, variety of application, frequent apostrophes, and happily chosen anecdotes; his short positive sentences appear to be proverbs, and his play of thesis and antithesis entertains and delights

the reader, and secures the success of his argument; quiet logical progress from idea to idea, and proposition to proposition, will be sought for in vain. With respect to the historical proof of his principles, Rousseau escapes all difficulty, by rhetorically connecting the Christian notion of virtue with the word which we are accustomed so to translate when it occurs in the ancients, although the French word, *vertu*, signifies something altogether different from the Latin word of the same sound, or from the Greek one, which is so translated. The celebrated introduction and address (a *prosopopœia*) of Fabricius, which Diderot is said to have so much admired, rest wholly upon this play upon words; Rousseau has here most skilfully applied the usual rhetorical treatises upon Roman history, which are not much better than novels for any other use than for that for which they were written, in order to find virtue where, strictly considered, nothing is to be found which deserves the name.

The same academy which had been the means of circulating the first universally admired prize-essay over the whole of Europe, gave him an opportunity of further illustrating his new thoughts, or what we should call the radical errors of his first treatise, and of connecting it intimately with a democratic system of social order, such as had been quite unheard of at his time. The academy of Dijon proposed another question in 1753, upon the causes of the inequality of men, and thus gave Rousseau an opportunity of expressing his opinion, in his prize-essay in reply to this query, that the whole civilization of mankind must be regarded as its degeneracy. In his attacks upon civilization in his first prize-essay, Rousseau appears to us to take the same course as the pietists of the darkest schools, with this single difference, that the pietists sought their ideal of humanity which, in order to be a man, needed neither activity nor progress in paradise, before the fall, and found nothing in any end or corner of the world since that event, but sin and sorrow; Rousseau, on the contrary, finds specimens of his human ideal among Hottentots, savages and Romans of the time of Fabricius. It is obvious that he neither wished to admit the idea that perfection belongs to God alone, nor that a state of growing perfection, or progressive approximation to the Divine Being, is that pre-eminence of the human creature, which distinguishes him from the beast; and that a condition of continual progress, the suppression of and victory over the animal passions, the de-

velopment and exaltation of the spiritual man, constitute the true dignity and happiness of a finite being—a condition and progress of which Rousseau's animal man can have as little idea as the primitive divine man of the pietists in paradise.

Rousseau had already begun, before this, to be distinguished in life and intercourse, from the sophists of the world. He has been accused of being under the influence of an unusual species of vanity, in thus seeking to play the character of Diogenes, when he had become renowned and was sought after; but it must always be admitted to his honour that this vanity was more nearly related to freedom, and to the firm principles of a sage, than the behaviour of Marmontel, Duclos, Grimm and others, whom Rousseau could well have imitated or surpassed, if he had had the ambition to be a fashionable and distinguished slave, or to become a parasite—like the celebrated academicians. This must always be borne in mind, in order that we may not be led astray by the abuse of the opponents of this singular, and oftentimes melancholy man, or by his own sins. When he undertook the work of writing the second prize-essay, he was known at court by his musical drama, 'Devin du Village,' and had acquired great reputation by his 'Lettre sur la Musique Française,' but had also made very many enemies; the usual way was open to him, but he chose his own path.

The treatise (discours) upon the causes of the inequality among men, or the answer to the second prize-question, Rousseau dedicated to the chief magistrate of Geneva. His masterly and true dedication to the Genevese magistrate, conceived and written in the most dignified tone, exhibits a very marked contrast with the declamation of the treatise itself, which appears in the conclusion of the very preface, as a rhetorical master-piece, and not a sedate and serious inquiry*, and best proves what we have remarked above, that Rousseau's youthful recollections of Geneva, and the enjoyment of nature in its simplest relations, had exercised a great influence upon his theories. All the delusions which his power of imagination suggested to his mind about his native city, and much of the truth of his views respecting it, were admirably suited to the idea of his democratic state, which he afterwards began to build

* We allude to the passage which begins:—"O homme de quelque contrée que tu sois, quelles que soient tes opinions, écoute voici ton histoire," &c. &c.

up in his mind, in accordance with both his treatises*. This treatise is extremely important for our object; because it contains the substance of all Rousseau's future writings, or at least the principles of all that he afterwards taught. The idea which reigns through the whole, the keenness of the discourse, the inspiration in favour of a phantom which his lively fancy has embodied, united with the able dialectics of the *contrat social*, led astray the noblest minds in the time of the French revolution, and gave rise to many weighty practical errors.

The historical path, which Rousseau despised, could alone lead to the goal; but he made very little use of what he knew of history, as well as of the passages collected from voyages and travels, but proceeded with that contempt for all that is positive and individual, which is usual with mere lovers of dialectics, abstract philosophers and poetical orators; because their object is to charm the multitude, and lead them captive, or to awaken the astonishment of their disciples, without any wish to convince the serious and reflecting friends of truth. Rousseau pursues precisely the same course as Herder; he selects examples at random, just as they may serve his purpose, and then savages and barbarians are children of nature; but whenever examples are brought forward which are wholly contradictory to his, and passages are quoted which refute his passages, then the child of nature exists no more, except in the fancy. But if ever we are conjured within the circle into which he seeks to allure his readers in the first division of his treatise, or, in other words, if it be ever admitted that "physical well-being and sensual enjoyments," which certainly may be found amongst the rude children of nature, constitute the chief end of human beings, as they do of the inferior animals, then indeed the distinction of men, in reference to their morals and intelligence, disappears. If it be only once admitted, that it is a mere fiction of the brain to believe that knowledge—the pursuit of it, and joy in its possession, although it may have neither outward

* He makes Geneva his ideal, by first describing accurately the situation and constitution of a city which he would wish to have for his own; he then indicates, that he once had had that ideal for his native city, and laments that it is no more to be had, and then draws out his thoughts already spoken into particulars:—"Dans tous les autres gouvernemens, quand il est question d'assurer le plus grand bien de l'état, tout se borne toujours à des projets en idées et tout au plus à de simples possibilités; pour vous, votre bonheur est tout fait, il ne faut qu'en jouir, et vous n'avez besoin pour devenir parfaitement heureux que de savoir vous contenter de l'être."

relations nor advantage, be truly worthy of humanity, that the happiness of the reasonable being consists in the delight which is felt in a world formed by intelligence in the mind and for the mind,—then we must necessarily acquiesce in the proposition which is propounded and illustrated in the second division of Rousseau's treatise.

Rousseau maintains in his treatise, after his own fashion and manner, that all inequalities among men are the consequence of their degeneracy, and that this degeneracy is the result of social union; that social union develops the capacities of man, and perfects his understanding, but at the same time makes him bad, because each individual man is found to be worse in proportion as he is social. He seeks to establish and justify this highly surprising proposition, which does not derive the smallest support from the most superficial daily experience, by deducing the usual social order, of whatever kind it may be, from an unnatural abuse of power on the one side, and from an unnatural weakness on the other. In order in some measure to justify this allegation, he boldly gives a development of the formation and constitution of social order, which he calls historical, and combines with it one of those common histories of the arts, sciences, trade and handicraft, which proceed wholly according to logical and psychological laws, and which are very agreeable to read, because every thing is made so consequent and harmonious, but which withal have not the slightest historical foundation. We shall afterwards see that D'Alembert, in his renowned introduction to the general Encyclopædia, proceeds precisely in the same way in reference to the same subject as Rousseau, but arrives at the most opposite results; this proves that both men were dialecticians, now called *doctrinaires*.

It will soon be obvious in what way Rousseau connects his democratic doctrine with the theory of society, and with the history to which we have alluded, when we bring the proposition with which he starts into immediate juxtaposition with the conclusion to which, at the end of his treatise, he arrives. The proposition with which the second division of the treatise commences runs thus:—"The first person who seized upon a piece of land, and to whom it occurred to say, 'This is mine,' and who met with people simple enough to believe his allegation, was the proper founder of civil society." We shall endeavour briefly to present the propositions and principles which he

offers in the conclusion, as consequences of his theory, and of his history of civil society, in the following results :—

As soon as the mightiest or the poorest, from their strength or from their necessities, established a right to the property of others, which according to their judgement belonged equally to all, from a right founded in nature and in reason, then the previous equality of all immediately disappeared. This equality no sooner ceased to exist, than the most dreadful confusion appeared, and there arose a struggle between the right of the stronger and that of the earlier possessor, which became the fruitful parent of murder and bloodshed: this led rich and poor to feel the absolute necessity of a contract. Such is the commencement of Rousseau's state, which he ought first to have endeavoured to prove by a general historical induction, and to show that it was in some respects consistent with reality and facts. It will be more readily conceded to him, that a new period of the dominion and deceit of the rich, and of the oppression and over-reaching of the poor and the weak, begins with the institution of this state, and with its new laws. We shall only add, that he goes into an examination and refutation of the hypotheses of other learned men upon the nature and constitution of human society, and that he communicates at great length his suppositions or assumptions upon the existence of that degeneracy which he perceives everywhere around him, and at the same time upon the origin of despotism. We are further of opinion, that this captivating little work, written with such charming eloquence, may with propriety be called a vehement manifesto, circulated among all persons of education, against the whole existing social order of the world.

It belongs to the singular and contradictory phenomena of a time, when governments dared to venture and do every thing they desired, of a time in which the police watched anxiously, not merely over actions, but also words and thoughts, that this treatise should have been openly crowned with laurels of victory, and that afterwards the wholly innocuous 'Emile' should have been burned by the hands of the common hangman, and, like its author, have been persecuted with fire and sword. The unhappy conclusions which a discontented generation, embittered with its present condition, must draw, and did indeed draw from this small work, are the following :—The condition of society among men is an unnatural one; the development and cultiva-

tion of the higher intellectual faculties and powers are disadvantageous; the condition of physical well-being, when no thought of intellectual life is awakened, is the normal condition, and every departure from it degeneracy. These supposititious orders must necessarily have led to the erection of a very different social building from that which the world then admired in the works of Montesquieu; and, according to the judgement of his contemporaries, who, after the appearance of his prize-essay, ranked him as a prose writer with Voltaire, Rousseau was quite superior, both as a writer and thinker, to the champion of the aristocracy.

Rousseau himself, intoxicated with his reputation and carried away by fancy, was so deeply impressed with his ideas, that he hoped for the new philosophical deliverance of the human race from their unconditional application to the realities of life; he therefore immediately afterwards projected two works, by means of which he proposed to establish his ideas in the state, and to make them circulate through all the veins and arteries of life. The first was a collection of necessary notices, accidental thoughts, and plans for a new theory of the constitution, establishment, government, and legislation of a state, which had precisely the same relation to Montesquieu's state, which good Parisian society had to that of the men trained by Rousseau. The second was to be a novel, which was to bring among the people, properly so called, his whole views of life,—his kind of morals and sentimentality,—his thoughts upon family life and the enjoyment of nature,—upon the passions and unbiassed virtue,—upon Parisian life and philosophy,—upon religion and ecclesiastical dogmas,—and was to recommend all his views upon these subjects in an agreeable and irresistible manner. The novel was indeed written and printed before the elements of the new theory in the so-called 'Contrat Social' were united in a system; we shall however first direct attention to the 'Contrat Social,' partly because the connexion of leading thoughts with the principles of the prize-essay will thus be made more obvious; and partly because the political importance of the book in the last decennium of the eighteenth century, was very great, and continues, mediately, to be so still in our own times.

In those times another clothing was given to the theory which Rousseau in his 'Contrat Social' had enveloped in a dialectic dress, or which, to speak according to our fashion, he had

scientifically propounded. It was circulated in the most various forms among the people, the doctrine struck root, and in a form which Rousseau himself would, perhaps, now disown, is still the terror of the governments on the other side the Rhine. In his composition of the 'Contrat Social,' Rousseau had the 'Spirit of Laws' always in his eye, and always supports himself also, as Montesquieu did, apparently upon observation and history; but we have only to read the manner in which the constitution of the Roman state and its history are here used, in order to see that Rousseau was wholly destitute of that practical and historical sense which must be possessed by a founder of states. The man who was strong in dialectics and rhetoric, who was the mere creature of easily excited feeling and of a lively fancy, altogether deceived himself, when he supposed that he was able to produce a work such as he promises in the introductory words to the 'Contrat Social.'

"He wishes," he there says, "to inquire if there exists in civil order a rule of legal and certain administration, when men are taken as they are, and laws as they might be." But without any reference to what is, or what may be, in the explanation of the contents of the first chapter of the 'Social Contract,' of which he proposes to treat, the whole is notwithstanding linked to the leading ideas in his two prize-essays. "Man," he begins, "is by nature free; we find him in experience everywhere a fettered slave: what is the reason of this contradiction, and how can the altered condition of the freeman be legal or right? Upon power," he continues, "no right can be founded; for such a right can only be good as long as we cannot escape from the power; but every bond of society must be a holy bond, although it may be cemented, not by nature, but by agreement." Then he adds, that he has imposed upon himself the task (in his work) of inquiring into the nature of this agreement and its conditions. In order to reach his object, he first despatches the historical views of Grotius and Hobbes, and then directs his arguments against the theological juridical teachers of the law of nations. He first comes to his "original contract" in the fifth and sixth chapters.

If we were to despatch the matter as quickly, and to speak as decisively as Rousseau has done, he must be accused of having merely substituted a metaphysical nonentity for the historical and theological nonentities of his predecessors; for he might

with propriety first be required to prove, that his original compact had an existence in some given time and place; but from this question he immediately and ingeniously escapes. But if, sleeping or waking, this notion of an original compact has been once conceded to him, then we are speedily and irrevocably entangled in the meshes of his delicate net; and the creator of this new system, like all speculative philosophers, by his oratorical talents, and without much trouble, constructs a splendid building, in which no deficient point can be shown above ground, because he has been permitted to lay and fill up the foundations before their swampy and unsound condition was discovered.

He comprehends the whole of his invented "original contract," or that notion which precedes the notion of state, in a few words:—"Each of us yields up his person, and all that he has or possesses, to the superior guidance of the general will; every individual is received as an inseparable part of this whole." By means of this proposition we are, then, suddenly led altogether out of the definite and given field of states and men, which we know or have become historically acquainted with, and driven into the extensive wilderness of mere possibilities, of sophistry, and dialectics, and of the dreams of well-meaning philanthropy. Then the metaphysical nonentity is made a historical thing. The state becomes a notion, and the notion a state; the subordinate notions become parts of the state, which are treated according to logical laws, and become pliant as the paper upon which we write; but which suddenly leave those in the lurch who trust in them, because notions have very rarely any value in real life, whereas money, enjoyment, and the fist have, and have had, a value in all times and places.

Our object does not permit us to follow the subtle demonstration of Rousseau, or to compare his speculation with historical facts and daily experience; the 'Contrat Social' obtained, however, far too great an importance to allow us to pass it over, without adding some further remarks. In Germany, where scarcely any but university scholars are to be found, the subtleties of Rousseau would have remained at that time, and even in France at another time, within the schools, and would only have had the effect of producing other systems and books; but at the end of the preceding century the 'Contrat Social' became the manual of Utopian dreamers. Rousseau had then become the apostle of all gentlemen and ladies who made pretensions to

education ; and the form of the composition, and the boldness of the speculation, suited the demands and necessities of the age : finally, the movements in North America, in Poland, in Corsica, and in Geneva, gave the work a great political value. We shall first show, how in this treatise the empirical thing, state, became a notion from which other notions are deduced, under the names of citizens and subjects, which in experience we know as something given, but which have no longer anything in them of what is known or given by history. As soon as he passes beyond this point, then it becomes possible and permissible for him, without ever looking round, to advance boldly and rapidly in his course, till his design is complete, and then he triumphantly calls in and accommodates individual cases of experience. In order to make the matter more distinct, we shall select a short specimen.

“ The state,” he says, “ is a moral person, consisting of members, which make up the whole, or the commonwealth. Such a commonwealth is called a simple state when it obeys its own will, or when it yields passive obedience ; it is called unlimited sovereign, when itself deals with itself ; power, when it is considered in its relation to other similar commonwealths. In this way the individuals combined in a state, as a commonwealth, are called people ; in so far as they have a share in the ruling power, citizens ; in so far as they are subject to their own laws, *i. e.* to those of the state, subjects.” It will be readily seen from this commencement, that these abstractions, for people who were wholly without experience, without acquired knowledge, and without desire and capacity to acquire, were spells, of a description of which we have often seen enough in Germany ; and that, after such definitions, it became very easy in the second book to exhibit democracy as the only just and legal constitution of that phantom which is here called a state. This proof is given in the following manner :—

“ Sovereignty is inalienable, it is indivisible ; the general will can never err ; all error springs from party-feeling, wherefore party unions and societies must either be altogether prevented in a state, or multiplied to such an extent, that individual societies can have but little influence.” In this way he goes on and on, and under a continued course of protestation against metaphysics, a dialectic work of art is reared ; and as is the manner of speculators and inventors, a number of examples are

raked together by chance ; and, without any reference to descent, climate, soil, modes of life, or traditionary usages, an abstract people are united into an abstract state. How well Rousseau knew his public, how well he understood how to become an oracle by apodictic decisions, may be learned from the following sentences :—

“ After what I have previously said,” he remarks, “ we are not allowed to ask to whom the legislative power belongs ; laws are only expressions of the public will ; it may not be asked, whether a prince is above the law, for he too is a member of the state ; it may not be asked, if the law can be unjust, for no man can be unjust against himself ; it may not be asked, how men can be free, and yet subject to the laws, for the laws are nothing else than the published expressions of their will.” It is obvious, on the first glance, that all is hollow, and wholly destitute of practical value in a world which is no more to be constructed, but which has been constructed thousands of years ago ; but how little he possesses those qualities which were peculiar to his model Montesquieu, Rousseau shows, like our countryman Fichte, especially when he descends from his seat in the clouds, and condescends to walk upon the solid ground. His high-sounding prophecies about Corsica, at the conclusion of the tenth chapter of the second book, best prove this remark.

Rousseau himself, in fact, sometimes seems to feel that he is altogether unfit to be the reformer of states in a practical sense ; for in the division upon legislation and its different systems, he refers to Montesquieu, and in the third book, in which he treats of the different forms of governments, never once seems to suspect that he is and must remain upon historical ground. He therefore mentions monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, and the executive power of princes ; but since merely a notion of the unlimited will of the people always remains in the back-ground, every man who has seen and known anything of men and life, and has thought anything about history, perceives that this is only a Utopian scheme.

Rousseau has had the boldness in this book to treat at large of all possible constitutions and of a mixed government, to speak of the accommodation of forms of government to climate, manners and nationality, to handle the subject of abuses, of the decline of governments, of the death of diseased bodies politic ; and how immeasurably far does he show himself inferior to

Montesquieu! and yet all that he advances upon these subjects is to be regarded as the opposite of what Montesquieu has said on the same points. The whole, however, has great historical value, as bearing upon the French revolution; and if we dwell somewhat longer upon the 'Contrat Social,' it is that we may hereafter be able to refer to the subject in the political history of the revolution. All that Rousseau says upon the nature of free constitutions, has the same relation to what Montesquieu has written on the same subject, as the French constitution of the year 1791 has to that of the year 1793, and that very naturally, because the originators of the first monarchical constitution were completely full of Montesquieu's notions, as St. Jüst and other visionary friends of freedom were of those of the 'Contrat Social.'

Rousseau here teaches what the enemies of a constitutional monarchy at a later period made good against it, that every representative constitution, every delegation of the rights of a commonwealth to an elective or delegated chief, is contrary to reason and destructive of freedom, and he treats the English constitution, which had been so loudly praised by Montesquieu, with the greatest contempt. We shall first hear him speak in general, and then about England in particular. "The idea," he says first, in general, "the idea of a representative constitution is one which is altogether modern; it is a descendant of the feudal times, and is therefore a fruit of those wonderful and depraved forms of government which so degraded the human race, that the name man is become a term of servility." It will be here seen, that Rousseau displays as much ignorance as ill-will; because he does not know that this is chargeable upon the bad Latinity of the middle ages alone, in which freeholder, liegeman, and man are denoted by the same term. Still more harsh and severe is his outbreak against England and the English constitution. He first alleges, that every law which has not been ratified by the whole people, is nothing, and then he adds,—“The English people believe themselves to be free; they are grossly in error, for they are only free during the elections for members of Parliament; as soon as these are chosen, they are again slaves, they are nothing; and the use which they make of their power during the short period of its possession, is proof enough that they are unworthy of it.”

At the conclusion of the fourth book, a theory with respect to

the assembly of the people and the revision of the constitution is stated, which is of such a singular kind, that nothing is more incomprehensible than that persons could be found at the end of the eighteenth century, among people in other respects so practical as the French, who could imagine the possibility of bringing such things into practical operation. Rousseau insists upon periodical assemblies of the whole people (not of Schwyz or Uri, or such cantons or small tribes), not merely for legislation, but also for the revision of the constitution, and those not to be called together by any authority or power, but to come together of their own mere motion. Such assemblies are to be opened by two questions;—first, “Shall the present form of government continue?”—then “Is it the pleasure of the people to allow the government to continue in the hands of those to whom it is at present committed?”

We have now sufficiently indicated and explained the tendency and contents of the ‘*Contrat Social*.’ We cannot go into a closer examination of the whole or of single parts, and therefore we do not further allude to the last division, upon the Roman constitution, comitia, tribunes, censors, and established religion. Whoever knows anything about Rome or Roman history and the Roman constitution, and then reads the manner in which Rousseau treats the generally known phænomena of the real world, must necessarily be astonished that the impress of Parisian celebrity was then so great, that the Corsicans, as well as the Poles, should have applied to Rousseau to draw up a constitution for their adoption and use. He was prudent enough to avoid this rock, but his considerations upon the Polish constitution, and the means of its improvement, are usually printed after the ‘*Contrat Social*.’

The novel in which, as we have already remarked, Rousseau wished to bring the leading ideas of his prize-essays immediately into life, and to procure access for them into the circle of the ladies and the tone-giving world, was the ‘*New Heloise*.’ It appeared before the ‘*Contrat Social*’ was printed in 1759, and immediately excited incredible attention. It was then generally alleged to be an imitation of Richardson’s ‘*Clarissa Harlowe* ;’ that can at most be only true of the novel in the book, and of the love adventure, and this is indisputably its worst part; the chief point is the picture of that kind of sensibility and passion, which Rousseau knew from experience; and there is besides the

form and the doctrine, which he wished through this form to recommend. Rousseau surpasses Richardson at least in this, that he only describes and represents what he himself had felt, and what had contributed to make his life in the highest degree unhappy. Rousseau's ideas of love were, as is well known, always in contradiction with his sensuality; his *idéal* of civil and domestic life, with his outward circumstances, or his vanity or ambition; wherefore he lived miserable and died unhappy.

As we are not writing a history of literature, but rather of morality, we are so much the more called on to premise one or two short remarks upon the moral principles of the three most celebrated novel-writers of the eighteenth century. Their influence upon the people was very great, because one novel did not follow another in quick succession in those days, as in ours; and so many journals, periodicals and books for passing and momentary entertainment were not written. Fielding remains fast by the strongest and broadest realities of life, and allows himself to fall no further into a strain of moralizing, than a magistrate occasionally must; the experience which he gained in the discharge of the duties of this office, and the knowledge of those classes of the people with whom, as a magistrate, he necessarily came into contact, guided him in his descriptions of English life. Richardson contains the usual morality of his church; he has an orthodox, tenacious, blind attachment to usages always in his eye, of which there are more respecters in England than elsewhere, and he deals out this morality to a wearisome length; Rousseau creates a morality of his own, as well as a peculiar life. Rousseau's morality may be much more serviceable to minds of a better class; the mass of men will be better guided by prejudice and opinion and traditionary usage, than by a morality which rests upon the understanding, however charmingly he propounds it. The virtue which he makes so easy, is very dangerous; because it flatters the senses and makes men confident.

The first part of the 'New Heloise' contains the proper novel, which secured for the book acceptance with the public, with which, however, we have least to do, because we desire only to draw attention to the politics and wisdom of life, which Rousseau by its instrumentality circulated among the best part of the people, who were dissatisfied with the existing order of things. We learn especially from the 'Heloise' how it came to pass, that Rousseau raised up even Lavater, and such men as he,

against the existing order of life, of instruction, and of education. This was a class of men wholly different from those whom Voltaire, Diderot and Helvetius honoured—the noble and sensitive minds, which, in that time of awakening to an altered condition of life, perceived and acknowledged the stiffness, the constraint—all that was artificial and degenerate in the relations of mankind and of the different ranks of society, and wished to bring it nearer to nature, yet shuddered at the thought of those who appeared, by their bitter scorn and ridicule, to aim only at destruction. They turned therefore to Rousseau, who announced a religion of the heart, instead of the prevailing dogmatics; and a virtue of feeling, instead of the morality of the ten commandments and the catechism.

Rousseau himself has very forcibly remarked, that he only did homage to his time, by attempting to teach morality through the medium of a novel, and particularly by a novel whose intrigues are altogether immoral: we do not at present touch upon this point, but rather upon the delineation of life, as it is represented immediately in the first part. We do not get a sight of the proper prosaic burgher life; but the better side of the fashionable world and fashionable education is exhibited, and this, although not free from reproach, contrasts advantageously with the pretensions, genius, or piety of the present fashion, and with the presumption of a time which is concerned only about money and luxury. The noble class of men and women of the great world, whose mental culture and enlarged feelings, as well as the morality deduced from those feelings, may often displease us, are recognised in the history of love as well as in the female character; they are to be regarded as gold to copper, when compared with the creations which are presented to us as highly educated ladies in the ‘*Liaisons Dangéreuses*,’ and in the novels of Diderot and Marmontel. Rousseau, indeed, covers with the mantle of love the frailties of his *idé*al women (*femmes à grands sentimens*).

Rousseau’s ‘*Heloise*’ had the same sort of influence which we remember, from our own experience in early youth, ‘*Werter*’ and ‘*Siegwart*’ had among us; for Julia, her singular lover and her wise husband, were admired by all the world, in spite of all ecclesiastical moralists, and were often imitated in a most singular manner. The first part is a picture of the truth of life, for Rousseau really felt what he wrote; he had felt all the

power of the passion which he painted, and did not merely make a book, as others do. In addition to this, we have the true, although some exaggeratedly beautiful descriptions of the Lake of Geneva and its neighbouring countries, the Vallais, and the introduction of men from Rousseau's early recollections. Truth gains much by these forms taken from real life, although Rousseau adorns them; and at the same time the letters in the first part had not yet grown, as in the following parts, to long philosophical treatises.

The first part which is, properly speaking, appropriated to the novel, is, however, not without reference to life and its relations, or, in other words, to the social and moral usages of the time for which Rousseau wrote; for we find a letter upon French and Italian music, a subject which at that period caused a vehement controversy in the Parisian world. We find remarks upon the Vallais, and considerations upon nobility put into the mouth of an Englishman; the second part, however, is that which has, properly speaking, to do with the internal history of the age. In this Rousseau avowedly enters upon the condition of the life of the higher classes, of the writers upon *belles lettres*, of the prattlers of the Parisian saloons and of the ladies in the time of the seven years' war, and through him we are made acquainted with the ever-growing necessity of a thoroughly comprehensive change of morals, of life and of government. We consider it necessary for our purpose to refer to some passages in this part, from which it will become obvious in what way Rousseau, by his novel, his eloquence, his great power of delineation, and the recollections of his youth, not only attacked the degenerate, artificial, sinful life of a great capital, and the evils of an advanced civilization, but also the wantonness of his celebrated friends, who, strong in their sophistical arts, praised every species of immorality, sensuality and shamelessness, as unprejudiced views of things and as marks of genius.

Those letters of the second part of the 'Heloise,' in which Rousseau, in a way peculiar to himself, describes with liveliness the history of the connexions of the Parisian tone-giving world, in no romantic style, but strictly according to truth, and treats at length of women, and the relation of the two sexes to one another—or from the fourteenth to the twenty-seventh, belong to the best and most useful pieces which ever flowed from his pen. He uses his St. Preux as his vehicle, and in this as-

sumed character he is partly free from those faults which make his 'Confessions' suspicious, when he speaks in his own person, and partly because he had not yet, in the time of this composition, become morose, suspicious, peevish and hypochondriac almost to madness. The eloquence and liveliness of the descriptions here are by no means sophistical; but every one who knows from experience the life of the rich which is here described, and the people who pursue such conduct, will again immediately recognise the members of good society who are known to him, who are always in the greatest difficulty with their time, with their polite education and manners, with their rank, and with their wealth, if they find it impossible to exhibit all these somewhere or other for public admiration.

Rousseau blames all that is affected and artificial in the life of great cities, not as a rhetorician or a sophist, but from full and inward conviction of its evil, and it will therefore excite no surprise that he was decried by this society and their sophists as a fool. These men know every thing, without having learned any thing. They pick up a superficial acquaintance with things, and their judgements, by tone and conversation, lightly passed upon all possible subjects, are always borrowed from the latest journal or work of fashion: how could nature and reason, whose language Rousseau here employs, and whose cause he maintains, ever make its way to such people? And yet he was the very man who brought into fashion that appearance at least of nature and simplicity, which we now here and there perceive in the polite world.

Things like those which occur in the twentieth letter of the second book could not have been described with liveliness by a moral man, according to our ideas of such a man, as they are there described by Rousseau; but he had before his eyes in strong colours the truth of life and life itself in all its sensuality and sinfulness; and so singular was that orthodox and moral time, that it received with admiration and rejoicing what would be persecuted with fire and sword in our days, from a feeling of care and anxiety for the newly converted among fashionable and noble sinners.

The novel properly is brought to a conclusion at the commencement of the second division of the second part, and all that follows might well have formed a distinct work; but our business is not here to investigate or to judge; and it is espe-

cially important for our historical object, that the following letters were not published in a separate form ; but as formal treatises, constitute part of a widely circulated and universally read novel. Among the letters of the third part, there is found an inquiry into the question, whether self-murder is or is not permissible under certain circumstances. The proof of the complete deficiency of all theological demonstrations against self-murder constitutes the most important piece in reference to the doctrine prevailing on this subject in the churches and schools of all confessions, which always follow, and without much investigation, the beaten and usual path of traditionary doctrine. This piece receives a still higher degree of value from the proof which it contains of the utter worthlessness of the defence of self-murder, which has been deduced from the splendid examples of antiquity.

The following division (*quatrième partie*) called modern times away from gardens full of box-trees, cut into the figures of statues, animals, and other innumerable devices—from the Dutch gardens, with their tulips, potsherds, shells, and statues—from dark chamomiles into pure nature ; and aided the ancient architecture, which is now presented anew with Gothic follies, to obtain a victory over the volutes of the court architects of monarchs. In the very commencement of the third letter of this division, Rousseau admirably expresses the impression which Lord Anson's ' *Voyages* ' had made upon him as an admirer of the beauties of nature, and the delight which he, in common with all Europe, felt at the description of the *Ladrones*, which is there given with much more poetry than truth. The remaining part of the work is especially important for Geneva and Germany, because the influence which it produced in both countries upon all the usages of conventional life did not prove so transitory as it did in France. The whole previous and ancient mode of training children and youth, the manner of life, the arrangements of the domestic circle, the severity of parents towards their children, their monarchical and patriarchal relation with respect to them, the distance at which the young were kept, and the outward reverence which they were obliged to show,—all this, when compared with the idyllic and simple pastoral relations which Rousseau described, seemed so burdensome and inconvenient, that it quickly disappeared, and people passed from one extreme to another. We shall afterwards see that Basedow and Campe,

and the whole sentimental school, brought Rousseau's ideas out in a German type, and that Claudius, Voss, Hölty, and others, tuned their lyres after his tone. By this means our domestic life became more joyous and milder; a feeling for the enjoyment of nature and its beauties, which Rousseau had described in such glowing colours, was awakened; the love and admiration of rural life, which the rich can make more cheerful by the various means which are at their command, made the enjoyment of it first a fashion, and afterwards, as happens in such cases, a necessity.

It is true, indeed, that this 'Heloise' and its innumerable imitations, and that stream of miserable sentimental novels and plays, which from this source flowed through Germany for almost thirty years, caused a sickly play of feelings, and gave rise to silly discourse and foolish prattle about nature and a life according to its laws; all the public relations of life, however, became thereby milder, and the cane and the scourge were no longer permitted to play those important characters, which a new species and generation of philosophers and historians seek again to revive.

In the ninth letter the relation of true refinement and genuine culture to that trivial and customary emptiness, which has a word for every thing, is admirably described, and to that worldly tone of a society, which exhibits all the outward pomp of mind, but in which alone mere custom and repetition of expression are to be found. In the tenth letter, on the contrary, there is portrayed at length the idyllic relation of a rich country gentleman, carried through all the connexions of life, and this piece had a more beneficial influence than a whole library of sermons. These descriptions, full of soul, of deep inward feeling, and of true inspiration—these idyllic dreams of a mind weary almost to melancholy of life, among men who are only thoughtful about the manner in which they can most advantageously present themselves upon the theatre of the world, have had by far a greater influence in the amelioration of the oppressive conditions of subjection which extend from the Pyrenees to Courland, than multitudes of laws, and so much the more, as there is here nothing of the merely fanciful, of which there is no want elsewhere in the 'Heloise.'

In the same manner as the ninth and tenth letters touch upon the unnatural perversion of those pedantic relations of life which

are deformed by ceremony, etiquette, and forms of all kinds, or upon the men themselves, the eleventh treats of nature marred and disfigured by these men, with their promenades, their artificial gardens and shrubberies. We must not here omit to remark, in pursuance of our historical object, that the French court pursued a very different course of conduct from that of the educated portion of society, in reference to the change of fashion which Rousseau effected. The court first did homage to these principles only under the reign of a new king, and precisely at a time when it was too late, and when it should rather have held fast by all which it was yet possible to maintain. The court and its forms, its fixity, its life in the country, its etiquette, its ceremonies, underwent not the slightest change during the reign of Louis the Fifteenth; all who belonged to the new world, on the contrary, studied to approximate nature, and applied the same principle to their grounds and gardens. They did not suffer themselves to be led astray in Versailles, by all that Rousseau had said against the art of gardening and the culture of flowers as it was practised in France and in Holland; and those who were faithful to the old system, still laid out their gardens and walks according to the taste of Versailles and Haarlem; others completely changed the form of their pleasure-grounds according to the taste and description of Rousseau. English gardens became the fashion at the same time with sentimentality; for Rousseau not only made it obvious, that the taste of the time, and the unnatural manner of laying out their grounds, were false and absurd, but also that the opposite method was more convenient, more advantageous, and more comfortable. The description of the man whose character and modes of life are given in the twelfth letter, as the *idéal* of a practical philosopher, of a landowner and master of a family, is also no mere phantom of the brain, such as perhaps might be expected from Rousseau.

In order to show that we have alleged with good reason that Rousseau wrote this novel with a view, partly attained, of making an immediate application of his ideas upon mankind and humanity, upon love and nature, upon government and life, upon morality and religion, we need only state, that he has so expressed himself, and that it may be deduced also from the last part, which in other respects contains a second novel cal-

culated to produce a great social movement. In the very commencement of the second letter there will be found an excellent criticism upon the domestic order and establishment of great houses, as they were usually found to exist, and arrangements of his own invention, and of a different kind, are recommended. In the third letter a matter is treated of, which was afterwards farther carried out, and has been applied in Germany by our reformers of education, who never mentioned Rousseau, when it would have been their duty so to have done. He treats minutely, for instance, and largely, of the faults and deficiencies in the education of children in rich and distinguished families. The letter is a long and formal introduction to the subject treated of in 'Emile,' it contains the fundamental principles of a new theory of education, and Rousseau himself admits that the letter was too long for the place in which it is inserted, and for the occasion on which it was written.

The morality and theology which Rousseau wished to substitute for dogmatising Protestantism and symbolising Catholicism, both of which subject reason to tradition, which they name faith, here hold a distinguished place. In his 'Emile,' which he calls the 'Confessions of a Savoyard Vicar,' he develops the theory of his doctrine; here it appears more to advantage in action, because he shows how his Christianity, which is, properly speaking, mere natural religion, is consolatory and elevating, and altogether suited to that life of nature so charmingly described by him. This kind of religion, and the Vicar, who makes it pass for Christianity, are here most eagerly and importunately recommended, in a piece of history written with the greatest and most touching eloquence and art. Rousseau's dying heroine, upon her death-bed, becomes the apostle of the new doctrine of a holy life, and all that she or her confessor say shortly before her death, stands in direct opposition to what at Rousseau's time was universally said to the dying, and required from them, if they wished to enter into a happy state.

The 'New Heloise' gave occasion to a great outcry, because all the friends of what was ancient, and, moreover, all the new sophists and academicians, all the numerous defenders of a genius-like witty banqueting mode of life, scoffed at the visionaries, and ridiculed their wisdom; but his book was circulated in the whole of Europe, became the oracle of the age, and

produced such an effect upon the better portion of all ranks, who had a lively feeling of the necessity of a reformation, as no novel ever afterwards produced.

Rousseau wished afterwards to reduce to a system what he had said incidentally and in various places in his 'Heloise,' upon the subject of religion and education. He wished to combine the single parts into a whole, and in order to secure for it general circulation, he clothed his materials in the form of a history. 'Emile,' or his treatise upon education, which appeared three years after the 'Heloise,' and fills four tolerably thick volumes, contains a history, which may not be very attractive for the great mass of novel-readers; but it is here, as well as in the 'Platonic Dialogues,' merely a means, and not an end. Many were deceived by the title; fathers and mothers, however, were allured by the form to study a system, which appeared to remove all trouble and labour, and all cares from the concerns of life. Instruction and education became an amusement. Man, from being an animal, became a reasonable creature without trouble, without annoyance, without effort, without reference to talents, perverted inclinations, or natural organization. Every thing that he learned was of immediate use and application; he was not harassed with books; all methods of punishment and constraint were abolished; and nothing was to receive attention except what was immediately serviceable to external physical life. What joy was here for all the rich and the distinguished, to whom, when they are not in good humour, or when they are in the church, and in the society of the affectedly pious, the earth only seems a vale of tears, and their very joys a sin!!!

It is singular enough, that Rousseau was most vehemently abused and persecuted on account of this book, which, however, only contained the application of a peculiar species of Protestant doctrine to life, although he had disseminated among the people the same theory of wisdom, propounded in a quite different form in 'Heloise,' under the clothing of the most seducing poetry. Rousseau himself, in his 'Emile,' declares that he had not coolness and quietness of mind enough to build up a system, he only therefore announces remarks, observations, &c., but, nevertheless, begins the very first sentence with the announcement of this proposition:—That he only recognises the finger of God in external nature, and its organic laws, but by no means in the development of human reason and in its progressive cul-

ture*. Because Rousseau altogether forsook the field of experience, the didactic part of the work appears to us to have the least value, and to be of the smallest importance; but the attack which it contains upon the reigning system is completely successful. We cannot, however, accuse Rousseau of having driven all seriousness and severity of training out of life; because it was no fault of his that the German education inventors and speculators accommodated the single parts of his connected positive imaginative theory to the historical world and to dull reality, which could only be used as a whole and an *ideal*.

The novel of 'Emile' is like a fable; but the alternation of the didactic and the narrative form, the half-romantic, half-logical manner, the transition of dialogue to narrative, and *vice versá*, the admirable criticism upon the perverted manner of instruction and education in public schools and families at that time, give the book a great charm. A degenerate and indolent generation willingly gave a place in reality to the idylls, and to the methods recommended by Rousseau in his novel; because it is a well-known error of indolent minds to think that a man, in order to be good, only needs to be weak and sensitive. We shall not dwell upon the first part; because it contains merely what we shall afterwards find in the writings of Basedow, Salzmann and Campe. We must so much the more defer noticing the influence of this theory, as it was practically brought into use in Germany at an earlier period than it was possible to have done in France under the old government and hierarchy. At the close of the second part, which contains notions of morality and religion, which Rousseau recommends to his pupil instead of the state religion enforced by civil laws, a hateful police and legal courts, he declares himself to be a vehement opponent of all positive religion, just after having made some admirable observations upon the necessity and need of religious feelings as the support of morality.

The third part, which contains the 'Confessions of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar,' excited the loudest outcry; raised on the one hand by unbelievers, egotists, encyclopædists, sensualists, parasites and prattlers, and on the other by orthodox Protestants and strict ecclesiastical Catholics. The first-named class of men of the school of genius felt spitefully towards Rousseau;

* "Tout est bien," he says, "sortant des mains de l'auteur des choses, tout dégénère entre les mains des hommes."

because, in the first division of his 'Confessions,' he opposed a religion of the heart to their subtleties and cold theory of the understanding; because he protected the doctrine of the existence of a God, of providence, and of a future state, against their doubts; and because he appealed to the feeling of noble and uncorrupted minds, against their audacious wit and bold satire. In the second division he roused and excited the orthodox slumbering Protestants, the rigid Jesuits and the severe Jansenists, by attacking them in a quarter in which they are most exposed, and in which they are therefore most sensitive. He attempts to prove, that the so-called historical faith and its principles are altogether untenable; and that those would act well and prudently, who, in attempting to establish the value and pre-eminence of the evangelical system, would appeal merely to its moral worth, and to the effects which obedience to its laws may have and have had. He here contends against the necessity, and even the possibility of what the theologians call a revelation; and, without sinking to the tone of the encyclopædists, he shows how useless and absurd the usual systems of Christian philosophy, as taught in the universities, are, by which the truth and divine origin of Christianity are attempted to be proved, not to those who doubt or are unbelievers, for by these none such could be converted, but to those who are already rigid believers. He rejects miracles and inspiration without scoffing at them. On this occasion, also, the obstinate blindness and the beneficial stubbornness of that overweening reliance upon external power appeared, with which God is accustomed to visit the enemies of light and of freedom. They, however, took no warning, they did not attempt to produce in a new form the faith which had disappeared, but they rather persecuted Rousseau the more bitterly, in proportion to the real value of his book. The consequence was, that the whole educated portion of society regarded the man who was thus persecuted by jurists, priests and domineering hypocrites as an apostle and martyr, and attached themselves to his theory.

The Parliament of Paris, in which the Jansenists were predominant, condemned the work and put the law in force against it, which was absurd and at that time injurious. It pronounced a sentence of personal arrest against the author, which he easily escaped; and what was the most singular of all, the Archbishop of Paris addressed a pastoral letter to the clergy and people of

his diocese against the book of a Protestant. This was as if the archbishop wished also to rouse his quietly slumbering believers and force them to reflection, and as if he wished immediately to furnish Rousseau with an opportunity of showing to what a miserable condition a system of doctrine must be reduced, which it was necessary to uphold by means of the police! Rousseau did not fail to take advantage of the occasion, but printed a letter to Christopher de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, which along with 'Junius's Letters,' and Lessing's attacks upon Göze, may be regarded as one of the master-pieces of this description of prose in the eighteenth century, an incomparable model of power and beauty of language, of style and of eloquence. The Protestants also did not fail to show, in like manner, that they too defended their Zion by the police. The Genevese magistrate first caused the book to be burned, then the high and mighty lords of Berne gave the author to understand, when he fled from France and had arrived at Yverdün, how little pleased they should be to see him in their territory. We here break off, because the writings which Rousseau afterwards sent forth from Motiers Travers, when living under Prussian protection in Neufchatel, not only in point of time, but in tendency and character belong to an entirely different circle, and sprung from feelings and desires quite different from those of his earlier writings. These works, particularly the 'Letters from the Mountain,' are closely connected with the democratic movement, which, shortly before and during the North American war, took place in Switzerland and England, and afterwards extended to France. We must therefore in the following period return especially to these 'Letters from the Mountain.'

§ V.

DIDEROT.

Diderot unquestionably belongs to the number of those men who have exhibited the most singular contrasts in their lives, as well as in their character; he must, therefore, by no means be confounded with such men as Marmontel, Duclos, Grimm, and other parasites and flatterers of the ladies and noble lords and gentlemen of those times, in which enlightenment was the fashion in the great world, as darkness now is. If we accurately com-

pare the report which he and his friends have given of his life and behaviour, with the evil which his enemies afterwards spoke of him*, we come to this result as our conclusion, that he was a well-disposed and benevolent man, that he possessed good and solid learning, and that in Paris he combined the life of a licentious man, striving after mere enjoyment, with the independence of a savage. With his good-heartedness and truly noble feeling he united a contempt for all traditionary morality which was consecrated by custom; but this contempt originated, in his mind, from that immoderate and exaggerated repugnance to all fetters upon the spirit of man, which is apt to take possession of a noble mind when it has reached the full inward conviction that it has been long held in leading-strings and deceived. This remark applies particularly to the earlier period of his life, for afterwards he turned what had originally sprung from a feeling of repugnance into a finance speculation; and at this time he became even as great a fanatic for the promotion of his philosophy of life, as Rousseau was for his, or a Trappist for the very reverse.

We are about to speak here only of his revolutionary influences, and have premised the foregoing observation in order to show that our object is, when occasion demands it, rather to blame with severity the principles and morality of the age than to attack the persons and behaviour of individuals: we shall follow the chronological order of his writings. We must however give precedence to a few remarks upon his theory of the drama, in order to complete what has been previously said of the transition of the French drama to sentimentality. The influence which Diderot secured for himself as a dramatist, and his efforts as a dramatical poet, seem to us, both in their good and their evil, perfectly to agree with his philosophical and moral tendencies. He shows himself eager always to take under his protection the prose of life, in opposition to the creative soaring of the mind—the weak feelings and morality of the heart in opposition to severe Christian training, in opposition to the doctrine of the sinfulness of the natural man, and to penances and contrition imposed upon Christians.

Diderot was a child and organ of his age, as the numerous retrograding alarmists, pietists, ghost-seers, and men of an irrefutable

* See London Quarterly Review, No. 94, July 1832.

system are the children and organs of ours; the alternating and vacillating dominion of orthodox and heterodox systems, of faith and of scepticism, proves nothing else than that the divine truth which dwells in our hearts and is not learned in schools, is eternal and unchangeable; but that the follies and wisdom of the learned alternate like winter and summer. Laharpe is wrong when he alleges, that Diderot made no material change in what La Chaussée had invented, and that he falsely boasted of being the inventor of a new species of drama, while he only expressed it by various names (*draine sérieux, drame honnête, tragédie domestique*). It was in itself no inconsiderable step to depart altogether from the form of poetry which Voltaire and La Chaussée, who made all the persons of their drama speak in verse, had adopted; by introducing his characters with prose in their mouths, he brought the stage much nearer to common life. This, however, was only external. He effected a far more considerable change, by making the affecting and the romantic parts of his plot the chief point, and wholly banishing the comic element.

In this style, which was afterwards perfected in Germany, and, through the instrumentality of Kotzebue, carried back to France, Diderot wrote his 'Natural Son,' an intolerable piece of composition, which was only twice performed; and his 'Father of a Family,' which had somewhat better success: his main services, however, in favour of this species of writing, were those which he rendered by his treatises, although these were written by him in the spirit of a rhetorician and a sophist. All his friends were summoned to lend their aid in promoting the cause of the drama, and however little they could do for a matter which was plainly not national, they did not let him fall; his treatises had their chief influence among the domestic Germans, who were disposed for their reception. These treatises are indeed wonderful enough, as in one, for example, without any reference to the existence of the more recent drama, he attempts to lay down rules as to the way in which a commencement must be made to invent new species, and prescribes the sort of sympathy which may and should be awakened. In this singular treatise he dramatises the death of Socrates, and most absurdly presents us with this drama at full length; on the contrary, the greatest man in the comic species, Aristophanes, is only in his eyes an original farce-writer. The master-pieces of the oldest comedies are regarded by him as mere political farces, such as are exhibited

nowadays by vagrant mountebanks in our fairs, and he recommends the government to profit by such people (for Aristophaneses, according to him, are easily to be had), in order to turn their opponents into ridicule or expose them to contempt. This treatise is, besides, written in that tedious manner, which the Parisians endured in the case of Diderot to such an extent, that he finally became an endless prattler. At the conclusion of a tedious discourse, in which he recommends his 'Natural Son,' he does not fail to quote Aristotle, Horace and Boileau in his favour, and finally appends a dialogue, entitled 'Dorval et moi,' in which he once more develops, investigates, explains and recommends the new drama.

We have dwelt somewhat longer than we should otherwise have done upon Diderot's poor dramas, and still poorer dramaturgy, not only because the existence of the German plays of Jünger, Kotzebue, and Iffland are intimately connected with them, but also from another reason, which bears upon the French relations, of which we are treating. It appears to us, namely, a very remarkable fact, that whilst all sorts of means were employed to destroy the old discipline of morality and of the church in real life, by bitter scorn and blunt contempt, immoral novels and offensive satire, the very same people who employed these means for such a purpose should represent on the stage morality of feeling and pastoral tenderness and sensibility. This applies not only to Diderot, but still more to his two imitators, Beaumarchais and Fabrice d'Eglantine, whose pieces are indisputably much better than those of Diderot: we shall mention both in the second volume as political writers. Whoever besides is disposed so to do, may regard this as an evidence of the devil himself in favour of eternal truth, that people, who in their conduct showed no trace of morality, who knew nothing of family life, and were only at home in the theatre or their evening societies, who by means of novels, satires, dictionaries, pamphlets, &c. banished all family enjoyment—all peaceful contentment and religious restrictions from the minds of men and their conversation, exhibited it for appearance sake on the stage.

In reference to the whole scope of Diderot's influence, and to his share in the works of the exclusive philosophers of the eighteenth century, we shall altogether pass over his early writings; and we do this with so much the better reason, as, when more closely considered, they were only written on com-

mission for the bookseller. Diderot made his first proper commencement of bold writing in the spirit of the mighty opposition against the general oppression which had begun to be active (1745), under the shield of an Englishman. He translated, or rather he worked up in his own fashion, Shaftesbury's 'Enquiry upon Virtue and Merit.' The translation was indeed still bolder and more vehement than the original; still Diderot then wrote with a degree of caution and circumspection, which was quite unknown to him six years afterwards; for in this treatise he not only abuses Tindal and Toland*, but in spite of all the ecclesiastics of different churches, he tries also to defend Shaftesbury's orthodoxy. His translation of Stanley's 'History of Philosophy' does not fall within our view; six years afterwards he first began his desolating war with all that was most certainly handed down by tradition and most faithfully believed.

Diderot's new and totally different form of instructing and entertaining the public was probably determined by the alteration of the general tone which by degrees took place, and by seeing that Rousseau's bold prize-essays, Voltaire's English letters, Montesquieu, and the bold scoffers, whose writings were smuggled into France from Holland as contraband wares, had produced their effect. Diderot's first writings are very different from the prattling and audacious manner of his later ones; they are written in a much closer and more logical style. He began his new philosophical career with his 'Pensées Philosophiques.' These seventy-three propositions, which have no apparent connexion with one another, have nevertheless a common design in their contents. It is immediately apparent from their superscription that they are intended to be placed in opposition to the celebrated 'Thoughts of Pascal.' Pascal, by means of a series of sceptical propositions hoped to establish the necessity of a revealed truth; Diderot, on the contrary, by the very same method, trusted to make the public perceive that this same revelation must be infallibly erroneous and untrue.

The first of these propositions only bears upon philosophy and

* Diderot quotes one of those passages in which Shaftesbury, according to his manner, assumes the appearance of a believer in the midst of his scepticism, and adds: "Je ne conçais pas comment, après des protestations aussi solennelles d'une entière soumission de cœur et d'esprit aux mystères sacrés de sa religion, il s'est trouvé quelqu'un assez injuste pour compter My Lord Shaftesbury au nombre des Asgils, des Tindals, et des Tolands, gens aussi décriés dans leur église en qualité de Chrétiens, que dans la république des lettres en qualité d'auteurs; mauvais protestans et misérables écrivains."

scepticism in general; the last are openly directed against Christianity, and against the philosophical proofs which Pascal had contrived in favour of revelation. In the first propositions the use and value of the passions are proved in such a manner, as that it must be admitted they are altogether necessary, and consequently that those theologians are wholly irrational who maintain that the most perfect virtue and the perfection of morality consist in the utter extinction of the passions. The cruel justice of the parliament in matters of religion is sharply censured, without the parliament being named; and on this occasion those who have a fear of God, which may be more properly called terror, and who are now again loud in their expressions of it among us, are admirably characterized*. In the twelfth proposition, Diderot proves, in favour of his own mode of thinking, that God, according to his view of the Divine Being, would rather see the spread of atheism than of superstition; and here he entrenches himself very skilfully behind the words of Plutarch. In the fourteenth proposition he seeks to make it clear, that Pascal and he in reality travelled precisely on the same path, and that he only opposed his sceptical dialectics to the orthodox logic of that profound thinker, because the latter had not had confidence to follow out the discovered truth to the full extent to which it must necessarily have led him,—that Pascal, as the instrument of the Jansenists, had never ventured to stand on his own feet, but allowed himself to be used merely as their tool †.

In a series of very acute propositions herejects, it is true, positive atheism; but he shows with the same acuteness that the system of the schools cannot possibly stand against a bold and deep-searching scepticism; and supported by this general scepticism, he proceeds with all the energy and power which he can summon to his

* The sentence runs thus,—“ Il y a des gens, dont il ne faut pas dire, qu'ils craignent Dieu; mais bien qu'ils en ont peur.”

† Without confining ourselves to the words, we shall here give the substance of the fourteenth paragraph:—“ Pascal,” he says, “ was honest and upright, but he was timid and credulous. He was an admirable writer, a deep thinker; he would have become a light of the world, had not Providence given him into the hands of people who used his talents to satisfy their hate. It had been greatly to be desired that he had left it to the theologians of his age to arrange their quarrels among themselves, and had devoted himself to the inquiry after truth; he ought to have followed his own way without fear of insulting God, by using the talents conferred upon him without regard to results, and especially ought not to have acknowledged persons as his masters who were not fit to be his scholars. It might be said of him what La Motte said of La Fontaine: “ he had been simple enough to believe that Arnauld, De Sacy, and Nicole, were better than he was.”

aid, in those propositions which follow the twenty-fourth, and with the keenest logic, to overthrow or weaken the traditionary proofs for the truth of the Christian religion. He does not indeed quote, but he makes an admirably ingenious use of the writings of Julian in his twenty-third paragraph, and still more afterwards, which arguments he applies after his own peculiar manner. He afterwards controverts, in a very able manner, the doctrine of miracles and the proof of the truth of any system which was introduced by miracles, without mentioning Christianity in particular. The acuteness, the clearness, and the oftentimes startling truth* of this acute and able paragraph are very advantageously distinguished from Diderot's later atheistical prattling; moreover, the delicacy and forbearance which politeness demands are nowhere wanting.

The second treatise in this new manner of bolder polemics first appeared three years later (1749), and in this he announces with great boldness and in more definite terms, a positive system in opposition to that which then prevailed. The title of the treatise is, 'Letters of a Blind Man for the Benefit of those who see.' In this letter we first meet with traces of his fanaticism in favour of infidelity, and of the eloquence which was the result of that enthusiasm; he still, however, abstains from the foolish declaration of the non-existence of God and of gross materialism. In the spirit of his philosophy, which was altogether directed towards external things, and which was inimical to an inward world given only in our thoughts and fancy, he apparently proceeds with a view to bring back the sense of vision, which stands nearer than other senses to inward perception, to the more bodily sense of touch, and for that purpose he makes use of Newton's 'Theory of Colours, Refraction,' &c. In this way he comes then to the celebrated Saunderson, who was blind, and yet taught optics in Cambridge, and avails himself of the example in a very masterly manner to controvert the proof of the schools in favour of the existence of a God.

In order to show that he calls the condition of the middle ages and the faith of his time, which was maintained by the police, blindness—and the philosophy announced by himself and his friends, seeing—he has recourse to a somewhat too enigmatical and figurative form of language:—"If," he says, "a man, who had enjoyed the power of vision for some days, or even for

* Pensée 56. "L'exemple, les prodiges, et l'autorité peuvent faire des dupes ou des hypocrites. La raison seule fait des croyans."

a single one, should return to a people consisting wholly of blind men, he must keep a strict silence amongst them, if he did not wish to be regarded as altogether insane. If he spoke, he would announce to such a people every day a new mystery, which was only a mystery to the blind, and which those among them, who boasted of having a little more insight than the rest, would certainly not believe.... This supposed case," he continues, "may explain to us the history and the persecution of people who may have had the misfortune accidentally to discover a truth in dark times, and been imprudent enough to communicate their discoveries to their blind contemporaries."

The species of persecution, which was inflicted upon Diderot on account of this treatise, as well as that which was afterwards directed against Rousseau and a number of other persons who were insignificant, appeared expressly calculated to rouse the attention of the people and to make them observant of the most unimportant manifestations. The police, the clergy, and the parliaments, by means of their powerless persecution, gave an importance which they would never otherwise have attained to those persons, who, sometimes with extraordinary talents, preached dangerous principles, and promoted to an incredible extent the circulation of their forbidden books, by making them the objects of a much more zealous curiosity. The men became apostles and martyrs; and their theories, which were in themselves often dry and tasteless, gained the reputation of oppressed and secret wisdom. Arrest and imprisonment were the sure path to fame; because this means of giving celebrity had not then lost its value by its frequency and repetition, as it has done in our days; and nothing, therefore, could by possibility be more acceptable to a man like Diderot, than to be seized upon and sent to Vincennes as the author of the 'Pensées.'

He no sooner recovered his freedom, after a confinement of three months and a half, through the interposition and efforts of his numerous friends, or rather through the continually growing opposition to the prevailing system, which in its nature was altogether untenable, than he projected the plan of the great Encyclopædia. The object of this publication, and the hope of its founders and conductors, were to prepare and circulate among all classes and conditions of men, new modes of thinking in all possible departments, which should be directly opposed to all that was traditionary, and, at the same time, to secure an

ample remuneration to those poor men of learning, who were of the same opinions with its projectors. The conduct of the whole undertaking was left in the hands of Diderot; and this French dictionary of all the practical and real sciences, arts, commerce, and handicraft, was announced with as great formalities and noise—was commenced, and its praises trumpeted forth with as much speculative ingenuity, as Basedow's elementary work afterwards was in Germany. The work was printed at great expense, one while prohibited by the government, and again the prohibition recalled. We shall have occasion hereafter to return to the work and to speak of it at length, when we come to refer to D'Alembert's introduction to this practical dictionary, which is a masterpiece of style, language, oratory, logic and sophistry.

The prospectus of the 'Dictionnaire Universel et Raisonné des Connaissances Humaines,' the first two volumes of which appeared in 1751, was the work of Diderot, and must in no respect be confounded with D'Alembert's introduction. D'Alembert's introduction is distinguished by logical and mathematical acuteness and conciseness; these are altogether wanting in Diderot's prospectus; and in this rhetorical specimen, which was incorporated in the great work, he already shows himself to be vaunting, presumptuous and loquacious. Besides the general superintendence and editing of the work, Diderot also undertook the articles upon the arts and commerce, and, in connexion with D'Alembert, wished to examine and oversee the articles delivered by the other contributors; he also undertook the articles upon the most ancient philosophy, probably because he had translated Stanley.

Under the very first letters of the alphabet Diderot attacked and calumniated all those who could not resolve to adopt a comfortless and heartless infidelity, in exchange for a dangerous superstition, or perhaps a simple faith, which, however, had consoled and blessed thousands of men. Under the article 'Ame' (soul), there is a development and defence of the mournful materialism of that dissolute society of men of genius, who shone in the Parisian saloons, and of which Diderot was the orator or prattler. In the article upon 'Intolerance,' the defender of forbearance with every sort of scepticism, and consequently of every kind of faith and superstition, allows himself to indulge in more unbecoming and unworthy language against Christianity, the spirit and moral effect of which folly or malice alone can disallow,

than any one of those whom he ridicules or blames as hypocrites or zealots has ever allowed himself to indulge against those who do not express their opinions precisely according to the tenour of their catechisms: by this means he seriously damaged his own cause, of which even his friends were very sensible.

From this moment forward the 'Dictionnaire Universel' had rather a curious fate; for even D'Alembert presently withdrew from it, and Diderot, supported by Voltaire, who alone was as fanatical as himself, struggled against his government, against all moderation and caution, against his publisher and the public, in a most foolish manner. We cannot, however, avoid admiring his perseverance and his zeal, to whatever degree we may find it necessary to blame the nature and objects of his activity. The management of the work was attended with great and uncommon difficulties. The government at first prohibited it; then, beset on all sides, withdrew its prohibition. The moderate portion of the public altogether withdrew from its support, or loudly complained against its tendencies. The editor at length quarrelled with the publisher, who subjected the proofs to a last revision, in order at least to moderate the most virulent outbreaks. The advantage of the work bore no relation to the labour and vexation which it caused; and however great Diderot's facilities both in speaking and writing confessedly were, he was unable himself successfully to superintend the management; he was therefore obliged to employ literary manufacturers, and the work consequently fell to the level of other manufactured literary wares.

In the following volume we must once again return to Diderot, but at present we believe that we have said enough of his activity in this period, and pass on therefore to those other celebrated writers who came forward, in opposition to all those opinions which belonged merely to faith or to tradition. We cannot mention all those, who are now scoffingly, but who were formerly with honour, called philosophers in France, by way of pre-eminence; we shall, however, refer to the so-called 'System of Nature,' which was a product of the Holbach saloons, 'Helvetius on Mind,' and some of the writings of D'Alembert, and reserve the remainder for the following volume. We shall there treat, when speaking of the dominion of the new philosophy and of its ultimate victory, of Diderot's travels and novels, of Buffon and Raynal, of Marmontel, his sentimentality and immoral mo-

rality, of Grimm, and some other members of the society which assembled at Holbach's, of the political economists, and among them especially of Turgot; and we shall at the same time name a number of other men who brought among the people the theories of the courtiers, whose parasites they were, the system of selfishness, or who, like Beaumarchais and Wilkes, for example, before and during the North American war, fought against the ruling classes, their creatures and their sophists, with their own weapons of wickedness.

With respect to Diderot, we have omitted to mention that Frederick the Second forsook him as early as 1773; but that Catharine the Second, who had much more need of such a European Stentor to defend her reputation, and must pay him better than was needful for Frederick the Second to do, purchased his library from him, left it in his hands, gave him a yearly pension, and for many years paid it in advance, &c. Madame du Deffant and Madame Geoffrin had at that time shut their doors against Diderot, and D'Alembert had altogether withdrawn from him.

§ VI.

SYSTEM OF NATURE—HELVETIUS ON MIND.

The society of dissolute Epicureans who for many successive years met in the house of Holbach, contributed to make this Baron, who was a native of the Palatinate, as celebrated in the history of the theory of sensuality, which emanated from Paris, as the Prussian Baron Cloots became in the time of the revolution, through the madness of his blasphemies and the nonsense of his general republic. Both were very rich, and Holbach at least had an admirable cook; it was very easy for him, as a man of talents and wit, to bring together in his house a society of friends whose modes of thinking and tastes for pleasure were similar to his own. This society entered into a formal bond against traditionary doctrines and the existing system, and its members were as fanatical in favour of infidelity, as monks and priests, Jesuits and pietists, methodists and missionaries, are accustomed to be, in favour of a mechanical worship and a literal faith. The members of this society were Diderot, Duclos, Helvetius, Marmontel, Grimm, Laharpe, Condorcet,

Raynal and Morcellet; these were regarded as its luminaries, and were especially named in public as its defenders. The theories which they proposed to make known, were formally debated in this assembly as in a congress, together with the books which were intended to be published, and Holbach not only aided in the preparation of the works, but furnished the money for their printing. The number of writings which were brought before the public by the instrumentality of this society was so great, that Barbier, who published a 'Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Writers,' has enumerated not less than forty-seven books, which had been attributed to Holbach. We select from this great number of works, prepared by the members of this Holbach club, the boldest and the most spoken against, the so-called 'System of Nature' (*Système de la Nature, ou des Lois du Monde Physique et Moral*), not with a view to go minutely through or examine its contents, but to show that the revolution is quite wrongfully accused of having annihilated a system, which had ceased to exist long before the revolution was thought of. We shall not venture a step into the literary disputes about the author of this disputable work; we know that if some allege that Holbach and Diderot were its joint authors, others attribute it to quite a different source, and it is enough for us that this dry production of an unholy mind and fancy-killing doctrine was brought into circulation by Holbach and his friends.

The book first appeared in two volumes in 1770, but we prefer bringing it immediately forward in this place, and wish rather to speak of all the system-mongers of this school, which is now so heartily abhorred and condemned by the French romantic writers and *doctrinaires* as well as by our new school of pietists and ghost-seers, than to come back to them again in the following volume. The work itself was indebted for its circulation merely to the spirit of contradiction, and to the charm which every thing secret and forbidden has for the great multitude; because it is in other respects written in a weak manner and in a bad style. This 'System of Nature,' in truth, merely exhibits in a formal theory those loose principles and maxims, which have been recognised and passed current in rich, fashionable and clever circles of men of pleasure, since the world began. It is easily perceived that the prudent people who laughed at all the world, must therein have been made ridiculous; for

what the world universally pursues, what every man also in our times regards as obscure and yet practises in life, he seeks, as is well known, to cover most carefully with the mantle of sophistry, and cries aloud if it is boldly spoken out in wine-houses or in the societies of distinguished or vulgar profligates; it is, therefore, ill-suited to be a system, and is destroyed even by the form.

In this book, which bears witness against itself, not only ideality and spirituality, which, however, in conscience and in history have as much in their favour as the phenomena of the outward world, are altogether denied; and all that which since the creation of the world has been indicated under the very comprehensive name of divine, is treated as a complete deception: but a species of mechanism is set up in opposition to some of the systems of physico-theology and teleology, which are often ridiculous enough, which is even more irrational than they are. Nature is a machine; morality a prejudice, custom, or instinct. Even Voltaire's sound understanding led him to oppose this abuse of his own kind of scepticism and of his description of satire. In the very passages, however, in which he contends earnestly against the principle inculcated, he confirms what we shall fully establish in the following volume, that this book found a very numerous class of readers and met with a most favourable reception in bigoted France, which was kept as it were in a state of nonage by means of a despotic police.

In his 'Philosophical Dictionary,' under the article 'Style,' Voltaire has conspicuously brought into notice, in strong colours and in a bitter spirit, the deficiencies of form in this code of sensuality and enjoyment; and in the article 'God,' has very ably shown how utterly absurd it is, as has been done in this book, to attempt to deny the existence of a God. He disputes also the reasons which have been brought forward in disproof of that existence; but only, indeed, in order to promote his own views of that indifference, which prefers remaining in a condition of absolute doubt. In general, obscurity and confusion reign through the whole, and the same sentences and propositions are repeated even to loathing; particular passages, on the contrary, are written in a clear and lively manner, and there are occasional bursts even of eloquence. The King of Prussia, by his refutation of the work, which was much read in these singular times even by ladies who made pretensions to education, contributed largely to give it much more importance than it deserved. We

shall choose only a few passages as they present themselves, in order to show in what way such authors sought to give some appearance of philosophy to their paradoxes.

The authors, for example, allege, that we can just as little form any clear and definite notions in relation to the moral or physical world from the word order or disorder, as from the common definition of dead and animate matter, inert and living materials and elements. Experience teaches, so these gentlemen think, that those materials which we call inert and dead, possess activity, motion, life, eyes, and even consciousness, when they are united in a certain way among themselves, or with other materials. This proposition is then laid down as a foundation, in order to prove the eternity of matter. This matter, an abstract thing, of which at last indeed we neither have nor obtain any idea, because we always contemplate it in some particular form, is to be regarded as something eternal and necessary, of which the forms only are fleeting and accidental.

These propositions just quoted, as will be obvious, annihilate the notion of a divine arrangement of the world, or Providence and an inward life; we shall add the proposition from which the authors deduce the nothingness of the moral order of human life, and the falsity of the adoption of any principles of morality. "If," it runs, "man, according to his nature, is necessitated to love his own well-being, he is also necessitated to search out and apply all those means which can contribute to promote his comfort and well-being. It is therefore absurd to expect, that a man should love virtue, when this would make him unhappy; and as soon as he feels that sin would make him happy, then he must love sin."

We are far from alleging that Diderot, Holbach, or the circle of dissolute men of genius and idlers, who passed the summer upon the latter's estate at Grandval, spent or regulated their lives according to those principles, or that, in their presumption, they ever thought what deadly poison they were sending into circulation; but this species of writing is far more comprehensible among such people as these, than the course which Helvetius pursued. It is easy to conceive, that a Parisian circle of pleasure-seeking and clever brothers and sisters, who rejoiced in every species of sensual enjoyment, might bring half a hundred of such books into circulation; because we ourselves, in Germany, where no Holbach promotes such writing by his money, have no

want of such publications : but it is a melancholy sign of those times, that a man, such as Helvetius, should seek and find the satisfaction of his love of glory and of his vanity, in the composition of a system of selfishness.

In order in some measure to explain and excuse the last-mentioned fact, we must suppose that it had come to be regarded as an honour, in the midst of generally reigning servility, to give evidence of free-thinking; under the reign of a general spirit of slavery, to assert freedom; and in a condition of almost universal hypocrisy, to exhibit open contempt, and to oppose scorn and contempt to a system which was forcibly sustained by police and cruel tribunals, by institutions of education, government and clergy, by blockheads and cunning sophists. Helvetius, therefore, as a man of the world, pursued that course which led to worldly reputation, and it will excite less surprise that he gained this by means of his dry and comfortless book upon 'Spirit,' when we know a little more accurately his personal connexions, his wealth, his expenditure, and the hospitality which he exercised towards foreign princes and nobility.

The work upon 'Spirit' has long since disappeared; but in consequence of the connexions of the author, it will always have an historical value, and it acquires a double importance from the fact that Madame du Deffant is said to have recognised its theory as the principles upon which the great world proceeded, although they were unwilling to announce them. It is said that Madame du Deffant stated, that this work betrayed everybody's secret; it is therefore worth while to learn who this everybody could be, whose secrets were betrayed by a printed system of egotism. By a singular accident Helvetius came to the possession of his more than princely wealth by means of Queen Maria Leszinsky, whose respect for the Jesuits amounted almost to reverence, and whose superstition almost to nonsense. When he was only twenty-three years of age, he received a share in the general farming of the taxes, which brought him in a yearly income of above a hundred thousand French crowns. From that time he became, as the farmers-general usually were, the friend, host and confidant of the high nobility of Europe. Helvetius divided his time among journeys of inspection, visits to great, or, more properly speaking, celebrated men, amours of every kind and description, entertaining and clever conversation and intercourse in all the Parisian saloons

mentioned elsewhere, and society with the actresses, opera singers, and the geniuses of power of his age, and with the fashionable European world, whose place of assembly was in his house.

We point out these connexions of the author as his justification; because it will be seen that he never became acquainted with the classes of men, whose occupations, education and position kept them apart from the egotism of the rich, by whom they were regarded with deep contempt, and which obliged them to live for others. Besides he was what the world calls a good man; he distributed pensions, he supported poor scholars, was a beneficent landowner, and behaved well to his peasants, except in the case of offences against the game laws, which he prosecuted with such severity that he was often in danger of his life; with respect to which we must, however, remark, that the poisonous letters on that subject in the collection of unprinted writings and letters of Diderot, which has first been published in our times, must be used with caution. Helvetius was well known in all Europe, and especially by the princes, because he kept an open and princely house for their reception, in Paris in the winter, and in summer in the country; and when his work appeared, the contents of which we shall explain below, it was received, as may be proved by documents, by all the great world in Europe with approbation, and their admiration was loudly expressed, that he had so admirably reduced to a system what they all thought.

If proof were required, we might bring forward all the German princes who made any pretensions to mental improvement, the Russian nobles and their empress Catharine, the Prussians celebrated in war, the Duke of Brunswick and Prince Henry; and also the Queen of Sweden. If any one, in our devotional and solid philosophical times, should express or feel surprise that we attribute so great importance to such a man as Helvetius, to such a person we would remark, that Italy also united in the general strain of commendation, that two translations were published at the same time in Germany, and that Gottsched took the greatest pains to trumpet forth the praises of the work. The book was only sought on account of its contents, for its style is uncommonly dry; and yet the author on account of it was sought out and gazed at as a miracle, when he was in Paris in winter, by the princes and high nobility who swarmed in the French capital.

Frederick the Second made an exception; he disapproved of

the book, because he saw well, that this wisdom which was set forth for him and such as he was, must destroy itself, as soon as it ceased to be the secret of an exclusive society; he however promoted the influence of the work by his reception of its author. As is well known, he caused Helvetius to be invited to Berlin, and not merely as an author, but as an oracle of the oppressive French *régime*, allotted him apartments in his palace, and treated him as an honoured guest. It will readily be believed, that all the German princes who favoured the French manners and mental culture, followed this example. Among these the Duke of Gotha did every thing possible to prove that he had not a Grimm in Paris in vain. Even George the Third, who probably knew nothing of the contents of the work, unless he may have read something of it in the newspapers, was induced particularly to distinguish the celebrated author during his sojourn in England.

In our notice of this work, we shall very shortly present, what the fashionable and the rich, probably always in secret, whilst they publicly professed quite different principles, regarded as the true Gospel; for we cannot by any means overlook the work.

Helvetius starts from a principle which he does not think it necessary to prove, but assumes as an axiom, that all our ideas are derived from the senses, and from impressions upon the senses retained in the mind, or what he calls exclusively memory*; hence he concludes, that what we name mind is nothing else than a power of perceiving the connexions and relations which these notions, impressed through the senses, have with and to one another and our whole personality†. Every judgement formed by the understanding, therefore, is, according to him, only a perception of various relations, and the action of the judgement is called by him a compound feeling. Error therefore only springs from passion or ignorance, or the abuse of certain words. As judgement with him is nothing else than a particular species of feeling, namely, that of the agreement or disagreement of two impressions, it is disturbed by passion, in

* “ Je me rappelle l'image d'un chêne, alors mes organes intérieurs doivent nécessairement se trouver dans la situation où ils étaient à la vue de ce chêne; or cette situation des organes doit incontestablement produire une sensation; il est donc évident que se ressouvenir c'est sentir.”

† “ Toutes les opérations de l'esprit consistent d'apercevoir les ressemblances ou différences, les convenances ou les disconvenances des objets divers. Cette capacité n'est que la sensibilité physique même; tout se réduit donc à sentir.”

as far as passion only presses forward one side of the subject, and prevents the other from being conceived, either in whole or in part. Ignorance leads to error, because the ignorant man is unable to recal by memory all the feelings or impressions which are necessary to the comparison.

In this manner Helvetius proceeds; as he is sensible, however, that his readers especially will be very easily wearied with this species of dry theorising, he departs from time to time altogether from his method and matter. As in other places he mixes up anecdotes of all kinds with his subject, such as one would seek for at most in a *Vade-mecum* of wit, or would relate in a social party, he here inserts a long article upon luxury, and then returns to the disturbance of a sound judgement by the abuse of words. It will be readily supposed, that in a theory from which identity and contemplation have wholly disappeared, the discourse must turn especially upon such subjects as matter, space, eternal, &c.

Materialism leads him naturally to the subject of self-love; and in establishing the notion of this feeling he declares, that Rochefoucault was entirely in the right when he laid down the principle in his celebrated 'Maxims,' that this feeling is the only motive of human action. In full agreement with this notion, the idea of moral freedom is altogether denied; because Helvetius, as he says, can make nothing of all that Mallebranche has said upon the subject of moral freedom, and acknowledges only physical freedom. The dryness of the materials is here again enlivened by anecdotes and narratives; which form a very extraordinary contrast with the rest of the work.

The whole so-called first part of the book is devoted to theoretical paradoxes, and the moral or practical matter first appears in the second part, to which the preceding is to be regarded as a foundation. And here we immediately find the riddle of the applause bestowed by the polite and fashionable world resolved; the author as a philosopher ventures to proclaim what a fashionable man of our days, with all his undervaluing and contempt of every thing except that which was the mode in the saloons, would only venture softly to whisper in the ear of his nearest neighbour. He places the manner of living in metropolitan cities—the acquaintance with all their loose arts—upon an equal footing with true science and art. Ninon de l'Enclos and Aristotle are, according to him, equally great and worthy of admiration. The possibility of such a notion is immediately learned

from the first sentence of the second discourse; for it will be seen, that he only needs to give a definition of that singular thing which the French call *esprit*, suitable to his previously assumed theoretical principles, in order to give it a place above that wisdom and greatness of mind which can only be gained by deep inward contemplation and study. Knowledge, according to Helvetius's definition, is only the recollection of certain facts and ideas propounded by others; *esprit*, on the contrary, is the combination of new ideas, in which it is of no consequence, whether these be combined in favour of the public of the licentious Ninon, or of the noble disciples of the serious teacher of all human wisdom.

Had such a work been written, or intended only for the schools and for books, it would scarcely have been worth mention as suggesting materials for refutation, or as furnishing an occasion for writing new books; but it had its immediate influence and value in the great world, which rejoiced to find itself here represented, and clung to this theory, as it had previously clung to blind faith, to which it now begins anew to do homage. We shall briefly point out the results to which this led. Helvetius, after having more accurately fixed and explained his singular definitions of knowledge and *esprit*, continues in the following popular language:—"Who will venture to deny, when he has taken counsel of good morals, that there is as much capacity in combining the most various things—that as many ideas are exhibited in the attitudes, the dress, and the studied discourse of a coquette, as are required for the discovery of a system of the world, and that the actress Couvreur and the wanton Ninon de l'Enclos have, each in and after her kind, quite as much mind (*esprit*) as Aristotle and Solon?" This at least is quite incapable of injury, and might serve to enliven or awaken conversation in the saloons, but can only win a smile from any person of the least reflection without exciting his contempt. But what follows is fearful:—

"Every individual judges persons or things according to the agreeable or disagreeable impression which they make upon him; the public is nothing else than the aggregate of these individuals, and it judges according to the same impressions. Accordingly, what is called the uprightness of a private man, may be nothing else than the custom of performing such actions as are found to be permanently advantageous." These general

principles are supported by a number of illustrations drawn from experience, the correctness of which no one will doubt who is acquainted with the *esprit* of those classes of men from among whom Helvetius has collected his illustrations. Speaking of his experience, he says,—“The ideas which we most willingly and most easily adopt, are those which flatter our inclinations ; and we decide according to the standard of our advantage, whether we shall receive or reject the opinions of others.” What he sub-joins, was then no doubt true in his time, like the most of his other illustrations from experience. “If,” it runs, “a work has once obtained renown, or a man celebrity, the one or the other will be generally praised, without being more highly esteemed ; for our applause in this case rests not upon our own feeling, but upon a faith in the word of other persons. The various different judgements pronounced by the most celebrated scholars upon the most renowned master-pieces, prove that every one merely esteems that the most which pleases him best, and that every circle has withal its own standard.” This is then applied to morality.

“Virtue is nothing else than the custom of so directing our actions, that they may be advantageous to the greatest number of men ; and love for virtue is nothing else than the wish to promote in the highest degree the general good, which may be unfavourable to particular circles.” Upon this passage then follow some admirable remarks upon the inward condition of a weakly trained, or rather ill-trained, generation, which was instructed in every thing, but which possessed no solid or substantial knowledge of anything : such that generation was, and such the present now is. These remarks have nothing in common with the system of egotism : they are immediately drawn from experience, and correspond most fully with what Rousseau says, who starts from quite a different point. We should perhaps literally translate these remarks with a view to our object, which is to represent the intellectual intercourse-life of that time, we shall however only bring forward a small portion of them.

“A philosopher,” he observes, “who lives among people who merely associate and entertain themselves with the trifles of social intercourse, with ladies and so-called people of good tone, will appear simple and ridiculous in such a society ; he will become an object of scorn to the poorest punster, whose miserable conceits pass for admirable specimens of wit. The

applause bestowed upon certain jests, depends much less upon whether the originator of the jest is really witty or not, than whether he takes care to ridicule and satirize those things which are disagreeable to the society with whom he associates." A chapter upon good tone contains, in like manner, some admirable observations, deduced from the experience of a nobleman of the world, thoroughly skilled and initiated in all the perversity of this system; from this some excuses may be made for those who praise it. Those who lived in the world and were thoroughly acquainted with its ways, found in the work many pieces of experience and many truths which remained altogether obscure to other readers, however clearly they are expounded. In these very pieces he manifests a contempt for moral principle which is not peculiar to him, but which in the great world was regarded as a mark of genius.

In order to show, for example, that what is commonly called the moral order of things is only another species of physical order, he deduces from what he daily sees and hears that many actions are regarded as crimes only from prejudice, and many only as virtues from the force of public opinion. The observation is in many respects perfectly well-founded. From this it appears how strong the dislike was at that time, even among the highest classes and in the midst of all their demoralisation, to the meanness and pitifulness of a degraded generation; for he alludes to their coalheaver's faith and slavish fidelity when, after the mention of many virtues only sanctified by public opinion, he alleges that the more such imaginary virtues are preferred to real ones, the more are morals destroyed and the state becomes degraded.

On this occasion he delineates his monarchical age, such as we have described it in the first division, but he names no one. "Religious corruption (we naturally think of Louis XV., of Elizabeth of Russia, of Bavaria, and of the Palatinate)—religious corruption is for the most part the consequence of a love of pleasure; political corruption the consequence of bad legislation and administration of affairs." "Moral theories," he aptly adds, "profit nothing, for our modes of thinking and feeling are not thereby determined, but by natural impulses and by laws*." The legis-

* "Les vices d'un peuple sont, si j'ose le dire, toujours cachés au fond de sa législation, c'est là qu'il faut fouiller pour arracher la racine productrice de ses vices."—*Discourse II. chap. 15.*

lator has only two means of improving morals: he must either unite, in a skilful manner, what is advantageous to all, with the private advantage of individuals, or he must promote and encourage development and cultivation of mind." What he says with respect to the first, sounds harsh; but when more closely considered, it must at least be regarded as the result of experience, if not of philosophy.

"Our own interest," says Helvetius, "is the only standard according to which we measure the esteem or contempt which we feel for the actions or notions of men, our whole life therefore is absolutely dependent upon the direction which our passions have received." He then goes through these passions one by one, and shows, that where no passions exist, all activity dies; and also, that what he calls virtue is an impossibility considered apart from the existence of passions. This leads him to a point to which above all others we must refer, because in this way it will be clearly shown that the change which took place at the close of the eighteenth century in the whole condition of society, was not effected by accidental causes, but was the necessary consequence of the excessive and unjust claims of the ruling and enjoying classes. Believers and unbelievers, idealists and realists, aristocrats and democrats, Rousseau and Montesquieu, Voltaire and Helvetius, Noailles and Condorcet, however different in their opinions in other respects, all agree in this point, that the existing condition of social order could not long continue: and what shall we say if this condition, under a somewhat altered form, is again recommended to the present generation by hiring or deceived sophists?

This leads us to the third discourse or division of the celebrated work upon 'Mind,' in which a kind of theory of government and legislation is proposed, after the example of Montesquieu and Rousseau; but considered from a different point of view, and founded upon very different principles from those which they professed. Helvetius continues true to himself, or starts here from frivolity and the love of pleasure, represents all those forms of government and morals then existing in the states of Europe, as altogether unsuitable, untenable, and irrational, and leads his readers to the same goal to which Montesquieu with his seriousness, and Rousseau with his fiery zeal for a condition of nature, had conducted their readers. The eighteenth chapter of the third part commences with a vehement and rhetorical de-

claration directed against despotism and against ministerial power, or what he calls the office of a vizier. After this introduction, like his predecessors, he describes the customs, laws and morals of France, and consequently of all the continental states, which were more or less like those of the military monarchy of France, as ruinous and calculated to destroy all the bonds of social union; whilst, on the contrary, he praises republican institutions, and particularly those of the states of antiquity. The protection, he alleges, which is extended to virtue in despotic states, (and under this expression he comprehends, like Montesquieu, all absolute monarchies) has a tendency, according to the proofs already given, to prefer false virtues to true ones—the most vigorous and able minds are oppressed, the weakest are called forward and promoted.

A whole series of chapters (20—30) contain an uninterrupted, well-sustained, and fine ironical description of the French manner of life, and of the French government. In the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters it is proved, that only humble talents and apparent virtues were rewarded in states organised as the most of the European states then were; whereas, on the contrary, true virtues and great abilities were necessarily discouraged. The republican states of antiquity alone, according to the representation here given, as well as that given by Montesquieu and Rousseau, awakened and called into action great virtues and talents, by the manner in which they were rewarded. And in the twenty-ninth chapter the system of arbitrary government practised in military monarchies is described in the very darkest and most repulsive colours, as if the question had only been about oriental despots, under which guise it had also been treated by Montesquieu.

We may entirely pass over the fourth division of the work, because it is not immediately connected with our object, although it indisputably contains many admirable observations, and conveys some very singular intelligence, drawn from the author's experience and that of his friends, with respect to the nature and usages of that world in which he was completely at home. In this division he speaks, not scientifically, but in the language of common life, about genius, imagination and feeling—of what was named *esprit* in French society, and the different kinds of which are indicated by his own words in the note*. The way in which

* “ *Esprit fort et esprit fin, bel esprit, esprit du siècle et esprit juste.*”

he treats education is similar to that in which he had previously treated government and administration; for he seeks to prove that no system of education can properly be thought of in absolute monarchies and wherever the minister of the day can do whatsoever he pleases, because in these cases all instruction and all education is then confined to mere preparation for business or for court service.

As we have now brought conspicuously and unsparingly forward the one side of the work, which unveils to us the corruption and immorality of the circle in which Helvetius lived, we must not wholly overlook or forget the other side, which furnishes evidence of a genuine love of mankind in the midst of corruption, of that intellectual movement which then animated all noble minds, and of that enthusiasm for the progress of humanity which inspired a generation which we, who are in the vale of years, have, alas! outlived. Blind faith and superstition, arbitrary dominion and the school systems of the learned, or rather of the upholders of the opinions of the Byzantine and Roman Churches, and of the iron power of military rule, are here stormed in the manner in which Danton and his contemporaries afterwards violently and utterly overthrew them. We can easily prove from his second work, that in fact Helvetius entertained the view of attaining the same end by a different way, which Montesquieu and Rousseau before him had endeavoured to reach.

This work appeared in 1771, under the title ‘*De l’Homme,*’ and contains, on the whole, the same principles which had been brought forward in his work upon ‘*Mind,*’ the principles however are more fully developed and more scientifically established; and the political tendencies which would be now called radical, and which had been only hinted at in the former work, are here openly, clearly and definitely announced. Frederick, who now began to see a democratic tendency reigning in literature, would hear nothing of the work; whereas Prince Gallitzin, on the contrary, caused a second edition to be published at his own expense. The tone of this book is such as could only spring from the conviction that a revolution was altogether unavoidable; the author knows well that his language is bold, but the moment was now arrived for his nation, in which prudence would have been considered merely equivalent to meanness, and in which a book, written in a cautious spirit, would have been regarded

as giving evidence of a slavish fear. He adds, that his book upon man need not appear during his lifetime, because the disease against which it was directed was incurable. In this work it is expressly alleged that France could only be delivered by means of conquest; because the form of the administration and of the police led infallibly to ignorance, and to an indifference towards every thing which stretches beyond inculcated and traditional ideas.

§ VII.

D'ALEMBERT.

We shall reserve our remarks upon D'Alembert's personal influence, especially upon Frederick the Second, Catherine the Second, and many German princes, till the close of this section, and first refer to his labours for the dissemination of views which must have necessarily proved destructive to the prevailing system, that rested wholly upon superstition and power. In this labour he was not only the colleague of Diderot in editing the Encyclopædia, but very important as the friend of Voltaire; and though he conducted himself with much greater tact, prudence and reason than Diderot, he was not more favourable to the existing religion than Holbach or Helvetius.

D'Alembert was very renowned in his time as a mathematician; his merits indeed in this department were afterwards called in question; but it is no part of our province to decide, nor even to assign him any definite rank as a writer upon style or *belles lettres*, since it is sufficient for us to show, in reference to our object, that he not only exercised a great and important influence upon the fashionable world and upon novel-readers, as Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau had also done, but that he introduced the new doctrine into the departments of science, and even sought to extend it over those of learning. We take for granted as admitted facts, that D'Alembert was first known as a mathematician, then as a friend of Voltaire and a man of talents and ingenuity; that he played an important character in the saloons, and assisted Lespinasse in the formation of her peculiar circle, in which the subjects of the day were treated with more boldness and freedom than in the house of Madame Geoffrin. We add to all this, that he was introduced by Vol-

taire to Frederick the Second, whose entire confidence he enjoyed, and who carried on a correspondence with him; that in connexion with Diderot, he wrote a book in defence of the audacious and in every respect contemptible Abbé de Prades, because he was persecuted by the fanatical French courts, and afterwards, as the panegyrist of the academy, had to distribute high-sounding commendations and phrases, which were of more value to many vain men than an order.

D'Alembert, in conjunction with Diderot, had projected the plan of the 'Encyclopædia,' the first two parts of which, as we have already mentioned, appeared in 1751; this work was to make all others unnecessary, and to diffuse the philosophy of the new school over every department of human knowledge. He alone wrote the Introduction to the work, which is, down to the present day, regarded as a masterpiece of didactic style. This Introduction is, properly speaking, a particular work; and although we cannot wholly concur in the unmeasured praise which the French of that period, which preceded the *doctrinaires* and the romantic school, have heaped upon it, yet we must admit, that the declamation and affected artificiality of the renowned stylist are not to be remarked in it, but that it exhibits a quiet, uniform, clear, altogether didactic strain of exposition. The art of the arrangement, and the unobserved introduction and carrying through of an entirely new system of the higher didactic method, of the change of the hitherto admitted rank of the various departments, is worthy of great admiration, and accomplished in a masterly manner.

This Introduction expounds a system whose foundation indeed belongs to Locke; but it is here so consistently developed and so clearly stated, that it may well be claimed by D'Alembert as his own, and that he is justly entitled either to claim the merit, or suffer the reproach, of having recommended and given dominion to this new system. D'Alembert, with Locke, starts from the principle that all our perceptions proceed from the operations of our senses (not only begin with them, for there all are agreed), and he leads us through a chain of propositions intimately and logically united, till he brings us to that doctrine which was in direct opposition to the philosophy of Aristotle as well as that of Leibnitz, viz. that reflection, comparison of sensible perceptions and of their relations by the power of the understanding, and the perception of that which would be injurious

or advantageous to us, constitute alone all human knowledge, and that intellectual activity is not a ruling but only a serving power.

If these principles be once admitted, then it necessarily follows that mere animal feeling or perception is not only the commencement of all social order, of all arts, and of all philosophy, but also that it is their only foundation, which is quite another thing. In this way social order springs from the necessity of making use of other men as instruments of our well-being alone, and it necessarily follows, that whoever has the greatest degree of power will seize upon and secure the greatest advantages. In this way the constitution of society necessarily calls forth oppression; and notions of right and wrong, very far from being founded originally in the intellectual nature of man, arise first from the repugnance which he feels against every species of oppression. The notion of duty is necessarily connected with the notion of right, and from them first springs the notion or rather the feeling of virtue in the members of society, and the necessity felt becomes a law. We must not overlook the fact, that D'Alembert does not omit to find a place for the comfortless system of his school. He introduces, without calling attention to the subject by any remark, the way in which man is led by the notion of right and wrong, impressed upon him from without, to the immateriality of the soul, to immortality, and to the notion of a Godhead. From all this it clearly follows, that external life and every thing which is connected with it must have the precedence, and that every thing which is intellectual must be placed in a subordinate position; and it naturally coincides with all these notions, that instead of the study of the ancient languages, the poetry and philosophy of antiquity, and of the science of the Christian schools, the foreway must be given in the series of knowledge to the natural sciences, to the mathematical parts of human knowledge, in short, to all that we can measure, reckon, taste, see, and weigh.

He expresses the last-mentioned fact with great caution, so that no one has anything very essential to object, although the whole order of the series of knowledge is subverted thereby, and the pursuits of this life and its advantages are made the chief object of learning, more than the belief in another. According to the old system, all knowledge was inclosed within the limits of faith; all the sciences of life and of things more profitable were subordinate to a science which was called a higher or a given one; whereas this, according to the new system, is

so far removed from life, that it is easily seen that the object is wholly to set it aside. In reference to this point D'Alembert with covert ingenuity observes:—"The definite is one side of knowledge; it belongs to the general properties of bodies—extension, size, in these alone is certainty; the other bears upon the knowledge of what is inwards, it leads us to God:" but he maliciously adds—"It is separated from the other by a great gulf." In this treatise, revelation, which is altogether excluded from knowledge, occupies a position which is sufficient to lead us to perceive, that he wishes wholly to avoid all discussion on it, or impugning it as Rousseau had done. He says he has nothing to do with revelation, which is to fill up the gulf between what is external and what is internal; that he speaks only of the other, the real side of things.

He afterwards admirably points out the inward connexion of the mathematical sciences among themselves, their absolute and clear relative value; with this however we have nothing to do, as we neither criticise nor analyse the work, but only wish to point out and explain its relation to the mighty progress of the spirit of the age. He passes on from mathematics to logic, thence to grammar, and from this to all that can remain to him of metaphysics according to his system, and comes at last to rhetoric, where all the others begin.

It is remarkable that Diderot as well as D'Alembert so extraordinarily underrated that very science to which they owed their reputation. This sprung from their common repugnance to the Jesuits. It is precisely the same with this, as it appears to us, as it was with their praises of stoic morality, which they sought to place in opposition to Christian; since both praised the brevity and conciseness, the earnestness, acuteness, and severity of Tacitus and Seneca in their books; although Diderot both in his conversation and writings fell into great diffuseness and repetition, and even his best friends were weary of his watery prolixity. D'Alembert maintains that rhetoric is, properly speaking, no science, in which we entirely concur with him, however little the remark may be borne out by experience. He appeals to the well-known sentence, that inward conviction or natural talents and confidence in their power alone makes an orator (*pectus facit disertum*); he adds, however, that the rhetorical arts have long attained to the distinction of being regarded as a science*.

* "Ils sont depuis longtems en possession de former une branche distinguée des connaissances humaines."

History, geography, chronology follow at the conclusion of all, and the history of political administration, and the knowledge of various political arrangements and constitutions are very properly connected with them. The fact must not be forgotten that all this had great influence upon the splendid activity of such men as Gatterer and Schlözer in Germany. We shall afterwards see also that our I. D. Michaelis became a favourer of D'Alembert. "All these sciences (he says) rest upon ideas which are immediately derived from the senses (*idées directes, que nous avons reçues par les sens*), or upon the connexion and comparison of such ideas," the latter of which he calls exclusively philosophy.

The notion which D'Alembert entertained with respect to the fine arts, which he recognises as not creative but merely imitative, is intimately connected with this idea of science, and of what alone deserves the name of philosophy. Painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry are mere imitations of the beauties of nature, and music is placed very far in the background. According to this Introduction, it took its origin merely from the desire to make a noise, and was afterwards perfected. It would almost appear as if D'Alembert had foreseen the newest direction of music, and we cannot but take advantage of the occasion to call the attention of our readers to the fact, that even those who wished, in all other things, to raise a barrier of power against the progress announced by the Encyclopædists, completely coincided with them in every thing which related to money and pleasures, in obstructing all moral and intellectual advancement, and in promoting what they called material well-being. In reference to the natural sciences and finance, our principle is generally recognised; we shall only quote D'Alembert's demand with respect to music, the remainder, *i. e.* the information and the proof, we must leave to those to give who are better acquainted with the department than we are. D'Alembert requires of music that it should represent and portray every thing possible; he even goes so far as to maintain, that music which represents and portrays nothing is a mere noise.

The same striving either altogether to keep at a distance, or at least to place in a very subordinate rank, all inward contemplation, all the power of creative fancy, all abstract thinking which is not merely reflective, is found in the division upon the mechanical arts. This new theory, which was intentionally placed in hostile opposition to the old, did not merely seek to secure a place for

these arts along with the others, which in those times would have been both necessary and praiseworthy, but to give them a pre-eminence above speculative science. When afterwards the new philosophy of life was developed in a lively manner, it is easily seen why all men of the world, and every man who was striving after clearness, must have preferred this philosophy to the obscurity, and to the positive oracular wisdom of the school philosophy, which was united to a scholastic terminology, and to artificial forms and formulas, and which was always dominant and renewing itself. D'Alembert starts with an accurate distinction of what he calls enlightening truth (*évidence*), certainty (*certitude*), and probability (*probabilité*), and then develops and explains the internal connexion of the different branches of that science, which he acknowledges as such. He here expressly repeats himself, because he wishes to give general currency to his clear and generally intelligible theory of the order and subordination of the various departments of knowledge. He states the whole process in the following manner:—

“The subjects on which the mind is employed are either internal or external, and the mind is engaged upon them either by mediate or immediate notions. The whole mass of immediate perceptions is passively gained by means of collecting or learning, after the manner of a machine, and this is called enriching the memory; the mediate perceptions are gained by reflection. The power of combining notions is double, either a combination of mediate notions (*elle raisonne sur les objets des idées directes*) in the production of new notions by the imitation of something given.” In this way he continues:—“Memory, imagination and reason are only three different activities in reference to objects, so that history corresponds to memory, philosophy to the understanding, and the fine arts to imagination.” Under the last-mentioned he understands what we call the productive capacity, but to which he sets very narrow limits in the words* which we shall quote, in order that he may keep free of all idealism.

We may venture to pass over the further development, enumeration and distribution of human perceptions, &c., because

* “L'esprit ne crée, et n'imagine des objets, que tant qu'ils sont semblables à ceux qu'il a connus par des idées directes et par des sensations; plus il s'éloigne de ces objets, plus les êtres qu'il forme sont bizarres et peu agréables.”

they are not so nearly connected with the attack upon the reigning system as the foregoing; on the other hand, we must examine somewhat more nearly his history of science. His division of the whole learned world into men of erudition (*érudits*), philosophers, and men of genius (*beaux esprits*), is so formed, that the sciences of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries retain a very small value, and that the whole history in consequence becomes very one-sided; but he by no means conceals his design, and for this reason his history is of great importance to us. He affirms boldly what, for long afterwards, all Frenchmen affirmed after him, and Michaelis, Schlözer and others disseminated in Germany, that the people of the middle ages were only possessed of a barbarous literature and were themselves barbarians. All that was magnificent in the manifestation and effect of the scholastic theology and the philosophy of the middle ages was not only wholly disallowed, but even that time of Italy, whose like will never return, and whose glorious productions might be compared with the full blow of Athens or with the splendid times of the Ptolemies, is satirized and treated with contempt. We speak of the bloom of Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and of the great and immortal men who created a new science from the ancients, from the poetry and philosophy of the middle ages, and from their own discoveries and observations. In all these great men, this bold writer only sees *Salmasiuses*, collectors, grammatical and critical bunglers. This is plainly intentional and calculated for the public, which he gains over in favour of the new science; for it could not be unknown to the malicious writer, how much his own mother tongue, poetry, eloquence, and the formative arts owed to the very men and studies which were contemned by him. He guards himself carefully from betraying to his educated but withal ignorant public, how the study of the ancient languages in the very time so abused by him, was intimately connected with the study of nature and the sciences of life, and that the most celebrated interpreters of the ancients were the most highly esteemed in proportion as they altogether kept aloof from the mere criticism of words.

D'Alembert goes so far as to allege that these men had sought only in the ancients facts and words, and it is a matter of surprise, that the most distinguished men among the teachers of a new and freer-thinking school, whose attention was more

directed to the duties of life than to the means of avoiding future punishments or reconciling an avenging God*, should have formed such false notions of the people to whom the new age was indebted for that which he so earnestly recommends and opposes to the scholastic science of his time. The scornful tone with which he appears to care for the learned †, makes the sciences of the school ridiculous; and the manner in which the democratic teacher is named along with the learned, is an evidence of the malice with which these academical *doctrinaires* persecuted Rousseau ‡, who would have nothing to do with the comradeship of the learned, and whom therefore the followers of Voltaire, under the appearance of praise, continued most maliciously to ridicule. Learning is here regarded as very far inferior to *belles lettres*, and D'Alembert, in his destructive zeal for the new school, goes so far, that he is even in the highest degree unjust towards Ronsard. He disallows the claims of the whole of the middle ages and its poetry, and mentions neither the Italians nor the Spaniards, because not the least shadow of poetry fell to the lot of this founder of natural, statistic and mathematical wisdom; wherefore he dates the commencement of *belles lettres* with the time of Malesherbes, and the bloom of the fine arts he identifies with the reign of Louis the Fourteenth.

This tendency, which distinguishes the history of learning and of *belles lettres*, again shows itself in the history of philosophy, for philosophy in the writer's view, first begins with Bacon, and he disposes of all the earlier philosophy with a bitter side-glance at theology. Des Cartes, as an ideal philosopher, places him in a difficulty, because he is obliged to name him as a mathematician and natural philosopher; but D'Alembert is too good a logician and sophist not to know how to help himself out of the difficulty. He honours the mathematician and discoverer of natural laws, he brings prominently forward the

* Those grammarians and critics of the earlier and better times of philology only sought the reputation, "de jouir d'une science hérissée de difficultés souvent ridicule et quelques fois barbare."

† He laments in some measure that now-a-days people despise the learned too much, and adds:—"Il semble que par le mépris qu'on a pour les savans on cherche à les punir de l'estime outrée qu'ils faisaient d'eux-mêmes, ou du suffrage peu éclairé de leurs contemporains."

‡ D'Alembert says, with a stroke at the courtiers and the Genevese philosophers:—"Une foule de circonstances tend à nous y précipiter (dans la barbarie). On peut regarder comme une des principales, cet amour du faux bel-esprit, qui protège l'ignorance, qui s'en fait honneur, et qui la repandra tôt ou tard."

opponent of the scholastic philosophy which prevailed in his age, and the founder of a mathematical philosophy; but he mentions his ideal philosophy only so far as to found his scepticism upon it. Along with Des Cartes he guards himself well against giving his due meed of honour and praise to our Kepler, as La Place and other Frenchmen of a later period have done; he merely mentions him in passing, because his Platonism alone would have excluded him, and the poetry of his 'Harmonica Mundi' would have harmonized very badly with D'Alembert's views: Newton alone found favour.

It is not, however, Newton's philosophy to which D'Alembert gives prominence in this department; besides Bacon, he is acquainted with Locke alone; Newton therefore only obtains a place, because in his mathematical and physical sciences he combined observation with calculation and measurement. The founder of this new science of the wisdom of life and of knowledge dwells long upon the works of Locke, and D'Alembert goes so far as to declare him alone to be worthy of the name of a philosopher, and his praise is most ingeniously combined with the exclusive recommendation of those men whom he proposes, in his manifesto to the educated world, to extol as the only friends of enlightenment.

When he afterwards comes to enumerate the men whom he recognises as renowned contemporaries, and recommends as the founders of a better wisdom, then he exhibits his perfect mastery in the business which he has undertaken in opposition to the old school. Voltaire is not expressly mentioned in the van, but when he has first mentioned others, he comes upon him with so much the greater praise. Condillac, Buffon and Montesquieu are named along with Voltaire, and Rousseau is maliciously cast in with the courtiers, who at that time gloried in their ignorance; and the author declares, that there was great reason to fear a species of barbarism from both. On the other hand, Rousseau is indeed praised as a contributor, and his paradox with respect to the moral disadvantage of the culture of the sciences is only slightly touched upon.

We think that we have now sufficiently pointed out the importance of this introduction with respect to the mental cultivation of the last half of the eighteenth century, and that we are thereby relieved from the necessity of speaking further of the Encyclopædia, or of inquiring what relation it bore to that of Cham-

brier which Diderot and D'Alembert took for their ground-work. Among the other works of D'Alembert, which were published in the year 1805, in eighteen volumes, if our object permitted us to go into a fuller and more minute examination of his literary merits, we should be obliged to mention and enter upon his panegyrics written after the manner of Fontenelle, his correspondence with Frederick the Second, Catherine the Second and others, and his attempt at a translation of Tacitus. But we hope to arrive more shortly at our object of pointing out the nature of the new mental training and its different tendencies, by availing ourselves of the occasion of his controversy with Rousseau, upon the question whether they should or should not erect a theatre in Geneva, in order to show in what manner the age was moved and excited by the two principal writers of the new school.

The controversy between Rousseau and D'Alembert sprung out of the article *Génève*, which the latter had worked up for the 'Encyclopædia,' and in which he had calculated upon attacking the obsolete severity of discipline and education from a new quarter. This article (*Génève, ou Description abrégée du Gouvernement de cette République*), was immediately published as a separate work and excited great attention, because every thing was praised in a fine and covert manner in the republic, which it was the intention of the writer thereby to blame and condemn in the French monarchy. In this way it was proved with foresight and forbearance, that the system then universally prevailing, and which was maintained wholly by power, was in itself unreasonable and indefensible. The tolerant spirit of the Genevese was especially lauded, and they were called upon to root out the last-remaining traces of the old intolerance, the exclusion of the theatre from their walls. The tone, the style, the manner of this article show with what a lavish expenditure of talents and mind Voltaire and D'Alembert attacked that antiquated system, which many of our contemporaries long for, as for a lost paradise. The fineness of the irony and of the blame contrasts in a manner very honourable to D'Alembert, with the scorn, satire and reckless audacity of a Holbach and a Diderot. In order to make this clear to our readers, we should be obliged to extract long passages from their writings, and introduce them into our text; instead of that, however, we shall rather lay before them some shorter but pertinent passages from Rousseau's paper against D'Alembert, because we shall thereby

be able to complete our account of Rousseau and his whole sphere of action, whilst we throw the fullest light upon D'Alembert's relation to his age. We shall see that D'Alembert's falsehood, as well as Rousseau's truth, agreed in this, that a morality maintained by the police, and a government founded upon soldiers, were and are equally destructive.

We have above said, that D'Alembert wished to convert the French by holding up the example of the Genevese, and therefore he sophistically exaggerates much which might have been said with truth to their honour. This remark holds good with respect to toleration; for he in some measure formally made the Genevese clergy Encyclopædists, when he alleged, that they laid very little stress upon dogmatics, and only preached morality. D'Alembert had besides in this a subordinate object; the clergy had, according to the constitution, taken part in the question when it was raised, whether they should depart from the severe principles of Calvin, and should suffer a theatre in Geneva, or not. The Genevese clergy were therefore shocked at D'Alembert's eulogies, they protested formally against his views, they asserted loudly and earnestly that the Christian religion of the councils, not that of its founder, was theirs; that, with the Byzantine favourers of Athanasius, they believed in a Trinitarian Aristotelian God, and not merely in a Creator of the physical and moral world, and in Jesus Christ, whom he had sent. We have expressed this thus strongly, because the Genevese clergy alleged, that D'Alembert had charged them with a heresy which they altogether repudiated, and which was then, as is usual in such cases, designated by the obsolete technical and sectarian name of Socinianism. They solemnly affirm, that, like Christ and his Apostles, they did not only preach that pure morality, which flows from the inward feeling of the divine origin of our nature, but that they also taught dogmatics, that they remained quite true to what is called the Apostles' Creed, and at the same time, as will be expected from what has been just said, that they heartily abhorred Diderot's and D'Alembert's philosophy.

The Genevese had their peculiar reasons arising from the well-known Genevese anxiety; they had a view to the members of their churches and to their neighbours, who urged them to deny the imputation of having given up the doctrine of the Catechism, and having embraced the fashionable theories of the

great world. Rousseau, from the impulse of his own mind, and from his own repugnance to D'Alembert, wrote a paper in order to maintain his democratic philosophy, in opposition to the aristocratic philosophy of the Encyclopædists. He chose a modest title; for he published merely a printed letter to D'Alembert upon the article in the 'Encyclopædia,' which affected his native city; but this letter contains a minute examination of the worldly wisdom of the academicians, or an admirably written treatise upon the object and effects of the distinguished philosophy which D'Alembert taught with such uncommon talents and ingenuity. Rousseau's letter (which we did not previously advert to when speaking of his writings, because it could be better introduced in this place, with a view to the object and connexion of this attempt at a history of the inward social relations of life) is peculiarly attractive by its manner of exposition, and well deserved to be mentioned and distinguished as a masterpiece of French prose; we consider it here, however, from another side and upon other grounds.

Rousseau appears only to speak of the advantage or injury of a theatre in a city of but small extent, but in reality he seeks to unmask the fashionable sophists who sought to avail themselves of that better spirit, which the time called forth in all classes of society, of that repugnance against despotism, the love of system and the hierarchy, which the progress of external life awakened, to turn all this to their own advantage and to that of the rich, and thereby to forge new chains. We here speak of all the then reigning academicians, of all the powerful parasites of the great and the rich, who put themselves forward as the defenders of their sins, and found out a species of virtue, which flattered their sensuality.

It may appear surprising, that the same man, whose chief work was afterwards condemned by the Genevese clergy and government as infidel and heretical, should first undertake the defence of their faith and their doctrines, and repel the malicious and cunning eulogies of D'Alembert, before he entered upon the question of the theatre. As to the point itself; the question of the advantage or disadvantage of a theatre must be quite differently conceived and treated, from that in which it has been done either by Rousseau or his antagonists. Rousseau's logic finds it an easy task to deal with the usual defenders of the theatre, and with the usual reasons which they assign in its

favour. Both parties, Rousseau as well as his opponents, allege that the poet occupies the same ground with the pulpit orator; that he preaches morality like him, but only in a different manner; they seek for moral greatness as their basis, when they should merely have sought for æsthetic. And although æsthetic greatness produced moral effects, this, as is well known, follows in a way quite different from the usual one.

The criticism and examination of some celebrated plays into which Rousseau here enters, is certainly altogether one-sided, and if the question were only that of a critical examination, they must be considered as almost ridiculous; but the question rather bears upon the false enlightenment of that time, upon that recklessness which was regarded as a mark of genius, which among us, along with an affectation of piety, sets up a claim to be looked upon as a poetry of life; this is the reason alone for which we must dwell upon this point. Rousseau first subjects several tragedies to his examination, and endeavours to prove, that the manner in which wicked characters are represented in them, the greatness and superiority which they manifest, must necessarily make a very disadvantageous impression upon the mind, and prove injurious to morality, even though poetic justice be inflicted upon them. We shall leave to our readers, the consultation of this ingenious and able work, the examination of the manner in which Rousseau criticises Racine and Voltaire, and their moral influences, and dwell somewhat longer upon comedy, and especially upon his criticism of Molière's 'Misanthrope,' because he then confessedly opposes his theory of human life and social intercourse to the prevailing morals, mental culture, and tone of the society of the world.

After having made some other remarks which we pass over, he proceeds;—"After Molière had held up to public laughter all the other deficiencies and sins which cleave to those who do not possess the amiable qualities of a man of good society, after he had brought upon the stage innumerable other ridiculous exhibitions of those people who are *mauvais ton*, there remained no other object for his ridicule, than that which those who are called the world will never pardon, viz. virtue; this he has done in the 'Misanthrope*.' The hero of the piece, Alceste," con-

* "Molière," he says, "voulant exposer à la risée publique tous les défauts opposés aux qualités de l'homme aimable, de l'homme de société, après avoir joué tant d'autres ridicules, il lui restait à jouer celui que le monde pardonne le moins, le ridicule de la vertu, c'est ce qu'il a fait dans le 'Misanthrope.'"

tinues Rousseau, "is no misanthrope, but a noble and true man, and because he is so, he hates the prevailing morals and abhors the false and empty tone of the world; it is that alone which makes him ridiculous. In order with greater certainty both to make him ridiculous, and through him the truth, which ventured to show itself in life, Molière, quite in the spirit of the worldlings for whose amusement his hero was to serve, contrives to exhibit him in a state of irritation and anger with all sorts of trifling things, which are not worth the notice of a reasonable man, to say nothing of his raving with that childish vehemence, which is attributed to him."

"The candid and noble-minded man," says Rousseau, "is made a special object of ridicule and scorn to the fashionable people of the saloons, by having opposed to him in the person of Philinthe, the model of a quiet and cold man of the world, who never becomes warm, who is roused by nothing or for nothing, except for the promotion of his own interest." He then proceeds to give an admirable delineation of the Philinthes of all times and of all countries. As Klinger, in his 'Man of the World and Poet,' has described one side of the case of which we here speak, in a masterly manner, Rousseau in his letter has drawn the other no less admirably. Rousseau has incomparably sketched the features of this philosophy of courts and of the world, of the poetical colouring of offences of all sorts by smooth sophistry, of the whole motives and impulses of the Encyclopædists, and of the *doctrinaires* and philosophical optimists who resemble them, under the pretence of characterizing the Philinthe of Molière.

"This Philinthe," says Rousseau, "is the sage of the piece; one of those honest people of high life, whose maxims very much resemble those of knaves; one of those people who are so moderate that they find every thing going well, because it is their interest that it should go no better; who are always content with everybody, because they care for no one; who, seated around a well-spread board, maintain, that it is quite untrue that the people are starving; who, with well-filled purses, regard it as altogether wrong for any one to speak with energy in favour of the poor; who, from their house, would look on and see the whole human race robbed, plundered and massacred, without a word of compassion or complaint; because God has endowed them

with a meritorious meekness, to enable them to endure such calamities when they affect others and not themselves."

In the same bitter and cutting way Rousseau shows, that what the world and novels usually call love, and the manner in which this feeling is copied from the life of those people whose principles D'Alembert and his friends wished to disseminate, is represented in these pieces. It is only after those outpourings of his wrath and indignation, that he first touches upon Geneva. He first directs attention to the private life of those who are connected with the theatrical art, as it is usually exhibited, shows the influence of actors and actresses upon life, and upon thoughtless self-admiring youth and the elegant world, then to the taste for luxury disseminated by means of the theatre, to dress, and to dissipation among a people, who had been so happy as hitherto to preserve and maintain their simplicity in the midst of corruption. On this occasion Rousseau makes this excellent and pertinent remark, which may also be applied to all those who have a passion for theatrical affairs; that there are many things which may be quite suitable in a great city, in which there are many idle persons who are intent only upon dissipation and a scandalous life, which would become altogether intolerable and ruinous in a small town. This remark is carried through with uncommon practical good sense and ability.

The few traits which have been given, and the turn which Rousseau gave to the whole subject which he had undertaken, will prove that his object in this letter, as well as in those which we have already quoted from his 'Heloise,' was much more that of exposing to contempt and ridicule Parisian life and its pursuits, the hunting after talents and enjoyment, the characters which women played in these societies, the dominion which they exercised, the whole mental condition and training which was recommended by the Encyclopædists, than to warn his native city against the siren songs of D'Alembert.

Rousseau's paper made so much noise in that excited and excitable time, in which the effect of a work was not merely momentary as it is in our days, that D'Alembert could not remain silent; but his assuming, scornful and satirical answer will only satisfy those who cannot or will not understand Rousseau. Every man who does not belong to the castes and classes in which all sense of a natural life and of simplicity has not been

extinguished by education or learning, will find D'Alembert's refutation unsatisfactory and trivial, although he undoubtedly has brought forward into bold relief the ridiculous point of his opponent, his idyllic sentimentality, with all that skill and ability which was learned and practised in those wicked but witty saloons, in which D'Alembert was thoroughly at home. Rousseau is therefore here and there made ridiculous, but the life and the literature of a falsely trained age and of the sect of D'Alembert gains nothing thereby. D'Alembert avails himself of that fine manner, by means of which, in the world, a dagger may be thrust into the heart of an opponent, and he may be robbed of honour and life, whilst he is all the while praised, treated with courtly politeness, and with all apparent respect, without almost the appearance of controversy and strife.

By the aid of this manner the cause and the person were ingeniously united and confounded, and Rousseau represented as an oddity, as a man who is always on the hunt after absurdities and paradoxes. In order to draw the French fully to his side, who were already embittered against Rousseau, in consequence of his severe judgement, or rather condemnation, of French music, D'Alembert ingeniously, but maliciously, contrives to combine the paradox of his judgements upon music with the paradox of his condemnation of the theatre. If D'Alembert means to refute Rousseau's objections against the life and social intercourse of capital cities, he brings forward nothing better than the old threshed-out and universally recurring principles of love of company, which pass by and do not affect the person who considers mankind from another point of view than that from which good society is accustomed to consider it.

What D'Alembert brings forward as the advantage of theatrical representations, in opposition to the defender of simplicity and nature, is in like manner quite as weak; because his philosophy, and the object which he and Voltaire wish to reach, forbid him to embrace that view of the question, on which Rousseau could be easily overthrown. Rousseau disallowed the principle, that the human mind is related to the Godhead by means of its creative power alone, that joy in mental creations is its highest happiness, and that the greatest counterpoise against all that immorality, which is the result of passion and sensuality, is the consideration of the great beautiful, in the creations of the mind. The maintenance of such views would have alto-

gether shattered D'Alembert's system, and told more strongly against his theory of life than the system of his opponent, and would have at once annihilated that subordination of the various departments of knowledge which he had proposed and maintained in his Introduction.

For the same reason D'Alembert could not adduce or defend the correct proposition, that the poet wishes to please and not to profit, in such a manner that Rousseau's moral estimation of the theatre should appear to be weak, and the result of an imperfect knowledge of the human mind. Rousseau was obviously unacquainted with true, genuine, creative poetry, and mere feeling and understanding represent with him the whole of the human mind. But as D'Alembert agreed with him on this point, in order to prove that good pieces are moral, he could only bring forward the common and popular observations which Rousseau no doubt, as all of us have, frequently heard in society, or read in the most common-place books; because the great mass of men merely repeat one another, without ever thinking of the truth of what is affirmed*. Every line of this defence, which is written in the style of an advocate, proves that D'Alembert is only propounding the theory of certain circles, whilst Rousseau pours out his own feelings and thoughts; and that the democracy of the one can never be reconciled with the knightly elegance of the other, however much both are opposed to ruling principles and systems.

D'Alembert had no shadow of success in his defence of Molière's 'Misanthrope,' against Rousseau, however easy that defence might have been. This failure also arises from the fact, that he dare not venture to conceive this work of art under that point of view under which it is now generally conceived. It will be readily seen, that his protection of the affecting drama arose chiefly from the circumstance that it was the invention of his friends. D'Alembert, on the contrary, is more successful, when he treats of the morals of actors and their influence, which he handles with much more knowledge and less melancholy than Rousseau. But in the passage again, in which he should have refuted his opponent's grounds of accusation against the

* Of the theatre in general it is said:—"C'est la morale mise en action, ces sont les préceptes réduits en exemples; la tragédie nous offre les malheurs produits par le vice des hommes, la comédie les ridicules attachés à leurs défauts."

pursuits of women which were called those of genius, and against their influence through the saloons, he merely degrades himself by directing miserable jests against Rousseau's person, and the whole of that masterly maliciousness of speech which is called *médiance*, was on this occasion summoned to his aid.

D'Alembert malevolently alludes to the fact, that Rousseau himself had written pieces, and, whilst appearing to bestow upon him extraordinary praise, takes advantage of the occasion to overwhelm him with the bitterest satire. Rousseau had indeed given a great opening to his experienced and skilful antagonist, by his having proposed to the Genevese as a substitute for the entertainments of the theatre, entertainments of his own invention, by mixing up sentimental scenes drawn from the Vallais into real life, and wishing to offer to the practical Parisian the sensitive descriptions of his fancy as solid truth. We must not longer dwell on this subject, by proving how much D'Alembert was superior to his opponent, how admirably he brought forward and opposed that which is attainable in real life to the sentimental theory of life; for we must here break off, because we believe that enough has been already said to explain this new wisdom of the world, and to point out its tendencies. In order not to dwell too long on the French, we defer till our next volume our observations upon some other distinguished men of that nation, who were more or less closely connected with those who have been already named; such, for example, as Raynal, Marmontel, Beaumarchais and Mirabeau, Buffon, and the whole school of economists till Turgot and Dupont.

CHAPTER V.

GERMANY TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTH DECENNIUM OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

§ I.

FIRST TRACES OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW SPIRIT OF THE AGE UPON PLACEMEN, UNIVERSITIES, THEOLOGY AND LEARNING.

IN the first part we adopted the 'Letters upon Literature' as the limits of the account of the first period of the new mental

development among our people, and we should, therefore, properly here commence with these 'Letters;' but, as we have literature less in our view than the whole life of the people, we regard it as more suitable to our design, first to speak of some individuals who exercised a great influence upon society as men of the world, or as learned members of the universities. We must, therefore, also necessarily go ten years further than has been done in the political history, yet without making any pretensions to give a complete view or to go into a minute account of individuals. We select that alone which is pertinent and serviceable for the instruction which it is our object to convey, leaving the rest to be collected from the fuller manuals and biographies, of whose number and character our nation has a right to be proud.

Our universities, which at that time had become altogether houses of industry and manufactories for training men for business, in which the greatest contempt was felt and maintained for every kind of pure and genuine human improvement, remained for a long time not only uninfluenced by, but even hostile to, the new movement. Afterwards, indeed, when it became absolutely necessary to entice new customers, in order to carry on a prosperous and flourishing trade, they hung out a new signboard, and this just took place in the following period. We should, besides, be altogether unjust, if we overlooked or failed duly to commend the great services which Semler, Michaelis, Gesner, Schlözer, Ernesti and Heyne rendered in the improvement of public instruction, and we shall direct attention to the three first in this period, and to the others in that which follows, when we have first noticed those men who acted immediately upon the great public and not by the instrumentality of the schools. We begin with Spalding and Reimarus; not with Mosheim, because he kept altogether and strictly within the limits of the traditionary method and of orthodoxy, notwithstanding he distinguished himself as a pulpit orator and author of an ecclesiastical history, written in a very good Latin style. Spalding and Reimarus wrote German, not merely for the learned, but for the benefit of the great public, and in the darkest times they disseminated religious enlightenment without however being cried down as, properly speaking, heretics, which had already been the fate of Semler; and this makes them more remarkable than the Abbot Jerusalem, who was as much celebrated as they.

Spalding had received an education wholly different from that

which the theologians of his time usually received. Books, long, tedious, mechanically written—numerous lectures in the universities, which were calculated to waste and destroy any spark of genius which the bad schools had left unextinguished—and learned systems, which were impressed on the memory for the mere purpose of an examination, were the means employed for training our Protestant ecclesiastics, *i.e.* men whose duty it was to raise the spirit of our oppressed people, to awaken their minds, and to prepare their souls for heaven. In the beginning of the century, they had turned from the straw of dogmatics to the milk of pietism; the pietists and their principles prevailed, during the greatest part of the period of which we are now writing, in various districts of Germany, for example, in ducal Saxony, in Halle, and in northern Germany; their instruction, however, had degenerated into a mere system of hypocrisy. The second part of Semler's autobiography gives the best and clearest view of the manner in which the nature of pietism was related to the nature of Christianity; the first part of the same book informs us how pietism afflicted private life, and disturbed all attempts at any progress commensurate with the demands or the spirit of the age. Spalding had made acquaintance with a greater world, and had early associated with persons who had notions of mental improvement and religion different from those of those prodigies of learning, whom people were accustomed to admire and wonder at in the universities. He attached himself early to Gleim and to Kleist. In the same manner as Kleist, in the English poets of his time, Thomson, Glover and others, sought for a poetry more suitable to the spirit of the age than that of Gottsched, König, or Bodmer, Spalding sought in the writings of Shaftesbury a philosophy and a morality which should be more useful and intelligible to the people, than the speculations and terminologies of Baumgarten and other university professors.

The translation of Shaftesbury's 'Moral Philosophy,' which Spalding published in 1745, stands in intimate connexion with the labours of all the men whose acquaintance he had made at the same time with that of Gleim and Kleist, who was then in Berlin; all these sought to raise up and oppose a free and noble examination and explanation of science to the hitherto corporate and slavish spirit of literature. In 1748 appeared that work which will for ever secure Spalding a place among those who awakened

the German people to the proper use of their reasoning faculties in matters of faith, and offered a religion of mildness and peace, instead of one of penance and prayer. This book, entitled 'The Destination of Mankind,' was so much in accordance with the necessities of the time and its progress, and so fully corresponded to the demands which at that time, and since that time, are made with regard to language and expression, that it was afterwards reprinted till 1794 in very numerous editions, and continued to meet the demands and necessities of the reading public. The merit to which Spalding established a claim, in a species of literature which scarcely yet deserved the name, and the services which he rendered by his style and manner of exposition, how well he deserved to be classed among those who sought to give thought and purity to our language and style after the models of our neighbours, and how fully he was entitled to a place along with Mendelssohn and Lessing, will be best learned and understood, by comparing this work with the long and tedious moral writings of the renowned Göttingen professor Johann Peter Miller, or those of Gellert or Dusch.

In his 'Destination of Men,' Spalding follows Shaftesbury's method, deduces his moral principles, not from the commands of the Scriptures, but from the constitution of human nature, and endeavours to enliven a subject in itself somewhat dry, by warmth and liveliness of exposition. Seven editions of this treatise had been published as early as 1763. We shall best see the great contrast which then existed between the demands of the educated and smaller part of the nation, which was progressive with the age, and those of the church and state, by the writings of a representative of the principles of the consistories and universities, of the catechism and pulpit morality, of his time. This man was the Reverend Melchior Götz, at that time minister of Aschersleben and afterwards chief pastor in Hamburg. We ascribe the above-mentioned representative character to him; because we see him appear afterwards on every occasion, during the progress of enlightenment, as a watchman of Zion; and because, by his ignorant zeal, he did more damage to the orthodox faith than all the French philosophers together, than Bahrtdt and the 'Wolfenbüttel Fragments.' This man, whom we afterwards see appealing for justice against the Frankfort newspapers because they had censured his sermons, who threw out all kinds of abuse against the 'Sorrows of Werther,' who gave occasion

to Lessing to write those master-pieces of German prose which were directed against him, wrote also against Spalding in the usual style of ecclesiastical polemical authors, his 'Thoughts upon the Consideration of the Destiny of Man, in the Form of a Letter, with a Copy of the said Work.'

The outcry of the zealots was vain, for Frederick the Second kept his eye upon a man who sought to awaken knowledge and understanding in the midst of the darkness which then, in spite of the king, was diffused especially from Halle, although Zedlitz induced him sometimes to take vigorous measures for the promotion of light and reason; and, by the favour of the king, Spalding obtained an important field of operations, in which he worked with great vigour against the Lutheran grand inquisitor of Hamburg. His influence was not merely exercised as an ecclesiastic and church ruler, but especially by means of his writings. He translated several temperate writings of the English, who at that time were in advance of the Germans in enlightenment, upon natural religion and Deism, and upon the union of rational consideration and critical examination with Christian faith. His sermons, which were circulated by the press, were calculated to produce the same effect. The honest Semler has rather given us to understand than properly described, from a meeting which he had with him, how very different Spalding appeared, and how very superior he was, among the men who were celebrated as pulpit orators about the end of the seven years' war. Spalding's treatise, which may be regarded as second in importance, is entitled 'Of the Value of the Feelings in Christianity.' The reputation of this work was equally great among the Lessing and the Lavater party, into which the reformers of that time may be most suitably divided. Its object was, in like manner, to give a milder tone to the stiff, severe, and dogmatic principles of the Church: we shall not, however, dwell upon it, because we must not enter upon doctrinal religion and its history.

Reimarus was no divine by trade, but we should mention him here because he was one of the greatest linguists and general scholars which have existed since the restoration of learning, even if he had not also done much in connexion with Spalding to introduce light and warmth into the benumbed theological science of the schools. This noble and learned man lived in Hamburg, where in his time gloomy Lutheranism reigned, and where the people,

roused and urged on by the fanatical clergy and the senate, willingly allowed themselves to be made the tools of blind orthodoxy. This produced in the soul of this gentle, amiable, educated man, who was deeply skilled in the languages of antiquity, in the natural sciences, and at the same time in medicine and philosophy, the most vehement dislike to Christianity, which he has breathed out quietly in the so-called 'Wolfenbüttel Fragments.' Of these we do not here speak; because he never acknowledged himself the author, and it has only just been shown very recently with any certainty, that he was probably the author of this work, to which we shall hereafter allude; we only now refer to the works in which he explained, in a readable and intelligible manner, to the German public what had hitherto been the exclusive property of the barbaric universities.

The object of his treatise, upon 'The most Important Truths in Natural Religion,' was intelligibly to inform the blindly believing Germans, without rousing the indignation of the clergy, that religion must be sought for, not only in the catechism, but also in the heart and in the works of nature. Reimarus shows admirably how absurd and tasteless it is for the theologians of the so-called church insolently to boast of the utter incapacity, or at least of the insufficiency, of human reason to attain to a knowledge of God. This work is closely connected with his second treatise, which is very important in reference to the progress of the natural sciences, and their philosophical treatment in Germany. As the natural sciences form no part of our inquiry, we can only mention the title of his book upon the 'Instincts of Animals,' in order to remark, that its appearance was in general hailed with triumph, and especially in the 'Letters upon Literature,' as the foreboding of a better German prose literature.

Such books were at that time the more important for our people, in consequence of the miserable condition into which the German schools and universities had fallen, in the middle of the last century, even in those districts and cities of our country where most was done for mental progress and improvement. The condition of the schools and universities, and the nature of the instruction which was imparted in them, may be accurately learned from the best original sources,—from the autobiographies of Michaelis, Semler and Reiske. All had become so dark among us, that we could only derive a knowledge of the ancients,

of criticism, of interpretation, and even of enlightenment in questions of religion, from the Dutch and English, among whom blind custom and pecuniary advantages have always been united with the traditionary errors of the old system. It had finally gone to such a length, that every one who had drawn his materials from the sources of the ancient writers, was obliged altogether to separate himself from the corporate learned men of the universities and their disciples and followers. In the movement which we have described in the previous part, and which advanced slowly in Germany, forcing its way from without, inward, the pietists in Germany shared the same fate and gave rise to the same consequences as the Jansenists, as well as their opponents the Jesuits, did in France; as soon as they began to obstruct every species of progress, to deprecate the entrance of every beam of light, and to condemn the study of the ancients, they gave rise to a lasting animosity against the truth even among its learned defenders. This will become manifest, when we come afterwards to treat particularly of Michaelis and Semler; we shall however premise some remarks upon the influence of Möser and Von Moser, before we proceed to a general consideration of the pietist school in Halle.

Michaelis, whom we shall afterwards notice as the founder of a new school of Orientalists and Biblical critics, was educated in Halle, took his doctor's degree in that university, and as such read lectures there. Before his journey to England, he not only maintained every other absurdity which people were required to believe in Halle, if they would not be regarded as heretics; but, in a very well-known treatise, he sought to prove also the divine origin of the Hebrew vowel points: he had scarcely travelled, however, beyond the sphere of the pietistic air, when he began to breathe more freely. We shall hereafter show, that after his return from Holland and England, when he became professor in Göttingen, he applied the theory and principles of Montesquieu, and the new criticism, to the explanation of the Old Testament. His fellow student in Halle, the learned Reiske, admits in his autobiography, that however far his convictions had gone beyond and were remote from the pietists and their principles, he never completely recovered from the oppression of the severe pious training of the Halle school, and since that time had conceived a dislike against Christianity which had there exercised oppressive power, and even against the Roman writers.

Reiske, indeed, does not say this expressly of Christianity; but we can infer it, partly from his incidental remarks in his other books, and partly from some circumstances in his life. He now became a doctor in Holland; and while those philologists and doctors of medicine who were like-minded with him extended their protection to him, the theologians formally opposed themselves to the promotion of a man whom, God knows on what ground, they called an atheist; for the same reason his only true friends in Germany, in this dark age, were the noble Reimarus and Lessing. The third of the men who have been named, received only his last pietistic consecration in Halle, but he had already been trained from his youth up in this school, at Saalfeld. Semler informs us how, from his very childhood he had been not only urged by every means to believing and praying, but that he was also, according to his true, well-disposed, honest, but narrow-minded nature, inclined to these ways. He came therefore full of faith to Halle, where one of our philosophical orthodox literati was then the academical leviathan. Baumgarten so entangled the true-hearted and much more learned and sounder-minded Semler with what is called scientific faith, he oppressed him so much with useless, false and vain learning, that the excellent man long remained the creature of the sly sophist, was frightened at his own discoveries, and because, like Baumgarten, he did not wish merely to cast a mist before the eyes, he became, almost against his will, a bold reformer. Before we point out in what way the anxious and timid Michaelis and the pious Semler showed how hollow the ground was under the Babylonian tower of the orthodox system, we cast a glance upon the men who brought a new life into political literature, in like manner as Michaelis and Semler did into theological.

We select Justus Möser and F. C. von Moser, in order to show, that the effort which had commenced in the *belles lettres* to bring the Germans up to the same point at which other nations stood, began to extend itself to every relation of restricted and oppressed civil life. This may be much the more easily effected, because both of the authors of the letters upon literature, which were, properly speaking, devoted only to the fine arts, were welcomed also in another relation as the announcers of a new species of political writing. It was but very rare in those days, that in general even the higher German officials understood anything beyond the barbaric science law, the chancery and

decree style, and the pedantry of the universities, or thought anything else worthy of their attention; and it is an especial subject of wonder, that a minister and a man, who was the penholder for the aristocracy in defence of their baronial privileges, should condescend to appear as a liberal writer, at a time when the much-despised people were regarded as wholly incapable and unworthy of forming judgments upon affairs of state and with respect to their own proper business.

We shall not deny that Justus Möser, who had been adopted into the Hanoverian nobility, as many lawyers and rich merchants are now into the English, often seized his pen only as a skilful advocate of the usurpations of the middle ages and of their fixed limits, in order to console the people, to appease the rising spirit of the age, and to put to silence the expressions of dislike which were waxing loud, and with whose causes he was better acquainted than any other German; still we must reckon him among the men who did all which, under the then existing circumstances, it was possible to do. Möser's eulogiums upon the then existing and traditionary but unsuitable state of things never flowed from impure sources, and mostly even from conviction. We might, in one respect, compare Möser with Turgot: how great soever the difference of the two men in every other respect was, and how little soever the one can be placed on a footing of equality with the other, they corresponded in this, that both as men of distinguished official rank appeared as friendly mediators between the people and proud and selfish governments, and that they both desired slowly, gently and prudently to introduce the improvements which they recommended in their writings; and in this respect Möser was a more popular writer than Turgot.

Both Möser and F. C. von Moser were at first, as writers, only upon a level with the Gottsched school of authors. The former, however, soon improved and ennobled both form and language, and the latter is only deserving of mention on account of the contents of his writings, because their form, tone and language always continued mediocre. We shall therefore pass over in silence the works of Möser's youth, which were written according to the taste of the Gottscheds, and also the diffuse and dull-written treatise upon the 'Value of the Benevolent Affections and Passions,' which appeared in 1756; because they are distinguished by no peculiarities from innumerable other treatises

written at the same time, in a similar manner, and upon like subjects. In a work upon the comico-grotesque, which appeared five years afterwards, all the qualities will be found which distinguish and characterise Möser as the writer who was not too high for the men who had passed from *burschen* life into that of placemen, &c., for the prosperous citizens; and who was not too low for the noble lords and half French circles, and which must therefore have been uncommonly dear to the good Nicolai.

In Osnabrück and Westphalia in general, any high flight of thought, any warm zeal, any poetical inspiration, would have been scarcely possible; and, like every thing else out of its proper place, would probably only have produced ridiculous fruits. And besides, we could not reasonably expect freer language and better and keener wit from a man circumstanced as Möser was, who was groaning under a load of prosaic business, who had daily to do with prebendaries, with the high nobility, with possessors of lands, lordships and feudal rights, whose prejudices and pride he was obliged to spare. His 'Harlequin, or Defence of the Comico-Grotesque,' is, properly speaking, wholly directed against pedants of all kinds and in favour of a popular literature, and at the same time against the pietists and the sneering enlightened bookmakers. Möser writes in a humorous tone, which was not at that time so disgraced by abuses as in our days, against the hypocritical opponents of the theatre in general, but especially against that fury which had sprung from Gottsched's school, to banish every thing which accorded with the taste of the humbler classes from the stage, and to suffer nothing to be represented on the theatre but stiff pieces manufactured according to Aristotle's rules, or translated from the French. Möser never rises above mediocrity, and his wit among other things has something forced and small townish; but it was precisely these qualities which amused his public, who knew well, from the spirit and feeling of their own societies, how they were astonished at the extensive knowledge of French, English and Italian, and works of *belles lettres*, which was exhibited merely for show, and they felt no surprise that Möser placed the mediocrity and even the pitiful style of a Zachariä and Dusch, the fashionable writers of the educated Germans, on a level with Cervantes and Molière.

Möser does not aim at giving direct instruction to the people

themselves, but only to the classes with whom he lived in constant intercourse, and the kind of ornamental form which he selected was altogether suited for this design. And he became the forerunner of a better time and of a freer movement of life, by opening up the senses and understanding of the people to whom his style was suited, without exciting their fears. As Möser presented truth to his public in the jesting garb, as his humour and his wit were quite in the taste and after the fashion of these people whom he wished to instruct, he alone might and could say to them that they must not be too prudish, too anxious, too tastelessly pious, if they wished to raise up a national literature and a national theatre. Möser himself in his writings never rises beyond mere conventional wit, although he admits and tries to convince his public, that the people must be allowed to amuse themselves in their own way, and that their natural wit notwithstanding all its offensive rudeness had incomparably more vigour than what is merely conventional. Möser shows his public in an agreeable manner, that it was far from being the same to take pleasure in rude and broad jokes, and to allow oneself for the moment to be made merry by the bright flashes of natural wit, even though they are emitted by a merry-andrew.

In this, as in all the rest of Möser's writings, are to be found those qualities which are peculiar to him above all the writers of his age, and which make him so peculiarly important for the history of the progress of Germans and their national literature. Foreseeing as he did the complete dissolution of old customs and usages, and even wishing and desiring to promote it, he always labours quietly to substitute what was new and attractive for what was traditional and antiquated—for what had become a custom and was regarded as valuable by the people—and thus to make it national and enduring. There is another quality in Möser's writings which cannot be overlooked,—that he calls the attention of the men of business to the fact, that the people may be guided and roused to duty by moral influences better than by being ruled by command. This is his especial object in a letter in which he considers Christianity merely as a traditionary popular belief, a prevailing opinion, and a state institution for the promotion of morality. This letter, entitled "A Letter to the Vicar of Savoy, to be delivered to Mr. James Rousseau," proves at the same time that as early as the sixth or seventh decennium of the eighteenth century, there was very little hope remaining that

the old dogmatics and their subtleties would be able to maintain their ground against the freer principles which were forcing their way from France into Germany.

The title, which indeed betrays a kind of wit, which is not to everybody's taste, but which was quite as good at that day as Rabener's and Gellert's humour, shows that this letter was directed against the confession of a Savoyard, or against an attack upon all revelation, or against the defence of natural religion, which Rousseau had incorporated in his 'Emile.' Before we bring forward another point, we must remark that the very fact of the appearance of this letter of Möser's is very important as indicating the condition of the time, and as a proof of the continually growing opposition, among people of education in Germany, to the religion of governments and consistories. What attention must Rousseau's principles have excited in Germany when two official men in high stations thought it advisable to come forward as his antagonists, in a yielding and conciliatory tone, with arguments, and not with denunciation and exclusion! One and the same notion of refutation was, at the same time, entertained by two very distinguished men, both of whom had rendered great service to our language and literature, the one a distinguished ecclesiastical and the other a civil officer—the Abbot Jerusalem of Brunswick, and Möser in Osnabrück. Jerusalem sought to gain the victory over Rousseau by showing the possibility of proving that every natural religion, to become the religion of the state and the people, must necessarily be positively taught and believed. Jerusalem maintained this proposition, in a letter, considered in its theological and philosophical point of view, and Möser in its political, in which he had indisputably all history and experience in his favour.

Möser, who, as an experienced man of business, regarded an aristocratical, intelligible, fatherly administration as beneficent and suitable, placed his experience of the wants and thoughts of the people in opposition to the theories of Rousseau, who had had, even in his riper years, no opportunity of accurately studying any particular people, and, without declamation, he lays down principles, the justice and applicability of which are obvious. It appears, from Möser's quiet and well-considered discourse, how vacillating those moral principles must be, which originate in sentimental lectures and are grounded on the feelings, which are very different in different individuals and nations. Möser, ac-

ording to his principles, takes civil society as he finds it, and grants to one class what he refuses to another; Rousseau makes himself men, on whom he then indeed can confer the rights which are suited to them. Rousseau was right if he only wished to destroy; Möser wishes to build up and to improve, and leaves that pre-eminence to the aristocracy which it sooner or later will again seize upon and appropriate.

Let us return to our proper subject,—to Möser's remarks upon positive religion: he says expressly, that he has nothing to say against the principle that certain men, even that whole classes, should look upon the popular religion in quite a different way from the mass of the people; yea, he wishes even to allow them to arrange their mode of conduct according to their doubts and scruples, only *the people must believe*. This sounds somewhat harsh; and Rousseau, as a friend and advocate of systems and theories, could by no means acquiesce in such a principle. Others of us, however, who have seen to what excesses those French and Germans have been led, who have renounced every thing positive in government and religion, are, however unwillingly, obliged to admit that Möser's principles have a solid foundation in history and experience. From experience and knowledge of the people, but not supported by philosophical demonstration, he maintains that the people, from beginning to doubt about the facts in the history of religion, are infallibly led to a vacillation of opinion with respect to religion itself. We do not wish to assert, that this practical doctrine would have been better than the abstract doctrines of orthodoxy and of absolutism in our days are, or that even then the mere letter of an advocate, which produces no inward conviction, could render such service to truth as Lessing and others rendered; but we must remember that this letter appeared in 1765.

In the same year Möser published his introduction to the history of Osnabrück, which may be called an introduction to the whole body of German history, or an illustration of the manner of treating it advantageously, which threw an entirely new light upon the nature of historical learning. We call attention also to this book in order to show the progress of our nation in the study and composition of history. The first part of the history of Osnabrück was printed, for the second time, in 1780, and it, as well as the works of Michaelis and Schlözer, showed the Germans how the principles which Voltaire, Bolingbroke,

and Hume had stated or followed, could be applied, without leading to absolute scepticism. Michaelis had taken the fore-way in his writings upon the history and legislature of the Jews, Möser followed upon those of the Germans. He was, on this occasion, as it appears to us, much more fortunate in developing the foundations and connexions of life and manners, of institutions and usages, of family descent and domestic relations, and therefore of the nature and principles of popular history, than in the investigation of history itself. We mean to say that Möser, in his immortal work, the value of which has been only duly discovered and appreciated in the present century, is much more successful when he deduces a history from the life of the country people, which abounds more in ancient usages in Westphalia than in other provinces, from the laws, the family registers, and from the sources of the business in which he was daily engaged, and upon which customs and usages were founded, than when he enters upon the chronicles and historical books of the middle ages. We see too, distinctly, that the general conclusion does not follow, and cannot properly be deduced, from the particulars which are brought forward, but that supports only are sought and added to those principles which are deduced from other sources, as the custom is to quote statutes and judgements for the maintenance of an opinion.

The work is not, therefore, the less important, because it is written by an author who was not master of the whole of the proper historical materials; for it contains, in fact, a philosophical history, without any of those abstractions, subtleties and imaginations which are usually attached to that name. Schlözer wrote at the same time, and in a similar manner, as Möser, but without mildness and without taste, in a language far from pure. Möser is distinguished also from Michaelis by the language and tone of better society, and by the absence of the self-satisfactory manner of professional enunciation which universally reigns in the writings of Michaelis. Möser's short essays, which he published in provincial papers, expressly to awaken the minds of his fellow-countrymen in Germany to what was altogether new, and to prepare them for treating upon public relations, were still more important for the social and civil life of the people, and for its progressive development in the later decennia of the eighteenth century. These essays, upon which for several reasons we cannot delay, were afterwards published in four volumes, and are

yet the very best book which can be put into the hands of a German official who is benevolent and able, to give him instruction upon every thing, with respect to his intercourse and transactions with the people, which he will not find in the criminal code or in the *corpus juris*. The essays collected in this national work appeared originally in the 'Osnabrück Intelligencer,' from 1766-1782, and go far beyond the limits which we have prescribed to ourselves.

The contents of these essays either refer to local subjects, or they have relations altogether special. He has, however, himself explained fully the connexion in which they stand to his other efforts to advance the progress of one part of the German nation, and to the object of the continuous endeavours of his whole life to rouse our nation from its slumber, without exciting wild and revolutionary alarm. His own declaration is, that he has endeavoured to lay down in these fugitive papers some important truths, which were the results of his experience in daily life, and to impress them earnestly upon the minds of the people. It cannot be denied, that there was in the background some anxiety about the influence of the bolder principles of the French, which, under Frederick's protection, threatened powerfully to disturb the lagging course and phlegmatic spirit of the Germans, and the customs and easy enjoyments of the Spaniards; and that Möser, according to the fashion of jurists and ordinary officials, sought to present the most favourable view of every oppression exercised upon peasants and citizens, and knew how to excuse and accommodate to his system every abuse, according to the manner of the *doctrinaires* both on this side and the other side of the Rhine. Möser, as a jurist, as a placeman and friend of great and small dynasties, in his position and with his occupations, could just as little raise his mind to an ideal view of life, and to the contempt of all limits, as his intimate friend and admirer Frederick Nicolai, the bookseller in Berlin. He was as much an enemy to all genius and originality, which had no practical application, as his friend in Berlin. Möser himself admits that his relations in society, and his duties and connexions as an official man, stood greatly in his way in the composition of his writings*.

* We believe what is said in the text may be best illustrated for our purpose, by quoting Möser's own words. In the preface to the third part of his 'Phantasien' (Fancies), he says :—"The honour of having freely

With respect to manliness of character and boldness of expression against small and great despots and their contemptible ways, F. C. von Moser far excels the author of the patriotic 'Imaginary Cases,' to whom in other respects he is very inferior. Not only is F. C. von Moser distinguished, above all his contemporaries, for noble freedom of mind, but we doubt if, even now, any French or German high official man would venture to use the language which Von Moser used in his days. He was not allowed indeed with impunity to throw his aspersions on the slavish souls of the people, who readily find reasons for all abuses, and, in return for money and rank, make the worse appear the better reason. We must not here speak of Moser's political grammar, published 1749, because both in form and contents it belongs to the seventeenth century. This book is composed in the barbarous language of the chancery courts, and treats diffusely of the barbarous formulas and the dull style of courts and law offices, with all that oppressive learning which is

spoken the truth would have been of little use to me if I had gained nothing thereby; because the approbation and confidence of my fellow-citizens (viz. the prebendaries, privileged men, and other officials) were as important to me as right and truth (!!!). I have therefore been obliged to have recourse to many a stratagem, in order to gain the one without losing the other, which would have appeared too low, perhaps, if I had been writing for a great public. The person who is acquainted with the matter, will not be led astray by this blind. What is most singular is (we see with what people the writer was obliged to live and rule), that at home I am regarded as the greatest enemy of mere personal rights of property, and abroad as their most zealous defender." But he declares himself most openly with respect to the kind of writing which alone remained to him, and to all the subordinates and daily companions of the honourable lords in Osnabrück and Hanover, in a letter to Nicolai; we shall quote the passage in the letter (afterwards published by Nicolai, 1798, second part, p. 166), although it is somewhat long. It says more than we, with our great respect for Möser, would venture to say; but it says it only to those who knew how to value the virtue of the virtuous officials, and who have read Klinger's 'Man of the World and Poet.' He says:—"I would not willingly fall under the suspicion of having, from mere arbitrary feelings, here and there written upon many subjects both *pro* and *contra*. Very important local reasons have obliged me to it, and I would have waged, certainly, open war against feudal rights if the whole present ministry here, and the whole district, did not consist of landowners, whose respect and confidence I cannot despise, without injuring all our institutions. And, God be praised! I have never, with all my expositions, made an enemy, and accomplished much which to others appeared impossible. I could have supported many pieces in my 'Imaginary Cases' by examples of decrees relating thereto, or explained them by plans afterwards adopted; but that would have been going too far. It would have been a very ticklish thing for me, if I had either publicly exposed to view the president of my college, or the honourable lord marshal, whose characters the local reader would have easily known; or had written my opinion to the public on matters which I discussed or expounded with my colleagues."

common to our old German professors of law. We pass on rather to books which are at least somewhat better written, although properly speaking, their contents alone render them worthy of notice. What however makes the works of both these men more worthy of notice than even their contents, is the time at which they appeared, and the reception which was given them by the public, because all the world was astonished that a German durst venture in any way whatever to speak the truth.

Moser published a work in 1759, entitled, 'Master and Servant, described with Patriotic Freedom.' This work excited the greatest attention in the whole of Germany, and the enmities which it drew upon the very cautious author, sufficiently prove in what a miserable condition our political press was before the time of Möser and Von Moser, and what a deep and abiding sense of slavery had entered into and degraded the souls of our people since the times of Hutten and Luther. We shall presently make a long extract from the work itself, in a note, from which it will be seen that the style, language and orthography belong wholly to an older time; and we may add, that the tone, the wit and the manner of composition are as tasteless as the style and language. How miserable must the education and the mental culture, even at the schools have been! how pitiful the teaching of our mountebanks of science in the faculties! how humble as lacqueys our official men, when Moser's 'Master and Servant,' and other books of his, still worse written, could become torches in a dark night! There were, however, also particular circumstances connected therewith.

Von Moser's voice came forth from the government chancery, and therefore penetrated into chanceries where the voice of humanity never reaches. The outcry of abuse, which came from an official person, who had from his own and his father's experience obtained a perfect acquaintance with princes, presidents, courts, court privileges and finance chambers, caused the greatest consternation, and disturbed in the most disagreeable manner that security and quiet, which the rod of military discipline, the triple brazen breast-plate of subtle jurists, the rock-fast faith of court theologians had served to establish in favour of despotic rulers, and their like-minded officials. Moser's inductions of facts, the examples and anecdotes about great governments and splendid courts in the German duodecimo states, are for the most part lost to the present age; because they are cautiously clothed in

the language of conventional obscurity. It appears to us at least not worth while to attempt to be the *Œdipus* of this riddle. It is enough to know, that those whom they concerned felt the keenness of the lash so sensibly, that they sought for, as such men are accustomed to do, the bitterest and the severest revenge.

In order to show in what manner Moser taught the Germans in what a condition they were, and how he strove to rouse the spirits of the people, from the mean service of slavery and thirst for gain, to a love of their country, we shall quote a passage in which he describes the connexion between the estates of the kingdom and their forms, and the increase of taxation*; we trust in God, that it may not be necessary in some ten years for another Moser, if such can be found in our days, to say something similar with regard to our estates of the present day. In order not to rest upon our own opinion of F. C. von Moser as a writer, we shall quote also in a note what Hamann, after his strange fashion, has said about the form of the ‘Master and

* ‘Der Herr und der Diener’ u. s. w. Frankfurt 1759. 12°. p. 101. “In verschiedenen Provinzen Teutschlands habe ich die Handlungen der Land-Täge in der Nähe zu betrachten Gelegenheit gehabt. Es hat mich ein ordentliches Bedauern gekostet, wie das Landes-Väterliche Herz auf denselben herumgeschleppt worden. Nach der Proposition der Landesherrlichen Commissarien brähe dem theuern Landes-Vater das Herz, dass er mit neuen Anforderungen beschwerlich fallen müsse. Er, der alsdann erst froh seyn würde, wenn er seine Unterthanen reich und glücklich machen könnte. Diss einige tröstet ihn, dass es ganz unvermeidliche und unter der Leitung eines höheren Schicksals stehende Landesbedürfnisse seyend, welche ihn nöthigen, dem Lande mit neuen Anforderungen beschwerlich zu fallen. Nach dieser charlatans-Predigt geht das Negotiren an. Die Land-Hauptleute, der Erb-Marschall, die Ausschüsse von Prälaten, Ritterschaft und Städten und wie sie nach der verschiedenen Lage der teutschen Provinzen heissen, werden einer nach dem andern besprochen, gastirt, belebt, bedroht und gewonnen, die mehreren Stimmen machen endlich den Schluss und es wird ein abermaliges Aderlassen durch das ganze Land resolvirt. Der Land-Tags-Abschied ist so gelehrt, wie eine Leichen-Predigt, und der Minister mit seinen Maklern und Küch-, auch Keller-Bedienten kommen im Triumph nach Hof zurück, Leben und Wonne breitet sich wieder über die Favoriten und Favoritinnen aus, der Jäger bläst auf die freudige Nachricht von den neuen Land-Tags-Geldern noch einmal so muthig ins Horn, die Sängerin, die seit 13 Monaten nicht bezahlte Sängerin, steigt so hoch, wie eine Lerche, der *Parforce*-Hunds-Stall, dem die Renth-Cammer und Creditores schon den Untergang decretirt hatten, ertönt von frohem Geheul, und alle adeliche und unadeliche Müssiggänger rechnen bereits auf die neu eröffnete Goldgrube. Von den gethanen Bewilligungen sollte den Truppen der rückständige Sold entrichtet, gewisse auf der Execution stehende Landes-Schulden abgetragen und einige mit grossem Vortheil feil gemachte, dem Lande incorporirte Ritter-Güter bezahlt werden. Alles dieses ist im Angesicht des Landes mit Hand und Siegel, auf Wort und Treue versprochen worden. Allein, dass Gott erbarm! Wie wird der theursten Zusage gespottet. u. s. w.”

Servant.' This judgement will be found given in the eleventh part of the 'Letters upon Literature,' which was the most celebrated, or, properly speaking, the only critical periodical of that time, in which the same work in the fifth part had been previously highly eulogised; and the words deserve double attention, because the editors of this periodical in no respect belonged to the class of Hamann's unconditional admirers*.

The publishers and authors of the 'Letters upon Literature,' who glowed with a noble zeal for the regeneration of their fellow-countrymen sunk in slavery and barbarism, directed so much attention to the 'Master and Servant,' because they wished to bring the book into the hands of the benumbed people; for Moser's style and manner and his kind of piety, effectually debarred him from becoming a great writer, and this is confirmed by all his subsequent productions. In the whole of the two volumes of his collected moral-political writings, a single essay could scarcely be mentioned which reaches even mediocrity; for his catechism and sermonising morality are intolerable, and what should be political is tedious and destitute of taste. His 'Remains' (1766) are indeed not altogether tedious; but they become absurd, because their form reminds us of Pascal, and because the good Moser, from pure piety, is so malicious against Frederick the Second, who could neither indeed value his theory of the atone-

* Hamann, in his 'Promiscuous Observations upon the Syntax of the French Language,' says:—"This rhapsody ('the Master and Servant') is partly spun from French silk, and therefore we should be conscientious enough to pay France with usury for the use of her materials,—a fresh proof of German honour, which however is often prejudicial to the growth of prudence. One of the translators has too zealously rendered *Diener* by *serviteur*; *valet-de-chambre* might have suited him better. Because the splendid skin of the original has excited great attention, a summary dissection of its inward structure shall here be introduced. The author appears to be a stranger in the cabinet, well acquainted however with the audience-chamber and the chancery. True political skill is too active and too cunning to stop with '*piis desideriiis*;' neither must it be interchanged with proverbs, economical advantages, and laws of ceremony. His knowledge of books and of men is not to be relied on. '*Fundusque mendax*,' to which Horace alludes in what he says of his converse with nations,—'*Unde plus haurire laboris mali est, quam ex re decerpere fructus*.' A magazine devoted to taste cannot, must not, assume to judge of the sources of learning. The unsteady eye of the merely curious, without the firm look of an examining observer, (on journeys, and especially at courts,) weary without being satisfied, furnishes rather dissipation of thought than instruction; accustomed indeed to admire, but not to judge, which must be more correct and delicate in blame than in praise. Undigested materials cause an unsound mode of writing, which tastes more of gall and vinegar than of salt and spices, interchanged with frost and heat. A pedagogue of great gentlemen and their servants will receive this '*licentiam poeticam*' of a scholiast with that moderation," &c. &c.

ment, nor his kind of learning. We would pass over his 'Daniel in the Den of Lions' and other poems, altogether in silence, out of respect for him, if we wished to write a history of German literature, which is not our object. It belongs to a later period to set a value upon the services which he rendered by his patriotic 'Archives,' and we now pass on to J. D. Michaelis and Semler, who bore about the same relation to the later enlightened views of religion, which Möser and Von Moser did to those of politics.

Michaelis and Semler in theology, like Möser and Von Moser in the treatment of history, remained always true to the principles of the government administration, and in politics to the old system and its forms; they trembled at the very thought of any bold and searching reforms; they were learned in an extraordinary degree, but very middling writers, like Von Moser. Both these men however carried a new light into the dark regions of Jewish and Christian history, exegesis, and dogmatics, which Michaelis afterwards took great pains, but in vain, to hide under a bushel. Semler could not calculate, Michaelis was a master in the art; the former therefore was early denounced as a heretic, the latter had to do with a Hanoverian statesman, who sought to advance the reputation and promote the advantages of Göttingen, and who found the theologians an aid and support to the calculating politicians, whose number was not then so great as it has now become. Michaelis was not the man (for we ought to allude to that) who wished for enlightenment in religion; his aim was reputation and money; he sought to discover an entirely new political, economical, and legislative interest for the readers of the Old Testament, who were then much more numerous than they are at present, in the Jewish books, and without observation to supplant the old theological stuff.

Michaelis himself was astonished when he observed that the old manner of explaining the Scriptures and of understanding and pointing out every history of the East literally in the West, could not subsist along with his new method of explaining the East by the East; he was therefore amazed and terrified, and protested against the supposition which the bold Semler put forth, that the church creeds of the Protestants of his time were throughout and essentially different from the doctrine which every honest man must announce as that of Jesus Christ and his apostles. The influence of the two learned men

who have been named was as different as that of their characters. Semler was only learned, and paved the way for the learned; Michaelis was diffuse and popular, and laid claim, not only to universality in knowledge, but also in influence. His books, like his lectures, of which they were faithful copies, conveyed some new general, if not very well-grounded knowledge, not only to the theologians, but also to the tradesmen educated in the universities, who did not at that time devote much attention to the Bible, and to whose vulgarity of mind the breadth and dulness, which are often found in Michaelis's writings, were altogether suited. Semler's books, which were somewhat difficult to read, had a quite different field of operations; his deep and honest investigations destroyed traditional falsehood among the learned, and he founded a school, which, following his footsteps, altogether renounced the traditional systematic faith.

We cannot in a general history enter upon an examination of the principles of these celebrated men, nor give a detailed account of the writings of either; we shall only throw out some hints to show how they paved the way for the bolder reformers of the Protestant church, which had become dark and ignorant through neglect or superstition, and to whom we must refer in the following period. We have already observed that Michaelis, ever thoughtful about, and prudently calculating upon, the advantage and the celebrity of his own name and that of Göttingen, looked to France and England, and imitated the examples there set before him, as far as he could venture so to do, without awakening the suspicion of heterodoxy; Semler, on the other hand, was guided wholly by his own immense and often confounding learning and discoveries, which his honest mind did not venture to conceal, however faithfully he remained attached to the Christian faith. Semler said advisedly, honestly and openly what he had found out; but he said it only to the learned, who were in a situation to follow him upon his painful and laborious path. Michaelis babbled and jested before the students, rejoiced in their vulgar applause of his wit, and never suspected that he was effectually destroying what he wished to uphold. Michaelis, in his expositions, books and in confidential conversation, and with an immense acquaintance with the subject, let fall remarks about the Old Testament and the Jews, in the presence of the great public, which were wholly inconsistent with the principles of our

Christian rabbis, and of those theologians who found the whole of the Athanasian creed in the Old Testament.

Michaelis and his friend Gessner knew right well how their opinions stood with regard to the reigning dogmatics, but they were by far too prudent to run any risk of making enemies for the sake of the pure and naked truth; the service however which they rendered to the then dawning enlightenment was not the less, and we shall show, by Michaelis's example, that a generation which had been educated and trained by Michaelis, Gessner, Heyne, Ernesti and Semler, from the stores of the ancients, or by seeing and thinking, and not merely by writing dictations, and committing lectures to memory, could no longer believe in the serpent walking on the point of its tail, in Jacob's ladder, Elijah's ascent to Heaven, and the like. Michaelis, in order to remain fast in such belief, required of those who wished to understand and explain the Old Testament, the criticism of the text, an inquiry into the strict signification of the words, acquaintance with the dialects related to the Hebrew language, with the usages of the East and its poetry. How was it possible, that a dogmatic interpretation should be maintained, which paid no respect to any of these requisitions?

This learned writer did more for Göttingen than any other of our theologians, even of later times, if we make in some respects an exception in favour of Eichhorn and Ernesti, who in other departments of literature were more at home than Michaelis. By his abounding loquacity, the activity of his mind, and the variety of his subjects, he enabled and led the dull worldly theologians of the university, whose oracle he was, who had been hitherto rendered indifferent by their dogmatics to every species of knowledge of nature or of mankind, to combine Biblical knowledge with the inventions and discoveries of the new age, and to free themselves from a belief in Jewish and monkish superstitions. He spoke of Waller and Linnæus, of natural science and politics, he applied the principles of Montesquieu to Jewish legislation; treated of agriculture and horse-breeding, of all political and economical sciences; and his bitter and severe jests in his lectures were often directed against his stupid orthodox colleagues—why did they not take warning? We answer, because, being accustomed to the Stentorian sounds of systems, they were quite deaf to the still quiet voice of sound reason.

Michaelis, properly speaking, was brought on his way by the English, but these quickly perceived whither that way was likely to lead him; the incumbents of their churches, the families to whom the livings belonged, that part of the nation in whose power the government has always been, had quite different and more tangible reasons for maintaining the integrity of all the old doctrines and institutions, from those of our German Protestants; they speedily began therefore to raise an outcry against the Germans, precisely in the same manner as the Germans had raised a murder-shout previously against the English Deists, who were by them called atheists.

We shall not examine how far Michaelis embraced the spirit of antiquity well or badly, when he made Moses, according to his theory, the oracle of God, the Montèsquieu of the Jews; it was at least a great step in advance, that he sought for something more than Messianic prophecies and types of the New Testament in the books of Moses. We willingly admit that Michaelis was a man of sound learning, that he examined and understood the customs of antiquity, the life of the Nomads, the wisdom of the Patriarchs, the poetry of the East in its length and breadth, but he failed to fathom its depth. His investigations, however, and his instruction were friendly to the life of our time, and made the quartos of Calovius, Gerhard, and Hutter, which had been hitherto authorities, altogether useless. These great dogmatists of our church, the author can assure his readers from his own acquaintance with their thick books, investigated and proved with great seriousness that the second, and not the first person of the Godhead, had written the tables of the law with his own hand!!

D'Alembert knew well that Michaelis, who was so eager for renown, could serve his and King Frederick's views in the enlightenment of Germany, and therefore had him invited to Prussia; but Michaelis remained orthodox, and Göttingen suited his views better than the country of this niggardly monarch. D'Alembert had only heard of Michaelis's exegetical and critical works from the reports of others, but he found no doubt the evidence of the direction of his mind in his treatise upon the influence of language, &c., which was honoured with the approbation of the Berlin Academy and crowned with its laurel. This work was at first only known through the admirable French

translation of Premontval*, which was then regarded in general as the production of Michaelis. When, however, D'Alembert entered into a correspondence with him, he indeed withdrew from the claim of being able to write good French, and asserted that he had need of Colom's help to assist him even in his letters; D'Alembert, however, did not cease to regard him as a good writer, which nobody will do, who judges him from his German alone.

D'Alembert entered into correspondence with Michaelis, invited him to be a fellow-labourer in the great 'Encyclopædia,' and when Frederick, after the seven years' war, caused him to come to Berlin, in order to consult him as to the best manner of beginning to open the eyes of his blind Germans, he earnestly recommended that Michaelis should, if possible, be attracted to Prussia. With this view Guichard (named Quintus Icilius), under the direction of the king and D'Alembert, wrote to Michaelis; but, as has been before observed, the latter thought it advisable not to accept the proposal. Michaelis's efforts, his writing and teaching differ in general from those of Semler, in the same way as all merely academical labours differ from those productions which spring from the free and unfettered mind. Michaelis uniformly gave proofs of learning, or what in the world is called talent, but he was wholly without soul or truth; his activity was influenced by vanity and directed towards the usual academical objects. It was in all respects different with the labours, feelings and objects of the true and pious Semler.

Semler's immense learning despised necessary forms; but his integrity, his fidelity, his love of truth impelled the man who was far removed from all vanity, to lay open those truths and discoveries of which he himself was afraid, and which we, astonished by his learning, and animated by his noble sense of duty, seek out with labour in his works. This holds good even of his autobiography; we wade through two volumes, in which he gives a conscientious account of his knowledge, his wishes and his efforts. We separate from him at length animated and consoled, because we have found out a noble man among thousands of greater but far less estimable writers, whose whole object is

* 'De l'Influence des Opinions sur le Langage, et du Langage sur les Opinions. Dissertation, qui a remporté le prix de l'Académie Royale de Prusse, en 1759.'

profit, and not to shine, or to serve the multitude in hopes they will serve him again.

Semler truthfully and honestly believed that the charlatan Baumgarten was a great man, he regarded the false show of the colossal learning of the scholastic wolf as genuine and true knowledge, and he worked himself sick and stupid, in order to be able merely to explain the orthodox waste of his Baumgarten, or the badly translated compound of Church history, borrowed from Fleury ; how therefore was he surprised when he found at last that all this theological learning was mere chaff, that the text of the New Testament was unfixed, and that many of these writings, which were regarded as the genuine productions of the early times of Christianity, were manifestly the works of pious fraud!! Notwithstanding the true honourable man remained faithful in his gratitude to Baumgarten ; but the truth which he had discovered was regarded by him as too sacred, to render it possible for him to keep it concealed, and he therefore brought it cautiously and prudently to light.

Semler in Halle set himself in opposition to the prevailing traditionary faith, which made the Germans stupid and even contemptible to their own princes and most distinguished men, who had been educated according to the French model ; he was frightened, however, when it was proposed to found an entirely new system, and shrunk back in presence of his own light. Whoever wishes to know from the best sources the true condition of the schools and churches in Germany, of instruction and instructors, the nature of the manuals and systems of faith and knowledge at the end of the seven years' war, let him take the autobiography of Semler, and read the somewhat tedious and difficult four hundred pages of its second part, and he will learn to despise the people, who in our days are assiduously industrious to bring back all this mischief, only in a somewhat modified form. We dare not propose to the readers of a general history to enter into the theological opinions of its authors ; we must, however, merely advert to one point as the result of our very laborious study of Semler's writings, and particularly of the second part of the history of his life.

Semler learned in the most laborious way, by the study of writings which altogether destroyed his taste and rendered him incapable of writing even tolerably, by reading all the old theological compounds, manuals, books of instruction, by examining

the writings of all the visionaries, fanatics, pietists and props of orthodoxy since the Reformation, that the whole theology of his time and its exposition belonged to the worst periods of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; how could that be? How evident must it not be to every man who has read Semler, that at a time when Gessner, Ernesti, Heyne and Michaelis had again given life to the study of the ancients, to a taste for arts and poetry, to an intelligent investigation and inquiry into oriental languages and customs in the schools and universities, the Bible also and theology must be studied and treated in a manner very different from what they had been twenty years before!

As German Protestants, upon whose modes of life, theology and the manner of its treatment had at that time far more influence than upon Catholics, with respect to whom religion in its definite and fixed forms has little to do with their advancement or progress, we consider Semler's services in the promotion of knowledge as belonging, at least in one point of view, to the general history of the mental culture and improvement of our native land, and not merely to learning; the investigation of his writings, on the other hand, we cannot enter upon. All the writings of Semler, who neither could nor would work immediately upon the people, belong to a science of whose literature we cannot in this work take account; in reference to our general view we must however remark, that he formed in Halle by his instructions and example a class of religious teachers who made it their business to think and examine in a time almost wholly devoted to mere speculation and hypocrisy, and this has made his name immortal. Those Protestant instructors who had been educated by Semler, announced from their pulpits and chairs an intelligible faith, founded upon mature investigation, instead of an implicit faith supported upon false historical testimonies, and all religious books were purified from the absurdities of antiquated reveries.

Semler, by his nature and education, was fitted above all others to unveil and expose all those things, which sly deception had forced upon Christians for centuries as the old and genuine sources of divine learning. He was incomparably learned, of unwearied industry, and distinguished by a national tact, which he had brought almost to perfection; by the necessary study of the deistical writers whom he refuted, he was able almost instinc-

tively to trace out every pious fraud, to discover and expose every forged and falsified alleged proof. In order to show that Semler was the first who showed the urgent necessity of improvement in the methods of religious instruction which was followed in the eighteenth, and is persecuted in the nineteenth century, we shall subjoin two passages under the text, in which he himself gives an account of his views of the history of theology. In the one, he lays down the principle of progress with the age, which was detested and persecuted before Semler's time, as it is in ours*; and in the other, he affirms, that explanation of the Bible without criticism is only ascetic and dogmatical pumproom authority†.

* Semler 'Autobiog.' 2nd part, p. 258, says—: "Every man, teacher as well as hearer, has a right to be an eclectic in theology; because the nature of all knowledge expressed by signs and communicated to others, is obnoxious to the differences of times, or it comes into or falls out of repute with these times, and can have no immutability. I regard therefore the numerous philosophical and theological writers as industrious and faithful labourers, who prepare such useful materials and furnish them as good as their times allow; but who can never render the labours of successors useless or unnecessary; on the contrary, they must have accidental unavoidable deficiencies, which neither we nor they can transform into advantages. If it were not so, whence come all the materials for refutation, the opinions of all sorts entertained by the fathers, scholastics and individual writers? Time further brings with it, even now, after Luther and all other theological writers, those unavoidable deficiencies, still much more than is apparent in all civil, economical and other affairs; in which, however, time unavoidably brings with it other advantages and conclusions to observant contemporaries."

† 2nd part, p. 336. "Because I already loved criticism, I never allowed it to be denied, that criticism must be applied to the Bible as well as to the writings of profane authors. I perceived that the Protestant theologians were as little, and yet still less acquainted with criticism in the seventeenth century, as the most learned men of the Romish church; for Morinus and Richard Simon, indeed, opened up a new path, which however the dogmatists of both parties were always anxious and laboured to stop again with new obstructions."

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