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THE

# ART OF THINKING WELL

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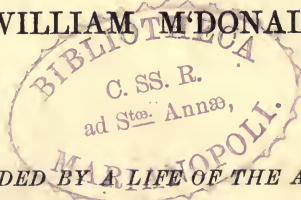
REV. JAMES BALMES,

AUTHOR OF "LETTERS TO A SCEPTIC," ETC.

Translated from the Spanish

BY

REV. WILLIAM M'DONALD, D.D.

  
PRECEDED BY A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

DUBLIN

M. H. GILL & SON, 50 UPPER SACKVILLE-ST.

1882.



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I AIMED at two things in this translation of one of Balmes' minor works—1st, to give a true and literal translation ; and, 2nd, to preserve the author's style as far as possible.

When Balmes wrote his pamphlet in defence of the reforms of Pius IX., Spanish churchmen's ideas were almost entirely conservative and totally opposed to any liberal changes. Hence the bitter reception which that pamphlet met with at the hands of many of Balmes' own friends. I think it right to mention this in explanation of the unworthy motives they ascribed to him in defending the Pope, and the harsh names they called him, as mentioned in his Life.

TRANSLATOR.



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LIFE  
OF  
REV. JAMES BALMES, D.D.





# L I F E

OF

REV. JAMES BALMES, D.D.

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SOMETIME about the year 1810, the house No. 58 of the street *de Cerrajeros*, in the town of Vich, in the province of Barcelona, Spain, was occupied by James Balmes, furrier by trade, who was married to Teresa Urpia. Of this marriage was born, on the 28th of August of the year indicated, James Lucian Anthony Balmes. It is a remarkable coincidence that Balmes came to the world on the day the Church celebrates the festival of the great doctor, St. Augustine.

His infancy passed, like that of most men, without any remarkable incident. He received his early education in the public school, called of *Jesus and Mary*, conducted by the Rev. Ramon Bach; and at seven years of age he studied Latin grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and one year's theology in the seminary. "I remember," says Don Antonio Soler, contemporary of young Balmes, "hearing him

describe the great pain he used to feel going home the day he should by chance lose the first place in class, and how he would even shed tears over it, never resting till he had regained it." He displayed precocious talent, stimulated by his competitor, Don Francisco de Asis Bofill, and an ardent desire of learning and imitating the first boys in the school, above all Bofill. "How do you get up those compositions in prose and verse?" he used to ask. "I strive hard to overtake and pass you, but I cannot." Often he cried from disappointment, and went home sad and thoughtful.

His paternal grandfather was very fond of literary exercises, and was always present at examinations and public theses. His father was gifted with a memory so wonderful that he needed no books to carry on his business perfectly; and many extraordinary things are told of the prodigious development of this faculty in him. Balmes himself was heard to say in his latter years:—"I have a great memory, but my father's was greater. If he and my grandfather had studied professionally they would have been more celebrated than I." There is nothing special to tell of his mother or of the other members of his family.

In 1817, his parents removed from Cerrajeros-street to the *Plaza de las Garzas*, No. 72. Balmes' favourite diversion at this time was to go to the pigeon-house, and seat himself on the steps, conversing with his elder brother, who was a hatter like his paternal grandfather. For this brother he had a very strong

affection, which grew deeper and stronger in the course of years.

Inflamed with noble emulation, and resolved on embracing the ecclesiastical state, he did not limit himself to the cultivation of the sciences which were the immediate subject of his studies, but used to frequent the Episcopal Library, where he perfected himself in the language of Tacitus and Virgil and in Spanish, which he had to learn as a foreign language, for Catalan was his native tongue. Here he examined the works of all the great men who have left their impress on the sands of time, but particularly of St. Thomas Aquinas, "because in them," says Balmes himself, "are embraced all the sciences, human and divine, and because without religion there is no virtue nor true wisdom."

The Archdeacon of Vich, Don Jose Sala, noticed young Balmes' indefatigable industry; and finding him possessed of privileged talents, and to be a young man of exemplary morals, he gave him an ecclesiastical benefice, which, however, was not sufficient to supply him with means to prosecute his studies to their full extent. His parents were poor; he wanted a Mécænas; and as Plutarch found one in Trajan, Boileau in Louis XIV., Fray Louis de Leon in Portocarrero, so Balmes met one in the Bishop of Vich, Don Pablo de Jesus Corcuera, who gave him a free place in the college of St. Charles in the University of Cervera.

The fame our young scholar had acquired in Vich preceded him and excited a lively curiosity among the

students of Cervera to see their new companion, who at the age of seventeen was regarded as a prodigy of learning. The anticipations of all were satisfied, for the young collegian of St. Charles very soon proved that fame had told no untruths in his case. His progress was astonishing, and that vast comprehension which he possessed was developed to the amazement of masters and fellow-students. From the accounts we have before us it results that Balmes was reputed first among the distinguished students; that he defended public conclusions and took an active part in other literary acts, with universal applause; and that his decision was sought in the halls and outside with confidence. He was regarded with such appreciation and respect by his professors, Drs. Barri, Caixal, Xarrie, Ricard, and Gali, that in some of the examinations they prolonged the questions and arguments beyond the fixed time, for the pleasure of hearing his clear and brilliant solutions; and such was his power of intellect that he often publicly defended the *pro* and the *contra* of disputed points.

He made no friends except among his fellow-students, and visited no one but the family of Don Gaspar de Eixala, to whom he was recommended, and Dr. P. Barri, a Dominican friar and peripatetic philosopher, whose opinions our young scholar followed at that time. Absorbed in his contemplations he sought solitude, and often avoided intercourse with those who had given him the strongest proofs of respect and friendship. This conduct was regarded by some as the offspring of indifference, pride, and



V even ingratitude, but he would explain it thus: "My dear friends, pardon me, I cannot help it; there are times when my only pleasure is to be alone meditating. It is not pride, God knows. What can I do? Put my friendship to the test, and you shall see whether it is sincere." Appearances deceived. Balmes always held that modesty should ever be the companion of science and virtue. One of his most beloved fellow-students has said to us: "This strangeness arose solely from the love of study, which mastered him so completely as to make him often forget his family, his friends, and even himself." We believe so ourselves; for in Madrid he was communicative, amiable, and attentive to all. Balmes knew the duties of a man placed in society, and fulfilled them thoroughly. We speak from personal experience, and we shall be supported by everyone who had intercourse with him.

+ When studying he leaned over the table, resting his head on his arms, and one would imagine he was asleep. As soon as he had read a little, he rolled his head in his cloak, and thus spent a considerable time, as if lost in thought. When one of his friends once asked him the cause of such a strange custom, he answered: "A man should read little, but that little bought to be select, and then think a great deal. If we only knew what is written in books, the sciences would remain stationary; and so we should try to know more than those who have preceded us. In these moments of meditation in the dark, my ideas ferment, and my head is converted into a sort of

cauldron." Another singular custom was observed in the young collegian, which attracted the attention of his companions and the librarians of Cervera and Vich. He never asked for one sole book, but would get five or six at a time. His first care was to turn over the leaves, examine the indices, take notes, and then close his eyes in meditation. We have been assured by persons who kept a close eye on him and noted his actions and progress, that at the age of twenty-two he knew the indices of 10,000 books; and on one occasion he invited Don Mathias Codony to put his memory to the test. Codony took a volume of the '*Sum of St. Thomas*,' and Balmes recited the index without hesitation, then the index of the second volume of "*Don Quixote*," and finally of the "*Philosophy of Eloquence*." Codony in astonishment threw the books from him, saying: "James, you are either a wizard, or God wants to show you to the world as a prodigy of memory."

From 1829 to 1833, he had for companion in the College of St. Charles, Don Xavier M. Moner: they studied and slept together in the same room. "We were both of the same age," says Mr. Moner, in the notes he has given us, "and our dispositions became sympathetic very soon after we first met, for I immediately recognized in my companion a frank, innocent, and peaceful character. In spite of his excessive passion for study, we had occasionally some fun in our room, jumping over the chairs or dancing about like children, or perhaps playing chess, which he learned from me in the space of eight days, and notwithstanding my



pretty fair knowledge of the game, I was very soon unable to compete with Balmes, and could scarcely get an odd game from him. Many a time we disputed over the play, and often the end of it would be to pitch the board out of the window. I knew French, and Balmes did not, and he undertook to learn it from me, making me read a piece every day to acquire the accent; but very soon he could give me lessons. At that time Balmes spoke and wrote Latin better than Spanish, and I remember that he often made me read the examples quoted in works on eloquence. In college he studied only the '*Sum* of St. Thomas,' and his library was composed of this single book. He also read a great deal in Bossuet's '*Universal History*.' We never spoke of politics till the publication of the *Royal Statute*, which I often heard him defend, looking on Martinez de la Rosa with admiration and respect." "When he was studying scholastic theology," adds Don Jose Puigdollers, "he agreed with his fellow-student Codony to keep up alternately a daily argument of half an hour. Codony was very studious, and a worthy competitor of Balmes. This extraordinary and violent study cost Codony his life, and Balmes a sickness so serious that he received all the sacraments."

On the 9th of June, 1830, he obtained the degree of S. Th. B. as a reward of special cleverness, and in the middle of October, 1833, he stood for the chair in Cervera, vacated by the promotion of Dr. Jose Caixal to the dignity of canon in Tarragona. "Don Jose Ricard," says Dr. Ramon Miguel, "assured me that

Balmes was by far the first in the literary trial, and that the chair should have been given him in justice."

It is natural to expect that a young man, dedicated to theological and serious studies, should not forget his Christian duties, when he complied so exactly with the obligations of a student. Firm in his dogmatical convictions and in his religious belief, he was exemplary in his morals, and he never allowed a bad word to be pronounced in his presence, or if pronounced, to pass without correction, even in familiar conversation. Besides following the practices of piety of the college, he dedicated some time to meditation in the morning when rising, and at night after supper. He generally prepared for prayer by reading some paragraphs of the "Imitation of Christ," and he was very devout to Our Lady of the Rosary and to St. Lucian. His piety and religious belief were solid, and arose from a profound interior conviction: a soul of his temperament could not live without the bread of meditation.

In November of the same year, 1833, Balmes stood for the dignity of *Magistral* in the Cathedral of Vich. With reference to this he says in his "Personal Vindication:" "Everyone knows what happens in cases of this sort in places of small population. Such events excite great attention, and as some take an interest in one and others in another, there is naturally talk *pro* and *contra*, and stories are set afloat, which a man of elevated views despises. I was born in the town; I was the youngest of those contending, and I consequently attracted most attention, and some people

took up my cause with ardour. When the concursus for this dignity was over, I was ordained, and in this as in all else I received particular attention from the bishop, on whose advice I returned to the university, where I studied Canon Law, and taught Sacred Scripture in quality of substitute, receiving the degree of Doctor, which is called in university language, of *pomp*." In order to complement Balmes' laconism, we have applied to the person indicated to us as best acquainted with this part of his life for further information. This person is Don Antonio Ristol. Here is what he says:—

"Balmes was twenty-three years of age when he stood for the dignity of *Magistral* of Vich, disputing the prebend with his own master, Dr. James Soler, who a few years previously had given him lectures on the very subjects of the present debate. When Balmes returned to the university after the concursus, he was not content with being theologian and canonist, but made a profound study of the best authorities on civil law. The works of Domat and of Vinio, the laws of *Partida* and of *Novisima Recopilacion*, were for a long time his favourite study, and he mastered law with as much ease and success as he did theology and canons. The University of Cervera was to confer a degree of *pomp*, as was usual every year on the feast of the Holy Mystery. This degree was given to the most distinguished student, who should prove his superiority in the examinations to be held for the purpose. What happened in the other public concursus made him hesitate about presenting himself in

the present one, and I remember well how he came one evening to my house ; we went out for a walk and he consulted me about whether he should go up for the prize doctorate.

“ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘by all means go up.’ ”

“ ‘And if I be again disappointed? You see, my dear Anthony, if that happened I should be miserable.’ ”

“ ‘Go up, I tell you, for I have a presentiment the prize is yours.’ ”

“ ‘Your words console me a good deal, but I would like to consult our beloved companion, Don Jose Ferrer.’ ”

“We immediately went to look for him, and as his opinion agreed with mine, we were able to overcome the hesitation of Balmes. He was so felicitous in this contest, and so brilliant, that, notwithstanding the great number of competitors, he came off victorious. He had eight days to compose the usual discourse, and I remember that in two days he was prepared to pronounce the brilliant production which astonished us all.”

It is a pity that this oration, a model in its kind for the novelty of the thoughts it contained and its elegance of style, should be known only by the reference its author makes to it in his “Vindication,” and the recollection of those who heard him deliver it. We understand that Balmes spoke in it of reforms in education, of the creation of Institutes and Model Schools, of the necessity of generalising the study of mathematics ; and touched incidentally on other matters which revealed his progress, his vast capacity,



and his desire to see introduced into Spain the true principles of modern civilisation. He constantly refused (we know not from what motive) to show this remarkable document even to his most intimate friends. When Government at different times reformed the plan of studies, Balmes was heard to say: "Some of these improvements I had foreseen in my doctoral discourse. Who should imagine that the ideas of a poor student, uttered in a corner of Catalonia, would coincide with those of the great men of State?"

Nor have we been able to examine the discourses of the concursus for the prebend of *Magistral*, and we only know, from what we heard in Vich, that Balmes in the first exercise treated of the equality of the Son of God with the Father as regards the divine nature, and in the second he delivered a sermon of an hour's duration, partly in form of a homily, and partly of a moral exhortation, on the first verse of the xiv. chap. of the Gospel of St. Mark, describing magnificently envy and its results.

"At the end of the course of 1834-5," says the "Vindication," "I went home and did not wish to return to the university; the war and the revolution were growing hotter; and I preferred the obscurity of domestic life to the activity of the University." But "Balmes was too big for Vich," one of his companions has said to us. "The bird wanted to leave the nest and fly," adds our respected friend, Dr. Soler. He wanted to visit the celebrated Barcelona, and to derive some fruit from his long studies and privations. His position must not have been at all flattering, when

with the object of improving it he wrote the following important and significant letter to his beloved companion, Don Antonio Ristol:—

*“Vich, 26th July, 1836.*

“DEAR FRIEND—As the time is approaching when a determination must be come to regarding the whereabouts of the university, I shall esteem it a favour if you visit Dr. Quintana, and after saluting him in my name, ask him the news about it, and also the probabilities of my obtaining a situation in it, whether it remain at Cervera or be translated to Barcelona. You may add that I would have written to him direct if I had known his address, and that I shall do so as soon as I do know it. After hearing his answers you will be able to form a close calculation of the probabilities of a good or bad issue, and you will be good enough to inform me of all that occurs. But, my dear friend, the subject does not end here. I have an idea of going to Barcelona, even though I do not obtain a situation in the university, and if possible before the classes open; and not by the way of excursion, but to spend a long time there. I will tell you why: you know I am here without any employment; I give a few lessons, but here the retribution is so small that it is not worth while. I was waiting for the war to end before doing something, but the war does not end. What can I do here like a caged bird? What I do is to endure affliction and consume myself to the danger of my health. But perhaps you will say, what will you do in Barcelona? Well, you know my instruction, though limited, has the advantage of being a little varied. Perhaps for the present I might take charge of the education of some young man; perhaps I might give lessons; in the meantime I should earn my living, make acquaintances, be at hand to see what occurs in the university, and likely some path would open up to me. I think it would not be so difficult to find in Barcelona the employment I have mentioned: and as the retribution is there much higher than here, I could easily earn as much as would keep me decently. You who live there, and have a number of acquaintances, and who profess for me an affection not only lively but ardent, may sound the matter, form an opinion, and let me know what you think of my plan as soon as possible. My dear friend, what pleasure I shall have if you can give me a favourable answer! We should talk together, and walk together, and if possible live together; and even though we lived apart, we should come together every idle moment, and we would talk a thousand and one

times about your plan of studies, and we would spend such pleasant hours alone that we should never miss the thronged streets or the public diversions. Good-bye, my dear friend; I am compelled to order my pen to stop, for it runs so quick that one would think it wanted to leave nothing for another post. You are now thoroughly acquainted with my plans; you know me, besides, intimately; you know what I should like and you know what I could do, you who have so often examined my head and my heart. As to tact in the business, and a prudent reserve that my plans may not be published, I confide in your discretion, activity, and warm affection.—

“At your commands,

“JAMES BALMES.”

Ristol, a young man of clear talent, who knew perfectly the character and qualities of Balmes, who entertained an ardent affection for him, and who could speak to him with all the effusion of friendship, accused him of being over-timid and modest. “I do not approve of your idea,” he answered. “You have been born for greater things—not for a pedagogue. Follow for the present the university career, and we shall afterwards see what course we should steer. As far as my capacity to serve you goes, I leave it at your disposal; not, however, to become a teacher of children, but a professor. It is natural at your age and in your circumstances to desire to improve your position: be calm, and we shall succeed. For the present confine yourself to writing to Dr. Quintana, who is prejudiced in your favour, and I shall do whatever else is to be done. You should be a professor or a public writer.”

Balmes answered him in the following terms:—

“*Vich, 29th August, 1836.*

“MY DEAR RISTOI,—From your favour I see you perfectly comprehended the spirit of my letter; that is, that I desired to improve



my situation, and see if I could better my fortune, but without lowering in the slightest degree the dignity of my character, or sacrificing to self-interest the inclinations of a disposition ever anxious to keep well within the bounds of decorum. Following your advice I have written to Dr. Quintana; we shall see what the result will be. You must have seen the new plan of studies: it contains many innovations; but, considering present circumstances, I don't believe that the half of it is workable. From this plan it may be deduced that literary establishments will continue as they were, with some slight modifications, so that it is probable the university will hold its ground in Cervera or Barcelona, the same as before. If I be not greatly mistaken, it will be easier for me to get into the university according to the new plan; and adding to this the pleasing news you gave me about Dr. Quintana, I think I may entertain some hopes. My dear friend, I have no doubt it is owing to you that Dr. Quintana has formed a favourable opinion of me. In the university there are scarcely any professors; much will lie in the Rector's hands; and I trust that you who have done so much already will be able to bring the business to a favourable conclusion. The time of the opening of the classes is approaching; I think Dr. Quintana must have received some communications from Government relative to the university; I believe that considering the peculiar circumstances of Cervera, they must have consulted him about various things; consequently, as you know well, whatever occasions turn up should be taken advantage of; for if they are allowed to pass, they often disappear never to return. Good-bye, my dear friend.

"I remain yours affectionately,

"JAMES BALMES.

These letters reveal Balmes' situation in 1836. It was a situation not at all desirable, and would have been sufficient to make a less finely tempered soul throw his books from him, and regard the studies so eagerly entered on, and so perseveringly prosecuted, as a melancholy deceit. At the age of 26 years, the age of illusions and desires, *caged like a bird* in Vich, when he hoped to be gathering the fruit of his labours; when he awaited the coming of the moment he

could say to his aged parents: "Now your son, by his toil, is able to make your old days comfortable;" when he saw himself reduced to giving lessons for *a retribution so small, that it was not worth while*, and to implore the favour of a friend to better his *situation and fortune*; when, finally, he might have regarded himself as destined to suffer all the rigours of an inexorable fate, without a future, without recompense, and even without emulation. . . . Balmes, the author a little after of "Protestantism Compared," &c., and of the "Fundamental Philosophy," was undergoing a severe trial, and was giving a brilliant example. If there was at the time no place for him in the universities of Spain, *though he thought it easy according to the new plan*, in scarce eight years after he exercised a universal professorship, and all the literary establishments of the world would have disputed the glorious distinction of reckoning among their professors the young priest of Vich.

He had, however, two sources of consolation in his misfortune—religion and his books. "He attended the devotions," (says Senor Puigdollers) "in the church of the Dominicans, being ever noted for a great depth of resignation and delicacy of conscience. Even when a student, if he chanced to get any money he used to take it to the church *De la Piedad*, to have Masses said for his intention." Given to biographical and historical studies, he derived comfort from the consideration of the ingratitude, perfidy, and crosses, so many men eminent in virtue and letters experienced. Thus he rose superior to his circumstances, and was

able to pursue his literary labours with unyielding firmness. Comprehending, like Mariana, Sarmiento, and Perez Bayer, the high dignity of the priesthood, he fulfilled the duties of his ministry in the tabernacle of the Lord and in the retirement of his study. "God before all, and above all," he used to say. "What is science without religion? what is learning without the fear of God?" Many of his friends told us in Vich, and Senor Soler mentions it in his "Biography," "That besides the celebration of Mass, he used to go to those churches where there would be no great concourse, to pray before the Adorable Sacrament, and the statues of the Blessed Virgin. Though at certain periods dispensed from the Divine Office and from fasting, he never availed himself of this privilege, and when travelling he read his Office in the coach, and often broke his journey for no other purpose than to hear or say Mass." The same "Biography" adds, "that Balmes never exercised the ecclesiastical ministry in its immediate intercourse with the faithful;" which is perfectly true. "I get convulsions," he used to say, in horror, "at the sole idea of sitting down in a confessional to hear the sins of my neighbour. Only through obedience or in a case of urgent necessity could I bring myself to do it." The Senores Martinez and Taulo have assured us "that a notable personage residing in Barcelona entreated him to hear his confession, signifying, at the same time, with great prudence and politeness, that he should be well recompensed. Balmes, though poor at the time (1840), rejected the pretensions of the polite penitent."

But if he felt repugnance for the duties of the confessional, those of the pulpit were very agreeable to him, and he deeply regretted that his weak voice would not permit him to exercise the ministry of preaching more frequently. He delivered only six or seven sermons, the most remarkable being one on "Jesus Christ crucified," and the funeral oration of the academicians of the *Cingulo*.

During this period, which Balmes called his time of rest, he dedicated himself to the profound study of various sciences, which he only knew elementally. Destitute of means and of patronage, which might authorize and encourage him to look for a chair in some of the universities with a hope of obtaining it, for true merit is not always successful in such cases; the filling up of ecclesiastical benefices being, at the time, suspended by order of Government; all the careers blocked up on which young men of application and talent might enter; the voice of learning drowned by the din of war; Spain converted into a vast camp, in which one-half of her unfortunate children struggled with the other half: Balmes contemplated in amazement that immense horizon filled with calamities; that heartrending picture, more bloody in Vich, perhaps, than elsewhere, as it was the capital of the mountains, and the centre of the civil war; and he saw the brilliant perspective fade away, which but four years before was the object of his illusions and his hopes. But did the mind of our young priest yield under the weight of so many misfortunes? Did he abandon his instincts and his resolutions? Did he



close up his books, throw away his pen, and forsake the episcopal library? No. "He surmounted all obstacles, he conquered all opposition, and one would think the difficulties only increased his heroic valour, and were shattered against that iron will. Unfortunate political, local, and domestic circumstances—what elements these to make a man learned and erudite! I remember having heard him say, 'that he thought every great man should aim at some object, and tenaciously try to reach it, though he had to struggle on for fifty years, without hesitating before any obstacle or unfounded censure.' Such was his inflexible will, undoubtedly the secret of his great learning." This is said by a fellow-student and friend of Balmes, "who had the happiness of taking a daily walk with him for five or six years."

We have said that Balmes was already, at the period we have reached, a great philosopher, a consummate theologian, and an eminent jurist. He was scarcely twenty-seven years of age, and he now dedicated himself to several auxiliary sciences. Blair's "Lectures" and Capmany's "Philosophy of Eloquence," inspired him with the desire of cultivating "Belles-Lettres," and he dived into the Greek, Latin, and Spanish classics, from Homer to Anacreon, from Virgil to Tibulus, from John of Mena to Cervantes. He perfected himself in Spanish, "which," he says himself, "we who have the fortune or misfortune to be born in Catalonia, must learn, as we do Latin, English, or French." Given to history, he wandered over its immense fields with the Bible as his compass. Law, chronology, geography,

almost all the branches of human learning became familiar to him, as is proved by those profound writings of his, which, for the glory and pride of Spain, and the instruction and admiration of the world, he has bequeathed to posterity. He needed no masters now. "I make trial in myself," he said, "of what talent, memory and perseverance can do." But these trials were colossal, as is proved by the fact that he learned mathematics without receiving lessons from anyone, and in eight months was superior to the most famous professors of Catalonia.

The revolution growled in all directions; the torch of civil war was burning. Spain, unhappy Spain, was passing through one of those great crises, through one of those periods of tribulation, which the hand of God sends to purify or chastise nations. Balmes, from the mountains of Vich, followed the course of events; and, with "a map before him" (Soler, page 10), "with the newspapers in one hand and a compass in the other, he calculated distances, the marches of the contending armies, the probability of events, so exactly, as to astonish everyone; and not rarely did we see his predictions realised in the issue." "Balmes had so keen an eye in politics," adds Ristol, "that, in 1836, when, talking of the civil war, I asked him if he thought it would soon end, he answered: 'I think that we are about half way through it, and that Isabel II. will triumph.' He had studied the war so closely in its origin, course, and vicissitudes that he often told me it would give him no trouble to relate all the actions and feats of arms which occurred in it, mentioning

the places where they happened, and who had been victorious and who defeated. He had the singular privilege of remembering everything he read ; and I recollect that on one occasion I wanted to quote, in a certain writing, a despatch of General Espartero, and he at once told me, though some years had passed, the date of the newspaper in which it was published, and, moreover, recited it word for word."

Competently authorised to read prohibited works, he laid the foundation of those victorious refutations, which afterwards earned for him so much fame by their geometrical method of handling the subject, and their copious learning, vast erudition, irresistible force of reasoning, and the facility of style and peculiar characteristics which distinguished all his publications. "I confess," he said, to some of his friends, "that prohibited books should be read only through necessity. You know how deeply grounded in my heart religious sentiments and belief are ; and yet before and after reading a prohibited work, I must have recourse to the Bible, to Kempis, or Fray Louis de Granada. What will happen inexperienced and fickle youth without this preservative ? Such an idea horrifies me ; deeply have we to bewail the effect in the depravation of public morals."

"He was inexorably opposed to idle pleasures, and wonderfully attached to solitude, meditation, and continence," says Soler. "He sometimes played chess with consummate ability, and took a daily walk." We must admit that only an inflexible will, an astonishing perseverance, and a profound love of letters



could counteract the influence of the unfortunate circumstances with which he was surrounded, and the inclinations of youth, to such a degree as to make Balmes content with an odd game of chess and a short walk in the environs of Vich. In these walks he was usually accompanied, at the time we have reached, by Senores Soler (James and Anthony), Alier, Galadies, Puigdollers, and other friends, and there was *much to be learned in them* ; they might be called real conferences; they were *otia scientifica*. *Apropos*, and in proof of what we said above, that Balmes aimed at and tried to reach, objects, though they were fifty years distant, we may relate the following anecdote :—

Walking one evening with his friends, Balmes interrupted an agreeable conversation, by suddenly asking the Rev. Mr. Alier :—

“ Don Pedro, have you ever thought what the world may be like 4,000 years hence ? ”

“ Dr. James,” Alier answered in astonishment, “ you are joking. Such an idea never occurred to me. How would you have me, who never think what may happen to-morrow, take 40 centuries into calculation ? Let us continue our conversation, and leave all that to God.”

Balmes smiled : Canon Soler was silent.

“ You smile,” said Alier to the former. “ Well, now, I put the same question to you. Have you ever meditated on the answer ? ”

“ I rather think I have, and deeply.”

“ All right, then ; what will the world be 4,000 years hence ? ”

“I will not tell you at present, my dear friend ; I have it well thought out, and perhaps some day I may make it known.”

From the turn he gave the conversation and a few expressions dropped by Balmes, his friends learned that he founded his opinion on the 9th and 10th verses of the 1st chap. of Ecclesiastes :—“What is it that hath been ? the same that shall be. What is it that hath been done ? the same that shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new, neither is any man able to say : Behold this is new ; for it hath already gone before, in the ages that were before us.”

At this time Balmes conceived an idea so bold that it could only be inspired by his indomitable perseverance and the desire to see “how far talent and application could reach.” We allude to the study of mathematics, of that profound science which enlarges the mind, rectifies the ideas, and sharpens the reasoning powers, but which was, at the period we speak of, sadly neglected in the schools. Knowing that a vacant chair was about to be filled in a literary establishment in Vich, he determined to contest it, against the advice of his friends, who qualified his resolution as imprudent and rash. “You shall see,” he said ; “I hope, with the favour of God, to be soon capable of acting as professor of mathematics, though the idea now appears to you absurd.” He went straight to Don Manuel Galadies, a studious young man distinguished in the exact sciences. When Galadies heard the decision of Balmes, he explained to him the great difficulties before him. “Time will tell,” he answered.

“Lend me a Vallejo, and as I progress I trust you will kindly supply me with the books I may want.”

Eight months after Balmes was a consummate mathematician, and the day of the opening of the establishment he gave a lecture which astonished his hearers and won for him the appointment.

What shall we say of the discharge of the duties of his new position? We will let one of his pupils speak for us:—“He knew the exact sciences perfectly, and had learned them without assistance. I often heard him say that he never wearied at sight of a difficulty or the impossibility of solving a problem; though he should have to give it up ten times, still he would return to it. And so deeply did he penetrate the subject that he taught not only its more sublime parts, but wrote inestimable treatises on it, particularly on trigonometry. Whoever has not heard Dr. Balmes in class, knows not what order is, nor punctuality, nor assiduity in both professor and students, nor attention, nor the clearness of an able teacher, nor the care with which a learned man’s words are gathered, nor the prudence with which the master forms the understanding and heart of youth. I heard him teach mathematics, a matter of itself so fine and delicate: we were a number of young men pretty well advanced in other subjects, and his lectures enchanted us, while his enjoyment was not less than ours. And it was not mathematics alone he taught us, but logic, metaphysics, history—in a word, he taught us how to study and be men.”

We have thought it right to illustrate with the fore-

going details a period of Balmes' life which appears fabulous, and of which he himself gives but a slight idea in his "Vindication:"—"Of my teaching it is not I should speak. More than once our calculations were interrupted by the sound of the alarm-bell and the call to arms: if it were possible to continue, we continued; if not, we quietly rose up and went out. My aim was to make distinguished students; and I succeeded, as well in the elemental part to which I was obliged, as in the higher branches which I voluntarily taught, though they were not included in the programme."

The exact sciences perfected his understanding, and fortified his reasoning powers with that irresistible logic, with that enchanting method, with that peculiar style, which some critics call *Balmistic*. If it has been said of the privileged intelligence of Descartes, that his brain was organized like a honeycomb, in which each science occupied its own compartment, this felicitous comparison may be also applied to Balmes, "who had the faculty of *pigeonholing* every subject with great order." If his works did not prove this, and if his biographer (Soler) did not assure us of it, the testimony of our distinguished friend Don Joachim Roca y Cornet, for whom Balmes entertained affection and respect, would be enough to satisfy us of its truth. "It is difficult," he says, "to harmonize such extension with such profoundness, such a knowledge of man and of the age, of the individual and of society. Take a glance at his works, at their nature and dissimilarity, and you will see with astonishment the uni-



versal mastery with which, at the age of thirty years, he treats all kinds of subjects, answers all sorts of objections, and surmounts all classes of obstacles. In politics and diplomacy he is up to the level of the highest talents of the age; he cleverly decides the deepest questions of State; he paints the men of to-day and historical personages with correct and characteristic touches; he dives into the chaos of modern politics, and with the clue of thought comes out again as if its paths were quite familiar to him; he comprehends and takes in the whole march of humanity with its dangers and tempests, with its breakers and shipwrecks. He possesses the secret of convincing, and even of making converts in politics—a thing rather difficult in these days of inflexible individual pride and of blind and ill-dissembled presumption."

We arrive now at the year 1839, and Balmes is a walking encyclopædia. He was behind only in the study of the art of curing; but his friendship with Dr. Clement Campa, a distinguished professor of medicine, afforded him the opportunity of dedicating himself to this science, "in which he acquired no common knowledge," says Campa. "Having undertaken the study of phrenology, too, he asked me for some book which described the brain. I gave him the 4th vol. of the "*Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales*," which, in the article "*Cerveau*," written by Gall and Spurzheim, describes in detail the anatomy and physiology of this organ. In eight or ten days he returned me the book, and, when I expressed my astonishment that he should have got through the article in so short a time,



though it contained only 33 pages French octavo, in close and compact type, but still dealt with a matter naturally difficult, he answered, 'that he had also read with pleasure the article '*Cas Rares*,' which contains nothing less than 126 pages, and, besides, looked over the rest of the book. So much learning at such an age is undoubtedly a mystery, and one wonders how he could have found time to collect it."

He alternated his labours between serious and pleasant studies, and rested from positive work by indulging in the enchantments of poetry. It is true he did not shine in this branch of literature. Balmes possessed the artificial part; he supplied with study the natural gifts he did not boast of, but he could not compete with Quintana as a poet, as he could not rival Orfila as a doctor. Who is consummate master of all the leading and accessory sciences at the age of 29 years? "*El Saber*," "*El Reo de Muerte*," "*Cien Siglos Despues*," and other poetical compositions of his which were published, were distinguished for their sublimity of thought and closeness of comparison. "*El Saber*" gained him so much applause "that it made his cheeks blush," as he wrote to his friend Moner. He soon abandoned rhyme; for, accustomed as he was to master understandings in the higher social and political questions, whenever the littleness of individuals or party left a fair field to reason; to take a part in all scientific and literary contests; to conquer in many, and to occupy a high place in the world of the learned, he must have felt that he was not born a poet, and that it was unbecoming so superior a man to be content

with a vulgar mediocrity. We may also presume that his after serious labours hindered him from cultivating poetical studies, whose first essays gained for him so much applause.

The name of the young Catalan priest was now known; his poetry ushered him into the literary world; these light productions were like *rockets*, Mr. Soler says; "they were an indication that the bird had left the nest and had begun to fly," we add, bringing to mind the phrase of the venerable magistral of Vich. And so it was. Encouraged by his friends, and flattered by the reception his first productions had met with, he answered the invitation of the newspaper called the *Madrileno Catolico*, which had proposed the following theme for public competition:—"Is the celibacy of the Catholic clergy (pre-scinding from canonical and civil law) more favourable, politically, morally, and religiously speaking, to the good of society than the permission to contract marriage existing among Protestants?"

This was the proposition on which those who aspired to the prize should write, and the triumph was reserved for Balmes. After a short introduction he enters boldly on the subject, and with philosophical arguments and palpable examples demonstrates the religious and moral advantages of the celibacy of the Catholic clergy compared with the permission to marry enjoyed by Protestants. To this article Balmes refers in the following letter addressed to Don Antonio Ristol, who wrote to him announcing his journey to Madrid:—

“*Vich*, 15th of September, 1839.

“MY ESTEEMED FRIEND,—It may be that I shall soon have some business of importance in the capital, and in that case I shall not fail to avail myself of your kind offer; but for the present I only want you to pay a visit in my name to the Rev. Inocencio M. Riesco Le Grand, editor of the newspaper which was lately published in Madrid under the name of *Madrileno Catolico*. Through an article I sent him in the competition on ecclesiastical celibacy, I have entered on some correspondence with that gentleman, and he has offered me the post of correspondent to the Biblico-Catholic Society about to be founded in Madrid under his auspices. He tells me in his last letter that I shall receive proper instructions for the purpose; and as their tenor may occasion some incidents, it will always be useful and satisfactory to me to have in Madrid a friend like you, in whose experience and discretion I shall have full confidence, and in whose affection I shall find a guarantee of sincerity and zeal. I am far advanced in an extensive work analagous to the object the society has in view. According to the course of events I may try to publish it in Madrid, although I have entertained the idea of doing so in Barcelona. Perhaps when viewed closely the latter may offer greater advantages, perhaps greater drawbacks. In the meantime, a happy journey.

“I remain your affectionate friend,

“JAMES BALMES.”

The congratulations of his friends, the favourable criticisms of the Press, and the flattering review of his article written in the *Religion* by Senor Roca y Cornet, encouraged Balmes to undertake another labour more arduous, more transcendent and intimately connected with the questions which were then agitating the bosom of our disturbed society. We allude to the little work “Social, Political, and Economical Observations on the Property of the clergy.” “It was published in *Vich*,” says Balmes in his “Vindication,” “and in spite of the obscurity of the place of issue and of the author, it was spoken favourably of by the Madrid papers of all shades, including the *Gazette*.

In the *Madrid Review* there was also a flattering notice of it, the initials to which they told me were those of Senor Pidal, at present Minister of the Interior. I do not know whether that be true or not: I relate what I then heard."

Among the various questions which at that time engaged the attention of the Press and the Cortes, that of the property of the clergy and Church held a foremost place. Balmes, a priest, and Catholic, and jurist, believed he should fail in his duty if he remained silent when the rights of the clergy were threatened, and he came out with those "Observations," remarkable for their novelty of thought, force of reasoning, exactness of conclusion, and precision in examples. It was natural that a new and humble writer should distrust his own work; but he consulted the matter with his learned friend and former master, Rev. James Soler, who was astonished at the production, and urged him to publish it immediately. On the 1st of February, 1840, Balmes wrote to Ristol:—"Think well over my writing, and when I see you or you write you will give me your opinion. I don't know whether it will please the public: what I can tell you is that the view I take of that property is somewhat original, and I think my little work is not at all like any previous production on the subject. It is all relative to civilisation."

On the 3rd of May, 1840, Balmes wrote the following letter to his friend Ristol, who was in Madrid:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—A parcel of 200 copies of my 'Observations' may reach Madrid any day: they are addressed to the stationer, Don Eusebio Aguado. Perhaps you would not think it too troublesome to have it



announced in some paper, either religious or political. Precisely now when the question is about being ventilated in the Cortes, the occasion should be opportune. I earnestly entreat you as a friend to let me know what opinion may be formed of my writings by those who are able to judge. Speak to me as a friend, and don't deceive me, for deception in such a case would be a sort of treason. How you must amuse yourself in the capital! I am sorry we cannot take a few turns together, and have a long talk about everything that might crop up. But I have one consolation, and it is the thought that on your return you shall find me in Barcelona. You are not unaware of the motives which induce to this step, for you yourself often prognosticated and advised in the same direction. When you were here in Vich you remember we had such a long chat; I wish we could have a longer one now, for somehow or other there is something in you which steals me away, and the hours glide in your company as if there were no such thing as time. What a long spell we have had to content ourselves with wishes, for our position and circumstances kept us so much apart that we could seldom meet! You may tell me we can fall back on letters; but what can one say in a letter? You see, for instance, that this is not a very short one, and yet I have not said the hundredth part of what I wanted to say. Patience. If any paper notice my poor writing, whether to criticise it favourably or unfavourably, I shall esteem it as a favour if you will let me know of it, and if it be anything remarkable send me a copy. Adieu, my dear friend.

"Yours as ever,

"JAMES BALMES."

Ristol, of course, did all his friend asked him, as may be seen from the following answer:—

"I have seen Senor Martinez de la Rosa, and I have given him your treatise to read and form an opinion on. The matter attracted his attention as being connected with questions which precisely at the present time are being discussed in Parliament. I go to the sessions every day, and you cannot imagine the emotion I felt yesterday when I saw Martinez de la Rosa in the anteroom of the Cortes surrounded by the Duke de Gor, Toreno, Pidal, and other distinguished deputies, reading and enthusiastically praising your writing. Our friend Perpina, who will also write to you to-day or to-morrow, told me that Martinez de la Rosa when asked what he thought of your pamphlet, said:—'Magnificent! I am very much pleased with it; there could be nothing better: there are a novelty of ideas and a



certain delicious smack in it. But I observe an occasional after-flavour and here and there the intercalation of an *a*, and some other little things, which come, I suppose, from the author being a Catalan. I have given it to read to the Duke de Gor with a special recommendation. The young writer is a worthy ecclesiastic, and we must make him known. It has also extremely pleased the Minister of Grace and Justice, but he also finds the after-flavour and the employment of some improper verbs, and above all the *a*, which sounds so bad. Others also have pointed out the same defect.' As you charged me (and even though you had not, you know my hatred of flattery) to be frank and tell you the pure, unvarnished truth, because, as you say, deceit in such a matter would be a sort of treason, I have complied with your wishes, and I think you will not complain of my want of sincerity. I give you my warmest congratulations, and I congratulate myself also, for you will remember that long ago I told you you should be a public writer."

The Madrid papers and the *Religion* of Barcelona gave great praise to the author of the "Observations," and encouraged him to continue studying and writing while enjoying the cooings of his rising fame. Balmes' *financial state*—he speaks of it thus in one of his letters—was now prosperous, for in addition to his salary as professor, the small income of his ecclesiastical benefice, and the emoluments derived from private tuition, he had the proceeds of his "Observations." He felt happy, and revolved in his ardent imagination the idea of his "Protestantism compared with Catholicity," "sleeping," as he said, "eating, teaching, and walking with this thought. It was my golden dream, my illusion, my hope in this world." He wrote another little work in 1840, which we shall speak of further on, and a translation of the "Maxims of St. Francis of Sales distributed over the days of the year." Canon Soler tells us the origin of this translation in the following words:—

“In the year 1840, I asked a favour of Dr. Balmes, which was immediately granted. I wanted to have the maxims taken from the works of St. Francis de Sales translated into our tongue for the good of souls. I gave him the French copy, and at the end of a few days he returned it translated, but would not have it published till we both should compare it with the original. With regard to the maxim for the 25th of January, which runs : *Our fear with respect to the judgments of God should be graduated so as not to admit of presumption, nor dishearten us*, he was a good while rounding it to make it express the saint's full thought without disfiguring it, and he would not write it out finally for the press till I should give my opinion. This proves that my dear friend and pupil had great deference for others and was really humble.”

The “Maxims” had a short prologue by the Spanish translator, who eulogises the special gift of St. Francis de Sales of knowing the secrets of the heart of man, “whose faults he points out without neglecting any, without forgetting any, but yet without offending him or lowering him, harmonising the austerity of morality with the most enchanting sweetness. He strews the rough road to heaven with the flowers of divine love, and sweetly carries souls by the path of perfection, enchanted by the angelic words of that man whose breast was filled with the Spirit of God, whose lips distilled the unction of Mary's Son. Nothing appears rough to him, nothing difficult, everything level and practicable. Who has not occasionally enjoyed the perusal of his delicious writings? Who has not

sought in them consolation in misfortune, strength in temptation, peace in uneasiness, light in his darkness?"

Soon after Balmes wrote his "Political Considerations," in which he condemns the revolutionary excesses, and which he had the courage to publish in Barcelona in the heat of the political disturbances in which that town was at the time involved. He was also far advanced with his "Protestantism compared with Catholicity," whose labours he interrupted for fifteen days to compose his "Religion demonstrated to the capacity of Children." "My intention," he says, "is not to write a Catechism of the Christian Doctrine, nor a Compendium of Religion: I have simply endeavoured to fill up a void which existed in the instruction of children."

The teaching of mathematics and the retirement of Vich did not now satisfy the inclinations of Balmes. His visit to Barcelona, the sight of its temples, its libraries, its academies, and its industrial establishments; intercourse with the most distinguished men of that town, the incentive of glory, his growing celebrity; the advice of his friends, the eye of the public, the words "that is Balmes," which he heard whispered after celebrating Mass, when walking on the street, when visiting a library, awakened those natural and irresistible, but worthy and noble, instincts, which elevate a man above his fellows. Emulation, not envy; prudence, not pride; the sublime sentiments of the real philosopher, not puerile dreams; inspired Balmes. At this time he received the distinguished honour of being elected member of the Academy of

Barcelona, on the motion of his friend, Roca y Cornet, to whom he wrote the following letter on the 10th of March, 1841 :—

“MY ESTEEMED FRIEND,—I have been considerably surprised at the satisfactory news you give me, not because I had any doubt of your friendship for me, but simply because I could scarcely hope that so respectable an Academy would carry its indulgence so far. I give you my warmest thanks, and I hope that while the diploma is being prepared, you will communicate the expression of my acknowledgment to the gentlemen who voted my admission. . . .”

His creative and original talent inspired the dissertation he subsequently remitted to the Academy. The subject is really worthy of the author, and characteristic of him, whilst it reveals the gift with which he was endowed—it is *Originality*. The academy received this singular and brilliant production with great pleasure, and regarded it as a prelude of the glory of its new member.

He had now finished his work on Protestantism and was anxious to publish it, but was in perplexity whether it would be better to do so in Madrid or Barcelona. Some of his friends advised him to go to Madrid with it, and he consulted Ristol on the subject, who told him to publish it in Barcelona, where the expenses would be much more moderate than in Madrid. Balmes followed this advice, and on the evening of the 8th of July, 1841, the author arrived in the capital of Catalonia, with the intention of fixing his residence there. The *caged bird* was at last free.

Our readers will remember that Don Joachim Roca y Cornet was the editor of a Review, called the *Religion*, in Barcelona. Balmes and Don Jose Ferrer, attorney



and professor in the university, a young man of great talent and worthy competitor of Balmes in certain things, conceived the idea of founding a new Review, which, embracing in its extensive range religion and society, should also comprehend politics and all the elements of civilisation. Roca y Cornet, yielding to the repeated invitations of Balmes and Ferrer, had the generosity to divide with them his glory and fortune. The *Religion* ceased and the *Civilisation* began to be published. It was a fortnightly paper which won the applause of all political parties, and gained for its editors, Balmes, Roca, and Ferrer, great renown and universal praise. It continued to appear up to 1843, when Balmes seceded from the editorship and founded a new Review of his own called the *Society*. In proof of the high estimation in which the *Civilisation* was held among the learned abroad, we will quote a precious and little known testimony, which particularly enhances the literary glory of Balmes. M. A. Blanche, in the second part of an article on the Religious Press of Spain, inserted in the *Catholic University of Paris* in 1843, says:—

“Owing to the will of Divine Providence, as usually happens in such cases, anarchy was unable to seize on this part of Spain (Catalonia), without awakening at the same time the valour of a generous resistance. More than six years ago the very idea which created among us the *Catholic University*, the *Annals of Christian Philosophy*, and other organs of sound philosophy, and pure literature, brought into existence in Barcelona an inestimable collection invariably



directed to the same object. We have already made this highly deserving work known in our pages. After a career of five years the editor of the *Religion* (such was the title of the Barcelona Review), Don J Roca y Cornet, feeling himself impelled to bolder combats, associated himself with two or three Catholic warriors. Uniting in a common idea the talents of his two fellow-labourers, one of whom was professor of Law, Don Jose Ferrer, and the other a priest, Don Jaime Balmes, author of well-known works, he gave new and vast proportions to his periodical issue. The field of politics was open to him, and he selected a title analagous to the idea of the masses; *Religion* changed its name into *Civilisation*, and the new paper appeared twice a month, thus doubling the number of publications and increasing its size.

“The *Civilisation* has been one of the most interesting collections, not only of the religious, but of the whole, Press of Spain. Written with well-sustained vigour, it was the echo of the most sound and generous foreign opinion, and the energetic director of a nation tending to monstrous errors. There circulated through its pages a sap of hope and success not usually found in religious publications. Among other articles we remember a very remarkable one on the results of the sale of ecclesiastical property. Its author is precisely the same Balmes who had inaugurated his career of publicist with the “Social, Political, and Economical Observations on the Property of the Clergy.” To demonstrate with facts and figures how imprudent and mad had been the revolutionary measure,

was a vast and interesting labour. Never was talent employed with greater success than when he engages on the elucidation of these theorems, based on one side on the eternal principles of justice, and on the other on the public anxiety and tribulations. In a long article on O'Connell the same writer employs vivid colours to paint the hero of oratorical warfare. Strong sympathies draw all the Catholic nations of Europe towards this athlete of religious liberty. Spain, whose strong faith is mingled with her history, could not remain indifferent in presence of the emancipation of Ireland. In other times, when free from that prolonged calamity which now oppresses her, a generous heart impelled her to succour this victim of Protestantism. The sword is now sheathed when a member of the Church is to be protected ; Providence wills that the victory be obtained by patience and prayer; but, notwithstanding, there exists in the Catholic world, and especially in Spain, an ardent and unanimous desire for the complete religious emancipation of Ireland. The *Civilisation* responds to this desire by portraying O'Connell's struggle," &c. &c.

Having given the last revision to his "Protestantism," he intrusted its publication to Don Jose Tauro. His multiplied labours and his change of domicile obliged him to give up his chair of mathematics, which he did on the 28th of August, 1841.

Tauro, an active, enterprising man, and a blind, though intelligent admirer of Balmes, conceived the idea of going to Paris and publishing the work in French. His acquaintance with several *litterati*, editors

and publishers of that capital; his practical knowledge of the book business, and of the country, were elements too favourable for Balmes not to avail himself of them. Besides, he naturally felt inclined to *see the world*, for Barcelona and Vich did not satisfy his longing curiosity, and he knew that "men are instructed, improved, and perfected by literary excursions." As there exists no diary of his journey, for when he was asked why he did not keep one, he answered, laying his hand on his forehead, "I have the diary here," we will supply the want from the notes of his companion. Tauro says:—

"Dr. Balmes, having accepted my proposal of translating the 'Protestantism' into French, we started for Paris at the end of April, 1842. We stopped at Figueras to dine, and several gentlemen availed themselves of the opportunity to pay some attentions to my companion. At Perpignan we put up at the Hotel du Midi. Don Miguel de Foxa was there, and he took advantage of my acquaintance to have some conversation with Balmes. In Toulouse I presented him to my friend, Father Magin Ferrer. I noticed that on several days my companion rose from table almost without eating anything, and thinking the French cookery did not agree with him, I proposed we should live as far as possible in Spanish style. It was then I found that it was caused by his observance of the fast, and the abstinence from certain food, although we were dispensed on the journey. In Bordeaux, when the Archbishop of Saragossa heard of our arrival, he sent a message to Dr. Balmes to say that his health did not permit

him to call at our lodgings, but he would have great pleasure in seeing Balmes. The answer of my companion was:—‘Tell the archbishop I will go to visit him at once.’ And taking me by the arm we went to the Grand Seminaire, where the archbishop lived; and he received Dr. Balmes with all politeness, and ratified the dispensation from fasting and abstinence of which, however, my companion did not avail himself.

“In Paris he took a room in the Rue de Saint Honore, No. 357. We went to visit the Marquis de Alfarrax, Don Antonio Gironella, M. Bonetti, Director of the *Unversité Catholique*, Don F. Martinez de la Rosa, the Count de Toreno, the Count de Orgilla, the Marquis de Rotavo, the General of the Jesuits, and other persons of distinction, who bestowed on Balmes many marks of respect and friendship. In four or five days after our arrival he himself began to translate his ‘Protestantism’ into French, and submitted the copy to M. Blanche. As I had been in London I urged my companion to go to that capital to examine the great libraries and precious things of all sorts it contained. ‘I will go,’ he answered, ‘but I must learn English first.’ Don Jose M. Comes wanted to procure a professor of that language for him; but Balmes would not hear of it. He bought an English grammar, and in a short time he read and understood English. To acquire the pronunciation he used to listen to any of the Englishmen we met on the street, and he was soon able to understand and make himself understood. I confess he astounded me.”

From a letter Balmes wrote to his friends, dated



Paris, 19th of September, 1842, we quote the following extracts :—

“ You will ask me what I think of Paris and London : well and ill, ill and well ; much and little, little and much ; they are beautiful and ugly, ugly and beautiful ; men and things have their more or less, their infinite phases, their innumerable aspects. But you will add, have you not been astonished ? You know I am a sort of old, hard-headed, satirical Christian, not easy to excite, but above all, an admirer of that famous saying of St. Cyprian, who knew well what he was about when he exalted the dignity of the human soul : ‘ that man lowers his greatness who wonders at anything which is not God.’ . . . You shall find me something about the same as when I left you. *Quid facias ?* . . . You see I have not forgotten my Latin ; nor have I lost my affection for old books. You know I have got it into my head that those old fellows knew something. I am looking through dust-covered volumes in these libraries, and making these Messieurs trot about examining forgotten corners of the Royal Library. Don’t show these lines to the gentlemen *à la dernière*, for they will only lift their eyebrows and say, ‘ the man is incorrigible ;’ and the worst or the best of it is that he will continue in his own track till he goes to await the resurrection, in which is the truth, as here my paper ends.

“ BALMES.”

These last words of his letter, though they appear to have familiarly escaped from his pen, confirm what many of his friends have told us, that his fixed, dominant thought was *eternity*. We shall hereafter see that the great philosopher did not fear death as it is feared by men in general. Balmes always lived prepared to die ; hence he awaited tranquil and resigned the moment he should have to abandon this transitory world, which he in his clear perception believed even more fleeting than it is ; hence all the ideas of that privileged understanding were concentrated in this sole one—*eternity*. Balmes did not fear, for he had faith and hope ; his faith and his hope were lively and



ardent as his genius. "I am now," he used to say to some of his friends, "twenty-eight, or thirty, or thirty-five years of age; in twenty more Balmes will be done with the world. This is a passing shadow. There" (he would add, pointing to heaven), "there is eternity; there is the truth, for there is God." In Vich as in Barcelona, in Cervera as in Madrid, in Paris as in London, in his study as on the street, in the sanctuary as in a corner of a bookseller's shop, it was *eternity*, ever *eternity*.

In the meantime the name of the writer of Vich flew through the four corners of intellectual Europe. Who is Balmes? eminent professors, learned men, the most distinguished philosophers of the civilized world would ask. Who is that Spaniard, the honour of his age, who treads so resolutely the hidden regions of all the sciences, and confounds his antagonists? His "Protestantism" was Balmes' great production. "This is my work," he sometimes said in our presence. Everyone knows that when writing it he aimed at refuting some doctrines of M. Guizot. He fought hand to hand in intellectual combat with this celebrated French writer, and conquered him. He impatiently awaited a renewal of the contest. "If Guizot answers," he used to say, "I have four other volumes in my head to reply." But Guizot and France did not venture on new combat.

Several French writers and newspapers, among them the *Gazette* and *Correspondent*, rendered the "Protestantism" and its author a homage all the more glorious as it came from a country which boasts

of leading the van of modern culture. We omit referring to the praises of various Spanish writers, lest they might be considered the offspring of a sentiment different from true admiration. "This work," says its author, "was published in the beginning of 1844, and in August, 1846, the sale of the second edition was far advanced. It was translated in Paris, and in Rome no censure was passed on it: I appeal to all the Spanish bishops to say whether they have ever found fault with it. On the contrary, I was congratulated by word and in writing by almost all of them; the Cardinal of Seville, the Archbishops of Tarragona and of Santiago, the bishops of Pamplona, of Palencia, Cordova, Barcelona, the Canaries, Tuy, Calahorra, Coria, and Salamanca, receiving from all proofs of affection and assurances that my labours pleased them . . . The English bishop, Wiseman, wrote me to the same effect. The translation of the 'Protestantism' made in Rome, the first two volumes of which I have before me, is a sign that the work was favourably received in the capital of the Christian world, particularly if we add that more than two years ago the Chief Pontiff, Gregory XVI., received a copy of it. The celebrated Father Perrone, of the Society of Jesus, in his 'Compendium of Theology,' refers to it thus:—'Recently the Spaniard Balmes has struck out a new path, when in a continuous parallel between the Catholic religion and Protestantism he showed in a solid manner the good the former did to civil society and the evil the latter has produced.'"

When he speaks in his "Vindication" of the works

he has published, he dedicates only one line to the *Criterion*,\* that sublime production, the more admired and appreciated the more profoundly it is studied. Few, indeed, in this age of novels and newspapers dedicate themselves to the abstract sciences. Involved in the whirlpool of politics; more or less identified with the events of the age, which might be called romantic if it were not so disastrous; ever dependent on the present without object in the future, men inclined to letters have not that quietude needed for studies of this sort. This explanation, though it is not an excuse, affects all writers and readers. But among the few learned men who, though they follow fearlessly the vicissitudes of public life, never abandon their fixed purpose, Balmes deserves a high place. During the bombardment of Barcelona by Espartero, in 1842, he became a fugitive from the town—an unwilling fugitive—for he was dragged away by his relatives. He took refuge in a house in the country without other books than his Breviary, “Kempis,” and the Bible; and while the cannon roared in his ears, Balmes the philosopher, Balmes the contemplative, wrote in that month of sad reminiscences his immortal *Criterion*. Absorbed in his religious and scientific meditations, he renewed in a certain measure the example of Archimedes, who pursued his silent studies while the Roman army was sowing devastation in and around Syracuse. We were told in Barcelona that Don Juan Zafout, Abbot of St. Paul, on reading the *Criterion*,

\* *El Criterion* means *Judgment*.

exclaimed: "Blessed bombardment, which gave us such a work as this." It seems incredible that Balmes could have written the *Criterion* in a month, and yet we are assured he did so.

Besides the *Criterion* and a "Treatise on the Conduct Ecclesiastics should Observe in Dealing with Unbelievers," our author published his "Letters to a Sceptic on Religious Matters." "The first fourteen," he says, "appeared in the *Society*, and the other eleven deal with points of great importance. This collection may be considered as an apology of religion, written with the pleasing variety peculiar to the epistolary style. The circumstance that all the Letters are addressed to a sceptic, renders it possible to present the proofs, the difficulties and the solutions, under an aspect accommodated to the spirit of the age."

Balmes arrived in Madrid in 1844, and founded a newspaper called the *Nation's Idea* (*El Pensamiento de la Nacion*), in which he advocated the marriage of her Majesty, Isabella II., with the Count of Montemolin, son of Charles V., a marriage which would have united the two Spains—the Carlist and the Liberal—and brought peace to the nation. In this advocacy, unfortunately, he was not successful, and when her Majesty was married to her cousin, Don Francisco de Assis, and her sister to the Duke de Montpensier, he brought his labours to a close, and dedicated himself to other work. The *Pensamiento* marks an epoch in the history of the Spanish Press. It was written with all Balmes' clearness of expres-



sion and force of logic, which confounded all adversaries, who did not know what to make of the new writer, and called him a literary athlete and sphinx, while its tone was always elevated and noble.

The stopping of Balmes' paper was regretted by friends and foes. The former wished the *Pensamiento* to continue, though its principal object was now beyond discussion. "Let Balmes speak, let Balmes speak: if the Queen be married and this subject cannot be touched, but is outside the pale of polemics sustained for the space of three years with such cleverness and glory to the illustrious publicist, there are many other subjects of interest which can be handled." "Write, write, James; your friend Ristol entreats you." "I cannot do so, my dear Anthony; lofty reasons oblige me to remain silent."

We will now break the monotonous narrative of the scientific labours of Balmes, to give a short account of his private life. He usually rose at five o'clock in the morning; he spent half an hour in prayer in preparation for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which he spent another half-hour, and the same time in thanksgiving. He then took chocolate, reading, if alone, Kempis or the Bible, and then he went to his study and examined the newspapers, after which he commenced his literary work. In general, he wrote himself the copy, though he sometimes had amanuenses. Very few writers could follow his dictation; and, as he never stopped, he used to say "he felt pained to see them sitting three or four hours without lifting their eyes or dropping their pen." If they



smoked, he allowed them to light a cigar occasionally. "So copious was Balmes' knowledge, and so privileged his emission of ideas," says Ristol, "that he sometimes assured me that he could easily dictate to two amanuenses on any questions which might be marked out for him."

His labours were usually interrupted by visits and epistolary correspondence. He did not generally delay the answers, and if asked to do anything for a friend in Madrid, he did it at once. Whilst he lived in the *Plaza de las Cortes* he dined at two; when he took lodgings in *No. 4 Calle de Leganitos*, where he lived with Don Louis Perez, manager of the *Pensamiento*, he commenced to dine at five o'clock in the evening; but, as he never breakfasted, he began to complain of weakness, and returned to his old habit of dining at two and supping at ten at night, always very frugally. He sometimes suffered from violent pains in the stomach, and his usual remedy was a regimen, which he regarded as a panacea. He rigorously observed the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church. In the evening he took a walk in the *Retiro* or in the *Fuente Castellana*, alone or accompanied by some friend. After the walk he went up to the room of Senor Ramirez. He esteemed and respected this worthy ecclesiastic, who was, he said, a living portrait of M. Affre, Archbishop of Paris—the holy pastor who has just laid down his life on the barricades of that disturbed city.

Balmes enjoyed tolerable health in Madrid. A short time after his arrival he had a slight attack of

sickness, and was attended by Dr. Thomas Corral; two years after he had a herpetic eruption, which was alleviated by the hydrosulphate baths ordered by Corral. Yielding to the entreaties of Don Ponciano Ponzano, a sculptor pensioned in Rome by the Spanish Government, Dr. Corral asked our author to allow his portrait to be taken. "He offered great resistance," says Senor Corral, "but in the end yielded; and Ponzano took with him to Rome a portrait done in pencil. His intention was to have it engraved in that city, where the name of Balmes was well known. I know not whether it has been published. I repeatedly advised him to moderate his mental labour. What do you want more fame or glory for, Senor Balmes? All my friends say the same, Senor Corral, but I am young, and I think my constitution can bear a few years more work."

His ordinary dress consisted of a coat, waistcoat and trousers of black cloth, stock and boots, and in winter he wore a blue cloak. His dress and person vied in cleanliness and neatness. The social intercourse of Balmes was in conformity with his position, his state of life and his great knowledge. In his conversations, which generally turned on politics, "there was a great deal to learn," says Soler, "and they were a little reserved even with respect to those who had closest intimacy with him, unless the subject was general, and did not affect him personally. This made his friends beat about carefully, for he was so close an observer that he penetrated one's most secret thoughts. I am certain if he had been a prelate or man of government

nothing could have escaped that gaze so prudently inquisitive and experienced, but never insulting or incautious." As a good Catholic priest he exercised charity, but in secret. Don Louis Perez has told us that "he was accustomed to give a shilling, eighteen pence, and two shillings to exclaustrated religious, to retired officials, and soldiers' widows; to the other poor the first coin his hand met in his pocket. On the stairs of his house poor people used to await his going out or his return. This displeased him very much, for he was opposed to making laudable actions public, and of his modesty we who have lived with him can speak."

Balmes did not observe the custom of some other men of reputation who seek the public gaze at all times and in all places. Our philosopher mingled with the crowd, without affecting that air of solemn gravity, and that ridiculous bearing which seem to say, "here is a man of worth, clear the way." Balmes, as Cienfuegos says of another illustrious man, "did not boast of the exercise of beneficence, nor seek to attract the acclamations of the world," but endeavoured to hide, rather than reveal, his virtue and learning. Now that we have spoken of the moral man, we shall complete the narrative by describing the physical man.

Dr. Balmes was of more than ordinary stature, thin, but with the muscular system well developed. His skin was white and fine, his nose well-formed, his lips rather full, and when he spoke or smiled he displayed extremely white teeth; his hair was dark-brown, his

face pale, with a little red in the cheeks ; his forehead broad and smooth ; his eyelids very open ; in his large, black, and lively eyes intelligence and genius sparkled ; his look was penetrating, with an undefinable expression ; his aspect agreeable and naturally majestic.

Dr. Campa says his temperament was a mixture of nervous and bilious, with a participation of the best moral qualities of all other temperaments. Thus it is he united to the extreme sensibility of the nervous, the quick perception, the felicitous memory, and the ardent imagination of the sanguine temperament ; the extreme development of the moral faculties, the firmness of character, the inclination to constant study, the boldness of conception and the perseverance, peculiar to the bilious ; the exquisite and delicate tact, the enthusiasm for the sublime and the inclination to the extraordinary which distinguish what the ancients called the melancholy temperament ; “in a word, his temperament was peculiar, his constitution delicate : he was a strong soul located in a weak body.”

He ate little ; his stomach could only digest small quantities of food, but required substantial and nutritive matter. For a long time he drank no wine ; but latterly he took a little after dinner and supper. He slept little, and generally took a long time to fall asleep. He often suffered nervous palpitations, which made him jump out of bed, and took a long time to settle. His intellectual absorbed his physical life : the man was all soul ; he was spiritualized. Such was Balmes. His only ambition was to write, and this



labour became a necessity to him, to which he sacrificed promotion in the Church, which was more than once forced on him to no purpose, for he preferred his freedom and independence.

In the middle of May, 1845, he undertook a journey of which we have but few details. We only know that he reached Paris, where he had the honour of becoming acquainted with Archbishop Affre, at whose table he dined four or five times. He also met the celebrated Chateaubriand; talking with whom one day about Spain, Balmes said she was *sick*, and the author of the "Martyrs" answered: *Not only is Spain sick, but all Europe*. He also went to Belgium, where a Jesuit showed him the room in which Jansenius died. He here received one of the greatest honours of his life, as Cardinal de Sterks, Archbishop of Malines, invited him to dine, and he met at table all his suffragans and the Apostolic Nuncio.

From Paris and Brussels he wrote several letters to his friend Ristol, which we do not insert because they are devoid of all literary or historical interest. He returned to Spain by Bayonne, and after remaining a few days in Madrid, went on to Barcelona, to prepare the publication of his "Fundamental Philosophy," which, according to Soler, is the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor accommodated to the necessities of the nineteenth century. This work, "which, from the stupendous variety of knowledge it manifests, and the richness of its mental treasures, appears a collection of libraries, a mine of science, for there is no faculty foreign to the vast comprehension of its author,"



placed Balmes if not higher than, at least on a level with, the first philosophers of Europe.

From Barcelona he returned to Madrid and then went to Vich, where he dedicated himself to the arrangement of his notes, and the preparation of materials for his "Elemental Philosophy." The few times he went out to walk, generally with Canon Soler and Father Alier, interesting conversations used to turn up. Contemplating one evening the lofty peaks of Monseny and of the Tangamanent, he said to Senor Soler: "What a magnificent spectacle is discovered from those immeasurable heights! How grand it were to there admire the omnipotence of God, and to think of eternity! Some day, when our occupations allow of it, you and I will go up there and make a week's retreat on the top of those mountains. Far from the bustle of the world we will concentrate our thoughts on the Supreme Maker, and divide our time between the spiritual necessities of our souls and meditation on the most important points of philosophical science."

Another day the venerable Canon said to him: "Dr. James, I confess I am afflicted and shocked at sight of the new socialistic and rationalistic doctrines propagated by some foreign authors. They appear to be madmen rather than philosophers. Society rests on fundamental principles, and if these be undermined the edifice falls to the ground. Religion being mocked, the absurdity that property is robbery sanctioned, broken the dikes which restrained the passions and all authority contemned; if these dissol-

vent doctrines continue to be propagated, can society exist?—or is the end of the world near?” “Not yet, my dear Canon, but that we are hastening to a social dissolution, or a state which human prevision cannot foresee, is indubitable; and if God does not enlighten men, and those mad schools become generalized, we shall return to the ages of barbarous vandalism. France will be the first victim of those doctrines: I am led to believe so by the observations I made in my travels.”

On the 20th of October Balmes left Vich for Barcelona, where his friends entreated him to have his portrait taken. “I have neither time nor humour for it at present; next year, please God,” he answered. But a painter drew his portrait from memory, and perfected it by placing himself near the altar where Balmes was celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When he heard what had occurred, he smiled and said: “For sake of the trick I forgive the painter for drawing me against my will.” On the 1st of November he left Barcelona for Madrid.

On concluding his “Elemental Philosophy” he felt extremely fatigued, and this circumstance coinciding with the need his friend, Don Pedro de La Hoz, the celebrated editor of the *Esperanza*, had to visit his native province of Santander to re-establish his shattered health, the two writers went off together to make a summer tour in that part of the country. In connexion with this journey Senor de La Hoz tells the following anecdote:—“I gave my companion a shock one day. We were going on foot along the rugged

mountain of Cabarga when we heard in one of the valleys a man's voice. Our luggage porter told us it was the priest of the neighbourhood, Don Jose de Rubalcaba, engaged, of course, in some outlawry which people of his habit are constantly mixed up in—he was teaching grammar and reading to a boy of the village! We were then drawing towards the *open air hall*. The kind preceptor, though surprised by the visit, and saluted by me at a considerable distance, knew me at once, for we were old friends, and, giving a holiday to his pupil, ran in to put on his hat and coat, with the intention of accompanying us a short distance. 'This gentleman,' I said to my companion, when the priest was away, 'is the most enlightened person in this country. He reads your works; but he is so strict in politics and canon law that I am aware he has several of your propositions marked down in his green book. I will talk to him of the author as if he were in Madrid, and you shall see you are not the saint of his special devotion.'

"'Don't do so,' Balmes answered; 'I should not be offended at the criticism; but he might be sorry for it when he came to know that the person criticised was present.'

"But I knew that the priest respected Balmes' principles as much as he admired his talent. So, as soon as we entered on conversation, jogging along, the three together, I asked him if he continued reading Balmes' works, and what he thought of them. 'I read them,' he said, 'whenever I can get hold of them; and I assure you, they daily please me more and more.'

That man's learning is wonderful! His pen appears the pen of an angel.' . . . Here Balmes, whose face I saw suddenly covered with blushes, could not restrain himself longer, and turning to our benevolent companion, he said to him: 'Don't say another word; there is a great deal of prejudice in what you have said, and this rogue here is laughing at both of us, for he did not tell you the man you are talking about is present.' You may imagine the priest's surprise at these last words: I took such a fit of laughing at the success of my trick that I only noticed they had to be repeated several times for him before he could believe it." Senor de La Hoz concludes his long description of their journey in the following words:—

"Balmes, however, was a man, and as such could not be totally free from imperfections. He was inclined to select difficult themes, which occasionally made him appear sophistical: he had some difficulty (I refer to my time) in laying aside opinions he once defended, which in some cases made him appear stubborn. But we must say to his credit that with regard to the first defect the exuberance of his powers was some excuse, and with regard to the second the moment he saw it might lead to a breach of duty his persistence ceased, and never became a real fault. Happy the mortal in whom could be found so few and so excusable defects in the midst of a rare treasure of eminent qualities!"

Balmes separated from Senor de la Hoz in Santander, and went on to Paris, whence he returned to



Madrid on the 18th October, 1847. After his return he wrote his pamphlet, "Pio Nono," which occasioned him great bitterness even from his intimate friends and admirers. In it he defends the acts of Pius IX. at the opening of his pontificate, when he gave an universal amnesty and adopted constitutional government. This pamphlet is perhaps the best written of all Balmes' works, although unfortunately his anticipations of the good he expected to come from the new measures of the Pope, were not realised. His production was bitterly attacked by several writers, and regretted by most of his friends. To the former he did not reply; and to the latter he used to say:—"My 'Pio Nono' is not understood."

A worthy Spanish prelate, as venerable for his learning as for his virtues, speaks in the following terms in a letter he was kind enough to send us:—"I had many conversations with Dr. Balmes, and we spoke of his last production, 'Pio Nono,' which I have no doubt made his sensibility suffer very much, as he saw himself attacked by many who believed the hour come to impugn the athlete whom in all classes of literature they had to respectfully admire for his rare superiority in dealing with everything. Human misery! They thought to obtain a triumph by lowering the merit of one who, even if he had made a mistake, should be supported by them. He said to me among other feeling things: 'I felt stung in conscience to see the way His Holiness was treated even by ecclesiastics without anyone coming forward in his defence.'" "I do not intend to defend myself,"



said Balmes in a letter, "I leave my defence to time and the sound judgment of the public. Besides, I have one consolation—the testimony of my conscience."

We do not hold that the bitterness he suffered, the deep sadness concentrated in the depths of his soul, caused his death, but we do believe it accelerated it. Secret pain corrodes the entrails, and the first sickness is felt most. Accustomed to walk among flowers and laurels, Balmes confirms the truth of the saying of Disraeli:—"He who walks on roses will be pricked by their thorns;" and that other of Pythagoras:—"The laurel's shadow inebriates or stupifies." The stupefaction of our author was the precursor of his eternal sleep. "My opponents upbraid me," he said to Ristol in Barcelona; "my opponents upbraid me with a slip I do not acknowledge; those who do not comprehend my 'Pio Nono' call me a visionary; I heed it not; but to call me the Spanish *L'Amennais* . . . Oh! . . . this is an arrow which wounds me to the quick. I, who am daily confirmed more and more in my faith; I, who yield to no one in purity of doctrine; I, who am ready to seal with my blood the principles of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion I profess, and have defended in all my works with such conviction and integrity . . . I *L'Amennais*! Great God! pardon those who speak thus, pardon those who say what they do not believe, as Thou didst pardon those who did not know what they were doing. They say my 'Pio Nono' is a petition for the purple of a cardinal! As if I had not had ample opportunities to rise rapidly in my ecclesiastical career!

As if I esteemed my independence so little as to sacrifice it at the age of thirty-seven ! As if I were capable of staining my name and fame by becoming a miserable sycophant to obtain that which I could have with little effort, perhaps without any !”

His grateful country tried to avenge our author, and administer a lenitive to his sorrows by crowning his brows and inscribing his name on the walls of several literary temples, and generously opening to him the doors of the Royal Spanish Academy ; but he died before he could take his place in that illustrious assembly. The honours bestowed by his country on the great philosopher scarcely mitigated his profound grief. The laurels faded before adorning the brows of the young academician : a new Tasso, he should die on the eve of being crowned in the capitol.

A serious illness attacks him : he recovers and flies from Madrid to Barcelona to be near his beloved family and his intimate friends. The climate and sun of Catalonia, the comforts heaped on him by so many persons interested in the preservation of that precious life, contributed to postpone the dreaded catastrophe, and he could again pursue his labours uninterruptedly. He dedicated two hours daily to the study of Greek and Hebrew, took notes for his inaugural discourse in the academy, “and alternated these labours,” says Ristol, “with the perusal of the Latin classics, in order to acquire a style distinct from that generally employed in text books. The day after his arrival he told me he intended to translate his

‘Elemental Philosophy’ into Latin, and wanted to have it published before the opening of the course of 1848. He worked thirteen or fourteen hours a day, and the amanuensis had sometimes to say to him: ‘Pardon me, Dr. Balmes, but I really cannot follow you if you do not dictate with less precipitation.’ The previous study he had made of those authors in so short a time, and the heavy, material work of translating without any sort of diversion, contributed, in my opinion, to accelerate his death. When he was within two or three days of concluding the translation, he suddenly felt weak, and had to drop his pen.”

The star which had illumined the intellectual world for eight years was hurrying rapidly to the horizon. His relatives and friends foresaw the fatal end. “The patient alone,” says Ristol, “hoping in God and confiding in his youth, was calm in the midst of his sufferings. ‘How are you, James?’ I asked him. ‘Pretty well. I feel some shivers, want of appetite, weakness, little desire of writing; but they advise me to go to my native place, and I desire it myself, and my native air will soon restore my health. I am thinking of afterwards going to Italy and England. I wish you could accompany me. I want to see the Pope, and Montemolin, and Cabrera. Because I spit some blood and cough, some of them think I am in consumption. It is not my chest but my stomach is wrong: the blood of the spittle does not come from the lungs, but from the head.’ ”

Dr. Cil advised him to go to Vich. On the 27th of May the patient entered the city in which he first saw

the light, and took up his residence in Don Mariano de Bojou's house in preference to his brother's, for the following reason, which we give in his own words:—"I am not able to go to the church as often as I should wish; I want to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass whilst I have strength to do so: in Senor Bojou's house I can do so without having to go on the street [there was an oratory in the house], which I should have to do if I lived with my brother. I shall also be more quiet, as fewer visitors will come. I do not feel able to receive people."

During the first few days after his arrival at Vich he recovered his appetite and sleep, he felt lighthearted and conceived hopes of recovering his health. But his love of reading and writing was invincible. Pretending that he wanted to amuse himself, he used to spend several hours at this labour against the advice of his friends and the doctor. On the 8th of June he became worse, and on the 26th he was unable to leave bed. Up to that date he entertained some hope of final recovery. Now, however, this last desire of all sick people had to be abandoned, and he submitted to the will of God and began to look forward to death as the term of this fleeting world and the beginning of eternity. Balmes prepared to die as well as he had lived. His first care was to regulate his temporal affairs, that he might afterwards employ himself with less embarrassment on the eternal. He made a will, in which he left his brother residuary legatee, after making several bequests to other relatives and leaving



considerable sums for Masses for his own soul and the souls of his father and mother. A few hours after signing his will he asked for the Viaticum, which was administered to him at eight o'clock on the morning of the 28th of June, and he received it with such devotion that all the bystanders were edified.

His consumption now became rapidly developed, and after receiving Extreme Unction and surrounded with all the consolation religion could administer to him, he breathed his pure soul into the hands of his Maker on the 9th of July, 1848. Not only the city of Vich but all Spain was filled with dismay when the sad news was whispered:—*Balmes is dead!*

"Balmes," said the *Herald*, "appeared like Chateaubriand on the last day of the revolution of his country, to demand from it an account of its excesses and to claim their forgotten rights for ancient institutions. Both mounted on the wings of genius to a height so elevated above the passions of party, that all entertained respect and veneration for them. One and the other brought such glory to their country that though they combated universal ideas and prejudices, all good citizens wove for them well-earned crowns and loved them with enthusiasm." The words of Montesquieu, in his historical eulogy of the Duke of Berwick, may well be applied to Balmes:—"In the works of Plutarch I have seen at a distance what great men were, in him I have seen closely what they are."

He was buried with great pomp, all the corporations attending, headed by the mayor and town-council,



and over his grave has been since placed the following simple inscription :—

HERE LIE  
THE MORTAL REMAINS  
OF  
REV. DR. JAMES BALMES.  
*Requiescat in Pace.*

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THE  
ART OF THINKING WELL.





# THE ART OF THINKING WELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

§ 1.—*The meaning of “ To think well.” What is Truth?*

To think well consists simply, either in knowing the truth, or in guiding the understanding in the way which leads to it. Truth is the reality of things. When we know them as they are in themselves, we reach the truth; otherwise, we fall into error. Knowing that there is a God we know a truth, because God really exists; knowing that the variety of the seasons depends on the sun, we know a truth, because it is so in fact; knowing that respect to parents, obedience to the law, good faith in contracts, fidelity to friends, are virtues, we know the truth; just as we would fall into error by thinking that perfidy, ingratitude, injustice, and drunkenness, are laudable and good.

If we desire to think well, we must endeavour to know the truth, that is, the reality of things. What is the use of thinking with acuteness, or with apparent profoundness, if our thoughts are not in conformity with the reality? A simple farmer, or a modest artisan, acquainted with the things connected with his busi-

ness, will think and speak better about them than a presumptuous philosopher, who in laboured conceptions and high-sounding words might try to read them lectures on what he knows nothing about.

§ II.—*Different modes of knowing the truth.*

Sometimes we know the truth, but in a very faulty way: the reality is indeed seen by us, but with some defect, addition, or change. A column of men is marching at some distance, and we see their guns shining in the sun, but cannot distinguish their dress: we know it is an armed force, but we do not know whether it is a body of yeomen or soldiers. Our knowledge is imperfect from *defect*, because we cannot distinguish the uniform so as to know to which it belongs. Again, if, owing to distance or other cause we mistake, and attribute to them a uniform which, indeed, they have not, our knowledge is again imperfect, because we *add* that which does not really exist. And, finally, if we take one thing for another, as for example, if we think that certain yellow facings are white, we *change* what exists, and make it something quite different.

When we know the truth perfectly, our mind is like a mirror in which objects are faithfully reproduced; when we fall into error, it is like a kaleidoscope which presents to us what does not really exist; and when we know half-truths, we might compare it to an unevenly polished glass, or one hung in such a position that though it shows us real objects, yet it changes and alters their size and figure.

§ III.—*Variety of talents.*

The good thinker endeavours to see in objects all there is in them, but nothing more than there is in them. Some men have the talent of seeing a great deal in everything; but they have the misfortune of seeing everything there is not, and nothing there really is. A bit of news, or any event whatever, supplies them with abundant matter to enter into profuse reasonings, and build castles in the air. Such men are great at projects and quackery.

Others have the contrary defect: they see well, but little. They see only one side of the object, and if this disappears, they are in the dark. These are inclined to be sententious and dogmatic. They resemble people who have never been out of their own country: beyond the horizon they are accustomed to see they imagine there is no more world.

A clear, capacious, and exact understanding takes in the entire object, and examines it in all directions, and in all its relations with what surrounds it. The conversation and writings of these privileged beings are distinguished by their clearness, precision, and exactness. In every word you meet with an idea, and you find that this idea corresponds to the reality of things. They enlighten, they convince, they leave you completely satisfied; and you say with full consent:—"Yes, it is true, he is right." You need no effort to follow their discourse: you appear to travel along a level road, and the speaker only draws your attention opportunely to the objects you meet on the

way. If they explain some difficult and abstruse matter, they save you a great deal of time and trouble. The path may be dark because it is in the bowels of the earth ; but a practical guide leads the way with a bright torch in his hand shedding vivid light.

§ IV.—*The perfection of a profession depends on the perfection with which its objects are known.*

The perfect knowledge of things, in the scientific order, forms the truly wise man ; in the practical order, for the regulation of one's conduct in the affairs of life, it forms the prudent man ; in the management of the business of the State, it forms the great politicians ; and in all the professions the greater the knowledge one has of their objects, the more distinguished will he be in them. But this knowledge must be practical—must embrace all the details of execution, which we may call little truths, from which one cannot prescind if he wishes to succeed. These little truths are numerous in all the professions, as one may very soon learn if he only listen to those engaged in the simplest offices. Who, then, will be the best farmer ? He who knows best the qualities of soils, the climate, his seeds and his plants ; who is acquainted with the best methods and instruments of agriculture, and knows the best time to employ them ; in a word, he who knows how to make the ground produce the largest crops, in the shortest time, of the best quality, and at the least cost. Consequently, the best farmer will be he who knows most truths relative to the practice of his profession. Who will be the



best carpenter? He who knows most about the nature and qualities of wood, the best way to work it, and prepare it for the use for which it is intended. In a word, the best carpenter is he who knows most truths connected with his art. Who will be the best merchant? He who knows most about the goods he deals in, the cheapest place to buy them, the best way to get them home quickly and at small cost, and the markets in which he can sell them off-hand at a good profit; in other words, he who knows most truths about articles of commerce—who is best acquainted with the reality of the business and things he is engaged in.

§ V.—*To think well is of importance to everyone.*

We consequently find that the art of thinking well does not interest philosophers alone, but the simplest people also. The understanding is a precious gift bestowed on us by the Creator; it is the light given us to guide us in all our actions; and clearly one of man's first duties is to keep this light in good order. If it fails, we are left in the dark, and have to grope our way; and consequently we should not let it burn out. We should not allow our understanding to remain inactive, lest it become obtuse and stupid; and, on the other hand, when we want to exercise and keep it alive, we should see that its light be good and well regulated, that it may not blind or lead us astray.

§ VI.—*How one may be taught to think well.*

The art of thinking well is learned rather by examples than by rules. || We might compare the man who should try to teach it by force of precepts and



analytical observations to one who should employ the same method to teach children to walk or talk. I do not, however, condemn all rules; but I do hold that they should be employed sparingly, with little philosophical pretensions, and, above all, in a simple, practical way, the example ever accompanying the rule. A child pronounces certain words wrong; what do his parents or tutors do to correct him? They pronounce them well themselves, and then make the child repeat them. "Listen to how I say it; come now; don't fix your lips in that way, and don't make such an effort with your tongue," and such like. This is precept by the side of example, the rule with the way to follow it. (1.)

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## CHAPTER II.

### ATTENTION.

THERE are means which help us to the knowledge of truth, and obstacles which block the way. The object of the art of thinking well is to teach us how to employ the former, and to remove the latter.

#### § 1.—*Definition of attention.—Its necessity.*

Attention is the application of the mind to an object. The first means of thinking well is to attend well. The axe does not cut unless applied to the tree, nor the hook shear unless applied to the corn. Sometimes objects are presented to the mind without attention on its part; as happens when we see without

looking, and hear without listening; but the knowledge thus acquired, is always light, superficial, often inexact, or totally erroneous. Without attention we are distracted, our mind is wandering somewhere else, and consequently does not see what is put before it. It is a matter of the greatest importance to acquire a habit of attending to what one studies or does; for if we look closely we shall find that what we often want is not capacity to attend to what we see, read, or hear, but the application of the mind to the subject in hand.

We are told of some event, but we listen with little attention, asking questions or making observations unconnected with the matter, or moving about and looking at objects which distract us. The consequence is that various interesting circumstances escape us, and essential points are unnoticed by us; and then when we try to tell it to others, or to meditate and form a judgment on it ourselves, the fact turns out disfigured and incomplete. In this way we fall into errors which do not come from the want of capacity, but from our not having paid due attention to what we heard.

§ II.—*Advantages of attention, and drawbacks of the want of it.*

An attentive mind multiplies its powers wonderfully; it employs its time in storing up a treasure of ideas; it perceives them with greater clearness and exactness; and, finally, it remembers them with more facility, because they are naturally arranged in an

orderly way in the brain by the force of constant attention.

Those who attend badly allow their mind to wander from place to place. Here they receive an impression, there a quite different one. They gather together a heap of unconnected things, which, far from mutually assisting each other to be distinguished and retained, are confounded, confused, and serve only to blot each other out. There is no reading, no conversation, no view, be it never so insignificant, which may not be of some use to us. With our attention we note its gems and gather them; through our distraction we may allow the gold and pearls to slip through our fingers as worthless.

§ III.—*What sort of attention we mean.—The thoughtless and the absent-minded.*

Someone may think that the attention I speak of is rather fatiguing; but such is not the case. When I speak of attention, I do not mean that intensity with which the mind sometimes fixes itself on objects; but a quiet, gentle application, which allows it to take note of everything, but leaves it free to pass easily from one class of occupations to another. This attention is not even incompatible with diversion and recreation, for relaxation of mind does not consist in freedom from thinking, but in withdrawing from laborious studies and engaging in lighter matters. The learned man who interrupts his profound meditations to enjoy for awhile the beauties of the country, is not fatigued, but rather relieved, by attending to the state

of the crops, the labours of the farmer, the murmur of the rills, or the song of the birds.

So far am I from considering attention as severe and continuous abstraction, that, on the contrary, I reckon among those suffering from distraction, not only the thoughtless, but the absent-minded. The former wander among external things, the latter are lost in the dark regions of the interior. One and the other are wanting in proper attention, which is that which is employed on the matter there and then in hand.

The attentive man has the advantage of being more courteous and polite; for people's self-esteem is wounded if they notice that we do not attend to what they say. It is remarkable, too, that politeness, or the want of it, is called *attention*, or *want of attention*.

#### § IV.—*Interruptions.*

Besides, there are few cases, even in serious studies, which require so profound attention that they cannot be interrupted without serious injury. Some people complain bitterly if an ill-timed visit, or an unexpected noise, cuts the thread of their meditations. Such heads are like daguerreotypes, in which the least movement of the object, or the interposition of a foreign body, is enough to ruin the picture. In some it may be a natural defect, in others it is a frivolous affectation of being a great thinker, and in not a few it is the want of a habit of concentration. Be this as it may, we should accustom ourselves to have at once a strong and flexible attention, and procure the assimilation of our conceptions, not to daguerreotypes, but



to ordinary pictures. If the painter be interrupted, he suspends his labour; and, when he returns to it, he finds it not at all injured. If a foreign body disturbs him in any way, by removing it all is remedied. (2.)

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### CHAPTER III.

#### CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.

##### § I.—*Vague signification of the word talent.*

EVERYONE should follow the profession for which he feels he has most capacity. I regard this rule as of great importance; and I am profoundly convinced that to the want of its observance is due the fact, that the sciences and arts have not progressed much more than they have. In the ears of some people the word *talent* signifies an absolute capacity; and they erroneously believe that the man who is happily endowed for one thing must be equally so for all. This, however, is not at all true. A person may be superior, extraordinary, of immense capacity, in one branch, and yet very mediocre, and even a nullity, in others. Napoleon and Descartes are two geniuses; and yet they resemble each other in nothing. The genius of war would not have comprehended the genius of philosophy; and if they had conversed together for a short time, it is probable they both would have been very little pleased. Napoleon would not have excepted the other from the number of those whom he disdainfully called *idealists*.

A work might be written on comparative talents,



pointing out the profound differences which exist between even the most exceptional. Daily experience palpably shows us the truth of this observation. There are men who speak and act in a given line with wonderful skill, who would be poor and meagre in another. Few there are of equal capacity in all lines ; perhaps we might say none, for experience tells us that there are dispositions which mutually embarrass and injure each other. The man of generalising talent is not likely to possess minute exactness. The poet, who lives on beautiful and sublime inspirations, will not be inclined to submit to the drudgery of mathematical disquisitions.

§ II.—*The instinct which points out the profession for which we are best adapted.*

The Creator, who bestows graduated faculties on men, communicates to all a precious instinct which points out their proper course of life. A strong and lasting inclination to any occupation is a sure sign that we are born with fitness for it ; just as a repugnance not easily overcome is a proof that the Author of nature has not given us the talent or dispositions suited to that which occasions it. The food which is good for us will please our taste and smell if they be not vitiated by bad habits or disordered by sickness ; and a disagreeable taste and smell warn us of the food and drink, which might injure us by their unsoundness or inferior quality. God has taken no less care of the soul than of the body.

Parents, tutors, and heads of educational establish-

ments, should pay great attention to this point, to prevent the loss of a talent, which, if well employed, would give precious fruit, and to see that it be not consumed in some occupation for which it was never intended.

The young person himself should take part in this examination. A lad of twelve years has commonly reflection enough to notice what he is most inclined to, what costs him least trouble, what studies he gets on best in, and for what tasks he feels he has most aptitude and cleverness.

§ III.—*Experiment to discern the peculiar talent of a child.*

It would be well to place before children a great variety of objects, and to bring them to visit establishments where the peculiar disposition of each might be excited by the presence of that for which it is best suited. If left to their own instincts, an intelligent observer would soon classify them. Show the works of a watch to a group of children of ten or twelve years, and if there be one among them of great mechanical genius, he will very soon make himself known by his curiosity in examining, his sensible questions, and his facility in comprehending the construction. Read them a piece of poetry, and if there be among them a Garcilaso, a Lope de Vega, an Ercilla, a Calderon or a Melendez, you will see his eyes sparkle, you will feel that his heart is beating, that his mind is agitated, and that his imagination is excited, under an impression which he himself does not comprehend.

Take care you do not change the parts ; for it is possible to make of two extraordinary children a pair of very ordinary men. The swallow and the eagle are distinguished for their power and lightness of wing ; and yet the eagle will never be able to fly like the swallow, nor the swallow like the king of birds.

The *tentate diu quid ferre recusent quid valeant humeri*, which Horace inculcates to writers, may likewise be applied to those who have to choose any profession whatever. (3.)

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## CHAPTER IV.

### QUESTIONS OF POSSIBILITY.

§ 1.—*A classification of the acts of our understanding, and of the questions which can present themselves to it.*

FOR the sake of clearness, I will divide the acts of our understanding into two classes—speculative and practical. I call those speculative which are limited to *knowing*; and practical, those which tend to *action*.

When we simply want to know anything, the following questions arise:—1. Whether it be possible or not? 2. Whether it exist or not? 3. What is its nature, what its properties and relations? The rules for the solution of these three questions comprehend all that relates to the speculative sphere.

If we treat of action, we always purpose attaining some end ; and from this come the following questions:—1. What is the end? 2. What are the best means of attaining it?

I beseech the reader to attend to the foregoing divisions, and endeavour to keep them in mind ; for, besides facilitating the understanding of what I am about to say, they will be useful to him in methodising all his thoughts.

§ II.—*Ideas of possibility and impossibility.—Their classifications.*

*Possibility.*—The idea expressed by this word is correlative of *impossibility*, as the one necessarily involves the negation of the other.

The words *possibility* and *impossibility* express very different ideas, according as they refer to things in themselves, or to the power of a cause capable of producing them. These ideas, however, are intimately related, as we shall see immediately. When possibility or impossibility are considered with respect to a being, prescinding from all cause, they are called intrinsic ; and when we attend to a cause, extrinsic. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity and clearness of this division, I will observe that it is hard to form a correct notion of its signification, without descending to the different classifications I shall give in the following paragraphs.

At first sight one might think it strange that I should explain impossibility rather than possibility ; but, on a little reflection, he will see that this method is very logical. The word *impossibility*, though negative in sound, often expresses an idea, which presents itself to our mind as positive : viz., the repugnance between two objects—a species of exclusion, of



opposition, of contention, if I may call it so: so that if this repugnance disappears, we conceive possibility. Hence come the expressions: "It is possible, for I see no *repugnance*;" "it is possible, for nothing is *opposed* to it." If we know what impossibility is, we also know what possibility is, and *vicé versa*.

Some people distinguish three classes of impossibility—*metaphysical*, *physical*, and *moral*. I will adopt this division, with the addition of a member—the *impossibility of common sense*. In the proper place I shall give my reason for this. I will also remark, that perhaps it would be better to call the metaphysical impossibility *absolute*; the physical, *natural*; and the moral, *ordinary*.

§ III.—*In what metaphysical, or absolute, impossibility consists.*

*Metaphysical, or absolute, impossibility*, is what springs from the very essence of things; or, in other words, it is absolutely impossible that a thing could exist, whose existence would involve the absurdity that a thing could be and not be at the same time. A triangular circle is an absolute impossibility, because it would be a circle and not a circle, a triangle and not a triangle. Five is equal to seven, is an absolute impossibility, because five would be five and not five, and seven would be seven and not seven. A virtuous vice would be an absolute impossibility, because the vice would be and would not be a vice at the same time.



§ IV.—*Absolute impossibility and divine omnipotence.*

What is absolutely impossible cannot exist in any imaginable supposition; and even when we say that God is all-powerful, we do not mean that He can do what is absurd. That the world could exist and not exist at the same time, that God could be and not be, that blasphemy is a laudable act, and other wild things of this kind, clearly do not fall under the action of omnipotence; and, as St. Thomas very wisely remarks, we should rather say that these things cannot be done than that God cannot do them, whence it follows, that absolute intrinsic impossibility involves also absolute extrinsic impossibility—that is, that no cause can produce what is absolutely impossible in itself.

§ V.—*Absolute impossibility and dogmas.*

To be able to say that a thing is absolutely impossible, we must have clear ideas of the extremes which are repugnant; for, otherwise, we run the risk of calling absurd what really is not so. I make this remark to show how unreasonable those are who condemn some of the mysteries of our faith, and call them absolutely impossible. The dogma of the Trinity, and the dogma of the Incarnation, are certainly incomprehensible to weak man; but they are not absurd. How is a God, with one nature and three distinct persons subsisting in that nature, possible? I know not; but I have no right to infer that it is contradictory. Do I comprehend, indeed, what that nature is and what those persons are of which I speak? No; then if I try to decide whether what is said of them is impos-

sible or not, I form a judgment about things unknown to me. What do we know about the secrets of the Divinity? The Eternal has pronounced certain mysterious words to prove our obedience and humble our pride; but He has not been pleased to lift the thick veil which separates this mortal life from the ocean of light and truth.

§ VI.—*Idea of physical, or natural, impossibility.*

*Physical, or natural, impossibility*, consists in a fact's being outside the laws of nature. It is naturally impossible that a stone thrown into the air will not fall to the ground, that water left to itself will not seek its level, that a body placed in a liquid of less specific gravity, will not sink, or that the stars will halt in their course, because the laws of nature prescribe the contrary. God, who established these laws, can suspend them; man cannot. What is *naturally* impossible is so to the creature, not to God.

§ VII.—*Mode of judging of natural impossibility.*

When can we say that a fact is naturally impossible? When we are sure that there exists a law opposed to its realisation, and that this opposition is not destroyed or neutralized by another natural law. It is a law of nature that a man's body, being heavier than air, will, if raised, fall to the ground if its support be removed; but there is another law, by virtue of which an aggregate of bodies united together, specifically lighter than that of the fluid in which it is placed, will float, or rise, even though some of the bodies composing it be heavier; hence the human

body, connected with an inflated balloon, may ascend through the air, and this phenomenon will be in strict keeping with the laws of nature. The smallness of certain insects does not permit their image to be sensibly impressed on our retina; but the laws of light are such, that by means of a glass the direction of its rays can be so modified that, coming from a small object, they are distributed when they reach the eye, and form a large image of the object; and thus it is not naturally impossible that, with the aid of a microscope, what is imperceptible to the naked sight may become revealed to us with enlarged dimensions.

From all this it is clear that we should be very cautious in declaring that a phenomenon is naturally impossible. We should not forget: 1st. That nature is very powerful; 2nd. That we know very little of her—two truths which should inspire us with great circumspection when dealing with matters of this sort. If a man of the fifteenth century had been told that at a future day a distance of twelve leagues would be got over in an hour, without the aid of horses, or animals of any kind, he would have regarded the fact as naturally impossible; and yet railway travellers know they can attain that velocity by means of purely natural agents. Who knows what may be discovered in the future, and the aspect the world will present ten centuries hence? Let us be cautious by all means, in believing strange phenomena, and not surrender ourselves too lightly to golden dreams; but let us be careful not to qualify as naturally impossible what a new discovery may prove to be realisable; let us not

rashly put faith in exaggerated hopes of inconceivable changes ; but, at the same time, let us not brand them as ravings and absurdities.

§ VIII.—*A difficulty about the miracles of our Lord is solved.*

From these observations springs a difficulty which the infidels have not overlooked. It is this : miracles may be the effects of causes which are not the less natural because unknown ; therefore they do not prove Divine intervention, and they consequently in no way confirm the truth of the Christian religion. This argument is as weak as it is plausible.

A man of humble birth, who has never learned letters in any school, who lives among the common people, possessed of no human means, who has not where to lay his head, presents himself in public, and teaches a doctrine as new as it is sublime. He is asked for the title deeds of his mission, and he produces the most simple ones. He speaks, and the blind see, the deaf hear, the tongue of the mute is untied, the crippled walk, rebellious fevers suddenly disappear, the lately dead come to life, people on the way to the grave arise from their coffins, the stinking come forth from the tomb enveloped in their winding-sheets, obedient to the voice which has told them to come forth ; and this is all historic fact. Can the most obstinate naturalist discover here the action of occult natural laws ? Can he call Christians imprudent for thinking that such prodigies could not be done without Divine intervention ? Do you believe that in time may be discovered the secret of raising the dead to



life at the simple word of a man who calls them? Has the operation for cataracts anything in common with the sudden restoration of sight to a man *born blind*? Or the means employed to restore action to a paralyzed limb, with this: *Arise, take-up thy bed and go to thy house*? Will hydrostatical or hydraulic theories ever discover sufficient power in the mere word of man to calm an angry sea and tame the waves beneath his feet, so that he can walk on them as a monarch on softest carpet?

And what shall we say if, besides all this, we take into account the prophecies fulfilled, the sanctity of a life without stain, the elevation of his doctrine, the purity of his morals, and, finally, the heroic sacrifice of dying amid torments and affronts, sustaining and publishing that doctrine to the world, serenity in his countenance, sweetness on his lips, and articulating with his last breath *love* and *pardon*?

Tell us not, then, of secret laws or of apparent impossibilities; oppose not to such convincing evidence a foolish "who knows? . . ." This difficulty, which would be reasonable if we had to deal with an isolated case, involved in some obscurity, subject to a thousand different combinations, when raised as an objection to Christianity, is not only unfounded, but opposed to common sense.

§ IX.—*Moral, or ordinary, impossibility.*

*Moral, or ordinary, impossibility*, is the opposition to the regular or ordinary course of events. This word



is susceptible of many significations, as the idea of *ordinary course* is so elastic—is applicable to so many different objects—that little can be said about it which may be practically useful. This impossibility is quite distinct from absolute, and from natural, impossibility: things *morally* impossible may be *absolutely*, and *naturally*, quite possible.

We shall give a clearer and more simple idea of ordinary impossibility, by saying that everything comes under it, which, taking into account the regular course of things, happens rarely or never. I see before me a person of high rank, whose name and title are known to all men, who pay him all the respect due to his position. It is morally impossible that the name is surreptitious, and the personage an impostor. Ordinarily such is not the case, although sometimes such a thing has occurred.

We often find that moral impossibility disappears through some extraordinary or unforeseen cause, which changes the course of events. A captain at the head of a handful of soldiers comes from distant lands, sets foot on unknown shores, and finds himself on an immense continent peopled with millions of inhabitants. He sets fire to his ships, and cries out *forward*. Whither does he go? To conquer vast kingdoms with a few hundred men. This is *impossible*: is the adventurer mad? Let him alone, for his madness is the madness of heroism and genius: the impossibility will become a historical fact. His name is *Hernan Cortes*; he is a Spaniard at the head of Spaniards.

§ X.—*Impossibility of common sense improperly confounded with moral impossibility.*

Moral impossibility has sometimes a meaning quite different from the one we have given. There are things impossible, which cannot be said to be so from absolute, or natural, impossibility; and yet we are as certain that these things will never be realised, as if they were naturally, nay, almost as if they were absolutely, impossible. A person has before him a case of printing types, which we will suppose to be of cubic form, that there may be an equal probability of their falling on any of their sides; he shakes them several times without order or arrangement—without thinking of what he does—and then turns them out on the floor; is it possible they should be so arranged by chance that they will form the episode of Dido? No, will be the answer of any sane man; to expect such a thing would be madness. So certain are we that it will not happen, that if our life were placed on the cast, we would be as much at ease as if no such condition existed.

And yet there is here no metaphysical, or absolute, impossibility, for there is nothing in the nature of the types which would essentially incapacitate them for such an arrangement, for a compositor would very soon dispose of the difficulty; nor is there a natural impossibility, for there is no law of nature which would prevent their falling on this or that side, nor in such combination as would produce the effect; but there is an impossibility of another order, which has

nothing in common with the foregoing ones, and is different even from the moral impossibility, although belonging to things outside the regular order of events.

The theory of probabilities, aided by that of combinations, makes this impossibility clear, calculating, as it were, the immense distance between this phenomenon and existence. The Author of nature made this important conviction independent of reasoning, and communicated it to all men ; and he has given it to them as an instinct, as He has others equally important. In vain shall you try to argue with it in the rudest of men : he may not know what answer to give you, but he will shake his head, and say to himself, "the philosopher who believes in the possibility of such a thing must be out of his mind."

When nature speaks in the depths of our souls so clearly and decisively, it is foolish to close our ears to her. No one does so but some obstinate philosopher or other, who forgets that there is no philosophy which can excuse the want of common sense, and that one who commences foolishly has a bad chance of ever becoming a wise man. (4)

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## CHAPTER V.

QUESTIONS ABOUT EXISTENCE. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED  
BY IMMEDIATE TESTIMONY OF THE SENSES.

§ I.—*Necessity of the testimony of the senses, and the different ways it gives us a knowledge of things.*

NOW that we have pointed out the principles and rules which should guide us in questions of possibility, let us come to those of existence, which are of more importance and of more useful and frequent application.

We can assure ourselves of the existence or non-existence of a thing, or rather, we can know whether a thing exists or does not exist, in two ways—by ourselves, or by means of others.

The knowledge of the existence of things, which we acquire by ourselves, comes from the senses directly or indirectly: they either present the object to us, or we pass from the impressions we receive from them, to infer the existence of what does not come under their range. The sight informs me *directly* of the existence of an edifice I have before me; but a piece of a column, the remains of a pavement, an inscription, or such like things, give me to understand that in such or such a place a Roman temple existed. In both cases I owe the knowledge to my senses; in the first, *directly*, in the second, *indirectly*.

A person devoid of all senses could never know of the existence of spiritual beings, for his deadened under-



standing could not acquire this knowledge either by reason or faith, unless God gave it him by some extraordinary means, with which we have at present nothing to do.

The systems which may be adopted about the origin of ideas, whether we suppose them acquired or innate, whether they come from the senses or are only excited by them, are by no means opposed to the distinction we have just given: what is certain is, that we know nothing—think of nothing—if our senses have not been in action. We may even leave to idealists the liberty of imagining what they please about the intellectual functions of a man devoid of all senses; we may safely give them this latitude, certain that they shall never clear up the truth of the matter, since the patient is incapable of telling them what happens, either in words or by signs. Finally we are here speaking only of men endowed with senses, and experience tells us that such men acquire knowledge either from these senses or through them.

§ II.—*Errors occasioned by the senses. Their remedy.*  
*Examples.*

The immediate knowledge of the existence of a thing afforded us by the senses is sometimes erroneous, because we do not avail ourselves as we should, of these wonderful instruments given us by the Author of nature. Corporeal objects acting on the organs of sense, produce an impression on our soul; let us take good care to be certain what this impression is; let us know perfectly how far the existence of an object

corresponds to it: these are the rules which will save us from error in this matter. A few examples will explain them better than theory and precept.

I see an object moving at a distance, and I say: "there is a man there;" coming nearer, I find it is not true, as it was only a bush shaken by the wind. Has my sight deceived me? No; for the impression it gave me was only of an object moving; and if I had paid proper attention to the sensation I should have found that it did not represent a man. When I thought differently, I should not blame the sense, but my want of attention, or rather my hastiness in inferring, from some likeness between the object and a man seen at a distance, that it was really one, without reflecting that likeness and reality are very different things.

Knowing that a battle is about being fought, or a town besieged, I think I hear the noise of cannon, and I am convinced that the attack has commenced. I soon find, however, that not a single shot was fired;—who is to blame for my error? Not my hearing, but myself. I did really hear the noise; but it was the sound of the woodman's hatchet in the depth of a distant forest; or it was the shutting of a door, which was heard over the house; or it was something else which produced a sound resembling the roar of distant cannon. Was I certain that the cause of the noise which led me into error was not in my immediate neighbourhood? Was I capable of discerning the truth, considering the distance at which the firing should occur, the direction of the place, and the point the wind was blowing from? It was not, then, my sense that

deceived me, but my thoughtlessness and precipitation. The sensation was just as it should be; but I made it say what it did not intend. If I had been content with stating that I heard noise like the sound of distant cannon, I should not have led others into error as well as myself.

Food of excellent quality is placed before a man, and when he tastes it, he says, "it is intolerably bad; it is easy to see there is such or such mixture in it," and it really appears so to him. Does his sense deceive him? No. If he thought it bitter, it was because he was unwell, and his tongue was covered with a substance which produced the sensation. A little reflection would have saved him from so hastily condemning the merchant or cook. When the palate is in proper order, its sensations indicate the quality of food; when otherwise, they cannot.

§ III.—*Necessity of employing more than one sense, sometimes, for due comparison.*

We may remark that, to acquire a knowledge of the existence of an object from our senses, we must sometimes employ more than one, and attend to the circumstances which may save us from illusion. It is true, the discerning how far the existence of an object corresponds to the sensation we receive, is a work of comparison, which is the fruit of experience. A man cured of cataracts cannot judge well of distances, size, or figure, till he has acquired the practice of seeing. We inadvertently make this acquisition from our childhood, and believe we have only to open our eyes

to be able to judge of objects as they are in themselves. A simple example of frequent occurrence will prove the contrary. A man, and a child three years old, look through an optical glass and see landscapes, animals, or armies; both receive the same impression; but the man, who knows well he is not in the country, but shut up in a room, is not alarmed by the proximity of the animals, nor the dangers of the field of battle. In fact it costs him trouble to continue the illusion; and to get rid of the reality he must more than once adjust or correct some defects of the instrument, if he is to enjoy the presence of the view. But the child, who does not compare, who only attends to the sensation in all its isolation, is alarmed lest the wild animals should devour him, and cries at sight of the cruelty of the soldiers.

More: we find every day, that a good perspective, with which we were previously unacquainted, when seen at the proper distance, produces illusion, and we take for objects of relief what in reality are plane figures. The sensation is not erroneous; but the judgment we form from it is. If we had adverted that there are rules for producing on the retina the same impression with a plane object as with a rounded one, we would have admired the cleverness of the artist, and escaped the error, which would be removed by viewing the object from different points, or by touching it.

§ IV.—*The sound of body and infirm of mind.*

Those who treat of the good use of the senses are accustomed to tell us to take care that no indisposition



affect our organs, and make them give us sensations capable of deceiving us: this is indeed very prudent, but not at all so useful as is generally believed. The sick very rarely dedicate themselves to serious studies; and so their mistakes are of very little importance; and, besides, they themselves or those about them very soon notice the affection of the organ, and the error is prevented in time. Those who require rules are they who are sound in body, but not in mind; who, when preoccupied with an idea, employ all their senses in its service, compelling them to perceive, perhaps most ingenuously, everything which may go to support their pet system. What will not be discovered in the celestial bodies by an astronomer who uses his telescope, not with a calm mind free from all partiality, but with a burning desire to prove some rash assertion? What will not the microscope reveal to a naturalist in a similar case?

I have said on purpose that these errors might be incurred ingenuously; for it often happens that a man deceives himself before he deceives others. Thoroughly possessed by his favourite opinion, and anxious to obtain proofs in its support, he examines objects not for knowledge, but for victory; and thus it happens that he finds only what he wants in them. Often his senses do not tell him a word of what he imagines; but they give him something like it. "That is it," he cries in ecstasy; "that is it, the very thing I suspected." And if a doubt arises in his mind, he tries to smother it—he attributes it to the want of faith in his wild doctrine—he struggles to satisfy himself, by

closing his eyes to the light, that he may be able to deceive others without descending to falsehood.

It is enough to have studied the heart of man to know that such scenes are not at all rare, and that we sport with ourselves at a sad rate. Do we want a conviction? Well, some way or other we labour to form it. At first the task is a little costly, but soon the habit comes to prop up our weakness, and pride will not allow us to recede; and he who commenced struggling against himself with a deceit, not altogether unknown to him, ends by being really deceived, and holds to his opinion with incorrigible obstinacy.

§ v.—*Real sensations, but without external object.*

*Explanation of this phenomenon.*

We should remark, besides, that it does not always happen that a person under a hallucination, attributes to sensation more than it presents to him. An imagination strongly affected by an object, acts on the senses themselves, and by disturbing the ordinary course of their functions, causes the mind to perceive more than really exists. To comprehend how this occurs, we must remember that sensation is not verified in the organ of sense, but in the brain, though the force of habit makes us refer the impression to the point from which we usually receive it. Though our eyes may be quite sound, we become completely blind if the optic nerve be damaged. If the communication of any member whatever with the brain be interrupted, sense is extinguished. Whence we infer that the real receptacle of all sensations is the brain;

and if the impression usually produced by the action of the external organ be excited in any of its parts by an internal act, sensation will exist, though there be no exterior impression. So that if the external organ, on receiving an impression from a body, communicates it to the brain, causing in the nerve A the vibration, or other affection, B, and this vibration B, is produced in the same nerve A, by any cause whatever, independently of exterior bodies, we shall experience the same sensation as if the external organ were really affected.

Reason and experience agree on this point. The soul is informed of exterior objects, mediately by the senses, but immediately by the brain; which, when it receives such or such an impression, cannot avoid referring it to the place from which it usually proceeds, and to the object which ordinarily produces it. If it be aware that the organisation is deranged, it will be on its guard against the error; not by ceasing to receive the sensation, but by distrusting its testimony. When Pascal, as they say, saw an abyss by his side, he knew well that in reality there was no such thing; but yet he received the same sensation as if there were such an abyss; and with all his efforts he was unable to overcome the illusion. This phenomenon happens very often, and appears no way strange to those acquainted with such matters.

§ VI.—*Madmen and the Absent-minded.*

What habitually occurs in a state of cerebral affection may very well happen when the imagination, excited

by any cause whatever, becomes really diseased with relation to what preoccupies it. What are manias but the realisation of this phenomenon? Well, mind that manias are distributed in many classes and gradations: they are permanent and intermittent, extravagant and orderly, vulgar and scientific; and just as Don Quixote converted the windmills into giants, and the flocks of sheep into armies, a hard-headed scientist may discover, with the aid of his telescopes, microscopes and other instruments, whatever suits his purpose.

Great thinkers and absent-minded men run a great risk of falling into learned manias—sublime illusions; for, miserable humanity, no matter what different forms it assumes in the various situations of life, always carries about with it the patrimony of debility. To a weak-nerved woman the whispering of the wind is a mysterious groan, the moonlight an apparition of a ghost, and the scream of the night birds a summons from Avernus to a meeting of witches. Unfortunately, it is not women alone who have feverish imaginations, and take the dreams of their fancy for stern realities. (5.)

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## CHAPTER VI.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THINGS ACQUIRED INDIRECTLY BY THE SENSES.

§ 1.—*Transition from what is perceived by the senses to what is not.*

THE senses give us notice, immediately, of the existence of many objects; but the majority of objects



exercise no action whatever on our material organs, either because they are incorporeal, or are not in a state to affect them. There is built up on what our senses communicate to us, such an extensive and lofty edifice of knowledge of all sorts, that when we gaze on it, we find it difficult to conceive how it could be piled up on such a contracted foundation.

The understanding reaches what the senses cannot, and acquires a knowledge of the existence of insensible objects by means of the sensible. Lava scattered over a country side tells us of the past existence of a volcano we have never seen; the shells found on the top of a mountain speak plainly of the flowing of water there, and of a catastrophe we have not witnessed; certain subterranean works show us that in former days a mine was there worked; the ruins of ancient cities mark the dwellings of men we never knew. Our senses present an object to us, and the understanding passes from this knowledge to another quite different.

But we cannot make this transition from the known to the unknown, unless we have some idea—more or less complete—more or less general—of the unknown object, and are also aware that there exists some dependence between them. Thus, in the examples given, although I did not know of that particular volcano, nor of the waves which inundated the mountain, though I was not acquainted with the miners, nor with the inhabitants of the cities, nevertheless, all these objects were known to me in general, as also their relations with what my senses presented to me. We could not pass from the contemplation of the

admirable machinery of the universe to the knowledge of God, if we had not some idea of effect and cause, of order and intelligence. And we may here remark, that this observation is alone sufficient to upset the system of those who see nothing in our thoughts but transformed sensations.

§ II.—*Coexistence and succession.*

The dependence of objects is the only thing which can authorize us to infer the existence of one from another ; and consequently the whole difficulty lies in knowing this dependence. If the intimate nature of things were patent to our view, it were enough to look at a being to know at once all its properties and relations, among which we should discover those which connect it with others. But, unfortunately, this is not the case ; and in the physical, as well as in the moral, order, the ideas we possess about the constitutive properties of beings are extremely few and incomplete, These are precious secrets carefully concealed by the hand of the Creator ; just as the richest and most exquisite things which nature contains, are usually hidden away in the depths of her bosom.

From this want of knowledge regarding the essence of things, we are frequently compelled to conjecture their dependence solely from their coexistence or succession, inferring that the one depends on the other, because sometimes, or often, they exist together, or because this one follows that. This reasoning, which cannot be always called unfounded, has, however, the drawback of frequently leading us into error ; for it is

not easy to possess the discretion necessary to know when coexistence is a sign of dependence or not.

In the first place, it is an indubitable fact, that the simultaneous existence of two beings, or their immediate succession, considered in itself, does not prove that one depends on the other. A bad and poisonous plant may be found beside a medicinal and aromatic one; a dangerous and horrible reptile may creep at a short distance from a beautiful and inoffensive butterfly; the assassin, flying from justice, may lurk in the same wood which affords cover to an innocent huntsman; a fresh and gentle breath of air soothes all nature, and a few moments after, a violent hurricane sweeps past, bearing a destructive tempest on its raven wings.

So that it is very rash to judge of the relations of two objects, because they have been sometimes seen together, or succeeded each other in a brief space of time; and yet this sophism is frequently perpetrated, and is the cause of infinite errors. In it will be found the origin of the many predictions made about atmospheric changes, which experience soon belies; of the many conjectures about springs of water, veins of precious metals, and things of that sort. It was sometimes noticed that after such or such position of the clouds, such or such wind, this or that direction of the morning mist, it rained or thundered, or other changes of weather occurred; it was remarked that in soil of this or that aspect, water was sometimes found, that beneath this or that rock a precious metal was discovered; and the conclusion was immediately drawn

that there was a relation between the two phenomena, and the one was regarded as a sign of the other, without reflecting that there could have been a purely casual coincidence, and that no sort of relation whatever might exist between them.

§ III.—*Two rules on coexistence and succession.*

The matter in hand is so important, that we must lay down some rules.

1. When constant and prolonged experience shows us two objects existing at the same time, so that on one's presenting itself the other appears also, and on its withdrawal the other disappears too, we may conclude, without fear of mistake, that there is some connection between them; and, consequently, from the existence of the one we shall legitimately infer that of the other.

2. If two objects succeed each other without fail, so that given the one, the other is certain to follow, and the former always precedes, we may deduce with certainty that there exists some dependence between them.

It might, perhaps, be difficult to demonstrate philosophically the truth of these assertions; but those who call them into doubt must not have reflected that the good sense of humanity inadvertently adopts them, that science often accommodates itself to them, and that in the majority of investigations the understanding has no other guide.

I think no one will doubt that fruit, when it has acquired a certain size, figure, and colour, shows signs of



being sweet. How does the countryman who gathers it know this relation? How does he infer the existence of a quality he does not experience, from the existence of the colour and the other qualities he sees? Ask him to explain the theory of this connection, and he will not know what answer to give; but raise difficulties, and try to persuade him he is wrong in the selection, and he will laugh at your philosophy, confirmed in his belief by the simple reason that "it is always the case."

Everyone is convinced that a certain degree of cold freezes liquids, and another of heat restores them to their former state. There are many who do not know the reason of these phenomena; but no one doubts of the relation between the freezing and the cold, the thawing and the heat. Perhaps some difficulties could be raised against the explanation given of them by physicists; but the human race does not wait to be enlightened by the learned: "These two facts," it says, "are always found together, therefore some relation unites them."

The applications which might be made of this rule are infinite; but the foregoing are sufficient. I will only add that the majority of the usages of life are founded on this principle. The simultaneous existence of two beings, observed for a long time, authorizes the deduction, that if one exists, the other will be found to exist also. Without this rule men could never get on; and philosophers themselves would be embarrassed oftener than they imagine. They could give very few steps more than the ignorant.

The second rule is analogous to the first: it is founded on the same principles, and is applicable to the same uses. Constant experience shows that the chicken comes from an egg: no one has, up to the present, satisfactorily explained how that little body, so wonderfully organized, is formed from the liquid enclosed in the shell; and even though he explained it thoroughly, the vulgar would not understand; and yet neither they, nor the learned, hesitate to believe that there is a relation of dependence between the liquid and the chicken. When we see the little fellow, we are all persuaded that he was preceded by that apparently inert mass.

The generality of men, or, perhaps we might say, all men, are completely ignorant of how the earth contributes to the development of seeds, and the growth of plants; or why one kind of land is better adapted than others to certain productions; but we have *ever* seen it so, and this is quite enough to believe that one thing depends on the other, and to deduce the second, without fear of erring, from the existence of the first.

§ IV.—*Observations on the relation of causality.*  
*A rule of logicians.*

But we should not forget the difference there is between succession, observed only once, and that which is repeated many times. In the first case, it does not argue causality, nor even relation of any kind; in the second, it does not always indicate dependence of effect and cause, but it does, at least, dependence from a common cause. If the ebb and flow of the tide had

been observed to coincide only now and again, with a certain position of the moon, we could not infer that there existed relation between these two phenomena ; but as the coincidence is constant, physicists were justified in concluding, that if the one is not the cause of the other, they both at least have a common cause, and so are connected in their origin.

In spite of what I have just said, logicians are quite right when they qualify the following reasoning as sophistical :—*Post hoc, ergo propter hoc: after this, therefore through this.* 1. Because they do not speak of a constant succession. 2. Because, even though they did, this succession might indicate dependence on a common cause, and not that the one was the cause of the other.

The rule we are dealing with is more general than at first sight might appear : we avail ourselves of it in the ordinary affairs of business, as well as in the investigation of the secrets of nature. According to the object to which it refers, its application is modified. In some cases a short experience is enough, in others a more prolonged one is required ; but at bottom, we are always guided by the same principle : two facts, one of which always succeeds the other, have some dependence between them, and the existence of one will ever indicate that of the other.

§ v.—*An example.*

It is night, and I see that a fire is lighted on a certain mountain ; very soon after it is lit I remark that another light appears on the opposite hill, which

shines for a short space, and then goes out. It appeared after the fire was lighted on the opposite side; but I cannot infer from this that there is any relation between the two facts. The following night I see the fire lighted in the same place, and the other light show as before. The coincidence, which I would not have thought twice on yesterday, now attracts my attention; but it may be accidental, and I dismiss it. The next night the same thing occurs; and now I begin to suspect it may be a concerted signal. It happens during a whole month; the hour is always the same, and the light never fails to appear shortly after the fire is kindled; now I have no doubt whatever, either that the one light depends on the other, or, at least, that there exists some relation between them; and it only remains to clear up the mystery I cannot comprehend.

In such cases the key to the discovery of the truth, and the prevention of rash judgments, lies in carefully attending to all the circumstances of the fact, without neglecting the most insignificant. For instance, in the example given, supposing that a little after the fire is kindled, the light appears, it might be said it was unnecessary to take into account the hour of the night, or whether there was any variation in it. But, really, these circumstances are very important, for, according to the hour it might be, it was more or less probable that a fire should be kindled, and a light appear, and being fixed, it was much less probable that the two facts would be related, than if it had varied. An imprudent person who should take nothing



of all this into account, would alarm the neighbourhood with the imaginary signals. There would now be no doubt that some malefactors were telegraphing; the robbery which occurred on such or such a day would be explained without difficulty; everyone would comprehend what a shot heard in that direction meant; and when the authorities would be duly warned of the nefarious plot, when dark suspicions would fall on innocent families, the police sent to examine into the mystery might well return laughing at the fears of the alarmist, as they were able to decipher the enigma in the following terms:—"Near the spot where the fire is kindled is the house of A, who at bedtime places a watchman in the neighbourhood, because he has heard that certain parties intend to injure a newly-planted grove of his. The sentinel feels cold, and very properly makes a fire to warm himself, never intending to alarm anybody, if it be not the gentry of rope and hook. As it is precisely the hour the neighbours go to bed, the family B, living on the opposite hill, retires to rest. When the clock strikes the master of the house rises from the fire and says, "To bed;" and in the meantime he goes out on a kind of gallery, on which several doors open, and tries them, to see if the servants have made everything secure. As the good soul is going to bed, he has a candle in his hand, and this is the mysterious light which always appeared at the same hour, and quickly disappeared, coinciding with the fire, and making people look like robbers, who were only trying to guard against robbers."

What should a good thinker do in this case? He should say to himself: Soon after the fire is kindled appears the light, and always about the same hour, which leads to the suspicion that it is a preconcerted signal. The country is peaceable, so that this should be some arrangement of malefactors. But it is not probable it is so, for it is not likely they would select the same time and place, at risk of being noticed and detected. Besides, an operation extending over a month would be rather a long one, and these things are done with a *coup de main*. In the neighbourhood are the houses of A and B, families of good reputation, who would have nothing to do with such gentry. I consequently think, that either it is a purely casual coincidence, or if there be any signal, it must be about something which does not fear the eyes of justice. The hour it occurs is precisely that at which the people of the district retire to rest; well, let us inquire whether it be not that some duties oblige one to make a fire, and another to show a light.

§ VI.—*Reflections on the foregoing example.*

Reflecting on the foregoing example we find that, in spite of the want of all relation of signal or cause, which the facts had in themselves, they yet claimed in a certain way the same origin—the striking of the hour of bedtime. So that we see the error did not consist in supposing they had something in common, nor in thinking the coincidence was not purely casual, but in appealing to interpretations, destitute of foundation, and in seeking in a preconcerted

intention what was simply the effect of the identity of hour.

This observation shows us, on one hand, the care with which we should proceed to determine the class of relation between two facts, whether simultaneous or successive; but, on the other, confirms the rule, that when the simultaneousness, or the succession, is constant, it indicates a bond or relation, either between the facts themselves, or between them both and a third.

§ VII.—*The reason of an act which appears instinctive.*

When we go deeper into the matter we find, that the inference of relation between two co-existing or successive facts, from their coexistence or succession, though it appears an instinctive and blind act, is the application of a principle we have engraved in the depths of our soul, and of which we inadvertently make continual use. It is the following: *Where there is order, where there is combination, there is a cause which regulates and combines; chance is nothing.* We may regard one or another coincidence as casual, that is, without relation; but when it is repeated, we say without hesitation: "There is here union, there is here mystery, casualty stops short of this."

And so, when we examine profoundly the human mind, we meet in all parts the bountiful hand of Providence, who has delighted in enriching our understanding and our heart with inestimable gifts. (6.)

## CHAPTER VII.

## LOGIC IN ACCORD WITH CHARITY.

§ I.—*Wisdom of the law prohibiting rash judgments.*

THE Christian law which prohibits rash judgments is not only a law of charity, but of prudence and sound logic. Nothing more dangerous than to judge of an action, and above all of an intention, from mere appearances. The ordinary course of things is so loaded with complicated events, men find themselves in such varied circumstances, they act from so different motives, they see objects with eyes so distinct, that we often regard as a whim or caprice, what we find, when examined closely and in presence of the circumstances, the most simple and natural thing in the world.

§ II.—*Examination of the maxim: "Think ill and you'll not be far astray."*

The world thinks it gives an important rule of conduct when it says, "Think ill, and you'll not be far astray," and imagines it has thus emended the gospel morality. "Don't be too candid," we are constantly told; "don't trust to words; men are very wicked; love comes from the hand, not from the lip;" as if the Gospel taught us to be imprudent and fools! as if Jesus Christ, when he told us to be simple as the dove, did not also advise us to be prudent as the serpent! as if He did not warn us not to trust every spirit, and to judge the tree by the fruit! and finally as if, *apropos* of the malice of men, he did not read in the first pages



of Sacred Scripture, that man is inclined to evil from his youth!

The pernicious maxim, which proposes nothing less than to secure freedom from error through malignity of judgment, is as contrary to sound reason as it is to Christian charity. In fact, experience tells us that the greatest liar utters much more truths than lies, and the worst wretch does more good actions than indifferent or bad ones. Man naturally loves the truth, and that which is good, ~~and~~ withdraws from them only when his passions drag him away. The liar lies when an occasion presents itself, when he thinks he can forward his interests, or flatter his foolish vanity; but outside these cases, he naturally tells the truth, and talks like other men. The thief steals, the *roué* commits debauchery, the quarrelsome fight, when the opportunity offers and their passion stimulates them. If they were constantly abandoned to their evil inclinations they would be real monsters, their crime would degenerate into madness, and then public decorum and the good order of society would imperiously demand, that they should be separated from intercourse with their fellow-men.

We may infer from these observations, that to judge ill without due foundation, and to take malignity as the guarantee of success, is just as irrational as to assert that, given an urn with very many white balls and very few black ones, the probabilities are in favour of the black ones being drawn before the white.

§ III.—*Some rules to judge of the conduct of men.*

Some judicious rules may be laid down on this subject, which spring from the prudence of the serpent, without destroying the simplicity of the dove.

1st Rule:—We should not trust to the virtue of ordinary men, when put to a hard test.

The reason is obvious; to resist vehement temptations requires a firm and steady virtue, which is found in very few. Experience tells us that in such extreme cases, human weakness generally succumbs; and the Scripture warns us that he who loves the danger will perish in it.

You know a respectable merchant who is in the greatest straits, when the world thinks him quite embarrassed. His honour and the future of his family depend on a questionable but beneficial stroke of business. If he yields, all is remedied; if he does not, the fatal secret is divulged, and his ruin is inevitable. What will he do? Well, all I will say is, that, if you are likely to be affected by the affair you should take your measures, and protect yourself in time; get away from a house shaken by a furious hurricane, though in ordinary circumstances it be sound enough.

You are aware that two persons of amiable manners and good looks have entered on very intimate and frequent intercourse: both are virtuous, and even though there were no other motives, their honour should be sufficient to restrain them within due limits. If you have an interest in them, take some steps at once; if you can do nothing, hold your tongue;

don't judge rashly, but pray to God for both, as your prayers may be useful.

You are in the Government; the times are bad, the period critical, the dangers numerous. One of your *employés*, engaged in an important position, is besieged, night and day, by an enemy who can dispose of long purses. The *employé* is honest, you believe; he is bound to you by many ties, and, above all, he is an enthusiastic partisan of certain principles, and supports them with great earnestness. No matter, it will be well for you not to lose sight of him. It will be all very well for you to believe that the honour and convictions of your inferior will not be crushed under a blow of fifty-thousand-dollar power; but it will be better for you not to try them, particularly if the consequences may be irreparable.

A friend has made you many protestations of affection, and you cannot doubt of his sincerity. Your friendship is of long standing, its motives many and powerful, the sympathy of your hearts is well proved; and to crown all there exists identity of ideas and sentiments between you. An affair suddenly turns up, in which your friendship may cost him dear; if he does not sacrifice you, he exposes himself to great losses, to imminent danger. Don't deceive yourself; prepare for the worst; resign yourself to become a victim; do not trust that the protestations of affection will be realised, or that your grief at his losses will be blunted by the recollection of his heroic conduct.

You see a man placed in authority, involved in a great difficulty; they want to force him to an act of

the highest significance, which he cannot do without degrading himself, without failing in his most sacred duties, without compromising interests of the greatest importance. This magistrate is naturally straightforward; in his long career he never committed a foul act; and his integrity is accompanied by a certain firmness of character. His antecedents are all good. Nevertheless, when you see the tempest gathering, when the mutiny is ascending the stairs, when the daring demagogue knocks at the door, with a paper to be signed in one hand, and in the other a loaded pistol, you may fear more for the consequences of the act than for the life of the magistrate. It is probable he shall not die; integrity is not heroism.

From these examples we see that on some occasions it is lawful and prudent to distrust the virtue of men; that is, when to do right requires a disposition of mind which reason, experience, and religion itself tell us is very rare. It is also clear, that to be justified in suspecting ill, the trial may not be so extreme as we have painted it. Much less is usually sufficient for the generality of men; and in the case of those who are decidedly bad, the simple opportunity is equivalent to a violent temptation. So that it is not possible to give a rule to discern different cases, but we must attend to the circumstances of the person, and graduate the probability by his habitual inclination to evil or his adhesion to virtue.

The other rules spring from these considerations.

2nd Rule:—To be able to conjecture what will be the conduct of a person in a given case we must be



acquainted with his intelligence, disposition, character, morality, means, and whatever else may influence his conduct.

Though man is gifted with free will, he is yet subject to a multitude of influences, which powerfully contribute to decide him. The omission of one sole circumstance may lead us into error. For instance, supposing a man is in a difficulty, from which it is not easy to escape without failing in his duties, it appears at first sight that we have sufficient data to foretell the issue, if we know what his moral ideas are, and the obstacles which at the moment hinder him from at once acting up to them. But we leave out one quality which has great weight in such cases—firmness of character. From neglect of this, a virtuous man may defraud our hopes, and a wicked man exceed them; for when energetic passions act in its favour, they contribute strongly to save virtue, in difficult circumstances. A powerful and daring soul becomes exalted and gains new strength at sight of danger; pride is then interested in the fulfilling of the duty, and a heart which naturally delights in surmounting obstacles and running risks becomes more daring and bold when animated by the voice of conscience. To yield is weakness; to turn back cowardice; to fail in duty is to show fear, is to be disgraced. The man of good intention, and of pure heart, but pusillanimous, will look at things in a different light. “There is a duty to fulfil, it is true; but it entails my death, and the orphanage of my family. The evil will occur all the same; and perhaps its disasters will be greater. I must

gain time ; integrity should never become wrong-headedness ; duties should not be considered in the abstract, we must look at their circumstances ; virtues cease to be virtues if they are not guided by prudence." The good poor fellow has found what he wanted—a go-between to confound good and evil. Fear, dressed up as itself, would not serve his purpose ; but when it puts on the garb of prudence, the accommodation will be quickly arranged.

Here is a palpable, and by no means imaginary example, in which it is absolutely necessary to attend to all the circumstances of the individual we have to deal with. Unfortunately, the knowledge of men is one of the most difficult studies ; and, consequently, it is no easy task to collect all the data requisite to form a correct judgment of them.

3rd Rule :—We must take care to lay aside our own ideas and affections, and not to imagine that others will act as we would.

Daily experience shows us that man is inclined to judge others by his own standard. Hence come the proverbs, " the guiltless think no ill ;" and, " the thief regards all men as rogues." This inclination is one of the greatest obstacles to the discovery of the truth concerning the conduct of other men, and often exposes the virtuous to become the prey of the wicked ; and it frequently directs the shaft of evil tongues against proved honesty, or perhaps superior virtue.

Reflection, aided by costly experience, sometimes cures this defect, the source of many private and public evils ; but its germ is in the understanding and

heart of man, and we must be constantly on the alert to prevent its budding and bearing fruit.

It is not difficult to explain the reason of this phenomenon. Man proceeds by analogy in the majority of his reasonings. "This has always occurred, therefore it will occur now." "After such a fact usually comes this other, therefore it will come at present." Whence it happens that, as soon as an occasion for forming a judgment presents itself, we appeal to comparison. If an instance comes to support our manner of thinking, we become more and more confirmed in it; and if experience supplies us with many such, without further delay we look on the thing as proved. It is natural that, when we need comparisons, we should seek them in the objects best known to us, and with which we are most familiar; and as, when we try to form a judgment, or a conjecture, about other people's conduct, we must calculate the motives which might influence the determination of the will, we inadvertently attend to how we act ourselves, and suppose that others look on and appreciate things as we do.

This explanation, as simple as it is sound, thoroughly indicates the reason of the difficulty we find in divesting ourselves of our own ideas and sentiments, when our success in judging of the conduct of others depends on it. A person unaccustomed to see other habits than those of his own country, thinks everything strange which departs from them, and when he leaves his native soil for the first time is astonished at every novelty he meets with. The same thing happens us

in the subject we are dealing with. We live with no one else on such intimate terms as with ourselves; and even those most given to abstraction have necessarily a clear consciousness of the course ordinarily pursued by their understanding and will. A case occurs, and forgetting that the thing happens in the mind of others, or, we might say, in a foreign land, we feel naturally inclined to think that nearly the same thing as occurs in our own country must happen there also. And now that I have begun comparing, I will add, that as those who travel a great deal are not surprised at any diversity of customs, and acquire a kind of habit of easily accommodating themselves to everything they meet with, so those who dedicate themselves to the study of the heart, and to the observation of men, are more clever at divesting themselves of their own way of seeing and thinking, and at putting themselves in other people's places; or, we might say, they more easily change their dress and habit of life, and adopt the air and manners of the natives of the strange country. (7.)

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON HUMAN AUTHORITY IN GENERAL.

#### § I.—*Two conditions necessary to render testimony of weight.*

WE are not always able to acquire the knowledge of the existence of a thing by ourselves, and we must then avail ourselves of the testimony of others. Two



conditions are required to prevent this testimony from leading us into error: 1st. That the witness be not himself deceived; 2nd. That he have no desire to deceive us. It is evident that if either of these extremes be wanting, his testimony is of no use in the acquisition of truth. It is of little advantage that the speaker know what it is, if his words do not indicate it; and his veracity and good faith are of little avail if he himself is deceived.

§ II.—*Examination and applications of the first condition.*

We may know whether the witness is deceived or not by attending to the means at his disposal to acquire the truth; and in these means I include his capacity, and the other personal qualities, which render him more or less apt for the purpose.

When we are told something, and the speaker has not been an eye-witness, sometimes good breeding prevents our asking on what authority he has it; but sound logic requires us to attend to this circumstance, and to be slow of accepting anything without doing so.

I pass through a country unknown to me, and I hear it said, "this is the best year's crop seen for a long time in this district." The first thing I should do is to fix my attention on the person who says so. Is he a man of years, a rich landed proprietor, living on his property, accustomed to collect statistics and form comparisons? Then I have no doubt the speaker should know it well; for his interest, profes-

sion, peculiar inclinations, and large experience, supply him with all the means requisite to form a correct judgment. Is he the son of this proprietor, who only visits his father's property to amuse himself, or to get some money ; who leads the distracted life of the city, and cares little for what occurs in the country ? Well, he may know it because he heard it from his father ; but if this last circumstance be wanting, his testimony is not at all reliable. Is he a traveller, who runs through that country on business quite unconnected with husbandry ? If such be the case, his word cannot be trusted, for he has not had the means of forming a correct opinion ; we may reject his testimony on chance.

It is said at a certain meeting that Mr. So-and-So, an engineer, has invented a machine for this or that use, and his invention is much superior to any known up to the present. The speaker is an eye-witness ; but who is he ? He is a gentleman of the same profession, of high standing in it, who has travelled a great deal to keep pace with all the latest improvements in machinery, and was several times commissioned by the Government, or by private firms, to compare the different systems of construction and elaboration—enough ; he is a competent judge, not likely to have been deceived by an imposter. The witness is a merchant, who has invested a large capital in machinery, and intends to employ more ; he possesses considerable knowledge of the business, as his own interest called his attention to the matter, and he has long years of experience. The testimony is not to be

despised ; but it is not at all equal to the other . . . Is he a man unacquainted with the principles of mechanism ? He may have seen some establishments, but does not know enough to be able to compare the invention with other known systems ; and besides, it is likely he knew there was cash to spare, and probably has an interest in praising the invention. Well, it is likely enough he has exaggerated the merit of the invention, and his testimony may be of little value, perhaps of no value whatever.

A woman of known veracity, but of ardent and lively imagination, and credulous besides in things of an extraordinary and mysterious character, relates in a tone of conviction, and with language and gestures peculiar to a recent impression, that she heard a fearful noise in her house the night before ; that having got out of bed she saw lights in a portion of the building for some time uninhabited ; and that she several times heard strange sounds, now like groans of pain, now like wails of despair, now like angry threats. . . . The witness was probably deceived. It is likely that while she was profoundly asleep, a cat, going about its ordinary occupations of theft or chase, tumbled down a piece of crockery, which made a great noise. The good woman, who may have had difficulty in going to sleep, thinking of ghosts and spectres, is awakened by the sound : she rises, terrified, and runs from one place to another ; she sees a light in the deserted rooms, simply because no one closed the shutters, and the moon shines in through the window ; she hears voices, which would probably be nothing

but the whispering of the wind, the creaking of an unsecured door, or, perhaps, the mewing of the rogue himself, who caused the disturbance, and afterwards escaped by the skylight, with the intention of kicking up some other row in the neighbourhood, never dreaming of the terror and agony he has caused his kind mistress.

In this way would a good thinker reason, without deciding the question one way or another, but inclining to the explanation given; when, just at the critical moment, in comes the woman's husband. He is a man bordering on fifty, who has had time to get rid of all fear during long military service; he lives absorbed in his business and his books, never troubling his head about his wife's ghost stories. The people about naturally turn to the new arrival, and all want to hear from his lips the impression the adventure made on him. "In fact," he says, "I know not what the mischief we had in the house last night. I was engaged finishing some papers I had to fill up, and had not yet retired to bed, when, sometime about twelve, I hear such a noise, that I think the house is coming down about me. As to a cat, that was impossible, for no cat in creation could make such an uproar; and besides, this morning we found nothing displaced or broken. I did not see the lights; but I heard the voices, and they were so terrible that they almost made me afraid—that's a fact. We will see if the trick be repeated; for I am inclined to believe someone has played one on us. I should like to come on the actors performing their respective parts." Now



the aspect of the question is completely changed; what was before improbable has become credible; the fact must be certain, it only remains to account for it.

§ III.—*Examination and applications of the second condition.*

If we must be on the watch to protect ourselves against any error the narrator may have unintentionally suffered, it is no less important to guard against his want of veracity. For this purpose it will be well to inquire what character he bears in that respect, and above all, to examine whether any interest, or passion, may impel him to lie. What account can be made of a man who describes prodigies of arms, from which he expects promotion, increase of pay, or a medal? We all know what a man in that case will do, if he is not guided by the principles of strict morality and gentlemanly delicacy. So that a person relating events which he has a great interest in making people believe is a suspicious witness, and it would be rash to trust his bare word.

When we try to calculate the probability of an affair which we can know only from the testimony of others, we must attend simultaneously to the two conditions mentioned—the witness' knowledge and veracity. But as we have in many cases some grounds besides the testimony to help us to conjecture about the probability of what we are told, we must bring them into play also, that we may decide with less danger of erring. There are, usually, many things

to attend to, which examples will point out better than rules.

A general sends a despatch about a brilliant victory he has just gained; the enemy, of course, was superior in numbers, and occupied advantageous positions, but has been hurled from them in all directions, and a precipitate flight alone has saved him from leaving numerous prisoners in the hands of the conqueror. The general's loss has been insignificant, in comparison with that of the enemy; a few companies, carried away by their ardour, advanced too far, and were surrounded by enemies four times their number, and were for a moment in danger; but the pluck of their officers and the clever dispositions of the general saved them, with the loss of a very small number of men.

What opinion should we form of this action? That the reader may see how much circumspection is necessary, if we want to form a correct judgment, and with the object of giving examples which may serve as a criterion in other cases, we will detail the many circumstances which must be attended to.

Is the general known? Has he the reputation of being trustworthy and modest, or does he pass for a boaster? What are his military talents? What sort of officers are under him? Are his troops known for their valour and discipline? Have they distinguished themselves in other actions, or have they lost prestige by frequent defeats? What sort of enemy had they before them? What was the general's object in this expedition? Has he gained it or not? Is there a

clause like the following in the despatch:—"I know positively that the town of N—— can hold out for some days. And so I have not thought it necessary to precipitate operations, particularly as the state of my men, overcome by hunger and fatigue, imperiously demanded some rest. The convoy is safe in the town of M——, whither I have fallen back, abandoning to the enemy some positions which were useless to me, and a quantity of provisions, which fell into his hands in the heat of the contest, owing to a momentary disorder among the baggage guard?" The affair looks ill; in spite of all the roundabouts, we know that the conqueror has lost a part of the convoy, and has been unable to proceed with the remainder.

What trophies does he show in testimony of his victory? He has taken no prisoners, and he himself confesses to some of his men being missing; those companies, which advanced too far, incurred a momentary danger, and were surrounded by forces four times their number; all this signifies that there was a *sauve qui peut*, and that the enemy made prisoners.

What news is there from the place on which the general has fallen back? It is probable the letters received are sad, and are filled with harrowing descriptions of the disorder in which the troops returned, and of the diminution of the convoy.

What do the partisans of the enemy say? Ah! this clears up the mystery: the bells have been rung in P——, and many prisoners have been brought in; the enemy has returned in haughty pride, to sit down

before the besieged town, whose straits are daily growing more and more extreme.

What is the victorious general doing? He is inactive, and has asked for reinforcements: the brilliant victory, then, has been a shameful defeat.

§ IV.—*An observation on interest in deceiving.*

There are cases in which, no matter how interested in failing in the truth the narrator may appear, it is not probable he has done so, for the lie would be soon found out, it would admit of no palliation, and would bring ignominy on his head.

Experience tells us we should not trust those military despatches, which cannot be easily contradicted clearly and with positive facts, sufficient to produce complete conviction. How can the public discern the truth concerning the greater or less numbers of the enemy, the order or disorder with which this or that portion of the army retreated, the number of dead and wounded, the more or less value of certain positions, the good or bad state of the roads, and other things of this kind? Each one relates things in his own way, according to his information, interests, or sympathies; and the very persons who know the truth best are the first to disfigure it, and spread corrupted versions. Those who have groped their way through the labyrinth, and see the whole affair clearly, either hold their tongue, or are contradicted by a thousand others, who have an interest in sustaining the illusion; and these rascals have always some way of escaping from the ignominy their conduct should entail on them. But



suppose that a general, who is besieging a town, and can make no progress, has the imprudence to send a pompous despatch to the Government, announcing that he has taken it by assault, and that the portion of the garrison which did not perish in the struggle is in his power; in a few days the Government will know, the public will know, the army itself will know, that the general has told an egregious falsehood; and the impostor will be laughed at and affronted, and be made pay dear for his momentary glory.

Hence it is that, in such cases, the sensible public is accustomed to inquire if the news is official; and if it be, though it may not accept all the circumstances with which the fact is described, it will, however, believe in its existence. We may also remark that when in great straits scandalous falsehoods are told, to keep up the public spirit for some hours longer and to gain time, a despatch giving names is very rarely invented; in such cases, people use such expressions as, "we know positively," "an eye-witness has just told us," and such like; despatches are mentioned, which will be printed immediately, public rejoicings are arranged, &c. &c.; but a door is always left open to escape from the lie, and care is taken not to compromise anyone by name; in a word, even in the most scandalous cases, some respect is paid to public opinion.

To refuse credit, then, to an account of any event, it is not enough to object that the narrator is interested in perverting the truth; we must also consider whether the circumstances of the lie are so unfortunate that it

must quickly be discovered in all its nakedness, and the pervertor will not be able to say that he was deceived or misinformed. In such cases, no matter how low the position of the person may be, no matter how little self-esteem he may be supposed to possess, particularly when the thing occurs in public, it is prudent to give him credit, if no bad results can come from it. It is possible we may be deceived, but the probability is against it.

§ V.—*Difficulties of getting at the truth of what occurs at a great distance of place or time.*

If it be so difficult to know the truth, when the events are contemporaneous, and occur in our own country, what shall we say of what happens at a great distance of place or time, or both. How can we get at the truth from travellers and historians? Sad as it is, we must say it: whoever has observed how things are exaggerated, or diminished, or disfigured, or turned topsy-turvy, before our very eyes, must feel great hesitation on opening a book of history or travel, or on reading newspapers, particularly foreign ones.

A person living at the time and in the place where the events occur has many means of avoiding error: he either sees them himself, or he reads or hears several different accounts, which he can compare; and as he knows a good deal about the history of the persons and things, as he has daily intercourse with people of opposite interests and opinions, as he follows closely the course of the totality of the events, it is not impossible for him, with care and discretion, to clear up

the truth in several points. But what is to become of the unfortunate reader, who lives in far off countries, and perhaps at a distance of centuries, and has no other guide than a newspaper, or a work, which he meets with by chance in a reading-room, or in a library, or has purchased because he saw it recommended somewhere, or heard it praised by a person in whom he has confidence?

There are three sources from which we usually derive our knowledge of what occurs in distant times and places—newspapers, books of travel, and histories. I will say a few words about each. (8.)

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## CHAPTER IX.

### NEWSPAPERS.

#### § I.—*An illusion.*

SOME people believe that in countries where liberty of the Press exists in all its vigour, it is not difficult to find the truth, for as each class of interests and opinions has its own organ, one will counteract the errors of another, and the light of truth will appear. "Among them all everything is known, everything is told; and nothing is wanting but patience in reading, care in comparing, tact in discerning, and fairness in judging." In this way do some people argue; and the first thing I assert is, that neither with respect to persons nor things do newspapers say all, or much less than all, or perhaps what the editors know well, even in the freest countries.

§ II.—*Newspapers do not say all they know about persons.*

We see every day of our lives that the partisans of a man of note heap unmeasured praise on him whilst his adversaries hurl the bitterest epithets at him. The learning, talents, honesty of purpose, amiability, generosity and other qualities attributed to him by his friends in the Press are considerably soiled by the compliments of his enemies; and what will you draw from all this? How shall a foreigner decide on these extremes, or constitute himself a just arbitrator in the case? The result is, to have to grope in the dark, and be forced to suspend his judgment, or to fall into grave errors. The public career of the man in question is not always well defined by his acts, and besides, it is not always clear whether the good or the bad in them is to be attributed to him or to his subalterns.

Sometimes the most curious part of the business is, that public opinion, in certain circles, or perhaps in the whole country, is already formed concerning the personage; so that it would appear that lies are told by common consent. In fact, listen to men well made up in the matter; perhaps the very men who have declared rudest war on him, and you shall hear:—"Ah! as far as talent is concerned, no one denies him that; but he has mixed himself up in such a thing, and we must take him down a little. I know he is learned, and has good intentions—certainly; I am the first to respect his private character; and I only wish he had listened to us; then his acquirements would have



been of some use, and he would have played a brilliant part." Do you see that other man so honest, so intelligent, so active and energetic, that according to some papers he, and he alone, is capable of saving the country from the brink of an abyss? Well, listen to those who know him intimately, perhaps his most ardent defenders:—"We all know he is a good-for-nothing poor fellow; but he is a man who suits us, and we must make use of some one. They accuse him of improper manœuvres; well, that is no news to anyone. In the A. bank he has deposited such and such funds, and he is going to do the same in the B. bank. He does pilfer scandalously, we all know, but what of that? it is so common a practice now . . . and besides, when our adversaries accuse him, we cannot leave him on the bull's horns. Do you know that man's history? Well, I'll tell you his life and actions. . . ."

And then you hear all his adventures, his ups and downs, his wickedness, evil acts, and his foolish ones; and from that moment you labour under no further illusion, but are able to judge in future with strictness and ease.

These advantages are not ordinarily enjoyed by foreigners, nor by the natives of the country who are content with reading the newspapers; and so, believing that the comparison of those of opposite opinions sufficiently clears up the truth, they form the wildest conceptions of men and things.

The dread of actions for libel, or of displeasing certain parties; the respect due to private life, their own character, and other such motives, prevent news-

papers from descending to details, and relating anecdotes which paint to the life the personage they are attacking; and it often happens, that with their exaggerated charges, the intemperance of their invective, and the cruelty of their satire, they do not do him as much harm as they could have done with the simple and calm relation of some particular facts.

Writers almost always distinguish between the public and private man; this is all right in the majority of cases, because otherwise the polemics of the Press, already embittered enough, would soon be converted into a sink intolerably dirty; but it does not prevent a man's private life being a great help to forming conjectures of his conduct in public office. Do you believe that a person who does not respect the property of others in his daily intercourse with men, will have clean hands when he rules over the treasury of a nation? Do you believe that the man of bad faith, without convictions of any kind, without religion, without morality, will be consistent in the political principles he pretends to support, and that the Government which avails itself of his services, can depend implicitly on his word or promises? Do you believe that the systematic epicurean, who in his native place shamelessly insulted public decorum, being a bad husband and a bad father, will renounce his libertinism when he is elevated to the magistracy, and that innocence, and the fortunes of the good, will have nothing to fear from his corruption and evil principles, the insolence and injustice of the wicked nothing to hope? And yet newspapers say nothing of all this;

they cannot say it, although the writers know it without the slightest shadow of doubt.

§ III.—*Newspapers do not tell the whole truth about things.*

Even in politics, it is not true that newspapers tell the whole truth. Who does not know how much, generally, the opinions manifested in friendly conversation differ from those which are expressed in writing? When one writes for the public there are always certain formalities and many considerations to be observed. Not a few say the very opposite of what they think; and even the most strict in regard to veracity are often obliged to say, if not what they do not think, at least much less than they do think. These remarks should not be lost sight of, if we want to know something more in politics than what circulates in the world so freely like base coin, recognised by many, but reciprocately accepted, though the intelligent are not at all deceived as to its weight and value. (9.)

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## CHAPTER X.

### BOOKS OF TRAVEL.

§ I.—*Two very different parts of travellers' narratives.*

Two parts should be distinguished in this kind of writing: the description of the objects the traveller has seen, or the scenes he has witnessed; and the other news and observations with which he fills up his book. As to the first, it would be well to recollect

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what we said about veracity, to which I will add the two following remarks :—1. That our distrust in the fidelity of the pictures should bear some proportion to the distance of the place where the scenes were realised. 2. That travellers run the risk of exaggerating, disfiguring, and even inventing, conveying the most false ideas about the country they are describing, from a childish desire to make themselves interesting, and to become important by recounting strange adventures.

As to the other news and observations they give us, it is not easy to reduce to fixed rules the means of distinguishing truth from error ; and in many cases it would be labour lost. But it may be well to make a few reflections, which may substitute rules in some measure, inspire a prudent distrust, and put the inexperienced and incautious on their guard.

§ II.—*Origin and formation of some books of travels.*

How are the majority of travels made ? By visiting only the most noted places, stopping some time in the principal centres, and hurrying through the country as quickly as possible ; for three powerful motives urge this course—to save time, to economise money, and to diminish discomfort. If it be a country of high culture, with good roads, canals, and rivers and coasts of easy navigation, the traveller jumps from one town to another with the swiftness of an arrow ; rocked to sleep by the gentle motion of the coach or steamer, and occasionally looking out of window to enjoy a fine landscape, or walking on deck contemplating the



banks of the river, on whose current he is borne. Hence it results that the whole intermediate country is completely unknown, as far as its ideas, religion, habits, and customs are concerned. He sees something of the soil and the dress of the inhabitants, for he cannot do less, as both objects lie before his eyes ; but even in these things, if the traveller is not cautious, he may give his readers the most false and extravagant notions. If some years hence the Ebro become navigable from Saragossa to Tortosa, the traveller who would describe the costumes of Aragon and Catalonia from what he has observed on the banks of the river, would certainly lead his readers very much astray.

Well now, let the admirer of books of travel reflect what will be the case with detailed accounts of a country of thousands of square miles' extent, given by a traveller such as we have described. "The man who says it, was there, and there can be no manner of doubt about it:" this is what you say, credulous reader, believing that your guide has taken great care and pains in collecting his information . Well, I will tell you what might very well have happened, and you will not allow yourself to be so easily imposed on another time.

Having arrived in a city, it may be with a very slight knowledge of the language, or, perhaps, none at all, the traveller will be confused and lose himself for some days in the labyrinth of streets and squares, occasionally opening his plan of the town, consulting every street corner, and getting out of his difficulty

the best way he can ; but at last he will be able to find the passport office, the residence of his ambassador, and the parties for whom he has letters of recommendation. Now this time is not well adapted for observation ; and if he takes a cab, to avoid fatigue and prevent his going astray, so much the worse for his note-book : everything whirls past as rapidly as the pictures of a magic lantern ; he will pick up rather pleasant sensations, but very little information. Then he visits the principal edifices, monuments, and points of interest indicated in his guide-book ; and if the city be not a very insignificant one, he will have spent several days in this task. The season is advancing, he must yet visit other cities, he must see the watering places, and witness this or that scene somewhere at a distance ; and so has to post off in haste to do elsewhere what he has done here. A few months from his departure he is back again on his native soil ; he puts his notes in order during the winter, and in spring his volume is found on the bookseller's shelves. Agriculture, arts, commerce, science, politics, popular notions, religion, habits, customs, character—what is it the fortunate traveller has *not* observed ? His book contains the whole statistics of the country : if you take him on his word, you shall have the most precise and delicate information about everything, without the trouble of leaving your room.

How has he acquired so copious information ? An Argos would not be capable of seeing and noting so much in so short a time ; how did he know what occurred where he has not been, perhaps hundreds of

miles to the right and left of the road, canal, or river by which he travelled? In this way: when the first rays of the sun reached the window of the coach, he awakes, and yawning and stretching himself, he looks out on the country, which appears different from what it was the evening before. Arranging his legs with those of the gentleman in front of him, he opens the following conversation:—Do you know this country? A little.—What is the name of that village?—If I don't mistake it is N.—What are the principal products of the country?—Such and such. Its industry?—This or that. Character?—Phlegmatic as a postillion. Riches?—As rich as Jews.

In the meantime the coach reaches the inn, his friend departs without bidding him good-bye, and the answers of this unknown informant are jotted down among the traveller's notes, who will afterwards probably give them as the fruit of his own observation.

But as these resources would not suffice to complete the description, he will make a careful collection of the strange costumes, the irregular edifices, the grotesque dances he may have seen by the way, and lo! you have a finished portrait of general customs and habits. But yet, there is another mine which the traveller will work, and from which he will draw his principal treasures. In the newspapers and guide-books he will find ample information to enable him to form his statistics; and what with the data he will take from them, arranged in different order, and what with the intermixture of some things he has seen, or heard, or conjectured, he will produce a perfect whole, which

will circulate as the fruit of the traveller's careful pains and habits of observation, while in reality it is nothing, in its greater part, but the stories of some nobody, and translations or plagiarisms from books and newspapers.

That no one may wonder at the severity with which I treat the writers of *travels*, without, however, intending to lower true merit wherever it may be found, it will be enough to remind him of all the foolish nonsense which some foreign travellers have published about Spain. What has happened to us may well happen to other countries: which will be ill or well-treated, praised with exaggeration, or criticised with injustice, according to the humour, notions, and other qualities of a light-headed painter, who tries to produce copies of originals he has never seen.

### § III.—*Mode of studying a country.*

Reason and experience tell us that to be able to form a proper conception of even a small territory, and to describe its material and moral aspect, it is necessary to be familiar with its language, to live a considerable time in it, to have a number of acquaintances, and to be in constant intercourse with the people, never tiring of asking questions and making observations. I do not think there is any other means of acquiring exact knowledge and forming a correct judgment; all else is to wander in generalities, and to fill one's head with inexactness and errors. Till countries are studied in this way, till their material and moral statistics are collected in this manner, they will



never be well known. They will be represented in books, as they are in maps, which show extensive regions in small spaces : all is covered with names, and degrees, and crosses, and mountains, and rivers ; but measure the distances with a compass, and go out through the world with no other guide, and you shall frequently believe you are near some city, or river, or mountain, which is hundreds of miles away.

In short, if you want to acquire exact knowledge about a country, and to form a true and correct conception of it, study it in the way I have mentioned, or read some one who has studied it so. And if you have not an opportunity of doing this, content yourself with a few general things, which will place you on a level with most people in this kind of knowledge ; but don't build up a philosophical, political, or economical system on such information ; and be cautious of showing off your knowledge, if you meet with a native of the country, and don't want to be laughed at. (10).

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HISTORY.

§ I.—*Means of saving time, aiding the memory, and avoiding errors in historical studies.*

THE study of history is not only useful, but necessary. The most sceptical do not neglect it ; for, even though they may not admit that it helps us to know the truth, at least they do not despise it as an indispensable ornament. Besides, the most exaggerated doubt can-

not destroy a considerable number of facts, which we must regard as certain, if we don't want to contradict common sense.

In this class of studies one of the first cares is to distinguish what is absolutely certain. In this way, what does not admit of a shadow of doubt is fixed on the memory, and the reader is free to go on classifying what does not reach this degree of certainty, what is only probable, and what has all the appearance of being false.

Who doubts that great empires existed in the East; that the Greeks were a people far advanced in civilization and culture; that Alexander made great conquests in Asia; that the Romans made themselves masters of a great part of the known world, that they had the republic of Carthage for rival; that the empire of the Masters of the World was destroyed by an irruption of barbarians from the North; that the Mussulmans seized on the north of Africa, destroyed the kingdom of the Goths in Spain, and threatened other regions of Europe; that the feudal system existed in the Middle Ages, and a thousand other events, ancient as well as modern, of which we are as certain as we are of the existence of London or Paris?

§ II.—*Distinction between the body of the fact and its circumstances. Applications.*

But while we admit as indubitable a certain class of facts, there is still a wide field to dispute about others, and to reject or credit them; and even with respect to those which admit of no shadow of doubt,

erudition, criticism, and the philosophy of history have ample expansion in examining and judging of the circumstances with which historians relate them. It is unquestionable that the Punic wars existed, that in them Rome and Carthage disputed the empire of the Mediterranean, the coasts of Africa, Spain, and Italy, and that in the end the country of the Scipios was triumphant, conquering Hannibal, and destroying the capital of the enemy; but were the circumstances of those wars such as described? Would it be possible we were deceived in the portrait we get of the Carthaginian character, in the causes which provoked hostilities, in the accounts of the battles, of the negotiations, and things of this sort? Did the Roman historians, from whom we have most of our knowledge, mix up nothing favourable to their own nation, and prejudicial to the Carthaginians? Here is where doubt comes in, here discernment is necessary, here we may admit with hesitation, or reject at once, or, in many instances, suspend our judgment.

What would become of the truth in the eyes of future generations, if, for example, the history of the struggles between two rival nations were to be written only by the historians of one of them? And yet it would deal with events which occurred in times of abundant intercommunication between nations, and, before it became actual history would have been corrected and emended, so that there could be no great fear of grave falsehoods. Well, then, what will be the case when all the accounts come to us from one only source, and it so suspicious, because interested, and

when we have to deal with times so distant, so wanting in means of communication, and devoid of the facility of publication which we moderns enjoy?

We should distrust the Greeks very much when they recount to us their gigantic feats, the slaughter of innumerable Persians, their acts of heroic patriotism, and a hundred things of this kind. Blind faith, unlimited enthusiasm, admiration of the incredible feats of that people—all this is for schoolboys; but whoever knows the heart of man, whoever has seen with his own eyes how things are exaggerated, disfigured, and perverted, will say to himself: “I believe it was a rather serious affair, and I think those Grecian fellows did not do so badly; but as to the respective numbers of the combatants, and other details, I will suspend my judgment till those Persians come back from the grave, and give us their version of the events and the circumstances.”

This rule is susceptible of infinite applications to ancient and modern history. He who acts on it, and keeps it in view in reading history, may be certain he will avoid many errors, and above all, will save time and labour in remembering, for instance, whether it was sixty or seventy thousand were slain in this or that battle, or whether the poor fellows who were conquered, and cannot belie the historian, were, to their greater disgrace, four times or five times more numerous than their conquerors.

§ III.—*Some rules for the study of history.*

As history enters into this little work only as one of the many things which could not be passed over



when treating of the investigation of truth, we cannot afford to be too minute in giving rules for its study : this in itself would require a book of no small dimensions ; and we cannot lose time which may be better employed on other things. So I will limit myself to prescribing as little as I can, and with all possible conciseness.

1st Rule:—According to what we said before (chap. viii.), we should attend to the means the historian had at hand to discover the truth, and to the probabilities of his veracity or want of it.

2nd Rule:—In equality of circumstances, an eye-witness is preferable.

No matter how good the channels may be, there is always some danger : the accounts which pass through many channels, usually absorb, like liquids, something from the canal through which they flow. Unfortunately the mud of malice and error abounds in these canals.

3rd Rule:—Among eye-witnesses, the one who took no part in the affair, and neither lost nor gained by it (chap. viii.), is preferable, in equality of circumstances.

Let the credit which Cæsar merits when he describes his actions be what it may, we could not expect him to paint his enemies as few and cowardly, nor to describe his enterprises as of too easy attainment. The prodigies of Hannibal, recounted by his enemies, are surely worth something more.

How are modern revolutions described? Just according to the opinion or interest of the writer. A

man of privileged talent has published a history of the rising and revolution of Spain in 1808; and yet, when he speaks of the Cortes of Cadiz, we easily discern, in spite of the antiquated language, and the serious and measured tone, the hot young deputy of parliament.

4th Rule:—The contemporary historian is preferable; taking care, however, to compare him with others of different opinions and interests, and to separate in both the fact recorded from the causes assigned, from the results attributed to it, and from the judgment of the writers.

In all events there is, commonly, something which stands out in relief, and strikes the eye too forcibly to be denied by the partiality of the historian. In such a case, he exaggerates or diminishes, he paints with glowing or repugnant colours, he seeks favourable explanations by appealing to imaginary causes, and pointing out effects he has only dreamed of; but the fact is there, and all the efforts of an impassioned or perverse writer only serve to call the attention to what there really is in the matter, neither more nor less.

The impassioned historians of Napoleon will tell posterity of the fanaticism and cruelty of the Spanish nation, representing the people as so stupid that they did not care to be happy; they will recount the thousand and one motives the Great Captain had for mixing himself up in the affairs of the Peninsula, and will point out the innumerable causes of the unsatisfactory result. Of course they will conclude that all

this does not sully in the slightest degree their hero's glory. But the judicious and careful reader will discover the truth, in spite of all their efforts to conceal it. The historian must confess, in his own way of course, and with a thousand roundabouts, that Napoleon, before commencing the struggle, and when the forces of the Marquis de la Romana were aiding him in the North, introduced into Spain, under friendly guise, a numerous army, and seized on all the cities and fortresses, including the capital of the kingdom; that he placed his brother Joseph on the throne; and that in the end Joseph and his army were forced, after six years of struggle, to recross the frontier. This cannot be denied by the historian: well, this is enough; let the details be represented as they may, the truth of this will be beyond all question. Now let us see what a discreet reader will say:—"You, partial historian, do indeed defend admirably the reputation and good name of your hero; but it results from your own account that he occupied the country, while making protestations of friendship, that he invaded it without right, that he attacked the party who assisted him, that he treacherously carried off the king, and that he fought for six years without results. On one side, then, were the fealty of the ally, the loyalty of the vassal, and the pluck and perseverance of the warrior: on the other, there might be skill and valour, but by their side were treachery, usurpation, and the sterility of a protracted war. Consequently there were errors and perfidy in the conception of the enterprise, failure in the execution; just grounds and heroism in the resistance."

5th Rule:—Little or no attention should be paid to anonymous writers.

The author may, perhaps, have concealed his name through modesty or humility; but the public does not know this, and is not obliged to give credit to a man with a veil on. If one of the most powerful checks, such as is the fear of losing one's reputation, is not enough to keep men within the limits of truth, how can we trust one who is free from it?

6th Rule:—Before reading a history it is very important to read the life of the historian.

I would almost venture to say that this rule, so commonly disregarded, is one of those which should hold a first place. It is contained, in a certain way, in what we have said in chap. viii.; but it will not be without use to place it here by itself, if only to illustrate it with a few observations.

It is evident that we cannot know what means the historian may have had to acquire a knowledge of what he relates, nor the conception we should form of his veracity, if we do not know who he was, what his conduct was, and the circumstances of his life. In the place where the historian wrote, in the political forms of his country, in the nature of certain events, and not seldom, in the particular position of the writer, we find the key to his declamations on a certain point, his silence or reserve on another; why he passed over this fact with a light touch, and why he drew the shadows so deeply on that other.

A historian of the troubled times of the League did not write in the same way as one of the reign of



Louis XIV.; and coming down to more recent dates, the days of the Revolution, of Napoleon, of the Restoration, of the dynasty of Orleans, surely inspired a writer with very different styles and language. During the contests between popes and princes it surely was not the same thing to publish a pamphlet on them in Rome, Paris, Madrid, or Lisbon. If you know where the work you have in your hand saw the light you will be able to realise the position of the writer; and so will complement here, curtail there; in one place you will be able to decipher an obscure word, in another to comprehend a circumlocution; in this page you can appreciate at its just value a protest, an eulogy, a restriction; in that you will be able to divine the object of a confession or a censure, or you will gather the true meaning of a startling proposition.

Few men rise completely above the circumstances which surround them; few there are who incur great danger for the sole cause of truth; few, who do not seek, in critical situations, a compromise between their interests and their conscience. It is heroism to remain faithful to truth in the face of great dangers, and heroism is very scarce.

Besides, we cannot always blame a writer for attuning himself to circumstances, if he do not prejudice the rights of justice and truth. There are cases in which silence is not only prudent, but obligatory; and therefore we may pardon a writer for not saying all he had on his mind, if he says nothing contrary to it. Profound and all as were Bellarmine's convictions

about indirect authority, would you have him express himself in the same way in Paris as in Rome? Why, that would be equivalent to telling him:—"Speak out in such a way, that as soon as the parliament has notice of your work, the copies will be seized by force, one of them perhaps burned by the common hangman, and you yourself expelled from France, or shut up in a prison."

The knowledge of the peculiar position of a writer, of his conduct, moral character, and even of his education, gives great light to a reader of his works. To judge of Luther's language about celibacy, it will be of no little advantage to know that the speaker is an apostate friar, married to Catherine de Boré; if any one has had the patience to blush a thousand times while wading through the shameless "Confessions" of Rousseau, he shall suffer very few illusions when the philosopher of Geneva talks of philanthropy and morality.

7th Rule:—Posthumous works, published by unknown or doubtful hands, should be suspected of being apocryphal or tampered with.

The authority of the illustrious dead is of little weight in such cases; it is not they who speak, but the editors who are certain that the persons most concerned cannot contradict them.

8th Rule:—Histories founded on secret records and inedited papers; publications from manuscripts in which the editor assures us he has done nothing but introduce order, file down a phrase or two, or throw light on some passages, deserve no more credit than

is due to the person responsible for their appearance.

9th Rule:—Accounts of backstairs negotiations, secrets of State, telling anecdotes about the private life of celebrated personages, about dark intrigues, and things of this sort, should be received with extreme distrust.

If we can with difficulty get at the truth about what passes in the light of day, and before the eyes of the world, we may not promise ourselves much with respect to things which happen in the depth of the night or in the bowels of the earth.

10th Rule:—In treating of ancient or distant nations, we should give little credit to what we are told of the riches of the country, the number of inhabitants, the wealth of the monarch, its religious notions and domestic habits.

The reason is very clear: all these things are difficult of acquirement; they suppose long residence, perfect acquaintance with the language, a knowledge of subjects in themselves difficult and complicated, means of acquiring exact ideas about hidden things which court exaggeration, and of which the natives themselves know nothing, or if they know anything, have a thousand motives to augment or diminish it. Finally, with regard to domestic habits, one cannot have an exact knowledge of them, if he cannot penetrate into the bosom of the family circle, and see what is there done and said in the effusion and liberty of the domestic hearth. (11.)

## CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MEANS OF KNOWING THE NATURE, PROPERTIES, AND RELATION OF BEINGS.

§ I.—*A classification of sciences.*

NOW that we know the rules which may direct us to a knowledge of the existence of an object, it only remains to examine those which may be useful in investigating the nature, properties, and relation of beings. These belong either to the order of nature, including in it everything which is subject to the necessary laws of creation, which we will call *natural*; or to the moral order, which we will call *moral*; or to the order of human society, which we will call *historical*, or more properly, *social*; or to the order of an extraordinary providence, which we will designate with the title of *religious*.

I will not insist on the exactness of this division; I will confess, without hesitation, that in dialectic rigour some objections may fairly be made to it; but no one can deny that it is founded on the nature of things, and on the manner in which the understanding is accustomed to distinguish different points of view. However, to clearly manifest the reason on which it is founded, I will here give the association of ideas in the concisest way I can.

God created the universe and all that is in it, and subjected it to constant and necessary laws: hence comes the natural order. Its study may be called natural philosophy.



God created man, and gave him reason and free will; but he is subject to certain laws, which do not force, but yet bind him: hence the moral order—the object of moral philosophy.

Man in society has given origin to a series of facts and events: hence the social order. Its study might be called social philosophy, or if you will, philosophy of history.

God is not bound by the laws He has prescribed to the work of His hands: consequently He can act beyond and contrary to these laws, and so it is possible there may exist a series of facts and revelations of an order superior to the natural and social orders: hence the study of religion, or religious philosophy.

Given the existence of an object, it belongs to philosophy to analyse, value, and judge it; and in the common acceptation of the word *philosopher*, it means a person occupied in the investigation of the nature, properties, and relations of beings.

§ II.—*Scientific prudence, and observations to attain it.*

Prudence should preside at philosophical investigation, as well as in practical conduct. This prudence is difficult to acquire, and is the costly fruit of bitter and repeated attempts. However it will be well to have a few observations in view which may contribute to its development in the mind.

1st Observation:—The intimate nature of things is generally unknown to us; we know little about it, and that little very imperfectly.

We must never forget this highly important truth.

It will show us the necessity of assiduous labour, if we wish to discover and examine the nature of anything; as the occult and abstruse cannot be comprehended at a glance. It will inspire us with prudent distrust in the result of our investigations, and will not allow us to rashly flatter ourselves that we have discovered what we were seeking. It will preserve us from that irrational curiosity which impels us to penetrate what is hidden under an inviolable seal.

This is a truth not at all flattering to our pride, but indubitably clear in the eyes of whoever has meditated on the science of man. The Author of nature has given us sufficient knowledge to attend to our physical and moral necessities, and for this purpose has placed under our control the knowledge of the applications and the uses of the objects which surround us; but He has hidden all else; as if He would exercise human ingenuity during its stay on earth, and afterwards agreeably surprise the mind, when He elevates it to the regions beyond the tomb, where the ineffable spectacle of unveiled nature will be displayed before our eyes.

We know many of the properties and applications of light, but we are ignorant of its essence; we know how to create and foment vegetation, but we know very little about its secrets; we know how to employ, preserve and aid our senses, but we are unacquainted with the mysteries of sensation; we know what is salutary or hurtful to our body, but in the majority of cases we know nothing of the particular manner in which it serves or injures us. What more? Why we

are constantly calculating time, and metaphysics has not been able to clear up what time is; geometry exists, and has been carried to a wonderful degree of perfection, and yet its fundamental idea, extension, is yet uncomprehended. We all dwell in space, the whole universe is in it, we subject it to close calculation and measurement; and neither metaphysics nor ideology has told us in what it consists, or whether it is something distinct from bodies, or is only an idea, or has a proper nature, or whether it is a being or nothing. We think, and we do not comprehend what thought is; ideas bubble up in our mind, and we know not what an idea is; our head is a magnificent theatre in which the universe is represented with all its splendour, variety, and beauty, in which an incomprehensible power creates at our caprice, fantastic worlds, now glorious, now sublime, now extravagant, and yet we do not know what imagination is, nor what these prodigious mental senses are, nor how they appear and disappear.

What a lively consciousness we have of that great multitude of affections we call feelings! And yet what is a feeling? He who loves, feels love, but he knows not what it is. The philosopher engaged in the examination of this affection points out, perhaps, its origin, indicates its tendency and its end, gives rules for its direction; but as regards the intimate nature of love he is just as ignorant as any of us. The feelings are like a mysterious fluid passing through impermeable pipes. Exteriorly some of its effects are known; in some cases we know whence it comes and

whither it goes, and we can diminish its velocity or change its direction ; but the eye cannot penetrate into the obscure cavity, and the agent remains unknown.

Do we know what our own body is, or all the bodies around us ? Has there ever yet existed a philosopher who could explain to us what a body is ? And yet we are continually in the midst of bodies, and we incessantly avail ourselves of them, and we know many of their properties, and of the laws which govern them, and a body forms part of our very nature.

These considerations should never be lost sight of, when we have to examine the intimate nature of a thing, in order to ascertain the constitutive principles of its essence. Let us, then, be diligent in investigating, but very guarded in defining. If we do not carry these qualities to a very high degree of scrupulousness, we shall be constantly substituting the combinations of our own mind for the reality.

2nd Observation :—Just as there are two ways of solving problems in mathematics, one of which discovers the true solution, and the other shows all solution is impossible ; so also is there a like double solution in all kinds of questions, and in many of them the better solution is to prove that they are unsolvable by us. And don't imagine that such a solution is devoid of all merit, and that it is easy to discern between the attainable and the unattainable : if a man is capable of doing it, it is a sign that he knows the matter in hand profoundly, and has spent some time in the examination of its principal questions.

The possession of this precious discernment saves



us a great deal of time; for when the case comes before us, we immediately divine whether sufficient data exist to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

The knowledge of the impossibility of solving is often rather historical and experimental than scientific; that is to say, that a well-instructed and experienced man knows that a solution is impossible, or almost so, on account of its extreme difficulty, not because he can demonstrate that it is so, but because the history of the efforts which others have made, or perhaps he himself has made, shows him the impotence of the human understanding with relation to the matter in hand. Sometimes the very nature of the things about which a question is raised indicates the impossibility of the solution. In this case we must be able to take in at a glance all the data necessary, and discover the absence of those which are wanting.

3rd Observation:—As things differ so much in their nature, properties and relations, our manner of viewing them, and our method of thinking about them must also vary considerably.

Some people imagine that if they have learned to think about one class of objects there is no difficulty in thinking about the remainder, and they have only to turn their attention to it, if they want to study anything new. Hence it is that we hear in the mouths of many, and even read occasionally in some author, the extremely false proposition that mathematics are the best kind of logic, because they accustom the mind to think with closeness and exactness in everything.

To remove this mistake it will be enough to observe that the objects which present themselves before our mind are of very different orders, that the means we can dispose of to reach them have nothing in common, that the relations they have with us are very dissimilar, and finally that daily experience tells us that a man dedicated to two classes of studies, may be superior in one, and quite mediocre in the other; that in the former he thinks with wonderful penetration and discernment, whilst in the latter he does not rise above miserable vulgarities.

There are mathematical truths, physical truths, ideological truths, metaphysical truths; there are moral, religious, and political truths; there are literary and historical truths; there are truths of pure reason, and others in which imagination and feeling are necessarily mixed up; there are purely speculative truths, and others necessarily related to practice; there are some which are known only from reasoning, and others which are seen by intuition, and others again which are acquired only by experience; in fine, so various are the classes into which truths might be divided, that it would be difficult to number them.

### § III.—*Great and learned men resuscitated.*

The reader will see the foundation of what I have just said, and will disentangle himself from the frivolous objections which the spirit of subtilty and cavillation might raise, if he attends at the following scene I am going to paint for him, in which he shall find the nature of things portrayed in lively colours, while

is explained and demonstrated at the same time the truth I am trying to inculcate.

I suppose a meeting of celebrated men now dead, but resuscitated just as they were in life, to be held in some establishment where they should have ample liberty to follow, each the bent of his own inclinations.

The mansion is prepared as becomes such guests : there are rich archives, an immense library, a museum in which are collected the greatest marvels of nature and art, spacious gardens adorned with all kinds of plants, long lines of cages in which are found all the animals of Europe, Asia, Africa and America, roaring, screaming, bellowing and tossing about. There among the great men we find Gonzalo de Cordoba, Cisneros, Richelieu, Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortes, Napoleon, Tasso, Milton, Boileau, Corneille, Racine, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Moliere, Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Descartes, Malebranche, Erasmus, Louis Vives, Mabillon, Vieta, Fermat, Bacon, Kepler, Galileo, Pascal, Newton, Leibnitz, Michael Angelo, Raffael, Linnaeus, Buffon, Watt, and many others, who have transmitted their names immortal to posterity.

Give them a little time to become acquainted with the arrangements of the house, and to engage in those pursuits to which they may be impelled by their favourite inclinations. The great Gonzalo will read about the deeds of Scipio in Spain, nonplussing his enemies by stratagem, terrifying them with his valour, and gaining the good-will of the natives by his handsome presence and generous conduct. You will find

Napoleon engaged on the passage of the Alps by Hannibal, the battles of Caunæ and Trasimenus; he will be indignant when he sees Cæsar vacillating on the banks of the Rubicon, he will enthusiastically strike the table on beholding him march on Rome, conquer at Pharsalia, subjugate Africa, and assume the dictatorship. Tasso and Milton will have the Bible, "Homer" and "Virgil" in their hands; Corneille and Racine, "Sofocles" and "Euripides;" Moliere, "Aristophanes," "Lope de Vega" and "Calderon;" Boileau, "Horace;" Bossuet, Massillon and Bourdaloue, "St. John Chrysostom," "St. Augustin," and "St. Bernard;" while Erasmus, Louis Vives, and Mabillon will be ransacking the archives, and hunting up dusty manuscripts to complete a truncated text, to throw light on a doubtful phrase, to emend an incorrect expression, or to solve a point of criticism. In the meantime their illustrious companions will have accommodated themselves to their respective tastes. One will be there with a telescope in his hands, another with a microscope and another with some other instrument; whilst some others pouring over a paper covered with signs, letters and geometrical figures, will be deeply absorbed in the solution of an abstruse problem. Nor will the mechanical engineers be idle, nor the artists, nor the naturalists; and we may be sure we shall find Buffon near the bars of a cage, Linnaeus in the garden, Watt examining some machine models, and Raffael and Michael Angelo in the picture and statue galleries.

They will all think, they will all form judgments,



and undoubtedly their thoughts will be precious, and their decisions respectable; and yet these men would not understand each other if those of different professions conversed together. And if you change their parts, it is possible you may turn a meeting of men of genius into a collection of vulgar capacities, capable of being satisfied with childish nonsense.

Do you see that one over there, whose eyes sparkle, who moves in his chair, who strikes the table, and in the end lets the book fall from his hands, exclaiming: "Good, good, magnificent . . . ?" Do you remark that other, who has a closed book before him, and shows by his arms crossed on his breast, his fixed gaze, and his wrinkled forehead, that he is buried in profound meditation, and when he suddenly recovers himself, rises, saying: "Evident, exactly so, it cannot be otherwise?" Well, the one is Boileau, who is reading a select passage from the "Letter to the Pisos," or from the "Satires," and, who in spite of knowing it by heart, finds it yet new and surprising, and cannot restrain the impulse of his enthusiasm; the other is Descartes, who is meditating on colours, and comes to the conclusion that they are nothing more than a sensation. Bring them together now, and let them mutually communicate their thoughts: Descartes will look on Boileau as a frivolous fellow to be so affected by a beautiful and happy image, or an energetic and concise expression; and Boileau will cry quits by contemptuously smiling at the philosopher, whose doctrine runs counter to common sense, and tends to disenchant all nature.

Raffael contemplates in ecstasy an ancient painting of rare merit : the scene represents the sun setting in the west, the shades of evening enveloping the earth ; the moon in her first quarter appears in the heavens, and some stars bespangle the immensity of the firmament. A solitary figure stands out in relief, with eyes fixed on the goddess of night, in sad and suppliant posture, as if it recounted its pains to her and conjured her aid in some tremendous woe. Just at this moment a meditative personage is going wandering about ; and remarking the moon and the stars, and the attitude of the woman in the picture, he stops, and articulates between his teeth I know not what about parallax, planes which pass through the eye of the spectator, terrestrial semidiametres, tangents of the orbit, foci of the ellipse, and things of this sort, which distract poor Raffael, and make him move off somewhere else with hurried step, cursing the barbarous astronomer and his astronomy.

Over there you see Mabillon with an old parchment, fixing his spectacles in different positions, now letting the light fall in this way, now in that, to see if he can make out a half-blotted line, in which he suspects he should find what he is in quest of ; and while the good monk is buried in his labours, up comes a naturalist, and begging pardon, takes out his microscope to try if he can discover moths' eggs in the parchment.

Poor Linnaeus had a number of flowers collected, and was in the act of distributing them, when Tasso and Milton come striding along, reciting some

sublime passage, and without noticing what they do, walk over the heaps of flowers, and with one crush destroy the work of hours.

In fine, those men do not understand each other, and we must again shut them up in their tombs, that they may not lose their credit and their claims to immortality.

What one saw plainly, another could not see; this one called that other a stupid fellow, and the other paid him back in the same coin. What the one appreciated highly, the other regarded as nonsense; what the one looked on as a treasure, the other considered a very trifling matter. And why? How are these great thinkers in such discordance? How is it they do not all see the truth in the same way? It is because truth is of so many different orders, it is because the rule and compass cannot be used to measure what affects the heart; it is because the feelings have no place in arithmetic and geometry, and metaphysical abstractions have nothing to do with the social sciences; it is because the truth is as various as are the natures of things, for truth is the reality.

The attempt to think about all kinds of objects in the same way, is an abundant source of error; it is to turn the human faculties topsy-turvy, it is to transfer to one what exclusively belongs to another. Even the most privileged men, on whom the Creator has bestowed an universal comprehension, cannot exercise it properly, if, when they pass from one subject to another, they do not, as it were, release themselves from themselves, to bring into play the faculties best adapted to the new matter they are to deal with. (12.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

## GOOD PERCEPTION.

§ I.—*Ideas.*

THE three qualifications of a thinker are to perceive with clearness, exactness and distinctness, to judge correctly, to reason with clearness and solidity: let us examine them separately, and make a few observations on each.

What is an idea? We do not intend to investigate this question here. What is perception in its ideological rigour? Nor is it our object to deal with this, nor would it lead to the end we have in view. It will suffice to say, in common language, that perception is that interior act by which we become acquainted with an object; and idea is that image, representation, or whatever it may be called, which serves as pabulum to perception. Thus we perceive a circle, an ellipse, or a tangent to either of these curves; we perceive the result of a system of forces, their inverse ratio on the arms of a lever, the gravitation of bodies, the law of acceleration in their descent, the equilibrium of fluids; we perceive the contradiction of being and not being at the same time; the difference between what is essential and accidental in beings; we perceive the principles of morality; we perceive our existence and that of the surrounding world; we perceive beauty or defect in a poem or picture; we perceive the simplicity or complication of a business, the easy or difficult means of carrying it out; we perceive the agreeable



impression made on our companions by such a word, or gesture, or event; in fine, we perceive everything our mind can take notice of; and that which in our interior serves as a mirror in which to see the object; that which now is present to our understanding, now retires, or slumbers, awaiting some other occasion to rouse it, or our own voice commanding it to come forth; that, which we know not what it is, but whose existence we cannot call into doubt, that thing is called idea.

We here care nothing for the opinions of idealists; for certainly to think well it is not necessary to know if the idea is distinct from the perception or not, if it is transformed sensation or not, or whether it has come to us through this or that channel, or is innate or acquired. For the solution of all these questions about which people have always, and will always, dispute, reflex acts are required, which cannot be entered on by one who is not dealing with ideology, except on pain of being distracted from the matter in hand, and embarrassing and confusing all his thoughts. If one thinks, he is not to be continually thinking that he thinks, and how he thinks; otherwise the object he had in view would be completely changed, and instead of pursuing what he should, he will be occupied with himself.

§ II.—*Rule for perceiving well.*

We shall perceive with clearness and distinctness, if we accustom ourselves to attend to what we have before us (chap. ii.); and if, besides, we have endeavoured to

acquire the tact necessary to call out the faculties best adapted to the matter in hand.

Do I get a mathematical definition? Well, then, away with vagueness, away with abstractions, away with everything fantastic and sentimental, away with the world in its complication and variety; in the present case my imagination must be used only as a blackboard on which to trace the signs and figures, and my understanding as the eye to see them. I will make the rule clear by an example the most simple, dealing with one of the elemental definitions of geometry.

The circumference is a curved line, whose extremities meet, and whose points are all equidistant from another called the centre. Well we see at once that we are not here dealing with a circumference in the metaphorical sense, as when it is applied to non-geometrical things; nor in a loose sense, as in cases which do not require rigorous precision; I should, then, consider the definition given as the expression of an object of the ideal order, to which the reality should more or less approximate.

But as geometrical figures come under the action of the sight and the imagination, I will avail myself of one of these, or, if possible, of both, to represent to me what I wish to conceive. I draw the figure on the blackboard, or in imagination, and I see, or imagine, a circumference; but is this enough to comprehend its nature? No. The rudest can see or imagine it quite as well as the most finished mathematician; and yet he cannot tell what a circumference is. Conse-

quently the view, or the imagination, of the figure, is not sufficient for the complete geometrical idea. Besides, if nothing more were wanted, the cat rolled up on a chair, contemplating a circle drawn by its master, and which sees it without doubt as well as he does, and has it imprinted on the imagination when it closes its eyes, should have an idea of it as perfect as Newton or Lagrange.

What, then, is necessary that there may be an intellectual perception? It is necessary to know the whole aggregate of conditions, one of which cannot be wanting without the circle's disappearing. This is what is explained by the definition; and that my perception may be perfect, I should take notice of every one of these conditions, whose aggregate will produce in my understanding the idea of a circle.

Whoever has been engaged in teaching must have noticed the difference I speak of. If he have once seen a circumference, and the way to describe it with the compass, the most stupid boy will recognise it wherever he may meet it, and describe it on a board without a mistake. In this there is no difference in talents; but we come to its definition, and there we see what a distance there is between the imagination and the intellect, then we discover the dunce, the fair talent, and the superior one. What is a circumference? you ask the first.—It is what is drawn on the blackboard. Very well; but in what does it consist? what is the nature of this line? in what does it differ from a straight line, which was the subject of our lesson yesterday? Are they both the same?—Oh!

no; this is round . . . there is a point here. . . . Do you remember the author's definition?—Yes, sir: the circumference is a curved line, whose extremities meet, and whose points are all equidistant from another, which is called the centre. Why do we call it a curved line?—Because its points do not run in the same direction. Why do we say, whose extremities meet?—Because they join. If its extremities did not meet, would it be a circumference?—Yes, sir. Have you not just told us that they must meet?—Ah! yes, sir. Why, then, if they did not meet, would it not be a circumference?—Because . . . the circumference . . . because . . . . At last, tired of waiting and explaining, you call another, who gives you the definition, who explains the terms, but who drops now the word *curved*, now *equidistant*; who, if you compel him to be more attentive, will repeat all perfectly, but in a short time will commit another mistake, thus showing that he has not yet formed a perfect idea, that he does not realise the full value of the conditions necessary to form a circumference.

Then you come to a boy of clear and brilliant intellect. He draws the figure with more or less ease, according to his natural agility, he goes over the definition more or less rapidly, according to his quickness of tongue; but bring him to the analysis, and you shall see at once the clearness and precision of his ideas, the exactness and conciseness of his words, the felicity and tact of his applications. Could we omit the word *line* in the definition?—Well, as we are just at present dealing with lines, we might understand it and say a



*curve*; but strictly, we could not, as the word *curve* might leave us in doubt, as it can be applied to surfaces. And if we express *line*, can we omit *curved*?—I think so, for as we say *whose extremities meet*, we exclude a straight line; and besides, the straight line cannot have all its points equidistant from another.—And could we pass over, *whose extremities meet*?—No, sir; for if the extremities of a curved line do not meet, it will not be a circumference; as, for example, if I here blot out a part A B, the remainder will not be a circumference but an arc. But if we add what follows, viz., that all its points must be equidistant from the centre, I think we might leave those other words understood?—No, sir; for the arc before us has all its points equidistant from another, and yet its extremities do not meet. And the word *equidistant*?—It is indispensable; without it we say nothing; for otherwise the line might be a straight line for a great distance, or a zigzag.

Here you have a full, clear, and exact perception, all that one could desire, which satisfies both pupil and master.

As we have just seen, the analysis of a geometric idea, and marked the difference between its degrees of clearness and exactness, let us now take up an artistic idea, and examine its greater or less perfection. In both cases there is perception of a truth; in both attention, or the application of the faculties of the soul, is required; but in the following example we shall see that what is hurtful in the one is favourable in the other, and *vice versa*; and that the classifications

and distinctions which indicated talent in the former, are here a proof that the person possessing them has mistaken his profession.

Two young men have just concluded a course of rhetoric, and recollect perfectly all they were taught. They would be capable of quoting their text-book from cover to cover, and promptly answering any question they might be asked about tropes, figures, classes of composition, &c. &c., and they have just got through their examinations to the full satisfaction of their parents and professors, each of them obtaining the highest mark. Their ease and brilliancy were equal, and it was impossible to discover any difference between them; and now they are revising the business in vacation, and are reading at the moment a magnificent piece of oratory or poetry.

Camillus turns again and again to the enchanting page, and now sheds tears of tenderness, or now his eyes sparkle with vivid enthusiasm. "This is inimitable," he exclaims, "it is impossible to read it without profound emotion. What beauty of imagery, what fire, what delicacy of sentiment, what propriety of expression, what inexplicable union of conciseness and abundance, of daring and regularity!" "Oh, yes," Eustace answers, "it is beautiful; we were told so in class; and if you examine it, you shall see that all is adjusted to the rules of art."

Camillus perceives what there is in the passage, Eustace does not; and yet the former does not reason, scarcely analyses, pronounces but a few curt words, whilst the latter speaks like a good theorist. The one

sees the truth, the other does not; and why? Because the truth is here an aggregate of relations between the intellect, the imagination, and the heart; and it is necessary to employ all these faculties at once, applying them to the subject naturally and without violence, and without distracting them by the recollection of this or that rule, leaving aside the critical analysis till after the merit of the passage is *felt*. To enter on disquisitions, to call up this or that precept, before taking in the beauty of the piece—before *perceiving* it—is to manacle the soul, as it were, leaving it the free use of only one faculty, when all are necessary.

§ II.—*Dangers of analysis.*

Even in matters in which the imagination and sentiment have no place, it is well to guard against the mania of putting the mind in a vice and screwing it up to a fixed method, when from its own peculiar character, or the subjects it is engaged on, it requires liberty and expansion. It cannot be denied that analysis, or the decomposition of ideas, is of wonderful use in cases requiring clearness and precision; but we should not forget that things are for the greater part an *aggregate*, and the best way to perceive them is to take in at a glance the parts of which they are composed and their different relations. A machine taken asunder shows the parts which constitute it with more distinctness and minuteness; but their object is not so well understood till they are put up in their place, and we see how each one contributes to the total movement. By force of decomposing, pre-

scinding and analysing, Condillac and his followers find nothing in man but sensations ; by pursuing an opposite course Descartes and Malebranche discover almost nothing but pure ideas—a refined spiritualism. Condillac tries to account for the phenomena of the soul, beginning with an act so simple as putting a rose to the nose of his man-statue, deprived of all sense but that of smell ; Malebranche eagerly seeks a system to explain the same thing ; and not finding it in creatures, has recourse to the very essence of God.

In our ordinary intercourse we often see laborious reasoners, who direct their conversation with apparent rigour and exactness, and following up the deceitful thread fall into egregious mistakes. If we examine the cause, we shall find that they look at only one side of the case. They are not wanting in analysis, for the moment anything falls into their hands, they decompose it ; but they have the misfortune to neglect some of its parts ; and if they keep them all in view, they forget that they were made to be united and are destined to have close relations ; and if these relations are overlooked the greatest prodigy may be converted into a fearful monstrosity.

#### § IV.—*The dyer and the philosopher.*

A clever dyer was once on a time engaged in the labours of his trade, when a minute observer, a very analytical reasoner, happened to enter, and immediately commenced a discussion about dyes and their effects, intending no less than to convince the dyer that he would destroy the precious fabrics he was



going to subject to his compositions. In fact the thing looked bad, for the reflections of the critic appeared plausible and well-founded. Here was a row of pans with dirty black liquids, none of them of good colour, all of them of bad smell, there, were some pieces of sticky gum, very disagreeable to the eye; on the fire were enormous caldrons, in which lumps of wood were boiling, and every now and then some dried leaves, apparently only fit for the dung-heap, were added. The dyer was bruising in a mortar a hundred sorts of different matters, which he extracted now from this vessel, now from that sack; and, passing from one pan to another, now here, now there, adding some spoonfuls of stinking liquid, from contact with which he had to guard his hands, as it burned like fire, he was preparing to empty the ingredients into different pans and to bury in that dirty stuff a number of cloths and textures of inestimable value. "You are going to destroy them," said the analytical critic. "In this pan is the ingredient A, which, as you know, is extremely caustic, and besides, gives a very ugly colour. In this other is the gum B, which stains very much, and whose marks are very hard to remove. In this pan is the wood C, which might give a heavy common colour, but I cannot conceive how it is to produce anything exquisite. In a word, I find on examining them closely, you employ ingredients the very contrary of the effect you intend to realise; and I am certain that instead of producing something similar to the samples in your shop, you are going to lose both your money and character." "Likely

enough, Mr. Philosopher," says the cool dyer, taking the precious materials in his hands, and burying them without compassion in his dirty pestilential caldrons; "likely enough; but to put an end to the discussion, will you call again in a few days?" The philosopher did return, and the dyer removed all his objections by displaying before his eyes the very cloths which, by rigorous demonstration, should have been ruined. What a surprise! what a humiliation for the analyst! Some of them were of the most delicate scarlet, others finest green, others beautiful blue, others exquisite orange, others deep black, others streaked white, others showed rich mixtures in which variety rivalled beauty. The shades were innumerable and charming, and the grain of the cloth as pure, clear, and brilliant, as if it had been under a glass cover, instead of coming in contact with the polluted hands of the dyer. The philosopher goes away confused and crestfallen, saying to himself:—"It is not the same thing to know what a thing is in itself, as what it may be in combination with others; henceforth I will not be content with decomposing and separating, for the dyer has proved to me that combination and union can work wonders."

§ V.—*Objects seen on one side only.*

There are intellects, otherwise clear and penetrating, which are completely lost by the prurience of evolving a series of ideas, which end in extravagant results, because they represent only one side of an object. Hence it is that reason can prove everything, or impugn everything; and a man with the truth evidently

on his side, must fortify himself in his convictions, and resist with the arms of common sense the attacks of a sophist, who cuts his way through all sorts of trenches, and penetrates through the most solid and compact barriers, as liquid permeates through the pores. The very superabundance of talent produces this defect, just as youths full of animal spirits finds it difficult to move along with grave and measured step.

§ VI.—*Evil results of too rapid perception.*

✓ Rapidity of perception is a precious quality; but we must be on our guard against its ordinary effect, which is want of exactness. Those who perceive with great quickness often only skim the object; just as the swallow, sweeping on rapid wing over a pond, can only pick up the insects on the surface; whilst other birds which dive, or rest on the waters, and fish beneath them, can feed on what is hidden below.

Contact with these men is dangerous; for, whether they speak or write, they are generally distinguished for an enchanting facility; and worse still, they invest every question they treat with an apparent method, clearness, and precision which blind and seduce. In science they are known by their clear principles, their simple definitions, their obvious deductions, their happy applications—characteristics which must accompany a profound gift of conception; but if aimed at by a person of less distinguished parts, they sometimes only indicate superficial lightness, as shallow water shines transparent, and pleases the eye with its golden sands. (13.)

## CHAPTER XIV.

## JUDGMENT.

§ I.—*What judgment is. Sources of error.*

To know whether an act of judgment is distinct from perception, or simply consists in perceiving the relation of two ideas, is a matter which conduces very little to the power of judging well. I will consequently prescind from these questions, and only remark, that when we interiorly say that a thing is, or is not, or is in this manner, or in that, we form a judgment. This is common sense, and quite sufficient for our purpose.

Falsity of judgment often depends on bad perception; and so what we are going to say, though primarily directed to the mode of judging well, conduces not a little to perceiving well.

Propositions are the expression of judgments.

False axioms, too general propositions, inexact definitions, undefined words, gratuitous suppositions, prejudices in favour of a doctrine, are abundant sources of mistaken or incomplete perceptions, and of wrong judgments.

§ II.—*False axioms.*

Every science needs a starting-point: and the professor of it anxiously seeks this point, as the architect looks for a foundation on which to build his edifice. Unfortunately what is wanted is not always found; and man is too impatient to wait till future ages supply the looked-for discovery. If he does not find one, he invents it; and instead of building on reality, he



works on the creations of his own head. By force of cavilling and subtlising he succeeds in deceiving himself, and what was at first a vague thought, without stability or consistence, becomes to him in the end an incontrovertible truth. Exceptions would only embarrass: the simplest way is to lay down an universal proposition, which he takes for an axiom. Numerous cases will turn up which it does not comprehend; no matter; it will be conceived in such general, confused, or unintelligible language, that it will be open to a thousand interpretations, and admit of any number of exceptions, without losing its prestige and reputation. In the meantime it serves admirably as a foundation for an extravagant reasoning, or to give weight to some wild judgment, or to get rid of some troublesome difficulty; and when doubts present themselves to the mind about the truth of what it is defending, when the whole edifice threatens to come down with devastating ruin, the mind says to itself:—"No, there is no danger; the foundation is firm; it is an axiom, and an axiom is a principle of eternal truth."

That it may have a just claim to this name, the proposition must be as evident to the mind as things we have before us are to the eye in the light of day and at the proper distance. If it does not entirely convince the understanding the moment it is presented to it, and the meaning of the terms in which it is enunciated is understood, it should not be admitted among axioms. When ideas are vitiated by a false axiom, everything is seen very differently from what it is in itself; and such errors are the more danger-

ous, inasmuch as the understanding sleeps in false security.

§ III.—*Too general propositions.*

If we knew the essence of things, we might establish universal propositions with regard to them, without any hesitation; for as the essence is one and the same in things of the same species, what we should affirm of one would clearly be equally applicable to all. But as we know little about essence, and that little imperfectly, and sometimes we know nothing at all, it follows that we can speak of beings only with relation to their properties which are within our reach, and with regard to these we often cannot tell whether they derive from the essence, or are purely accidental. General propositions are usually defective; for as they express what we conceive and judge, they can only extend to what our mind has a knowledge of. Whence it comes that they are subject to a thousand unforeseen exceptions: and perhaps in the end we find that we took the exception for the rule. If this occurs in the case of a person who takes great pains in the establishment of a general proposition, what will be the case when we consider how lightly they are often conceived and emitted?

§ IV.—*Inexact definitions.*

What we said of axioms is applicable to inexact definitions; as definitions serve as a light to direct perception and judgment, and as a *point d'appui* for our reasonings. A good definition is a very difficult thing to give, and in many cases absolutely impos-

sible. The reason is obvious: the definition explains the essence of the thing defined; and how can that be explained which is unknown? In spite of this great difficulty there exists a multitude of definitions in every science, which pass as current coin; and if authors very often reject the definitions given by others, they take care to supply the deficiency by definitions of their own, which they circulate through their works, and take as the foundation of their disquisitions. If the definition should be the explanation of the essence of the thing, and the knowledge of this essence is a matter of such difficulty, why such haste in defining? The object of investigation is the knowledge of beings; consequently the proposition which explains this nature, that is, the definition, should be the last thing given by an author.

In the definition is the equation which gives the unknown quantity; and in the solution of problems this equation is always last.

What we can define very well is that which is purely conventional; for the nature of a conventional being is that which we give it, from motives which approve themselves to us. As, in many cases, it is impossible for us to define the thing itself, we should at least understand ourselves when we speak of it; or in other words we should define the terms with which we try to define it. I do not know what the sun is; I am unacquainted with its nature; and consequently, if you ask me for a definition of it, I cannot give it. But I know very well what I mean when I use the word *sun*, and so it will be easy for me to explain what I

signify by it. What is the sun? I do not know. What do you understand by the word *sun*? It is that planet whose presence brings day with it, and whose disappearance produces night. This brings me naturally to ill-defined words.

§ V.—*Ill-defined words. Examination of the word  
"equality."*

Apparently nothing is more easy than to define a word, for it is natural that the person who employs it should know what he says, and consequently be able to explain it. But experience tells us that such is not the case, and that there are very few, indeed, capable of fixing the meaning of the expressions they use. This confusion springs from confusion in ideas, and in its turn contributes to increase it. You will hear at every turn a hot argument in which the disputants show considerable ingenuity. Let them turn the matter inside out, let them attack and repulse each other a thousand times, like enemies in bloody battle; and then, if you wish to act as mediator, and to show how both are wrong, take up the word which expresses the subject in question, and ask each of them:—"What do you understand by this?—what meaning do you give to this word?" Frequently you shall find that neither of the adversaries will be able to give you an answer, or that they will pronounce some vague, unconnected expressions, showing clearly that you have taken them by surprise, that they did not expect an attack on this flank, and that this is perhaps the first time, and now probably against their will, they have rendered



to themselves an account of the meaning of a word which they have been employing hundreds of times in the last quarter of an hour, and making infinite applications of. But suppose this does not happen, and that each gives with facility and without hesitation the explanation you ask, in this case you may be certain that the one will not accept the definition of the other, and the disagreement, which before turned, or appeared to turn, on the subject in question, will now be translated to new ground, and the new dispute will be about the meaning of a word. I have said, *or appeared to turn*, for if you followed the course of the discussion, you must have seen that under the name of the thing, was frequently concealed the signification of the word.

There are certain words expressing a general idea, applicable to numerous and various objects, and employed in different senses, which would appear invented on purpose to confound. Everyone uses them, everyone knows what he signifies by them, but each in his own way, from which there results a gibberish very annoying to good thinkers.

"The equality of men," says a demagogue, "is a law established by God Himself. We are all born weeping, we all expire with a sigh: nature makes no distinction between the poor and the rich, the plebeian and the nobleman; and religion tells us that we have all the same origin and the same end. Equality is the work of God; inequality, the production of man. The genius of evil alone could introduce into the world those hateful inequalities, of which the human race is

the victim; ignorance and the want of all feeling of self-dignity could alone tolerate them." These words do not sound badly in the ears of pride; and it cannot be denied that there is something plausible in them. The orator utters capital errors and primary truths; he confounds the latter with the former; and his discourse, so seductive to the incautious, is ridiculous gibberish in the eyes of a good thinker. What is the cause of this? He employs the word *equality* in very different senses, and applies it to things as far apart as heaven is from earth; and then, with perfect security, as if there were not the slightest fear of mistake, draws a general conclusion.

If you want to upset all he has said, you have only to ask:—

What do you mean by equality?

What do I mean by equality? . . . the thing is clear enough in itself.

No matter, I want you to tell me.

Equality consists in one not being more or less than another.

But you must see that this may be taken in several senses; for two men six feet high will be equal in stature, but may be unequal in everything else, for example, if the one be pot-bellied like the governor of the island of Barataria, and the other as lean as the Knight of the Sad Figure. Besides, the two men may be equal or unequal in learning, virtue, nobleness of sentiment, and a thousand other things; so that it will be well for us to understand exactly what acceptation you give to the word equality.

I speak of the equality of nature, of the equality established by the Creator Himself, whose laws are not to be tampered with by man.

So that you only mean that men are by nature equal . . .

Certainly.

I know; but I see that nature makes some men robust, others feeble; some handsome, others ugly; some active, others lazy; to some she gives quiet dispositions, to others violent ones, to some—but I should never end if I were to mention all the inequalities which come from nature. Where, then, is the natural equality of which you speak?

But those inequalities do not destroy the equality of rights . . .

Well, leaving aside the fact that you have completely changed the state of the question, abandoning, or very much restricting, the equality of nature, I may say, that the equality of rights has its own difficulties. Do you think a child of five or six years, has the *right* to quarrel with or chastise its own father?

Ah! you are talking absurdities . . .

No, sir, I am not: equality of rights demands all this; and if not, you should tell us what rights you speak of: to which of our rights equality applies, and to which it does not.

Well, I think you should know we are talking now of social equality.

You did not speak of it alone; but a moment ago, in your discourse, you spoke in general and absolutely, and now when driven out of one trench, you

take refuge in another. But let us go to social equality. This should mean that in society we should all be equal. Now I ask, in what should we be equal. In authority? Then there is no government possible. In property? Very well; let us cast justice aside, and make the division. At the end of an hour, one gambler will have lightened the purse of another, and they will be unequal; after a few days, the industrious man will have increased his capital, and the lazy fellow will have wasted part of what he received; and we are back into inequality. The division is repeated a thousand times, and a thousand times the fortunes become unequal. Is the equality to be in respect? But will you appreciate and respect the rogue equally with the honest man? Will you place as much confidence in the one as in the other? Will the same business be entrusted to an ignorant boor as to a Metternich? And even though he tried, could one man do all another could?

That is impossible; but what is not impossible is equality in the eye of the law.

New retreat, new trench; let us see. The law says: "The person who does such a thing will be fined £10, in default of which he will get ten days' imprisonment." The rich man pays his £10, and laughs at the magistrate; the poor man has not a farthing, and must spend the time inside the prison bars. Where is the equality in the eye of the law?

But I would change all that, and establish such penalties as would avoid this inequality.

But then the fines would disappear, which go to fill



up vacuums in the Budget and relieve the Treasury. Besides, I am going to show you that your pretended equality is not possible in any supposition. Let us suppose that the sum of £100 is the penalty of a certain transgression; two men have incurred it, and both have the means of paying; but the one is a rich banker, and the other a struggling tradesman. The banker will laugh over the £100, and the tradesman will be ruined. Is the penalty equal?

Certainly not; but how would you remedy it?

I should not try by any means; and that is exactly what I want to show you—that inequality is without ✓remedy. If we suppose the penalty a corporal one, we shall find the same inequality. Imprisonment or exposure to public shame, is a penalty which a man wanting in education and dignity of sentiments, will suffer with perfect indifference; and a criminal of a certain rank would prefer death a thousand times to it. The penalty should be appreciated, not for what it is in itself, but for the injury it causes the sufferer, and the impression it makes on him; for otherwise the two objects of chastisement would disappear—expiation and warning. Therefore, the same penalty, applied to criminals of different ranks, has no equality except in name, and involves a monstrous inequality. You will confess with me that in these difficulties there is much that is irremediable; then let us acknowledge the sad necessity, and give up talking about an equality which is impossible.

The definition of a word, and the discernment of the different applications which could be made of it,

enabled us to pulverise a plausible sophism, and to demonstrate to evidence, that the pompous orator either uttered absurdities, or said nothing we did not all know before ; for it is no great discovery to tell us we all come to the world, and leave it, in the same way.

§ VI.—*Gratuitous suppositions. The dead body in the precipice.*

For want of a general principle we sometimes take a fact, which has no more truth or certainty than what we ourselves give it. Whence have we so many systems to explain the phenomena of nature ? From a gratuitous supposition, which the inventor of the system thought well to lay down as the primary stone of the edifice. The greatest talents are exposed to this danger, whenever they insist on explaining a phenomenon, and are deficient in data about its nature and origin. An effect may have been produced by an infinity of causes ; but we do not discover the truth by simply knowing that it *could have been produced* ; we must demonstrate that it *has been produced*. If an hypothesis satisfactorily explains to me a phenomenon I have before me, I may admire the ingenuity of the inventor, but I shall have advanced very little in the knowledge of the reality of things.

This vice of attributing an effect to a *possible* cause, forgetting the distance between *possibility* and *reality*, is more common than is generally believed ; above all, when the reasoner is assisted by the coexistence or succession of the facts which he wants to connect.

Sometimes, even, people do not wait to know whether the fact assigned as cause, really existed or not ; it is enough that it could have existed, and might have produced the effect which is to be explained.

At the bottom of a precipice the dead body of a person unknown has been found ; the marks on the victim clearly show that he fell over the rocks. Three suppositions can account for the catastrophe—an accident, a suicide, or an assassination. In all these cases the effect would be the same ; and in the absence of evidence, no one can say that one would explain it more satisfactorily than the others. Numerous spectators are visiting the scene of the disaster ; all are anxious to discover the cause ; if you only give the smallest clue, you shall draw out abundance of conjectures, and you shall hear the following expressions : “It is certain . . . it may be . . . it cannot be otherwise . . . I see it as clearly as if I were looking on . . . there is no evidence, it cannot be proved ; but there is no room for doubt.”

And what are the foundations ? Some hours before the body was found, the poor fellow was seen going towards the fatal spot, and was noticed to be reading papers, stopping now and again, and showing signs of restlessness. Besides, it was well known that latterly he had met with annoyance, and his affairs were in a rather unsatisfactory state. All the neighbours saw signs of pain and sadness in his face. The matter is settled : the man committed suicide. It could not be assassination, he was so near home . . . besides, an assassination would not be committed in

this way. . . . An accident is out of the question ; because he knew the ground well ; besides, he was in no way reckless nor absent-minded. As the poor fellow was pressed by his creditors, this being a post day he must have received some important news, and he could resist no longer.

Of course, a number will say, the thing is very clear ; not a doubt of it, this is a post day. . . .

The coroner arrives, and the first thing done is to examine the pocket-book of the deceased.

Two letters.

Didn't I tell you ? . . . this day's post ! . . .

One is from N——, his correspondent in M——.

Exactly ; that's where his difficulties lay. . .

It says :—"My dear Sir, I am just come from the meeting I told you of. There was some opposition, but in the end, supported by our friends N. N., I have gained the point. For the present you may be at ease, and if your son succeed in arranging the American business, these people will agree to everything, and your fortune and credit are saved. Details by next post ; but I did not think it right to delay a moment in giving you this satisfactory news. In the meantime, I remain, &c. &c. &c."

Well, there is no cause for suicide here.

But the other. . . .

It is from his son. . . .

Bad news, I have no doubt. . . .

It says :—"My dear father. I arrived just in time. A few hours after I disembarked, the bubble was blown. It was all a bit of roguery of Mr. N——. He has ter-



ribly abused our confidence. He did not dream of my coming, and when he saw me, he was like one struck by a thunderbolt. I took stock of his confusion, and seized on all the correspondence. Whilst I was thus engaged, he took leg bail, and I know not where he is. Everything is saved, except a mere trifle. I write against time, as the post is just leaving, &c. &c. &c."

There certainly was no cause for suicide in to-day's post; and the conjecturer is all wrong. And this happened because he took the possibility for reality, because he built on gratuitous suppositions, because he was deceived by the plausibility of a satisfactory explanation.

Could it be an assassination? . . . .

Of course it could, because with the post . . . . and besides, the man had no want of enemies.

The other day his tenant N—— used terrible threats. And he is a bad man. . . .

Oh! a very bad one . . . . he leads the life of a bandit . . . . why, he has the whole neighbourhood afraid. . . .

And what terms were they on lately?

Bad: why this very morning they came out of the deceased's house, and both were talking very loud.

And was the tenant accustomed to knock about here?

He was never away from here; his land lies only a few paces away; and besides (but this is between you and me), they were in dispute about the trees above the precipice there. The owner complained that he was destroying the plantation, the other denied it: why, the other day, they were nearly coming to blows in this very spot, I tell you . . . . only one should

not try to hurt a poor wretch . . . they were quarrelling almost daily in this cursed place.

Well, you may say no more . . . it is monstrous ! but how can it be proved ? . . .

And you see he is not working on his farm to-day ; and his spade is there . . . and it is evident he was there this very morning. . . . I tell you there is no doubt about it ; it is clear as the light of day ; the wretch is ruined, for you may be sure this will all leak out. . . .

A countryman arrives.

This is a terrible business !

Did you not know of it ?

No ; I was told it just now in his own house. I went to see him, to try to pacify him with regard to N——, who has been taken prisoner. . . .

Prisoner ! . . .

Yes ; his wife came to me crying ; she says he was a little loose with his tongue, and the police took him prisoner. You know he is a great bully ! . . .

And was he not out of the village from the time he was talking with the deceased this morning ?

How could he ? He is in the lock-up since early this morning ; and the poor fellow had plenty to do down there ! . . .

Here is a new jumble ; the supposed assassin was far away ; the prisoner was the tenant : a new lesson not to trust to gratuitous suppositions, not to confound the reality with the possibility, not to be deceived by plausible appearances.

§ VII.—*Prejudice in favour of a doctrine.*

This is one of the most abundant sources of error ; this is the drag on all sciences ; one of the obstacles which most retard their progress. The influence of this prejudice would appear incredible, if the history of the human mind did not prove it by unanswerable facts.

When a man is possessed by a prejudice, he seeks neither in books nor in things what there is really in them, but only what helps to support his opinions. And the worst of it is, that he does so, not unfrequently, with the greatest sincerity, believing all the time that he is labouring in the cause of truth. Our education, the masters and authors from whom we have received the first light of a science, the persons with whom we constantly live, or have frequent intercourse, our position or profession, and other such circumstances, powerfully contribute to engender in us a habit of viewing things under one sole aspect, and always in the same way.

Scarcely had we taken our first step in the study of a science, when we met with certain axioms as the emanations of eternal truth, and found certain propositions sustained by indisputable demonstrations ; and we were taught to look on the reasons which militated on the other side, not as arguments to be examined, but as objections to be solved. Was one of our reasons a little shaky on any side ? Well, we immediately rushed to its support, or to show, at least, that it was not our only one ; that it was accompanied by others

thoroughly satisfactory ; and that if it alone was not enough by itself, yet, when added to the others, it weighed in the balance, and inclined it in our favour. Did our adversaries bring forward some difficulty, which was rather a hard nut to crack? Well, the number of our answers made up for the want of solidity. The respectable author A answers in this way, the celebrated B in this other, and the learned C in that ; any one of the three is sufficient, and we may choose whichever we wish, and be certain that the difficulty of our adversaries will receive the blow in the Achilles-tendon. The question is, not to convince, but to conquer ; self-esteem is interested in the contest, and everyone knows the infinite resources of this diabolical agent. What is favourable is harped on and exaggerated ; what is unfavourable is lessened, disfigured, or ignored ; ingenuousness sometimes protests from the depths of the soul ; but its voice is smothered and stifled, like the tones of peace in a deadly combat.

If it be not so, how do you explain the existence, during long ages, of schools as well organised as disciplined armies grouped round their respective banners? How is it that a series of men, illustrious for their learning and virtues, looked on a question all in the same way, while their adversaries, no less illustrious than they, saw it in a directly opposite way? How is it, if we want to know an author's opinions, we do not require to read him, and have only to know to what order he belonged, or in what school he studied? Could it be that they were ignorant of the



subject, when they consumed their lives in its study? Could it be that they did not read their adversaries' works? This might happen in some cases, but there is no doubt that many of those men frequently consulted them. Could it be want of sincerity? Certainly not, for they are distinguished for their Christian integrity.

The causes are those we have assigned above : man, before he attempts to lead others astray, often first imposes on himself. He clings to a system ; he intrenches himself with all the reasons which can favour it ; till, in the end, let the number or prowess of his adversaries be what it may, he likely says to himself : "This is your post ; you must defend it ; better die with glory than live an ignominious coward."

Hence, when we want to convince others, we should carefully separate the cause of truth from the cause of self-esteem : it is of the utmost importance to persuade our adversary, that by yielding, his reputation suffers no hurt. Never attack the clearness and sharpness of his talent ; for otherwise the combat will become formal, the struggle will be desperate, and even though you bring him to the ground, and place your foot on his neck, you shall never get him to admit he is conquered.

There are certain expressions of courtesy and deference in no way opposed to truth : if your adversary hesitates, don't spare them if you want to bring the matter to a close without disagreeable consequences.

## CHAPTER XV.

## REASONING.

§ I.—*What dialectic principles and rules are worth.*

WHEN authors come to treat of this operation of the understanding, they heap up rules for its direction, founded on some axioms. I will not dispute the truth of the axioms; but I question very much whether the utility of the rules be as great as many imagine. It cannot be denied that things which are equal to the same, are equal to each other; that if one of two things, equal to each other, be unequal to a third, the other will also be unequal to it; that what is affirmed or denied of a whole genus or species, should be affirmed or denied of an individual contained in them; and it is also very true that rules of argumentation, founded on these principles, are infallible. But my difficulty lies in their application; and I am far from feeling convinced that they are of much practical use.

In the first place, I confess that these rules contribute to give a certain precision to the understanding, which in some cases may enable it to conceive with more clearness, and to detect the defects which an argument may contain: although this advantage may occasionally be neutralised by the evils occasioned by the presumption of one's thinking he can reason, because he is not unacquainted with the rules of reasoning. One may know the rules of an art very well, and not be able to reduce them to practice. A

person might be able to recite all the rules of rhetoric without a mistake, and yet be incapable of writing a page without blundering, not alone against the rules of art, but even against common sense.

§ II.—*The syllogism. Observations on this dialectic instrument.*

We shall form a fair conception of the utility of these rules if we consider, that a person who reasons forgets their existence, if not compelled to formulate his argument scholastically, a thing which at the present time has fallen into disuse. Pupils learn to know whether this or that syllogism is defective, according to this or that rule; and they do so with examples so simple, that when they leave school they never meet with anything like them. "Every virtue is laudable; justice is a virtue; therefore justice is laudable." This is all very well; but when I want to find whether in such or such an act justice has been infringed, and the law should punish; if I want to inquire in what justice consists, by analysing the sublime principles on which it rests, and the utility its empire confers on the individual and society, what is the use of this example, or others like it? I could wish to know whether those overlauded rules have been of great service to theologians and jurists in the development of their ideas.

"Every metal is a mineral; gold is a metal; therefore gold is a mineral." "Every animal has feeling; fish are animals; therefore fish have feeling." "Peter is culpable; this man is Peter; therefore this man is

culpable." "This sovereign is light; this is the sovereign I got from John; therefore the sovereign John gave me is light." These, and other arguments like them, are what are generally found in treatises on logic, which give rules for syllogisms; and yet I cannot see of what great utility they can be to any one.

The difficulties of reasoning are not removed by such frivolities, which are calculated rather to waste time at school than to instruct. When the question passes from examples to reality, the pupil finds nothing like them; and then, he either completely forgets the rules, or, after trying to make constant application of them, he gets tired of the troublesome and useless task. A certain person, an intimate friend of mine, took the trouble of examining all his arguments by the light of dialectic rules; I don't know whether he follows this strange custom yet; but whilst I had the pleasure of his acquaintance, I did not observe that he gained much by it.

Let us analyse some of these examples, and compare them with practical life.

The question is about the right to a certain possession. All the property of the family N. should have passed into the hands of the family M; but the length of time allowed to go by, and various other circumstances, occasion a question about the farm of B, who is in possession of it, and claims a right to it deriving from the family N. It is clear that the syllogism of the family M would be the following: All the property that belonged to N is mine; but B's farm belonged to N; therefore B's farm is mine. Let us suppose, for



the sake of clearness, that there is no difficulty in the first proposition, or major, and the whole dispute turns on the minor; that is, they must prove that B's farm really did belong to the family N.

The whole lawsuit hangs on proving, not that the syllogism is conclusive, but on whether the minor can be proved or not. And now I ask: will anyone think once even of the syllogism? Is it of the slightest use in the world to recollect that what is said of all should be said of each? If it be once proved that B's farm did belong to the family N, will any rule be required to deduce that the family M is the legitimate owner? The reasoning is gone through—certainly; the syllogism exists—undoubtedly; but the thing is so clear, the deduction is so obvious, that any rules given to make it, look more like a purely speculative amusement than anything else. The trouble does not lie in the syllogism, but in finding the family N's title to B's farm, in interpreting properly the clauses of the will, donation, or purchase by which it was acquired; the difficulty lies in this or something like it, and it would be well if we could sharpen the wits and give some rules to discover the truth in a heap of complicated and contradictory documents. It would be funny to ask the parties concerned, the counsel and the judge, how often they thought of the rules of syllogisms when they were following with attentive eye the thread which was to lead them to the object they had in view.

“Money which has not all the qualities prescribed by law should not be taken; this sovereign has not

all these qualities ; therefore it should not be taken." The reasoning is as conclusive as it is useless. If I know the qualities money should have, and find the sovereign deficient, I will return it to the giver without any argumentation ; and if any dispute be raised about it, it will not be on the legitimacy of the consequence, but about whether it is light or not, whether it is fairly weighed or not, whether it has this or that mark, and things of this kind.

When man reasons he does not enter into reflex acts about his thoughts, just as the eyes when they look make no contortions to see themselves. An idea presents itself, and is conceived with more or less clearness ; in it another, or others, are seen to be contained ; through these the recollection of others is excited, and thus we go on softly, without reflex cavillations, or embarrassing ourselves at every step with accounting for our thoughts.

### § III.—*The enthymeme.*

The evidence of these truths has caused the enthymeme to be numbered among the forms of argumentation. The enthymeme is a syllogism in which one of the propositions is understood. Daily experience suggested this form to the dialecticians, for they saw that in practical life the whole thread of the reasoning was not given. Thus in the last example, the full syllogism would be as we gave it ; but in the form of an enthymeme it would be converted into this other :—"This sovereign has not all the conditions prescribed by law, therefore I will not take it ;" or, more vulgarly,

but more concisely and expressively :—" I won't take it ; it is light."

§ IV.—*Reflections on the middle term.*

The whole artifice of the syllogism consists in comparing the extremes with a middle term, in order to deduce their relation with each other. When the extremes and the middle term are known there is nothing more simple than to make the comparison ; but then precisely the rule is unnecessary, for the understanding instantly sees the consequence to be drawn. How is that middle term found ? How can we know the two extremes, when the investigation is about a thing we are ignorant of ? I know very well that if this piece of mineral I have in my hand were gold, it would have such a quality ; but the difficulty lies in the fact that it does not even occur to me that it may be gold, and consequently I do not think of one of the two extremes ; and even if I did think of it, I have no means of testing it. The judge knows very well that if the man meeting him on the street were the assassin the police have been looking for so long, he should condemn him to death, if he came before him ; but the difficulty is in the fact that when he sees the culprit, he does not think of the assassin ; and if he thought of him, and suspected the man before him was the person, he could not condemn him for want of proof. He has the two extremes, but not the middle term : a term he will never discover through the agency of all the dialectic forms in the world. The man's name, his country, his ordinary residence, his previous con-

duct, his present manner of life, the place where he was when the assassination was committed, the witnesses who saw him in the neighbourhood where the victim was found; his dress, stature, physiognomy; the marks of blood on his clothes, the hidden dagger, the signs of terror he showed on reaching home a few moments after the foul act must have been committed; some articles in his possession very like others possessed by the deceased, his contradictions, his well-known enmity to the victim—these are the middle terms, or rather an aggregate of circumstances which will indicate whether the prisoner is the real assassin or not. Little attention is paid to the rules of the syllogism. Now we must attend to a word, now to a fact; here such a sign must be examined, there two or three coincidences must be compared. The judge must attend to the physical, moral and social qualities of the individual; he must weigh the evidence; in a word, he must turn his attention in all directions, fix it on a hundred different things, and hold the balance with scrupulous justice and fairness that the culprit may not get off without punishment, nor the innocent be condemned.

I will say it once for all: the examples which abound in books of logic are of no use whatever in practical life. If anyone believes he has learned to think through the agency of that mechanism, he is egregiously mistaken. If what I have just said does not convince him, experience will very soon undeceive him.



§ v.—*Utility of the dialectic forms.*

Notwithstanding what we have said, I will not deny that those dialectic forms serve, even in our own times, to present the chain of ideas in reasoning with clearness and exactness ; and that, if they are not of much use as a means of invention, they may be of service as a channel of instruction. And so far from desiring to see them eliminated from elementary works, I would have them preserved, not in their dryness, but by all means in their vigour. Melchor Cano with great propriety calls them *nervos et ossa*: do not destroy these nerves and bones ; but cover them with a soft white skin, that they may not cause repugnance. We must confess that at present by force of despising these forms, the opposite extreme is reached, an extreme highly dangerous to the progress of science and to the cause of truth. Formerly, the reasonings were given much too naked ; their armour was rather unpolished ; but now, there is such neglect of the exterior, and such forgetfulness of the interior also, that in many reasonings we meet with nothing but words, which would be beautiful, if vacant words could be so. With the aid of the dialectic forms men of subtle and argumentative minds fenced too much ; in oratorical forms empty heads often envelop themselves. *Est modus in rebus.* (15.)

## CHAPTER XVI.

ALL IS NOT DONE BY REASONING.

§ I.—*Inspiration.*

IT is an error to imagine that great thoughts are the offspring of reasoning, which, when well employed, serves in some degree for instruction, but very little for invention. Almost all that the world admires for its felicity, grandeur, and surprising character, is due to inspiration; to that instantaneous light which glows suddenly in the mind of man, without his knowing whence it comes. I call it inspiration, and very properly, because there is no other name more adapted to explain this wonderful phenomenon.

A mathematician is turning over and over an intricate problem; he has made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the data, and nothing is omitted which should be attended to in such cases. He cannot find the solution, though he has tried various plans, which have ended in nothing. He has employed different quantities, to see if he can hit the mark; but it is all useless. His head is fatigued; his pen rests on the paper, but writes nothing. The calculator's attention is almost asleep from pure abstraction; he scarcely knows that he thinks. Tired of forcing a door so closely locked, he appears to have given up the attempt, and is sitting on the threshold, waiting to see if someone will open it from without. "Now I have it," he suddenly exclaims, "this is it!" . . . and like another Archimides, without knowing what

happens, jumps from the bath, and runs about shouting: "I have found it! . . . I have found it!" . . .

It often happens that after long hours of meditation, one cannot arrive at a satisfactory result, and when the mind is distracted, and occupied on quite a different subject, the truth presents itself like a mysterious apparition. St. Thomas of Aquinas was dining with the King of France; and as he was not ill-bred and boorish, it is not likely he would select such a place to surrender himself to profound meditations. But before the dinner hour he was probably engaged at his ordinary work, sharpening the arms of reason to combat the enemies of the Church. Likely he was in the same state as others accustomed to dive into the depths of things. When they lay aside the meditation in which they were engulfed, the point in question frequently occurs to them, as if it came to knock at the door, and ask if its turn had come. He feels inspired, and sees what before he could not see, and, forgetting that he was at the king's table, he strikes it with his hand, exclaiming—"This is conclusive against the Manichæans!" . . . .

## § II.—*Meditation.*

When a man is occupied in comprehending a very difficult subject, far from employing the rule and compass to direct his meditations, he is, in the majority of instances, absorbed in the investigation, without advertng that he meditates, or even that he exists. He looks at the matter, now on this side, now on that; he interiorly pronounces the name of that which he is

examining ; he gives a glance at the surroundings of the principal point ; he does not look like a man who travels on a beaten path, aware of the term of his journey, but is more like a person seeking a treasure, whose existence he suspects, but knows not the precise spot where it is hidden, and goes about digging here and there.

And it cannot well happen otherwise, as the truth he is seeking is not previously known. A person who has before him a piece of mineral he is acquainted with, will avail himself of the simplest and most efficient means for the purpose, when he tries to give others instruction about it. But if he had not this knowledge, he would turn it over, and look at it again and again ; from this or that indication he would form his conjectures, and in the end would have recourse to experiments, not to prove that it is such or such, but to find out what it really is.

### § III.—*Invention and instruction.*

And from this springs the difference between the method of instruction and that of invention : a person who instructs knows whither he is going, and he knows the road he has to follow, for he has travelled it several times ; but the discoverer has, perhaps, no fixed object but just to examine what is in the thing before him ; or, if he has some aim, he may not know whether it is possible to attain it, or he doubts of its existence, or fears it is only a caprice of his imagination ; and even if he be sure of its existence, he knows not the path which leads to it.



For this reason the present profound discoveries are taught on principles quite different from those which guided the inventors: the Infinitesimal Calculus is due to geometry, and now its geometrical applications are reached by a series of pure algebraical processes. In a chain of rocky mountains an inaccessible peak raises its head aloft, and some remains of an ancient edifice appear to exist on it: an enterprising and daring fellow conceives the design of ascending it; he examines it, he tries it, he creeps from rock to rock, he slides down impracticable hollows, he crawls along the edge of fearful precipices, he lays hold on weakly plants and rotten roots, and at last, covered with sweat, and jaded almost to death, he reaches the top, and, stretching out his arms, proudly exclaims: "I am up at last! . . ." Then he commands all the points of the chain of mountains; what he previously saw only by parts, he now sees in the aggregate: he looks at the places he first tried, he sees the impossibility of ascending there, and he laughs at his ignorance. He contemplates the broken path he followed, and he is proud of his rashness and daring; but the people below, who are watching him, shall never be able to climb by it. He looks about and discovers an easy path; it is not seen from below, but it is from above. It takes many turns, it is true, and the distance is pretty long, but it is accessible to the weakest and most timid. Then he runs down, joins his companions, and says: "Follow me:" he leads them to the top, without fatigue or danger, and there they enjoy a view of the old monument, and of the mag-

nificent sweep of landscape which the peak commands.

§ IV.—*Intuition.*

But we are not to believe that the labours of genius are always so heavy and fatiguing. One of its characteristics is *intuition*, the power of seeing without effort, of beholding an object inundated with light, when to others it is enveloped in darkness. Lay before a man, gifted with it, an idea or a fact, which to others appears quite an insignificant thing, and he discovers in it a thousand circumstances and relations till then completely unobserved. There was nothing previously but a very contracted circle, and when he fixes his gaze on it, the circle becomes agitated, and dilates, extending its circumference like the dawn at sunrise. There was nothing at first but one sickly luminous ray, and a few moments after the firmament shines with immense streaks of silver and gold, and torrents of light inundate the celestial arch, stretching from east to west and from north to south.

§ V.—*The difficulty is not in comprehending but in divining. The chess-player. Sobieski. Hannibal's vipers.*

There is a peculiarity in this point worthy of note, but seldom observed; and it is, that many truths are not difficult in themselves, and yet they occur to none but men of talent. When these latter point them out, or draw attention to them, everyone then sees they are so clear, so simple, so obvious, that the wonder is they were not seen before.

Two clever chess-players are engaged on a compli-

cated game. One of them makes what appears a rather careless move. . . . "My, oh!" say those looking on; then he abandons a piece he could have easily defended, and plays at a point where no one threatens him. "Well, well," exclaim all, "you might want that piece yet." "What can I do?" he says, deprecatingly; "no one is infallible;" and he continues as if distracted. His adversary has not penetrated his intention, he does not attend to the impending danger, he moves, and then the man who appeared distracted, who was losing time and pieces uselessly, attacks on the unprotected flank, and cries, with a meaning smile: "Check-mate." "He is right," exclaim all; "how is it we did not see it? And it so simple! . . . . To be sure, he lost time, in order to creep round to that side; he abandoned the piece to open a passage for himself; he went to that corner, not to defend himself, but to block up all escape; it appears impossible we should not have seen it."

The Turks are encamped before Vienna; everyone argues about the point on which they should be attacked, as soon as the reinforcements under the orders of the King of Poland should arrive. The rules of art are bandied from mouth to mouth, the projects are innumerable. Sobieski arrives, and casts one glance over the enemy's army: "It is mine," he says, "they are badly encamped." The following day he attacks; the Turks are defeated; Vienna is free. And after seeing the plan of attack, and its successful issue, all exclaim: "The Turks committed this or that mistake; the king was right, they were badly

encamped ;" they all saw the truth, and found it so simple, but it was after it was pointed out to them.

Every mathematician knew the properties of arithmetical and geometrical progressions ; that the exponent of 1 was 0 ; of 10, 1 ; of 100, 2, and so on, and that the exponent of the numbers between 1 and 10, was a fraction ; but no one saw that this could be made an instrument of so various and advantageous uses as are the tables of logarithms. Napier said :—" Here it is ;" and then every mathematician saw at once it was a most simple thing.

There is nothing easier than our system of numeration ; and yet, neither the Greeks nor the Romans were acquainted with it. What a simple, evident phenomenon is the tendency of fluids to seek their level, to rise to the height from which they descend ! Do we not witness it daily in jets, and in vessels with two or more tubes of communication ? What could be more simple than the application of this law to waterworks ? And yet long years had to pass before humanity availed itself of the lesson which it was daily receiving from a phenomenon so palpable.

Two artisans, of no great cleverness, are completely embarrassed in a certain work. The one consults the other, both argue, try, pull down, but all without result. At last they have recourse to a third of more brains. Can you get us out of this difficulty ? Easily, in this way.—Perfectly right ; it was so simple ! and yet we could not hit on it.

Hannibal is on the eve of a naval combat ; he gives his commands, and in the meantime some soldiers



come on board, carrying a great number of clay vessels well corked, the contents of which no one knows. The battle begins; the enemy laughs at Hannibal's marines for throwing such vessels instead of arrows; when they fall, the vessels are broken in pieces and nobody is hurt. After a moment a Roman feels an atrocious bite: his cry of pain is quickly succeeded by that of another; everyone looks round, and sees with horror that the ship is full of vipers. Disorder succeeds. Hannibal manœuvres dexterously, and victory decides in his favour. Certainly no one was ignorant that it was possible to collect together a great number of vipers, and shut them up in clay vessels, and cast them at the enemy; but yet it did not occur to anyone but the astute Carthaginian. And very likely he discovered this infernal trick without reasonings or arguments; probably it was enough that someone should have mentioned the word *viper* for him to realise at once that the reptile might be employed by him as an efficient auxiliary.

What do these examples tell us? They tell us that talent often consists in seeing a relation, which is patent enough, but which nobody hits on. In itself it is not difficult, and the proof is, that as soon as someone discovers it, and says: "There it is;" everyone sees it without effort, and wonders he had not seen it before. And so, language, carried away by the force of things, calls these thoughts *bright ideas, strokes of genius, inspirations*, thus indicating that they cost no trouble, but were clear and evident in themselves.

§ VI.—*Rule for meditating.*

I will infer from what we have said that in order to think well, it is not a good system to put the mind in a vice; it should be left considerable room. It is meditating on an object, apparently it advances nothing; it might be said it was sleeping with its attention fixed on something. No matter; don't do it violence; it is labouring to discover some clue to guide it; it is like a man exercising his wits in trying to open a box, which will only yield to a touch on some secret spring. He examines it a long time, he turns it round and round, now he presses with his thumb, now he forces with his nail, till finally resting a moment in perplexity, he exclaims: "This is the spring; now it is open."

§ VIII.—*Characteristic of elevated intelligences. Remarkable doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.*

Why do not certain simple truths occur to all? Why does the human race regard as extraordinary minds those who see things which, apparently, the whole world should see? Ah! this is to seek the reason of one of the secrets of Providence, this is to ask why the Creator bestowed on some privileged men a great power of intuition, or immediate intellectual vision, and withheld it from the majority.

St. Thomas Aquinas gives us a wonderful theory on this point. According to the Holy Doctor, reasoning is a sign of the short range of our intellect; it is a faculty given us to supply our deficiency: the angels understand, but do not reason. The more elevated an

intelligence is, the fewer ideas it has ; for it encloses in a few, what more limited ones distribute over many. Thus the angels of the higher categories understand by means of few ideas ; and their number becomes reduced, as the created intelligences approach the Creator, who, as infinite being and infinite intelligence, sees all in one, only, simplest, but infinite idea—his own essence. What a sublime theory ! it is worth a whole book in itself ; it displays a profound knowledge of the secrets of spirits, and it suggests to us innumerable applications with respect to the understanding of man.

In fact, superior geniuses are not distinguished by their great abundance of ideas, but for their possessing a few capital broad ones, in which they make the world itself fit. The bat describes circles, and gets over much ground, but never escapes from the crooked turns of the valley ; whilst the eagle soars on majestic wing, lights on the highest peak of the Alps, and from his resting-place contemplates the mountains, the valleys, and the currents of the rivers, and sweeps with his eye vast plains studded with cities, and adorned with delicious groves, fruitful meadows, and rich and varied crops.

In all questions there is a principal, dominant point of view : in it genius plants itself. There it discovers the key, and thence it commands all. If the generality of men are incapable of reaching that point at one stride, they should, at least, try to get to it by force of toil ; and in doing so they will save themselves time, and reap advantage. On close observation we find, that

every question, and even every science, has one or two capital points to which all others are referred. If one takes his stand on them, he sees everything plainly and clearly; otherwise he will see the details, but never the whole aggregate. The human understanding, so weak of itself, needs to have objects presented to it as simplified as possible; and hence, it is of the utmost importance to strip them of useless foliage, and distribute them in a few classes, each one vinctuated to one point. In this way we learn with more facility, we perceive with more clearness and exactness, and our memory is powerfully aided.

§ VIII.—*Necessity of labour.*

May we infer from the doctrines of this chapter on inspiration and intuition that we should abandon mental exercise and labour, and resign ourselves to a sort of intellectual quietism? Certainly not. There is an indispensable condition for the development of any faculty—exercise. In the intellectual as in the physical order an organ which does not operate goes asleep, loses vitality; the member which is not kept in movement, becomes paralysed. Even the most privileged geniuses do not acquire their herculean strength but after long labour. Inspiration does not fall on the lazy; it only exists when prolific ideas and sentiments bubble in the mind. Intuition, the power of *seeing* of the understanding, is only acquired by a habit engendered by long *looking*. The rapid, certain, and delicate glance of a great painter is not due to nature alone, but is owing in part to the prolonged



contemplation and observation of the best models; and the magic of music would never become developed in the most harmonical organisation, which had heard during life only harsh and discordant sounds. (16.)

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### TEACHING.

§ I.—*Two objects of teaching. Different classes of professors.*

LOGICIANS usually distinguish between the method of teaching and that of invention. I am now going to make a few observations on one and the other.

Teaching has two objects: 1. To instruct pupils in the elements of science; 2. To develop their talents, so that when they leave school they may be able to make progress proportioned to their capacities.

Someone might think that these two objects were one and the same; but they are not. The first is reached by all professors decently acquainted with letters; the second is attained only by men of very superior parts. For the first, it is sufficient to know the concatenation of some facts and propositions, whose aggregate forms the body of the science; for the second, it is necessary to know how that chain which unites one extreme with another has been constructed; the first requires men acquainted with books, the second needs men acquainted with things.

More; it may happen that a superficial professor may be more adapted for the simple teaching of the

elements of a subject, than another more profound; for the latter will be inadvertently carried into discussions which may complicate the simplicity of first notions, and so impede the perception of backward pupils.

The clear explanation of the terms, the plain exposition of the principles on which a science rests, the methodical co-ordination of the theorems, and of their corollaries—this should be the object of the man who undertakes to give elementary instruction.

But the man who has more extensive views, and regards the understanding of youth not only as blank tablets on which are to be drawn some lines which may remain permanently fixed, but as fields in which prolific seed is to be sown, assumes a higher and much more difficult task. To reconcile clearness with profoundness, to harmonise simplicity with combination, to lead over level ground, while teaching the young feet to pick their steps on stony roads, pointing out to them as they pass the difficult and thorny paths pursued by the first inventors, to inspire lively enthusiasm, to awaken in talent the consciousness of its own powers, without exciting in it rash presumption—this is the task of the professor who regards elementary teaching not alone as the fruit but as a seed.

§ II.—*Geniuses unknown to others and to themselves.*

How few the professors endowed with this precious gift! And how can we have such men in the miserable state of abandonment in which this branch lies? Who ever tries to give a taste for teaching to men of high capacity? Who ever tries to engage their continuance

in this occupation, if they do once enter on it? Professorial chairs are regarded, at most, as a stepping-stone to something higher; to the difficult task they impose are united a hundred others of a different order, and what should absorb the whole man is got through in a hurry and without heart.

And so when a bright boy, on whose brow the gift of genius sparkles, happens to be among the pupils, nobody notices him, nobody tells him of it, nobody makes him feel it; and thus, regarded simply as among the more brilliant, he pursues his course, without ever being made to try the extent of his powers. For we must remember that these powers are not always known to their possessor, even with respect to what he is studying. The fire of genius may remain during life covered up in ashes, for want of someone to rake them. Do we not daily see that an extraordinary agility, a peculiar flexibility of certain members, a great muscular development, or other corporal qualities, lie hidden till some casual effort reveals them? If Hercules had never used anything but a walking-stick he should never know he could wield a club.

§ III.—*Means to discover occult talent and to appreciate its value.*

A professor of mathematics, explaining to his pupils the theory of conic sections, will give them a clear and exact idea of these curves, by showing them the equations expressed by their nature, and deducing the properties it originates. Up to this point the pupil learns the elements well enough, but has no exercise

for the development of his intellectual powers ; he has yet met with nothing which may make him feel his talent of invention, if he possess such a thing. But if the professor calls his attention to the fact that such a fundamental equation, to all appearance merely conventional, has not been established without motive, the young man will immediately find the so-called steady base unsteady, and will look out for something to support it. If he does not hit on the generating principle of these curves, he may be reminded of the name they bear, and that the section parallel to the base of the cone is a circle. Then, of course, the pupil will intersect the cone with planes in different positions, and at the first glance he sees that if the section is not parallel to the base, it describes curves with an elliptical figure. Now he imagines the section more parallel, now less, and he still finds that the figure is an ellipse, the only difference being that its sides are nearer the plane, or farther from it, or, in other words, the greater or less difference of the axes. Is it possible to express the nature of this curve by an equation ? Are there any known data ? Have they any relation to the properties of the cone, and of the parallel section ? Does the greater or less inclination of the plane change the nature of the section ? If we give the plane other positions, so that the section will not be closed, what curves result ? Is there any likeness between them and parabolas and hyperbolas ? These, and such like questions, suggest themselves to a pupil of superior capacity ; and if he be highly gifted, you will soon see him inter-



sect the cone with lines, compare them with one another, conceive triangles, calculate their relations, and try a hundred ways to reach the equation he wants. In this he is not simply learning the first notions of the theory; he has already become an inventor; his talent finds pabulum to devour; and though, when isolated in the processes of the first lessons, he had many equals in the comprehension of the doctrine explained, now you find that he has left his companions far behind, that they do not advance a step, while he has attained the desired result, or is far on the way to it. It is then he lets his powers be known, and knows them himself; then it becomes evident that his capacity is a very superior one, and in the course of time he may contribute to widen the range of science.

A professor of the natural law will fully explain the rights and duties of parental authority, and the obligations of children with respect to their parents, giving the definitions and reasons usually employed in such cases. The elements go thus far; but nothing has turned up to develop the philosophical genius of a gifted pupil, and make him shine among his companions, endowed with ordinary capacity. The clever professor wants to take the measure of the talents there are in his class, and he employs the time there remains after his lecture in making an experiment.

Do you think the sentiments of the heart tell us anything about these duties? Are the lights of philosophy in accord with the inspirations of nature? Even the mediocre will answer this question by ob-

serving that parents naturally love their children, and children their parents, and our duties are thus interlaced with our affections, which urge us to their fulfilment. Up to this there is no difference between fair pupils. But the professor, entering more deeply into the analysis of the matter, asks :—

What do you think of children who act ungratefully to their parents, and do not correspond duly to the love they receive from them ?

That they fail in a sacred duty, and are deaf to the voice of nature.

But how is it we often find children who do not act as they should towards their parents, whilst the latter, if they have any fault, it is a superabundance of love and tenderness ?

In this the children do not do right, one will say. Men very soon forget benefits received, another will say; this one will say that as children advance in age they are distracted by a hundred different things they have to attend to; that one, that the new affections engendered in their hearts by the family of which they themselves become the head, diminish that which they owe their parents; and thus each one will give reasons more or less adequate, more or less solid, none of which, however, entirely satisfy. If there be among your pupils one destined to acquire future fame, ask him the same question, and see whether he shall say anything that goes to its marrow and illustrates it.

It is too true, he will answer, that children do frequently fail in their duties to their parents, but if I

am not mistaken, the reason of this is found in the very nature of things. The more necessary for the preservation and the good order of beings the fulfilment of a duty may be, the more care has the Creator taken to secure its fulfilment. The world gets along pretty well, in spite of the improper conduct of children; but the day parents should act badly, and neglect the care of their children, the human race would enter on the high road to ruin. And so we see that even the best children do not entertain as lively and ardent a love for their parents as their parents do for them. The Creator could, undoubtedly, have communicated to children as passionate and tender a love for their parents as He has to the parents for them; but this was not necessary, and precisely for that reason He did not do so. And we may remark that mothers who require a higher degree of this love and tenderness have it to the limits of frenzy, as the Creator has thus armed them against the weariness which the first cares of infancy should naturally produce. It follows, then, that the failure of children to comply with their duties, does not come precisely from the fact that they are degenerate, for, as soon as they become parents, they act as their parents did; but from the fact that filial love is in itself less intense than parental love, exercises much less ascendancy and dominion over the heart, and hence is more easily smothered; it has less strength to surmount obstacles, and exercises less influence on the totality of our actions.

In the first answers you discovered fair pupils; in this one you meet with the young philosopher, who

begins to show himself, like a tender oak sapling among the lowly brushwood, destined at some future day to become the king of the forest.

§ IV.—*Necessity of elementary studies.*

Let it not be imagined, from what I have said, that I think it right that youth should be emancipated from elementary instruction; far from it, for I think that whoever has to learn a science, let his natural powers be never so great, should subject himself to this mortification, which may be regarded as the novitiate of letters. Some people wish to be excused from it on the ground that articles in dictionaries contain enough to enable a man to speak of everything while understanding nothing; but reason and experience tell us that such a method can only produce superficial blue-stockings.

In fact, there is in every science and profession an aggregate of primordial notions, names and expressions which can only be learned by studying an elementary work: so that even though there were no other considerations, the present one would be sufficient to demonstrate the drawbacks of taking any other road. Those primordial notions, names and expressions, should be treated with respect by a person who enters for the first time on the study of anything; for he should suppose that those who preceded him in this study, and invented those words, knew what they were doing. If the freshman distrusts his predecessors, if he hopes to be able to reform the science or profession, or, perhaps, radically change it, he should



at least reflect, that it is prudent to see what others have said, that it is rash to try to create everything himself, and that by refusing to avail himself of his neighbour's labours, he exposes himself to lose a great deal of time. The most wonderful mechanical engineer begins, perhaps, the study of his profession in an ordinary artisan's shop, and however great may be the hopes his brilliant dispositions inspire, he does not omit learning the names and uses of the tools he is to handle. In the course of time he will make several variations in them; he will construct them of more suitable material, he will change their form, and, perhaps, their very name; but for the present he must take them as he gets them, and exercise himself in handling them, till reflection and experience have pointed out to him their defects, and the improvements of which they are susceptible.

The advice given to those who commence the study of history is applicable to all classes of students: before you begin its study read a compendium. We may here quote the remarkable words of Bossuet in the dedicatory to his "*Discourse on Universal History*." He speaks of the necessity of studying history in a compendium, to avoid confusion and save trouble, and then he adds:—"We may compare this manner of exposing to view universal history, to the description of geographical maps: universal history is the general map, compared with the partial maps of each country and province. In the partial maps you see minutely what a kingdom or a province is in itself: in the universal maps you learn to connect these parts of the

world with the whole : in a word, you see the part which Paris or the Isle de France occupies in the kingdom, what the kingdom occupies in Europe, and Europe in the universe." Very well : the pointed and luminous comparison between the map of the world and partial maps holds in all branches of knowledge. In all there is an aggregate with which we must become acquainted, in order to comprehend the parts and to avoid confusion in arranging them. Even the ideas acquired without method are almost always incomplete, often inexact, and sometimes false ; but all these drawbacks are as nothing, compared with those which result from undertaking in the dark, without antecedent or guide, the study of a science. Elemental works, we may be told, are but a skeleton ; that is true ; but yet, they save time and labour : having the skeleton ready formed for you, it will be easy to correct its defects, to cover it with nerves, and muscles, and flesh, and to give it colour, motion, and life.

Between those who have studied a science in its principles, and those who have gathered some slight notions of it from encyclopædias and dictionaries there is always a marked difference which does not escape the experienced eye. The former are distinguished for precision of ideas and propriety of language ; the latter may display abundant and select knowledge, but on the moment least expected they make an egregious stumble which manifests their ignorant superficiality. (17.)

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## INVENTION.

§ I.—*What one should do who is devoid of the talent of invention.*

I THINK I have said enough about the methods of teaching and learning: I come now to speak of the method of invention.

When the elements of a science are once known, and a man reaches the age and position to dedicate himself to more extensive and profound studies, he has to follow less trodden paths, and to enter on more daring undertakings. If nature has not endowed him with the talent of invention, he must be content during life with the elemental method, but on a larger scale, of course. He requires guides, and the master-works will serve him as such. But he is not to think that he is condemned to blind servitude, and must never disagree with the authority of his masters; in the scientific and literary army discipline is not so severe as to prohibit the soldier from addressing certain observations to his officer.

§ II.—*Scientific authority.*

The men who are capable of raising a standard are very few; and it is better to enlist in the ranks of a qualified general than to go about like an insignificant free-lance, affecting the importance of a renowned leader.

In saying this it is not my intention to preach up authority in purely scientific and literary affairs: in

the whole course of this work I have proved sufficiently that I do not suffer from this weakness ; I merely wish to indicate a necessity of our understanding, which, being usually so weak, needs support. The ivy, by embracing a tree, ascends to a great height ; if it grew without help, it would never rise from the earth, and would be trodden under foot by the passers by. And, besides, the fact of making this observation, will not change the regular course of things ; and with it I have rather stated a fact than given a counsel. Yes, a fact ; for notwithstanding so much talk about independence, it is clearer than the light of day that such independence does not exist, that a large portion of humanity is guided by a few chiefs, and that these chiefs conduct it at their pleasure by the ways of truth or of error.

This is a fact of all countries and of all times—an indestructible fact, for it is founded on the very nature of man. The weak feel the superiority of the strong, and humble themselves in their presence ; genius is not the patrimony of the human race, it is a privilege granted to few : the possessor of it exercises an irresistible ascendant over others. It has been said with great truth that the masses have a tendency to despotism ; this comes from their feeling their incapacity to direct themselves, and they naturally seek a guide in consequence : what we find the case in war and politics is also true in science. In general its devotees are masses—are a vulgar herd, which, left to itself, would not know what to do, and, consequently, like popular groups, gathers round somebody who speaks



better than itself, and displays a knowledge it does not possess. Enthusiasm penetrates the learned populace also, and it applauds, and cries: "Hear, hear! . . . you know more than we do; you shall be our leader. . . ."

§ III.—*Modifications which scientific authority has suffered in our times.*

It might be believed that as knowledge has become generalised by the immense development of the Press, the phenomenon we have indicated has disappeared; but such is not the case: it has only become modified. When the leaders were few, when the command was in the hands of a limited number of schools, understandings in the world were like disciplined armies, and their dependence on someone was so patent that there could be no room for mistake. Quite a different thing happens now: the chiefs and the schools are more numerous; discipline has been relaxed; the soldiers pass from one camp to another; those go forward, these straggle behind; some fall out on the flanks, and engage in skirmishes, without instructions or orders from their officers. One would think the great armies have been broken up, and each one does what he pleases; but don't deceive yourself, the armies exist, in spite of all the disorder, and everyone knows the company to which he belongs: if he desert from one, he will join another; and when he finds himself pressed, he will fall back on the point where the principal body is ready to cover his retreat.

And if we should go into close accounts, we should

find that it is not altogether exact to say that the leaders of the present day are more numerous than formerly. If we formed a tree of scientific and literary classifications we should easily discover that in each genus there are very few standard-bearers, and that the multitude follows at their heels now as ever.

Have not the theatre and the novel a small number of *notable men*, whose works are imitated to nauseousness? Cannot politics, philosophy, and history, number a few chiefs, whose names are on everyone's lips, and whose opinions and language are adopted without questioning? Has not *independent* Germany her philosophical schools, as well defined and characterised as those of St. Thomas, Scotus, and Suarez could possibly be? What is the rabble of universalist philosophers in France but the humble disciples of Cousin?—and what was Cousin himself but the vicar of Hegel and Schelling? And does not his philosophy, which they are trying to introduce here, commence with magisterial tone, commanding respect and deference, as if it were a sacred ministry, whose sole aim was the conversion of the simple and the ignorant? Do the greater part of those who profess the philosophy of history, do more than recite passages from the works of Guizot, and a few other writers? Are not those who declaim about the lofty principles of legislation, constant plagiarists of Becaria and Filangieri? Do the utilitarians tell us anything, do you imagine, but what they have just read in Bentham? Have not the writers on constitutional law Benjamin Constant for ever in their month?

Let us, then, acknowledge a fact which stands out before us in such relief, and not flatter ourselves with having destroyed what is stronger than ourselves, but guard against its evil effects, as far as possible. If we have to avail ourselves of the lights of others, on account of the dimness of our own, let us not receive them with ignoble submission, nor abdicate our right of examining for ourselves, nor allow our enthusiasm for any man to carry us so far as to make us regard him as an infallible oracle. We should not attribute to the creature what is the peculiar property of the Creator.

§ IV.—*The talent of invention. Career of genius.*

If one's understanding is such that it can lead itself, if, on examining the works of great writers, it feels it can imitate them, and finds itself among them, not as a pigmy among giants, but as an equal among equals, then the method of invention is the one which suits it, then it should not limit itself to *knowing books*, but should strive *to know things*; it should not be content to follow the beaten paths, but should seek new and better ones of its own, which go straighter, and reach, if possible, higher and more inaccessible points. Let it not admit ideas without analysis, nor propositions without discussion, nor reasonings without examination, nor rules without test; let it make a science of its own, as much so as the blood of its veins, not the simple recital of what it has read, but the fruit of its observation and thought.

What rules should it observe? Those we have men

tioned before for a good thinker. To enter on details would be useless, and perhaps impossible. To line out a fixed march for genius is not less rash than to try to confine the expressions of an animated physiognomy within a miserable circle of measured movements. When you behold it tremulously enter on its gigantic career, do not address to it empty words, nor sterile counsels, nor lay down rules for it: say to it this only :—"Image of the Divinity, go forward to fulfil the destiny thy Creator has marked out for thee; forget not thy origin and thy end; thou spreadest thy wing, and knowest not whither thou goest; raise thy eyes to heaven and question thy Maker about it. He will manifest to thee His will; fulfil it thoroughly; for in its fulfilment are centered thy grandeur and thy glory." (18)

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## CHAPTER XIX.

THE UNDERSTANDING, THE HEART, AND THE IMAGINATION.

§ I.—*Discretion in the use of the faculties of the soul.*  
*Queen Dido. Alexander.*

I HAVE said (chap. xii.) that in order to know the truth in certain matters, it is necessary to display at one and the same time different faculties of the soul, among which I mentioned feeling. Now I will add, that though this is necessary when we treat of those truths whose nature consists in relation with feeling, as the beautiful or the tender, the melancholy or the sublime; it is not so, when the truth belongs to a dis-



tinct order, which has nothing in common with our faculty of feeling.

If I want to appreciate the whole merit of Virgil in the episode of Dido, I must not drily reason, but simply exercise my imagination and feel; but if I want to judge, in its moral aspect, the conduct of the queen of Carthage, I must get rid of all sentiment, and let cold reason decide in conformity with the eternal principles of virtue.

When I read Quintus Curtius, I admire the Macedonian hero, and I feel delight when I see him fearlessly dash through the Granicus, conquer in Arbela, pursue and annihilate Darius, and lord it over the East. In all this there is grandeur, there are touches which could not be duly appreciated, if one's heart were closed to all sentiment. The sublime narrative of the Sacred Text (1 Mach., chap. i.) cannot be estimated in its just value by a person who coldly analyses: "Now it came to pass, after that Alexander, the son of Philip the Macedonian, who first reigned in Greece, coming out of the land of Cethim, had overthrown Darius, King of the Persians and Medes, he fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth, and he went through even to the ends of the earth: and took spoils of many nations: *and the earth was quiet before him.* . . ." When one comes to this expression, the book falls from his hands, and his mind is filled with wonder and astonishment. A man in whose presence *the earth is quiet!* . . . In feeling the force of this image in a lively manner, we form the best idea possible of

the conquering hero. If I try to comprehend this truth by abstracting, and reasoning, and smothering my feelings, I shall not advance a step : I must forget all philosophy, be no more than man, and, leaving my fancy in full play, and my heart open, follow the son of Philip, who comes out of the land of Cethim, marches with gigantic strides to the extremity of the world, and contemplates the earth, which hushes in his presence.

But if I want to examine the justice and the utility of those conquests, then I must clip the wings of my imagination, smother my sentiments of admiration and enthusiasm, forget the youthful monarch, surrounded by his phalanxes, and towering among his warriors like Jupiter in the court of the gods : I must think of nothing but the eternal principles of reason, and the interests of humanity. If I allow my fancy free scope, and permit my heart to expand, in this examination, I shall surely make mistakes ; for the radiant aureola of glory, which encircles the conqueror's brow, will blind me, and I cannot condemn him ; it will incline me to forgive him everything for his genius and heroism, particularly when I remember, that in the height of his glory, at the age of thirty-three years, *he falls down on his bed and knows that he is dying.—Et post hæc decidit in lectum, et cognovit quia moreretur.* (Mach. lib. i. cap. i.)

§ II.—*Influence of the heart on the head. Causes and effects.*

At every step we observe the great influence which our passions exercise on our conduct ; this truth is so

well known that it requires no proof. But the same attention has not been paid to the effects of the passions on the understanding, even with respect to truths which have no connexion with our actions. This, perhaps, is one of the most important points of the art of thinking, and for that reason I will treat of it with some minuteness.

If our soul were endowed with intelligence alone, if it could contemplate objects, without being affected by them, it would happen, that if the objects remained unchanged we should see them always in the same manner. If the eye is the same, the distance the same, the point of view the same, the quantity and direction of light the same, the impression we receive must ever be the same. But if any one of these conditions be changed, the impression will be changed: the object will appear larger or smaller, the colours more or less vivid, or perhaps completely different; its figure will suffer considerable modifications, or perhaps be converted into another quite distinct. The moon has always the same figure, and yet she constantly presents to our view a variety of phases; a rough, unequal rock looks at a distance like the dome of some superb edifice; and a monument, which, when viewed closely, is a marvel of art, looks at a great distance like an irregular boulder, deposited by chance on the hill-side.

The same thing happens in the understanding: the objects are sometimes the same, and yet they appear very different, not only to different persons, but often to the same person; and to effect this change no great

length of time is required. Perhaps an instant is sufficient to transform the scene; we are now transported to new ground; a curtain is raised, and all has varied; everything has assumed new forms and colours; one would say that the objects have been touched by the wand of a magician.

And what is the cause? The cause consists in the fact, that the heart has been brought into play, that it is we who have changed, and not the objects. Just as when we sail out of port, the town and coast appear to fly away quickly, whilst in reality nothing has moved but the ship.

And mind, this change is not realised solely when we are deeply moved, and our passions are profoundly excited. In the midst of apparent calm we often suffer this alteration in our mode of seeing, an alteration all the more dangerous, the more occult the causes which produce it. The passions of the human heart have been divided into certain classes, but whether it is that all have not been included in the philosophical classification, or that each of them involves many others, which may be regarded as its daughters, or as transformations of itself, the fact is, that if one attentively observe the variety and gradations of our sentiments, or feelings, he will believe he is witnessing the changing illusions of a magic lantern. There are moments of calm and of tempest, of sweetness and of bitterness, of suavity and of harshness, of valour and of cowardice, of strength and of dejection, of enthusiasm and of contempt, of joy and of sadness, of pride and



of humility, of hope and of despair, of patience and of resentment, of activity and of prostration, of expansion and of narrowness, of generosity and of avarice, of pardon and of vengeance, of indulgence and of severity, of pleasure and of discomfort, of satisfaction and of weariness, of gravity and of light-heartedness, of elevation and of frivolity, of seriousness and of fun, of . . . but where should I stop if I enumerated all the varieties of dispositions which the soul experiences? Not more inconstant and changing is the sea flogged by the hurricanes, played on by the zephyr, rippled by the breath of the aurora, motionless with the weight of a leaden atmosphere, gilded by the rays of the rising sun, silvered with the beams of the queen of night, studded like lacework with the stars of the firmament, wan as the cheek of the dead, bright as the glow of the fire-fly, gloomy and dark as the mouth of the tomb.

§ III.—*Eugene. His transformations in four-and-twenty hours.*

It was a lovely morning in April; Eugene had risen early, had mechanically reached his hand to the book-stand, and taking down a volume, without opening it, leaned over the balcony of his window, which commanded a charming landscape. What a beautiful morning! What an enchanting hour! The sun is mounting the horizon, bathing the strips of cloud with subdued light, tinting them with glowing colours, and shedding beams in all directions, like golden locks waving over the brow of childhood. The earth puts

on her richest robes, the nightingale warbles in the neighbouring wood, and the farmer, on his way to his daily toil, salutes the god of day with songs of happiness and love. Eugene contemplates the scene with ineffable delight. His tranquil mind yields to the influence of soft and pleasurable emotions. He enjoys perfect health, he has an ample fortune: his family affairs are in a favourable state, and every one about him tries to make him happy. His heart is agitated by no violent passion; the previous night he slept profoundly, and did not awaken till the dawn of morning, and he now awaits the coming of the proper hour to begin the ordinary course of his peaceful labours.

At last he opens the book: it is a novel of romance. An unfortunate being, whom the world did never understand, curses society and the whole human race, curses earth and heaven, curses the past, the present, and the future, curses God, curses himself; and, wearied of looking on a cold and gloomy sun, on a musty and haggard earth; wearied of dragging out an existence which weighs heavy on his heart, which oppresses—which chokes it, as the executioner's rope does the neck of his victim, he determines to put an end to his days. Behold him! Now he is on the brink of the fatal precipice, now is written in his pocket-book the word *Good-bye*; he turns around his dishevelled head, his face is pallid as death, his eyes sunken and bloodshot, his whole countenance disturbed. Before consummating the fearful act, he remains a moment silent, he reflects on nature, on the

destiny of man, on the injustice of society. "This is exaggeration," says Eugene, impatiently; "in the world there is a good deal of evil, but it is not all bad. Virtue is not yet exiled from the earth; I know several persons who could not be accounted criminals, without atrocious calumny. There is injustice, it is true; but injustice is not the rule of society; and if we examine it we shall find that great crimes are monstrous exceptions. The greater part of the acts committed against virtue proceed from our frailty; they injure ourselves, but they do no harm to others; they do not frighten the world, and in the majority of instances, are perpetrated without its knowledge. Nor is it true that happiness is so impossible; the unfortunate are many, but this does not all come from injustice and cruelty; in the very nature of things is found the reason of these evils, which, besides, are not so numerous and black as they are painted here. I cannot understand the way these men look on things; they complain of everything and everybody, they blaspheme God, they calumniate humanity, and when they rise to philosophical considerations, their soul wanders through a region of night, where it finds nothing but disheartening chaos. On returning from these excursions, it can only pronounce the words *damnation* and *crime*. It is insupportable; it is as false in philosophy as unbecoming in literature." Thus spoke Eugene, shutting the book; and, lifting his mind from these sad reflections, he again turned to enjoy the beauties of nature.

Time flies by, and the hour to commence his work

arrives ; and that day appears to be one of misfortunes. Everything goes wrong ; one would say that the maledictions of the suicide had reached Eugene. A fearfully bad humour is over the house the whole morning : N. has passed a wretched night, M. rises with a headache ; and everyone is as bitter as green fruit. Eugene feels the influence of the unhealthy atmosphere which surrounds him ; but he still preserves something of the soft emotions of the rising sun.

Clouds are gathering, and the weather will not be as fine as it promised in the early morning. Eugene goes out about his business, the rain begins to fall, the umbrella is not sufficient to protect the passenger, and in a narrow street, full of mud, Eugene meets a horse galloping, without considering the hail of dirt he scatters with his hoofs, bespattering the wayfarers from head to foot. He cannot go on, he must return home, annoyed and irritated, not cursing in so high tones as the fellow of the romance, but praying no good prayers on horse and rider. Life is not now so beautiful ; but yet it is not insupportable ; philosophy is growing clouded like the weather, but there is still a ray of sunshine. The destinies of humanity are not quite desperate, but notwithstanding, the misfortunes of men are annoying. It certainly would be more agreeable if the faces in one's house were not so long, if the streets were a little cleaner, or, when dirty, if horses would not gallop past foot-passengers.

One misfortune brings another. When Eugene gets himself cleaned up, he returns to his friend's



house, who is to give him some satisfactory news about a matter of importance. He is received coldly, his friend tries to avoid all conversation about the business, and feigns pressing engagements which oblige him to postpone the subject to another day. Eugene takes his leave, low-spirited and suspicious, and racks his brain to solve the mystery. A felicitous chance runs him against another friend, who explains the whole affair, and warns him not to sleep on it, if he does not want to be the victim of the most atrocious perfidy. He runs to take his measures, he appeals to others who can tell him the real state of affairs; they explain the treason, they pity his misfortune, but all agree it is now too late. The loss is heavy, and irreparable; the perfidious friend took his measures so well, that the unfortunate Eugene never saw the net in which he was involved. To appeal to the courts of law is impossible, for the matter brooks no delay; to accuse the wretch of his roguery were poor satisfaction; by taking vengeance nothing is cured, and the evils may be increased. There is nothing for it but resignation. Eugene goes home, enters his study, surrenders himself to all the grief which frustrated hopes and an inevitable change in social position entail. The book is still on his table, its sight brings back his reflections of the morning, and he interiorly exclaims: "Oh! how wretchedly mistaken you were, when you thought the infernal pictures drawn of the world by those fellows were exaggerated. It is all true; they are perfectly right; it is horrible, desperate, but it is the fact. Man is a depraved

animal, society a cruel stepmother, I should rather say, an executioner, who delights in torturing us, who insults us, laughs at our miseries, whilst he loads us with infamy, and slays us. There is no good faith, no friendship, no gratitude, no generosity, there is no virtue on earth: all is egotism, interested views, perfidy, treason, falsehood. Why has life been given us for such suffering? Where is Providence, where the justice of God? Where . . . ”

Thus far did Eugene arrive, and as our readers see, the soft, and pleasant, and judicious philosophy of the morning was converted into satanic thoughts, and the inspirations of Beelzebub. No change had occurred in the world, everything followed its ordinary course, and it could not be said that either man or society had become worse, or that the destiny of either had changed, because an unforeseen misfortune had happened to Eugene. It is he who has changed: his sentiments are now different; his heart, filled with bitterness, drops gall on his understanding, and the latter, obedient to the inspirations of pain and desperation, takes revenge on the world by painting it in repugnant colours. And do not think that Eugene acts in bad faith; he sees everything as he describes it; just as he did this morning, when he used language so different.

We left Eugene in the terrible *where*—which would undoubtedly have ended in a fearful blasphemy, if his monologue had not been interrupted by the arrival of a gentleman, who, with all the freedom of a friend, enters his study unannounced.

Come, my dear Eugene, I am aware you have been badly treated.

Just as I might have expected !

It was great perfidy.

Thus wags the world.

The business is to remedy it.

Remedy ?—impossible—

Easily.

Well that is good !

The whole thing consists in handing out more cash, taking advantage of the post, and getting the upper-hand.

But how am I to hand out cash ? His calculations are built on the impossibility I labour under of doing so, and as he knew the state of my affairs, produced by the heavy payments I have made in this cursed business, he is pretty certain I cannot get the upper-hand.

And if the funds were forthcoming ?

Don't be dreaming—

Well now, look here ; a few friends of us had met about that business you are aware of ; we heard what happened you, and the disaster you were about to suffer. You may imagine the profound impression it produced on me : having asked the members for permission to abandon my part in the project, that I might come and place my resources at your disposal, they all instantly followed my example : all said they would willingly run the risk of postponing their operations, and sacrificing their profit, in order to get you out of this bad business.

But I cannot consent . . .

Don't be a fool . . .

And if those gentlemen, whom I have not even the pleasure of knowing . . .

Come, no nonsense ; prepare for the post ; I am off, but in this pocket-book you shall find all you need. Good-bye, Eugene.

The pocket-book has fallen beside the fatal volume : Eugene is ashamed of having anathematized all humanity, without exception ; the approach of post hour prevents his philosophising, but he feels his philosophy has taken a turn for the better. To-morrow the sun will rise as beautiful and brilliant as to-day ; the nightingale will warble in the deep foliage, the farmer will go to his labours, and Eugene will see things as he did before his desperate adventures. In twenty-four hours, which certainly have produced no alteration in nature, or in society, Eugene's philosophy has travelled over an immense space, and returned, like the stars, to its starting point.

§ IV.—*Mr. Marceline. His political changes.*

Mr. Marceline has just come out from the election booths, in which both sides struggled desperately. Muscular strength was well represented in them ; sticks were used, blows were struck ; the chairman's feeble voice was drowned in the wild confusion created by lungs of bronze. Mr. Marceline is on the losing side, and he has had to seek safety in flight. Of course he was not wanting in courage ; oh, no ; but prudence is the better part of valour.

The disagreeable impression will not be blotted out



for some time, and it has gone far to destroy his Liberal ideas. "Don't deceive yourselves, gentlemen," he says in a tone of the most profound conviction : " the whole thing is a farce—an absurdity ; it is a bit of madness to try it ; there is no argument like a strong arm ; absolutism has its drawbacks, but of two evils choose the less. Representative government—the government of enlightened reason and free will—looks well in the pages of works on constitutional law, and in leading articles ; but in reality there is nothing in it but intrigue, dishonesty, and, above all, impertinence and audacity. I am thoroughly cured of my fit of wild dreams."

In consequence of the disturbance, the military authorities assume an imposing aspect, proclaim a state of siege, and suspend the Habeas Corpus Act ; the rioters are alarmed, and the city recovers its calm. Mr. Marceline may take his daily stroll in peace ; there is perfect security by night and day ; and the excited elector begins to gradually forget the scene of the groans, and sticks, and blows.

In the meantime he has to make a journey, and requires a passport. At the entrance to the police office, there is a numerous guard of soldiers. Mr. Marceline is about entering by the first door he meets, but the grenadier on duty cries : *Back*. He goes to another, and the sentinel shouts, in a loud voice, *Take down your cloak*. He had it folded over his mouth ; he removes it, and pushes on. Then the servants of the office, affecting official rigidity, say to him, very discourteously, " Don't be in such a hurry, man, take your turn." In at last, the official asks him a number of

questions, and looks at him from head to foot, as if he suspected that poor Mr. Marceline was one of the leaders in the riot the other day. At last he gives him the passport with disdainful air, lowers his head, and does not condescend to return our traveller's salute as he is leaving.

The sufferer goes away in disgust, never dreaming that this scene could in any way modify his political opinions. He joins his friends, the conversation turns on the late events, and by degrees reaches the region of the theories of government. Mr. Marceline is not now the absolutist he was the other day. "It is scandalous," says one of the bystanders, "I cannot recall it without protesting against such tricks!" "True," answers Mr. Marceline, "but there are drawbacks in everything; the fact is, absolutism does afford security and peace, but still it has its own queer things. Men should not be governed with a club; and self-dignity should not be forgotten." "But do you mean to say it is forgotten by those who live under an absolute government?"—"I do not say so; but I do say we should not rashly condemn the representative system; for no one can deny that absolutists have a certain degree of rigidity, which infects the humblest official servitor."

The reader will see that Mr. Marceline's mind is inadvertently running on the scene in the passport office; the rude *back* of the grenadier, the sentinel's *take down your cloak*, and the discourtesy of the servants and the official, have succeeded in introducing a considerable reformation into his political ideas.

Unfortunately the police officer had carried his suspicions very far. After filling the passport he felt bound to report to his superior that a person had presented himself, whom he suspected, from certain signs, to be a party for whom the authorities were on the look-out. Without knowing how, at the very moment he was entering the stage coach, Mr. Marceline is detained, conducted to prison, and kept there for some days, in spite of the strong presumptions in his favour—his decent dress, his well-kept person, and his peaceful appearance. This was the last straw required to break the back of his absolutist convictions, already bent by the affair of the passport. The roughness of his capture, the discomfort of the prison, the offensiveness and coarseness of the examination, were enough, and more, to make Mr. Marceline leave prison with all his Liberalism renewed, with all his old affection for the Bill of Rights, with all his hatred of arbitrariness, with all his aversion from military rule, with his old vehement desire to see personal security and all other constitutional guarantees become a reality. His political faith is just at present very lively; but as to its stability, just wait till new elections come round, or till he is again alarmed by a riotous street mob. I am afraid his new convictions will scarcely be proof against this severe trial.

§ v.—*Anselm. His variations about the pain of death.*

Anselm is a young man given to the study of the higher questions of legislation, and he has just read an eloquent speech against the pain of death. The

irreparableness of the condemnation of the innocent, the repugnance and horribleness of the punishment, even though the real culprit suffers, the inutility of such chastisement in extirpating or diminishing crime—all this is painted in lively colours, and with magnificent touches, and is backed up with pathetic details and anecdotes which make one shudder. The young man is profoundly moved, he imagines that he meditates, and yet he does nothing but *feel*; he believes himself a philosopher who judges, when he is only a man who *pities*. In his conception the pain of death is useless; and even if it be not unjust, its inutility is enough to render its application highly criminal. This is a point on which society should seriously reflect, in order to rid itself of a cruel custom, bequeathed to it by less enlightened generations. The young convert's convictions are all that could be desired; they are founded on social and humane reasons, and apparently nothing can eradicate them.

Our young philosopher talks the matter over to a magistrate of profound learning and wide experience, who holds that the abolition of the pain of death is a dream, which can never be realised. He shows, in the first place, the principles of justice on which it is founded; he paints, in lively colours, the fatal consequences which its abolition would entail, he depicts how men, lost to all shame, would mock at any minor punishment, he speaks of the obligation of society to protect the weak and the innocent, he mentions fearful cases in which the cruelty of the culprit and the sufferings of the victim stand out in bold relief. The



young man's heart experiences new impressions; a holy indignation swells his breast, his zeal for justice is inflamed; his feeling soul is identified and elevated with that of the magistrate; he is proud to think that he can crush down his sentiments of unjust compassion, and sacrifice them on the altar of the glorious interests of humanity; and, imagining himself already sitting in the tribunal, clothed with the toga of the judge, he thinks he hears his heart say: "Yes, you also would know how to be just; you also would know how to conquer yourself; you also would know how, if it were necessary, to obey the inspirations of your conscience, and with your hand on your heart, and your eyes turned to God, to pronounce the fatal sentence in the interests of justice."

§ VI.—*Some observations to guard against the evil influence of the heart.*

There is nothing more important in the matter of thinking well, than to become thoroughly acquainted with the alterations produced in our mode of seeing things, by the disposition of mind in which we may at the moment find ourselves. And here we discover the reason why it is so difficult to rise above the times we live in, our own peculiar circumstances, the prejudices of education, and the influence of our interests. Hence it is so hard for us to act and think conformably to the prescriptions of the eternal law, to comprehend what rises above the material world, to sacrifice the present to the future. What we have at the moment before our eyes, what affects us at the present instant,

is what commonly decides our acts and our opinions. The man who wants to think well must accustom himself to be on his guard, and to keep this most important truth constantly before him; he must habituate himself to self-concentration, and must frequently ask himself: "Is your mind sufficiently tranquil? Are you not agitated by some passion which changes the look of things to you? Are you not chained by some secret affection, which, without violently tossing your heart, softly subdues it, by means of a fascination you scarcely notice? In what you now think, judge, foresee, or conjecture, are you acting under the influence of some recent impression, which, by turning your ideas topsy-turvy, shows you objects in a false light? Did you think, in this way, a few days—a few moments—ago? When did you begin to modify your opinions? Is it not since some agreeable or disagreeable, favourable or adverse, event has changed your situation? Have you studied the matter better, have you acquired new data, or have you only some new interests? Which have moved you—reasons or desires? Now that you are agitated by some passion, domineered over by your affections, you judge in this way, and you think your judgment right; but if you translate yourself in imagination to a different situation, if you suppose that some time has elapsed, do you believe you would look on things in the same way, and in the same light?

Let it not be imagined that this practice is impossible; anyone can test it by experience, and he shall see that it serves as an admirable guide in the direc-

tion of his understanding and the regulation of his conduct. The stimulation of our affections does not commonly go so far as to completely deprive us of the use of reason; for such cases we can prescribe nothing, for then there is mental derangement, whether passing or permanent. What the passions ordinarily do is to obfuscate our understanding, and pervert our judgment, without completely blinding the former, or destroying the latter. In the depths of the soul there is always a light, which grows dim, but does not go out; and whether it is to burn with more or less brilliancy in critical moments, depends, in great measure, on the habit of attending to it, of reflecting on our situation, of knowing how to doubt of our present aptitude to form a correct opinion, of not taking the sparks of our heart for a light to guide us, and of considering that they are only calculated to dazzle us.

§ VII.—*The friend converted into a monster.*

That our passions do considerably blind us is a truth well known to everybody. What we want is not the abstract, vague principle, but a constant attention to its effects, a practical, minute knowledge of the disorder which this malign influence may produce in our understanding; and this is not acquired without painful labour, and long exercise. The examples given before sufficiently manifest this truth, on whose exposition we are engaged; but still I think it may be useful to illustrate it with a few more.

We have a friend whose fine qualities enchant us, whose merit we uphold on all possible occasions, and of whose affection for us we cannot doubt. He denies

us some favour we ask of him, he does not take sufficient interest in some person we recommend to him, he receives us some time with coldness, he gives us a short answer, or affords us some other motive for resentment. From that moment we experience a notable change in our opinion of him, perhaps a complete revolution. His talents are not now so superior, his will is not at all what it was, his disposition is not nearly so sweet, nor his heart so good, nor his intercourse so agreeable, nor his manners so affable ; in all we find a great deal to correct and amend ; we were completely deceived in him ; this thing that has occurred has raised the curtain, and dissipated the illusion ; and it will be well if the model man has not suddenly been converted into a monster.

Is it probable that we were so much deceived as all this ? No ; but it is probable that our former affection blinded us to his defects ; and that our present resentment exaggerates or invents them. Could we possibly have believed that our friend could not deny us a favour, or should not act negligently in some matter, or could not in a moment of bad humour, forget his ordinary affability and courtesy ? We certainly could not think so ; and if we had been asked the question, we would have answered that he was only a man, and consequently subject to frailty, but that this did not diminish his excellent qualities. Well, why such exaggeration now ? The motive is evident : we feel wounded ; and what thinks and judges, is not the understanding enlightened with more data, but the heart, irritated, exasperated, perhaps thirsting for vengeance.



Do you want to see what our new judgment is worth? Well, here is a simple way. Let us imagine that the disagreeable incident did not occur to us, but to someone perfectly indifferent to us. In this case, even though the circumstances be the same, even though the relations between the offending friend and the person offended be as affectionate and close as between him and us, will we draw the same consequences from the fact? It is certain we will not: we shall see he has acted badly, we shall tell him so perhaps with entire frankness, we shall have discovered a bad quality in his disposition, which had escaped us; but for all that we will not shut our eyes to the other good ones which adorn him, we will not consider him unworthy of our appreciation, nor will we break the bonds of friendship which unite us. Now he will not be a man undeserving of all praise, but simply a person endowed with a great deal that is good, but subject to failings. And these variations of judgment will occur, even supposing that our friend is really culpable, even if we remember that our passion or interest may easily have blinded us, making us overlook the serious and just motives which impelled him to act in the way we reprehend, and prescind from circumstances we knew well enough—perhaps our own conduct among them—and, finally, perverting our judgment in such a way, that what was a fair and reasonable action on his part appears to us the height of injustice, perfidy, and ingratitude. How often would our judgments be rectified, if we looked on the matter with a calm mind, and as an affair which in no way interested us!

§ VIII.—*Unsteady variations of political judgments.*

If our political friends, or those we are most inclined to, be in power, and take some illegal measure or course, we say at once—"Circumstances are stronger than men or laws: Government cannot always adjust itself to strict legality. Sometimes the thing that is most legal is most illegitimate, and besides, governments, as well as individuals and peoples, have an instinct of self-preservation, so pressing, that in its presence all considerations and all rights must yield." If the infraction of the law be openly committed, and plainly admitted, alleging necessity as the excuse;—"Well done," we say, "candour is one of the best qualities of government. What is the good of deceiving the people, and trying to govern with inventions and lies?" If the actual breach of the law has been avoided, but avoided by a captious interpretation of it, quite contrary to the spirit of the law:—"It was a splendid idea," we say; "at least the world sees here so profound a respect for the law, that even in the last extremity it is not trampled on. Legality is a sacred thing, against which no attempt should ever be made; and a government which, when unable to observe the spirit, leaves the forms intact, does no small thing. If there be any arbitrariness in it, at least it does not show itself in public with the irritating rod of despotism in its hand; and this is absolutely necessary for the liberty of a people."

Are the men in power our adversaries? Ah! then the matter is quite different: "The illegality was not

necessary ; and even if it were, the law is before everything. Where shall we stop, if we give to a government the faculty of breaking it when it thinks proper ? Why, that would be the same as to authorize despotism, for the most despotic ruler alleges urgent necessity for any infraction of the law of which he is guilty."

Has the government openly admitted the breach of the law ? " This is intolerable," we exclaim : " this is only to add insult to injury ; why if they had only tried to cloak it in some way . . . it is the height of impudence, it is the ostentation of the most repugnant arbitrariness. Nobody may trouble his head with roundabouts hereafter ; why the autocrat of all the Russias could do no more."

Has the government endeavoured to save the forms, and observe a certain appearance of legality ? " No despotism," we exclaim, " is as bad as that which is wielded in the name of the law ; the infraction is not the less ugly, because dressed up in the garb of hypocrisy. When a government, in trying circumstances, oversteps the law, and openly admits it, it appears to ask pardon of the public with its confession, and to give a kind of guarantee that the excess will not be repeated ; but to commit illegalities under the shadow of the law itself, is to profane it—is to abuse the patience of the public—is to open a door to all sorts of outrages. If we do not respect the spirit of the law, we may do as we wish, with the law staring us in the face ; we have only to lay hold of some ambiguous word, to barefacedly contradict all the views of the legislator."

§ IX.—*Dangers of much sensibility. Men of great talents. Poets.*

There are errors so marked, there are judgments so manifestly stamped by passion, that they can deceive only one blinded by it. The great difficulty does not lie in such cases as these; it lies in those others which are more disguised, as the motive which has falsified them is hidden. Unfortunately, men of high talent are very subject to the influence of these hidden motives. Gifted commonly with exquisite sensibility, they receive lively impressions, which act strongly on the course of their ideas and decide their opinions. Their penetrating understanding easily finds reasons in support of what they wish to defend, and their words and writings exercise a fascinating ascendant over other men.

This must undoubtedly be the cause of the changeableness we remark in men of recognised genius; to-day they praise what to-morrow they condemn; what is an undoubted dogma in their eyes to-day, to-morrow is a miserable prejudice. In the very same work, perhaps, they contradict themselves in a glaring manner, and they lead you on to consequences which you should never have suspected were reconcilable with their principles. You will be quite mistaken if you imagine that these strange anomalies come from want of sincerity: the author has defended the affirmative and negative with profound conviction; for this conviction, without his knowing it, flowed from lively, excited feeling; when his intellect luxuriated



in thoughts and conceptions, admirable in their beauty and brilliancy, it was only the slave of his heart ; but a clever, ingenious slave, which humoured the caprices of its mistress with exquisite tact.

Poets—real poets—that is, those men to whom the Creator has given elevated conception, creative fancy, and a heart of fire, are more exposed than others to be carried away by the impressions of the moment. I will not deny them the faculty of rising to the highest regions of thought, nor do I say it is impossible for them to moderate the flight of their genius, and to acquire the habit of judging correctly ; but to do so, they undoubtedly need a larger amount of reflection and greater strength of character, than the ordinary run of men.

§ X.—*The poet and the monastery.*

A poet in his travels passing through a solitary region, hears the sound of a bell, which arouses him from the meditations in which he is absorbed. His soul is destitute of faith, but is not inaccessible to religious inspirations. That pious sound in the heart of the wilderness suddenly changes the state of his mind, and buries it in deep and serious melancholy. Soon he descries the silent mansion, where innocence and repentance seek an asylum far removed from the world. He arrives, alights and knocks with mingled respect and curiosity ; and on crossing the threshold of the monastery he meets a venerable old man, of serene aspect and courteous and affable manners. The traveller is received with affectionate cordiality, is

conducted to the church, to the cloisters, to the library—to every place there is anything to note or admire. The old monk keeps by his side, sustains the conversation with discernment and good taste, is quite tolerant of the opinions of the traveller, is ready to please him in every way, and never leaves him, till the hour strikes for the fulfilment of his duties. The traveller's heart is softly moved: the silence interrupted only by the chanting of psalms, the multitude of religious objects, which awaken recollection and piety, united to the estimable qualities and the goodness and condescension of his venerable companion, inspire his heart with sentiments of religion, admiration, and gratitude, which fill his whole soul. Bidding good-bye to his host, he goes away buried in thought, and bears with him pleasant recollections which he shall not forget for some time. If while in this disposition of mind, our poet is pleased to mingle with the narrative of his travels some reflections on religious institutions, what do you think he shall say? Ah! there is no difficulty in guessing. To his mind the institution will be concentrated in that monastery, and the monastery personified in the monk whose memory enchants him. You may reckon, then, on an eloquent testimony in favour of religious institutions, an anathema against the philosophers who condemn them, an imprecation against the revolutions which destroy them, a tear of sorrow over their ruins and their ashes.

But woe to the monastery and all religious institutions if the traveller should have met a host of bad personal appearance, of dry and distasteful conver-

sation, incapable of appreciating literary and artistic beauties, and dissatisfied at having to accompany the curious over the house! In the poet's eyes the disagreeable monk would have been the personification of the institution; and in chastisement for his unfavourable reception, this kind of life would be condemned in all the moods and tenses, and accused of lowering the mind, of cramping the heart, of rendering men unfit for society, of making them coarse and disagreeable, and of producing innumerable evils, without the counterpoise of a single good. And yet the reality of things would have been just the same in one supposition as the other, with the accidental difference of the more or less satisfactory reception of the traveller.

§ XI.—*Necessity of having fixed ideas.*

The preceding reflections show the necessity of having fixed ideas and formed opinions about matters of moment; and if this be not possible, the great importance of abstaining from improvising them, and giving way to sudden inspirations. It has been said, that great thoughts spring from the heart; and it might be added, that great errors also come from it. If experience did not render this palpable, reason would suffice to demonstrate it. The heart does not think or judge, it only feels; but feeling is a powerful spring which moves the soul, and develops and multiplies its faculties. When the understanding travels by the path of truth and that which is good, noble and pure sentiments contribute to give it strength

and buoyancy; but ignoble and depraved sentiments may pervert the best understanding. Even good sentiments, if too highly excited, may lead us into deplorable errors.

§ XII.—*Duties of oratory, poetry, and the fine arts.*

From all this spring serious considerations about the proper use of oratory, and in general of all the arts which reach the intellect by the channel of the heart, or at least employ it as a powerful auxiliary. Painting, sculpture, music, poetry and literature in all its parts, have strict duties, which are too often forgotten. Truth and virtue are the two objects they should aim at: truth for the understanding, virtue for the heart—this is what they should supply to man by means of the inspirations with which they enchant him. If they aim at any other mark, if they limit themselves to the simple production of pleasure, they are sterile as far as good is concerned, but fruitful in evil.

The artist who only aims at flattering the passions by corrupting morals, is a man who abuses his talents, and forgets the sublime mission committed to him by the Creator, when He bestowed on him the privileged faculties which assure his ascendant over his fellow-men; the orator who, by availing himself of the beauties of diction, and his power to move the affections and swell the fancy, endeavours to propagate wrong opinions, is a downright impostor, no less culpable than one who employs means, perhaps more repugnant, but much less dangerous. It is not lawful



to persuade, when it is not lawful to convince : when conviction is a deceit, persuasion is a perfidy. This doctrine is strict, but it is true : the dictates of reason must necessarily be severe, when they are adjusted to the prescriptions of the eternal law, which is also severe, because just and immutable.

We infer from what we have said, that writers or orators gifted with splendid qualities to interest and seduce, are a real public calamity when they employ them in defence of error. What is the good of brilliancy if it only serve to dazzle and destroy ? Modern nations have forgotten these truths when they re-established popular eloquence among them, which caused so much injury to ancient republics ; in the deliberative assemblies where decisions are come to on the great interests of society, no other voice should be heard than that of clear, sober, austere reason. Truth is ever the same ; the reality of things is not changed because the enthusiasm of the assembly and of the spectators has been excited, and the voting decided by the accents of a fiery orator. Is that which is defended the truth or is it not, is what is proposed useful or not ? This should be the only thing to be attended to ; all else is to wander from the subject, is to forget the end of all deliberation, is to sport with the great interests of society, is to sacrifice them to the childish prurience of displaying oratorical gifts, and to the miserable vanity of gaining applause.

It has been observed that all assemblies, and particularly in the beginning of revolutions, partake of the spirit of invasion, and are distinguished for their

wild resolutions. The session begins, perhaps, auspiciously; but suddenly it takes a dangerous turn; men's minds are heated and blinded, and their excitement rises rapidly, till it approaches the bounds of frenzy; and a meeting of men, who would separately have been reasonable, is converted into a mob of madmen. The cause is obvious; the impression of the moment is lively, preponderates and lords it over everything; through sympathy, natural to man, it is propagated like an electric fluid, and in its course acquires velocity and force; what was at first but a spark, in a few moments is a fearful conflagration.

Time, undeceptions, and sad experience teach nations some lessons, corking up their sensibility, and rendering oratorical fascination less dangerous: sad remedy for evil—the repetition of its injuries! But as it is impossible to change the heart of man, the illustrious orators, who employ in defence of truth and justice the same arms used by others in behalf of error and crime, will be worthy of all glory and praise. Beside the poison, Providence generally places the antidote.

§ XIII.—*Illusion caused by thoughts dressed up in images.*

Besides the danger of erring, which the movement of the affections brings with it, there is another, perhaps less regarded, but yet of great transcendence, and it is that of thoughts clothed in a brilliant image. The effect produced by this artifice is unspeakable: such a thought, though but a very superficial one, passes for a profound truth, thanks to its grave and

philosophical disguise; such another, which, if presented naked, would be a vulgarity, hides its plebeian origin in gaudy adornments; and a proposition which, if enunciated drily, would at once appear inexact or false, or would be an evident absurdity, is reckoned among truths which admit of no doubt, if it be ingeniously covered with a veil.

I have said that the dangers on this head are of great transcendence, because it is a common defect of profound and sententious authors; and as their words are listened to with the more respect, the stronger the tone of conviction with which they are expressed, the result is, that the incautious reader accepts as an undoubted axiom, or as a maxim of eternal truth, what is often nothing more than a dream of the writer's, or a snare laid for the simplicity of the incautious. (19.)

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## CHAPTER XX.

### PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

§ I.—*In what philosophy of history consists.. Difficulty of acquiring it.*

I DO not here treat of history under its critical, but solely under its philosophical, aspect. What relates to the simple investigation of facts is explained in chap. xi.

What is the best way to comprehend the spirit of an age, to form clear and exact ideas of its character, to penetrate the causes of the events which occurred in it, and to point out the results of each?

This is equivalent to asking what is the best method of acquiring the true philosophy of history.

Will it be by the choice of the best authors? But which are the best? Who will assure us that they are not guided by passion? Who will go bail for their impartiality? How many have written history in the way necessary to teach us its philosophy? The majority of histories are reduced to the description of battles, negotiations, palace intrigues, political forms; we get no portrait of the individual, with his ideas, his affections, his necessities, his tastes, his caprices, his customs; we are told nothing which puts before us the interior life of families and of peoples; nothing which in the study of history makes us comprehend the march of humanity. They always deal with politics, that is, with what is superficial; always with what is apparent and noisy, never with the hidden life of society, the nature of things, nor with those events which, though removed from sight, are yet of the utmost importance.

At the present time this vacuum is acknowledged, and writers endeavour to fill it up. No one writes history now, without trying to philosophise about it. This, though in itself very good, has one drawback, which is, that instead of the true philosophy of history we often get nothing but the philosophy of the historian. Better not philosophise at all than philosophise badly; if I pervert history in trying to examine it profoundly, it were preferable I had confined myself to the system of names and dates.



§ II.—*A means of advancing in the philosophy of history is indicated.*

It is absolutely necessary to read histories, and for want of better we must be content with those we have ; but I am inclined to think that this study is insufficient to learn the philosophy of history. There is a better one, which, if made with discernment, produces most satisfactory results—the immediate study of the monuments of the age. I say *immediate*, or we should not be content with what a historian tells us of them, but should see them with our own eyes.

But this labour, I shall be told, is rather troublesome, impossible for many, difficult for all. I do not deny the force of this observation ; but I hold that, in many cases, the method I propose saves time and pains. The sight of some edifice, the reading of some document, a fact, a word, apparently insignificant, and on which the historian has not dwelt, speaks to us more clearly, more truly, and more exactly, than he with all his disquisitions.

A historian tries to paint to me the simplicity of patriarchal customs ; he collects abundant data about the most remote times, he exhausts his fund of erudition, philosophy, and eloquence, in making me comprehend what those times and those men were, and in giving me a complete description. In spite of all he says, I find another means more simple, which is, to attend at the scenes where that which I desire to know is presented to me in movement and life. I open the authors of those times, who are neither

numerous nor voluminous, and there I find faithful portraits which instruct and delight me. The Bible and Homer leave nothing to desire.

§ III.—*Application to the history of the human mind.*

The human intelligence has its history, as well as exterior events : a history all the more precious that it portrays the interior man, and whatever exercises powerful influence on him. We find at every step descriptions of schools, and of the characteristics and tendency of thought in this or that epoch ; that is to say, there are many historians of the understanding ; but if we want to know something more than a few generalities, always inexact, and often totally false, we must put the rule mentioned above in practice : we must read the authors of the period we desire to study. And let no one think that it is absolutely necessary to handle them all, and consequently that this method is impracticable for the majority of readers ; one sole page of a writer shows us the spirit of his age much better than all the most minute historians could tell us.

§ IV.—*An example taken from physiognomy, which throws light on what we have said about advancing in the philosophy of history.*

If the reader is content with what others tell him, and does not examine for himself, he will obtain a *historical*, but not an *intuitive*, knowledge : he will *know* what men and things are, but he will not *see* it ; he may be able to give an account of the thing, but will not be able to paint it. A comparison will illus-

trate what I mean. Let us suppose that someone tells me of an important personage, whom I have no means of meeting, and anxious to know something of his figure and appearance, I ask those who know him personally about them. They will tell me, for example, that he is of more than medium height, that his forehead is broad and intelligent, his hair black and falling in a certain disorder, his colour pale, his features animated and expressive ; that on his lips a benevolent smile frequently plays, but occasionally looks a little satirical ; that his language is measured and grave, but in the heat of conversation becomes rapid, incisive, and even fiery ; and thus they will go on giving me a number of physical and moral characteristics to help me to form the best approximate idea possible. If we suppose that these descriptions are exact, and faithfully represent the original, I have an idea of what the person is, and I shall be able to give an account of him to another who may be anxious like me to know him. But is this enough to form a perfect conception of him, so that my imagination can represent him just as he is ? Certainly not. Do you want a proof ? Suppose that the person who has heard the description is a celebrated portrait painter : will he be able to draw the person described ? Let him try, and as soon as he is done, let the original suddenly appear ; and you may rest assured you will not know him from the copy.

We must all have personally experienced this truth ; a hundred times we must have heard the physiognomy of some person described ; in our own way we have

formed an imaginary figure, in which we have endeavoured to put all the qualities mentioned ; but when we meet the person, we find such a difference that we have to modify the work, if not to totally destroy it. And it is because there are things of which it is impossible to form a clear and exact idea, without seeing them ; and they are very numerous, and exceedingly delicate and imperceptible when taken separately, whose aggregate forms what is called physiognomy. How will you explain the difference between two persons very like each other ? Only by seeing them : they are so much alike, that you could not tell in what they differ : but there is a something which distinguishes them : you see it at the first glance, but you cannot tell what it is.

Well, here you have my whole thought. In critical works we get extensive, and perhaps exact, descriptions of the state of the understanding in such or such an epoch ; and in spite of all, we do not know it : if we should meet with passages of writers of different periods, we would not be able to classify them properly ; we would tire ourselves in bringing to mind the different characteristics of those times, but we would undoubtedly fall into gross mistakes, and dreadful anachronisms. With much less trouble we would have come out successful, if we had read the authors in question ; perhaps we should not have discussed the point with the same apparatus of critical erudition ; but we would have formed a more correct judgment. "The turn of thought," we would say, "the style and language indicate an author of such a



period; this passage is not authentic; we discover here the hand of a different time;" and thus we would go on classifying without fear of mistake, though we should not make ourselves perfectly understood by others who did not know those passages by sight as we did. If anyone should then say to us: "How is it we do not find such or such a quality here? How is it such another is not more marked? Why?" . . . "It is impossible," we should likely answer, "to satisfy all your scruples; what I can assure you is, that I am well acquainted with the personages who figure here; and I cannot mistake their peculiarities of physiognomy, I have seen them so often."

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### RELIGION.

§ I.—*Senseless reasoning of sceptics in religious matters.*

A TREATISE on religion would be here out of place, but not so a few reflections to direct thought in this most important matter. From these reflections we shall see what bad thinkers indifferentists and infidels are.

Life is short, death is certain: a few years hence the man who now enjoys robust and flourishing health will have descended to the grave, and will know from experience what truth there is in what religion says of the destinies of the other life. If I do not believe, my unbelief, my doubts, my invectives, my satires, my indifference and my insensate pride do not destroy the reality of facts: if another world exists in which

are reserved rewards for the good, and chastisements for the wicked, it will not certainly cease to exist because I am pleased to deny it; and besides, my capricious negation will not improve the destiny reserved to me by the eternal laws. When the last hour strikes, I must die, and find myself in nothingness or in eternity. This business is exclusively mine; as much so, as if I alone existed in the world : no one will die for me ; no one will take my place in the other life, depriving me of the reward, or liberating me from the chastisement. These considerations show, with all evidence, the supreme importance of religion ; the necessity I am under of knowing what truth there is in it ; and that if I say : " Let religion be what it may, I don't want to think about it," I speak like the foolishhest of men.

A traveller meets on his road a broad river ; he must cross it, he knows not whether there is danger in this or that ford, and he finds that many like him on the bank talk of the great depth of the water in certain places, and the impossibility of being saved, if one were rash enough to plunge into them. The madman says : " What do I care for such questions," and dashes into the river without looking where. Such is the indifferentist in religious matters.

#### § II.—*The indifferentist and the human race.*

All humanity has been, and is, occupied about religion ; legislators have regarded it as a matter of the highest importance ; the learned have taken it as the subject of their most profound meditations. The

monuments, law codes, and writings of the ages which have gone before us, prove this fact, and daily experience confirms it. People have reasoned and argued to a wonderful extent about religion; the libraries are filled with works relating to it; and even in our days the Press is daily adding to the number. When, then, the indifferentist comes and says: "All this is not worth the trouble of examination: I judge without hearing; these learned men are a lot of cheats, these legislators are fools, entire humanity is a miserable dupe, they have all wasted their time on questions of no importance;" does he not deserve that humanity, and those learned men, and those legislators, should rise up against him, and throw back in his teeth the insults he has heaped on them, and say to him in their turn: "Who are you, who thus insult us, who thus despise the most intimate sentiments of the heart, and all the traditions of humanity? who thus call frivolous what in the whole round of the earth is reputed serious and important? Who are you? Have you discovered the secret of not dying? Miserable heap of dust, do you forget that soon will the wind blow you to atoms? Weak mortal, can you reckon on means to change your destiny in the unknown region? Is happiness or misery indifferent to you? If that judge exists, about whom you won't trouble yourself now, do you think he will be satisfied if, when he calls you to judgment, you answer: 'What do I care about your commands, or your very existence?' Before your tongue utters such foolish discourses, give a look at yourself, think of that fragile

organisation which the slightest accident can disturb, and a moment can consume; and then sit down on a tombstone, enter into yourself and meditate."

§ III.—*Transition from indifferentism to examination.  
Existence of God.*

The good thinker once cured of his fit of indifferentism, and profoundly convinced that religion is a subject of the utmost importance, should go on, and reason thus:—Is it probable that all religions are no more than a heap of errors, and that the doctrine which rejects them all is true?

The first thing that all religions establish or suppose, is the existence of God. Does God exist? Does any Maker of the universe exist? Lift your eyes to the firmament, glance over the face of the earth, examine what you yourself are; and on beholding in all parts grandeur and order, say, if you dare:—"It was chance made the world; it was chance made me; the edifice is admirable, but there is no architect; the mechanism is astounding, but there is no artificer; order exists without an ordainer, without wisdom to conceive the plan, without power to realise it." Can this reasoning, which, with regard to the most insignificant productions of art, would be despicable and opposed to common sense, be applied to the universe? Will what is foolish with respect to trifles be reasonable with respect to what is so grand?

§ IV.—*It is impossible for all religions to be true.*

The religions holding sway in the different parts of the earth are many and various; is it possible that



they may all be true? The affirmative and the negative with respect to the same thing, cannot be true at the same time. The Jews say the Messiah has not come, and Christians say He has; the Mussulmans respect Mahomet as an illustrious prophet, the Christians regard him as a confounded impostor; Catholics hold that the Church is infallible in points of doctrine and morals, Protestants deny it; the truth cannot be on both sides; one or the other must be wrong. Therefore it is absurd to say that all religions are true.

Besides, every religion says it has come down from heaven: that which has in reality come thence, will be the true one, and all the others nothing more than an illusion and imposture.

§ V.—*It is impossible that all religions are equally pleasing to God.*

Is it possible that all religions are equally pleasing to God, and that He is equally satisfied with all kinds of worship? No. Error cannot be acceptable to infinite truth, nor evil pleasing to infinite goodness: therefore, to say that all religions are equally good, that with all kinds of worship man fulfils his duty to God, is to blaspheme the truth and the goodness of the Creator.

§ VI.—*It is impossible that all religions are a human invention.*

Would it not be right to think that there is no religion true—that all are the invention of men? No. Who was the inventor? The origin of religion is

lost in the mists of time: wherever there are men, there you find a priest, an altar, and a worship. Who might that inventor be, whose name was lost, and whose invention was diffused over the whole earth, and communicated to all generations? If the invention occurred in cultivated peoples, how did the barbarians and the savages adopt it? If it sprung up among the barbarians, how is it civilised nations did not reject it? You will say it was a social necessity, and that its origin is found in the very cradle of society. But then I will ask:—Who was aware of this necessity, who discovered the means to satisfy it, who invented a system so well adapted to restrain and direct men? And the discovery once made, who had in his hand all understandings and all hearts to communicate to them those ideas and sentiments, which have made religion a real necessity, and as it were a second nature?

We see every day that the most useful discoveries are limited to this or that nation, without extending themselves during lengthened periods, and are propagated very slowly to the neighbouring nations; how is it that the like did not happen in the case of religion?—how is it that all the peoples of the earth, be their country, language, customs, state of barbarism or civilization, ignorance or enlightenment, what they may, have a knowledge of this marvellous invention?

There is only one alternative here: either religion proceeds from primitive revelation or from an inspiration of nature; in the one case and the other we discover its divine origin: if from revelation, God has

communicated it to man by word of mouth; and if not, then God has inscribed religion in the depths of our soul. It is beyond all doubt that religion could not be a human invention, and in spite of its disfigured and adulterated state in various times and countries, a sentiment descended from above is found at the bottom of the human heart: through the haze of the monstrosities which history presents to us, we descry the apparition of a primitive revelation.

§ VII.—*Revelation is possible.*

Is it possible that God has revealed some things to man? Yes. He who has given us the power of speech cannot be devoid of it Himself; if we possess a means of reciprocally communicating our thoughts and affections, the all-powerful and infinitely wise God surely cannot be wanting in means of transmitting to us what He pleases. He has created intelligence, and can He not enlighten it?

§ VIII.—*Solution of a difficulty against revelation.*

But God, the infidel will object, is too great to humble Himself to converse with his creature; but then we should also say, that God is too great to have troubled Himself in creating us. By creating us He drew us from nothingness, by revealing some truth to us He perfects his production; and when was an artificer ever lowered by improving his work? All the knowledge we have comes from God, for it is He who has given us the faculty of knowing, and it is He who has either engraved ideas on our understanding, or

has given us the faculty of acquiring them by means yet unknown to us. If God has communicated to us a certain order of ideas, without tarnishing his greatness, it is absurd to say He would lower Himself by communicating other knowledge by a channel distinct from nature. Therefore revelation is possible: therefore the man who should doubt of this possibility, must at the same time call into doubt the omnipotence, and even the existence, of God.

§ IX.—*Consequence of the foregoing paragraphs.*

It is of the utmost importance to discover the truth in religious matters (§§ I. and II.); all religions cannot be true (§ IV.); if there were one revealed by God, that would be the true one (§ IV.); religion could not be a human invention (§ VI.). Revelation is possible (§ VII.); then all that is wanting now is to investigate whether this revelation exists, and where it is to be found.

§ X.—*Existence of revelation.*

Does revelation exist? At the very outset a fact strikes our eye, which affords us reason to think that it does. All peoples on earth talk of a revelation; and humanity does not conspire to get up an imposture. This proves a primitive tradition, the knowledge of which has passed from father to son, and which, though dimmed and adulterated, could not be blotted out from the memory of men.

We shall be told that the imagination has converted the noise of the wind into voices, and the phenomena of nature into mysterious apparitions; and thus the



weak mortal has believed himself surrounded by unknown beings who speak to him, and tell him the secrets of other worlds. It cannot be denied that the objection is plausible; but it will not be difficult to show how weak and groundless it is.

It is certain that when man has an idea of the existence of unknown beings, and is convinced that they are in relation with him, he easily inclines to imagine he hears fairy accents, and has seen spectres escaped from the other world. But this does not, and cannot, happen, if he have no such conviction, and much less if he do not even know of the existence of such beings; for in this case we could not conjecture whence such an extravagant illusion could come. We may observe that all the creations of our fancy, even the most incoherent and monstrous, are formed of an aggregate of images of objects which we have seen before, and which at the moment we unite at the dictates of our caprice or our disordered head. The enchanted castles of the books of knight-errantry, with their damsels, dwarfs, subterranean halls, spells, and all their madness, are a disordered result of real parts, which the writer's imagination arranged at pleasure, producing a whole which could only have place in the dreams of a madman. The same thing happens in everything; and this idealistic phenomenon is attested by reason and experience. If, then, we suppose that he has no idea whatever of another life distinct from the present, nor of any world but the one before his eyes, nor of other creatures than those which dwell with us on earth, a man will imagine

giants, fierce wild animals, and other extravagances of this sort; but not invisible beings, nor revelation from a heaven he knows nothing of, nor spirits or gods to enlighten and direct him. That new, ideal, purely phantastic world will not even occur to him; for such an occurrence would have no starting-point, no antecedents which might occasion it. And even supposing that this order of ideas should have presented itself to some individual, how was it possible that all humanity should participate in it? When was such an intellectual and moral contagion ever witnessed?

Let the value of these reflections be what it may, we will now go to facts: we will leave what might have been, and examine what has been.

§ XI.—*Historical proofs of the existence of revelation.*

There exists a society which claims to be the only depositary and interpreter of the revelations with which God has deigned to favour the human race: this claim should attract the attention of the philosopher who purposes investigating truth.

What society is that? Has it sprung up only a short time ago? It counts eighteen centuries of duration, and these centuries it regards as only a period of its existence; for going higher, it proclaims its uninterrupted genealogy from the very beginning of the world. That it can count eighteen centuries of duration, that its history is connected with that of a people whose origin is lost in the most remote antiquity, are facts as certain as that the republics of Greece and Rome have existed.

What titles does it show in support of its doctrine? In the first place it is in possession of a book, which is indisputably the oldest known, and besides contains the purest morality, an admirable system of legislation, and an account of prodigies. Up to the present day no one has called in question the eminent merit of this book; which is the more to be wondered at, as a great part of it has come to us from the hands of a people whose culture did not reach nearly so high as that of other peoples of antiquity.

Does this society show any other titles which go to justify its pretensions? From among many, each more significant and imposing than another, I will give you one, which is enough in itself.

It says that the transition from the old to the new society was effected in the way foretold in the mysterious book; that when the plenitude of time arrived a God-Man appeared on earth, who was at once the fulfilment of the Old Law, and the author of the New; that all that preceded Him was a shadow and figure, that this God-Man was the reality; that He founded the society we call the Catholic Church, promised it his assistance to the consummation of ages, sealed his doctrine with his blood, rose again on the third day after his crucifixion and death, ascended into heaven, sent down the Holy Ghost, and that at the end of the world He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Is it true that this Man fulfilled the ancient prophecies? It is undeniable: when reading some of them one might think he was reading the Gospel history.

Did He give any proofs of the divinity of his mission? He wrought miracles in abundance; and all He prophesied has either been fulfilled, or is being fulfilled with wondrous punctuality.

What sort of life did He lead? Without stain on his character; without limits in doing good. He despised riches and mundane power, and bore patiently with privations, insults, torments, and an ignominious death.

What sort was his doctrine? Sublime as never entered human mind before, so pure in its morality, that his most violent enemies does it justice.

What social change did this Man produce? Remember what the Roman world was, and see what the present is; look at what those peoples are among whom Christianity has not penetrated, and these others who have been ages under its teaching, and still preserve it, though altered and disfigured in some.

Of what means did He dispose? He had not where to rest his head. He sent twelve men, taken from the lowest class of the people; they scattered to the four corners of the earth, and the earth heard and believed them.

Has this religion passed through the crucible of misfortune? Has it met with no kind of contradiction? Ah! there you have the blood of infinite martyrs, there the writings of numerous philosophers who have impugned it, there the many monuments which attest the tremendous struggles it has sustained with princes, with the learned, with the passions, with interests,



with prejudice, with all the elements of resistance it was possible to combine on earth.

What means did the propagators of Christianity employ? Preaching and example, confirmed by miracles. These miracles the most scrupulous criticism has not been able to reject; and if it does reject them, it is no matter, for then must be admitted the greatest of all miracles, the conversion of the world without miracles.

Christianity has counted among its children men the most eminent for virtue and learning: no people, ancient or modern, has risen to the high degree of civilisation and culture which those who profess it have reached; about no religion has so much been disputed and written as about the Christian; the libraries are filled with master-works of criticism and philosophy due to men who humbly bowed their understanding to the yoke of faith; therefore that religion is beyond the reach of the attacks which might be made against those which sprung up and prospered among gross and ignorant peoples. It has, then, all the characteristics of being true—divine.

#### § XII.—*Protestants and the Catholic Church.*

In these latter ages Christians have been divided: some have remained addicted to the Catholic Church, others have preserved of Christianity what they thought proper; and in consequence of the fundamental principle they have laid down, which hands over faith to the discretion of each believer, they have become fractioned into innumerable sects.

Where is the truth? The founders of the new sects are of yesterday, the Catholic Church points to the succession of her pastors, which reaches to Jesus Christ; they have taught different doctrines, and the same sect has repeatedly varied them, the Catholic Church has preserved intact the faith transmitted to her by the apostles; novelty and change, then, are face to face with antiquity and unity—the decision cannot be doubtful.

Besides, Catholics hold that outside the Church there is no salvation; Protestants say that Catholics can also be saved; and so even they acknowledge that among us there is nothing believed or practised which can bring us to eternal damnation. They have only their own vote in favour of their salvation; in favour of ours we have our own and theirs; even though we judged solely from motives of human prudence, you see, we should not abandon the faith of our fathers.

In this short sketch is contained the thread of a Catholic's reasoning, who according to the advice of St. Peter, wishes to be ready to give an account of his faith, and show, that by remaining a Catholic he does not depart from the rules of good thinking. Now I shall add a few observations which may serve to avoid dangers, which sometimes make the faith of the incautious totter.

§ XIII.—*Wrong method of some impugnors of religion.*

In the examination of religious matters many follow a wrong course. They take a dogma as the object of

their investigations, and they believe the difficulties they raise against it sufficient to destroy the truth of religion, or at least to place it in doubt. This mode of action shows how little they have meditated on the state of the question.

In fact, the point is not to know whether the dogmas are within the grasp of our intelligence, nor whether we satisfactorily answer all the difficulties which may be raised : religion herself is the first to tell us that we cannot comprehend these dogmas with the sole light of reason ; that whilst we are in this life, we must necessarily resign ourselves to see the secrets of God through shadows and enigmas ; and hence she requires from us faith. To say, then, "I will not believe, because I do not comprehend," is to utter a contradiction ; if you comprehended all there would be no use in talking to you about faith. To argue against religion, on the grounds of the incomprehensibility of her dogmas, is to make a charge against her which she admits, which she accepts, and on which, in a certain manner, she rests her whole edifice. What should be examined is, whether she gives guarantees of her veracity, and whether she could not be deceived in what she proposes : if the principle of infallibility be once established, all the rest is as smooth as ice ; but if it be not established, not one step forward can be made. When a traveller, of whose intelligence and veracity we cannot doubt, relates to us things we do not comprehend, do we refuse him our faith or credence ? Certainly not. Therefore if we are once assured that the Church does not deceive us, it is a

very small matter, indeed, that her teaching be superior to our intelligence.

No truth could subsist, if some difficulties we are unable to answer were sufficient to make us doubt of it. In that case a talented man might spread uncertainty over everything, when in company with those who were not equal to him in capacity; for it is well known that, when this difference exists, the inferior cannot escape from the meshes which the other spreads for him.

In the sciences, in the arts, in the ordinary affairs of life, we meet difficulties at every step which render something incomprehensible, of whose existence we cannot doubt. Sometimes the incomprehensible thing touches on the impossible; but if from other sources we know that it does exist, we take good care not to declare it impossible, and preserving the conviction of its existence, we bring to mind the short range of our understanding. Nothing is more common than to hear:—"I do not comprehend what such a person has said; it appears to me impossible, but the man is truthful, and knows what he says; if another had said it I would not believe it, but I cannot doubt it is as he has told me."

#### § XIV.—*The highest philosophy in accord with faith.*

Some people regard themselves as deep thinkers when they will not believe what they do not comprehend. These men justify the famous saying of Bacon:—"Little philosophy separates from faith, much philosophy leads to it." And, indeed, if they



had dived into the profundities of the sciences, they would know that a thick veil hides the majority of objects from our eyes; that we are acquainted with very few of the secrets of nature; that even in things of apparently easy comprehension, their constitutive principles—their essence—are hidden from us; they would know that we are ignorant of what this universe is, which astounds us, that we are ignorant of what our own mind is; that we are a mystery to our own eyes, and that up to the present all the efforts of science have been incapable of explaining the phenomena which constitute our life, which make us feel our existence; they would know that the most precious fruit gathered in the highest philosophical regions is a profound conviction of our weakness and ignorance. Then they would infer that the sobriety in knowing, recommended by the Christian religion, and a prudent want of confidence in the powers of our understanding, are in accord with the lessons of the deepest philosophy; and that the catechism carries us in our youth to the highest point of human wisdom.

§ XV.—*He who abandons the Catholic religion knows not where to take refuge.*

We have followed the path which may lead to the Catholic religion; let us now cast a glance on the one which lies before us, if we separate from it. If we abandon the Catholic faith, where shall we take refuge? If in Protestantism, in which of its sects? What motives of preference has one over another for us? To discern them would be impossible; to blindly

embrace some one of them whatever, would be more so; and, besides, this would be equivalent to professing none. If in philosophism, what is infidel philosophism? It is a negation of everything, it is darkness, it is despair. Shall we go in search of other religions? Certainly neither Islamism nor idolatry will number us among its disciples.

To abandon the Catholic religion, then, is to abjure all religion; is to live without any religion whatever; is to allow the years to run by, is to permit our life to approach its fatal term, without guide for the present, without light for the future; is to close our ears, bend our head, and hurl ourselves into a bottomless abyss.

The Catholic religion gives us all the guarantees of its truth we could possibly desire. She, besides, imposes on us a law gentle, but fair, just and beneficent; by fulfilling it we become like unto angels, we approach that ideal beauty which the highest poetry might conceive in humanity. She consoles us in our misfortunes, and closes our eyes in peace: she appears truer and more certain, the nearer we approach the grave. Ah! the all-bountiful Providence has placed these holy inspirations at the mouth of the tomb, like heralds to warn us we are about to cross the threshold of eternity! . . .

## CHAPTER XXII.

### PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING.

#### § I.—*A classification of actions.*

THE practical acts of the understanding are those which are directed to action: this involves two questions: what is the end we propose to ourselves, and what are the best means of attaining it.

Our actions may be exercised either on the objects of nature subject to necessary laws, and in this all the arts are comprehended; or on what falls under the dominion of free-will, and this comprehends the regulation of our conduct with respect to ourselves or others, embracing morality, urbanity, domestic and political administration.

What I have said before about the mode of thinking on all matters, saves me the trouble of entering on these points to any extent, for whoever has comprehended the preceding rules and observations will know that he should propose to himself an end, and should seek the means best adapted to attaining it. Nevertheless, I think it will not be altogether useless to add some reflections which, without trespassing the fixed limits of a work like this, may afford some light to guide men in their different operations.

#### § II.—*Difficulty of proposing a proper end.*

I do not here speak of the ultimate end, which is the felicity of the other life, to which religion leads us. I treat only of secondary ends, such as to attain a

suitable position in society, to bring a business to a good conclusion, to get out of a difficult situation, to gain the friendship of some person, to guard against the attacks of an enemy, to upset a threatening intrigue, to establish a political or financial or administrative system, to uproot a dangerous institution, and things of this sort.

At first sight it would appear that every man who acts should have in view the end he proposes, clear, determined, and fixed. Yet observation tells us it is not so; and that there are many, very many, even among the more active and energetic, who go almost at hap-hazard.

How often we attribute to men a plan they never had! When we see them occupy a lofty position, we are naturally inclined, whether from their reputation or the high functions they exercise, to suppose in all they do a fixed object, with lengthened premeditation, with vast combination in the designs, with long provision of the obstacles, with sagacious knowledge of the true nature of the end, and of its relations with the means which are to attain it. Oh! what a mistake! Man, in all social conditions, in all the circumstances of life, is ever man, that is, a very insignificant thing. Knowing little of himself, without forming, as a general rule, clear ideas either of the quality or of the reach of his powers, sometimes believing himself stronger, sometimes weaker than he really is, he often finds himself doubtful, perplexed, without knowing whither he is going, nor whither he should go. Besides, he often knows not what suits



him ; so that to his doubts about his powers are added his doubts about his interests.

§ III.—*Examination of the proverb, “ Every man is the child of his actions.”*

What is said about self-interest being a sure guide, and that where it is concerned a man seldom goes wrong, is not true. In this, as in everything else, we are uncertain ; and in proof of it we have the sad experience, that often and often we work our own misery.

What admits of no doubt is, that as regards happiness or misfortune, the proverb, that a man is the child of his actions, is verified. In the moral as in the physical world chance signifies nothing. It is certain that in the instability of human things unforeseen events frequently occur which upset the best concerted plans, which prevent the fruit of well-knit combinations and hard toil from being gathered, and, on the contrary, which favour others, who were far from deserving it, considering the part they took ; but neither is there any doubt that this is not so common as is generally said and believed. Intercourse with society, accompanied by proper observation, rectifies many judgments lightly formed about the causes of the good or bad fortune of different people.

Where is the unfortunate man, who is so through his own fault, if we listen to himself ? There is scarcely such a man in the world. And yet, if we get to know his disposition, his character, his habits, his manner of seeing things, his system in the management of business, his manners, his conversation, his family and

friendly relations, rarely shall we not discover many of the causes, if not all, which have contributed to make him miserable.

Mistakes on this head usually arise from fixing our attention on the one event which has decided the person's fate, without reflecting that this event was either led up to by many others, or has been capable of having the fatal influence solely on account of the peculiar circumstances of the person, or his errors, or his defects, or his faults.

A prosperous or adverse lot very rarely depends on a single cause: many, and these of different orders, are usually mixed up in it, but as it is not easy to follow the thread of events through so much complication, we point out as principal, or, perhaps, sole cause what has been very likely but an influencing event, or a simple occasion.

#### § IV.—*The man detested.*

Do you see that man whom his former friends look on with disdain or indifference, for whom those about him profess a hatred, and who finds no one in society to take an interest in him? If you listen to his explanation of the causes, they are nothing but the injustice of men, envy which cannot bear the splendour of another's merits, universal egotism which will not suffer the least sacrifice even for those who have most claims on it through blood, friendship, or gratitude; in a word, the wretch is a victim against whom the human race has conspired, determined on not recognising his great merit, virtues, and privileged dis-

position. What truth may there be in this account? Perhaps it were not difficult to discover it in the very apology; perhaps it were not difficult to note the insufferable vanity, the bitter character, the petulance, and the evil tongue, which have called up the hatred of some, the disdain of others, and have ended in leaving him in the isolation of which he unjustly complains.

§ V.—*The ruined man.*

Have you heard that other, whose fortune has been ruined by his own excessive goodness, or the infidelity of a friend, or an unforeseen misfortune, which has upset close combinations, and projects full of prevision and sagacity? Well, if you look up something about his conduct, you shall likely discover the true causes, distant enough, God knows, from those he assigns.

It may in fact, have happened that the infidelity of a friend intervened, or that an unforeseen misfortune occurred; it may be true that his heart is excessively good, that is, it is possible he may not have lied in his account; but it will be no way strange if he has exaggerated the causes of his misfortune; no way strange if you discover in his conception, as superficial as hurried, in his extremely rash judgment, in his plausible and sophistic reasoning, in his prurience to get up an adventure, in his undue self-confidence, in his contempt for others' opinions, in the precipitation and rashness of his actions, a sufficient cause of his ruin, without his goodness of heart, without his friend's infidelity, without the unforeseen misfortune.

This misfortune, far from being purely casual, may have depended on an order of things, which were acting for a considerable time, and it might not have been difficult to have foreseen the infidelity of the friend, and avoid its sad consequences, if the person concerned had taken more care in bestowing his confidence, and in observing the use made of it.

§ VI.—*The learned bankrupt and the ignorant millionaire.*

How is it that man so clever, so penetrating, so well educated, has not been able to better his fortune, or has lost what he had, when that other so ignorant, so dull, so rude, has made such wonderful progress in his? Should this not be attributed to chance, to fatality, to his *évil* star? This is what is very often said, without noticing the sad confusion of ideas it involves, or reflecting that causes and effects, which have no relation with each other, are united with a bond of close dependence.

It is true that the one is clever and the other ignorant; that the one is penetrating and the other dull; that the one is well-educated and the other rude: but what good is that cleverness, or that apparent penetration, or that fine education, in the case in question? It is certain that as far as figuring in society is concerned, the former would conduct himself with much more ease and grace than the latter; if it be necessary to sustain a conversation, the first will shine much brighter than the second, his tongue will be much more ready, his ideas more varied, his observations much more pointed, his retorts more ready and



sharp ; that the rich man in question will not, perhaps, know anything about the merit of this or that novel, of this or that drama ; that he will know little about history, and will be lost in amazement on hearing the bankrupt merchant hold forth like a prodigy of erudition and learning ; it is certain he will not know as much of politics, nor of public finance and administration, that he will not speak so many languages ; but had all this anything to do with minding his business properly ? Certainly not. When, then, we praise the merit of the one, and wonder at his want of fortune, we pass from one order of things to another quite different, and try to derive certain effects from causes with which they have no connection.

Observe attentively those two men so unequal in fortune, reflect on the qualities of both, and above all make an experiment in some business in which both are interested ; and you will easily infer that the prosperity of the one, as well as the ruin of the other, springs from purely natural causes.

The one talks, writes, forms projects, calculates, gives things a hundred turns, proves everything, answers everything, takes into account a thousand advantages, drawbacks, hopes, dangers ; in a word, he exhausts the subject, leaves nothing unsaid or unconsidered. And what does the other do ? Is he capable of sustaining an argument with his adversary ? No. Does he upset the calculations placed before him ? No. Does he answer all the difficulties his opponent raises to his opinion ? No. Does he give the same stock of reasons as his adversary ? No.

Does he form projects as various and ingenious? No. What, then, does this unfortunate ignoramus do when combated, and pressed by his terrible antagonist?

What do you say to that? says the man of projects and learning.

Nothing; but still. . . .

But don't you think my reasons are conclusive?

Not altogether.

Let us see. Have you anything to object to this calculation? It is a matter of figures; nothing more.

That's true; it looks well enough on paper: my difficulty is whether it will do as well in practice. You count on many things I don't feel so certain of; I had many a sad experience, and a burned child . . . .

But do you question the data those people have supplied us with? What interest have they in deceiving us? If there be a loss, we shall not be the only ones to suffer, they will have a part in it. They are people well up in the business, smart and honest; and, besides, they have an interest in it; what more do you want? What motive have you for doubting?

I have no doubt about them; I believe all you say about those gentlemen; but, no matter, I don't like the business. Besides, there are so many eventualities which you have made no account of. . . .

But what eventualities are they, my dear sir? If we pay attention to a simple *it may be*, we shall never get on; every business has its risks; but I repeat, I cannot see any here with looks of probability about it.

You know better than I, says the rude man, shrugging his shoulders; and then wisely shaking his head,

he adds : No, sir ; I repeat I don't like the business ; as for me, I will have nothing to do with it ; you are satisfied that it must turn out a good speculation ; all right ; we shall see. I don't risk my capital in it.

The victory in the discussion undoubtedly belongs to the man of projects ; but who is right ? Experience will tell. The rich man, apparently so rude, has a duller eye than his antagonist, but in exchange he sees more distinctly, more deeply, with more security, more precision, more exactness. It is true he cannot oppose data to data, reflections to reflections, calculations to calculations ; but his discernment and his tact, developed by observation and experience, are telling him, with all certainty, that many of the data are imaginary, that the calculation is inexact, that many unfortunate eventualities, not only possible but probable, are not taken into account ; his sharp glance has discovered indications of bad faith in some of the parties mixed up in the business, his memory, well stocked with knowledge about their conduct in other matters, helps him to appreciate at their true value the intelligence and probity which the man of projects dwells so much on.

What matter if he do not see as much, if he sees better, with more clearness, distinctness, and exactness ? What matter if he be devoid of that facility of thinking and talking, well calculated to shine, but sterile in good results, and incapable of reaching the object in view ?

§ VII.—*Observations. Facile reasoning and good sense.*

Vivacity is not penetration: abundance of ideas does not always carry with it clearness and exactness of thought: quickness of judgment is usually to be suspected of error: a long series of ingenious reasonings generally involves sophisms, which break the thread of sequence, and lead to error.

It is not always easy to point out these defects with precision; particularly in the case of a facile and brilliant speaker, who develops his ideas in a torrent of beautiful words. Human reason is naturally so cavillous, some men possess qualities so well calculated to dazzle, to present things from the point of view which suits them, or is in accord with their prejudices, that it is no rare thing to see good sense, tact, and experience unable to give any other answer to a cloud of plausible arguments than: "This is not right; these reasonings are not conclusive; there is some illusion here; time will show it."

And it is because there are things which are felt rather than known; which are seen rather than proved; for there are delicate relations, almost microscopic niceties, which it would be impossible to show to one who did not discern them at first sight; there are highly fugitive points of view, which will be sought in vain by him who is incapable of occupying them at the critical moment.

§ VIII.—*Delicacy of certain intellectual phenomena in their relations with practice.*

In the exercise of the intelligence and the other faculties of man, there are many phenomena which



cannot be expressed by any word, or phrase, or sentence: to comprehend a man who experiences them it is necessary to experience them one's self; and sometimes the time employed in making one's self understood is as much lost as if a person with sight should try, by force of explanation, to give an idea of colours to a man born blind.

This delicacy of phenomena abounds in all the acts of our intelligence; but it is noted in a particular manner in what relates to practice. Then the mind cannot abandon itself to vain abstractions, nor form purely conventional fantastic systems; it must take things, not at its pleasure or desire, but as they are; if not, on making the transition from the idea to the objects, it will find itself in disagreement with the reality, and all its plans will be disconcerted.

Add to this, that in dealing with practice, above all in the relations of men with men, it is not the understanding alone which acts, for the other faculties are momentarily brought into play. There is not only the communication of understanding with understanding, but of heart with heart; besides the reciprocal influence of ideas, there is also that of feeling.

#### § IX.—*Nonsense.*

A man highly endowed with the faculties of the soul, when he meets with others who are devoid of some, or possess them in an inferior degree, is in the same position as one with his senses complete with respect to another wanting in some one of them

If these observations be kept in sight, much time and trouble, nay, even annoyance, will be saved in

dealing with men. It is sometimes laughable to see how some people labour uselessly to withdraw others from a wrong judgment, or to make them comprehend some truth. You hear in conversation some wild bit of nonsense uttered with all the serenity and good faith in the world. There is a person of good sense present, and he is shocked, and replies, and sharpens his wits, and employs a thousand arguments to make the foolish fellow comprehend his nonsense, and yet the latter is not convinced, and is quite satisfied and content with himself; his adversary's reflections make no impression on his impassible soul. And why? Is he devoid of knowledge? No. What he wants in the case is common sense. His natural disposition, or his habits, have formed him so; and the person who tries to convince him should reflect that the man who is capable of uttering such nonsense is incapable of comprehending the force of the contradiction.

§ X.—*Crooked understandings.*

There are some understandings which appear to be naturally defective, for they have the misfortune of seeing everything from a false, inexact, or extravagant point of view. In such cases there is no madness, nor monomania: their reason is not gone, but good sense considers them wanting in judgment. They are usually notorious for their insufferable loquacity—the effect of rapidity of perception, and of facility in stringing reasons together. They very seldom judge of anything aright; and if they do ever enter on the right road, they very soon leave it, hurried away by their mental activity. Sometimes

we see in their reasonings a beautiful perspective, which they take for a real and solid edifice: the secret of all lies in the fact that they have taken for incontestable an uncertain, doubtful, inexact, or entirely false fact; or have laid down a gratuitous proposition as a principle of eternal truth, or taken a hypothesis as a reality; and they have thus built up a castle which has the trifling defect of being in the air. Impetuous, precipitate, making no account of the reflections of those about them, without other guide than their warped reason, carried away by the prurience of arguing and talking, borne, if I may say so, on the turbulent current of their own ideas and words, they completely forget their starting-point, and never advert that the whole edifice they raise is fantastic, because devoid of foundation.

§ XI.—*Unfitness of such men for business.*

There are no worse men of business: unfortunate the affair they put their hand to; and often unfortunate they themselves if in their business they be abandoned to their own exclusive direction. The principal gifts of a good practical understanding are maturity of judgment, good sense, and tact, and in them these qualities are all absent. When we want to reach the reality, we must not attend solely to ideas, but to things also; and those men almost always forget the objects, and attend only to their ideas. In practice it is necessary to think, not what things should or could be, but what they are; and those people dwell less on what they are, than on what they might be, or ought to be.

When a man of clear understanding and right judgment has any business to transact with one who suffers from the defect I am describing, he feels himself greatly perplexed. What the former sees clearly, the latter finds obscure; what the former considers beyond doubt, the latter regards as very doubtful indeed. The judicious man puts the question in a way he thinks very natural and simple, the cavillous man looks at it in quite a different way; one would think they were two men, one of whom suffers from a sort of intellectual squint, which confuses and confounds the other, who sees straight and well.

§ XII.—*This intellectual defect usually comes from a moral cause.*

If we reflect on the cause of such aberrations, it will not be hard to see that their origin is in the heart rather than in the head. Such men are generally extremely vain; self-love, wrongly understood, inspires them with the desire of singularising themselves in everything; and in the end they acquire the habit of departing from what others think and say, that is, of putting themselves in contradiction with common sense.

The proof that if left to themselves, they would not see things so wrongly, and that their ridiculous aberrations proceed from a desire of singularising themselves, converted into habit, is in the fact that they are generally noted for a perpetual spirit of opposition. If the defect were in the head, there would be no reason why in almost all questions they defend the negative when others hold the affirmative, and the affirmative



when others uphold the negative. There is occasionally, and this is worthy of remark, only one sure way of bringing them to the truth, and it is by taking the wrong side.

I admit that they sometimes do not advert to what they do; that they have no clear consciousness of that inspiration of vanity which guides and controls them: but this mischievous inspiration does exist, and is not without remedy, if there be anyone to advise, particularly if age, social position, and flattery have not carried it to the last extreme. And often favourable opportunities present themselves for warning with some fruit; for those men, through their imprudence, often bring on themselves annoyance, if not misfortune; and then, broken down by adversity, and taught by sad experience, they have lucid intervals of which a sincere friend may take advantage to pour into their ear the counsels of judicious reason.

But when some cruel reality has not yet come to open their eyes, when in their fits of unreasonableness they yield unlimitedly to the vanity of their desires, there is usually no other means of resisting them than to hold your tongue, and with your arms folded, and shaking your head, to suffer with stoical impassibility the impetuous current of their rash propositions, their incoherent reasonings, or their wild plans.

And certainly this impassibility will sometimes produce salutary effects; for the itch of disputation disappears when there is nobody to rub it; there can be no opposition when no opinion is expressed; there is no defence when nobody attacks. And so it is no

rare thing to see those men enter into themselves soon after overwhelming a person who makes no answer, and, warned by the eloquence of silence, to beg pardon for their annoying petulance. They are restless and ardent souls who live on contradiction, and require to be contradicted : when there is none, the battle is over ; and if they try to get it up, they soon tire when they see that instead of having to deal with an enemy resolved on fighting, they fall on one who resigns himself a victim to importunate verbosity.

§ XIII.—*Christian humility in its relations to worldly affairs.*

Christian humility, that virtue which lets us know the limit of our powers, which reveals our defects to us, which does not allow us to exaggerate our merit, nor raise ourselves above others, which does not permit us to despise anyone, which inclines us to avail ourselves of the counsel and example of others, even of our inferiors, which makes us look on the desire of applause, and the enjoyment of the perfume of praise, as frivolities beneath a serious mind ; which never allows us to believe we have reached the pinnacle of perfection in any sense, nor shut our eyes to what still remains to be done, and to how far others are before us ; that virtue, which well understood is the truth, but the truth applied to the knowledge of what we are, of our relations with God and men ; the truth guiding our conduct past the exaggerations of self-love ; Christian humility, I repeat, is of the greatest utility in all that concerns practice, even in purely mundane things.

Yes, Christian humility, in return for some sacrifices, affords great advantages, even in things very far removed from devotion. The proud man buys his self-satisfaction very dear; and he does not advert that the victim he immolates to that idol which he has set up in his heart, is sometimes his dearest interests, or the very glory that he pants after.

§ XIV.—*Injuries produced by vanity and pride.*

How many reputations are sullied, if not ruined, by miserable vanity! How the illusion produced by a great name is dissipated, if, on approaching him, you find that the owner can talk of nothing but himself! How many men, otherwise most worthy, lose prestige, or expose themselves to ridicule, by a tone of superiority, which shocks and irritates, or brings down the envenomed shafts of satire! How many engage in some unfortunate business, take disastrous steps, tarnish their fame or lose it altogether, solely because they are exclusively wrapped up in their own thoughts, without paying the slightest attention to the counsels, reflections, or hints of those who see more clearly, but have the misfortune to be looked down on from a great distance, by that puffed-up god, who, dwelling far up in the fantastic heaven fabricated by his vanity, does not condescend to visit the lower regions where dwells the vulgar herd of ordinary mortals!

And what need had he to consult anyone? The elevation of his understanding, the security and success of his judgment, the force of his penetration, the reach of his prevision, the sagacity of his combi-

nations—are these things not proverbial? To whom is due, if not to himself, the favourable result of every business he has entered on? Who but he himself has got over those serious difficulties? If his companions did not ruin all, who prevented it but he? What idea of any importance was conceived, if not his? Who ever suggested anything good but himself? What use were anything which came from the others, if it had not been rectified, emended, illustrated, enlarged on, and directed by him?

Behold him; his lofty head appears to threaten heaven; his imperious look commands submission and respect; disdain for all about him plays on his lip; self-complacency sits on his countenance; the affectation of his gestures and manners proclaims the man full of himself, who makes every movement with excessive care, as if he were afraid of spilling. He begins to speak—resign yourself to silence. Do you reply? He pays no attention to your answers, and continues on his way. Do you try again? The same contempt, accompanied with a look which demands attention and imposes silence. He is tired talking, and stops to rest; you take advantage of the occasion to say what you tried to say a little before; vain endeavour! the demigod does not condescend to pay attention, and interrupts you when he chooses, addressing himself to others, if he be not absorbed in his profound meditations, arching his brows, and preparing to open his lips anew with the majestic solemnity of an oracle.

How could a man so foolish do less than commit great errors? And a great many belong to this class,



though their fatuity may not reach so repugnant an exaggeration. Woe to the man who does not accustom himself, from his early years, to reject flattery, and to appreciate, at their proper value, the praises bestowed on him; who does not often enter into himself to ask himself whether pride blinds him, whether vanity makes him ridiculous, whether excessive confidence in his own opinion leads him astray. On arriving at business age, when he now occupies an independent position in society, when he has acquired a certain reputation, deservedly or undeservedly, when he is treated with every consideration, when he now has inferiors, the flatterers increase and multiply, his friends are less outspoken and sincere, and the man abandoned to the vanity which he allowed to vegetate in his heart, daily pursues the dangerous path more blindly, burying himself deeper and deeper in that self-esteem, in that enjoyment of self, till self-love reaches a fearful development, degenerating into what might be called *egolatry*.

§ XV.—*Pride.*

The exaggeration of self-love does not always show itself under the same form. In men of strong mind and sagacious understanding it is pride; in the weak and thoughtless it is vanity. Both have the same object, but employ different means. The proud man without vanity, has the hypocrisy of virtue: the vain man has the honesty of his weakness. Flatter the proud man, and he will reject your praise, for fear of injuring his reputation by becoming ridiculous; of him it has been truly said, that he is too proud to be

vain. In the bottom of his heart he feels lively complacency in praise; but he knows that it is an honourable incense as long as the idol manifests no pleasure in it; and consequently he will never put the censer in your hand, nor allow you to swing it too near. He is a god whom a magnificent temple and a splendid worship please, whilst the idol keeps hidden in the mysterious obscurity of the sanctuary.

This character is probably more culpable in the eyes of God, but it does not attract so frequently the ridicule of men. I have said *so frequently*, for pride can scarcely have its lodging in a heart without degenerating into vanity, in spite of all precautions. That violence cannot be lasting; that fiction cannot be continued for a long time. To take delight in praise, and pretend to feel contempt for it; to make the pleasure of glory one's principal object, and pretend not to regard it, is too great a strain on the truth not to manifest itself in spite of the densest veils. The proud man I described above could not be properly called vain, and yet his conduct produced a worse impression than vanity could—besides indignation it provoked mockery and contempt.

#### § XVI.—*Vanity.*

The man who is simply vain does not irritate; he excites compassion, he affords a butt to satire. The poor fellow does not despise other men; he respects, perhaps admires and fears them. But he suffers from a burning thirst of praise; and not any way whatever, for he requires to hear it himself, to be satisfied that in fact he is praised, to take morose delectation in it,

and in return for the goodness of which he is the object, he expresses with an innocent smile his interior enjoyment, his happiness, and his gratitude.

Has he done a good action? Ah! for mercy sake talk to him about it, and don't make him suffer. Do you not see that he is dying to turn the conversation on his glories? Cruel man! to pay no attentions to his hints; with your silence, with your hard-heartedness, you will oblige him to make them more and more marked, till they become almost supplications.

Has what he has said, or written, or done, given satisfaction? What happiness! and you must bear in mind that it was without preparation, that it was all due to his prolific vein, or occurred to him in one of his happy moments! Have you not noticed the many beauties, and the many fortunate strokes? For mercy, don't lift your eye off these wonders, don't talk of anything else, let him enjoy his beatitude. Nothing of the satanic haughtiness of the proud man, nothing of his hypocrisy, but an inexplicable candour, is reflected in his face; his countenance expands agreeably; his look is affable and sweet; his manners pleasing; his conduct highly complacent; the poor fellow is in the attitude of a suppliant, he fears some imprudent word of yours may rob him of his supreme happiness. He is not hard-hearted, he is not insulting, he is not opposed to others being praised; he only desires to participate in it.

With what candid complacence he relates his labours and adventures! Whenever he can talk of himself, he can never give over. In his fascinated eyes, his life is little less than an epopœia. The most

insignificant facts are converted into episodes of supreme interest, ordinary sayings into strokes of genius, the most natural conclusions into the result of stupendous combinations. All converges to him : the very history of his country is nothing but a grand drama, whose hero he is ; everything is insipid if it does not bear his name.

§ XVII.—*The influence of pride on business is worse than that of vanity.*

This defect, though more ridiculous than pride, has not the same drawbacks as far as practical life is concerned. As it is a complacency in praise, rather than a strong feeling of superiority, it does not exercise so injurious an influence on the understanding. These men are commonly of weak character, as the frailty with which they allow themselves to be hurried away by their inclination, indicates. And so it is that they do not generally reject counsel, like the proud man, but often ask it. They are not so haughty that they will accept nothing from anybody ; and they will afterwards fabricate out of the business their little pot of vainglory. If the matter turns out well, do you think the pleasure of recounting the operator's thoughts, and the sagacity with which he foresaw the difficulties, and the tact with which he overcame them, and the prudence with which he sought the counsel of knowing ones, and how much the advised improved the judgment of the adviser—do you think, I say, the pleasure of all this a small matter ? No, there is a mine here, which will be worked in due time.



§ XVIII.—*Comparison between pride and vanity.*

The proud man has more malice, the vain man more weakness; the proud man irritates, the vain man excites compassion; the proud man concentrates, the vain man dissipates; the proud man would, perhaps, suggest great crimes, the vain man ridiculous trifles; pride is accompanied by a strong sentiment of superiority and independence, vanity is compatible with a want of self-confidence, even with humiliation; pride tightens the screws of the soul, vanity loosens them; pride is violent; vanity is bland; pride wishes for glory, but with dignity, with authority, with haughtiness, without degradation; vanity longs for it also, but with languid passion, with gentleness, with nervelessness: it might be called the effemination of pride. And so, vanity is more peculiar to women, pride to men, and for the same reason, infancy has more vanity than pride, which is usually developed only in adult age.

Although these two vices are theoretically distinguished by the qualities we have mentioned, in practice they are not always found so well characterised. It is more common to find them mingled in the human heart, each having, not only its own epochs, but its own days, and hours, and moments. There is no division-line to distinctly separate the two colours; there is a gradation of shades, there is an irregularity in their appearance, there are waves and minglings, only to be discovered by one accustomed to analyse and examine the complicated and delicate folds of the human heart. And perhaps, if well looked into, pride

and vanity are one and the same thing under different forms, are one and the same picture, which looks different according as the light falls on it. The idol is covered with a thick veil, or is presented to its adorers with attractive and smiling face; but the man who has built to himself an altar in his heart, and burns incense on it, and desires that others should do so too, is still the same.

§ XIX.—*How general this passion is.*

It may be asserted, without fear of error, that this passion is the most general, and admits of fewest exceptions, perhaps none, outside those privileged souls enveloped in the pure flame of a celestial love. Pride blinds the ignorant as well as the learned, the poor as the rich, the weak as the strong, the unfortunate as the successful, the young as the old; it domineers over the libertine, it excepts not the austere, it struts through the world, and penetrates the retirement of the cloister; it is enthroned on the countenance of the haughty lady, who queens it in the drawingroom by her lineage, her talents, and beauty, but it is also discerned in the timid words of the lowly nun, sprung from an obscure family, who has shut herself up in a convent, unknown to men, her only future on earth an unknown grave.

There are people found free from lust, covetousness, envy, hatred, or a spirit of revenge; but free from the exaggeration of self-love, which, according to its form, is called pride or vanity, there is almost no one—I might say no one. The learned man delights in recording the prodigies of his learning, the ignorant

man in talking of his nonsense; the brave man recounts his valiant deeds, the *rouè* his adventures; the avaricious man exalts his economical talents, the prodigal his generosity; the light-headed man dwells on his vivacity, the slow man on his steadiness; the libertine glories in his disordered life, and the austere man delights in the thought that his face indicates to men his mortification and fasting.

This is undoubtedly the most general defect; this is the most insatiable passion, when it gets loose rein; the most insidious, the most sagacious in asserting its sway, if one tries to subject it. If it is crushed a little by the force of elevation of ideas, seriousness of mind, and firmness of character, very soon it labours to take advantage of these noble qualities, and directs the soul to their contemplation; and if it be resisted by that truly powerful, and only efficacious arm, Christian humility, it tries to make even this virtue vain, and lays snares for its ruin. It is a reptile which, if cast from our bosom, will creep on to our feet, and if we tread on an extremity of its flexible body, will turn round and wound us with its poisoned bite.

§ XX.—*Necessity of a continual struggle.*

As this is one of the failings of weak humanity, one must resign himself to struggle with it all his life; but he must ever keep his eye on the evil, and limit it to the narrowest circle possible; and as our frailty cannot cure it entirely, he must labour at least to impede its progress, and avoid the ruin it is accustomed to produce. The man who knows how to master him-

self on this point, is far on the way to the proper regulation of himself; he possesses a rare quality, which will soon produce good results, perfecting and maturing his judgment, causing him to advance in the knowledge of men and things, and acquiring for him that praise, which is the more deserved the less it is sought.

The obstacle impeding the right road once removed, and the sight once freed from the mist which obscured it, there is not so much danger of going astray.

§ XXI.—*It is not pride alone which leads to error when we propose to ourselves an end.*

To successfully propose to one's self an end, it is necessary to perfectly comprehend the position of whoever has to attain it. And I will here repeat what I said before, which is, that there are many men who go at hap-hazard, now fixing on no well-determined end, now not calculating the relation between it and the means on which they can count. In private as in public life, it is a rather difficult task to thoroughly comprehend one's own position: man forms a thousand illusions, which deceive him with regard to the reach of his powers, and the proper occasion for displaying them. It often happens that vanity exaggerates them; but as the human heart is an abyss of contradictions, neither is it rare that pusillanimity underrates them. Men build up with astounding facility lofty towers of Babel, with the mad hope of reaching to the heavens; but sometimes, too, they are afraid to undertake the construction of a lowly hut—real children who now think they can touch the sky with their hand if they



go to the top of a hill, or now take for stars shining in the far-distant firmament the lowly and passing exhalations of the sub-lunar atmosphere. Sometimes they aim at more than they can reach; but sometimes also they cannot reach because they do not aim.

What may be the true criterion in these cases? This is a question rather difficult to answer, and on which only vague reflections can be made. The first obstacle met with is, that man knows so little of himself; and then how shall he know what he can, and what he cannot, do? We may be told, by experience. Certainly; but the drawback is in the fact that that experience is of slow growth, and sometimes bears fruit only when life is approaching its end.

I do not say that that criterion is impossible; on the contrary, in various parts of this work I indicate the means to acquire it. I point out the difficulty, but I do not assert the impossibility: the difficulty should inspire us with diligence, but not dishearten us.

#### § XXII.—*Development of latent powers.*

There are in the human mind many powers which remain *latent*, till occasion arouses and awakens them; their possessor never even suspects it, and may go down to the grave without discovering that precious treasure, without a ray of light being reflected from that diamond which might have embellished the most splendid crown.

How often a scene, a lecture, a word, an indication, turns up the soil of the soul, and makes mysterious inspirations germinate in it! Now it is cold, hard, and inert, and in a moment after a prolific spring

bursts out in it, which nobody suspected to be hidden in its interior. What has happened? A slight obstacle which impeded communication with the atmosphere has been removed, an attractive point has been presented to the electric mass, and the fluid has been distributed with the quickness of thought.

The mind is developed by intercourse, by reading, by travelling, and by the presence of grand spectacles; not so much from what it receives from without, as from what it discovers within. What signifies the forgetting of what was read, or heard, or seen, if one can keep alive the faculty fortuitously revealed? The fire kindles, burns without going out, and what matters the loss of the match?

The intellectual and moral faculties are excited like the passions. Sometimes an unawakened heart sleeps tranquilly the sleep of innocence: its thoughts are as pure as an angel's, its dreams candid as the snow which covers the earth with silvery carpet; an instant passes; some mysterious curtain has been drawn; the world of innocence and peace disappears, and the horizon is converted into a sea of fire and tempests. What has happened? Nothing but a scrap of reading, an imprudent conversation, or the presence of a seductive object. This is also the history of the awakening of many faculties of the soul. Created to be united to the body with incomprehensible bond, and to hold relation with its kind, it has some of its faculties bound, as it were, till an external impression comes to unloose them.

If we knew with what dispositions the Author of

nature has endowed us, it would not be difficult to put them in action by presenting to each the object best adapted to it, and consequently calculated to excite and develop it; but as, when man finds himself engulfed in the stream of life, it is often impossible for him to turn back and retrace the steps he took, through his education and the profession he chose or had to adopt, he must take things as they are, availing himself of that which is good, and avoiding that which is evil, as far as he can.

§ XXIII.—*On proposing to ourselves an end, we should guard against presumption and excessive want of confidence.*

Let his profession, his position in society, his talents, his inclination and his disposition, be what they may, a man should never prescind from using his reason, whether to successfully fix on an end, or to employ the most adequate means of attaining it.

The end should be proportioned to the means, and the means are the intellectual, moral, or physical powers, and the other resources he can employ. To propose a mark beyond his reach, is to uselessly expend his powers; as it is to waste them, and expose them to deterioration for want of exercise, not to aspire to that which reason and experience tell him he can attain.

§ XXIV.—*Sloth.*

If it be certain that prudence advises a man to be rather wanting in confidence than presumptuous, and consequently not to enter with rashness on arduous undertakings, it is no less so that it warns him never

to forget that sloth may employ for its own purposes his resistance to the suggestions of pride or vanity.

Pride is undoubtedly a bad counsellor, not only on account of what it leads to, but also on account of the difficulty there is in guarding one's self against its insidious wiles, but it has a worthy competitor in sloth. Man loves riches, glory, pleasure, but he is also very fond of an idle life; which is for him a real enjoyment, to which he often sacrifices his reputation and fortune. God knew well the nature of man, when he chastised it with labour: to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow is for man a continual penalty, and frequently a very hard one.

§ XXV.—*An advantage of sloth over the other passions.*

Laziness, the passion of inaction, has one advantage over the other passions, which helps it to triumph, and it is that it demands nothing: its object is a pure negation. To gain a high position much activity, constancy, and effort are required; to acquire a brilliant reputation it is necessary to show titles to it, and these are not won without long and painful labour; to accumulate riches, successful combinations and persevering toil are indispensable; even the lowest pleasures are not to be enjoyed without the trouble of seeking them, and employing the proper means to reach them. All the other passions exact something for the attainment of their objects; sloth alone demands nothing. You content it more seated than on foot, lying down than seated, dozing than wide awake. It seems to be the tendency to nonentity itself; nonentity is at least



its sole limit; the nearer the lazy man approaches that state the happier he is.

§ XXVI.—*Origin of sloth.*

The origin of sloth is in our very organisation, and in the mode of exercising our functions. In every act there is a waste of strength, in which there is a principle of weariness, and consequently of suffering. When the loss is insignificant, and the organs or members have been in action but for a short time, there is so far no suffering, and there may even be pleasure; but soon the loss becomes sensible, and weariness begins. For this reason there is no slothful man who would not undertake some labour often and with pleasure; and perhaps for the same reason, too, the most active are not the most laborious. The intensity with which they put their powers in exercise should excite in them the sensation of weariness sooner than in others; and for this motive they will more easily accustom themselves to look on labour with aversion.

§ XXVII.—*Sloth of mind.*

As the exercise of the intellectual and moral faculties requires the concomitance of certain organic functions, sloth exists in the acts of the mind as well as in those of the body. It is not the mind that becomes weary, but the corporal organs which serve it: the result, however, is the same. Thus it is, that there is sometimes a sloth of thinking, and even of willing, as powerful as that of performing any corporeal labour whatever. And these two classes of sloth are not always simultaneous, for one can exist with-

out the other. Experience testifies that fatigue purely corporal, or of the muscular system, does not always produce intellectual and moral prostration ; and it is not at all rare to be greatly fatigued of body, and yet feel the faculties of the mind quite active. And after long and intense mental labours, one often experiences a real pleasure in exercising the physical powers, when the intellectual have been reduced to a state of complete prostration. These phenomena are easily explained by adverting that the alterations of the muscular system are far from bearing proportion to those of the nervous system.

§ XXVIII.—*Reasons which confirm what we have said about the origin of sloth.*

In proof of the fact that sloth is an instinct of precaution against the suffering which springs from the exercise of the faculties, we may observe—1. That when this exercise produces pleasure, there is not only no repugnance to action, but a decided inclination to it. 2. That the repugnance to labour is more powerful before beginning it, because then an effort to put the organs or members in action is required. 3. That the repugnance is *nil* when the movement is once begun, and sufficient time has not passed to make us feel the weariness which springs from the waste of force. 4. That the repugnance reappears, and increases in proportion to the waste effected. 5. That men of active disposition are more subject to this evil, because they sooner experience the suffering. 6. That the versatile and light of disposition have generally the same defect, for the simple reason that be-

sides the effort which labour demands, they require to make another to subject themselves and conquer their propensity to vary their object.

§ XXIX.—*Inconstancy. Its nature and origin.*

Inconstancy, which apparently is no more than an excess of activity, as it continually urges us to vary our employments, is nothing but sloth under a hypocritical veil. The inconstant man substitutes one labour for another, because he thus avoids the molestation he experiences from the necessity of confining his attention and action to a determined object. Thus it is that all slothful men are great at projects; for to devise projects is a thing which gives scope to vast ramblings, which impose no subjection on the mind. They are also fond of undertaking many things successively or simultaneously, but always on the well-understood condition of never finishing any.

§ XXX.—*Proofs and applications.*

At every turn we see men whose interests or duties demand certain labours not more fatiguing than others they impose on themselves; and yet they neglect the former for the latter, and sacrifice interest and duty to taste. They have to write an important document, and they leave it untouched, though they should not have to employ on it half the time they waste in trivial correspondence. They have to meet a person to treat about some business; they neglect it, and travel more, and consume more time, and waste more words, talking of trifles. They have to go to some meeting where matters of interest are to be ventilated, and

they would have been able to understand all without much effort, and to form a correct judgment; well, no matter; those hours they consume perhaps in talking of politics, war, literature, science, anything, so that it be not that to which their interests oblige them. Walking, talking, and disputing are undoubtedly an exercise of the faculties of mind and body; and yet the world is full of walkers, talkers, and disputers, and real laborious men are scarce. And why is this? Because walking, talking, and disputing are compatible with inconstancy, require no effort, admit of constant variety, involve naturally alternatives of labour and rest, entirely subject to the will and caprice.

§ XXXI.—*The just medium between these extremes.*

To avoid pusillanimity without fomenting presumption, to sustain and encourage activity without inspiring vanity, to make the mind feel its powers without blinding it with pride—this is a difficult task in the direction of men, and more so in the direction of one's self. This is what the Gospel teaches, this is what reason applauds and admires. Between these rocks we should ever sail, not with the hope of never impinging on any of them, but with the look-out, with the desire, with the hope, too, of not getting shipwrecked on them.

Virtue is difficult, but not impossible: man does not attain it here on earth without a mixture of many frailties which sully it; but he is not wanting in the means of possessing and improving it. Reason is a monarch condemned to struggle constantly with the rebellious passions; but God has provided it with all



that it needs to fight and conquer. Terrible struggle, fatiguing struggle, struggle full of chances and dangers! but for that very reason more worthy of being entered on by generous souls.

In vain does the age try to proclaim the omnipotence of the passions, and the irresistableness of their power to triumph over reason; the human soul—a sublime spark of the Divinity—has not been abandoned by its Maker. Nothing is capable of extinguishing the lamp of morality, either in the individual or in society: in the individual it outlives all crimes, in society all turmoils: in the culpable individual it claims its rights with the voice of remorse; in society, by means of eloquent protests, and heroic examples.

§ XXXII.—*Morality is the best guide of the practical understanding.*

The best guide of the practical understanding is morality. In the government of nations, small politics are the politics of bastard interests, of intrigues, of corruption; great politics are the politics of public convenience, of reason, of right. In private life, little conduct is that of ignoble tricks, of contracted aims, of vice; noble conduct is that which is inspired by generosity and virtue.

That which is right and that which is useful sometimes appear to be separated; but they are generally so only for a short time; they apparently follow opposite roads, and yet the point they aim at is the same. God wishes to try the fortitude of men by these means; and the reward of constancy is not always reserved for the other life. And if this happens now and again, is

it indeed a small recompense to go down to the grave with a tranquil soul, without remorse, and with a heart intoxicated with hope?

Do not doubt it: the art of governing is only the application of reason and morality to the direction of nations; the art of conducting one's self well in private life is nothing but the Gospel reduced to practice.

Neither society, nor the individual, is permitted to forget the eternal principles of morality with impunity; when they try it through the seduction of interest, early or late, they perish with all their combinations. The interest which would erect itself as an idol, becomes a victim. Daily experience is the proof of this truth: in the history of all times we see it written in characters of blood.

§ XXXIII.—*The harmony of the universe defended by chastisement.*

There is no fault without chastisement; the universe is subject to a law of harmony; whoever disturbs it suffers. The abuse of our physical faculties is followed by pain; the extravagances of the mind, by sadness and remorse. Whoever seeks glory with excessive zeal, finds mockery; whoever tries to exalt himself above others with distempered pride, provokes indignation, resistance, insult, humiliation. The slothful man delights in his inaction, but soon his sloth diminishes his resources, and the necessity of attending to his wants drives him to an excess of activity and toil. The prodigal dissipates his wealth in pleasures and ostentation; but he quickly meets with the avenger of his extravagance in tattered and

hungry poverty, which substitutes privations for pleasure, and pinching want for luxurious ostentation. The avaricious man accumulates treasures through fear of poverty; and in the midst of his riches he suffers the rigours of the poverty he fears; he condemns himself to them, with his scanty and coarse food, his soiled and torn dress, and his narrow, uncomfortable and untidy lodging. He ventures nothing for fear of losing, he distrusts the persons who love him most; in the silence and darkness of night he visits his coffers hidden away in secret places, to assure himself his treasure is still there, and to add more to it; and in the meantime his servant, or one of his neighbours, watches him, and the treasure, accumulated with so much anxiety and precaution, disappears.

In social intercourse, in literature, in the arts, the excessive desire to please produces displeasure; the anxiety to offer things too exquisite disgusts; the ridiculous is only one step from the sublime; delicacy stands side by side with surfeit; the prurience to produce symmetrical pictures, generally leads to monstrous contrasts.

In social government the abuse of power entails its ruin; the abuse of liberty engenders slavery. The people which wants to extend its frontiers too far often sees them curtailed beyond their natural limits, the conqueror who labours to heap crowns on his head ends by losing them all, he who is not satisfied with the empire of vast dominions frets his life out on a solitary rock in the immensity of the ocean. Of those who ambition supreme power, the majority reach only proscription or the scaffold. They long

for the palace of a monarch, and they lose their humble home; they dream of a throne, and they occupy the guillotine.

§ XXXIV.—*Observations on the advantages and disadvantages of virtue in business.*

God has not left his laws without defence; He has guarded all with proper chastisement—a chastisement commonly experienced in this life. For this reason the calculations based on interest in opposition to morality, are exposed to err, immorality becoming enveloped in its own meshes. But do not think that in saying this I mean to deny that the virtuous man often finds himself in a highly disadvantageous position, to compete with an immoral adversary. I am not unaware that in a given case his end will more probably be gained by him who can employ any means, because he stops at none, as happens in the case of a bad man; and that it must be a serious obstacle to be able to avail one's self of very few means, perhaps of one only, as in the case of the virtuous man, because the immoral ones are for him as if they did not exist; but if this be true in an isolated case, it is no less so, that in the course of time the drawbacks of virtue are compensated by its advantages; and the advantages of vice are brought to a level by its drawbacks; and that, at last, a truly just man will gather the fruit of his rectitude, and attain the end he discreetly proposed to himself; and that the immoral man will expiate, sooner or later, his iniquities, and stumble on ruin at the end of his evil and tortuous ways.



§ XXXV.—*Defence of virtue against an unjust charge.*

Men who are virtuous and unfortunate have a certain propensity to point to their virtues as the origin of their misfortunes ; for they are driven to this by the desire to display their virtue and to hide their want of prudence ; and great acts of imprudence are really committed with the best and purest intention. Virtue is not responsible for the evils brought on by our carelessness and want of prevision ; but man is accustomed to lay them at her door without reflection. "My candour has been my ruin," exclaims the honest victim of an imposture ; when what has been his ruin was not his candour, but his gross over-confidence in one who must have given occasion for suspicion. Are not bad men also frequently the victims of other bad men, and perfidious men of others as dishonest as themselves ? Virtue shows us the path we should follow, but she does not undertake to point out all the pitfalls there may be in it : this is the business of penetration, of prevision and of sound judgment ; that is to say, of a clear and correct understanding. Virtue is not at variance with these gifts, but they do not always accompany her. As the faithful friend of humanity, she dwells without repugnance in the heart of all classes of men, let the splendid and pure sun of intelligence shine in them, or a deep mist overspread them.

§ XXXVI.—*Defence of learning against an unfounded charge.*

Some people believe that great talents and much learning propend of themselves to evil ; this is a sort

of blasphemy against the goodness of the Creator. Does virtue need darkness? Do not the knowledge and virtue of the creature emanate from the same origin, from the ocean of light and sanctity, which is God? If the elevation of intelligence led to evil, the wickedness of beings would be in proportion to their loftiness do you divine the consequence?—why not draw it? Infinite wisdom would be infinite wickedness; and there you are in the error of the Manichæans, discovering at the extremity of the scale of beings a principle of evil. But what am I saying? This error would be worse than that of Manes; for in it a principle of good could not be admitted. The genius of evil would preside, entirely alone, over the destinies of the world; the monarch of Avernus would fix his throne of black lava in the brilliant regions of heaven.

No; man should not fly from the light through fear of falling into evil; the truth fears not the light, and moral good is a great truth. The more an understanding is enlightened, the better it will know the ineffable beauty of virtue, and knowing it better, will have less difficulty in practising it. Rarely is there elevation of ideas, without the sentiments participating in it, and elevated sentiments either spring from virtue itself, or are a fitting disposition to attain it.

There is also in favour of talent and learning a reason founded on the nature of the faculties of the soul. Everyone knows that a great development of one is not effected without some prejudice to another; consequently, when man's superior faculties are developed in a special manner, the grosser passions—the origin of vices—must lose some of their power.

The history of the human mind confirms this truth: generally speaking, men of very privileged intellect have not been perverse; many of them were distinguished for their eminent virtues; others have been weak like men, but not wicked; and if one or another has reached this extreme, he should be looked on as the exception, not as the rule.

Do you know why a wicked man of great talent compromises, if I may say so, the reputation of the others, occasioning general deductions to be drawn from particular cases? Because everyone fixes his attention on a wicked man of talent, and nobody ever thinks of a bad man when a booby; because iniquity and great learning form a lively contrast, and this contrast makes the foul extreme more notable, just for the same reason as the fall of a priest is more remarkable than that of a layman. No one notices one stain more on a dirty glass; but on another, clear and brilliant, the eye detects the smallest speck.

§ XXXVII.—*The passions are good servants but bad counsellors.*

We have already seen (chap. xix.) how pernicious is the influence of the passions in impeding our arrival at the knowledge of truth—even speculative truth; but what was there said in general has much more application in relation to practice. When we try to do something, the passions are occasionally an excellent auxiliary; but in the preparation of it in our understanding they are dangerous counsellors.

Man without passions would be cold, would be inert,

because he would want one of the most powerful principles of action which God has given to human nature; but in return, man domineered over by his passions, is blind, and tends to objects like the brute creation.

Examining attentively our faculties' mode of action, we find that reason is qualified to direct, and the passions to execute; the former attends not only to the present, but also to the past and future; whilst the latter regard the object as it is at the present moment, and in the way it actually affects us. And it is because reason, like a good director, takes into account all that may injure or favour, not only at present, but in future; but the passions, charged only with the execution, attend to the present instant alone, and the momentary impression. Reason does not dwell on the pleasure alone, but on the utility, on the morality, on the decorum of the act; the passions prescind from the decorum, the morality, the utility, from everything but the agreeable or disagreeable impression which is felt in the act.

§ XXXVIII.—*Hypocrisy of the passions.*

When I speak of passions I do not refer solely to those strong, violent, tempestuous inclinations, which agitate our heart, as the winds do the ocean; I include also those others more gentle, more spiritual, if I may say so, for they approach nearer to the higher regions of the spirit, and are generally called *sentiments*. The passions are the same, with the difference of form, or degree of intensity, or the mode of approaching their object. As sentiments they are then more delicate, but no less dangerous; for their very delicacy con-



tributes to our being more easily misdirected and seduced by them. When a passion presents itself in all its deformity and violence, brutally shaking the mind, and determined on dragging it the wrong road, the mind adopts precautions and prepares for the contest; so that it may happen that the very impetuosity of the attack provokes a heroic defence. But if the passion lay aside its violent manners, if it throw off, as it were, its coarse garments, and cover itself with the mantle of reason; if its suggestions be called knowledge, and its inclinations will, enlightened but decided, then does it take by treason the fortress it could not have carried by storm.

§ XXXIX.—*Example. Vengeance under two forms.*

A man who has given offence is engaged in some critical business, for the success of which the co-operation of the person offended is absolutely necessary. As soon as the latter hears it, he remembers the offence he received: resentment awakens in his heart, anger follows resentment, and anger engenders a lively desire of revenge. And why will he not have revenge? Is not this an excellent opportunity? Will it not be a real pleasure to him to witness the desperation of his adversary, foiled in his hopes, and perhaps sunk in obscurity, in misfortune, or in misery? "Take revenge, take revenge," cries his heart in loud voice; "take revenge, and let him know that you have taken it: injure him, for he injured you; humble him, for he humbled you; enjoy the cruel but lively pleasure of his misfortune, as he enjoyed yours. You have the victim in your grasp; don't let him go; hold him

tight ; satisfy your thirst of vengeance on him. He has children, and they will perish . . . no matter . . . let them perish ; he has parents, and they will die of grief . . . no matter . . . let them die ; thus shall his infamous heart receive additional wounds ; thus shall he bleed the more abundantly ; thus shall there be no consolation for him ; thus shall the measure of his affliction be filled up ; thus shall you pour into his villainous bosom all the bitterness and poison he poured into yours. Take revenge, take revenge ; laugh at a generosity he did not practise with you ; have no pity on one who had none on you ; he is unworthy of any favour, unworthy of compassion, unworthy of pardon ; take revenge, take revenge."

Thus speaks hatred excited by anger ; but its language is too hard and cruel not to offend a generous heart. So much cruelty awakens a contrary sentiment :—"This conduct would be ignoble, would be infamous," the person says to himself ; "this is repugnant even to self-love. What ! am I going to enjoy the downfall, the irremediable misfortune of a family ? Would it not be an inextinguishable remorse for me, to remember that I buried his innocent children in misery, and brought down his old parents in sorrow to the grave ? I cannot do it ; I will not do it ; it is more honourable not to take revenge ; let my adversary see that if he were mean I am noble ; if he were inhuman I am generous ; I want no other revenge than to triumph over him by force of generosity ; when he meets me his eye will be cast down ; his cheeks will blush ; his heart will feel remorse, and he will do me justice."

The spirit of vengeance has failed through its imprudence; it longed for all, it exacted all with urgency, with impetuosity, without considerations of any sort; and the heart has taken offence at such monstrosity; has thought it was going to be lowered; has called noble sentiments to its aid, and they have quickly responded to the call, and decided the victory in favour of reason. Other, perhaps, would have been the result, if the spirit of vengeance had taken a less obtrusive form, and throwing a veil over its face, had hidden its ferocious features. It should not give loud shouts, nor horrible yells; it should envelop itself in the most secret fold of the heart, and thence distil its venomous poison. "Certainly," it should say, "the offender is by no means deserving of obtaining what he asks; and this is motive enough to oppose him. He did an injury, it is true; but this is not the occasion to remember it. It is not resentment that has to direct your conduct, but reason and the desire that a matter of such importance may not fall into bad hands. The person in question is not wanting in some good qualities for the discharge of the business; why should I not do him the justice of saying so? But in return he has unpardonable defects. The offence he offered you proves that; you should not remember it through a spirit of vengeance, but you should not lose sight of it, if you wish to form a correct judgment. You feel a secret and lively pleasure in opposing, in lowering, in ruining him; but this sentiment does not master you; you are only impelled by the desire of good; and the fact is, if no other motive existed than that of resentment, you would place no obstacle in his way.

Perhaps even you would make the sacrifice of helping him; though indeed it would be painful to do so; but perhaps you would resign yourself to it. But that is not the case; fortunately reason, prudence, and justice are in accord with the inclinations of your heart, to which, in fact, you pay no attention whatever; you feel pleasure in wounding your enemy; but this pleasure is a natural expansion, which you are unable to extinguish, but which you have sufficiently under control to prevent its blinding you. There is nothing, then, to hinder you from taking your measures in time. But you must act calmly, that all may see that you have no partiality, no hatred, no spirit of revenge, that you simply make use of a right, and even obey the voice of duty." The impetuous, violent, openly unjust vengeance was unable to obtain a triumph, which has been easily gained by this other so pacific and insidious, hypocritically masked in the veil of reason, justice, and duty.

For this reason the vengeance which acts in the name of zeal for justice is so much to be feared. When the heart, possessed by hatred, succeeds in deceiving itself, and believes it acts under the impulse of good-will, perhaps even of charity itself, it is under the fascination of a reptile it does not see, and whose existence it does not even suspect. Then envy destroys the purest and best reputations, rancour persecutes inexorably, vengeance delights in the convulsions and sobs of its victim, and makes it drain the dregs of sorrow and bitterness. The illustrious Protomartyr shone for his eminent virtues, and scared the Jews with his divine eloquence; what name, do you



think, will be adopted by the envy and vengeance, which dry up their hearts and make their teeth gnash? Do you imagine they will go before the world under their own names? No, by no means. Those men utter a cry as if they were filled with scandal, close their ears, and sacrifice the innocent Deacon in the name of God. The Saviour of the world astonishes all who hear Him by the divine beauty of his morality, and the marvellous spring of wisdom and love which flows from his august lips; the people gather together to see Him, and He goes about doing good; affable with the lowly, compassionate with the unfortunate, indulgent with the guilty, He pours out with open hand the treasures of his omnipotence and his love; his words are words of sweetness and pardon; He only reserves the language of a holy and terrible indignation to confound the hypocrites. The latter meet from Him a look majestic and severe, and they return the glance of the viper. Envy corrodes their heart, they feel a burning thirst of vengeance. But will they act and talk as revengeful people? No; this man is a blasphemer, they will say, he seduces the people, he is an enemy of Cæsar; allegiance, then, and the public tranquillity, and religion, require his removal. And the treason of a disciple will be availed of, and the innocent Lamb will be carried before the tribunals, and will be questioned, and when he answers in words of wisdom, the chief priest will be devoured by zeal, and will tear his garments, and say, *he hath blasphemed*, and they will all cry out, *he is guilty of death*.

§ XL.—*Precautions.*

Man can never meditate too much on the secrets of his heart; can never employ too much vigilance to guard the thousand doors by which iniquity may enter; can never use too much caution against the innumerable ambuscades he lays for himself. The passions are not so much to be feared, when they present themselves as they are, and go directly to their object, impetuously trampling down everything which opposes them. In this case, no matter how little love of virtue may remain, if a man has not yet got to the depths of corruption and perversity, he feels a cry of horror and indignation rise in his soul, as soon as vice shows itself in its lothing deformity. But what dangers does he not run, if the names and garments are changed, and everything appears before him masked and inverted?—if his eyes see through deceptive prisms, which surround blackness and monstrosity with brilliant colours and pleasing forms?

The greatest dangers of a pure heart are not in the brutal attractions of gross passions, but in those sentiments which enchant with their delicacy and seduce with their tenderness; fear enters not into noble souls but under the name of prudence; avarice only introduces itself into generous breasts under the title of provident economy; pride hides itself under the shadow of regard for self-dignity, and the respect due to the position one holds; vanity procures its small delights under the plea of the necessity of knowing the judgment of others in order to take advantage of the criticism; vengeance enfolds itself in the mantle

of justice ; fury calls itself holy indignation ; sloth invokes the necessity of rest ; and gnawing envy, when destroying reputations, when sullying with its impure breath the splendours of eminent merit, talks of the love of truth, of impartiality, of how necessary it is to guard against ignorant admiration or puerile enthusiasm.

§ XLI.—*Hypocrisy of man with himself.*

Man plays the hypocrite to impose on himself, perhaps more than he does to deceive others. Rarely does he render to himself an exact account of the mainspring of his actions : and for this reason there is always some dross in the purest virtue. The perfectly pure gold is only obtained from the crucible of perfect divine love ; and this love, in all its perfection, is reserved for the celestial regions. Whilst we live here on earth, we bear in our heart a malignant germ which kills, or debilitates, or sullies virtuous actions ; and it is no small thing if we manage to prevent that germ's becoming developed and ruining us. But notwithstanding our great weakness, there does not cease to burn in the depths of our soul that inextinguishable light kindled there by the hand of the Creator ; and that light enables us to distinguish between good and evil, and serves as a guide in our progress, and as a monitor in our wanderings. For this cause we strive hard to deceive ourselves, in order to avoid running into too patent contradiction with the dictates of conscience ; we close our ears that we may not hear what it says, we shut our eyes that we may not see what it points out, and we try to convince ourselves that the principle it inculcates is not applicable to the present

case. In this the passions play an important part, and insidiously suggest to us sophistical arguments. It costs man a great deal to appear bad, even in his own eyes ; he does not attempt such a thing, and becomes a hypocrite.

§ XLII.—*The knowledge of one's self.*

The defect indicated in the foregoing paragraph has a different character in different persons ; and for this motive we should never lose sight of that rule of the ancients, so profoundly wise—*Know thyself; nosce teipsum*. Though there are certain qualities common to all men, they have a peculiar character in each of them ; each one has, as it were, a spring which must be touched in a special way. This spring must be discovered in his neighbours, if a man is to deal properly with them ; but it is still more necessary for each one to discover it in himself. Because *there* is generally the secret of great actions, whether good or bad, as this spring is nothing but a strong propensity, which masters all others, and subordinates them to an object. This dominant passion affects all the others ; it mixes itself up in all the actions of life, and constitutes what is called character.

§ XLIII.—*Man flies from himself.*

If we had not the unfortunate inclination of flying from ourselves, if the contemplation of our own interior were not so repugnant to us, it would not be difficult for us to discover the passion which predominates in us. Unfortunately we fly from nothing so much as from ourselves, we study nothing less than



that which interests us most. The generality of men go down to the grave, not only without knowing, but without having tried to know themselves. We should have our eye constantly fixed on our heart to see its inclinations, to penetrate its secrets, to restrain its impetus, to correct its vices, and to avoid its going astray ; we should live that interior life in which man renders himself an account of his thoughts and affections, and contracts relations with external objects, only after consulting his reason and properly directing his will. But this is not done ; man rushes and clings to the things which incite him, and only lives that exterior life which leaves him no time to think about himself. Clear intellect and charming hearts are found, which preserve for themselves none of the precious things with which the Creator has enriched them ; which pour out on the public streets the exquisite aroma, which, if kept in the depths of their own interior, might be of great gratification and comfort to them.

It is told of Pascal, that having dedicated himself with great earnestness to the study of mathematics and the natural sciences, he tired of this study because he met with so very few people with whom he could talk on these matters. Anxious to find a subject which would not have this drawback, he commenced the study of man ; but he soon found from experience that those who troubled themselves with studying man were still fewer in number than the students of mathematics. This is true now as well as in Pascal's time ; observation shows us how little the generality

of men like this task, especially when it turns on themselves.

§ XLIV.—*Good result of reflecting on the passions.*

When one has acquired the habit of reflecting on his own inclinations, distinguishing the character and intensity of each, even though they master the mind now and again, they do not effect their purpose without its being aware of the violence done itself. They blind the understanding, perhaps, but this blindness is not altogether unknown to the sufferer : it says to it : "You think you see ; but in reality you do not see ; you are blind." But if man never fixes his attention on his interior, if he acts as his passions impel him, without caring to investigate whence the impulse comes, passion and will, dictates of reason and instinct of passion, become to him one and the same thing. Then reason is not the mistress, but the slave ; instead of directing, moderating, and correcting, with its counsels and commands, the inclinations of the heart, it becomes their vile instrument, and is obliged to employ all the resources of its sagacity to supply them with the satisfaction of their desires.

§ XLV.—*Wisdom of the Christian religion in the direction of conduct.*

The Christian religion, in directing us to that moral interior life, which reflects on our inclinations, does a work in strict conformity with the soundest philosophy, and displays a profound knowledge of the human heart. Experience tells us that what man wants in order to act properly is not a speculative and general

knowledge, but a practical, detailed one, with application to all the acts of life. Who does not know and repeat a thousand times that the passions lead us astray and effect our ruin? The difficulty is not in that, but in knowing which passion influences us in this or that case, which commonly predominates in our actions, and under what form and disguise it presents itself to the mind; and how its attacks should be repelled, or its stratagems discovered. And all this, not in any way whatever, but with a clear, vivid knowledge, which will naturally occur to the understanding whenever it has to adopt any resolution, even in the commonest things.

The difference which generally exists in the speculative sciences between an ordinary and a superior man, consists in the fact that the latter knows with clearness, distinctness, and exactness what the other only knows inexactly, confusedly, and obscurely; it does not consist in the number of ideas, but in their quality; the latter can say nothing on any point which the former has not some knowledge of; both see the same thing, but the sight of the one is much more perfect than that of the other. The very same thing occurs with relation to practice. Profoundly immoral men will speak of morality in such a way as to show that they are not unacquainted with its rules; but they only know these rules in general, without caring to reduce them to practice, without reflecting on the obstacles which may impede their employment on this or that occasion, without thinking of them when an opportunity occurs of making use of them. What is in possession of their understanding, of their

will, of the entire man, is the passions; they preserve these moral rules hidden away, as it were, in the archives of their conscience; and they are afraid to examine them, even as curiosities, lest they might find in them the worm of remorse. On the contrary, when virtue is rooted in the soul, moral rules become a familiar idea which accompanies all its thoughts and actions, which stirs and is agitated in presence of the least danger, which commands and urges before action, and produces incessant remorse if it has been neglected. Virtue causes this continual attention of the intellect to the rules of morality; and this attention in its turn contributes to fortify virtue; and so it is that religion never ceases to inculcate the virtues, convinced that they are a precious seed which sooner or later will produce fruit.

§ XLVI.—*The moral sentiments aid virtue.*

In aid of moral ideas come the sentiments, among which there are some extremely moral, and powerful, and beautiful; for God, when permitting our mind to be tossed by violent and furious tempests, has not neglected to send us also gentle and soothing zephyrs. The habit of attending to the rules of morality and obeying their prescriptions, develops and excites these sentiments; and then does man, in following the path of virtue, combat his evil inclinations with his good; the contest is not so dangerous, and, above all, not so painful; for one sentiment struggles with another; the suffering caused by the sacrifice of the one is compensated by the pleasure produced by the triumph of the other, and we feel none of those dis-



treassing sufferings which we endure when unaided reason struggles with the heart.

This development of the moral sentiments, this call of reason on the aid of the passions, is a powerful means of acting properly, and of enlightening the understanding when obfuscated by other passions. There is in this opposition a great variety of combinations which produces excellent results. The love of pleasure is neutralised by the love of self-dignity; the excess of pride is tempered by the fear of becoming abhorred; vanity is moderated by the dread of ridicule; sloth is stimulated by the desire of glory; anger is curbed by the repugnance to appear violent; the thirst of vengeance is mitigated or extinguished by the happiness or honour which results from being generous. Through this combination, through the sagacious opposition of the good sentiments to the bad, many of the germs of evil which lie in the human heart are softly and efficaciously weakened; and man becomes virtuous without losing his sensibility.

§ XLVII.—*A rule for practical judgments.*

The mainspring of our heart once discovered, and the generous and moral sentiments developed as much as possible, we should try to find out how the understanding is to be directed to a successful issue in practical judgments.

The first rule we should have present is, that while the mind is under the influence of any passion relative to an object, we should not judge nor deliberate about it. How offensive an act, a word, or a gesture appears to a person whom it irritates! "The intention

of the offender," he says to himself, "could not be more malicious; he tried not only to injure but to outrage; the bystanders must be scandalised; if I do not take a quick and complete revenge, the mocking smile which sits on the lips of all will be converted into profound contempt for one who could put up with such an ignominious affront. I should not be violent, that is true; but what could be worse than the neglect of one's honour? I should be prudent; but does prudence go so far as to allow one's self to be trampled under foot?" Who goes through this piece of reasoning? Is it reason? Certainly not; it is anger. But anger, you will say, does not reason. Yes, it does; for it presses the understanding into its service, and the latter supplies it with all it wants. And in this service anger itself aids it; for the passions, in moments of excitement fecundate the understanding with the inspirations which they convey to it.

Do you want a proof that the reasoner in this case was not reason but anger? Here is an evident one. If there were any truth in what the angry man says, it would not be entirely unknown to the bystanders. They also have sentiments of honour, they also highly esteem self-dignity, and know how to distinguish between a word uttered with malicious design, and another let fall unintentionally; and yet they discover nothing of that which the angry man sees with such clearness; and if they smile, that smile is caused, not by the humiliation which he imagines he has suffered, but by his unmeaning and groundless explosion of fury. More: it is not necessary to apply to the bystanders to find out the truth; it is enough to

appeal to the angry man himself when his passion has blown by. Will he think in the same way then as now? It is certain he will not; he will be, perhaps the first to condemn his foolishness, and ask pardon for it.

§ XLVIII.—*Another rule.*

From these observations springs another rule, and it is, that on feeling ourselves under the influence of a passion, we should make an effort to suppose ourselves, if only for a moment, free from its influence. Such a reflection, how rapid soever it may be, greatly contributes to calm the passion, and to excite in the mind ideas quite different from those suggested by blind inclination. The force of the passions is broken the moment they come in contact with a thought which springs from the head; the secret of their victory lies in smothering all those opposed to them, and exciting those that are favourable. But as soon as the attention is turned to another order of ideas, comparison takes place, and exclusiveness consequently ceases. In the meantime are developed other intellectual and moral forces unsubordinated to passion, and the latter loses its primitive force through having to divide with the other faculties the life and energy which it enjoyed alone.

These means are suggested not only by the experience of their good result, but also by a reason founded on the nature of our organisation. The intellectual and moral faculties are not exercised without some of the material organs coming into play. Well, now; among the corporeal organs is distributed a certain

quantity of vital force enjoyed by them alternately in greater or less proportion, and consequently there is a decrease in some, when there is an increase in others. Whence it results, that it must produce a salutary effect to strive to bring into action the organs of intelligence in opposition to those of the passions, and that the energy of those of the latter must diminish in proportion as the organs of intelligence exercise their functions.

But we must remark that this phenomenon is verified by directing the attention of the intelligence in opposition to the passions, which is effected by transferring it for a moment to the order of ideas which it would have, if not under the passionate influence ; for if, on the contrary, intelligence is directed in favour of the passion, the latter will be increased ; and what it might have lost in what we may call purely organic energy, it recovers in moral energy, in the greater abundance of resources it finds to attain its object, and in that bill of indemnity through which it believes itself free from accusations, when it sees that the intellect, far from combating, aids it.

This exercise on the passions is not a mere theory ; anyone may convince himself that it is quite practicable, and that its good results are felt as soon as it is employed. It is true we cannot always hit on the best means of smothering, tempering, or directing an excited passion ; nor employ it, when found, as we should ; but the very custom of looking for it is enough to make a man be on his guard and not abandon himself too lightly to the first movements, and it gives him in his practical judgments a criterion of which those are devoid who act otherwise.



§ XLIX.—*Man laughing at himself.*

When a man accustoms himself to carefully observe his passions, he often ends by employing ridicule against himself in his own interior—ridicule, that salt which exists in the heart and on the lips of mortals as one of many preservatives against intellectual and moral corruption; ridicule, which is employed with fruit not only against others, but even against ourselves, when we see the side of our defects which is open to satire. Man, then, says to himself what others might say to him; he is present at the scene which might be represented if the matter had fallen into the hands of an adversary of sparkling good humour. When we use satire against ourselves we employ it against some one else besides; for if we examine the matter, we shall find that there is in our interior two men who dispute, struggle, and are never at peace; and so as the intelligent, moral, provident man employs against the stupid, immoral, and blind one, the firmness of the will and the authority of reason, so also he sometimes combats and humbles him with the sharp stings of satire—a satire all the more witty and free because there are no witnesses, a satire which hurts no reputation, nor lowers us in the esteem of others, for it is not expressed in words, and the mocking smile which plays on the lips dies the moment it appears.

A thought of this class occurring in the agitation caused by the passions, produces an effect like that of a judicious, incisive, and penetrating word hurled into the midst of a turbulent assembly. How often does

an expressive look change the state of mind of a bystander, moderating or smothering a burning passion ! And what has that look expressed ? Nothing more than a call to decorum, a consideration for the place or the persons about, a friendly expostulation, a delicate irony ; nothing more than an appeal to the good sense of the party under the influence of the passion ; and this was enough to extinguish it. Why should we not produce in ourselves the effect caused in us by others, if not fully as well, at least approximately ?

§ L.—*Perpetual childhood of man.*

Very little suffices to make man go astray ; but very little is needed to correct some of his defects. He is rather weak than wicked, he is far from that satanic wrongheadedness which never abandons evil once embraced : on the contrary, he pursues good as well as evil, and deserts both with great facility. He is a child up to old age ; he presents himself before others with all possible seriousness ; but in his interior he knows well he is puerile in many things, and is ashamed of himself. It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet, which is very true. And it is because man, when viewed closely, manifests the littleness which lowers him. But he knows more of himself than his valet does, and is consequently less even in his own eyes. Even in his best years he needs to veil the puerility which exists in his heart.

Children laugh, and play, and sport ; and then they sigh, and cry, and rage, and often without knowing why : does not the adult often do the same in his own way ? Children yield to an impulse of their organi-

sation, of their state of health, of the atmospheric influence which affects them agreeably or disagreeably : as soon as these causes change, their state of mind changes too ; they remember not the moment just gone, nor think of the future ; they are guided solely by the actual impression they experience. Does not the most serious, grave, and settled man do the same a hundred times ?

§ LI.—*Change of Mr. Nicacius in a few hours.*

Mr. Nicacius is a man advanced in years, of sound and mature judgment, full of knowledge and experience, and is rarely carried away by the impression of the moment. He weighs everything in the scales of sound reason, and in these scales he does not permit the passions to have any weight. You speak to him about an enterprise of great importance, depending on his acquaintance with the world, and his peculiar knowledge of business of this kind. Mr. Nicacius is at your service ; he has no hesitation to enter fully into the matter, and even to risk a part of his capital in it. He is quite certain of not losing it : the obstacles give him no trouble, he knows how to remove them ; nor powerful rivals, for Mr. Nicacius will find a way to put them down. He has done more difficult things in his life ; he has had more troublesome affairs than that on hand, and more dangerous rivals to conquer. Filled with this flattering idea, he expresses himself with ease and rapidity ; he gesticulates with energy, his look is wonderfully expressive, his countenance quite juvenile, one would say he was back in his five-and-twenty summers, only that some gray

hairs peeping out from under his wig treacherously reveal the trophies of time.

The affair is ended, some details only are to be squared up; you are to have another interview to settle them: to-morrow? Not at all, no delay, Mr. Nicacius' activity will not tolerate it, this very day—this evening. Mr. Nicacius goes home, and nothing disagreeable occurs either to himself personally, or in his family, or in his affairs.

It is the hour appointed, you attend punctually, and you stand before the hero of the morning. Mr. Nicacius' clothes are a little disordered in consequence of the choking heat there is. Reclining on the sofa, he returns your salute with a friendly effort, but with evident signs of weariness.

Well, Mr. Nicacius, I suppose we had better bring this affair to a close.

Oh! there is time enough, . . . says Mr. Nicacius, and his face is contracted with evident signs of being bored.

As you appointed this evening . . . .

Yes, but . . . .

As you like.

No doubt. But we require to think over it; after all . . . .

As to difficulties, I know they exist; but seeing you so sanguine this morning, I confess it all looked plain sailing to me.

Sanguine, of course I was . . . and I am still . . . but yet we must not be in too great a hurry. . . . We will talk of it another time, he adds, with the expression of one who fears to compromise himself.



Mr Nicacius is quite another man, but he expresses what he feels ; there is now nothing of the daring, nothing of the activity of the morning ; nothing of the projects then of such easy execution ; then the obstacles signified nothing, now they are insuperable ; rivals were not of the slightest importance, now they are invincible. What has happened ? Has Mr. Nicacius got more information ? He has not seen a soul. Has he meditated on the business ? He has not even thought of it. What has happened, then, to cause such a mental revolution, change his mode of seeing things, and make his juvenile spirits evaporate ? Nothing ; the explanation of the phenomenon is very simple ; don't seek it in great things, it is in very small ones. In the first place it is now excessively hot, and there is a great change from the cool air of the morning ; Mr. Nicacius is exceedingly exhausted, the atmosphere is oppressive, and thunder is threatening. Besides, he had a heavy dinner ; his evening doze was rather short and uncomfortable. What more do you want ? Is all this not enough to upset any man and modify his opinions ? What evil star guided you to his house notwithstanding the appointment ?

Such is man ; the least thing disconcerts him, and transforms him into another being. His soul being united to a body subject to a thousand different impressions, which rapidly succeed one another, and are received with as much facility as the leaf of a tree is impressed by the movements of the wind, participates in a certain measure of the same inconstancy and variety, and frequently refers to other things the changes which the man himself alone has experienced.

§ LII.—*The sentiments by themselves are a bad rule of conduct.*

What we have said shows the impossibility of directing the conduct of man by feeling alone ; and the literature of our days, so little occupied in communicating ideas of reason and morality, and aiming solely to all appearance, at exciting sentiment, loses sight of the nature of man, and causes evils of immense transcendence.

To deliver man over to sentiment alone, is to send a ship to sea without a rudder. It is equivalent to proclaiming the infallibility of the passions, and saying : “ Act ever through instinct, and blindly obey all the motions of your heart ; ” it is equivalent to despoiling man of his understanding and free will, and converting him into a simple instrument of sensibility.

It has been said that great thoughts come from the heart ; and it might also be added that from the heart come great errors, wild dreams, great extravagance, and fearful crimes. From the heart comes everything ; it is a magnificent harp which emits all kinds of sounds, from the deafening noise of the infernal caverns to the most delicate harmony of the celestial spheres.

The man who has no guide but his heart, is the play-toy of a thousand different, and often contradictory, inclinations : a feather shows how the wind blows, and during unsettled weather does not display more varied and irregular movements than such a man. Who could count or classify the infinite sentiments which succeed one another in our breast in a

few hours? Who has not noticed the astounding facility with which a love for some labour is transformed into an almost invincible repugnance? Who has not felt sympathy or antipathy in presence of some person without being able to assign a reason for it, and without its being afterwards justified by facts? Who has not wondered at finding himself completely transformed in a few moments, passing from high spirits to dejection, from boldness to timidity, or *vice versâ* without any ostensible cause? Who is ignorant of the changes which the sentiments undergo from age, from difference of profession, from social position, from family connexions, from health, from climate, from change of season and air? Everything that affects our ideas, our senses, or our body, no matter in what way, also modifies our sentiments; and hence the astounding inconstancy of those who abandon themselves to all the impulses of the passions; hence the fickleness of too sensitive organisations, if great efforts be not made to master it.

The passions have been given to man as a means to rouse and put him in motion, as instruments to aid him in action; but not as directors of his mind, nor as guides of his conduct. It is sometimes said the heart does not deceive; lamentable error! what is our life but a web of illusions woven by the heart? If, occasionally we hit the mark by blindly yielding to its inspirations, how often and often do we miss? Do you know why this instinctive success is attributed to the heart? It is because its rare success attracts attention, its failures are so many; because we are strangely surprised to see it hit the mark with all its

blindness, when it usually shoots beside it. Hence we remember its exceptional success, for which we forgive its mistakes, and we attribute to it a prevision and tact which it does not and cannot possess.

To found morality on sentiment, is to destroy it; to regulate one's conduct by the inspirations of sentiment, is to render it unsettled, and frequently to make it dangerous and immoral. The tendency of the literature at present in vogue in France, and unfortunately being introduced into Spain, too, is to deify the passions; and deified passions are extravagance, immorality, corruption and crime.

§ LIII.—*Not sensible impressions, but morality and reason.*

The conduct of man, as well with respect to that which is moral as to that which is useful, should not be governed by impressions but by fixed rules; in that which is moral, by the maxims of eternal truth; in that which is useful, by the counsels of sound reason. Man is not a god in whom everything is sanctified simply by its being in him; the impressions he receives are modifications of his nature which alter not the eternal laws; a just thing does not lose its justice because it is disagreeable to him; an unjust thing, because agreeable, is not purified of its injustice. The implacable enemy who buries a revengeful dagger in the breast of his victim, feels a ferocious pleasure in his heart, and yet his action does not cease to be a crime; the Sister of Charity who attends a sick person, who alleviates and consoles him, often suffers great



annoyance, but her action does not thereby cease to be heroically virtuous.

Prescinding from that which is moral, and attending to that which is useful, it is necessary to deal with things as they are in themselves, not as they affect us; the truth is not essentially in our impressions, but in the objects; when the former place us in disagreement with the latter, they set us wrong. The real world is not the world of poets and novelists; it must be considered and dealt with as it is in itself, not sentimentally, not fantastically, not as in a dream, but in a positive, practical, and prosaic way.

§ LIV.—*Exaggeration makes a good sentiment bad.*

Religion does not suffocate the sentiments, it only moderates and directs them; prudence does not reject the aid of tempered passions, it only guards against their mastery. Harmony is not to be produced in man by the simultaneous development of the passions, but by their repression; the counterpoise of one passion in action is not precisely another, but principally reason and morality. The very opposition of the good inclinations to the bad, ceases to be salutary when reason does not preside over it and direct it; for the good inclinations are not good, except in as much as reason rules and moderates them; abandoned to themselves, they become exaggerated, and turn bad.

A brave soldier is left in charge of a dangerous position; the risk momentarily increases; his comrades are falling around him; the enemy approaches nearer and nearer; there is scarcely any hope of being able to resist, and the order to retire has not arrived.

Dismay for a moment enters the heart of the brave fellow ; why fruitlessly die ? Does the duty of discipline and honour extend to a useless sacrifice ? Would it not be better to abandon the position, and excuse himself to his superior officer with the imperiousness of the necessity ? “No,” his generous heart responds, “it is cowardice which speaks in the name of prudence. What would your companions say ?—what your commander ?—what all who know you ?—death, then, without vacillating, death !”

Can we blame this reflection with which the brave officer has endeavoured to support himself against the temptation of cowardice ? Has not this desire of honour, this horror of the disgrace of appearing a coward, been only a sentiment in him ? Yes ; but a noble, generous sentiment, through force of which he has been fortified against the insinuations of fear, and has done his duty. That passion, then, directed to a good object, has produced an excellent result, which perhaps would not have been attained without it. In those critical, terrible moments, in which the roar of the cannon, the cheers of the approaching enemy, and the groans of his dying comrades, began to introduce dismay into his heart, reason alone would perhaps have yielded ; but it has called to its aid a passion more powerful than the fear of death—the sentiment of honour, the shame of passing for a coward—and reason triumphed and the call of duty was obeyed.

The order to fall back having arrived, the officer joins his brigade, after losing in the fatal post almost all his men. We looked on you as dead, says one of his friends, in joke ; I am sure you did not forget the

parapet. The officer believes himself insulted; he demands satisfaction, and in a few hours the imprudent friend who rallied him ceases to exist. The very same sentiment which a little before impelled him to a heroic action is now the cause of a murder. Honour, the fear of passing for a coward, had sustained the brave fellow to the point of despising life; honour, the fear of passing for a coward, has stained his hands with the blood of his imprudent friend. Passion directed by reason becomes heroism; delivered over to blind impulse, it is degraded into crime.

Emulation is a powerful sentiment, an excellent preservative against sloth, against cowardice, against all passions opposed to the useful exercise of our faculties. The teacher avails himself of it to stimulate his pupils; the father, to correct the evil inclinations of his child; the officer, to procure from his men constancy, valour, and heroic actions. The desire to advance, to do one's duty, to carry out great enterprises, the painful reflection that we did not do all that we should and could, the shame of seeing ourselves surpassed by those we could have beaten, are sentiments extremely just, extremely noble, and excellent to urge us forward on the road to good. There is nothing reprehensible in them; they are the spring of many virtuous actions, of sublime resolutions, and of surpassing feats.

But if the sentiment become exaggerated, the sweet aromatic, comforting nectar is turned into the deadly humour, which flows from the mouth of a poisonous reptile; emulation becomes envy. The sentiment at bottom is the same, but has been carried too far; the

desire of advancing has become a burning thirst; there is now none of that rivalry compatible with the closest friendship, which endeavours to sweeten the humiliation of the conquered by loading him with proofs of affection, and sincere praise for his efforts; which is content with winning the laurel, and hides it that it may not wound the self-esteem of others; or on the contrary, the regret at seeing one's self surpassed has become a rancour against the person who surpasses; and then there is a real grief, a real fury, not for the absence of progress in himself, but at sight of another's: there is a real hatred of the conqueror; there is an active desire to lower the merit of his acts, there is a temptation to calumniate, there is a contempt in which an ill-restrained fury is veiled, there is a sardonic smile, which scarcely hides the torments of the soul.

There is nothing more conformable to reason than that sentiment of self-dignity, which stands up in holy indignation when the brutal passions incite to some degrading action; which reminds man of the sacredness of duty, and does not permit him to fail in it; that sentiment which inspires a man's proper bearing, according to the position he occupies; that sentiment which throws majesty around the countenance and manners of the monarch, which lends to the face and bearing of a pontiff holy gravity and august unction; which blazes in the fiery eye of a great general, and in his resolute, daring, imposing gesture; that sentiment which does not permit success to indulge in unbecoming joy, nor misfortune to wallow in ignoble grief; which marks the time for prudent silence, or



suggests a becoming and firm word ; which draws the line between affability and familiarity, frankness and thoughtlessness, natural grace and unbecoming liberty of manners ; that sentiment, in fine, which makes a man vigorous without hardening him, which softens without relaxing him, renders him flexible without inconstancy, consistent without hardheadedness. But this very sentiment, if not moderated and directed by reason, becomes pride—pride which swells the heart, lifts the eyebrows, gives the physiognomy an offensive aspect, and the manners an affectation between irritating and ridiculous ; pride which renders all improvement impossible, which raises obstacles to its own action, which inspires great crimes, which provokes abhorrence and contempt, and renders itself insufferable.

What sentiment more reasonable than the desire of acquiring or preserving what is required for one's own necessities, and those of the persons one has under his charge through duty or affection ? It takes measures against prodigality, it keeps away from excesses, it is a preservative against a licentious life, it inspires a love of sobriety, it tempers all desires, it makes labour sweet. But this very sentiment, carried to exaggeration, does acts unacceptable to God, suffers cold in winter, heat in summer, neglects health, abandons the sick, mortifies the family with privations, denies all favours to friends, closes the hand against the poor, cruelly hardens the heart to all kinds of misfortune, torments with suspicions, dread, and anxiety, prolongs the night-watch, engenders insomnia, persecutes and agitates with the apparition

of spectral thieves the short moments of sleep, and renders feverish and restless

“The miser on his narrow bed,  
Who wakes with terror sweating.”

See, then, with what truth I said that exaggeration makes good sentiments themselves bad; and that sentiment by itself alone is an insecure, and often a dangerous guide. Reason should direct it conformably to the eternal principles of morality; reason should guide it, even in the regions of utility. Hence man can never employ himself too much in the knowledge of himself; no effort is superfluous to acquire that moral and just criterion, which manifests practical truth to us, that truth which should preside over all the actions of our life. To proceed at haphazard, to abandon one's self blindly to the inspirations of the heart, is to expose one's self to become immoral, and to commit a series of errors which must end in terrible misfortunes.

§ LV.—*Science is very useful to practice.*

In everything concerning objects subject to necessary laws, it is clear that the knowledge of these laws must be very useful, if not indispensable. From this principle I infer that those act badly who, in treating of execution, neglect science and attend only to practice. Science, if it be really worthy of the name, engages in the discovery of the laws which rule nature; and so its aid must be of the utmost importance. We have an incontrovertible proof of this truth in what has occurred in Europe within the last three centuries. Since mathematics and the natural sciences

have begun to be cultivated, the progress of the arts has been astonishing. In the present century ingenious discoveries are being made; and what are they but so many applications of science?

Routine which despises science, displays thereby a foolish pride, the offspring of ignorance. Man is distinguished from the lower animals by the reason with which the Author of nature has endowed him; and he who refuses to employ the lights of his understanding in the direction of his operations, no matter how simple they may be, is ungrateful to the bounty of the Creator. Why has that lamp been given us, if not to avail ourselves of it as far as possible? And if such grand scientific conceptions are due to it, why shall we not consult it that it may supply us with rules to guide us in practice?

See the backwardness of Spain in material development, thanks to the neglect with which the natural and exact sciences have been so long treated; if we compare ourselves with the nations which have not committed this error, it will not be hard to see the difference. It is true there is a part in the sciences purely speculative, which can scarcely lead to practical results; nevertheless, we must not forget, that even this part, apparently useless, and, we might say, of mere adornment, is often bound up with others which have immediate relation to the arts. So that its inutility is only apparent, for in the course of time consequences are discovered which were never dreamed of. The history of the natural and exact sciences gives us abundant proof of this truth. What is there

more speculative, and apparently more sterile, than continuous fractions? And yet Huygens availed himself of them to determine the dimensions of the indented wheels used in the construction of his planetary automaton.

Practice without theory remains stationary, or creeps on very slowly; but, on the other hand, theory without practice would be fruitless. Theory does not progress nor become solid without observation; and observation rests on practice. What would agricultural science be without the farmer's experience?

Those who dedicate themselves to the career of an art should, if possible, be well made up in the principles of the science on which it is founded. Carpenters, masons, machinists, would undoubtedly become better tradesmen if they knew the elements of geometry and mechanics; and painters, dyers, and men of like trades would not depend so much on chance, if they were not totally ignorant of chemistry. If a great part of the time miserably lost at school and at home on other studies were employed in acquiring preparatory knowledge, accommodated to the business about to be undertaken, the individuals themselves, their families and society would certainly gather more fruit from their labours and pecuniary sacrifices.

It is all well enough for a young man to be literary; but what use will a brilliant passage from Sir Walter Scott or Victor Hugo be to him, when he is placed at the head of an establishment, and must discover the defects of some machine, calculate the advantages or drawbacks of some new process, or divine the secret employed in foreign countries for perfecting some



dye? Is it political articles in newspapers that will teach the architect and the engineer how to build with solidity, elegance, and good taste, or prepare a successful plan of a railway or a canal, to direct the works with intelligence, and to lay out a road or suspend a bridge?

§ LVI.—*Inconvenience of universality.*

Knowledge is costly and life extremely short; and yet to our grief we see men scattering their faculties over a thousand different things, flattering at once their vanity and sloth: their vanity, because they may thus acquire the reputation of being learned; their sloth, for it is much more troublesome to fix the attention on one matter and master it than to acquire a few general notions on every branch.

We talk a great deal of the advantages of division of labour in industrial pursuits, and we do not see that the principle is also applicable to science. The men born with felicitous dispositions for everything are very few indeed. Many who might be a sort of prodigy, if they dedicated themselves exclusively to one branch, become useless by aspiring to universality. Incalculable injuries come from this to society and the individuals themselves; for many powers are uselessly consumed, which, if properly directed, might have done great things. Vaucanson and Watt worked wonders in mechanics; and it is very probable that they should not have distinguished themselves in the fine arts and poetry. Lafontaine immortalised himself with his "Fables," and if he had been brought up to business, he would have been

stupid. It is well known that in his intercourse with society, he appeared sometimes to want common sense.

I do not deny that one class of knowledge aids another, nor that one science may derive great advantages from the lights of others, perhaps of a totally distinct order; but I repeat that this is for few, and that the generality of men should dedicate themselves specially to one branch.

In the sciences as well as in the arts, what should be done is to make a good choice of a profession; but once chosen to dedicate one's self to it principally or exclusively.

The abundance of books, of papers, of manuals, of encyclopædias, induces one to study a little of everything; this abundance indicates the great treasures of knowledge heaped up in the course of ages, and enjoyed in our times; but it gives rise to a serious evil, which is to make many lose in intensity what they gain in extension, and induce not a few to believe they know everything when in reality they know nothing.

If Spain is to progress in a real and positive manner, this abuse must be remedied. Let the different classes of genius be confined to their own respective careers, and without forbidding universality of knowledge in those who are capable of it, let care be taken that in some there be not wanting profoundness, in all sufficiency. The majority of professions require a whole man, to be discharged as they should; if this truth be overlooked, intellectual powers will be miserably consumed without result; just as in an ill-constructed

machine a great part of the impulse is lost for want of connecting-rods or bands to direct and apply it.

Whoever reflects on the intellectual movement of our country at the present time must discover at a glance the cause of the sterility which afflicts us, in spite of the ever-growing activity. The force is dissipated and lost, for want of direction; the intellect moves at hap-hazard without thinking whither it is going; those who successfully follow some profession abandon it in view of some advantages in another; and the revolution by changing the parts, by making the lawyer a diplomatist, the soldier a politician, the merchant a man of government, the judge an economist, and nothing everything, intensifies the vertigo of ideas, and opposes serious obstacles to all progress.

§ LVII.—*Force of will.*

Man has always a great stock of forces unemployed; and the secret of achieving great things is to know how to work the mine there is in one's self. To become convinced of this truth it is enough to consider how much a man's powers are multiplied when he finds himself in a difficulty: his understanding is more capacious and penetrating, his heart more daring and enterprising, his body more vigorous: and why? Are new powers created? Certainly not: they are only awakened, put in motion, and applied to a determinate object. And how is this done? The difficulty spurs the will, and makes it display, as it were, the plentitude of its power: it desires the end with intensity and warmth, it energetically commands all the faculties to labour to discover the proper means, and

employ them when discovered ; and man is astonished to find himself another being, capable of carrying out what would have appeared to him impossible in ordinary circumstances.

What happens in pressing necessity should teach us how to avail ourselves of, and multiply, our forces in the course of ordinary business : generally what is wanting to attain an end is *will*—decided, resolute, firm will, which aims at the object without dread of obstacles or fatigue. In the generality of cases we have no real will, we have only velleity ; we would wish, but we do not ; we would wish, if we had not to step out of our habitual sloth, to bend to toil, to surmount obstacles ; but we do not wish to attain the end at such cost ; we sluggishly employ our faculties, and lie down wearied before we reach half way.

§ LVIII.—*Firmness of will.*

Firmness of will is the secret of carrying out arduous enterprises ; with this firmness we begin by mastering ourselves, which is the first condition to master business. We all experience the existence of two men in us : the one intelligent, active, of elevated thoughts, of noble desires conformable to reason, of arduous and grand projects ; the other lazy, sleepy, of low views, rolling in the dust like an unclean reptile, ready to sweat with anguish if he finds he has to lift his head from the earth. For the second there is no recollection of yesterday, no thought of to-morrow ; there is nothing but the present, the enjoyment of the moment, all else exists not : for the first there are the teaching of the past and the view of the future ; there



are other interests besides the present, there is a life too wide to be limited by what affects us at the moment: for the second, man is a being that feels and enjoys; for the first, man is a rational creature, after the image and likeness of God, who disdains to bend his brow to the dust, who raises it with noble haughtiness to the heavens, who knows all his own dignity, who conceives the nobility of his origin and destiny, who elevates his thoughts above the region of sensations, and prefers duty to pleasure.

To make any solid and firm advance, we must develop the noble, and keep down and direct the ignoble man, with firmness of will. Whoever has mastered himself, easily masters any business whatever, and those who take part in it. For it is well known that a firm and consistent will, even by itself, and prescinding from the other qualities of its possessor, exercises a powerful ascendant over other minds, and subdues and brings them under its control.

Wrongheadedness is undoubtedly a serious evil, for it makes us reject counsel, and shuts us up in our own judgments and resolutions, against all considerations of prudence and justice. We should carefully guard against it, for as it is rooted in pride, it is a plant which becomes easily developed. Nevertheless, perhaps we might assert that wrongheadedness is not as common, nor causes as much injury, as inconstancy. The latter renders us incapable of carrying out arduous enterprises, and makes our faculties barren, by leaving them unemployed, or incessantly applying them to different objects, without permitting us to gather the seasonable fruit of our toil; it makes us retreat at

sight of the first obstacle, and faint before any risk or fatigue; it leaves us at the mercy of our passions, of events, and of the people who surround us; it also makes us obstinate in the prurience of change, and causes us to overlook the counsels of justice, of prudence, and even of our dearest interests.

In order to attain this firmness of will, and to guard against inconstancy, we must form fixed convictions, prescribe to ourselves a system of conduct, and never work on chance. It is true that the variety of events and circumstances, and the shortness of our prevision, often oblige us to modify our preconceived plans, but this does not prevent our forming them, nor authorize us to surrender ourselves blindly to the course of things, and move at hap-hazard. What have we got reason for, if not to avail ourselves of it, and employ it as the guide of our actions?

Take it for certain that whoever keeps these observations in mind, whoever acts on system, whoever works on premeditated design, will always have an immense advantage over those who act otherwise: if they be his assistants, they will find themselves naturally placed under his orders, and he will be constituted their ruler without their noticing, or his pretending to it; if they be his adversaries or enemies, he will overcome them, even though he dispose of fewer resources.

A tranquil conscience, premeditated design, firm will—these are the conditions for carrying out any enterprise. This requires sacrifice, it is true; this requires that man should conquer himself, undoubtedly; this supposes much interior labour, indubitably; but in the intellectual, as in the moral, as in the physical,

order, in things temporal as in things eternal, it is ordained that he alone shall win the crown who enters on the contest.

§ LIX.—*Firmness, energy, impetuosity.*

A firm will is not the same as an energetic, and much less, as an impetuous, will. These three qualities are very distinct, are not always found united, and not rarely reciprocally exclude each other. Impetuosity is produced by an attack of passion; it is the movement of the will hurried on by passion—it is passion itself. As to energy, a momentary attack is not enough; it requires a strong passion, sustained for a lengthened period. In impetuosity there is an explosion, the ball flies out, but falls at a short distance; in energy there is also an explosion, perhaps not so loud, but the projectile whistles for a great distance through the air, and hits a distant mark. Firmness requires neither one nor the other; it admits of passion, frequently needs it; but it is a lasting passion, with a fixed direction, and subject to regularity. Impetuosity either destroys in a moment all obstacles or is itself broken; energy sustains the contest longer, but is also broken; firmness removes the obstacles if it can; if it cannot, it surmounts them, or goes round them; if it can do neither, it stops and waits.

But let no one think that this firmness cannot have in given cases energy and irresistible impetuosity; after waiting a long time, it grows impatient, and a final resolution is the more to be feared the more it is premeditated and calculated. Those men apparently so cold, but who in reality have a concentrated and

compressed fire within, are formidable when the fatal moment arrives and they say "now." . . . Then they fix their burning gaze on the object, and rush at it, rapid as the lightning, sure as an arrow.

Moral forces are like the physical ; they need to be economised ; those who constantly waste lose them ; those who reserve them with prudent economy have them strong and active at the fitting moment. It is not the firmest wills which butt against everything ; on the contrary, the most impetuous yield when resisted, and attack when not opposed. Men of strong will do not exercise it on small things ; they look on them with contempt, and do not consider them worth a combat. And so in ordinary intercourse they are condescending, flexible, yielding with ease, and agreeing to anything. But when an occasion arises, whether it be that a serious business calls on them to display their strength, or that some insignificant person has outstepped the limits of condescension, and they must say, *enough* ; then the lion is not more impetuous if they have to attack, nor the rock more firm, if they must resist.

That strength of will which gives courage in combat and fortitude in suffering, which triumphs over all resistance, which yields at sight of no obstacle, which is not broken down by want of success, nor staggers under the severest shocks ; that will, which according to the circumstances of the moment, is burning fire or chilly frost ; which paints on the countenance a formidable tempest, or a serenity still more formidable ; that great strength of will, which is to-day what it was yesterday, which will be to-morrow



what it is to-day ; that strength of will, without which it were impossible to carry out arduous enterprises requiring time ; which is one of the distinctive characteristics of those who have signalized themselves in the annals of humanity, who live in the monuments they have left behind, in the institutions they founded, in the revolutions they have wrought, or in the dikes they raised against revolutions ; that wonderful strength of will possessed by the great conquerors, the heads of sects, the discoverers of new worlds, the inventors who consumed their lives in search of their invention, the politicians who with iron hand moulded society in a new form, impressing on it a seal which ages have not blotted out ; that force of will which makes of a humble friar a great pope in Sixtus V., a great regent in Cisneros ; that force of will which, like a wall of brass, stops Protestantism on the Pyrenees, which hurls a gigantic Armada against England, and calmly receives the news of its loss ; which subjects Portugal, conquers in St. Quintin, builds the Escorial, and in the obscure cell of that monastery serenely contemplates the approach of death ; whilst

“ And bustle strange and weeping sad  
Through Philip’s palace speed.  
And husbandman and hoary monk  
In inner heart do bleed ;”

that strength of will, I repeat, requires two conditions, or rather results, from the combined action of two causes—an idea and a sentiment. An idea clear, lively, fixed, powerful, which absorbs the understanding, occupying and filling it completely ; a sentiment

strong and energetic, exclusive master of the heart, and thoroughly subordinated to the idea. If either of these circumstances be wanting, the will is weak and vacillating.

When the idea has not the sentiment to assist it, the will is weak ; when the sentiment has not the aid of the idea the will is vacillating and inconstant. The idea is the light which points out the road : it is more, it is the luminous spot which fascinates, which draws, which absorbs ; the sentiment is the impulse, the power which moves, which hurls.

When the idea is not lively, the attraction is diminished, uncertainty commences, and the will is irresolute ; when the idea is not fixed, when the luminous point shifts, the will is insecure ; when the idea is clouded or is replaced by others, the will changes its object, becomes voluble ; and when the sentiment is not sufficiently powerful, when it is not proportioned to the idea, the understanding contemplates it with pleasure, with affection, perhaps with enthusiasm, but the soul does not feel equal to so much ; its flight cannot reach so far ; the will attempts nothing, and if it do attempt anything, it becomes dismayed and faints.

It is incredible what these forces can do when united ; and the strangest thing is that their power does not affect their possessor alone, but acts on those about him. The ascendant exercised on other men by a person of this class is beyond all description. That strength of will, sustained and directed by the force of an idea, has something mysterious in it which appears to invest man with a superior character, and

gives him the right to command his fellow-men ; it inspires an unlimited confidence, and a blind obedience to the hero's commands. Even though they be wrong, they are not thought so, everyone believes there is an inconceivable secret plan in operation ; " he knows well what he is doing," the soldiers of Napoleon were accustomed to say, when rushing on death.

For the ordinary purposes of life these qualities in so eminent a degree are not necessary ; but to possess them so that they can be adapted to the talents, disposition, and position of the individual, is always useful, and in some cases necessary. On this depend, in a great measure, the advantages which some people have over others in the proper direction and management of business ; and it may be asserted that the man who is entirely wanting in these qualities is of little worth, and incapable of carrying out any important matter. For great things great force is needed, for little things a little is enough ; but all require some. The difference is in the intensity and in the objects ; but not in the nature of the faculties nor in their development. The great man and the ordinary one are directed by the understanding, and moved by the will and the passions. In both the steadiness of idea and the strength of sentiment are the two principles which give the will energy and firmness. The particles of dust hurried along by the wind are subject to the same laws as the mass of a planet.

§ LX.—*Conclusion and resumé.*

Judgment is a means of knowing the truth. The truth in things is reality. The truth in the under-

standing is to know things as they are. The truth in the will is to will properly, in conformity with the rules of sound morality. The truth in conduct is to act on the impulse of correct will. The truth in proposing to one's self an end is to propose an end proper and fitting, according to circumstances. The truth in the selection of means is to select those which are conformable to morality, and are best adapted to the end. There are truths of many classes ; for there is reality of many classes. There are also many means of knowing the truth. All things are not to be looked on in the same way, but in the way they can be seen best. To man many faculties have been given. Not one of them is useless. Not one of them is intrinsically bad. Their sterility or malice comes from ourselves who employ them badly. A sound logic should comprehend the whole man ; for truth is in relation with all the faculties of man. To care one and neglect another is sometimes to render the latter barren, and spoil the former. Man is a little world ; his faculties are numerous and diverse ; he needs harmony, and there is no harmony without skilful combination, and there is no skilful combination if everything is not in its own place, if he does not exercise his functions or suspend them at the fitting moment. When man leaves inactive any of his faculties, he is an instrument wanting chords ; when he employs them badly, he is an instrument out of tune. Reason is cold, but it sees clearly ; give it heat, but do not cloud its clearness : the passions are blind, but they communicate strength ; give them direction, and take advantage of their strength. The understanding subject



to the will ; the will subject to the moral law ; the passions subject to the understanding and the will, and all enlightened, directed and elevated by religion — behold the complete man, the man *par excellence*. In him reason gives light, the imagination paints, the heart warms, and religion deifies.

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## NOTES.

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(1.) Page 80. *Verum est quod est*, says St. Augustin (Lib. 2. Solil., cap 5). We can distinguish between the *truth of a thing* and the *truth of the understanding*: the first, which is the thing itself, might be called objective; the second, which is the conformity of the understanding with the thing, may be called formal, or subjective. Gold is a metal, independently of our understanding; this is an objective truth. The understanding knows that gold is a metal; this is a formal, or subjective truth.

It would be great presumption to despise the rules for thinking well. "Nullam dicere," says Cicero, "maximarum rerum esse artem, cum minimarum sine arte nulla est, hominum est parum considerate loquentium." "It is the part of light-headed people to say there is no art for great things, when the smallest things are not without it." (Lib. 2, de Offic.) The ancients and moderns are agreed about the utility of rules: the difficulty is in knowing them, and the best means of teaching how to use them. *Gift of the gods* Socrates calls logic; but unfortunately we do not avail ourselves as we should of this precious gift, and the cavillings of men often render it useless to many. The Aristotelians have been accused of confusing the heads of beginners with the abundance of their rules, and the farrago of abstract discussions. In return, the schools which have succeeded them, and particularly the most modern idealists, are not altogether free from the same charge. Some of them reduce logic to an analysis of the operations of the understanding, and of the means by which ideas are acquired; which involves the highest and most difficult questions which could be put to human philosophy.

We could wish to have a little less science and a little more practice; remembering what Bacon of Verulam says on the art of observation, when he calls it a kind of sagacity, or scent, rather than a science. "*Ars experimentalis sagacitas potius est, et odoratio quædam venatica quam scientia.*" (De Augm. scient. L. 5, c. 2.)

(2.) Page 84. The most illustrious men in the scientific world were dis-

tinguished for great force of attention ; and some of them for an abstraction verging on the incredible. Archimedes, occupied with his geometrical meditations and operations, never notices the uproar of the city taken by the enemy ; Vieta passes uninterruptedly days and nights absorbed in his algebraic combinations, and is completely lost in himself, till his domestics and friends rouse him ; Leibnitz injures his health by remaining several days without rising from his chair. This extraordinary abstraction is to be respected in men who have enriched the sciences with their wonderful discoveries ; they had really and truly a mission to fulfil, and they are excusable to a certain degree for sacrificing their health to so sublime an object. But even in the most eminent geniuses the intensity of attention has not been incompatible with its flexibility. Descartes was elaborating his colossal conceptions amid the din of war ; and when he wearied of military life and retired from the service in which he had enlisted as a volunteer, he continued to travel over the principal countries of Europe. With such a line of life, it is very probable the great philosopher learned to unite intensity with flexibility of attention, and grew to be much less delicate than Kant, of whom it is said, that the disorder or change of a button on one of his hearers was sufficient to make him lose the thread of his discourse. This will not appear so strange if we consider that the German philosopher was never out of his own country, and consequently was only accustomed to meditate in the retirement of his study. But let the singularity of some celebrated men be what it may, it is of great importance to force one's self to acquire that flexibility of attention which can very well be allied with its intensity. In this, as in everything else, much can be done by labour, and the repetition of acts, which engender a habit not easily lost in after life. By accustoming one's self to think on everything that comes before him, and constantly giving the mind a serious direction, one attains gently, and without effort, the proper disposition of mind, now to dwell for long hours on one point, now to softly effect a transition from one class of occupation to another. When it does not possess this flexibility, the mind is fatigued and enervated by excessive concentration, or wanders away to some other object of attraction ; the first being, besides injurious to health, of little service towards progress in a science ; and the second inutilising the understanding for serious studies. The mind, like the body, needs proper regimen ; and in this regimen there is one indispensable condition—temperance.

(3.) Page 87. A man dedicated to a profession for which he was not born, is a piece of machinery out of joint : he is of little use, and often does



nothing but suffer and muddle. Perhaps he works with zeal and ardour, but his efforts are either impotent, or are far from responding to his desires. Whoever has paid some attention to this matter must have observed the evil effects of such dislocation. Men well gifted for one thing, prove themselves very inferior if they engage on something else. One of the most brilliant talents I have known in moral and political sciences I found far under mediocrity in the exact ; and, on the contrary, I have seen others with felicitous dispositions for the latter, who were almost a nullity with regard to the former.

And the most singular thing in the difference of talents is, that even with respect to the same science, some are better suited than others for certain parts. Experience will prove that in learning mathematics, a pupil's capacity is not equal in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. In counting, some will have much more facility in the part of application than in that of generalisation ; some will advance in geometry much more than their success in algebra and arithmetic would lead one to expect. In the demonstration of the theorems and in the solution of the problems, marked differences are seen ; some have facility in applying or constructing, but stop on the surface, if I may say so, without penetrating into the heart of the matter ; whilst others, not at all so smart at that, are distinguished for their talent of demonstration, their facility in generalising, their power of seeing results, and of deducing distant consequences. The latter are men of science, the former, men of practice ; those should dedicate themselves to study, these, to the labour of application.

If these differences are noticed in the limits of the same science, what will be the case with regard to those which deal with things widely different in themselves ? And yet who is there pays any attention to them when directing children or young men by the road which suits them ? We are all thrown, as it were, into the same mould ; in the election of a profession, everything is attended to but the peculiar disposition of those who are to embrace it. Ah ! how much neglect of observation there is in what relates to education and instruction !

In the proper selection of a course of life, not only is the progress of the individual concerned, but the felicity of his whole life. A man who dedicates himself to an occupation for which he is adapted has great enjoyment, even amid the fatigues of labour ; but the unfortunate fellow who is condemned to a business for which he was not born, has always to do constant violence to himself, whether to counteract his inclinations, or to supply with effort what he wants in cleverness.

Some of those who have been most distinguished in their respective professions, would probably have been very mediocre if they had been dedicated to another which did not suit them. Malebranch was engaged in the study of languages and history when he chanced to enter a bookseller's shop, where he found Descartes' "Treatise on Man;" its perusal produced such an impression on him, that it is said he had to interrupt it more than once to calm the wild throbbings of his heart. From that day Malebranch dedicated himself to the study for which he was peculiarly adapted, and ten years after he published his famous work on the "Investigation of Truth." And it was because the words of Descartes awakened the philosophic genius dozing in the youth under the weight of languages and history: he felt himself another man, he knew he was capable of comprehending those sublime doctrines, and, like the poet on reading another poet, he exclaimed—" *I also am a philosopher.*"

Something of the kind also happened Fontaine. He had reached the age of twenty-two, without giving the slightest sign of possessing the poetic fire. He did not know it himself till he read Malherbe's ode on the assassination of Henry IV. And what would this very Fontaine, who stood so high as a poet, have been had he been a man of business? His innocent softness, which made his friends laugh so much, is not a very strong indication of felicitous dispositions for such a life.

I have said that it is well to observe the peculiar talent of every child in order to dedicate him to the course of life for which he is best adapted, and that it would be well to see what he says or does when he has certain objects before him. Madame Perier, in the "Life" of her brother, Pascal, relates that when he was a child his attention was one day attracted by the phenomenon of the different sound of a plate when struck with a knife, according as the finger was applied to it or withdrawn; and that after reflecting a great deal on the cause of this difference, he wrote a little treatise about it. Did not this spirit of observation, at so tender an age, presage the illustrious physicist of the Puy-de-Dome experiment to confirm the ideas of Torriceli and Galileo.

Pascal's father, anxious to form his son's mind by fortifying him with other classes of studies before allowing him to enter on those of mathematics, avoided even speaking of geometry in the child's presence; but the latter, in the privacy of his own room, traced figures and more figures on the wall with a piece of charcoal, and developing the definition of geometry he had picked up, demonstrated the first thirty-two propositions of Euclid. The genius of the eminent geometrician laboured under a powerful inspiration, which he himself was yet incapable of comprehending.

The celebrated Vaucanson passes the time in attentively examining the construction of a clock in the anteroom where he was waiting for his mother ; instead of playing about, he puts his head into the clock-case to try if he can discover the mechanism ; and immediately afterwards endeavours to construct a wooden clock, which reveals the astounding genius of the illustrious constructor of the *Flutist* and *Cleopatra's Asp.*

(4.) Page 97. I have said that the theory of probabilities, aided by that of combinations, makes the impossibility I have called of *common sense* manifest, calculating, if I may say so, the immense distance there is between the possibility of a fact and its existence—a distance which may be regarded as little less than absolutely impossible. To give some idea of this I will suppose that we have seven letters, *s, p, a, n, i, s, h*, which, left to chance, we want to form the word *spanish*. It is evident there is no intrinsic impossibility in the case, for we see it done daily, when a compositor's intelligence presides over the combination ; but if this intelligence be wanting, there is no more reason that they should turn out combined in this than any other way. Well, now ; as the number of combinations of different quantities is equal to  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \dots (n - 1) n$ ,  $n$  expressing the number of factors ; and as in the present case there are seven letters, the number of possible combinations will be equal to  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 = 5,040$ .

Recollecting now that the probability of a fact is the relation of the number of favourable cases to the number of possible cases, it results that the probability of the seven letters turning out so as by chance to form the word *spanish*, is as 1 : 5,040. So that it would be the same as to expect that one black ball should be drawn from an urn in which it was placed with 5,040 white ones.

If there be such difficulty in the formation of one word of seven letters, what will be the case if we take, for example, a writing of many pages, containing a great number of letters ? The imagination is astounded on considering the smallness of the probability when we attend to the following :—

1. The casual formation of one sole word is little less than impossible ; what, then, must we say of thousands of words ? 2. The words without proper order would mean nothing, and consequently they should turn out duly arranged to express what we require. Seven words would cost us the same trouble as seven letters. 3. All this is true even without collocation in lines, and supposing them all in one ; what will be the case if we require lines ? Seven lines would cost the same as seven words or seven letters,

4. To form an idea of the point which the number would reach which should express the cases possible, consider that we have limited ourselves to a small number, *seven*; remember there are many words with more letters; that every line should consist of several words, and all the pages of many lines. 5. Finally, reflect where a number will end which is formed by so augmentative a law as this  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 \dots (n - 1) n$ . Follow up the multiplication for a little while, and you will see the astounding increase.

In the majority of cases in which common sense tells us there is an impossibility, there are many quantities to be combined; I understand by quantity all objects which are to be disposed so as to produce a certain result. If this number be at all considerable, calculation shows that the probability is so small, that the instinct with which we immediately say, without reflection, "this cannot be," is admirable, so well founded on reason is it. I will give another example. Supposing the number of quantities to be a hundred, the number of possible combinations will be  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \dots 99 \times 100$ . To conceive the incredible height to which the product would rise, consider that the logarithms of all these quantities must be added together, and that the *characteristics* alone, pre-scinding from the *false numbers*, give 92: which in itself gives a quantity equal to unity followed by ninety-two ciphers. Add together the *false numbers*, and add the result of the *whole numbers* to the *characteristics*, and you shall see that the number is still more increased. You may form an idea of the augmentation without fatiguing yourself with calculations. Thus, supposing that the number of combined quantities is ten thousand, by adding the *characteristics* alone of the factors, we would have a *characteristic* equal to 28,894; that is to say, that even without taking into account how much higher the sum of the *false numbers* would go, there results a number equal to 1 followed by 28,894 ciphers. Conceive if you can a number which would reach several yards no matter how closely the ciphers were written; and say if the instinct be not true which tells us that a thing is impossible whose probability is so small that it is represented by a fraction whose numerator is unity, and whose denominator is a number so colossal.

(5.) Page 106. I have considered it useless to ventilate in this work the many questions debated concerning the senses, in their relations with external objects, and the generation of ideas. This would have carried me beyond my purpose, and besides would not have contributed to teach us how to make good use of the senses. In another work, which may soon



appear (his "Fundamental Philosophy"), I purpose examining these questions with all the extension their importance demands.

(6.) Page 117. What I have said of the consequences we instinctively draw from the coexistence or succession of phenomena is intimately connected with what is said in *Note 4*, about the *impossibility of common sense*. From this can be drawn an unanswerable demonstration in favour of the existence of God.

(7.) Page 126. Those who believe that Christian morality may easily lead to error through an excess of charity, know very little of this morality, and have not reflected much on the fundamental dogmas of our religion. One of them is the original corruption of man, and the devastation produced by it in the understanding and will. Is such a doctrine, indeed, likely to inspire over-confidence? Are not the Sacred Books full of episodes in which the perfidy and wickedness of man are depicted? Charity makes us love our brethren, but does not oblige us to repute them good, if they be bad; it does not prohibit us to suspect them, when there are just motives, nor prevent our having prudent caution, inspired by the knowledge of the weakness and malice of the human race.

(8.) Page 137. To become convinced that I have not exaggerated when speaking of the danger of being led into error by historians, it is enough to consider that even with respect to countries well known, history is being continually *reformed*, and perhaps in this age more than in former ones. Works are daily published, in which errors, real or imaginary, are emended, but at any rate it is a fact beyond all doubt that there is a complete discordance of opinions on most important points. This should not induce scepticism, but ought, indeed, to inspire great caution. Human authority is a condition indispensable to the individual and society; but we must not trust too much to it. Bad faith or error is sufficient to deceive us. Unfortunately these things are not at all rare.

(9.) Page 141. It is very doubtful whether the Press will be injurious or useful to the history of the present; but it cannot be denied that it will multiply the number of historians with the increased circulation of documents. Formerly it was necessary to have recourse to secretaries' offices or to archives, to get hold of some of them; now, there are few so reserved that they do not fall immediately, or after some time, into the hands of a newspaper; and, if they be of any consequence, they are reproduced in every tongue. So that now newspaper collections are excellent notes for the writing of history. This augments the number of facts on which the historian may build, so that he do not confound the text with the commentary.

(10.) Page 147. On reading a book of travels, we should not look up the chapters on distant countries, but on those with whose details we are acquainted; this will enable us to form a fair judgment of the work, and often afford us no little diversion. Besides, you will thus find how lightly some travels are written. I have seen a town I knew well, and whose dry and stony environs I have often trod, surrounded in a book of travels with the enchantment of gardens and murmuring brooks; and I have seen another, in which people were talking of bringing to it the waters of a not very distant river, described as if the project were already executed, or rather as if there were no necessity of executing it, for the river's bed was spoken of as adjoining the walls.

(11.) Page 157. I have manifested great distrust in posthumous works, above all, if the author had been unable to give them the last touch, and had to commit them to persons of doubtful integrity, or to strangers who should do more than publish them. Among the many examples which might be cited, in which the falsification has been proved, or suspected, not without strong grounds, I will remind the reader of one serious case now occurring in France with respect to a very important work: "The Thoughts of Pascal." In the space of two centuries numerous editions of this work have been published, and it has been translated into different languages, and yet now, in 1845, M. Cousin and M. Fangère are disputing about passages of great transcendence. M. Cousin pretended to have restored the true Pascal, removing the emendations introduced by the hand of Port-Royal, and now M. Fangère has published another edition, from which it results that he alone has consulted the autograph writing, and that M. Cousin—even M. Cousin—had in general confined himself to copies. Trust editors after that.

(12.) Page 169. What is said in *Note 3*, about the difference of talents, places beyond all doubt what I lay down in chap. xii. Nevertheless, to show that the scene of the *Learned Resuscitated* is not an exaggerated fiction, I will here cite one example equivalent to many. Who would have thought that a writer so prolific, so brilliant, so versatile and graphic as Buffon, were not a poet, or capable of doing justice to the most eminent poets? If we referred to a man who only distinguished himself in the exact sciences, this would not be so strange; but in Buffon, in the magnificent painter of nature, how can this anomaly be conceived? Yet, the anomaly existed; and this shows that not only two very different classes of talent may be found separated, but even those which apparently are only distinguished by a slight shade. "I have seen," says Laharpe, "the

respectable old Buffon, affirm, without hesitation, that the most beautiful verses are full of defects, and very far from reaching the perfection of good prose. He did not hesitate to take, for example, the verses of the *Athalia*, and make a minute criticism of the first scene. All he said was what one might expect from a man devoid of the *first notions of poetry*, and unacquainted with the ordinary processes of versification; but you could not answer without *humiliating* him." And remember, we are not talking of a man who thought less of the form of a production than its matter: it is said of Buffon that he polished his works with extreme scrupulousness, and copied the manuscript of his "Ages of Nature" eleven times; and yet this man who paid so much attention to beauty, to culture, and to harmony, was not capable of comprehending Racine, and found fault with the verses of the *Athalia*.

(13.) Page 181. Confusion of ideas does great harm to the sciences; but the isolation of objects causes others of no less gravity. One of the radical vices of the Encyclopædic School was to consider man isolated, and prescind from the relations which bind him to other beings. Some philosophers, by force of analysing sensations, have retained nothing but the sensations; which in ideologic and physilogic science is equivalent to taking the portico for the edifice.

(14.) Page 199. The *doubt* of Descartes was a sort of revolution against scientific authority, and was consequently carried by many to undue exaggeration. Yet, we cannot overlook the fact that the schools needed a shock, to rouse them out of their lethargy. The authority of some writers was carried farther than was right; and an impetus like that of the philosophy of Descartes was needed to tumble down the idols. The respect due to great men should not verge on worship, nor the regard for their opinions degenerate into blind submission. By being great men they do not cease to be men, and they manifest this fact in the errors, neglect and defects of their works:—" *Summi enim sunt, homines tamen,*" says Quintilian. And St. Augustine confesses that he attributes infallibility to the Sacred Books; but that as far as the works of men are concerned, no matter what virtue and wisdom they may have reached, he does not consider himself obliged to regard as true everything they have said or written.

(15.) Page 207. I will here resume, in a few words, the most useful thing the dialecticians tell us about perception, judgment, and ratiocination, terms, propositions, and argumentation.

According to the dialecticians, perception is the knowledge of a thing, without affirmation or negation; judgment is the affirmation or the nega-

tion; ratiocination is the act of the understanding by which we infer one thing from another.

I think of virtue without affirming or denying anything about it; I have a perception. I interiorly affirm that virtue is laudable; I form a judgment. I hence infer that to deserve real praise it is necessary to be virtuous; this is a ratiocination.

The interior object of perception is called an idea.

The term or word is the expression of the thing perceived. The word *America* does not express the idea of the New World, but the New World itself. It is true the term would not exist if the idea did not, and that the latter serves as the bond to connect the term with the thing; but it is no less so, that when we say *America*, we understand the thing itself, not the idea. Thus we say, *America* is a beautiful country, and it is evident we do not affirm this of the idea,

When I think of metals, I know that the fact of being *metal* is common to many things otherwise different, as silver, gold, lead, &c.; when I think of animals, I see there is something in which the camel, the eagle, the serpent, the butterfly, and all others, agree, namely, *life* and *feeling*. When I express that in which many agree, and say, *metal, animal, body, just man, bad man, &c.*, the term is called *common*.

The common term taken in general is that whose signification can be applied to many things; but as it may happen that it can be applied to many, now only as considered united, or now may be applied to each of them taken separately; in the first case the term is called collective, in the second distributive. *Academy* is a common collective term, because it expresses the *collection* of academicians; but not so that each of them may be called *academy*. *Learned* is a common distributive term, because it is applied to many, in such a way, that each individual possessing learning may be called learned.

A singular term is that which expresses one sole individual: as *Pyrenees, Black Sea, Madrid, &c.*

I think the collective should not be considered as a species of the common term, for then the division is not well made. We say the term is common or singular. The common is divided into collective and distributive. That a division may be well made, it is requisite that of two opposed terms the one should not belong to the other, which happens if we adopt the division indicated. In fact, the word *nation* is distributively common, because it agrees with many nations; and collectively, because it is applied to a reunion. France is collectively common because it is



applied to an aggregate of men, and singular, because it expresses one sole nation, an individual of the species *nation*. Therefore the collective term should not be counted among the common, as opposed to the singular, terms, for there are common collective names which are singular.

The common term is divided into univocal, equivocal, and analogous. Univocal is that which has an identical signification for many things, as man, animal, corporeal. Equivocal is that which has a different one, as lion, which expresses an animal and a celestial sign. Analogous is that which has an identical signification in one part, and a different one in another: as *sound*, when applied to the food which preserves health, to the medicine which restores it, to the man who possesses it; *pious*, which is applied to a person, a book, an action, an image. *Master* is applied to monarchs; as in that well-known formula, "the king, my august master;" to those who have slaves, to those who have dependents or servants, and to the owner of a house.

Many terms involve a general idea, susceptible of various modifications, and their employment without due distinction gives rise to confusion and barren disputes. At every turn we make use of the words king, monarch, sovereign; we talk about what they signify, and lay down our respective systems. And yet we are liable to serious mistakes, if in each question we do not determine the meaning of these words. The Sultan is a sovereign, the Emperor of Russia is a sovereign, the King of Prussia is a sovereign, the King of France is a sovereign, the Queen of England is a sovereign, and yet in no two of these cases does sovereignty express the same thing.

Definition is the explanation of a thing. If it explains its essence it is called essential; if it merely describe it so that we may have some knowledge of it, without entering into its nature, it is called descriptive.

When the signification of a word is the thing explained, it is called definition of name: *definitio nominis*. We must not confound the definition of a name with its etymology, for as the latter is the explanation of the origin of the word, it often happens that its ordinary acceptation is quite different from its etymological meaning. Etymology tells us the true signification, but does not determine it. Thus, for example, the word bishop, *episcopus*, which, considered in its Greek etymology signifies overseer, and in its Latin acceptation, superintendent, indicates in a certain way the pastoral attributions; but it is far from determining them in their true sense. So this word signified, among the Latins, the magistrate who had care of the bread and other eatables. Cicero, writing to Atticus,

says : "Vult enim Pompejus me esse quem tota hæc Campania, et maritima ora habent episcopum ad quem delectus et negotii summa referatur." (Lib. 7, epist.)

The qualities of a good definition are clearness and exactness. It is clear, if it can be understood by whoever is not ignorant of the signification of words ; exact, if it explain the thing defined so as to neither add to, nor diminish it.

The best rule to secure the perfection of a definition is to apply it immediately to the things defined, and see whether it comprehends them all, and them alone.

Division is the distribution of a whole into its parts. According as these parts are, it takes different names ; it is called actual when they exist in reality, and potential when they are only possible. The actual is subdivided into metaphysical, physical, and integral. The metaphysical is that which distributes the whole into metaphysical parts, as man into animal and rational ; the physical is that which distributes it into physical parts, as man into body and soul ; the integral is that which distributes it into parts which express quantity, as man into head, feet, hands, &c. ; the potential is that which distributes a whole into those parts which we can conceive it as possessing. Thus, considering as a whole the abstract idea, *animal*, we can divide it into rational and irrational. If what is expressed by the potential division belongs to the essence of the thing, it is called essential ; if not, accidental. It will be essential if I divide *animal* into rational and irrational ; accidental if I divide it by its colours, or such like qualities.

A good division should : 1, embrace the whole ; 2, not attribute to it parts it has not ; 3, not include one part in others ; 4, proceed with order, whether this order is founded on the nature of things, or on the generation or distribution of ideas.

If I affirm one thing of another, I form a judgment ; if I announce it in words, I have a proposition. I interiorly affirm that the earth is a spheroid ; this is a judgment : I say, or I write, "the earth is a spheroid," this is a proposition.

In every judgment there is a relation of two ideas, or rather of the objects they represent ; the same happens in propositions. The term which expresses that of which we affirm or deny something, is called the subject ; what we affirm or deny of it, is called the predicate ; and the verb *to be*, which, expressed or understood, is always found in the proposition, is called the union or copula, because it represents the connection of the two ideas.

Thus in the preceding example, *earth* is the subject, *spheroid* the predicate, and *is* the copula.

If there be affirmation, the proposition is called affirmative; if negation, negative. But we should remark, that for a proposition to be negative it is not enough that the particle *not* affect some of the terms; it is necessary that it affect the verb. "The law does *not* command us to pay." "The law commands us *not* to pay." The first is negative, the second affirmative. The sense becomes very different by merely changing the position of the *not*.

Propositions are divided into universal, indefinite, particular, and singular, according as the object is singular, indefinite, particular, or universal. *bodies are heavy*: this is a universal proposition, on account of the word *all*. *Man is inconstant*: the proposition is indefinite, because it does not express whether all or only some are so. *Some axioms are false*: the proposition is particular, because the subject is restricted by the adjunct *some*. *Gonzalo de Cordoba was an illustrious captain*: the proposition is singular, because the subject is so. For a proposition to be singular, it is not necessary that the name be a proper one; it is enough if it be in any way determined; as if I say, "this money is false."

Regarding indefinite propositions, it may be asked if the object is taken in an universal or particular sense; and this question is originated by two motives: 1. its not being accompanied by an universal or particular and not

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Balmes, Jaime Luciano,  
1810-1848.

The art of thinking well

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