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MATTHEW ARNOLD

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ON THE STUDY

OF

CELTIC LITERATURE

AND ON

TRANSLATING HOMER

BY

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ON THE

STUDY OF CELTIC LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

THE following remarks on the study of Celtic Literature formed the substance of four lectures given by me last year and the year before in the chair of poetry at Oxford. They were first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and are now reprinted from thence. Again and again, in the course of them, I have marked the very humble scope intended ; which is, not to treat any special branch of scientific Celtic studies (a task for which I am quite incompetent), but to point out the many directions in which the results of those studies offer matter of general interest, and to insist on the benefit we may all derive from knowing the Celt and things Celtic more thoroughly. It was impossible, however, to avoid touching on certain points of ethnology and philology, which can be securely handled only by those who have made these sciences the object of special study. Here the mere literary critic must owe his whole safety to his tact in choosing authorities to follow, and whatever he advances must be understood as advanced with

a sense of the insecurity which, after all, attaches to such a mode of proceeding, and as put forward provisionally, by way of hypothesis rather than of confident assertion.

To mark clearly to the reader both this provisional character of much which I advance, and my own sense of it, I have inserted, as a check upon some of the positions adopted in the text, notes and comments with which Lord Strangford has kindly furnished me. Lord Strangford is hardly less distinguished for knowing ethnology and languages so scientifically than for knowing so much of them; and his interest, even from the vantage-ground of his scientific knowledge, and after making all due reserves on points of scientific detail, in my treatment,—with merely the resources and point of view of a literary critic at my command,—of such a subject as the study of Celtic Literature, is the most encouraging assurance I could have received that my attempt is not altogether a vain one.

Both Lord Strangford and others whose opinion I respect have said that I am unjust in calling Mr. Nash, the acute and learned author of *Taliesin, or the Bards and Druids of Britain*, a 'Celt-hater.' 'He is a denouncer,' says Lord Strangford in a note on this expression, 'of Celtic extravagance, that is all; he is an anti-Philocelt, a very different thing from an anti-Celt, and quite indispensable in scientific

inquiry. As Philoceltism has hitherto,—hitherto, remember,—meant nothing but uncritical acceptance and irrational admiration of the beloved object's sayings and doings, without reference to truth one way or the other, it is surely in the interest of science to support him in the main. In tracing the workings of old Celtic leaven in poems which embody the Celtic soul of all time in a mediæval form, I do not see that you come into any necessary opposition with him, for your concern is with the spirit, his with the substance only.' I entirely agree with almost all which Lord Strangford here urges, and indeed, so sincere is my respect for Mr. Nash's critical discernment and learning, and so unhesitating my recognition of the usefulness, in many respects, of the work of demolition performed by him, that in originally designating him as a Celt-hater, I hastened to add, as the reader will see by referring to the passage,[1] words of explanation and apology for so calling him. But I thought then, and I think still, that Mr. Nash, in pursuing his work of demolition, too much puts out of sight the positive and constructive performance for which this work of demolition is to clear the ground. I thought then, and I think still, that in this Celtic controversy, as in other controversies, it is most desirable both to believe and to profess that the work of construction is the fruitful and important

[1] See p. 28 of the following essay.

work, and that we are demolishing only to prepare for it. Mr. Nash's scepticism seems to me,—in the aspect in which his work, on the whole, shows it,—too absolute, too stationary, too much without a future; and this tends to make it, for the non-Celtic part of his readers, less fruitful than it otherwise would be, and for his Celtic readers, harsh and repellent. I have therefore suffered my remarks on Mr. Nash still to stand, though with a little modification; but I hope he will read them by the light of these explanations, and that he will believe my sense of esteem for his work to be a thousand times stronger than my sense of difference from it.

To lead towards solid ground, where the Celt may with legitimate satisfaction point to traces of the gifts and workings of his race, and where the Englishman may find himself induced to sympathise with that satisfaction and to feel an interest in it, is the design of all the considerations urged in the following essay. Kindly taking the will for the deed, a Welshman and an old acquaintance of mine, Mr. Hugh Owen, received my remarks with so much cordiality, that he asked me to come to the Eisteddfod last summer at Chester, and there to read a paper on some topic of Celtic literature or antiquities. In answer to this flattering proposal of Mr. Owen's, I wrote him a letter which appeared at the time in several newspapers, and of which

the following extract preserves all that is of any importance :—

'My knowledge of Welsh matters is so utterly insignificant that it would be impertinence in me, under any circumstances, to talk about those matters to an assemblage of persons, many of whom have passed their lives in studying them.

'Your gathering acquires more interest every year. Let me venture to say that you have to avoid two dangers in order to work all the good which your friends could desire. You have to avoid the danger of giving offence to practical men by retarding the spread of the English language in the principality. I believe that to preserve and honour the Welsh language and literature is quite compatible with not thwarting or delaying for a single hour the introduction, so undeniably useful, of a knowledge of English among all classes in Wales. You have to avoid, again, the danger of alienating men of science by a blind, partial, and uncritical treatment of your national antiquities. Mr. Stephens's excellent book, *The Literature of the Cymry*, shows how perfectly Welshmen can avoid this danger if they will.

'When I see the enthusiasm these Eisteddfods can awaken in your whole people, and then think of the tastes, the literature, the amusements, of our own lower and middle class, I am filled with admiration for you. It is a consoling thought, and one which history allows us to entertain,

that nations disinherited of political success may yet leave their mark on the world's progress, and contribute powerfully to the civilisation of mankind. We in England have come to that point when the continued advance and greatness of our nation is threatened by one cause, and one cause above all. Far more than by the helplessness of an aristocracy whose day is fast coming to an end, far more than by the rawness of a lower class whose day is only just beginning, we are imperilled by what I call the "Philistinism" of our middle class. On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence,—this is Philistinism. Now, then, is the moment for the greater delicacy and spirituality of the Celtic peoples who are blended with us, if it be but wisely directed, to make itself prized and honoured. In a certain measure the children of Taliesin and Ossian have now an opportunity for renewing the famous feat of the Greeks, and conquering their conquerors. No service England can render the Celts by giving you a share in her many good qualities, can surpass that which the Celts can at this moment render England, by communicating to us some of theirs.'

Now certainly, in that letter, written to a Welshman and on the occasion of a Welsh festival, I enlarged on the merits of the Celtic

spirit and of its works, rather than on their demerits. It would have been offensive and inhuman to do otherwise. When an acquaintance asks you to write his father's epitaph, you do not generally seize that opportunity for saying that his father was blind of one eye, and had an unfortunate habit of not paying his tradesmen's bills. But the weak side of Celtism and of its Celtic glorifiers, the danger against which they have to guard, is clearly indicated in that letter; and in the remarks reprinted in this volume,—remarks which were the original cause of Mr. Owen's writing to me, and must have been fully present to his mind when he read my letter,—the shortcomings both of the Celtic race, and of the Celtic students of its literature and antiquities, are unreservedly marked, and, so far as is necessary, blamed.[1] It was, indeed, not my purpose to make blame the chief part of what I said; for the Celts, like other people, are to be meliorated rather by developing their gifts than by chastising their defects. The wise man, says Spinoza admirably, '*de humana impotentia non nisi parce loqui curabit, at largiter de humana virtute seu potentia.*' But so far as condemnation of Celtic failure was needful towards preparing the way for the growth of Celtic virtue, I used condemnation.

The *Times*, however, prefers a shorter and sharper method of dealing with the Celts, and

[1] See particularly pp. 10, 11, 12, of the following essay.

in a couple of leading articles, having the Chester Eisteddfod and my letter to Mr. Hugh Owen for their text, it developed with great frankness, and in its usual forcible style, its own views for the amelioration of Wales and its people. *Cease to do evil, learn to do good,* was the upshot of its exhortations to the Welsh ; by *evil,* the *Times* understanding all things Celtic, and by *good,* all things English. 'The Welsh language is the curse of Wales. Its prevalence, and the ignorance of English have excluded, and even now exclude the Welsh people from the civilisation of their English neighbours. An Eisteddfod is one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated. It is simply a foolish interference with the natural progress of civilisation and prosperity. If it is desirable that the Welsh should talk English, it is monstrous folly to encourage them in a loving fondness for their old language. Not only the energy and power, but the intelligence and music of Europe have come mainly from Teutonic sources, and this glorification of everything Celtic, if it were not pedantry, would be sheer ignorance. The sooner all Welsh specialities disappear from the face of the earth the better.'

And I need hardly say that I myself, as so often happens to me at the hands of my own countrymen, was cruelly judged by the *Times,* and most severely treated. What I said to Mr.

Owen about the spread of the English language in Wales being quite compatible with preserving and honouring the Welsh language and literature, was tersely set down as 'arrant nonsense,' and I was characterised as 'a sentimentalist who talks nonsense about the children of Taliesin and Ossian, and whose dainty taste requires something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his fellow Englishmen.'

As I said before, I am unhappily inured to having these harsh interpretations put by my fellow Englishmen upon what I write, and I no longer cry out about it. And then, too, I have made a study of the Corinthian or leading article style, and know its exigences and that they are no more to be quarrelled with than the law of gravitation. So, for my part, when I read these asperities of the *Times*, my mind did not dwell very much on my own concern in them; but what I said to myself, as I put the newspaper down, was this: '*Behold England's difficulty in governing Ireland!*'

I pass by the dauntless assumption that the agricultural peasant whom we in England, without Eisteddfods, succeed in developing, is so much finer a product of civilisation than the Welsh peasant, retarded by these 'pieces of sentimentalism.' I will be content to suppose that our 'strong sense and sturdy morality' are as admirable and as universal as the *Times* pleases. But even supposing this, I will ask: Did any

one ever hear of strong sense and sturdy morality being thrust down other people's throats in this fashion? Might not these divine English gifts, and the English language in which they are preached, have a better chance of making their way among the poor Celtic heathen, if the English apostle delivered his message a little more agreeably? There is nothing like love and admiration for bringing people to a likeness with what they love and admire; but the Englishman seems never to dream of employing these influences upon a race he wants to fuse with himself. He employs simply material interests for his work of fusion; and, beyond these, nothing except scorn and rebuke. Accordingly there is no vital union between him and the races he has annexed; and while France can truly boast of her 'magnificent unity,' a unity of spirit no less than of name between all the people who compose her, in England the Englishman proper is in union of spirit with no one except other Englishmen proper like himself. His Welsh and Irish fellow-citizens are hardly more amalgamated with him now than they were when Wales and Ireland were first conquered, and the true unity of even these small islands has yet to be achieved. When these papers of mine on the Celtic genius and literature first appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, they brought me, as was natural, many communications from Welshmen and Irishmen having an

interest in the subject: and one could not but be painfully struck, in reading these communications, to see how profound a feeling of aversion and severance from the English they in general manifested. Who can be surprised at it, when he observes the strain of the *Times* in the articles just quoted, and remembers that this is the characteristic strain of the Englishman in commenting on whatsoever is not himself? And then, with our boundless faith in machinery, we English expect the Welshman as a matter of course to grow attached to us, because we invite him to do business with us, and let him hold any number of public meetings and publish all the newspapers he likes! When shall we learn that what attaches people to us is the spirit we are of, and not the machinery we employ?

Last year there was a project of holding a Breton Eisteddfod at Quimper in Brittany, and the French Home Secretary, whether wishing to protect the magnificent unity of France from inroads of Bretonism, or fearing lest the design should be used in furtherance of Legitimist intrigues, or from whatever motive, issued an order which prohibited the meeting. If Mr. Walpole had issued an order prohibiting the Chester Eisteddfod, all the Englishmen from Cornwall to John o' Groat's House would have rushed to the rescue; and our strong sense and sturdy morality would never have stopped gnashing their teeth and rending their garments till the

prohibition was rescinded. What a pity our strong sense and sturdy morality fail to perceive that words like those of the *Times* create a far keener sense of estrangement and dislike than acts like those of the French Minister! Acts like those of the French Minister are attributed to reasons of State, and the Government is held blamable for them, not the French people. Articles like those of the *Times* are attributed to the want of sympathy and of sweetness of disposition in the English nature, and the whole English people gets the blame of them. And deservedly; for from some such ground of want of sympathy and sweetness in the English nature, do articles like those of the *Times* come, and to some such ground do they make appeal. The sympathetic and social virtues of the French nature, on the other hand, actually repair the breaches made by oppressive deeds of the Government, and create, among populations joined with France as the Welsh and Irish are joined with England, a sense of liking and attachment towards the French people. The French Government may discourage the German language in Alsace and prohibit Eisteddfods in Brittany; but the *Journal des Débats* never treats German music and poetry as mischievous lumber, nor tells the Bretons that the sooner all Breton specialities disappear from the face of the earth the better. Accordingly, the Bretons and Alsatians have come to feel themselves a part of

France, and to feel pride in bearing the French name; while the Welsh and Irish obstinately refuse to amalgamate with us, and will not admire the Englishman as he admires himself, however much the *Times* may scold them and rate them, and assure them there is nobody on earth so admirable.

And at what a moment does it assure them of this, good heavens! At a moment when the ice is breaking up in England, and we are all beginning at last to see how much real confusion and insufficiency it covered; when, whatever may be the merits,—and they are great,—of the Englishman and of his strong sense and sturdy morality, it is growing more and more evident that, if he is to endure and advance, he must transform himself, must add something to his strong sense and sturdy morality, or at least must give to these excellent gifts of his a new development. My friend, Mr. Goldwin Smith, says, in his eloquent way, that England is the favourite of Heaven. Far be it from me to say that England is not the favourite of Heaven; but at this moment she reminds me more of what the prophet Isaiah calls, 'a bull in a net.' She has satisfied herself in all departments with clap-trap and routine so long, and she is now so astounded at finding they will not serve her turn any longer! And this is the moment, when Englishism pure and simple, which with all its fine qualities managed always to make itself

singularly unattractive, is losing that imperturbable faith in its untransformed self which at any rate made it imposing,—this is the moment when our great organ tells the Celts that everything of theirs not English is 'simply a foolish interference with the natural progress of civilisation and prosperity'; and poor Talhaiarn, venturing to remonstrate, is commanded 'to drop his outlandish title, and to refuse even to talk Welsh in Wales!'

But let us leave the dead to bury their dead, and let us who are alive go on unto perfection. Let the Celtic members of this empire consider that they too have to transform themselves; and though the summons to transform themselves be often conveyed harshly and brutally, and with the cry to root up their wheat as well as their tares, yet that is no reason why the summons should not be followed so far as their tares are concerned. Let them consider that they are inextricably bound up with us, and that, if the suggestions in the following pages have any truth, we English, alien and uncongenial to our Celtic partners as we may have hitherto shown ourselves, have notwithstanding, beyond perhaps any other nation, a thousand latent springs of possible sympathy with them. Let them consider that new ideas and forces are stirring in England, that day by day these new ideas and forces gain in power, and that almost every one of them is the friend of the Celt and not his

enemy. And, whether our Celtic partners will consider this or no, at any rate let us ourselves, all of us who are proud of being the ministers of these new ideas, work incessantly to procure for them a wider and more fruitful application ; and to remove the main ground of the Celt's alienation from the Englishman, by substituting, in place of that type of Englishman with whom alone the Celt has too long been familiar, a new type, more intelligent, more gracious, and more humane.

ON THE STUDY

OF

CELTIC LITERATURE

They went forth to the war, but they always fell.
OSSIAN.

THE summer before last I spent some weeks at Llandudno, on the Welsh coast. The best lodging-houses at Llandudno look eastward, towards Liverpool; and from that Saxon hive swarms are incessantly issuing, crossing the bay, and taking possession of the beach and the lodging-houses. Guarded by the Great and Little Orme's Head, and alive with the Saxon invaders from Liverpool, the eastern bay is an attractive point of interest, and many visitors to Llandudno never contemplate anything else. But, putting aside the charm of the Liverpool steamboats, perhaps the view, on this side, a little dissatisfies one after a while; the horizon wants mystery, the sea wants beauty, the coast wants verdure, and has a too bare austereness and aridity.

At last one turns round and looks westward. Everything is changed. Over the mouth of the Conway and its sands is the eternal softness and mild light of the west; the low line of the mystic Anglesey, and the precipitous Penmaenmawr, and the great group of Carnedd Llewelyn and Carnedd David and their brethren fading away, hill behind hill, in an aërial haze, make the horizon; between the foot of Penmaenmawr and the bending coast of Anglesey, the sea, a silver stream, disappears one knows not whither. On this side, Wales,—Wales, where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition, every name its poetry, and where the people, the genuine people, still knows this past, this tradition, this poetry, and lives with it, and clings to it; while, alas, the prosperous Saxon on the other side, the invader from Liverpool and Birkenhead, has long ago forgotten his. And the promontory where Llandudno stands is the very centre of this tradition; it is Creuddyn, *the bloody city*, where every stone has its story; there, opposite its decaying rival, Conway Castle, is Diganwy, not decaying but long since utterly decayed, some crumbling foundations on a crag-top and nothing more;—Diganwy, where Mael-gwyn shut up Elphin, and where Taliesin came to free him. Below, in a fold of the hill, is Llan-rhos, the church of the marsh, where the same Mael-gwyn, a British prince of real history, a bold and licentious chief, the original, it is said, of Arthur's

Lancelot, shut himself up in the church to avoid the Yellow Plague, and peeped out through a hole in the door, and saw the monster and died. Behind among the woods, is Glod-daeth, *the place of feasting*, where the bards were entertained; and farther away, up the valley of the Conway towards Llanrwst, is the Lake of Ceirionydd and Taliesin's grave. Or, again, looking seawards and Anglesey-wards, you have Pen-mon, Seiriol's isle and priory, where Mael-gwyn lies buried; you have the *Sands of Lamentation* and Llys Helig, *Heilig's Mansion*, a mansion under the waves, a sea-buried palace and realm. *Hac ibat Simois; hic est Sigeia tellus.*

As I walked up and down, last August year, looking at the waves as they washed this Sigeian land which has never had its Homer, and listening with curiosity to the strange, unfamiliar speech of its old possessors' obscure descendants,—bathing people, vegetable-sellers, and donkey boys,—who were all about me, suddenly I heard, through the stream of unknown Welsh, words, not English, indeed, but still familiar. They came from a French nursery-maid with some children. Profoundly ignorant of her relationship, this Gaulish Celt moved among her British cousins, speaking her polite neo-Latin tongue, and full of compassionate contempt, probably, for the Welsh barbarians and their jargon. What a revolution was here! How had the star of this daughter of Gomer waxed, while the star of these Cymry,

his sons, had waned! What a difference of fortune in the two, since the days when, speaking the same language, they left their common dwelling-place in the heart of Asia; since the Cimmerians of the Euxine came in upon their western kinsmen, the sons of the giant Galates; since the sisters, Gaul and Britain, cut the mistletoe in their forests, and saw the coming of Cæsar! *Blanc*, *rouge*, *rocher*, *champ*, *église*, *seigneur*, —these words, by which the Gallo-Roman Celt now names white, and red, and rock, and field, and church, and lord, are no part of the speech of his true ancestors, they are words he has learnt; but since he learned them they have had a world-wide success, and we all teach them to our children, and armies speaking them have domineered in every city of that Germany by which the British Celt was broken, and in the train of these armies, Saxon auxiliaries, a humbled contingent, have been fain to follow;—the poor Welshman still says, in the genuine tongue of his ancestors,[1] *gwyn*, *goch*, *craig*, *maes*, *llan*,

[1] Lord Strangford remarks on this passage:—'Your Gomer and your Cimmerians are of course only lay figures, to be accepted in the rhetorical and subjective sense. As such I accept them, but I enter a protest against the "genuine tongue of his ancestors." Modern Celtic tongues are to the old Celtic heard by Julius Cæsar, broadly speaking, what the modern Romanic tongues are to Cæsar's own Latin. Welsh, in fact, is a *detritus;* a language in the category of modern French, or, to speak less roughly and with a closer approximation, of old Provençal, not in the category of Lithuanian, much less in the category of Basque. By true inductive research, based on an accurate comparison of such forms of Celtic speech, oral and recorded, as we now possess, modern philology

arglwydd; but his land is a province, and his history petty, and his Saxon subduers scout his speech as an obstacle to civilisation; and the echo of all its kindred in other lands is growing every day fainter and more feeble; gone in Cornwall, going in Brittany and the Scotch Highlands, going, too, in Ireland;—and there, above all, the badge of the beaten race, the property of the vanquished.

But the Celtic genius was just then preparing, in Llandudno, to have its hour of revival. Workmen were busy in putting up a large tent-like wooden building, which attracted the eye of every new-comer, and which my little boys believed (their wish, no doubt, being father to their belief) to be a circus. It turned out, however, to be no circus for Castor and Pollux, but a temple for Apollo and the Muses. It was the place where the Eisteddfod, or Bardic Congress of Wales, was about to be held; a

has, in so far as was possible, succeeded in restoring certain forms of the parent speech, and in so doing has achieved not the least striking of its many triumphs; for those very forms thus restored have since been verified past all cavil by their actual discovery in the old Gaulish inscriptions recently come to light. The *phonesis* of Welsh as it stands is modern, not primitive; its grammar,—the verbs excepted,—is constructed out of the fragments of its earlier forms, and its vocabulary is strongly Romanised, two out of the six words here given being Latin of the Empire. Rightly understood, this enhances the value of modern Celtic instead of depreciating it, because it serves to rectify it. To me it is a wonder that Welsh should have retained so much of its integrity under the iron pressure of four hundred years of Roman dominion. Modern Welsh tenacity and cohesive power under English pressure is nothing compared with what that must have been.'

meeting which has for its object (I quote the words of its promoters) 'the diffusion of useful knowledge, the eliciting of native talent, and the cherishing of love of home and honourable fame by the cultivation of poetry, music, and art.' My little boys were disappointed; but I, whose circus days are over, I, who have a professional interest in poetry, and who, also, hating all one-sidedness and oppression, wish nothing better than that the Celtic genius should be able to show itself to the world and to make its voice heard, was delighted. I took my ticket, and waited impatiently for the day of opening. The day came, an unfortunate one; storms of wind, clouds of dust, an angry, dirty sea. The Saxons who arrived by the Liverpool steamers looked miserable; even the Welsh who arrived by land,—whether they were discomposed by the bad morning, or by the monstrous and crushing tax which the London and North-Western Railway Company levies on all whom it transports across those four miles of marshy peninsula between Conway and Llandudno,—did not look happy. First we went to the Gorsedd, or preliminary congress for conferring the degree of bard. The Gorsedd was held in the open air, at the windy corner of a street, and the morning was not favourable to open-air solemnities. The Welsh, too, share, it seems to me, with their Saxon invaders, an inaptitude for show and spectacle. Show

and spectacle are better managed by the Latin race, and those whom it has moulded; the Welsh, like us, are a little awkward and resourceless in the organisation of a festival. The presiding genius of the mystic circle, in our hideous nineteenth-century costume relieved only by a green scarf, the wind drowning his voice and the dust powdering his whiskers, looked thoroughly wretched: so did the aspirants for bardic honours; and I believe, after about an hour of it, we all of us, as we stood shivering round the sacred stones, began half to wish for the Druid's sacrificial knife to end our sufferings. But the Druid's knife is gone from his hands; so we sought the shelter of the Eisteddfod building.

The sight inside was not lively. The president and his supporters mustered strong on the platform. On the floor the one or two front benches were pretty well filled, but their occupants were for the most part Saxons, who came there from curiosity, not from enthusiasm; and all the middle and back benches, where should have been the true enthusiasts,—the Welsh people,—were nearly empty. The president, I am sure, showed a national spirit which was admirable. He addressed us Saxons in our own language, and called us 'the English branch of the descendants of the ancient Britons.' We received the compliment with the impassive dulness which is the characteristic of our nature; and the lively Celtic nature, which should

have made up for the dulness of ours, was absent. A lady who sat by me, and who was the wife, I found, of a distinguished bard on the platform, told me, with emotion in her look and voice, how dear were these solemnities to the heart of her people, how deep was the interest which is aroused by them. I believe her, but still the whole performance, on that particular morning, was incurably lifeless. The recitation of the prize compositions began : pieces of verse and prose in the Welsh language, an essay on punctuality being, if I remember right, one of them ; a poem on the march of Havelock, another. This went on for some time. Then Dr. Vaughan,—the well-known Nonconformist minister, a Welshman, and a good patriot,—addressed us in English. His speech was a powerful one, and he succeeded, I confess, in sending a faint thrill through our front benches ; but it was the old familiar thrill which we have all of us felt a thousand times in Saxon chapels and meeting-halls, and had nothing bardic about it. I stepped out, and in the street I came across an acquaintance fresh from London and the parliamentary session. In a moment the spell of the Celtic genius was forgotten, the Philistinism of our Saxon nature made itself felt ; and my friend and I walked up and down by the roaring waves, talking not of ovates and bards, and triads and englyns, but of the sewage question, and the glories

of our local self-government, and the mysterious perfections of the Metropolitan Board of Works.

I believe it is admitted, even by the admirers of Eisteddfods in general, that this particular Eisteddfod was not a success. Llandudno, it is said, was not the right place for it. Held in Conway Castle, as a few years ago it was, and its spectators,—an enthusiastic multitude,—filling the grand old ruin, I can imagine it a most impressive and interesting sight, even to a stranger labouring under the terrible disadvantage of being ignorant of the Welsh language. But even seen as I saw it at Llandudno, it had the power to set one thinking. An Eisteddfod is, no doubt, a kind of Olympic meeting; and that the common people of Wales should care for such a thing, shows something Greek in them, something spiritual, something humane, something (I am afraid one must add) which in the English common people is not to be found. This line of reflection has been followed by the accomplished Bishop of St David's, and by the *Saturday Review;* it is just, it is fruitful, and those who pursued it merit our best thanks. But, from peculiar circumstances, the Llandudno meeting was, as I have said, such as not at all to suggest ideas of Olympia, and of a multitude touched by the divine flame, and hanging on the lips of Pindar. It rather suggested the triumph of the prosaic, practical Saxon, and the approaching extinction of an

enthusiasm which he derides as factitious, a literature which he disdains as trash, a language which he detests as a nuisance.

I must say I quite share the opinion of my brother Saxons as to the practical inconvenience of perpetuating the speaking of Welsh. It may cause a moment's distress to one's imagination when one hears that the last Cornwall peasant who spoke the old tongue of Cornwall is dead; but, no doubt, Cornwall is the better for adopting English, for becoming more thoroughly one with the rest of the country. The fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogeneous, English-speaking whole, the breaking down of barriers between us, the swallowing up of separate provincial nationalities, is a consummation to which the natural course of things irresistibly tends; it is a necessity of what is called modern civilisation, and modern civilisation is a real, legitimate force; the change must come, and its accomplishment is a mere affair of time. The sooner the Welsh language disappears as an instrument of the practical, political, social life of Wales, the better; the better for England, the better for Wales itself. Traders and tourists do excellent service by pushing the English wedge farther and farther into the heart of the principality; Ministers of Education, by hammering it harder and harder into the elementary schools. Nor, perhaps, can one have much sympathy with the literary cultivation

of Welsh as an instrument of living literature; and in this respect Eisteddfods encourage, I think, a fantastic and mischief-working delusion. For all serious purposes in modern literature (and trifling purposes in it who would care to encourage?) the language of a Welshman is and must be English; if an Eisteddfod author has anything to say about punctuality or about the march of Havelock, he had much better say it in English; or rather, perhaps, what he has to say on these subjects may as well be said in Welsh, but the moment he has anything of real importance to say, anything the world will the least care to hear, he must speak English. Dilettanteism might possibly do much harm here, might mislead and waste and bring to nought a genuine talent. For all modern purposes, I repeat, let us all as soon as possible be one people; let the Welshman speak English, and, if he is an author, let him write English.

So far, I go along with the stream of my brother Saxons; but here, I imagine, I part company with them. They will have nothing to do with the Welsh language and literature on any terms; they would gladly make a clean sweep of it from the face of the earth. I, on certain terms, wish to make a great deal more of it than is made now; and I regard the Welsh literature,—or rather, dropping the distinction between Welsh and Irish, Gaels and Cymris, let me say Celtic literature,—as an object of very

great interest. My brother Saxons have, as is well known, a terrible way with them of wanting to improve everything but themselves off the face of the earth ; I have no such passion for finding nothing but myself everywhere ; I like variety to exist and to show itself to me, and I would not for the world have the lineaments of the Celtic genius lost. But I know my brother Saxons, I know their strength, and I know that the Celtic genius will make nothing of trying to set up barriers against them in the world of fact and brute force, of trying to hold its own against them as a political and social counter-power, as the soul of a hostile nationality. To me there is something mournful (and at this moment, when one sees what is going on in Ireland, how well may one say so !) in hearing a Welshman or an Irishman make pretensions,—natural pretensions, I admit, but how hopelessly vain !—to such a rival self-establishment ; there is something mournful in hearing an Englishman scout them. Strength ! alas it is not strength, strength in the material world, which is wanting to us Saxons ; we have plenty of strength for swallowing up and absorbing as much as we choose ; there is nothing to hinder us from effacing the last poor material remains of that Celtic power which once was everywhere, but has long since, in the race of civilisation, fallen out of sight. We may threaten them with extinction if we will, and may almost say in so threatening them, like

Cæsar in threatening with death the tribune Metellus who closed the treasury doors against him: 'And when I threaten this, young man, to threaten it is more trouble to me than to do it.' It is not in the outward and visible world of material life that the Celtic genius of Wales or Ireland can at this day hope to count for much; it is in the inward world of thought and science. What it *has* been, what it *has* done, let it ask us to attend to that, as a matter of science and history; not to what it will be or will do, as a matter of modern politics. It cannot count appreciably now as a material power; but, perhaps, if it can get itself thoroughly known as an object of science, it may count for a good deal, —far more than we Saxons, most of us, imagine, —as a spiritual power.

The bent of our time is towards science, towards knowing things as they are; so the Celt's claims towards having his genius and its works fairly treated, as objects of scientific investigation, the Saxon can hardly reject, when these claims are urged simply on their own merits, and are not mixed up with extraneous pretensions which jeopardise them. What the French call the *science des origines*, the science of origins,—a science which is at the bottom of all real knowledge of the actual world, and which is every day growing in interest and importance, —is very incomplete without a thorough critical account of the Celts, and their genius, language,

and literature. This science has still great progress to make, but its progress, made even within the recollection of those of us who are in middle life, has already affected our common notions about the Celtic race ; and this change, too, shows how science, the knowing things as they are, may even have salutary practical consequences. I remember, when I was young, I was taught to think of Celt as separated by an impassable gulf from Teuton ;[1] my father, in particular, was never weary of contrasting them ; he insisted much oftener on the separation between us and them than on the separation between us and any other race in the world ; in the same way Lord Lyndhurst, in words long

[1] Here again let me have the pleasure of quoting Lord Strangford :—'When the Celtic tongues were first taken in hand at the dawn of comparative philological inquiry, the tendency was, for all practical results, to separate them from the Indo-European aggregate, rather than to unite them with it. The great gulf once fixed between them was narrowed on the surface, but it was greatly and indefinitely deepened. Their vocabulary and some of their grammar was seen at once to be perfectly Indo-European, but they had no case-endings to their nouns,—none at all in Welsh, none that could be understood in Gaelic ; their *phonesis* seemed primeval and inexplicable, and nothing could be made out of their pronouns which could not be equally made out of many wholly un-Aryan languages. They were therefore co-ordinated, not with each single Aryan tongue, but with the general complex of Aryan tongues, and were conceived to be anterior to them and apart from them, as it were the strayed vanguard of European colonisation or conquest from the East. The reason of this misconception was, that their records lay wholly uninvestigated as far as all historical study of the language was concerned, and that nobody troubled himself about the relative age and the development of forms, so that the philologists were fain to take them as they were put into

famous, called the Irish, 'aliens in speech, in religion, in blood.' This naturally created a profound sense of estrangement; it doubled the estrangement which political and religious differences already made between us and the Irish: it seemed to make this estrangement immense, incurable, fatal. It begot a strange reluctance, as any one may see by reading the preface to the great text-book for Welsh poetry, the *Myvyrian Archæology*, published at the beginning of this century, to further, nay, allow,—even among quiet, peaceable people like the Welsh, the publication of the documents of their ancient literature, the monuments of the Cymric genius; such was the sense of repulsion, the

their hands by uncritical or perverse native commentators and writers, whose grammars and dictionaries teemed with blunders and downright forgeries. One thing, and one thing alone, led to the truth: the sheer drudgery of thirteen long years spent by Zeuss in the patient investigation of the most ancient Celtic records, in their actual condition, line by line and letter by letter. Then for the first time the foundation of Celtic research was laid; but the great philologist did not live to see the superstructure which never could have been raised but for him. Prichard was first to indicate the right path, and Bopp, in his monograph of 1839, displayed his incomparable and masterly sagacity as usual, but for want of any trustworthy record of Celtic words and forms to work upon, the truth remained concealed or obscured until the publication of the *Grammatica Celtica*. Dr. Arnold, a man of the past generation, who made more use of the then uncertain and unfixed doctrines of comparative philology in his historical writings than is done by the present generation in the fullest noonday light of the *Vergleichende Grammatik*, was thus justified in his view by the philology of the period, to which he merely gave an enlarged historical expression. The prime fallacy then as now, however, was that of antedating the distinction between Gaelic and Cymric Celts.'

sense of incompatibility, of radical antagonism, making it seem dangerous to us to let such opposites to ourselves have speech and utterance. Certainly the Jew,—the Jew of ancient times, at least,—then seemed a thousand degrees nearer than the Celt to us. Puritanism had so assimilated Bible ideas and phraseology; names like Ebenezer, and notions like that of hewing Agag in pieces, came so natural to us, that the sense of affinity between the Teutonic and the Hebrew nature was quite strong; a steady, middle-class Anglo-Saxon much more imagined himself Ehud's cousin than Ossian's. But meanwhile, the pregnant and striking ideas of the ethnologists about the true natural grouping of the human race, the doctrine of a great Indo-European unity, comprising Hindoos, Persians, Greeks, Latins, Celts, Teutons, Slavonians, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of a Semitic unity and of a Mongolian unity, separated by profound distinguishing marks from the Indo-European unity and from one another, was slowly acquiring consistency and popularising itself. So strong and real could the sense of sympathy or antipathy, grounded upon real identity or diversity in race, grow in men of culture, that we read of a genuine Teuton,—Wilhelm von Humboldt, finding, even in the sphere of religion, that sphere where the might of Semitism has been so overpowering, the food which most truly suited his spirit in the pro-

ductions not of the alien Semitic genius, but of the genius of Greece or India, the Teuton's born kinsfolk of the common Indo-European family. 'Towards Semitism he felt himself,' we read, 'far less drawn'; he had the consciousness of a certain antipathy in the depths of his nature to this, and to its 'absorbing, tyrannous, terrorist religion,' as to the opener, more flexible Indo-European genius, this religion appeared. 'The mere workings of the old man in him!' Semitism will readily reply; and though one can hardly admit this short and easy method of settling the matter, it must be owned that Humboldt's is an extreme case of Indo-Europeanism, useful as letting us see what may be the power of race and primitive constitution, but not likely, in the spiritual sphere, to have many companion cases equalling it. Still, even in this sphere, the tendency is in Humboldt's direction; the modern spirit tends more and more to establish a sense of native diversity between our European bent and the Semitic bent, and to eliminate, even in our religion, certain elements as purely and excessively Semitic, and therefore, in right, not combinable with our European nature, not assimilable by it. This tendency is now quite visible even among ourselves, and even, as I have said, within the great sphere of the Semitic genius, the sphere of religion; and for its justification this tendency appeals to science, the science of origins; it

appeals to this science as teaching us which way our natural affinities and repulsions lie. It appeals to this science, and in part it comes from it; it is, in considerable part, an indirect practical result from it.

In the sphere of politics, too, there has, in the same way, appeared an indirect practical result from this science; the sense of antipathy to the Irish people, of radical estrangement from them, has visibly abated amongst all the better part of us; the remorse for past ill-treatment of them, the wish to make amends, to do them justice, to fairly unite, if possible, in one people with them, has visibly increased; hardly a book on Ireland is now published, hardly a debate on Ireland now passes in Parliament, without this appearing. Fanciful as the notion may at first seem, I am inclined to think that the march of science,—science insisting that there is no such original chasm between the Celt and the Saxon as we once popularly imagined, that they are not truly, what Lord Lyndhurst called them, *aliens in blood* from us, that they are our brothers in the great Indo-European family, has had a share, an appreciable share, in producing this changed state of feeling. No doubt, the release from alarm and struggle, the sense of firm possession, solid security, and overwhelming power; no doubt these, allowing and encouraging humane feelings to spring up in us, have done much; no doubt a state of fear and danger, Ireland in hostile

conflict with us, our union violently disturbed, might, while it drove back all humane feelings, make also the old sense of utter estrangement revive. Nevertheless, so long as such a malignant revolution of events does not actually come about, so long the new sense of kinship and kindliness lives, works, and gathers strength ; and the longer it so lives and works, the more it makes any such malignant revolution improbable. And this new, reconciling sense has, I say, its roots in science.

However, on these indirect benefits of science we must not lay too much stress. Only this must be allowed ; it is clear that there are now in operation two influences, both favourable to a more attentive and impartial study of Celtism than it has yet ever received from us. One is the strengthening in us of the feeling of Indo-Europeanism ; the other, the strengthening in us of the scientific sense generally. The first breaks down barriers between us and the Celt, relaxes the estrangement between us ; the second begets the desire to know his case thoroughly, and to be just to it. This is a very different matter from the political and social Celtisation of which certain enthusiasts dream ; but it is not to be despised by any one to whom the Celtic genius is dear ; and it is possible, while the other is not.

ON THE STUDY OF

I

To know the Celtic case thoroughly, one must know the Celtic people; and to know them one must know that by which a people best express themselves,—their literature. Few of us have any notion what a mass of Celtic literature is really yet extant and accessible. One constantly finds even very accomplished people, who fancy that the remains of Welsh and Irish literature are as inconsiderable by their volume, as, in their opinion, they are by their intrinsic merit; that these remains consist of a few prose stories, in great part borrowed from the literature of nations more civilised than the Welsh or Irish nation, and of some unintelligible poetry. As to Welsh literature, they have heard, perhaps, of the *Black Book of Caermarthen*, or of the *Red Book of Hergest*, and they imagine that one or two famous manuscript books like these contain the whole matter. They have no notion that, in real truth, to quote the words of one who is no friend to the high pretensions of Welsh literature, but their most formidable impugner, Mr. Nash:—'The Myvyrian manuscripts alone, now deposited in the British Museum, amount to 47 volumes of poetry, of various sizes, containing about 4700 pieces of poetry, in 16,000 pages, besides about 2000 englynion or epigrammatic stanzas. There are also, in the same collection, 53 volumes of prose,

in about 15,300 pages, containing a great many curious documents on various subjects. Besides these, which were purchased of the widow of the celebrated Owen Jones, the editor of the *Myvyrian Archæology*, there are a vast number of collections of Welsh manuscripts in London, and in the libraries of the gentry of the principality.' The *Myvyrian Archæology*, here spoken of by Mr. Nash, I have already mentioned; he calls its editor, Owen Jones, celebrated; he is not so celebrated but that he claims a word, in passing, from a professor of poetry. He was a Denbighshire *statesman*, as we say in the north, born before the middle of last century, in that vale of Myvyr, which has given its name to his archæology. From his childhood he had that passion for the old treasures of his country's literature, which to this day, as I have said, in the common people of Wales is so remarkable; these treasures were unprinted, scattered, difficult of access, jealously guarded. 'More than once,' says Edward Lhuyd, who in his *Archæologia Britannica*, brought out by him in 1707, would gladly have given them to the world, 'more than once I had a promise from the owner, and the promise was afterwards retracted at the instigation of certain persons, pseudo-politicians, as I think, rather than men of letters.' So Owen Jones went up, a young man of nineteen, to London, and got employment in a furrier's shop in Thames Street; for forty years, with a single object in

view, he worked at his business; and at the end of that time his object was won. He had risen in his employment till the business had become his own, and he was now a man of considerable means; but those means had been sought by him for one purpose only, the purpose of his life, the dream of his youth,—the giving permanence and publicity to the treasures of his national literature. Gradually he got manuscript after manuscript transcribed, and at last, in 1801, he jointly with two friends brought out in three large volumes, printed in double columns, his *Myvyrian Archæology of Wales*. The book is full of imperfections; it presented itself to a public which could not judge of its importance, and it brought upon its author in his lifetime more attack than honour. He died not long afterwards, and now he lies buried in All-hallows Church, in London, with his tomb turned towards the east, away from the green vale of Clwyd and the mountains of his native Wales; but his book is the great repertory of the literature of his nation, the comparative study of languages and literatures gains every day more followers, and no one of these followers, at home or abroad, touches Welsh literature without paying homage to the Denbighshire peasant's name; if the bard's glory and his own are still matter of moment to him,—*si quid mentem mortalia tangunt*,—he may be satisfied.

Even the printed stock of early Welsh

literature is, therefore, considerable, and the manuscript stock of it is very great indeed. Of Irish literature, the stock, printed and manuscript, is truly vast ; the work of cataloguing and describing this has been admirably performed by another remarkable man, who died only the other day, Mr. Eugene O'Curry. Obscure Scaliger of a despised literature, he deserves some weightier voice to praise him than the voice of an unlearned bellettristic trifler like me ; he belongs to the race of the giants in literary research and industry,—a race now almost extinct. Without a literary education, and impeded too, it appears, by much trouble of mind and infirmity of body, he has accomplished such a thorough work of classification and description for the chaotic mass of Irish literature, that the student has now half his labour saved, and needs only to use his materials as Eugene O'Curry hands them to him. It was as a professor in the Catholic University in Dublin that O'Curry gave the lectures in which he has done the student this service ; it is touching to find that these lectures, a splendid tribute of devotion to the Celtic cause, had no hearer more attentive, more sympathising, than a man, himself, too, the champion of a cause more interesting than prosperous,—one of those causes which please noble spirits, but do not please destiny, which have Cato's adherence, but not Heaven's,—Dr. Newman. Eugene O'Curry,

in these lectures of his, taking as his standard the quarto page of Dr. O'Donovan's edition of the *Annals of the Four Masters* (and this printed monument of one branch of Irish literature occupies by itself, let me say in passing, seven large quarto volumes, containing 4215 pages of closely printed matter), Eugene O'Curry says, that the great vellum manuscript books belonging to Trinity College, Dublin, and to the Royal Irish Academy,—books with fascinating titles, the *Book of the Dun Cow*, the *Book of Leinster*, the *Book of Ballymote*, the *Speckled Book*, the *Book of Lecain*, the *Yellow Book of Lecain*,—have, between them, matter enough to fill 11,400 of these pages; the other vellum manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, have matter enough to fill 8200 pages more; and the paper manuscripts of Trinity College, and the Royal Irish Academy together, would fill, he says, 30,000 such pages more. The ancient laws of Ireland, the so-called Brehon laws, which a commission is now publishing, were not as yet completely transcribed when O'Curry wrote; but what had even then been transcribed was sufficient, he says, to fill nearly 8000 of Dr. O'Donovan's pages. Here are, at any rate, materials enough with a vengeance. These materials fall, of course, into several divisions. The most literary of these divisions, the *Tales*, consisting of *Historic Tales* and *Imaginative Tales*, distributes the contents of its

Historic Tales as follows: — Battles, voyages, sieges, tragedies, cow-spoils, courtships, adventures, land-expeditions, sea-expeditions, banquets, elopements, loves, lake-irruptions, colonisations, visions. Of what a treasure-house of resources for the history of Celtic life and the Celtic genius does that bare list, even by itself, call up the image! The *Annals of the Four Masters* give 'the years of foundations and destructions of churches and castles, the obituaries of remarkable persons, the inaugurations of kings, the battles of chiefs, the contests of clans, the ages of bards, abbots, bishops, etc.'[1] Through other divisions of this mass of materials,—the books of pedigrees and genealogies, the martyrologies and festologies, such as the *Féliré of Angus the Culdee*, the topographical tracts, such as the *Dinnsenchas*,—we touch 'the most ancient traditions of the Irish, traditions which were committed to writing at a period when the ancient customs of the people were unbroken.' We touch 'the early history of Ireland, civil and ecclesiastical.' We get 'the origin and history of the countless monuments of Ireland, of the ruined church and tower, the sculptured cross, the holy well, and the commemorative name of almost every townland and parish in the whole island.' We get, in short, 'the most detailed information upon almost every part of ancient

[1] Dr. O'Conor in his *Catalogue of the Stowe MSS.* (quoted by O'Curry).

Gaelic life, a vast quantity of valuable details of life and manners.'[1]

And then, besides, to our knowledge of the Celtic genius, Mr. Norris has brought us from Cornwall, M. de la Villemarqué from Brittany, contributions, insignificant indeed in quantity, if one compares them with the mass of the Irish materials extant, but far from insignificant in value.

We want to know what all this mass of documents really tells us about the Celt. But the mode of dealing with these documents, and with the whole question of Celtic antiquity, has hitherto been most unsatisfactory. Those who have dealt with them, have gone to work, in general, either as warm Celt-lovers or as warm Celt-haters, and not as disinterested students of an important matter of science. One party seems to set out with the determination to find everything in Celtism and its remains; the other, with the determination to find nothing in them. A simple seeker for truth has a hard time between the two. An illustration or so will make clear what I mean. First let us take the Celt-lovers, who, though they engage one's sympathies more than the Celt-haters, yet, inasmuch as assertion is more dangerous than denial, show their weaknesses in a more signal way. A very learned man, the Rev. Edward Davies, published in the early part of this century two

[1] O'Curry.

important books on Celtic antiquity. The second of these books, *The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, contains, with much other interesting matter, the charming story of Taliesin. Bryant's book on mythology was then in vogue, and Bryant, in the fantastical manner so common in those days, found in Greek mythology what he called an arkite idolatry, pointing to Noah's deluge and the ark. Davies, wishing to give dignity to his Celtic mythology, determines to find the arkite idolatry there too, and the style in which he proceeds to do this affords a good specimen of the extravagance which has caused Celtic antiquity to be looked upon with so much suspicion. The story of Taliesin begins thus:—

'In former times there was a man of noble descent in Penllyn. His name was Tegid Voel, and his paternal estate was in the middle of the Lake of Tegid, and his wife was called Ceridwen.'

Nothing could well be simpler; but what Davies finds in this simple opening of Taliesin's story, is prodigious:—

'Let us take a brief view of the proprietor of this estate. Tegid Voel—*bald serenity*—presents itself at once to our fancy. The painter would find no embarrassment in sketching the portrait of this sedate venerable personage, whose crown is partly stripped of its hoary honours. But of all the gods of antiquity, none could with

propriety sit for this picture excepting Saturn, the acknowledged representative of Noah, and the husband of Rhea, which was but another name for Ceres, the genius of the ark.'

And Ceres, the genius of the ark, is of course found in Ceridwen, 'the British Ceres, the arkite goddess who initiates us into the deepest mysteries of the arkite superstition.'

Now the story of Taliesin, as it proceeds, exhibits Ceridwen as a sorceress; and a sorceress, like a goddess, belongs to the world of the supernatural; but, beyond this, the story itself does not suggest one particle of relationship between Ceridwen and Ceres. All the rest comes out of Davies's fancy, and is established by reasoning of the force of that about 'bald serenity.'

It is not difficult for the other side, the Celt-haters, to get a triumph over such adversaries as these. Perhaps I ought to ask pardon of Mr. Nash, whose *Taliesin* it is impossible to read without profit and instruction, for classing him among the Celt-haters: his determined scepticism about Welsh antiquity seems to me, however, to betray a preconceived hostility, a bias taken beforehand, as unmistakable as Mr. Davies's prepossessions. But Mr. Nash is often very happy in demolishing, for really the Celt-lovers seem often to try to lay themselves open, and to invite demolition. Full of his notions about an arkite idolatry and a Helio-dæmonic worship, Edward

Davies gives this translation of an old Welsh poem, entitled *The Panegyric of Lludd the Great*:—

'A song of dark import was composed by the distinguished Ogdoad, who assembled on the day of the moon, and went in open procession. On the day of Mars they allotted wrath to their adversaries; on the day of Mercury they enjoyed their full pomp; on the day of Jove they were delivered from the detested usurpers; on the day of Venus, the day of the great influx, they swam in the blood of men;[1] on the day of the Sun there truly assemble five ships and five hundred of those who make supplication: O Brithi, O Brithoi! O son of the compacted wood, the shock overtakes me; we all attend on Adonai, on the area of Pwmpai.'

That looks Helio-dæmonic enough, undoubtedly; especially when Davies prints *O Brithi, O Brithoi!* in Hebrew characters, as being 'vestiges of sacred hymns in the Phœnician language.' But then comes Mr. Nash, and says that the poem is a Middle-Age composition, with nothing Helio-dæmonic about it; that it is meant to ridicule the monks; and that *O Brithi, O Brithoi!* is a mere piece of unintelligible jargon in mockery of the chants used by the monks at prayers; and he gives this counter-translation of the poem:—

[1] Here, where Saturday should come, something is wanting in the manuscript.

'They make harsh songs; they note eight numbers. On Monday they will be prying about. On Tuesday they separate, angry with their adversaries. On Wednesday they drink, enjoying themselves ostentatiously. On Thursday they are in the choir; their poverty is disagreeable. Friday is a day of abundance, the men are swimming in pleasures. On Sunday, certainly, five legions and five hundreds of them, they pray, they make exclamations: O Brithi, Brithoi! Like wood-cuckoos in noise they will be, every one of the idiots banging on the ground.'

As one reads Mr. Nash's explanation and translation after Edward Davies's, one feels that a flood of the broad daylight of common-sense has been suddenly shed over the *Panegyric on Lludd the Great*, and one is very grateful to Mr. Nash.

Or, again, when another Celt-lover, Mr. Herbert, has bewildered us with his fancies, as uncritical as Edward Davies's; with his neo-Druidism, his Mithriac heresy, his Crist-celi, or man-god of the mysteries; and, above all, his ape of the sanctuary, 'signifying the mercurial principle, that strange and unexplained disgrace of paganism,' Mr. Nash comes to our assistance, and is most refreshingly rational. To confine ourselves to the ape of the sanctuary only. Mr. Herbert constructs his monster,—to whom, he says, 'great sanctity, together with foul crime,

deception, and treachery,' is ascribed,—out of four lines of old Welsh poetry, of which he adopts the following translation :—

'Without the ape, without the stall of the cow, without the mundane rampart, the world will become desolate, not requiring the cuckoos to convene the appointed dance over the green.'

One is not very clear what all this means, but it has, at any rate, a solemn air about it, which prepares one for the development of its first-named personage, the ape, into the mystical ape of the sanctuary. The cow, too,—says another famous Celt-lover, Dr. Owen, the learned author of the *Welsh Dictionary*,—the cow (*henfon*) is the cow of transmigration ; and this also sounds natural enough. But Mr. Nash, who has a keen eye for the piecing which frequently happens in these old fragments, has observed that just here, where the ape of the sanctuary and the cow of transmigration make their appearance, there seems to come a cluster of adages, popular sayings ; and he at once remembers an adage preserved with the word *henfon* in it, where, as he justly says, 'the cow of transmigration cannot very well have place.' This adage, rendered literally in English, is : 'Whoso owns the old cow, let him go at her tail' ; and the meaning of it, as a popular saying, is clear and simple enough. With this clue, Mr. Nash examines the whole passage, suggests that *heb eppa*, 'without the ape,' with which Mr. Herbert begins, in truth belongs to

something going before and is to be translated somewhat differently; and, in short, that what we really have here is simply these three adages one after another: 'The first share is the full one. Politeness is natural, says the ape. Without the cow-stall there would be no dung-heap.' And one can hardly doubt that Mr. Nash is quite right.

Even friends of the Celt, who are perfectly incapable of extravagances of this sort, fall too often into a loose mode of criticism concerning him and the documents of his history, which is unsatisfactory in itself, and also gives an advantage to his many enemies. One of the best and most delightful friends he has ever had,—M. de la Villemarqué,—has seen clearly enough that often the alleged antiquity of his documents cannot be proved, that it can be even disproved, and that he must rely on other supports than this to establish what he wants; yet one finds him saying: 'I open the collection of Welsh bards from the sixth to the tenth century. Taliesin, one of the oldest of them,' . . . and so on. But his adversaries deny that we have really any such thing as a 'collection of Welsh bards from the sixth to the tenth century,' or that a 'Taliesin, one of the oldest of them,' exists to be quoted in defence of any thesis. Sharon Turner, again, whose *Vindication of the Ancient British Poems* was prompted, it seems to me, by a critical instinct at bottom sound, is weak and uncritical in details

like this : 'The strange poem of Taliesin, called the *Spoils of Annwn*, implies the existence (in the sixth century, he means) of mythological tales about Arthur ; and the frequent allusion of the old Welsh bards to the persons and incidents which we find in the *Mabinogion*, are further proofs that there must have been such stories in circulation amongst the Welsh.' But the critic has to show, against his adversaries, that the *Spoils of Annwn* is a real poem of the sixth century, with a real sixth-century poet called Taliesin for its author, before he can use it to prove what Sharon Turner there wishes to prove ; and, in like manner, the high antiquity of persons and incidents that are found in the manuscripts of the *Mabinogion*,—manuscripts written, like the famous *Red Book of Hergest*, in the library of Jesus College at Oxford, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,—is not proved by allusions of the old Welsh bards, until (which is just the question at issue) the pieces containing these allusions are proved themselves to possess a very high antiquity. In the present state of the question as to the early Welsh literature, this sort of reasoning is inconclusive and bewildering, and merely carries us round in a circle. Again, it is worse than inconclusive reasoning, it shows so uncritical a spirit that it begets grave mistrust, when Mr. Williams ab Ithel, employed by the Master of the Rolls to edit the *Brut y Tywysogion*, the 'Chronicle of the Princes,' says in his intro-

duction, in many respects so useful and interesting: 'We may add, on the authority of a scrupulously faithful antiquary, and one that was deeply versed in the traditions of his order—the late Iolo Morganwg—that King Arthur in his Institutes of the Round Table introduced the age of the world for events which occurred before Christ, and the year of Christ's nativity for all subsequent events.' Now, putting out of the question Iolo Morganwg's character as an antiquary, it is obvious that no one, not Grimm himself, can stand in that way as 'authority' for King Arthur's having thus regulated chronology by his Institutes of the Round Table, or even for there ever having been any such institutes at all. And finally, greatly as I respect and admire Mr. Eugene O'Curry, unquestionable as is the sagacity, the moderation, which he in general unites with his immense learning, I must say that he, too, like his brother Celt-lovers, sometimes lays himself dangerously open. For instance, the Royal Irish Academy possesses in its Museum a relic of the greatest value, the *Domhnach Airgid*, a Latin manuscript of the four gospels. The outer box containing this manuscript is of the fourteenth century, but the manuscript itself, says O'Curry (and no man is better able to judge), is certainly of the sixth. This is all very well. 'But,' O'Curry then goes on, 'I believe no reasonable doubt can exist that the *Domhnach Airgid* was actually sanctified by the hand of our great

Apostle.' One has a thrill of excitement at receiving this assurance from such a man as Eugene O'Curry ; one believes that he is really going to make it clear that St. Patrick did actually sanctify the *Domhnach Airgid* with his own hands ; and one reads on :—

'As St. Patrick, says an ancient life of St. Mac Carthainn preserved by Colgan in his *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniæ*, was on his way from the north, and coming to the place now called Clogher, he was carried over a stream by his strong man, Bishop Mac Carthainn, who, while bearing the Saint, groaned aloud, exclaiming : "Ugh ! Ugh !"

'"Upon my good word," said the Saint, "it was not usual with you to make that noise."

'"I am now old and infirm," said Bishop Mac Carthainn, "and all my early companions in mission-work you have settled down in their respective churches, while I am still on my travels."

'"Found a church then," said the Saint, "that shall not be too near us (that is to his own Church of Armagh) for familiarity, nor too far from us for intercourse."

'And the Saint then left Bishop Mac Carthainn there, at Clogher, and bestowed the *Domhnach Airgid* upon him, which had been given to Patrick from heaven, when he was on the sea, coming to Erin.'

The legend is full of poetry, full of humour ;

and one can quite appreciate, after reading it, the tact which gave St. Patrick such a prodigious success in organising the primitive church in Ireland; the new bishop, 'not too near us for familiarity, nor too far from us for intercourse,' is a masterpiece. But how can Eugene O'Curry have imagined that it takes no more than a legend like that, to prove that the particular manuscript now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy was once in St. Patrick's pocket?

I insist upon extravagances like these, not in order to throw ridicule upon the Celt-lovers,—on the contrary, I feel a great deal of sympathy with them,—but rather, to make it clear what an immense advantage the Celt-haters, the negative side, have in the controversy about Celtic antiquity; how much a clear-headed sceptic, like Mr. Nash, may utterly demolish, and, in demolishing, give himself the appearance of having won an entire victory. But an entire victory he has, as I will next proceed to show, by no means won.

II

I said that a sceptic like Mr. Nash, by demolishing the rubbish of the Celtic antiquaries, might often give himself the appearance of having won a complete victory, but that a complete victory he had, in truth, by no means won. He has cleared much rubbish away, but this is no

such very difficult feat, and requires mainly common-sense; to be sure, Welsh archæologists are apt to lose their common-sense, but at moments when they are in possession of it they can do the indispensable, negative part of criticism, not, indeed, so briskly or cleverly as Mr. Nash, but still well enough. Edward Davies, for instance, has quite clearly seen that the alleged remains of old Welsh literature are not to be taken for genuine just as they stand: 'Some petty and mendicant minstrel, who only chaunted it as an old song, has tacked on' (he says of a poem he is discussing) 'these lines, in a style and measure totally different from the preceding verses: "May the Trinity grant us mercy in the day of judgment: a liberal donation, good gentlemen!"' There, fifty years before Mr. Nash, is a clearance very like one of Mr. Nash's. But the difficult feat in this matter is the feat of construction; to determine, when one has cleared away all that is to be cleared away, what is the significance of that which is left; and here, I confess, I think Mr. Nash and his fellow-sceptics, who say that next to nothing is left, and that the significance of whatever is left is next to nothing, dissatisfy the genuine critic even more than Edward Davies and his brother-enthusiasts, who have a sense that something primitive, august, and interesting is there, though they fail to extract it, dissatisfy him. There is a very edifying story told by O'Curry of the effect produced

on Moore, the poet, who had undertaken to write the history of Ireland (a task for which he was quite unfit), by the contemplation of an old Irish manuscript. Moore had, without knowing anything about them, spoken slightingly of the value to the historian of Ireland of the materials afforded by such manuscripts; but, says O'Curry :—

'In the year 1839, during one of his last visits to the land of his birth, he, in company with his old and attached friend Dr. Petrie, favoured me with an unexpected visit at the Royal Irish Academy. I was at that period employed on the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, and at the time of his visit happened to have before me on my desk the *Books of Ballymote and Lecain*, *The Speckled Book*, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, and many other ancient books, for historical research and reference. I had never before seen Moore, and after a brief introduction and explanation of the nature of my occupation by Dr. Petrie, and seeing the formidable array of so many dark and time-worn volumes by which I was surrounded, he looked a little disconcerted, but after a while plucked up courage to open the *Book of Ballymote* and ask what it was. Dr. Petrie and myself then entered into a short explanation of the history and character of the books then present as well as of ancient Gaedhelic documents in general. Moore listened with great attention, alternately scanning the books and myself, and then asked

me, in a serious tone, if I understood them, and how I had learned to do so. Having satisfied him upon these points, he turned to Dr. Petrie and said: "Petrie, these huge tomes could not have been written by fools or for any foolish purpose. I never knew anything about them before, and I had no right to have undertaken the *History of Ireland*."'

And from that day Moore, it is said, lost all heart for going on with his *History of Ireland*, and it was only the importunity of the publishers which induced him to bring out the remaining volume.

Could not have been written by fools, or for any foolish purpose. That is, I am convinced, a true presentiment to have in one's mind when one looks at Irish documents like the *Book of Ballymote*, or Welsh documents like the *Red Book of Hergest*. In some respects, at any rate, these documents are what they claim to be, they hold what they pretend to hold, they touch that primitive world of which they profess to be the voice. The true critic is he who can detect this precious and genuine part in them, and employ it for the elucidation of the Celt's genius and history, and for any other fruitful purposes to which it can be applied. Merely to point out the mixture of what is late and spurious in them, is to touch but the fringes of the matter. In reliance upon the discovery of this mixture of what is late and spurious in them, to pooh-pooh them altogether,

to treat them as a heap of rubbish, a mass of Middle-Age forgeries, is to fall into the greatest possible error. Granted that all the manuscripts of Welsh poetry (to take that branch of Celtic literature which has had, in Mr. Nash, the ablest disparager), granted that all such manuscripts that we possess are, with the most insignificant exception, not older than the twelfth century; granted that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a time of great poetical activity in Wales, a time when the mediæval literature flourished there, as it flourished in England, France, and other countries; granted that a great deal of what Welsh enthusiasts have attributed to their great traditional poets of the sixth century belongs to this later epoch,—what then? Does that get rid of the great traditional poets, the Cynveirdd or old bards, Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hen, and their compeers,—does that get rid of the great poetical tradition of the sixth century altogether; does it merge the whole literary antiquity of Wales in her mediæval literary antiquity, or, at least, reduce all other than this to insignificance? Mr. Nash says it does; all his efforts are directed to show how much of the so-called sixth-century pieces may be resolved into mediæval, twelfth-century work; his grand thesis is that there is nothing primitive and pre-Christian in the extant Welsh literature, no traces of the Druidism and Paganism every one associates with Celtic antiquity; all this, he says, was extinguished by

Paulinus in A.D. 59, and never resuscitated. 'At the time the Mabinogion and the Taliesin ballads were composed, no tradition or popular recollection of the Druids or the Druidical mythology existed in Wales. The Welsh bards knew of no older mystery, nor of any mystic creed, unknown to the rest of the Christian world.' And Mr. Nash complains that 'the old opinion that the Welsh poems contain notices of Druid or Pagan superstitions of a remote origin' should still find promulgators; what we find in them is only, he says, what was circulating in Wales in the twelfth century, and 'one great mistake in these investigations has been the supposing that the Welsh of the twelfth, or even of the sixth century, were wiser as well as more Pagan than their neighbours.'

Why, what a wonderful thing is this! We have, in the first place, the most weighty and explicit testimony,—Strabo's, Cæsar's, Lucan's, —that this race once possessed a special, profound, spiritual discipline, that they were, to use Mr. Nash's words, 'wiser than their neighbours.' Lucan's words are singularly clear and strong, and serve well to stand as a landmark in this controversy, in which one is sometimes embarrassed by hearing authorities quoted on this side or that, when one does not feel sure precisely what they say, how much or how little; Lucan, addressing those hitherto under the pressure of Rome, but now left by the Roman civil war to their own devices, says:—

'Ye too, ye bards, who by your praises perpetuate the memory of the fallen brave, without hindrance poured forth your strains. And ye, ye Druids, now that the sword was removed, began once more your barbaric rites and weird solemnities. To you only is given knowledge or ignorance (whichever it be) of the gods and the powers of heaven; your dwelling is in the lone heart of the forest. From you we learn, that the bourne of man's ghost is not the senseless grave, not the pale realm of the monarch below; in another world his spirit survives still; —death, if your lore be true, is but the passage to enduring life.'

There is the testimony of an educated Roman, fifty years after Christ, to the Celtic race being then 'wiser than their neighbours'; testimony all the more remarkable because civilised nations, though very prone to ascribe to barbarous people an ideal purity and simplicity of life and manners, are by no means naturally inclined to ascribe to them high attainment in intellectual and spiritual things. And now, along with this testimony of Lucan's, one has to carry in mind Cæsar's remark, that the Druids, partly from a religious scruple, partly from a desire to discipline the memory of their pupils, committed nothing to writing. Well, then come the crushing defeat of the Celtic race in Britain and the Roman conquest; but the Celtic race subsisted here still, and any one can see that, while the race

subsisted, the traditions of a discipline such as that of which Lucan has drawn the picture were not likely to be so very speedily 'extinguished.' The withdrawal of the Romans, the recovered independence of the native race here, the Saxon invasion, the struggle with the Saxons, were just the ground for one of those bursts of energetic national life and self-consciousness which find a voice in a burst of poets and poetry. Accordingly, to this time, to the sixth century, the universal Welsh tradition attaches the great group of British poets, Taliesin and his fellows. In the twelfth century there began for Wales, along with another burst of national life, another burst of poetry; and this burst *literary* in the stricter sense of the word,—a burst which left, for the first time, written records. It wrote the records of its predecessors, as well as of itself, and therefore Mr. Nash wants to make it the real author of the whole poetry, one may say, of the sixth century as well as its own. No doubt one cannot produce the texts of the poetry of the sixth century; no doubt we have this only as the twelfth and succeeding centuries wrote it down; no doubt they mixed and changed it a great deal in writing it down. But, since a continuous stream of testimony shows the enduring existence and influence among the kindred Celts of Wales and Brittany, from the sixth century to the twelfth, of an old national literature, it seems certain that much of this

must be traceable in the documents of the twelfth century, and the interesting thing is to trace it. It cannot be denied that there is such a continuous stream of testimony; there is Gildas in the sixth century, Nennius in the eighth, the laws of Howel in the tenth; in the eleventh, twenty or thirty years before the new literary epoch began, we hear of Rhys ap Tudor having 'brought with him from Brittany the system of the Round Table, which at home had become quite forgotten, and he restored it as it is, with regard to minstrels and bards, as it had been at Caerleon-upon-Usk, under the Emperor Arthur, in the time of the sovereignty of the race of the Cymry over the island of Britain and its adjacent islands.' Mr. Nash's own comment on this is: 'We here see the introduction of the Arthurian romance from Brittany, preceding by nearly one generation the revival of music and poetry in North Wales'; and yet he does not seem to perceive what a testimony is here to the reality, fulness, and subsistence of that primitive literature about which he is so sceptical. Then in the twelfth century testimony to this primitive literature absolutely abounds; one can quote none better than that of Giraldus de Barri, or Giraldus Cambrensis, as he is usually called. Giraldus is an excellent authority, who knew well what he was writing about, and he speaks of the Welsh bards and rhapsodists of his time as having in their possession 'ancient and

authentic books' in the Welsh language. The apparatus of technical terms of poetry, again, and the elaborate poetical organisation which we find both in Wales and Ireland, existing from the very commencement of the mediæval literary period in each, and to which no other mediæval literature, so far as I know, shows at its first beginnings anything similar, indicates surely, in these Celtic peoples, the clear and persistent tradition of an older poetical period of great development, and almost irresistibly connects itself in one's mind with the elaborate Druidic discipline which Cæsar mentions.

But perhaps the best way to get a full sense of the storied antiquity, forming as it were the background to those mediæval documents which in Mr. Nash's eyes pretty much begin and end with themselves, is to take, almost at random, a passage from such a tale as *Kilhwch and Olwen*, in the *Mabinogion*,—that charming collection, for which we owe such a debt of gratitude to Lady Charlotte Guest (to call her still by the name she bore when she made her happy entry into the world of letters), and which she so unkindly suffers to remain out of print. Almost every page of this tale points to traditions and personages of the most remote antiquity, and is instinct with the very breath of the primitive world. Search is made for Mabon, the son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall. The seekers

go first to the Ousel of Cilgwri; the Ousel had lived long enough to peck a smith's anvil down to the size of a nut, but he had never heard of Mabon. 'But there is a race of animals who were formed before me, and I will be your guide to them.' So the Ousel guides them to the Stag of Redynvre. The Stag has seen an oak sapling, in the wood where he lived, grow up to be an oak with a hundred branches, and then slowly decay down to a withered stump, yet he had never heard of Mabon. 'But I will be your guide to the place where there is an animal which was formed before I was'; and he guides them to the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd. 'When first I came hither,' says the Owl, 'the wide valley you see was a wooded glen. And a race of men came and rooted it up. And there grew a second wood; and this wood is the third. My wings, are they not withered stumps?' Yet the Owl, in spite of his great age, had never heard of Mabon; but he offered to be guide 'to where is the oldest animal in the world, and the one that has travelled most, the Eagle of Gwern Abwy.' The Eagle was so old, that a rock, from the top of which he pecked at the stars every evening, was now not so much as a span high. He knew nothing of Mabon; but there was a monster Salmon, into whom he once struck his claws in Llyn Llyw, who might, perhaps, tell them something of him. And at last the Salmon of Llyn Llyw told them of Mabon.

'With every tide I go along the river upwards, until I come near to the walls of Gloucester, and there have I found such wrong as I never found elsewhere.' And the Salmon took Arthur's messengers on his shoulders up to the wall of the prison in Gloucester, and they delivered Mabon.

Nothing could better give that sense of primitive and pre-mediæval antiquity which to the observer with any tact for these things is, I think, clearly perceptible in these remains, at whatever time they may have been written; or better serve to check too absolute an acceptance of Mr. Nash's doctrine,—in some respects very salutary,—'that the common assumption of such remains of the date of the sixth century, has been made upon very unsatisfactory grounds.' It is true, it has; it is true, too, that, as he goes on to say, 'writers who claim for productions actually existing only in manuscripts of the twelfth, an origin in the sixth century, are called upon to demonstrate the links of evidence, either internal or external, which bridge over this great intervening period of at least five hundred years.' Then Mr. Nash continues: 'This external evidence is altogether wanting.' Not altogether, as we have seen; that assertion is a little too strong. But I am content to let it pass, because it is true, that without internal evidence in this matter the external evidence would be of no moment. But when Mr. Nash continues further: 'And the internal evidence

even of the so-called historic poems themselves, is, in some instances at least, opposed to their claims to an origin in the sixth century,' and leaves the matter there, and finishes his chapter, I say that is an unsatisfactory turn to give to the matter, and a lame and impotent conclusion to his chapter ; because the one interesting, fruitful question here is, not in what instances the internal evidence opposes the claims of these poems to a sixth-century origin, but in what instances it supports them, and what these sixth-century remains, thus established, signify.

So again with the question as to the mythological import of these poems. Mr. Nash seems to me to have dealt with this, too, rather in the spirit of a sturdy enemy of the Celts and their pretensions,—often enough chimerical,—than in the spirit of a disinterested man of science. 'We find in the oldest compositions in the Welsh language no traces,' he says, 'of the Druids, or of a pagan mythology.' He will not hear of there being, for instance, in these compositions, traces of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, attributed to the Druids in such clear words by Cæsar. He is very severe upon a German scholar, long and favourably known in this country, who has already furnished several contributions to our knowledge of the Celtic race, and of whose labours the main fruit has, I believe, not yet been given us,—Mr. Meyer. He is very severe

upon Mr. Meyer, for finding in one of the poems ascribed to Taliesin, 'a sacrificial hymn addressed to the god Pryd, in his character of god of the Sun.' It is not for me to pronounce for or against this notion of Mr. Meyer's. I have not the knowledge which is needed in order to make one's suffrage in these matters of any value; speaking merely as one of the unlearned public, I will confess that allegory seems to me to play, in Mr. Meyer's theories, a somewhat excessive part; Arthur and his Twelve (?) Knights of the Round Table signifying solely the year with its twelve months; Percival and the Miller signifying solely steel and the grindstone; Stonehenge and the *Gododin* put to purely calendarial purposes; the *Nibelungen*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Iliad*, finally following the fate of the *Gododin;* all this appears to me, I will confess, a little prematurely grasped, a little unsubstantial. But that any one who knows the set of modern mythological science towards astronomical and solar myths, a set which has already justified itself in many respects so victoriously, and which is so irresistible that one can hardly now look up at the sun without having the sensations of a moth;—that any one who knows this should find in the Welsh remains no traces of mythology is quite astounding. Why, the heroes and heroines of the old Cymric world are all in the sky

as well as in Welsh story; Arthur is the Great Bear, his harp is the constellation Lyra; Cassiopeia's chair is Llys Don, Don's Court; the daughter of Don was Arianrod, and the Northern Crown is Caer Arianrod; Gwydion was Don's son, and the Milky Way is Caer Gwydion. With Gwydion is Math, the son of Mathonwy, the 'man of illusion and phantasy'; and the moment one goes below the surface,—almost before one goes below the surface,—all is illusion and phantasy, double-meaning, and far-reaching mythological import, in the world which all these personages inhabit. What are the three hundred ravens of Owen, and the nine sorceresses of Peredur, and the dogs of Annwn the Welsh Hades, and the birds of Rhiannon, whose song was so sweet that warriors remained spell-bound for eighty years together listening to them? What is the Avanc, the water-monster, of whom every lake-side in Wales, and her proverbial speech, and her music, to this day preserve the tradition? What is Gwyn the son of Nudd, king of fairie, the ruler of the Tylwyth Teg, or family of beauty, who till the day of doom fights on every first day of May,—the great feast of the sun among the Celtic peoples,—with Gwythyr, for the fair Cordelia, the daughter of Lear? What is the wonderful mare of Teirnyon, which on the night of every first of May foaled, and no one ever knew what became of the colt? Who is the mystic Arawn,

the king of Annwn, who changed semblance for a year with Pwyll, prince of Dyved, and reigned in his place? These are no mediæval personages; they belong to an older, pagan, mythological world. The very first thing that strikes one, in reading the *Mabinogion*, is how evidently the mediæval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; he is like a peasant building his hut on the site of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely;—stones 'not of this building,' but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestical. In the mediæval stories of no Latin or Teutonic people does this strike one as in those of the Welsh. Kilhwch, in the story, already quoted, of *Kilhwch and Olwen*, asks help at the hand of Arthur's warriors; a list of these warriors is given, which fills I know not how many pages of Lady Charlotte Guest's book; this list is a perfect treasure-house of mysterious ruins:—

'Teithi Hen, the son of Gwynham—(his domains were swallowed up by the sea, and he himself hardly escaped, and he came to Arthur, and his knife had this peculiarity, that from the time that he came there no haft would ever remain upon it, and owing to this a sickness came over him, and he pined away during the remainder of his life, and of this he died).

'Drem, the son of Dremidyd — (when the gnat arose in the morning with the sun, Drem could see it from Gelli Wic in Cornwall, as far off as Pen Blathaon in North Britain).

'Kynyr Keinvarvawc—(when he was told he had a son born, he said to his wife: Damsel, if thy son be mine, his heart will be always cold, and there will be no warmth in his hands).'

How evident, again, is the slightness of the narrator's hold upon the Twrch-Trwyth and his strange story! How manifest the mixture of known and unknown, shadowy and clear, of different layers and orders of tradition jumbled together, in the story of Bran the Blessed, a story whose personages touch a comparatively late and historic time. Bran invades Ireland, to avenge one of 'the three unhappy blows of this island,' the daily striking of Branwen by her husband Matholwch, King of Ireland. Bran is mortally wounded by a poisoned dart, and only seven men of Britain, 'the Island of the Mighty,' escape, among them Taliesin:—

'And Bran commanded them that they should cut off his head. And take you my head, said he, and bear it even unto the White Mount in London, and bury it there with the face towards France. And a long time will you be upon the road. In Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while. And all that time the head will be to you as pleasant company as it ever was when

on my body. And at Gwales in Penvro you will be fourscore years, and you may remain there, and the head with you uncorrupted, until you open the door that looks towards Aber Henvelen and towards Cornwall. And after you have opened that door, there you may no longer tarry ; set forth then to London to bury the head, and go straight forward.

'So they cut off his head, and those seven went forward therewith. And Branwen was the eighth with them, and they came to land at Aber Alaw in Anglesey, and they sate down to rest. And Branwen looked towards Ireland and towards the Island of the Mighty, to see if she could descry them. "Alas," said she, "woe is me that I was ever born ; two islands have been destroyed because of me." Then she uttered a loud groan, and there broke her heart. And they made her a four-sided grave, and buried her upon the banks of the Alaw.

'Then they went to Harlech, and sate down to feast and to drink there ; and there came three birds and began singing, and all the songs they had ever heard were harsh compared thereto ; and at this feast they continued seven years. Then they went to Gwales in Penvro, and there they found a fair and regal spot overlooking the ocean, and a spacious hall was therein. And they went into the hall, and two of its doors were open, but the third door was closed, that which looked towards Cornwall. "See yonder," said

Manawyddan, "is the door that we may not open." And that night they regaled themselves, and were joyful. And there they remained fourscore years, nor did they think they had ever spent a time more joyous and mirthful. And they were not more weary than when first they came, neither did they, any of them, know the time they had been there. And it was as pleasant to them having the head with them as if Bran had been with them himself.

'But one day said Heilyn, the son of Gwyn: "Evil betide me if I do not open the door to know if that is true which is said concerning it." So he opened the door and looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen. And when they had looked, they were as conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost, and of all the misery that had befallen them, as if all had happened in that very spot; and especially of the fate of their lord. And because of their perturbation they could not rest, but journeyed forth with the head towards London. And they buried the head in the White Mount.'

Arthur afterwards, in his pride and self-confidence, disinterred the head, and this was one of 'the three unhappy disclosures of the island of Britain.'

There is evidently mixed here, with the newer legend, a *detritus*, as the geologists would say, of something far older; and the secret of

Wales and its genius is not truly reached until this *detritus*, instead of being called recent because it is found in contact with what is recent, is disengaged, and is made to tell its own story.

But when we show him things of this kind in the Welsh remains, Mr. Nash has an answer for us. 'Oh,' he says, 'all this is merely a machinery of necromancers and magic, such as has probably been possessed by all people in all ages, more or less abundantly. How similar are the creations of the human mind in times and places the most remote! We see in this similarity only an evidence of the existence of a common stock of ideas, variously developed according to the formative pressure of external circumstances. The materials of these tales are not peculiar to the Welsh.' And then Mr. Nash points out, with much learning and ingenuity, how certain incidents of these tales have their counterparts in Irish, in Scandinavian, in Oriental romance. He says, fairly enough, that the assertions of Taliesin, in the famous *Hanes Taliesin*, or *History of Taliesin*, that he was present with Noah in the Ark, at the Tower of Babel, and with Alexander of Macedon, 'we may ascribe to the poetic fancy of the Christian priest of the thirteenth century, who brought this romance into its present form. We may compare these statements of the universal presence of the wonder-working magician with those of the gleeman who recites the Anglo-Saxon

metrical tale called the *Traveller's Song*.' No doubt lands the most distant can be shown to have a common property in many marvellous stories. This is one of the most interesting discoveries of modern science; but modern science is equally interested in knowing how the genius of each people has differentiated, so to speak, this common property of theirs; in tracking out, in each case, that special 'variety of development' which, to use Mr. Nash's own words, 'the formative pressure of external circumstances' has occasioned; and not the formative pressure from without only, but also the formative pressure from within. It is this which he who deals with the Welsh remains in a philosophic spirit wants to know. Where is the force, for scientific purposes, of telling us that certain incidents by which Welsh poetry has been supposed to indicate a surviving tradition of the doctrine of transmigration, are found in Irish poetry also, when Irish poetry has, like Welsh, its roots in that Celtism which is said to have held this doctrine of transmigration so strongly? Where is even the great force, for scientific purposes, of proving, if it were possible to prove, that the extant remains of Welsh poetry contain not one plain declaration of Druidical, Pagan, pre-Christian doctrine, if one has in the extant remains of Breton poetry such texts as this from the prophecy of Gwenchlan: 'Three times must we all die, before we come

to our final repose'? or as the cry of the eagles, in the same poem, of fierce thirst for Christian blood, a cry in which the poet evidently gives vent to his own hatred? since the solidarity, to use that convenient French word, of Breton and Welsh poetry is so complete, that the ideas of the one may be almost certainly assumed not to have been wanting to those of the other. The question is, when Taliesin says, in the *Battle of the Trees:* 'I have been in many shapes before I attained a congenial form. I have been a narrow blade of a sword, I have been a drop in the air, I have been a shining star, I have been a word in a book, I have been a book in the beginning, I have been a light in a lantern a year and a half, I have been a bridge for passing over three-score rivers; I have journeyed as an eagle, I have been a boat on the sea, I have been a director in battle, I have been a sword in the hand, I have been a shield in fight, I have been the string of a harp, I have been enchanted for a year in the foam of water. There is nothing in which I have not been,'—the question is, have these 'statements of the universal presence of the wonder-working magician' nothing which distinguishes them from 'similar creations of the human mind in times and places the most remote'; have they not an inwardness, a severity of form, a solemnity of tone, which indicates the still reverberating echo of a profound doctrine and discipline, such as was Druidism? Suppose

we compare Taliesin, as Mr. Nash invites us, with the gleeman of the Anglo-Saxon *Traveller's Song*. Take the specimen of this song which Mr. Nash himself quotes: 'I have been with the Israelites and with the Essyringi, with the Hebrews and with the Indians and with the Egyptians; I have been with the Medes and with the Persians and with the Myrgings.' It is very well to parallel with this extract Taliesin's: 'I carried the banner before Alexander; I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain; I was on the horse's crupper of Elias and Enoch; I was on the high cross of the merciful son of God; I was the chief overseer at the building of the tower of Nimrod; I was with my King in the manger of the ass; I supported Moses through the waters of Jordan; I have been in the buttery in the land of the Trinity; it is not known what is the nature of its meat and its fish.' It is very well to say that these assertions 'we may fairly ascribe to the poetic fancy of a Christian priest of the thirteenth century.' Certainly we may; the last of Taliesin's assertions more especially; though one must remark at the same time that the Welshman shows much more fire and imagination than the Anglo-Saxon. But Taliesin adds, after his: 'I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain,' '*I was in the hall of Don before Gwydion was born*'; he adds, after: 'I was chief overseer at the building of the tower of Nimrod,' '*I have been three times*

resident in the castle of Arianrod' ; he adds, after : 'I was at the cross with Mary Magdalene,' '*I obtained my inspiration from the cauldron of Ceridwen.*' And finally, after the mediæval touch of the visit to the buttery in the land of the Trinity, he goes off at score : 'I have been instructed in the whole system of the universe ; I shall be till the day of judgment on the face of the earth. I have been in an uneasy chair above Caer Sidin, and the whirling round without motion between three elements. Is it not the wonder of the world that cannot be discovered ?' And so he ends the poem. But here is the Celtic, the essential part of the poem : it is here that the 'formative pressure' has been really in operation ; and here surely is paganism and mythology enough, which the Christian priest of the thirteenth century can have had nothing to do with. It is unscientific, no doubt, to interpret this part as Edward Davies and Mr. Herbert do ; but it is unscientific also to get rid of it as Mr. Nash does. Wales and the Welsh genius are not to be known without this part ; and the true critic is he who can best disengage its real significance.

I say, then, what we want is to *know* the Celt and his genius ; not to exalt him or to abase him, but to know him. And for this a disinterested, positive, and constructive criticism is needed. Neither his friends nor his enemies have yet given us much of this. His friends

have given us materials for criticism, and for these we ought to be grateful; his enemies have given us negative criticism, and for this, too, up to a certain point, we may be grateful; but the criticism we really want neither of them has yet given us.

Philology, however, that science which in our time has had so many successes, has not been abandoned by her good fortune in touching the Celt; philology has brought, almost for the first time in their lives, the Celt and sound criticism together. The Celtic grammar of Zeuss, whose death is so grievous a loss to science, offers a splendid specimen of that patient, disinterested way of treating objects of knowledge, which is the best and most attractive characteristic of Germany. Zeuss proceeds neither as a Celt-lover nor as a Celt-hater; not the slightest trace of a wish to glorify Teutonism or to abase Celtism, appears in his book. The only desire apparent there, is the desire to know his object, the language of the Celtic peoples, as it really is. In this he stands as a model to Celtic students; and it has been given to him, as a reward for his sound method, to establish certain points which are henceforth cardinal points, landmarks, in all the discussion of Celtic matters, and which no one had so established before. People talked at random of Celtic writings of this or that age; Zeuss has definitely fixed the age of what we actually

have of these writings. To take the Cymric group of languages: our earliest Cornish document is a vocabulary of the thirteenth century; our earliest Breton document is a short description of an estate in a deed of the ninth century; our earliest Welsh documents are Welsh glosses of the eighth century to Eutychus, the grammarian, and Ovid's *Art of Love*, and the verses found by Edward Lhuyd in the *Juvencus* manuscript at Cambridge. The mention of this *Juvencus* fragment, by the bye, suggests the difference there is between an interested and a disinterested critical habit. Mr. Nash deals with this fragment; but, in spite of all his great acuteness and learning, because he has a bias, because he does not bring to these matters the disinterested spirit they need, he is capable of getting rid, quite unwarrantably, of a particular word in the fragment which does not suit him; his dealing with the verses is an advocate's dealing, not a critic's. Of this sort of thing Zeuss is incapable.

The test which Zeuss used for establishing the age of these documents is a scientific test, the test of orthography and of declensional and syntactical forms. These matters are far out of my province, but what is clear, sound, and simple, has a natural attraction for us all, and one feels a pleasure in repeating it. It is the grand sign of age, Zeuss says, in Welsh and Irish words, when what the grammarians call

the '*destitutio tenuium*' has not yet taken place; when the sharp consonants have not yet been changed into flat, *p* or *t* into *b* or *d*; when, for instance, *map*, a son, has not yet become *mab*; *coet*, a wood, *coed*; *ocet*, a harrow, *oged*. This is a clear, scientific test to apply, and a test of which the accuracy can be verified; I do not say that Zeuss was the first person who knew this test or applied it, but I say that he is the first person who in dealing with Celtic matters has invariably proceeded by means of this and similar scientific tests; the first person, therefore, the body of whose work has a scientific, stable character; and so he stands as a model to all Celtic inquirers.

His influence has already been most happy; and as I have enlarged on a certain failure in criticism of Eugene O'Curry's,—whose business, after all, was the description and classification of materials rather than criticism,—let me show, by another example from Eugene O'Curry, this good influence of Zeuss upon Celtic studies. Eugene O'Curry wants to establish that compositions of an older date than the twelfth century existed in Ireland in the twelfth century, and thus he proceeds. He takes one of the great extant Irish manuscripts, the *Leabhar na h'Uidhre*; or *Book of the Dun Cow*. The compiler of this book was, he says, a certain Maelmuiri, a member of the religious house of Cluainmacnois. This he establishes from a

passage in the manuscript itself: 'This is a trial of his pen here, by Maelmuiri, son of the son of Conn na m'Bocht.' The date of Maelmuiri he establishes from a passage in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, under the year 1106: 'Maelmuiri, son of the son of Conn na m'Bocht, was killed in the middle of the great stone church of Cluainmacnois, by a party of robbers.' Thus he gets the date of the *Book of the Dun Cow*. This book contains an elegy on the death of St. Columb. Now, even before 1106, the language of this elegy was so old as to require a gloss to make it intelligible, for it is accompanied by a gloss written between the lines. This gloss quotes, for the explanation of obsolete words, a number of more ancient compositions; and these compositions, therefore, must, at the beginning of the twelfth century, have been still in existence. Nothing can be sounder; every step is proved, and fairly proved, as one goes along. O'Curry thus affords a good specimen of the sane mode of proceeding so much wanted in Celtic researches, and so little practised by Edward Davies and his brethren; and to found this sane method, Zeuss, by the example he sets in his own department of philology, has mainly contributed.

Science's reconciling power, too, on which I have already touched, philology, in her Celtic researches, again and again illustrates. Races and languages have been absurdly joined, and

unity has been often rashly assumed at stages where one was far, very far, from having yet really reached unity. Science has and will long have to be a divider and a separatist, breaking arbitrary and fanciful connections, and dissipating dreams of a premature and impossible unity. Still, science,—true science,—recognises in the bottom of her soul a law of ultimate fusion, of conciliation. To reach this, but to reach it legitimately, she tends. She draws, for instance, towards the same idea which fills her elder and diviner sister, poetry,—the idea of the substantial unity of man; though she draws towards it by roads of her own. But continually she is showing us affinity where we imagined there was isolation. What schoolboy of us has not rummaged his Greek dictionary in vain for a satisfactory account of that old name for the Peloponnese, the *Apian Land?* and within the limits of Greek itself there is none. But the Scythian name for earth, 'apia,' *watery*, *water-issued*, meaning first *isle* and then *land*—this name, which we find in 'avia,' Scandin*avia*, and in 'ey' for Aldern*ey*, not only explains the *Apian Land* of Sophocles for us, but points the way to a whole world of relationships of which we knew nothing. The Scythians themselves again,—obscure, far-separated Mongolian people as they used to appear to us,—when we find that they are essentially Teutonic and Indo-European, their very name the same word as the common Latin word 'scutum,' the

shielded people, what a surprise they give us! And then, before we have recovered from this surprise we learn that the name of their father and god, Targitavus, carries us I know not how much further into familiar company. This divinity, *Shining with the targe*, the Greek Hercules, the Sun, contains in the second half of his name, *tavus*, 'shining,' a wonderful cement to hold times and nations together. *Tavus*, 'shining,' from 'tava'—in Sanscrit, as well as Scythian, 'to burn' or 'shine,'—is *Divus*, *dies*, *Zeus*, Θεός, *Dêva*, and I know not how much more; and *Taviti*, the bright and burnt, fire, the place of fire, the hearth, the centre of the family, becomes the family itself, just as our word family, the Latin *familia*, is from *thymelé*, the sacred centre of fire. The hearth comes to mean home. Then from home it comes to mean the group of homes, the tribe; from the tribe the entire nation; and in this sense of nation or people, the word appears in Gothic, Norse, Celtic, and Persian, as well as in Scythian; the *Theuthisks*, Deutschen, Tudesques, are the men of one *theuth*, nation, or people; and of this our name *Germans* itself is, perhaps, only the Roman translation, meaning the men of one germ or stock. The Celtic divinity, Teutates, has his name from the Celtic *teuta*, people; *taviti*, fire, appearing here in its secondary and derived sense of *people*, just as it does in its own Scythian language in Targitavus's second name, *Tavitvarus*, *Teutaros*, the

protector of the people. Another Celtic divinity, the Hesus of Lucan, finds his brother in the Gaisos, the sword, symbolising the god of battles of the Teutonic Scythians.[1] And after philology has thus related to each other the Celt and the Teuton, she takes another branch of the Indo-European family, the Sclaves, and shows us them as having the same name with the German Suevi, the *solar* people; the common ground here, too, being that grand point of union, the sun, fire. So, also, we find Mr. Meyer, whose Celtic studies I just now mentioned, harping again and again

[1] See *Les Scythes les Ancêtres des Peuples Germaniques et Slaves*, par F. G. Bergmann, professeur à la faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg: Colmar, 1858. But Professor Bergmann's etymologies are often, says Lord Strangford, 'false lights, held by an uncertain hand.' And Lord Strangford continues:—'The Apian land certainly meant the watery land, *Meer-umschlungen*, among the pre-Hellenic Greeks, just as the same land is called Morea by the modern post-Hellenic or Romaic Greeks from *more*, the name for the sea in the Slavonic vernacular of its inhabitants during the heart of the Middle Ages. But it is only connected by a remote and secondary affinity, if connected at all, with the *avia* of Scandinavia, assuming that to be the true German word for *water*, which, if it had come down to us in Gothic, would have been *avi*, genitive *aujôs*, and not a mere Latinised termination. Scythian is surely a negative rather than a positive term, much like our *Indian*, or the *Turanian* of modern ethnologists, used to comprehend nomads and barbarians of all sorts and races north and east of the Black and Caspian seas. It is unsafe to connect their name with anything as yet; it is quite as likely that it refers to the bow and arrow as to the shield, and is connected with our word to *shoot*, *scéotan*, *skiutan*, Lithuanian *szau-ti*. Some of the Scythian peoples may have been Anarian, Allophylic, Mongolian; some were demonstrably Aryan, and not only that, but Iranian as well, as is best shown in a memoir read before the Berlin Academy this last year; the evidence having been first indicated in the rough by Schaffarik the Slavonic antiquary. Coins, glosses, proper names, and inscriptions prove it. Targitaos (not -tavus) and

on the connection even in Europe, if you go back far enough, between Celt and German. So, after all we have heard, and truly heard of the diversity between all things Semitic and all things Indo-European, there is now an Italian philologist at work upon the relationship between Sanscrit and Hebrew.

Both in small and great things, philology, dealing with Celtic matters, has exemplified this tending of science towards unity. Who has not been puzzled by the relation of the Scots with Ireland—that *vetus et major Scotia*, as Colgan calls

the rest is guess-work or wrong. Herodotus's Ταβιτί for the goddess Vesta is not connected with the root *div* whence Dêvas, Deus, etc., but the root *tap*, in Latin *tep* (of tepere, tepefacere), Slavonic *tepl*, *topl* (for *tep* or *top*), in modern Persian *tâb*. *Thymele* refers to the hearth as the place of smoke (*θύω*, *thus*, *fumus*), but *familia* denotes household from *famulus* for *fagmulus*, the root *fag* being equated with the Sansk. *bhaj*, *servira*. Lucan's Hesus or Esus may fairly be compared with the Welsh *Hu* Gadarn by legitimate process, but no letter-change can justify his connection with *Gaisos*, the spear, not the sword, Virgil's *gæsum*, A.S. *gâr*, our verb to *gore*, retained in its outer form in *gar*-fish. For *Theuthisks*, *lege Thiudisks*, from *thiuda*, *populus;* in old high German Diutisk, Diotisk, *popularis*, *vulgaris*, the country vernacular as distinguished from the cultivated Latin ; hence the word *Dutch*, *Deutsch*. With our ancestors *theód* stood for nation generally and *getheóde* for any speech. Our *diet* in the political sense is the same word, but borrowed from our German cousins, not inherited from our fathers. The modern Celtic form is the Irish *tuath*, in ancient Celtic it must have been *teuta*, *touta*, of which we actually have the adjective *toutius* in the Gaulish inscription of Nismes. In Oscan we have it as *turta*, *tuta*, its adjective being handed down in Livy's *meddix tuticus*, the mayor or chief magistrate of the *tuta*. In the Umbrian inscriptions it is *tota*. In Lithuanian *tauta*, the country opposed to the town, and in old Prussian *tauta*, the country generally, *en Prusiskan tautan*, *im Land zu Preussen*.'

it? Who does not feel what pleasure Zeuss brings us when he suggests that *Gael*, the name for the Irish Celt, and *Scot*, are at bottom the same word, both having their origin in a word meaning *wind*, and both signifying *the violent stormy people?*[1] Who does not feel his mind agreeably cleared about our friends the Fenians, when he learns that the root of their name, *fen*, 'white,' appears in the hero Fingal; in Gwynned, the Welsh name for North Wales; in the Roman Venedotia; in Vannes in Brittany; in Venice? The very name of Ireland, some say, comes from the famous Sanscrit word *Arya*, the land of the Aryans, or noble men; although the weight of opinion seems to be in favour of connecting it rather with another Sanscrit word, *avara*, occidental, the western land or isle of the west.[2] But, at any rate, who that has been brought up to think the Celts utter aliens from us and our culture, can come without a start of sympathy upon such words as *heol* (sol), or *buaist* (fuisti)? or upon such a sentence as this, '*Peris*

[1] Lord Strangford observes here:—'The original forms of Gael should be mentioned—Gaedil, Goidil: in modern Gaelic orthography Gaoidheal where the *dh* is not realised in pronunciation. There is nothing impossible in the connection of the root of this with that of Scot, *if* the *s* of the latter be merely prosthetic. But the whole thing is *in nubibus*, and given as a guess only.'

[2] 'The name of Erin,' says Lord Strangford, 'is treated at length in a masterly note by Whitley Stokes in the first series of Max Müller's lectures (4th ed.) p. 255, where its earliest *tangible* form is shown to have been Iverio. Pictet's connection with Arya is quite baseless.'

Duw dui funnaun' ('God prepared two fountains')? Or when Mr. Whitley Stokes, one of the very ablest scholars formed in Zeuss's school, a born philologist,—he now occupies, alas! a post under the Government of India, instead of a chair of philology at home, and makes one think mournfully of Montesquieu's saying, that had he been an Englishman he should never have produced his great work, but have caught the contagion of practical life, and devoted himself to what is called 'rising in the world,' —when Mr. Whitley Stokes, in his edition of *Cormac's Glossary*, holds up the Irish word *traith*, the sea, and makes us remark that, though the names *Triton*, *Amphitrite*, and those of corresponding Indian and Zend divinities, point to the meaning *sea*, yet it is only Irish which actually supplies the vocable, how delightfully that brings Ireland into the Indo-European concert! What a wholesome buffet it gives to Lord Lyndhurst's alienation doctrines!

To go a little farther. Of the two great Celtic divisions of language, the Gaelic and the Cymric, the Gaelic, say the philologists, is more related to the younger, more synthetic, group of languages, Sanscrit, Greek, Zend, Latin, and Teutonic; the Cymric to the older, more analytic Turanian group. Of the more synthetic Aryan group, again, Zend and Teutonic are, in their turn, looser and more analytic than Sanscrit and Greek, more in sympathy with the Turanian

group and with Celtic. What possibilities of affinity and influence are here hinted at; what lines of inquiry, worth exploring, at any rate, suggest themselves to one's mind. By the forms of its language a nation expresses its very self. Our language is the loosest, the most analytic, of all European languages. And we, then, what are we? what is England? I will not answer, A vast obscure Cymric basis with a vast visible Teutonic superstructure; but I will say that that answer sometimes suggests itself, at any rate,—sometimes knocks at our mind's door for admission; and we begin to cast about and see whether it is to be let in.

But the forms of its language are not our only key to a people; what it says in its language, its literature, is the great key, and we must get back to literature. The literature of the Celtic peoples has not yet had its Zeuss, and greatly it wants him. We need a Zeuss to apply to Celtic literature, to all its vexed questions of dates, authenticity, and significance, the criticism, the sane method, the disinterested endeavour to get at the real facts, which Zeuss has shown in dealing with Celtic language. Science is good in itself, and therefore Celtic literature,—the Celt-haters having failed to prove it a bubble, —Celtic literature is interesting, merely as an object of knowledge. But it reinforces and redoubles our interest in Celtic literature if we find that here, too, science exercises the reconciling,

the uniting influence of which I have said so much; if we find here, more than anywhere else, traces of kinship, and the most essential sort of kinship, spiritual kinship, between us and the Celt, of which we had never dreamed. I settle nothing, and can settle nothing; I have not the special knowledge needed for that. I have no pretension to do more than to try and awaken interest; to seize on hints, to point out indications, which, to any one with a feeling for literature, suggest themselves; to stimulate other inquirers. I must surely be without the bias which has so often rendered Welsh and Irish students extravagant; why, my very name expresses that peculiar Semitico-Saxon mixture which makes the typical Englishman; I can have no ends to serve in finding in Celtic literature more than is there. What *is* there, is for me the only question.

III

We have seen how philology carries us towards ideas of affinity of race which are new to us. But it is evident that this affinity, even if proved, can be no very potent affair, unless it goes beyond the stage at which we have hitherto observed it. Affinity between races still, so to speak, in their mother's womb, counts for something, indeed, but cannot count for very much.

So long as Celt and Teuton are in their embryo rudimentary state, or, at least, no such great while out of their cradle, still engaged in their wanderings, changes of place and struggle for development, so long as they have not yet crystallised into solid nations, they may touch and mix in passing, and yet very little come of it. It is when the embryo has grown and solidified into a distinct nation, into the Gaul or German of history, when it has finally acquired the characters which make the Gaul of history what he is, the German of history what he is, that contact and mixture are important, and may leave a long train of effects ; for Celt and Teuton by this time have their formed, marked, national, ineffaceable qualities to oppose or to communicate. The contact of the German of the Continent with the Celt was in the prehistoric times, and the definite German type, as we know it, was fixed later, and from the time when it became fixed was not influenced by the Celtic type. But here in our country, in historic times, long after the Celtic embryo had crystallised into the Celt proper, long after the Germanic embryo had crystallised into the German proper, there was an important contact between the two peoples ; the Saxons invaded the Britons and settled themselves in the Britons' country. Well, then, here was a contact which one might expect would leave its traces ; if the Saxons got the upper hand, as we all know they

did, and made our country be England and us be English, there must yet, one would think, be some trace of the Saxon having met the Briton; there must be some Celtic vein or other running through us. Many people say there is nothing at all of the kind, absolutely nothing; the *Saturday Review* treats these matters of ethnology with great power and learning, and the *Saturday Review* says we are 'a nation into which a Norman element, like a much smaller Celtic element, was so completely absorbed that it is vain to seek after Norman or Celtic elements in any modern Englishman.' And the other day at Zurich I read a long essay on English literature by one of the professors there, in which the writer observed, as a remarkable thing, that while other countries conquered by the Germans, —France, for instance, and Italy,—had ousted all German influence from their genius and literature, there were two countries, not originally Germanic, but conquered by the Germans, England and German Switzerland, of which the genius and the literature were purely and unmixedly German; and this he laid down as a position which nobody would dream of challenging.

I say it is strange that this should be so, and we in particular have reason for inquiring whether it really is so; because though, as I have said, even as a matter of science the Celt has a claim to be known, and we have an interest

in knowing him, yet this interest is wonderfully enhanced if we find him to have actually a part in us. The question is to be tried by external and by internal evidence ; the language and the physical type of our race afford certain data for trying it, and other data are afforded by our literature, genius, and spiritual production generally. Data of this second kind belong to the province of the literary critic ; data of the first kind to the province of the philologist and of the physiologist.

The province of the philologist and of the physiologist is not mine ; but this whole question as to the mixture of Celt with Saxon in us has been so little explored, people have been so prone to settle it off-hand according to their prepossessions, that even on the philological and physiological side of it I must say a few words in passing. Surely it must strike with surprise any one who thinks of it, to find that without any immense inpouring of a whole people, that by mere expeditions of invaders having to come over the sea, and in no greater numbers than the Saxons, so far as we can make out, actually came, the old occupants of this island, the Celtic Britons, should have been completely annihilated, or even so completely absorbed that it is vain to seek after Celtic elements in the existing English race. Of deliberate wholesale extermination of the Celtic race, all of them who could not fly to Wales or Scotland, we hear

nothing; and without some such extermination one would suppose that a great mass of them must have remained in the country, their lot the obscure and, so to speak, underground lot of a subject race, but yet insensibly getting mixed with their conquerors, and their blood entering into the composition of a new people, in which the stock of the conquerors counts for most, but the stock of the conquered, too, counts for something. How little the triumph of the conqueror's laws, manners, and language, proves the extinction of the old race, we may see by looking at France; Gaul was Latinised in language, manners, and laws, and yet her people remained essentially Celtic. The Germanisation of Britain went far deeper than the Latinisation of France, and not only laws, manners, and language, but the main current of the blood, became Germanic; but how, without some process of radical extirpation, of which, as I say, there is no evidence, can there have failed to subsist in Britain, as in Gaul, a Celtic current too? The indications of this in our language have never yet been thoroughly searched out; the Celtic names of places prove nothing, of course, as to the point here in question; they come from the prehistoric times, the times before the nations, Germanic or Celtic, had crystallised, and they are everywhere, as the impetuous Celt was formerly everywhere,—in the Alps, the Apennines, the Cevennes, the

Rhine, the Po, as well as in the Thames, the Humber, Cumberland, London. But it is said that the words of Celtic origin for things having to do with every-day peaceful life,—the life of a settled nation,—words like *basket* (to take an instance which all the world knows) form a much larger body in our language than is commonly supposed ; it is said that a number of our raciest, most idiomatic, popular words—for example, *bam*, *kick*, *whop*, *twaddle*, *fudge*, *hitch*, *muggy*,—are Celtic. These assertions require to be carefully examined, and it by no means follows that because an English word is found in Celtic, therefore we get it from thence ; but they have not yet had the attention which, as illustrating through language this matter of the subsistence and intermingling in our nation of a Celtic part, they merit.

Nor have the physiological data which illustrate this matter had much more attention from us in England. But in France, a physician, half English by blood though a Frenchman by home and language, Monsieur W. F. Edwards, brother to Monsieur Milne-Edwards, the well-known zoologist, published in 1839 a letter to Monsieur Amedée Thierry with this title : *Des Caractères Physiologiques des Races Humaines considérés dans leurs Rapports avec l'Histoire.* The letter attracted great attention on the Continent ; it fills not much more than a hundred pages, and they are a hundred pages which well deserve

reading and re-reading. Monsieur Thierry in his *Histoire des Gaulois* had divided the population of Gaul into certain groups, and the object of Monsieur Edwards was to try this division by physiology. Groups of men have, he says, their physical type which distinguishes them, as well as their language; the traces of this physical type endure as the traces of language endure, and physiology is enabled to verify history by them. Accordingly, he determines the physical type of each of the two great Celtic families, the Gaels and the Cymris, who are said to have been distributed in a certain order through Gaul, and then he tracks these types in the population of France at the present day, and so verifies the alleged original order of distribution. In doing this, he makes excursions into neighbouring countries where the Gaels and the Cymris have been, and he declares that in England he finds abundant traces of the physical type which he has established as the Cymric, still subsisting in our population, and having descended from the old British possessors of our soil before the Saxon conquest. But if we are to believe the current English opinion, says Monsieur Edwards, the stock of these old British possessors is clean gone. On this opinion he makes the following comment:—

'In the territory occupied by the Saxons, the Britons were no longer an independent nation, nor even a people with any civil existence at all.

For history, therefore, they were dead, above all for history as it was then written; but they had not perished; they still lived on, and undoubtedly in such numbers as the remains of a great nation, in spite of its disasters, might still be expected to keep. That the Britons were destroyed or expelled from England, properly so called, is, as I have said, a popular opinion in that country. It is founded on the exaggeration of the writers of history; but in these very writers, when we come to look closely at what they say, we find the confession that the remains of this people were reduced to a state of strict servitude. Attached to the soil, they will have shared in that emancipation which during the course of the Middle Ages gradually restored to political life the mass of the population in the countries of Western Europe; recovering by slow degrees their rights without resuming their name, and rising gradually with the rise of industry, they will have got spread through all ranks of society. The gradualness of this movement, and the obscurity which enwrapped its beginnings, allowed the contempt of the conqueror and the shame of the conquered to become fixed feelings; and so it turns out, that an Englishman who now thinks himself sprung from the Saxons or the Normans, is often in reality the descendant of the Britons.'

So physiology, as well as language, incomplete though the application of their tests to this

matter has hitherto been, may lead us to hesitate before accepting the round assertion that it is vain to search for Celtic elements in any modern Englishman. But it is not only by the tests of physiology and language that we can try this matter. As there are for physiology physical marks, such as the square head of the German, the round head of the Gael, the oval head of the Cymri, which determine the type of a people, so for criticism there are spiritual marks which determine the type, and make us speak of the Greek genius, the Teutonic genius, the Celtic genius, and so on. Here is another test at our service; and this test, too, has never yet been thoroughly employed. Foreign critics have indeed occasionally hazarded the idea that in English poetry there is a Celtic element traceable; and Mr. Morley, in his very readable as well as very useful book on the English writers before Chaucer, has a sentence which struck my attention when I read it, because it expresses an opinion which I, too, have long held. Mr. Morley says:—'The main current of English literature cannot be disconnected from the lively Celtic wit in which it has one of its sources. The Celts do not form an utterly distinct part of our mixed population. But for early, frequent, and various contact with the race that in its half-barbarous days invented Ossian's dialogues with St. Patrick, and that quickened afterwards the Northmen's blood in

France, Germanic England would not have produced a Shakspeare.' But there Mr. Morley leaves the matter. He indicates this Celtic element and influence, but he does not show us, —it did not come within the scope of his work to show us,—how this influence has declared itself. Unlike the physiological test, or the linguistic test, this literary, spiritual test is one which I may perhaps be allowed to try my hand at applying. I say that there is a Celtic element in the English nature, as well as a Germanic element, and that this element manifests itself in our spirit and literature. But before I try to point out how it manifests itself, it may be as well to get a clear notion of what we mean by a Celtic element, a Germanic element; what characters, that is, determine for us the Celtic genius, the Germanic genius, as we commonly conceive the two.

IV

Let me repeat what I have often said of the characteristics which mark the English spirit, the English genius. This spirit, this genius, judged, to be sure, rather from a friend's than an enemy's point of view, yet judged on the whole fairly, is characterised, I have repeatedly said, by *energy with honesty*. Take away some of the energy which comes to us, as I believe, in part from Celtic and Roman sources; instead of

energy, say rather *steadiness;* and you have the Germanic genius: *steadiness with honesty.* It is evident how nearly the two characterisations approach one another; and yet they leave, as we shall see, a great deal of room for difference. Steadiness with honesty; the danger for a national spirit thus composed is the humdrum, the plain and ugly, the ignoble: in a word, *das Gemeine*, *die Gemeinheit*, that curse of Germany, against which Goethe was all his life fighting. The excellence of a national spirit thus composed is freedom from whim, flightiness, perverseness; patient fidelity to Nature,—in a word, *science*,—leading it at last, though slowly, and not by the most brilliant road, out of the bondage of the humdrum and common, into the better life. The universal dead-level of plainness and homeliness, the lack of all beauty and distinction in form and feature, the slowness and clumsiness of the language, the eternal beer, sausages, and bad tobacco, the blank commonness everywhere, pressing at last like a weight on the spirits of the traveller in Northern Germany, and making him impatient to be gone,—this is the weak side; the industry, the well-doing, the patient steady elaboration of things, the idea of science governing all departments of human activity,—this is the strong side; and through this side of her genius, Germany has already obtained excellent results, and is destined, we may depend upon it, however her pedantry, her slowness, her

fumbling, her ineffectiveness, her bad government, may at times make us cry out, to an immense development.[1]

For dulness, the creeping Saxons,—says an old Irish poem, assigning the characteristics for which different nations are celebrated :—

> For acuteness and valour, the Greeks,
> For excessive pride, the Romans,
> For dulness, the creeping Saxons ;
> For beauty and amorousness, the Gaedhils.

We have seen in what sense, and with what explanation, this characterisation of the German may be allowed to stand ; now let us come to the beautiful and amorous Gaedhil. Or rather, let us find a definition which may suit both branches of the Celtic family, the Cymri as well as the Gael. It is clear that special circumstances may have developed some one side in the national character of Cymri or Gael, Welshman or Irishman, so that the observer's notice shall be readily caught by this side, and yet it may be impossible to adopt it as characteristic of the Celtic nature generally. For instance, in his beautiful essay on the poetry of the Celtic races, M. Renan, with his eyes fixed on the Bretons and the Welsh, is struck with the timidity, the shyness, the delicacy of the Celtic nature, its preference for a retired life, its embarrassment at having to deal with the great world. He talks of the *douce*

[1] It is to be remembered that the above was written before the recent war between Prussia and Austria.

petite race naturellement chrétienne, his *race fière et timide, à l'extérieur gauche et embarrassée.* But it is evident that this description, however well it may do for the Cymri, will never do for the Gael, never do for the typical Irishman of Donnybrook fair. Again, M. Renan's *infinie délicatesse de sentiment qui caractérise la race Celtique*, how little that accords with the popular conception of an Irishman who wants to borrow money! *Sentiment* is, however, the word which marks where the Celtic races really touch and are one; sentimental, if the Celtic nature is to be characterised by a single term, is the best term to take. An organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow; this is the main point. If the downs of life too much outnumber the ups, this temperament, just because it is so quickly and nearly conscious of all impressions, may no doubt be seen shy and wounded; it may be seen in wistful regret, it may be seen in passionate, penetrating melancholy; but its essence is to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay. Our word *gay*, it is said, is itself Celtic. It is not from *gaudium*, but from the Celtic *gair*, to laugh;[1] and the impressionable

[1] The etymology is Monsieur Henri Martin's, but Lord Strangford says:—'Whatever *gai* may be, it is assuredly not Celtic. Is there any authority for this word *gair*, to laugh, or rather "laughter," beyond O'Reilly? O'Reilly is no authority at all except in so far as tested and passed by the new school. It is hard to give up

Celt, soon up and soon down, is the more down because it is so his nature to be up—to be sociable, hospitable, eloquent, admired, figuring away brilliantly. He loves bright colours, he easily becomes audacious, overcrowing, full of fanfaronade. The German, say the physiologists, has the larger volume of intestines (and who that has ever seen a German at a table-d'hôte will not readily believe this?), the Frenchman has the more developed organs of respiration. That is just the expansive, eager Celtic nature; the head in the air, snuffing and snorting; *a proud look and a high stomach*, as the Psalmist says, but without any such settled savage temper as the Psalmist seems to impute by those words. For good and for bad, the Celtic genius is more airy and unsubstantial, goes less near the ground, than the German. The Celt is often called sensual; but it is not so much the vulgar satisfactions of sense that attract him as emotion and excitement; he is truly, as I began by saying, sentimental.

Sentimental,—*always ready to react against the despotism of fact;* that is the description a great friend[1] of the Celt gives of him; and it is not a bad description of the sentimental temperament; it lets us into the secret of its dangers

gavisus. But Diez, chief authority in Romanic matters, is content to accept Muratori's reference to an old High-German *gâhi*, modern *jähe*, sharp, quick, sudden, brisk, and so to the sense of lively, animated, high in spirits.'

[1] Monsieur Henri Martin, whose chapters on the Celts, in his *Histoire de France*, are full of information and interest.

and of its habitual want of success. Balance, measure, and patience, these are the eternal conditions, even supposing the happiest temperament to start with, of high success; and balance, measure, and patience are just what the Celt has never had. Even in the world of spiritual creation, he has never, in spite of his admirable gifts of quick perception and warm emotion, succeeded perfectly, because he never has had steadiness, patience, sanity enough to comply with the conditions under which alone can expression be perfectly given to the finest perceptions and emotions. The Greek has the same perceptive, emotional temperament as the Celt; but he adds to this temperament the sense of *measure;* hence his admirable success in the plastic arts, in which the Celtic genius, with its chafing against the despotism of fact, its perpetual straining after mere emotion, has accomplished nothing. In the comparatively petty art of ornamentation, in rings, brooches, crosiers, relic-cases, and so on, he has done just enough to show his delicacy of taste, his happy temperament; but the grand difficulties of painting and sculpture, the prolonged dealings of spirit with matter, he has never had patience for. Take the more spiritual arts of music and poetry. All that emotion alone can do in music the Celt has done; the very soul of emotion breathes in the Scotch and Irish airs; but with all this power of musical feeling,

what has the Celt, so eager for emotion that he has not patience for science, effected in music, to be compared with what the less emotional German, steadily developing his musical feeling with the science of a Sebastian Bach or a Beethoven, has effected? In poetry, again, —poetry which the Celt has so passionately, so nobly loved; poetry where emotion counts for so much, but where reason, too, reason, measure, sanity, also count for so much,—the Celt has shown genius, indeed, splendid genius; but even here his faults have clung to him, and hindered him from producing great works, such as other nations with a genius for poetry,—the Greeks, say, or the Italians,—have produced. The Celt has not produced great poetical works, he has only produced poetry with an air of greatness investing it all, and sometimes giving, moreover, to short pieces, or to passages, lines, and snatches of long pieces, singular beauty and power. And yet he loved poetry so much that he grudged no pains to it; but the true art, the *architectonicé* which shapes great works, such as the *Agamemnon* or the *Divine Comedy*, comes only after a steady, deep-searching survey, a firm conception of the facts of human life, which the Celt has not patience for. So he runs off into technic, where he employs the utmost elaboration, and attains astonishing skill; but in the contents of his poetry you have only so much interpretation of the world as the first dash of a quick,

strong perception, and then sentiment, infinite sentiment, can bring you. Here, too, his want of sanity and steadfastness has kept the Celt back from the highest success.

If his rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt even in spiritual work, how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics! The skilful and resolute appliance of means to ends which is needed both to make progress in material civilisation, and also to form powerful states, is just what the Celt has least turn for. He is sensual, as I have said, or at least sensuous; loves bright colours, company, and pleasure; and here he is like the Greek and Latin races; but compare the talent the Greek and Latin (or Latinised) races have shown for gratifying their senses, for procuring an outward life, rich, luxurious, splendid, with the Celt's failure to reach any material civilisation sound and satisfying, and not out at elbows, poor, slovenly, and half-barbarous. The sensuousness of the Greek made Sybaris and Corinth, the sensuousness of the Latin made Rome and Baiæ, the sensuousness of the Latinised Frenchman makes Paris; the sensuousness of the Celt proper has made Ireland. Even in his ideal heroic times, his gay and sensuous nature cannot carry him, in the appliances of his favourite life of sociability and pleasure, beyond the gross and creeping Saxon whom he despises; the regent Breas, we are

told in the *Battle of Moytura of the Fomorians*, became unpopular because 'the knives of his people were not greased at his table, nor did their breath smell of ale at the banquet.' In its grossness and barbarousness is not that Saxon, as Saxon as it can be? just what the Latinised Norman, sensuous and sociable like the Celt, but with the talent to make this bent of his serve to a practical embellishment of his mode of living, found so disgusting in the Saxon.

And as in material civilisation he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics. This colossal, impetuous, adventurous wanderer, the Titan of the early world, who in primitive times fills so large a place on earth's scene, dwindles and dwindles as history goes on, and at last is shrunk to what we now see him. For ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more, out of the Celt's grasp. 'They went forth to the war,' Ossian says most truly, '*but they always fell.*'

And yet, if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it! Of an ideal genius one does not want the elements, any of them, to be in a state of weakness; on the contrary, one wants all of them to be in the highest state of power; but with a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole. So the sensibility of the Celt, if everything else were not sacrificed to it, is a beautiful and

admirable force. For sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion, is one of the very prime constituents of genius, perhaps its most positive constituent; it is to the soul what good senses are to the body, the grand natural condition of successful activity. Sensibility gives genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave. Do not let us wish that the Celt had had less sensibility, but that he had been more master of it. Even as it is, if his sensibility has been a source of weakness to him, it has been a source of power too, and a source of happiness. Some people have found in the Celtic nature and its sensibility the main root out of which chivalry and romance and the glorification of a feminine ideal spring; this is a great question, with which I cannot deal here. Let me notice in passing, however, that there is, in truth, a Celtic air about the extravagance of chivalry, its reaction against the despotism of fact, its straining human nature further than it will stand. But putting all this question of chivalry and its origin on one side, no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret. Again, his sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life

of nature ; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it. In the productions of the Celtic genius, nothing, perhaps, is so interesting as the evidences of this power : I shall have occasion to give specimens of them by and by. The same sensibility made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning, and the things of the mind ; *to be a bard, freed a man*,—that is a characteristic stroke of this generous and ennobling ardour of theirs, which no race has ever shown more strongly. Even the extravagance and exaggeration of the sentimental Celtic nature has often something romantic and attractive about it, something which has a sort of smack of misdirected good. The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence ; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. And very often, for the gay defiant reaction against fact of the lively Celtic nature one has more than sympathy ; one feels, in spite of the extravagance, in spite of good sense disapproving, magnetised and exhilarated

by it. The Gauls had a rule inflicting a fine on every warrior who, when he appeared on parade, was found to stick out too much in front,—to be corpulent, in short. Such a rule is surely the maddest article of war ever framed, and to people to whom nature has assigned a large volume of intestines, must appear, no doubt, horrible ; but yet has it not an audacious, sparkling, immaterial manner with it, which lifts one out of routine, and sets one's spirits in a glow ?

All tendencies of human nature are in themselves vital and profitable ; when they are blamed, they are only to be blamed relatively, not absolutely. This holds true of the Saxon's phlegm as well as of the Celt's sentiment. Out of the steady humdrum habit of the creeping Saxon, as the Celt calls him,—out of his way of going near the ground,—has come, no doubt, Philistinism, that plant of essentially Germanic growth, flourishing with its genuine marks only in the German fatherland, Great Britain and her colonies, and the United States of America ; but what a soul of goodness there is in Philistinism itself ! and this soul of goodness I, who am often supposed to be Philistinism's mortal enemy merely because I do not wish it to have things all its own way, cherish as much as anybody. This steady-going habit leads at last, as I have said, up to science, up to the comprehension and interpretation of the world. With us in Great

Britain, it is true, it does not seem to lead so far as that; it is in Germany, where the habit is more unmixed, that it can lead to science. Here with us it seems at a certain point to meet with a conflicting force, which checks it and prevents its pushing on to science; but before reaching this point what conquests has it not won! and all the more, perhaps, for stopping short at this point, for spending its exertions within a bounded field, the field of plain sense, of direct practical utility. How it has augmented the comforts and conveniences of life for us! Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things, are the invention of the Philistines.

Here, then, if commingling there is in our race, are two very unlike elements to commingle; the steady-going Saxon temperament and the sentimental Celtic temperament. But before we go on to try and verify, in our life and literature, the alleged fact of this commingling, we have yet another element to take into account, the Norman element. The critic in the *Saturday Review*, whom I have already quoted, says that in looking for traces of Normanism in our national genius, as in looking for traces of Celtism in it, we do but lose our labour; he says, indeed, that there went to the original making of our nation a very great deal more of a Norman element than of a Celtic element, but

he asserts that both elements have now so completely disappeared, that it is vain to look for any trace of either of them in the modern Englishman. But this sort of assertion I do not like to admit without trying it a little. I want, therefore, to get some plain notion of the Norman habit and genius, as I have sought to get some plain notion of the Saxon and Celtic. Some people will say that the Normans are Teutonic, and that therefore the distinguishing characters of the German genius must be those of their genius also ; but the matter cannot be settled in this speedy fashion. No doubt the basis of the Norman race is Teutonic ; but the governing point in the history of the Norman race,—so far, at least, as we English have to do with it,—is not its Teutonic origin, but its Latin civilisation. The French people have, as I have already remarked, an undoubtedly Celtic basis, yet so decisive in its effect upon a nation's habit and character can be the contact with a stronger civilisation, that Gaul, without changing the basis of her blood, became, for all practical intents and purposes, a Latin country, France and not Ireland, through the Roman conquest. Latinism conquered Celtism in her, as it also conquered the Germanism imported by the Frankish and other invasions ; Celtism is, however, I need not say, everywhere manifest still in the French nation ; even Germanism is distinctly traceable in it, as any one who attentively compares

the French with other Latin races will see. No one can look carefully at the French troops in Rome, amongst the Italian population, and not perceive this trace of Germanism ; I do not mean in the Alsatian soldiers only, but in the soldiers of genuine France. But the governing character of France, as a power in the world, is Latin ; such was the force of Greek and Roman civilisation upon a race whose whole mass remained Celtic, and where the Celtic language still lingered on, they say, among the common people, for some five or six centuries after the Roman conquest. But the Normans in Neustria lost their old Teutonic language in a wonderfully short time ; when they conquered England they were already Latinised ; with them were a number of Frenchmen by race, men from Anjou and Poitou, so they brought into England more non-Teutonic blood, besides what they had themselves got by intermarriage, than is commonly supposed ; the great point, however, is, that by civilisation this vigorous race, when it took possession of England, was Latin.

These Normans, who in Neustria had lost their old Teutonic tongue so rapidly, kept in England their new Latin tongue for some three centuries. It was Edward the Third's reign before English came to be used in law-pleadings and spoken at court. Why this difference? Both in Neustria and in England the Normans were a handful ; but in Neustria, as Teutons,

they were in contact with a more advanced civilisation than their own; in England, as Latins, with a less advanced. The Latinised Normans in England had the sense for fact, which the Celts had not; and the love of strenuousness, clearness, and rapidity, the high Latin spirit, which the Saxons had not. They hated the slowness and dulness of the creeping Saxon; it offended their clear, strenuous talent for affairs, as it offended the Celt's quick and delicate perception. The Normans had the Roman talent for affairs, the Roman decisiveness in emergencies. They have been called prosaic, but this is not a right word for them; they were neither sentimental, nor, strictly speaking, poetical. They had more sense for rhetoric than for poetry, like the Romans; but, like the Romans, they had too high a spirit not to like a noble intellectual stimulus of some kind, and thus they were carried out of the region of the merely prosaic. Their foible,—the bad excess of their characterising quality of strenuousness,—was not a prosaic flatness, it was hardness and insolence.

I have been obliged to fetch a very wide circuit, but at last I have got what I went to seek. I have got a rough, but, I hope, clear notion of these three forces, the Germanic genius, the Celtic genius, the Norman genius. The Germanic genius has steadiness as its main basis, with commonness and humdrum for its defect,

fidelity to nature for its excellence. The Celtic genius, sentiment as its main basis, with love of beauty, charm, and spirituality for its excellence, ineffectualness and self-will for its defect. The Norman genius, talent for affairs as its main basis, with strenuousness and clear rapidity for its excellence, hardness and insolence for its defect. And now to try and trace these in the composite English genius.

V

To begin with what is more external. If we are so wholly Anglo-Saxon and Germanic as people say, how comes it that the habits and gait of the German language are so exceedingly unlike ours? Why while the *Times* talks in this fashion: 'At noon a long line of carriages extended from Pall Mall to the Peers' entrance of the Palace of Westminster,' does the *Cologne Gazette* talk in this other fashion: 'Nachdem die Vorbereitungen zu dem auf dem Gürzenich-Saale zu Ehren der Abgeordneten Statt finden sollenden Bankette bereits vollständig getroffen worden waren, fand heute vormittag auf polizeiliche Anordnung die Schliessung sämmtlicher Zugänge zum Gürzenich Statt'?[1] Surely the

[1] The above is really a sentence taken from the *Cologne Gazette*. Lord Strangford's comment here is as follows:—'Modern Germanism, in a general estimate of Germanism, should not be taken, absolutely and necessarily, as the constant, whereof we are the variant. The Low Dutch of Holland, anyhow, are indisputably as

mental habit of people who express their thoughts in so very different a manner, the one rapid, the other slow, the one plain, the other embarrassed, the one trailing, the other striding, cannot be essentially the same. The English language, strange compound as it is, with its want of inflections, and with all the difficulties which this want of inflections brings upon it, has yet made itself capable of being, in good hands, a business instrument as ready, direct, and clear, as French or Latin. Again: perhaps no nation, after the Greeks and Romans, has so clearly felt in what true rhetoric, rhetoric of the best kind, consists, and reached so high a pitch of excellence in this, as the English. Our sense for rhetoric has in some ways done harm to us in our cultivation of literature, harm to us, still more, in our cultivation of science; but in the true sphere of rhetoric, in public speaking, this sense has given us orators whom I do think we may, without fear of being contradicted and accused of blind national vanity, assert to have inherited the great Greek and

genuine Dutch as the High Dutch of Germany Proper. But do they write sentences like this one,—*informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum?* If not, the question must be asked, not how we have come to deviate, but how the Germans have come to deviate. Our modern English prose in plain matters is often all just the same as the prose of *King Alfred* and the *Chronicle*. Ohthere's *North Sea Voyage* and Wulfstan's *Baltic Voyage* is the sort of thing which is sent in every day, one may say, to the Geographical or Ethnological Society, in the whole style and turn of phrase and thought.'

The mass of a stock must supply our data for judging the stock. But see, moreover, what I have said at p. 99.

Roman oratorical tradition more than the orators of any other country. Strafford, Bolingbroke, the two Pitts, Fox,—to cite no other names,—I imagine few will dispute that these call up the notion of an oratory, in kind, in extent, in power, coming nearer than any other body of modern oratory to the oratory of Greece and Rome. And the affinity of spirit in our best public life and greatest public men to those of Rome, has often struck observers, foreign as well as English. Now, not only have the Germans shown no eminent aptitude for rhetoric such as the English have shown,—that was not to be expected, since our public life has done so much to develop an aptitude of this kind, and the public life of the Germans has done so little,—but they seem in a singular degree devoid of any aptitude at all for rhetoric. Take a speech from the throne in Prussia, and compare it with a speech from the throne in England. Assuredly it is not in speeches from the throne that English rhetoric or any rhetoric shows its best side ;—they are often cavilled at, often justly cavilled at ;—no wonder, for this form of composition is beset with very trying difficulties. But what is to be remarked is this ;—a speech from the throne falls essentially within the sphere of rhetoric, it is one's sense of rhetoric which has to fix its tone and style, so as to keep a certain note always sounding in it ; in an English speech from the throne, whatever its faults, this rhetorical note is

always struck and kept to; in a Prussian speech from the throne, never. An English speech from the throne is rhetoric; a Prussian speech is half talk,—heavy talk,—and half effusion. This is one instance, it may be said; true, but in one instance of this kind the presence or the absence of an aptitude for rhetoric is decisively shown. Well, then, why am I not to say that we English get our rhetorical sense from the Norman element in us,—our turn for this strenuous, direct, high-spirited talent of oratory, from the influence of the strenuous, direct, high-spirited Normans? Modes of life, institutions, government, and other such causes, are sufficient, I shall be told, to account for English oratory. Modes of life, institutions, government, climate, and so forth,—let me say it once for all,—will further or hinder the development of an aptitude, but they will not by themselves create the aptitude or explain it. On the other hand, a people's habit and complexion of nature go far to determine its modes of life, institutions, and government, and even to prescribe the limits within which the influences of climate shall tell upon it.

However, it is not my intention, in these remarks, to lay it down for certain that this or that part of our powers, shortcomings, and behaviour, is due to a Celtic, German, or Norman element in us. To establish this I should need much wider limits, and a knowledge, too, far beyond what I possess; all I purpose

is to point out certain correspondences, not yet, perhaps, sufficiently observed and attended to, which seem to lead towards certain conclusions. The following up the inquiry till full proof is reached,—or perhaps, full disproof,—is what I want to suggest to more competent persons. Premising this, I now go on to a second matter, somewhat more delicate and inward than that with which I began. Every one knows how well the Greek and Latin races, with their direct sense for the visible, palpable world, have succeeded in the plastic arts. The sheer German races, too, with their honest love of fact, and their steady pursuit of it, — their fidelity to nature, in short, — have attained a high degree of success in these arts; few people will deny that Albert Dürer and Rubens, for example, are to be called masters in painting, and in the high kind of painting. The Celtic races, on the other hand, have shown a singular inaptitude for the plastic arts; the abstract, severe character of the Druidical religion, its dealing with the eye of the mind rather than the eye of the body, its having no elaborate temples and beautiful idols, all point this way from the first; its sentiment cannot satisfy itself, cannot even find a resting-place for itself, in colour and form; it presses on to the impalpable, the ideal. The forest of trees and the forest of rocks, not hewn timber and carved stones, suit its aspirations for something not to

be bounded or expressed. With this tendency, the Celtic races have, as I remarked before, been necessarily almost impotent in the higher branches of the plastic arts. Ireland, that has produced so many powerful spirits, has produced no great sculptors or painters. Cross into England. The inaptitude for the plastic art strikingly diminishes, as soon as the German, not the Celtic element, preponderates in the race. And yet in England, too, in the English race, there is something which seems to prevent our reaching real mastership in the plastic arts, as the more unmixed German races have reached it. Reynolds and Turner are painters of genius, who can doubt it? but take a European jury, the only competent jury in these cases, and see if you can get a verdict giving them the rank of masters, as this rank is given to Raphael and Correggio, or to Albert Dürer and Rubens. And observe in what points our English pair succeed, and in what they fall short. They fall short in *architectonicé*, in the highest power of composition, by which painting accomplishes the very uttermost which it is given to painting to accomplish; the highest sort of composition, the highest application of the art of painting, they either do not attempt, or they fail in it. Their defect, therefore, is on the side of art, of plastic art. And they succeed in magic, in beauty, in grace, in expressing almost the inexpressible: here is the charm of Reynolds's

children and Turner's seas; the impulse to express the inexpressible carries Turner so far, that at last it carries him away, and even long before he is quite carried away, even in works that are justly extolled, one can see the stamp-mark, as the French say, of insanity. The excellence, therefore, the success, is on the side of spirit. Does not this look as if a Celtic stream met the main German current in us, and gave it a somewhat different course from that which it takes naturally? We have Germanism enough in us, enough patient love for fact and matter, to be led to attempt the plastic arts, and we make much more way in them than the pure Celtic races make; but at a certain point our Celtism comes in, with its love of emotion, sentiment, the inexpressible, and gives our best painters a bias. And the point at which it comes in is just that critical point where the flowering of art into its perfection commences; we have plenty of painters who never reach this point at all, but remain always mere journeymen, in bondage to matter; but those who do reach it, instead of going on to the true consummation of the masters in painting, are a little overbalanced by soul and feeling, work too directly for these, and so do not get out of their art all that may be got out of it.

The same modification of our Germanism by another force which seems Celtic, is visible in our religion. Here, too, we may trace a

gradation between Celt, Englishman, and German, the difference which distinguishes Englishman from German appearing attributable to a Celtic element in us. Germany is the land of exegesis, England is the land of Puritanism. The religion of Wales is more emotional and sentimental than English Puritanism; Romanism has indeed given way to Calvinism among the Welsh,—the one superstition has supplanted the other,—but the Celtic sentiment which made the Welsh such devout Catholics, remains, and gives unction to their Methodism; theirs is not the controversial, rationalistic, intellectual side of Protestantism, but the devout, emotional, religious side. Among the Germans, Protestantism has been carried on into rationalism and science. The English hold a middle place between the Germans and the Welsh; their religion has the exterior forms and apparatus of a rationalism, so far their Germanic nature carries them; but long before they get to science, their feeling, their Celtic element catches them, and turns their religion all towards piety and unction. So English Protestantism has the outside appearance of an intellectual system, and the inside reality of an emotional system: this gives it its tenacity and force, for what is held with the ardent attachment of feeling is believed to have at the same time the scientific proof of reason. The English Puritan, therefore (and Puritanism is the characteristic form of English Protestantism),

stands between the German Protestant and the Celtic Methodist; his real affinity indeed, at present, being rather with his Welsh kinsman, if kinsman he may be called, than with his German.

Sometimes one is left in doubt from whence the check and limit to Germanism in us proceeds, whether from a Celtic source or from a Norman source. Of the true steady-going German nature the bane is, as I remarked, flat commonness; there seems no end to its capacity for platitude; it has neither the quick perception of the Celt to save it from platitude, nor the strenuousness of the Norman; it is only raised gradually out of it by science, but it jogs through almost interminable platitudes first. The English nature is not raised to science, but something in us, whether Celtic or Norman, seems to set a bound to our advance in platitude, to make us either shy of platitude or impatient of it. I open an English reading-book for children, and I find these two characteristic stories in it, one of them of English growth, the other of German. Take the English story first:—

'A little boy accompanied his elder sister while she busied herself with the labours of the farm, asking questions at every step, and learning the lessons of life without being aware of it.

'"Why, dear Jane," he said, "do you scatter good grain on the ground; would it not be

better to make good bread of it than to throw it to the greedy chickens?"

'"In time," replied Jane, "the chickens will grow big, and each of them will fetch money at the market. One must think on the end to be attained without counting trouble, and learn to wait."

'Perceiving a colt, which looked eagerly at him, the little boy cried out: "Jane, why is the colt not in the fields with the labourers helping to draw the carts?"

'"The colt is young," replied Jane, "and he must lie idle till he gets the necessary strength; one must not sacrifice the future to the present."'

The reader will say that is most mean and trivial stuff, the vulgar English nature in full force; just such food as the Philistine would naturally provide for his young. He will say he can see the boy fed upon it growing up to be like his father, to be all for business, to despise culture, to go through his dull days, and to die without having ever lived. That may be so; but now take the German story (one of Krummacher's), and see the difference:—

'There lived at the court of King Herod a rich man who was the king's chamberlain. He clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and fared like the king himself.

'Once a friend of his youth, whom he had not seen for many years, came from a distant land to pay him a visit. Then the chamberlain

invited all his friends and made a feast in honour of the stranger.

'The tables were covered with choice food placed on dishes of gold and silver, and the finest wines of all kinds. The rich man sate at the head of the table, glad to do the honours to his friend who was seated at his right hand. So they ate and drank, and were merry.

'Then the stranger said to the chamberlain of King Herod: "Riches and splendour like thine are nowhere to be found in my country." And he praised his greatness, and called him happy above all men on earth.

'Well, the rich man took an apple from a golden vessel. The apple was large, and red, and pleasant to the eye. Then said he: "Behold, this apple hath rested on gold, and its form is very beautiful." And he presented it to the stranger, the friend of his youth. The stranger cut the apple in two; and behold, in the middle of it there was a worm!

'Then the stranger looked at the chamberlain; and the chamberlain bent his eyes on the ground, and sighed.'

There it ends. Now I say, one sees there an abyss of platitude open, and the German nature swimming calmly about in it, which seems in some way or other to have its entry screened off for the English nature. The English story leads with a direct issue into practical life: a narrow and dry practical life, certainly, but yet enough

to supply a plain motive for the story; the German story leads simply nowhere except into pathos. Shall we say that the Norman talent for affairs saves us here, or the Celtic perceptive instinct? one of them it must be, surely. The Norman turn seems most germane to the matter here immediately in hand; on the other hand, the Celtic turn, or some degree of it, some degree of its quick perceptive instinct, seems necessary to account for the full difference between the German nature and ours. Even in Germans of genius or talent the want of quick light tact, of instinctive perception of the impropriety or impossibility of certain things, is singularly remarkable. Herr Gervinus's prodigious discovery about Handel being an Englishman and Shakspeare a German, the incredible mare's-nest Goethe finds in looking for the origin of Byron's *Manfred*,—these are things from which no deliberate care or reflection can save a man; only an instinct can save him from them, an instinct that they are absurd; who can imagine Charles Lamb making Herr Gervinus's blunder, or Shakspeare making Goethe's? but from the sheer German nature this intuitive tact seems something so alien, that even genius fails to give it. And yet just what constitutes special power and genius in a man seems often to be his blending with the basis of his national temperament, some additional gift or grace not proper to that temperament; Shakspeare's greatness is thus in his blending

and openness and flexibility of spirit, not English, with the English basis; Addison's, in his blending a moderation and delicacy, not English, with the English basis; Burke's, in his blending a largeness of view and richness of thought, not English, with the English basis. In Germany itself, in the same way, the greatness of their great Frederic lies in his blending a rapidity and clearness, not German, with the German basis; the greatness of Goethe in his blending a love of form, nobility, and dignity, the grand style,—with the German basis. But the quick, sure, instinctive perception of the incongruous and absurd not even genius seems to give in Germany; at least, I can think of only one German of genius, Lessing (for Heine was a Jew, and the Jewish temperament is quite another thing from the German), who shows it in an eminent degree.

If we attend closely to the terms by which foreigners seek to hit off the impression which we and the Germans make upon them, we shall detect in these terms a difference which makes, I think, in favour of the notion I am propounding. Nations in hitting off one another's characters are apt, we all know, to seize the unflattering side rather than the flattering; the mass of mankind always do this, and indeed they really see what is novel, and not their own, in a disfiguring light. Thus we ourselves, for instance, popularly say 'the phlegmatic Dutchman' rather than 'the sensible Dutchman,' or

'the grimacing Frenchman' rather than 'the polite Frenchman.' Therefore neither we nor the Germans should exactly accept the description strangers give of us, but it is enough for my purpose that strangers, in characterising us with a certain shade of difference, do at any rate make it clear that there appears this shade of difference, though the character itself, which they give us both, may be a caricature rather than a faithful picture of us. Now it is to be noticed that those sharp observers, the French,—who have a double turn for sharp observation, for they have both the quick perception of the Celt, and the Latin's gift for coming plump upon the fact,—it is to be noticed, I say, that the French put a curious distinction in their popular, depreciating, we will hope inadequate, way of hitting off us and the Germans. While they talk of the '*bêtise* allemande,' they talk of the '*gaucherie* anglaise'; while they talk of the 'Allemand *balourd*,' they talk of the 'Anglais *empêtré*'; while they call the German '*niais*,' they call the Englishman '*mélancolique*.' The difference between the epithets *balourd* and *empêtré* exactly gives the difference in character I wish to seize; *balourd* means heavy and dull, *empêtré* means hampered and embarrassed. This points to a certain mixture and strife of elements in the Englishman; to the clashing of a Celtic quickness of perception with a Germanic instinct for going steadily along close to the ground.

The Celt, as we have seen, has not at all, in spite of his quick perception, the Latin talent for dealing with the fact, dexterously managing it, and making himself master of it ; Latin or Latinised people have felt contempt for him on this account, have treated him as a poor creature, just as the German, who arrives at fact in a different way from the Latins, but who arrives at it, has treated him. The couplet of Chrestien of Troyes about the Welsh—

> Gallois sont tous, par nature,
> Plus fous que bêtes en pâture—

is well known, and expresses the genuine verdict of the Latin mind on the Celts. But the perceptive instinct of the Celt feels and anticipates, though he has that in him which cuts him off from command of the world of fact ; he sees what is wanting to him well enough ; his mere eye is not less sharp, nay, it is sharper, than the Latin's. He is a quick genius, checkmated for want of strenuousness or else patience. The German has not the Latin's sharp precise glance on the world of fact, and dexterous behaviour in it; he fumbles with it much and long, but his honesty and patience give him the rule of it in the long run,—a surer rule, some of us think, than the Latin gets ;—still, his behaviour in it is not quick and dexterous. The Englishman, in so far as he is German, — and he is mainly German, — proceeds in the steady-

going German fashion ; if he were all German he would proceed thus for ever without self-consciousness or embarrassment ; but, in so far as he is Celtic, he has snatches of quick instinct which often make him feel he is fumbling, show him visions of an easier, more dexterous behaviour, disconcert him and fill him with misgiving. No people, therefore, are so shy, so self-conscious, so embarrassed as the English, because two natures are mixed in them, and natures which pull them such different ways. The Germanic part, indeed, triumphs in us, we are a Germanic people ; but not so wholly as to exclude hauntings of Celtism, which clash with our Germanism, producing, as I believe, our *humour*, neither German nor Celtic, and so affect us that we strike people as odd and singular, not to be referred to any known type, and like nothing but ourselves. 'Nearly every Englishman,' says an excellent and by no means unfriendly observer, George Sand, 'nearly every Englishman, however good-looking he may be, has always something singular about him which easily comes to seem comic ;—a sort of typical awkwardness (*gaucherie typique*) in his looks or appearance, which hardly ever wears out.' I say this strangeness is accounted for by the English nature being mixed as we have seen, while the Latin nature is all of a piece, and so is the German nature, and the Celtic nature.

It is impossible to go very fast when the

matter with which one has to deal, besides being new and little explored, is also by its nature so subtle, eluding one's grasp unless one handles it with all possible delicacy and care. It is in our poetry that the Celtic part in us has left its trace clearest, and in our poetry I must follow it before I have done.

VI

If I were asked where English poetry got these three things, its turn for style, its turn for melancholy, and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charm of nature in a wonderfully near and vivid way,—I should answer, with some doubt, that it got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; with less doubt, that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source; with no doubt at all, that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic.

Any German with penetration and tact in matters of literary criticism will own that the principal deficiency of German poetry is in style; that for style, in the highest sense, it shows but little feeling. Take the eminent masters of style, the poets who best give the idea of what the peculiar power which lies in style is,—Pindar, Virgil, Dante, Milton. An example of the peculiar effect which these poets produce, you can hardly give from German poetry. Examples enough you

can give from German poetry of the effect produced by genius, thought, and feeling expressing themselves in clear language, simple language, passionate language, eloquent language, with harmony and melody; but not of the peculiar effect exercised by eminent power of style. Every reader of Dante can at once call to mind what the peculiar effect I mean is; I spoke of it in my lectures on translating Homer, and there I took an example of it from Dante, who perhaps manifests it more eminently than any other poet. But from Milton, too, one may take examples of it abundantly; compare this from Milton:—

> nor sometimes forget
> Those other two equal with me in fate,
> So were I equall'd with them in renown,
> Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides—

with this from Goethe:—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt.

Nothing can be better in its way than the style in which Goethe there presents his thought, but it is the style of prose as much as of poetry; it is lucid, harmonious, earnest, eloquent, but it has not received that peculiar kneading, heightening, and recasting which is observable in the style of the passage from Milton,—a style which seems to have for its cause a certain pressure of emotion, and an ever-surging, yet bridled,

excitement in the poet, giving a special intensity to his way of delivering himself. In poetical races and epochs this turn for style is peculiarly observable ; and perhaps it is only on condition of having this somewhat heightened and difficult manner, so different from the plain manner of prose, that poetry gets the privilege of being loosed, at its best moments, into that perfectly simple, limpid style, which is the supreme style of all, but the simplicity of which is still not the simplicity of prose. The simplicity of Menander's style is the simplicity of prose, and is the same kind of simplicity as that which Goethe's style, in the passage I have quoted, exhibits ; but Menander does not belong to a great poetical moment, he comes too late for it ; it is the simple passages in poets like Pindar or Dante which are perfect, being masterpieces of *poetical* simplicity. One may say the same of the simple passages in Shakspeare ; they are perfect, their simplicity being a *poetical* simplicity. They are the golden, easeful, crowning moments of a manner which is always pitched in another key from that of prose, a manner changed and heightened ; the Elizabethan style, regnant in most of our dramatic poetry to this day, is mainly the continuation of this manner of Shakspeare's. It was a manner much more turbid and strewn with blemishes than the manner of Pindar, Dante, or Milton ; often it was detestable ; but it owed its existence to Shakspeare's instinctive impulse towards *style*

in poetry, to his native sense of the necessity for it; and without the basis of style everywhere, faulty though it may in some places be, we should not have had the beauty of expression, unsurpassable for effectiveness and charm, which is reached in Shakspeare's best passages. The turn for style is perceptible all through English poetry, proving, to my mind, the genuine poetical gift of the race; this turn imparts to our poetry a stamp of high distinction, and sometimes it doubles the force of a poet not by nature of the very highest order, such as Gray, and raises him to a rank beyond what his natural richness and power seem to promise. Goethe, with his fine critical perception, saw clearly enough both the power of style in itself, and the lack of style in the literature of his own country; and perhaps if we regard him solely as a German, not as a European, his great work was that he laboured all his life to impart style into German literature, and firmly to establish it there. Hence the immense importance to him of the world of classical art, and of the productions of Greek or Latin genius, where style so eminently manifests its power. Had he found in the German genius and literature an element of style existing by nature and ready to his hand, half his work, one may say, would have been saved him, and he might have done much more in poetry. But as it was, he had to try and create, out of his own powers, a style for German poetry, as well as to

provide contents for this style to carry ; and thus his labour as a poet was doubled.

It is to be observed that power of style, in the sense in which I am here speaking of style, is something quite different from the power of idiomatic, simple, nervous, racy expression, such as the expression of healthy, robust natures so often is, such as Luther's was in a striking degree. Style, in my sense of the word, is a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it ; and dignity and distinction are not terms which suit many acts or words of Luther. Deeply touched with the *Gemeinheit* which is the bane of his nation, as he is at the same time a grand example of the honesty which is his nation's excellence, he can seldom even show himself brave, resolute, and truthful, without showing a strong dash of coarseness and commonness all the while ; the right definition of Luther, as of our own Bunyan, is that he is a Philistine of genius. So Luther's sincere idiomatic German,—such language is this : 'Hilf lieber Gott, wie manchen Jammer habe ich gesehen, dass der gemeine Mann doch so gar nichts weiss von der christlichen Lehre !'—no more proves a power of style in German literature, than Cobbett's sinewy idiomatic English proves it in English literature. Power of style, properly so called, as manifested in masters of

style like Dante or Milton in poetry, Cicero, Bossuet or Bolingbroke in prose, is something quite different, and has, as I have said, for its characteristic effect, this: to add dignity and distinction.

Style, then, the Germans are singularly without, and it is strange that the power of style should show itself so strongly as it does in the Icelandic poetry, if the Scandinavians are such genuine Teutons as is commonly supposed. Fauriel used to talk of the Scandinavian Teutons and the German Teutons, as if they were two divisions of the same people, and the common notion about them, no doubt, is very much this. Since the war in Schleswig-Holstein, however, all one's German friends are exceedingly anxious to insist on the difference of nature between themselves and the Scandinavians; when one expresses surprise that the German sense of nationality should be so deeply affronted by the rule over Germans, not of Latins or Celts, but of brother Teutons or next door to it, a German will give you I know not how long a catalogue of the radical points of unlikeness, in genius and disposition, between himself and a Dane. This emboldens me to remark that there is a fire, a sense of style, a distinction, in Icelandic poetry, which German poetry has not. Icelandic poetry, too, shows a powerful and developed technic; and I wish to throw out, for examination by those who are competent to sift the matter,

the suggestion that this power of style and development of technic in the Norse poetry seems to point towards an early Celtic influence or intermixture. It is curious that Zeuss, in his grammar, quotes a text which gives countenance to this notion ; as late as the ninth century, he says, there were Irish Celts in Iceland ; and the text he quotes to show this, is as follows :—'In 870 A.D., when the Norwegians came to Iceland, there were Christians there, who departed, and left behind them Irish books, bells, and other things ; from whence it may be inferred that these Christians were Irish.' I speak, and ought to speak, with the utmost diffidence on all these questions of ethnology ; but I must say that when I read this text in Zeuss, I caught eagerly at the clue it seemed to offer ; for I had been hearing the *Nibelungen* read and commented on in German schools (German schools have the good habit of reading and commenting on German poetry, as we read and comment on Homer and Virgil, but do *not* read and comment on Chaucer and Shakspeare), and it struck me how the fatal humdrum and want of style of the Germans had marred their way of telling this magnificent tradition of the *Nibelungen*, and taken half its grandeur and power out of it ; while in the Icelandic poems which deal with this tradition, its grandeur and power are much more fully visible, and everywhere in the poetry of the Edda there is a force of style and a distinction

as unlike as possible to the want of both in the German *Nibelungen*.[1] At the same time the Scandinavians have a realism, as it is called, in their genius, which abundantly proves their relationship with the Germans; any one whom Mr. Dasent's delightful books have made acquainted with the prose tales of the Norsemen, will be struck with the stamp of a Teutonic nature in them; but the Norse poetry seems to have something which from Teutonic sources alone it could not have derived; which the Germans have not, and which the Celts have.

This something is *style*, and the Celts certainly have it in a wonderful measure. Style is the most striking quality of their poetry. Celtic poetry seems to make up to itself for being unable to master the world and give an adequate interpretation of it, by throwing all its force into style, by bending language at any rate to its will,

[1] Lord Strangford's note on this is :—'The Irish monks whose bells and books were found in Iceland could not have contributed anything to the old Norse spirit, for they had perished before the first Norsemen had set foot on the island. The form of the old Norse poetry known to us as Icelandic, from the accident of its preservation in that island alone, is surely Pan-Teutonic from old times; the art and method of its strictly literary cultivation must have been much influenced by the contemporary Old-English national poetry, with which the Norsemen were in constant contact; and its larger, freer, and wilder spirit must have been owing to their freer and wilder life, to say nothing of their roused and warring paganism. They could never have known any Celts save when living in embryo with other Teutons.'

Very likely Lord Strangford is right, but the proposition with which he begins is at variance with what the text quoted by Zeuss alleges.

and expressing the ideas it has with unsurpassable intensity, elevation, and effect. It has all through it a sort of intoxication of style,—a *Pindarism*, to use a word formed from the name of the poet, on whom, above all other poets, the power of style seems to have exercised an inspiring and intoxicating effect; and not in its great poets only, in Taliesin, or Llywarch Hen, or Ossian, does the Celtic genius show this Pindarism, but in all its productions:—

> The grave of March is this, and this the grave of Gwythyr;
> Here is the grave of Gwgawn Gleddyfreidd;
> But unknown is the grave of Arthur.

That comes from the Welsh *Memorials of the Graves of the Warriors*, and if we compare it with the familiar memorial inscriptions of an English churchyard (for we English have so much Germanism in us that our productions offer abundant examples of German want of style as well as of its opposite):—

> Afflictions sore long time I bore,
> Physicians were in vain,
> Till God did please Death should me seize
> And ease me of my pain—

if, I say, we compare the Welsh memorial lines with the English, which in their *Gemeinheit* of style are truly Germanic, we shall get a clear sense of what that Celtic talent for style I have been speaking of is.

Or take this epitaph of an Irish Celt, Angus the Culdee, whose *Féliré*, or festology, I have

already mentioned ;—a festology in which, at the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century, he collected from 'the countless hosts of the illuminated books of Erin' (to use his own words) the festivals of the Irish saints, his poem having a stanza for every day in the year. The epitaph on Angus, who died at Cluain Eidhnech, in Queen's County, runs thus :—

> Angus in the assembly of Heaven,
> Here are his tomb and his bed ;
> It is from hence he went to death,
> In the Friday, to holy Heaven.
>
> It was in Cluain Eidhnech he was rear'd ;
> It was in Cluain Eidhnech he was buried ;
> In Cluain Eidhnech, of many crosses,
> He first read his psalms.

That is by no eminent hand ; and yet a Greek epitaph could not show a finer perception of what constitutes propriety and felicity of style in compositions of this nature. Take the well-known Welsh prophecy about the fate of the Britons :—

> Their Lord they will praise,
> Their speech they will keep,
> Their land they will lose,
> Except wild Wales.

To however late an epoch that prophecy belongs, what a feeling for style, at any rate, it manifests ! And the same thing may be said of the famous Welsh triads. We may put aside all the vexed questions as to their greater or less

antiquity, and still what important witness they bear to the genius for literary style of the people who produced them!

Now we English undoubtedly exhibit very often the want of sense for style of our German kinsmen. The churchyard lines I just now quoted afford an instance of it; but the whole branch of our literature,—and a very popular branch it is, our hymnology,—to which those lines are to be referred, is one continued instance of it. Our German kinsmen and we are the great people for hymns. The Germans are very proud of their hymns, and we are very proud of ours; but it is hard to say which of the two, the German hymn-book or ours, has least poetical worth in itself, or does least to prove genuine poetical power in the people producing it. I have not a word to say against Sir Roundell Palmer's choice and arrangement of materials for his *Book of Praise;* I am content to put them on a level (and that is giving them the highest possible rank) with Mr. Palgrave's choice and arrangement of materials for his *Golden Treasury;* but yet no sound critic can doubt that, so far as poetry is concerned, while the *Golden Treasury* is a monument of a nation's strength, the *Book of Praise* is a monument of a nation's weakness. Only the German race, with its want of quick instinctive tact, of delicate, sure perception, could have invented the hymn as the Germans and we have it; and our non-German turn for

style,—style, of which the very essence is a certain happy fineness and truth of poetical perception,—could not but desert us when our German nature carried us into a kind of composition which can please only when the perception is somewhat blunt. Scarcely any one of us ever judges our hymns fairly, because works of this kind have two sides,—their side for religion and their side for poetry. Everything which has helped a man in his religious life, everything which associates itself in his mind with the growth of that life, is beautiful and venerable to him; in this way, productions of little or no poetical value, like the German hymns and ours, may come to be regarded as very precious. Their worth in this sense, as means by which we have been edified, I do not for a moment hold cheap; but there is an edification proper to all our stages of development, the highest as well as the lowest, and it is for man to press on towards the highest stages of his development, with the certainty that for those stages, too, means of edification will not be found wanting. Now certainly it is a higher state of development when our fineness of perception is keen than when it is blunt. And if, —whereas the Semitic genius placed its highest spiritual life in the religious sentiment, and made that the basis of its poetry,—the Indo-European genius places its highest spiritual life in the imaginative reason, and makes that the

basis of its poetry, we are none the better for wanting the perception to discern a natural law, which is, after all, like every natural law, irresistible; we are none the better for trying to make ourselves Semitic, when Nature has made us Indo-European, and to shift the basis of our poetry. We may mean well; all manner of good may happen to us on the road we go; but we are not on our real right road, the road we must in the end follow.

That is why, when our hymns betray a false tendency by losing a power which accompanies the poetical work of our race on our other more suitable lines, the indication thus given is of great value and instructiveness for us. One of our main gifts for poetry deserts us in our hymns, and so gives us a hint as to the one true basis for the spiritual work of an Indo-European people, which the Germans, who have not this particular gift of ours, do not and cannot get in this way, though they may get it in others. It is worth noticing that the masterpieces of the spiritual work of Indo-Europeans, taking the pure religious sentiment, and not the imaginative reason, for their basis, are works like the *Imitation*, the *Dies Iræ*, the *Stabat Mater*,—works clothing themselves in the Middle-Age Latin, the genuine native voice of no Indo-European nation. The perfection of their kind, but that kind not perfectly legitimate, they take a language not perfectly legitimate; as if to

show, that when mankind's Semitic age is once passed, the age which produced the great incomparable monuments of the pure religious sentiment, the books of Job and Isaiah, the Psalms,—works truly to be called inspired, because the same divine power which worked in those who produced them works no longer, —as if to show us, that, after this primitive age, we Indo-Europeans must feel these works without attempting to remake them; and that our poetry, if it tries to make itself simply the organ of the religious sentiment, leaves the true course, and must conceal this by not speaking a living language. The moment it speaks a living language, and still makes itself the organ of the religious sentiment only, as in the German and English hymns, it betrays weakness;—the weakness of all false tendency.

But if, by attending to the Germanism in us English and to its works, one has come to doubt whether we, too, are not thorough Germans by genius and with the German deadness to style, one has only to repeat to oneself a line of Milton,—a poet intoxicated with the passion for style as much as Taliesin or Pindar,—to see that we have another side to our genius beside the German one. Whence do we get it? The Normans may have brought in among us the Latin sense for rhetoric and style,—for, indeed, this sense goes naturally with a high spirit and a strenuousness like theirs,—but the sense for style

which English poetry shows is something finer than we could well have got from a people so positive and so little poetical as the Normans; and it seems to me we may much more plausibly derive it from a root of the poetical Celtic nature in us.

Its chord of penetrating passion and melancholy, again, its *Titanism* as we see it in Byron, —what other European poetry possesses that like the English, and where do we get it from? The Celts, with their vehement reaction against the despotism of fact, with their sensuous nature, their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities, the Celts are the prime authors of this vein of piercing regret and passion,—of this Titanism in poetry. A famous book, Macpherson's *Ossian*, carried in the last century this vein like a flood of lava through Europe. I am not going to criticise Macpherson's *Ossian* here. Make the part of what is forged, modern, tawdry, spurious, in the book, as large as you please; strip Scotland, if you like, of every feather of borrowed plumes which on the strength of Macpherson's *Ossian* she may have stolen from that *vetus et major Scotia*, the true home of the Ossianic poetry, Ireland; I make no objection. But there will still be left in the book a residue with the very soul of the Celtic genius in it, and which has the proud distinction of having brought this soul of the Celtic genius into contact with the genius of the

nations of modern Europe, and enriched all our poetry by it. Woody Morven, and echoing Sora, and Selma with its silent halls !—we all owe them a debt of gratitude, and when we are unjust enough to forget it, may the Muse forget us ! Choose any one of the better passages in Macpherson's *Ossian* and you can see even at this time of day what an apparition of newness and power such a strain must have been to the eighteenth century :—

'I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fox looked out from the windows, the rank grass of the wall waved round her head. Raise the song of mourning, O bards, over the land of strangers. They have but fallen before us, for one day we must fall. Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days ? Thou lookest from thy towers to-day ; yet a few years, and the blast of the desert comes ; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round thy half-worn shield. Let the blast of the desert come ! we shall be renowned in our day.'

All Europe felt the power of that melancholy ; but what I wish to point out is, that no nation of Europe so caught in its poetry the passionate penetrating accent of the Celtic genius, its strain of Titanism, as the English. Goethe, like Napoleon, felt the spell of Ossian very powerfully, and he quotes a long passage from him in his *Werther*. But what is there Celtic, turbulent, and Titanic about the German Werther, that

amiable, cultivated, and melancholy young man, having for his sorrow and suicide the perfectly definite motive that Lotte cannot be his? Faust, again, has nothing unaccountable, defiant, and Titanic in him; his knowledge does not bring him the satisfaction he expected from it, and meanwhile he finds himself poor and growing old, and baulked of the palpable enjoyment of life; and here is the motive for Faust's discontent. In the most energetic and impetuous of Goethe's creations,—his *Prometheus*,—it is not Celtic self-will and passion, it is rather the Germanic sense of justice and reason, which revolts against the despotism of Zeus. The German *Sehnsucht* itself is a wistful, soft, tearful longing, rather than a struggling, fierce, passionate one. But the Celtic melancholy is struggling, fierce, passionate; to catch its note, listen to Llywarch Hen in old age, addressing his crutch:—

O my crutch! is it not autumn, when the fern is red, the water-flag yellow? Have I not hated that which I love?

O my crutch! is it not winter-time now, when men talk together after that they have drunken? Is not the side of my bed left desolate?

O my crutch! is it not spring, when the cuckoo passes through the air, when the foam sparkles on the sea? The young maidens no longer love me.

O my crutch! is it not the first day of May? The furrows, are they not shining; the young corn, is it not springing? Ah! the sight of thy handle makes me wroth.

O my crutch! stand straight, thou wilt support me the better; it is very long since I was Llywarch.

Behold old age, which makes sport of me, from the hair of my head to my teeth, to my eyes, which women loved.

The four things I have all my life most hated fall upon me together,—coughing and old age, sickness and sorrow.

I am old, I am alone, shapeliness and warmth are gone from me; the couch of honour shall be no more mine; I am miserable, I am bent on my crutch.

How evil was the lot allotted to Llywarch, the night when he was brought forth! sorrows without end, and no deliverance from his burden.

There is the Titanism of the Celt, his passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact; and of whom does it remind us so much as of Byron?

> The fire which on my bosom preys
> Is lone as some volcanic isle;
> No torch is kindled at its blaze;
> A funeral pile!

Or, again:—

> Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
> And know, whatever thou hast been,
> 'Tis something better not to be.

One has only to let one's memory begin to fetch passages from Byron striking the same note as that passage from Llywarch Hen, and she will not soon stop. And all Byron's heroes, not so much in collision with outward things, as breaking on some rock of revolt and misery in the depths of their own nature; Manfred, self-consumed, fighting blindly and passionately with I know not what, having nothing of the

consistent development and intelligible motive of Faust,—Manfred, Lara, Cain, what are they but Titanic? Where in European poetry are we to find this Celtic passion of revolt so warm-breathing, puissant, and sincere; except perhaps in the creation of a yet greater poet than Byron, but an English poet, too, like Byron,—in the Satan of Milton?

> What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what is else not to be overcome.

There, surely, speaks a genius to whose composition the Celtic fibre was not wholly a stranger!

And as, after noting the Celtic Pindarism or power of style present in our poetry, we noted the German flatness coming in in our hymns, and found here a proof of our compositeness of nature; so, after noting the Celtic Titanism or power of rebellious passion in our poetry, we may also note the Germanic patience and reasonableness in it, and get in this way a second proof how mixed a spirit we have. After Llywarch Hen's—

> How evil was the lot allotted to Llywarch, the night when he was brought forth—

after Byron's—

> Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen—

take this of Southey's, in answer to the question whether he would like to have his youth over again :—

> Do I regret the past?
> Would I live o'er again
> The morning hours of life?
> Nay, William, nay, not so!
> Praise be to God who made me what I am,
> Other I would not be.

There we have the other side of our being; the Germanic goodness, docility, and fidelity to nature, in place of the Celtic Titanism.

The Celt's quick feeling for what is noble and distinguished gave his poetry style; his indomitable personality gave it pride and passion; his sensibility and nervous exaltation gave it a better gift still, the gift of rendering with wonderful felicity the magical charm of nature. The forest solitude, the bubbling spring, the wild flowers, are everywhere in romance. They have a mysterious life and grace there; they are Nature's own children, and utter her secret in a way which makes them something quite different from the woods, waters, and plants of Greek and Latin poetry. Now of this delicate magic, Celtic romance is so pre-eminent a mistress, that it seems impossible to believe the power did not come into romance from the Celts.[1] Magic is just the word for it,—the

[1] Rhyme,—the most striking characteristic of our modern poetry as distinguished from that of the ancients, and a main

magic of nature; not merely the beauty of nature, — that the Greeks and Latins had; not merely an honest smack of the soil, a faithful realism, — that the Germans had; but the intimate life of Nature, her weird power and her fairy charm. As the Saxon names of places, with the pleasant wholesome smack of the soil in them, — Weathersfield, Thaxted, Shalford, — are to the Celtic names of places, with their penetrating, lofty beauty, — Velindra, Tyntagel, Caernarvon, — so is the homely realism of German and Norse nature to the fairy-like loveliness of Celtic nature. Gwydion wants a wife for his pupil: 'Well,' says Math, 'we will seek, I and thou, by charms and illusions, to form a wife for him out of flowers. So they took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Flower-Aspect.' Celtic romance is full of exquisite touches like that, showing the delicacy of the Celt's feeling in these matters, and how deeply Nature lets him come into her secrets. The quick dropping of blood is called 'faster than the fall of the dewdrop from the blade of reed-grass upon the earth, when the dew of

source, to our poetry, of its magic and charm, of what we call its *romantic element*,—rhyme itself, all the weight of evidence tends to show, comes into our poetry from the Celts.

June is at the heaviest.' And thus is Olwen described: 'More yellow was her hair than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood-anemony amidst the spray of the meadow fountains.' For loveliness it would be hard to beat that; and for magical clearness and nearness take the following:—

'And in the evening Peredur entered a valley, and at the head of the valley he came to a hermit's cell, and the hermit welcomed him gladly, and there he spent the night. And in the morning he arose, and when he went forth, behold, a shower of snow had fallen the night before, and a hawk had killed a wild-fowl in front of the cell. And the noise of the horse scared the hawk away, and a raven alighted upon the bird. And Peredur stood and compared the blackness of the raven, and the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair of the lady whom best he loved, which was blacker than the raven, and to her skin, which was whiter than the snow, and to her two cheeks, which were redder than the blood upon the snow appeared to be.'

And this, which is perhaps less striking, is not less beautiful:—

'And early in the day Geraint and Enid left the wood, and they came to an open country, with meadows on one hand and mowers mowing

the meadows. And there was a river before them, and the horses bent down and drank the water. And they went up out of the river by a steep bank, and there they met a slender stripling with a satchel about his neck ; and he had a small blue pitcher in his hand, and a bowl on the mouth of the pitcher.'

And here the landscape, up to this point so Greek in its clear beauty, is suddenly magicalised by the romance touch :—

'And they saw a tall tree by the side of the river, one-half of which was in flames from the root to the top, and the other half was green and in full leaf.'

Magic is the word to insist upon,—a magically vivid and near interpretation of nature ; since it is this which constitutes the special charm and power of the effect I am calling attention to, and it is for this that the Celt's sensibility gives him a peculiar aptitude. But the matter needs rather fine handling, and it is easy to make mistakes here in our criticism. In the first place, Europe tends constantly to become more and more one community, and we tend to become Europeans instead of merely Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians ; so whatever aptitude or felicity one people imparts into spiritual work, gets imitated by the others, and thus tends to become the common property of all. Therefore anything so beautiful and attractive as the natural magic I am speaking

of, is sure, nowadays, if it appears in the productions of the Celts, or of the English, or of the French, to appear in the productions of the Germans also, or in the productions of the Italians; but there will be a stamp of perfectness and inimitableness about it in the literatures where it is native, which it will not have in the literatures where it is not native. Novalis or Rückert, for instance, have their eye fixed on nature, and have undoubtedly a feeling for natural magic; a rough-and-ready critic easily credits them and the Germans with the Celtic fineness of tact, the Celtic nearness to Nature and her secret; but the question is whether the strokes in the German's picture of nature[1] have ever the indefinable delicacy, charm, and perfection of the Celt's touch in the pieces I just now quoted, or of Shakspeare's touch in his daffodil,

[1] Take the following attempt to render the natural magic supposed to pervade Tieck's poetry:—'In diesen Dichtungen herrscht eine geheimnissvolle Innigkeit, ein sonderbares Einverständniss mit der Natur, besonders mit der Pflanzen -und Steinreich. Der Leser fühlt sich da wie in einem verzauberten Walde; er hört die unterirdischen Quellen melodisch rauschen; wildfremde Wunderblumen schauen ihn an mit ihren bunten sehnsüchtigen Augen; unsichtbare Lippen küssen seine Wangen mit neckender Zärtlichkeit; *hohe Pilze, wie goldne Glocken, wachsen klingend empor am Fusse der Bäume*'; and so on. Now that stroke of the *hohe Pilze*, the great funguses, would have been impossible to the tact and delicacy of a born lover of nature like the Celt, and could only have come from a German who has *hineinstudirt* himself into natural magic. It is a crying false note, which carries us at once out of the world of nature-magic and the breath of the woods, into the world of theatre-magic and the smell of gas and orange-peel.

Wordsworth's in his cuckoo, Keats's in his Autumn, Obermann's in his mountain birch-tree or his Easter-daisy among the Swiss farms. To decide where the gift for natural magic originally lies, whether it is properly Celtic or Germanic, we must decide this question.

In the second place, there are many ways of handling nature, and we are here only concerned with one of them ; but a rough-and-ready critic imagines that it is all the same so long as nature is handled at all, and fails to draw the needful distinction between modes of handling her. But these modes are many ; I will mention four of them now : there is the conventional way of handling nature, there is the faithful way of handling nature, there is the Greek way of handling nature, there is the magical way of handling nature. In all these three last the eye is on the object, but with a difference ; in the faithful way of handling nature, the eye is on the object, and that is all you can say ; in the Greek, the eye is on the object, but lightness and brightness are added ; in the magical, the eye is on the object, but charm and magic are added. In the conventional way of handling nature, the eye is not on the object ; what that means we all know, we have only to think of our eighteenth-century poetry :—

> As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night—

to call up any number of instances. Latin poetry

supplies plenty of instances too; if we put this from Propertius's *Hylas*:—

> manus heroum . . .
> Mollia composita litora fronde tegit—

side by side the line of Theocritus by which it was suggested:—

> λειμὼν γάρ σφιν ἔκειτο μέγας, στιβάδεσσιν ὄνειαρ—

we get at the same moment a good specimen both of the conventional and of the Greek way of handling nature. But from our own poetry we may get specimens of the Greek way of handling nature, as well as of the conventional: for instance, Keats's—

> What little town, by river or seashore,
> Or mountain-built with quiet citadel,
> Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?

is Greek, as Greek as a thing from Homer or Theocritus; it is composed with the eye on the object, a radiancy and light clearness being added. German poetry abounds in specimens of the faithful way of handling nature; an excellent example is to be found in the stanzas called *Zueignung*, prefixed to Goethe's poems; the morning walk, the mist, the dew, the sun, are as faithful as they can be, they are given with the eye on the object, but there the merit of the work, as a handling of nature, stops; neither Greek radiance nor Celtic magic is added; the power of these is not what gives the poem in

question its merit, but a power of quite another kind, a power of moral and spiritual emotion. But the power of Greek radiance Goethe could give to his handling of nature, and nobly too, as any one who will read his *Wanderer*,—the poem in which a wanderer falls in with a peasant woman and her child by their hut, built out of the ruins of a temple near Cuma,—may see. Only the power of natural magic Goethe does not, I think, give ; whereas Keats passes at will from the Greek power to that power which is, as I say, Celtic ; from his—

> What little town, by river or seashore—

to his—

> White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine,
> Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves—

or his—

> magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn—

in which the very same note is struck as in those extracts which I quoted from Celtic romance, and struck with authentic and unmistakable power.

Shakspeare, in handling nature, touches this Celtic note so exquisitely, that perhaps one is inclined to be always looking for the Celtic note in him, and not to recognise his Greek note when it comes. But if one attends well to the difference between the two notes, and bears in

mind, to guide one, such things as Virgil's 'moss-grown springs and grass softer than sleep':—

> Muscosi fontes et somno mollior herba—

as his charming flower-gatherer, who—

> Pallentes violas et summa papavera carpens
> Narcissum et florem jungit bene olentis anethi—

as his quinces and chestnuts—

> cana legam tenera lanugine mala
> Castaneasque nuces . . . . . .

then, I think, we shall be disposed to say that in Shakspeare's—

> I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
> With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine—

it is mainly a Greek note which is struck. Then, again in his—

> look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold!

we are at the very point of transition from the Greek note to the Celtic; there is the Greek clearness and brightness, with the Celtic aërialness and magic coming in. Then we have the sheer, inimitable Celtic note in passages like this—

> Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
> By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
> Or in the beached margent of the sea—

or this, the last I will quote :—

> The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
> When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
> And they did make no noise, in such a night
> Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls—
>
> in such a night
> Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew—
>
> in such a night
> *Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,*
> *Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love*
> *To come again to Carthage.*

And those last lines of all are so drenched and intoxicated with the fairy-dew of that natural magic which is our theme, that I cannot do better than end with them.

And now, with the pieces of evidence in our hand, let us go to those who say it is vain to look for Celtic elements in any Englishman, and let us ask them, first, if they seize what we mean by the power of natural magic in Celtic poetry ; secondly, if English poetry does not eminently exhibit this power ; and, thirdly, where they suppose English poetry got it from ?

I perceive that I shall be accused of having rather the air, in what I have said, of denying this and that gift to the Germans, and of establishing our difference from them a little ungraciously and at their expense. The truth is, few people have any real care to analyse closely in their criticism ; they merely employ criticism as

a means for heaping all praise on what they like, and all blame on what they dislike. Those of us (and they are many) who owe a great debt of gratitude to the German spirit and to German literature, do not like to be told of any powers being lacking there; we are like the young ladies who think the hero of their novel is only half a hero unless he has all perfections united in him. But nature does not work, either in heroes or races, according to the young ladies' notion. We all are what we are, the hero and the great nation are what they are, by our limitations as well as by our powers, by lacking something as well as by possessing something. It is not always gain to possess this or that gift, or loss to lack this or that gift. Our great, our only first-rate body of contemporary poetry is the German; the grand business of modern poetry,—a moral interpretation, from an independent point of view, of man and the world,—it is only German poetry, Goethe's poetry, that has, since the Greeks, made much way with. Campbell's power of style, and the natural magic of Keats and Wordsworth, and Byron's Titanic personality, may be wanting to this poetry; but see what it has accomplished without them! How much more than Campbell with his power of style, and Keats and Wordsworth with their natural magic, and Byron with his Titanic personality! Why, for the immense serious task it had to perform, the steadiness of German poetry, its going near the ground, its

patient fidelity to nature, its using great plainness of speech, poetical drawbacks in one point of view, were safeguards and helps in another. The plainness and earnestness of the two lines I have already quoted from Goethe :—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt—

compared with the play and power of Shakspeare's style or Dante's, suggest at once the difference between Goethe's task and theirs, and the fitness of the faithful laborious German spirit for its own task. Dante's task was to set forth the lesson of the world from the point of view of mediæval Catholicism ; the basis of spiritual life was given, Dante had not to make this anew. Shakspeare's task was to set forth the spectacle of the world when man's spirit re-awoke to the possession of the world at the Renaissance. The spectacle of human life, left to bear its own significance and tell its own story, but shown in all its fulness, variety, and power, is at that moment the great matter ; but, if we are to press deeper, the basis of spiritual life is still at that time the traditional religion, reformed or unreformed, of Christendom, and Shakspeare has not to supply a new basis. But when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life ; she had to find it again ; Goethe's task was,—the inevitable task for the modern poet henceforth is,—as it was for the Greek poet in the

days of Pericles, not to preach a sublime sermon on a given text like Dante, not to exhibit all the kingdoms of human life and the glory of them like Shakspeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it. This is not only a work for style, eloquence, charm, poetry; it is a work for science; and the scientific, serious German spirit, not carried away by this and that intoxication of ear, and eye, and self-will, has peculiar aptitudes for it.

We, on the other hand, do not necessarily gain by the commixture of elements in us; we have seen how the clashing of natures in us hampers and embarrasses our behaviour; we might very likely be more attractive, we might very likely be more successful, if we were all of a piece. Our want of sureness of taste, our eccentricity, come in great measure, no doubt, from our not being all of a piece, from our having no fixed, fatal, spiritual centre of gravity. The Rue de Rivoli is one thing, and Nuremberg is another, and Stonehenge is another; but we have a turn for all three, and lump them all up together. Mr. Tom Taylor's translations from Breton poetry offer a good example of this mixing; he has a genuine feeling for these Celtic matters, and often, as in the *Evil Tribute of Nomenoë*, or in *Lord Nann and the Fairy*, he is, both in movement and expression, true and appropriate; but he has a sort of Teutonism

and Latinism in him too, and so he cannot forbear mixing with his Celtic strain such disparates as :—

> 'Twas mirk, mirk night, and the water bright
> Troubled and drumlie flowed—

which is evidently Lowland-Scotchy ; or as :—

> Foregad, but thou'rt an artful hand !

which is English-stagey ; or as :—

> To Gradlon's daughter, bright of blee,
> Her lover he whispered tenderly—
> *Bethink thee, sweet Dahut ! the key !*

which is Anacreontic in the manner of Tom Moore. Yes, it is not a sheer advantage to have several strings to one's bow ! if we had been all German, we might have had the science of Germany ; if we had been all Celtic, we might have been popular and agreeable ; if we had been all Latinised, we might have governed Ireland as the French govern Alsace, without getting ourselves detested. But now we have Germanism enough to make us Philistines, and Normanism enough to make us imperious, and Celtism enough to make us self-conscious and awkward ; but German fidelity to Nature, and Latin precision and clear reason, and Celtic quick-wittedness and spirituality, we fall short of. Nay, perhaps, if we are doomed to perish (Heaven avert the omen !), we shall perish by our Celtism, by our self-will and want of patience

with ideas, our inability to see the way the world is going; and yet those very Celts, by our affinity with whom we are perishing, will be hating and upbraiding us all the time.

This is a somewhat unpleasant view to take of the matter; but if it is true, its being unpleasant does not make it any less true, and we are always the better for seeing the truth. What we here see is not the whole truth, however. So long as this mixed constitution of our nature possesses us, we pay it tribute and serve it; so soon as we possess it, it pays us tribute and serves us. So long as we are blindly and ignorantly rolled about by the forces of our nature, their contradiction baffles us and lames us; so soon as we have clearly discerned what they are, and begun to apply to them a law of measure, control, and guidance, they may be made to work for our good and to carry us forward. Then we may have the good of our German part, the good of our Latin part, the good of our Celtic part; and instead of one part clashing with the other, we may bring it in to continue and perfect the other, when the other has given us all the good it can yield, and by being pressed further, could only give us its faulty excess. Then we may use the German faithfulness to Nature to give us science, and to free us from insolence and self-will; we may use the Celtic quickness of perception to give us delicacy, and to free us from hardness and

Philistinism; we may use the Latin decisiveness to give us strenuous clear method, and to free us from fumbling and idling. Already, in their untrained state, these elements give signs, in our life and literature, of their being present in us, and a kind of prophecy of what they could do for us if they were properly observed, trained, and applied. But this they have not yet been; we ride one force of our nature to death; we will be nothing but Anglo-Saxons in the Old World or in the New; and when our race has built Bold Street, Liverpool, and pronounced it very good, it hurries across the Atlantic, and builds Nashville, and Jacksonville, and Milledgeville, and thinks it is fulfilling the designs of Providence in an incomparable manner. But true Anglo-Saxons, simply and sincerely rooted in the German nature, we are not and cannot be; all we have accomplished by our onesidedness is to blur and confuse the natural basis in ourselves altogether, and to become something eccentric, unattractive, and inharmonious.

A man of exquisite intelligence and charming character, the late Mr. Cobden, used to fancy that a better acquaintance with the United States was the grand panacea for us; and once in a speech he bewailed the inattention of our seats of learning to them, and seemed to think that if our ingenuous youth at Oxford were taught a little less about the Ilissus, and a little more

about Chicago, we should all be the better for it. Chicago has its claims upon us, no doubt; but it is evident that from the point of view to which I have been leading, a stimulation of our Anglo-Saxonism, such as is intended by Mr. Cobden's proposal, does not appear the thing most needful for us; seeing our American brothers themselves have rather, like us, to try and moderate the flame of Anglo-Saxonism in their own breasts, than to ask us to clap the bellows to it in ours. So I am inclined to beseech Oxford, instead of expiating her over-addiction to the Ilissus by lectures on Chicago, to give us an expounder for a still more remote-looking object than the Ilissus, — the Celtic languages and literature. And yet why should I call it remote? if, as I have been labouring to show, in the spiritual frame of us English ourselves, a Celtic fibre, little as we may have ever thought of tracing it, lives and works. *Aliens in speech, in religion, in blood!* said Lord Lyndhurst; the philologists have set him right about the speech, the physiologists about the blood; and perhaps, taking religion in the wide but true sense of our whole spiritual activity, those who have followed what I have been saying here will think that the Celt is not so wholly alien to us in religion. But, at any rate, let us consider that of the shrunken and diminished remains of this great primitive race, all, with one insignificant exception, belongs to the English

empire; only Brittany is not ours; we have Ireland, the Scotch Highlands, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall. They are a part of ourselves, we are deeply interested in knowing them, they are deeply interested in being known by us; and yet in the great and rich universities of this great and rich country there is no chair of Celtic, there is no study or teaching of Celtic matters; those who want them must go abroad for them. It is neither right nor reasonable that this should be so. Ireland has had in the last half-century a band of Celtic students,—a band with which death, alas! has of late been busy,—from whence Oxford or Cambridge might have taken an admirable professor of Celtic; and with the authority of a university chair, a great Celtic scholar, on a subject little known, and where all would have readily deferred to him, might have by this time doubled our facilities for knowing the Celt, by procuring for this country Celtic documents which were inaccessible here, and preventing the dispersion of others which were accessible. It is not much that the English Government does for science or literature; but if Eugene O'Curry, from a chair of Celtic at Oxford, had appealed to the Government to get him copies or the originals of the Celtic treasures in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, or in the library of St. Isidore's College at Rome, even the English Government could not well have refused him. The invaluable Irish manuscripts

in the Stowe Library the late Sir Robert Peel proposed, in 1849, to buy for the British Museum; Lord Macaulay, one of the trustees of the Museum, declared, with the confident shallowness which makes him so admired by public speakers and leading-article writers, and so intolerable to all searchers for truth, that he saw nothing in the whole collection worth purchasing for the Museum, except the correspondence of Lord Melville on the American war. That is to say, this correspondence of Lord Melville's was the only thing in the collection about which Lord Macaulay himself knew or cared. Perhaps an Oxford or Cambridge professor of Celtic might have been allowed to make his voice heard, on a matter of Celtic manuscripts, even against Lord Macaulay. The manuscripts were bought by Lord Ashburnham, who keeps them shut up, and will let no one consult them (at least up to the date when O'Curry published his *Lectures* he did so) 'for fear an actual acquaintance with their contents should decrease their value as matter of curiosity at some future transfer or sale.' Who knows? Perhaps an Oxford professor of Celtic might have touched the flinty heart of Lord Ashburnham.

At this moment, when the narrow Philistinism, which has long had things its own way in England, is showing its natural fruits, and we are beginning to feel ashamed, and uneasy, and alarmed at it; now, when we are becoming

aware that we have sacrificed to Philistinism culture, and insight, and dignity, and acceptance, and weight among the nations, and hold on events that deeply concern us, and control of the future, and yet that it cannot even give us the fool's paradise it promised us, but is apt to break down, and to leave us with Mr. Roebuck's and Mr. Lowe's laudations of our matchless happiness, and the largest circulation in the world assured to the *Daily Telegraph*, for our only comfort; at such a moment it needs some moderation not to be attacking Philistinism by storm, but to mine it through such gradual means as the slow approaches of culture, and the introduction of chairs of Celtic. But the hard unintelligence, which is just now our bane, cannot be conquered by storm; it must be suppled and reduced by culture, by a growth in the variety, fulness, and sweetness of our spiritual life; and this end can only be reached by studying things that are outside of ourselves, and by studying them disinterestedly. Let us reunite ourselves with our better mind and with the world through science; and let it be one of our angelic revenges on the Philistines, who among their other sins are the guilty authors of Fenianism, to found at Oxford a chair of Celtic, and to send, through the gentle ministration of science, a message of peace to Ireland.

ON TRANSLATING HOMER

ON TRANSLATING HOMER

. . . . Nunquamne reponam ?

I

It has more than once been suggested to me that I should translate Homer. That is a task for which I have neither the time nor the courage ; but the suggestion led me to regard yet more closely a poet whom I had already long studied, and for one or two years the works of Homer were seldom out of my hands. The study of classical literature is probably on the decline ; but, whatever may be the fate of this study in general, it is certain that, as instruction spreads and the number of readers increases, attention will be more and more directed to the poetry of Homer, not indeed as part of a classical course, but as the most important poetical monument existing. Even within the last ten years two fresh translations of the *Iliad* have appeared in England : one by a man of great ability and genuine learning, Professor Newman ; the other by Mr. Wright, the conscientious and pains-

taking translator of Dante. It may safely be asserted that neither of these works will take rank as the standard translation of Homer; that the task of rendering him will still be attempted by other translators. It may perhaps be possible to render to these some service, to save them some loss of labour, by pointing out rocks on which their predecessors have split, and the right objects on which a translator of Homer should fix his attention.

It is disputed what aim a translator should propose to himself in dealing with his original. Even this preliminary is not yet settled. On one side it is said that the translation ought to be such 'that the reader should, if possible, forget that it is a translation at all, and be lulled into the illusion that he is reading an original work,—something original' (if the translation be in English), 'from an English hand.' The real original is in this case, it is said, 'taken as a basis on which to rear a poem that shall affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers.' On the other hand, Mr. Newman, who states the foregoing doctrine only to condemn it, declares that he 'aims at precisely the opposite: to retain every peculiarity of the original, so far as he is able, *with the greater care the more foreign it may happen to be*'; so that it may 'never be forgotten that he is imitating, and imitating in a different material.' The translator's 'first duty,' says Mr.

Newman, 'is a historical one, to be *faithful*.' Probably both sides would agree that the translator's 'first duty is to be faithful'; but the question at issue between them is, in what faithfulness consists.

My one object is to give practical advice to a translator; and I shall not the least concern myself with theories of translation as such. But I advise the translator not to try 'to rear on the basis of the *Iliad*, a poem that shall affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers'; and for this simple reason, that we cannot possibly tell *how* the *Iliad* 'affected its natural hearers.' It is probably meant merely that he should try to affect Englishmen powerfully, as Homer affected Greeks powerfully; but this direction is not enough, and can give no real guidance. For all great poets affect their hearers powerfully, but the effect of one poet is one thing, that of another poet another thing: it is our translator's business to reproduce the effect of Homer, and the most powerful emotion of the unlearned English reader can never assure him whether he has *re*produced this, or whether he has produced something else. So, again, he may follow Mr. Newman's directions, he may try to be 'faithful,' he may 'retain every peculiarity of his original'; but who is to assure him, who is to assure Mr. Newman himself, that, when he has done this, he has done that for which Mr. Newman

enjoins this to be done, 'adhered closely to Homer's manner and habit of thought'? Evidently the translator needs some more practical directions than these. No one can tell him how Homer affected the Greeks; but there are those who can tell him how Homer affects *them*. These are scholars; who possess, at the same time with knowledge of Greek, adequate poetical taste and feeling. No translation will seem to them of much worth compared with the original; but they alone can say whether the translation produces more or less the same effect upon them as the original. They are the only competent tribunal in this matter: the Greeks are dead; the unlearned Englishman has not the data for judging; and no man can safely confide in his own single judgment of his own work. Let not the translator, then, trust to his notions of what the ancient Greeks would have thought of him; he will lose himself in the vague. Let him not trust to what the ordinary English reader thinks of him; he will be taking the blind for his guide. Let him not trust to his own judgment of his own work; he may be misled by individual caprices. Let him ask how his work affects those who both know Greek and can appreciate poetry; whether to read it gives the Provost of Eton, or Professor Thompson at Cambridge, or Professor Jowett here in Oxford, at all the same feeling which to read the original

gives them. I consider that when Bentley said of Pope's translation, 'It was a pretty poem, but must not be called Homer,' the work, in spite of all its power and attractiveness, was judged.

Ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν,—'as the judicious would determine,'—that is a test to which every one professes himself willing to submit his works. Unhappily, in most cases, no two persons agree as to who 'the judicious' are. In the present case, the ambiguity is removed: I suppose the translator at one with me as to the tribunal to which alone he should look for judgment; and he has thus obtained a practical test by which to estimate the real success of his work. How is he to proceed, in order that his work, tried by this test, may be found most successful?

First of all, there are certain negative counsels which I will give him. Homer has occupied men's minds so much, such a literature has arisen about him, that every one who approaches him should resolve strictly to limit himself to that which may directly serve the object for which he approaches him. I advise the translator to have nothing to do with the questions, whether Homer ever existed; whether the poet of the *Iliad* be one or many; whether the *Iliad* be one poem or an *Achilleis* and an *Iliad* stuck together; whether the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is shadowed forth

in the Homeric mythology; whether the Goddess Latona in any way prefigures the Virgin Mary, and so on. These are questions which have been discussed with learning, with ingenuity, nay, with genius; but they have two inconveniences,—one general for all who approach them, one particular for the translator. The general inconvenience is that there really exist no data for determining them. The particular inconvenience is that their solution by the translator, even were it possible, could be of no benefit to his translation.

I advise him, again, not to trouble himself with constructing a special vocabulary for his use in translation; with excluding a certain class of English words, and with confining himself to another class, in obedience to any theory about the peculiar qualities of Homer's style. Mr. Newman says that 'the entire dialect of Homer being essentially archaic, that of a translator ought to be as much Saxo-Norman as possible, and owe as little as possible to the elements thrown into our language by classical learning.' Mr. Newman is unfortunate in the observance of his own theory; for I continually find in his translation words of Latin origin, which seem to me quite alien to the simplicity of Homer,—'responsive,' for instance, which is a favourite word of Mr. Newman, to represent the Homeric ἀμειβόμενος:

> Great Hector of the motley helm thus spake to her *responsive*.
> But thus *responsively* to him spake god-like Alexander.

And the word 'celestial,' again, in the grand address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles,

> You, who are born *celestial*, from Eld and Death exempted !

seems to me in that place exactly to jar upon the feeling as too bookish. But, apart from the question of Mr. Newman's fidelity to his own theory, such a theory seems to me both dangerous for a translator and false in itself. Dangerous for a translator ; because, wherever one finds such a theory announced (and one finds it pretty often), it is generally followed by an explosion of pedantry ; and pedantry is of all things in the world the most un-Homeric. False in itself ; because, in fact, we owe to the Latin element in our language most of that very rapidity and clear decisiveness by which it is contradistinguished from the German, and in sympathy with the languages of Greece and Rome : so that to limit an English translator of Homer to words of Saxon origin is to deprive him of one of his special advantages for translating Homer. In Voss's well-known translation of Homer, it is precisely the qualities of his German language itself, something heavy and trailing both in the structure of its sentences and in the words of which it is composed, which prevent his translation, in spite of the hexameters, in spite of the fidelity, from creating in us the impression created by the Greek. Mr. Newman's prescription, if followed, would just strip the English

translator of the advantage which he has over Voss.

The frame of mind in which we approach an author influences our correctness of appreciation of him ; and Homer should be approached by a translator in the simplest frame of mind possible. Modern sentiment tries to make the ancient not less than the modern world its own ; but against modern sentiment in its applications to Homer the translator, if he would feel Homer truly—and unless he feels him truly, how can he render him truly ?—cannot be too much on his guard. For example : the writer of an interesting article on English translations of Homer, in the last number of the *National Review*, quotes, I see, with admiration, a criticism of Mr. Ruskin on the use of the epithet *φυσίζοος*, 'life-giving,' in that beautiful passage in the third book of the *Iliad*, which follows Helen's mention of her brothers Castor and Pollux as alive, though they were in truth dead :

> ὣς φάτο· τοὺς δ' ἤδη κατέχεν φυσίζοος αἶα
> ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.[1]

'The poet,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'has to speak of the earth in sadness ; but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thought of it. No ; though Castor and Pollux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving.' This is a just specimen of that sort of application of

[1] *Iliad*, iii. 243.

modern sentiment to the ancients, against which a student, who wishes to feel the ancients truly, cannot too resolutely defend himself. It reminds one, as, alas! so much of Mr. Ruskin's writing reminds one, of those words of the most delicate of living critics: 'Comme tout genre de composition a son écueil particulier, *celui du genre romanesque, c'est le faux.*' The reader may feel moved as he reads it; but it is not the less an example of 'le faux' in criticism; it is false. It is not true, as to that particular passage, that Homer called the earth φυσίζοος, because, 'though he had to speak of the earth in sadness, he would not let that sadness change or affect his thought of it,' but consoled himself by considering that 'the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving.' It is not true, as a matter of general criticism, that this kind of sentimentality, eminently modern, inspires Homer at all. 'From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn more clearly,' says Goethe, 'that in our life here above ground we have, properly speaking, to enact Hell':[1]—if the student must absolutely have a key-note to the *Iliad*, let him take this of Goethe, and see what he can do with it; it will not, at any rate, like the tender pantheism of Mr. Ruskin, falsify for him the whole strain of Homer.

These are negative counsels; I come to the positive. When I say, the translator of Homer

[1] *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, vi. 230.

should above all be penetrated by a sense of four qualities of his author;—that he is eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct, both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it, that is, both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his thought, that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally that he is eminently noble;—I probably seem to be saying what is too general to be of much service to anybody. Yet it is strictly true that, for want of duly penetrating themselves with the first-named quality of Homer, his rapidity, Cowper and Mr. Wright have failed in rendering him; that, for want of duly appreciating the second-named quality, his plainness and directness of style and diction, Pope and Mr. Sotheby have failed in rendering him; that for want of appreciating the third, his plainness and directness of ideas, Chapman has failed in rendering him; while for want of appreciating the fourth, his nobleness, Mr. Newman, who has clearly seen some of the faults of his predecessors, has yet failed more conspicuously than any of them.

Coleridge says, in his strange language, speaking of the union of the human soul with the divine essence, that this takes place

> Whene'er the mist, which stands 'twixt God and thee,
> Defecates to a pure transparency;

and so, too, it may be said of that union of the

translator with his original, which alone can produce a good translation, that it takes place when the mist which stands between them—the mist of alien modes of thinking, speaking, and feeling on the translator's part—'defecates to a pure transparency,' and disappears. But between Cowper and Homer—(Mr. Wright repeats in the main Cowper's manner, as Mr. Sotheby repeats Pope's manner, and neither Mr. Wright's translation nor Mr. Sotheby's has, I must be forgiven for saying, any proper reason for existing)—between Cowper and Homer there is interposed the mist of Cowper's elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer; between Pope and Homer there is interposed the mist of Pope's literary artificial manner, entirely alien to the plain naturalness of Homer's manner; between Chapman and Homer there is interposed the mist of the fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer's thought and feeling; while between Mr. Newman and Homer is interposed a cloud of more than Egyptian thickness,—namely, a manner, in Mr. Newman's version, eminently ignoble, while Homer's manner is eminently noble.

I do not despair of making all these propositions clear to a student who approaches Homer with a free mind. First, Homer is eminently rapid, and to this rapidity the elaborate movement of Miltonic blank verse is alien. The reputation

of Cowper, that most interesting man and excellent poet, does not depend on his translation of Homer; and in his preface to the second edition, he himself tells us that he felt,—he had too much poetical taste not to feel,—on returning to his own version after six or seven years, 'more dissatisfied with it himself than the most difficult to be pleased of all his judges.' And he was dissatisfied with it for the right reason,—that 'it seemed to him deficient *in the grace of ease*.' Yet he seems to have originally misconceived the manner of Homer so much, that it is no wonder he rendered him amiss. 'The similitude of Milton's manner to that of Homer is such,' he says, 'that no person familiar with both can read either without being reminded of the other; and it is in those breaks and pauses to which the numbers of the English poet are so much indebted, both for their dignity and variety, that he chiefly copies the Grecian.' It would be more true to say: 'The unlikeness of Milton's manner to that of Homer is such, that no person familiar with both can read either without being struck with his difference from the other; and it is in his breaks and pauses that the English poet is most unlike the Grecian.'

The inversion and pregnant conciseness of Milton or Dante are, doubtless, most impressive qualities of style; but they are the very opposites of the directness and flowingness of Homer, which he keeps alike in passages of the simplest

narrative, and in those of the deepest emotion. Not only, for example, are these lines of Cowper un-Homeric :—

> So numerous seemed those fires the banks between
> Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece
> In prospect all of Troy ;

where the position of the word 'blazing' gives an entirely un-Homeric movement to this simple passage, describing the fires of the Trojan camp outside of Troy ; but the following lines, in that very highly-wrought passage where the horse of Achilles answers his master's reproaches for having left Patroclus on the field of battle, are equally un-Homeric :—

> For not through sloth or tardiness on us
> Aught chargeable, have Ilium's sons thine arms
> Stript from Patroclus' shoulders ; but a God
> Matchless in battle, offspring of bright-haired
> Latona, him contending in the van
> Slew, for the glory of the chief of Troy.

Here even the first inversion, 'have Ilium's sons thine arms Stript from Patroclus' shoulders,' gives the reader a sense of a movement not Homeric ; and the second inversion, 'a God him contending in the van Slew,' gives this sense ten times stronger. Instead of moving on without check, as in reading the original, the reader twice finds himself, in reading the translation, brought up and checked. Homer moves with the same simplicity and rapidity in the highly-wrought as in the simple passage.

It is in vain that Cowper insists on his fidelity : 'my chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original' :—'the matter found in me, whether the reader like it or not, is found also in Homer ; and the matter not found in me, how much soever the reader may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope.' To suppose that it is *fidelity* to an original to give its matter, unless you at the same time give its manner ; or, rather, to suppose that you can really give its matter at all, unless you can give its manner, is just the mistake of our pre-Raphaelite school of painters, who do not understand that the peculiar effect of nature resides in the whole and not in the parts. So the peculiar effect of a poet resides in his manner and movement, not in his words taken separately. It is well known how conscientiously literal is Cowper in his translation of Homer. It is well known how extravagantly free is Pope.

> So let it be !
> Portents and prodigies are lost on me :

that is Pope's rendering of the words,

> Ξάνθε, τί μοι θάνατον μαντεύεαι ; οὐδέ τί σε χρή·[1]

> Xanthus, why prophesiest thou my death to me ? thou needest not at all :—

yet, on the whole, Pope's translation of the *Iliad* is more Homeric than Cowper's, for it is more rapid.

[1] *Iliad*, xix. 420.

Pope's movement, however, though rapid, is not of the same kind as Homer's; and here I come to the real objection to rhyme in a translation of Homer. It is commonly said that rhyme is to be abandoned in a translation of Homer, because 'the exigences of rhyme,' to quote Mr. Newman, 'positively forbid faithfulness'; because 'a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme,' to quote Cowper, 'is impossible.' This, however, is merely an accidental objection to rhyme. If this were all, it might be supposed, that if rhymes were more abundant, Homer could be adequately translated in rhyme. But this is not so; there is a deeper, a substantial objection to rhyme in a translation of Homer. It is, that rhyme inevitably tends to pair lines which in the original are independent, and thus the movement of the poem is changed. In these lines of Chapman, for instance, from Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus, in the twelfth book of the *Iliad*:—

> O friend, if keeping back
> Would keep back age from us, and death, and that we might not wrack
> In this life's human sea at all, but that deferring now
> We shunned death ever,—nor would I half this vain va or show,
> Nor glorify a folly so, to wish thee to advance;
> But since we *must* go, though not here, and that besides the chance
> Proposed now, there are infinite fates, etc.

Here the necessity of making the line,

> Nor glorify a folly so, to wish thee to advance,

rhyme with the line which follows it, entirely changes and spoils the movement of the passage.

οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην,
οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν· [1]

Neither would I myself go forth to fight with the foremost,
Nor would I urge thee on to enter the glorious battle,

says Homer; there he stops, and begins an opposed movement:

νῦν δ'—ἔμπης γὰρ Κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο—

But—for a thousand fates of death stand close to us always—

This line, in which Homer wishes to go away with the most marked rapidity from the line before, Chapman is forced, by the necessity of rhyming, intimately to connect with the line before.

But since we *must* go, though not here, and that besides the chance—

The moment the word *chance* strikes our ear, we are irresistibly carried back to *advance* and to the whole previous line, which, according to Homer's own feeling, we ought to have left behind us entirely, and to be moving farther and farther away from.

Rhyme certainly, by intensifying antithesis, can intensify separation, and this is precisely what Pope does; but this balanced rhetorical antithesis, though very effective, is entirely un-Homeric. And this is what I mean by saying

[1] *Iliad*, xii. 324.

that Pope fails to render Homer, because he does not render his plainness and directness of style and diction. Where Homer marks separation by moving away, Pope marks it by antithesis. No passage could show this better than the passage I have just quoted, on which I will pause for a moment.

Robert Wood, whose *Essay on the Genius of Homer* is mentioned by Goethe as one of the books which fell into his hands when his powers were first developing themselves, and strongly interested him, relates of this passage a striking story. He says that in 1762, at the end of the Seven Years' War, being then Under-Secretary of State, he was directed to wait upon the President of the Council, Lord Granville, a few days before he died, with the preliminary articles of the Treaty of Paris. 'I found him,' he continues, 'so languid, that I proposed postponing my business for another time; but he insisted that I should stay, saying, it could not prolong his life to neglect his duty; and repeating the following passage out of Sarpedon's speech, he dwelled with particular emphasis on the third line, which recalled to his mind the distinguishing part he had taken in public affairs :—

ὦ πέπον, εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
ἔσσεσθ', οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην,[1]

[1] These are the words on which Lord Granville 'dwelled with particular emphasis.'

οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·
νῦν δ'—ἔμπης γὰρ Κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο
μυρίαι, ἃς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι—
ἴομεν.

His Lordship repeated the last word several times with a calm and determinate resignation; and, after a serious pause of some minutes, he desired to hear the Treaty read, to which he listened with great attention, and recovered spirits enough to declare the approbation of a dying statesman (I use his own words) "on the most glorious war, and most honourable peace, this nation ever saw."'[1]

I quote this story, first, because it is interesting as exhibiting the English aristocracy at its very height of culture, lofty spirit, and greatness, towards the middle of the last century. I quote it, secondly, because it seems to me to illustrate Goethe's saying which I mentioned, that our life, in Homer's view of it, represents a conflict and a hell; and it brings out, too, what there is tonic and fortifying in this doctrine. I quote it, lastly, because it shows that the passage is just one of those in translating which Pope will be at his best, a passage of strong emotion and oratorical movement, not of simple narrative or description.

Pope translates the passage thus:—

Could all our care elude the gloomy grave
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,

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[1] Robert Wood, *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, London, 1775, p. vii.

> For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
> In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war:
> But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
> Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
> The life which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame what we to nature owe.

Nothing could better exhibit Pope's prodigious talent, and nothing, too, could be better in its own way. But, as Bentley said, 'You must not call it Homer.' One feels that Homer's thought has passed through a literary and rhetorical crucible, and come out highly intellectualised; come out in a form which strongly impresses us, indeed, but which no longer impresses us in the same way as when it was uttered by Homer. The antithesis of the last two lines—

> The life which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame what we to nature owe—

is excellent, and is just suited to Pope's heroic couplet; but neither the antithesis itself, nor the couplet which conveys it, is suited to the feeling or to the movement of the Homeric ἴομεν.

A literary and intellectualised language is, however, in its own way well suited to grand matters; and Pope, with a language of this kind and his own admirable talent, comes off well enough as long as he has passion, or oratory, or a great crisis to deal with. Even here, as I have been pointing out, he does not render Homer; but he and his style are in themselves strong. It is when he comes to level passages, passages

of narrative or description, that he and his style are sorely tried, and prove themselves weak. A perfectly plain direct style can of course convey the simplest matter as naturally as the grandest; indeed, it must be harder for it, one would say, to convey a grand matter worthily and nobly, than to convey a common matter, as alone such a matter should be conveyed, plainly and simply. But the style of Rasselas is incomparably better fitted to describe a sage philosophising than a soldier lighting his camp-fire. The style of Pope is not the style of Rasselas; but it is equally a literary style, equally unfitted to describe a simple matter with the plain naturalness of Homer.

Every one knows the passage at the end of the eighth book of the *Iliad*, where the fires of the Trojan encampment are likened to the stars. It is very far from my wish to hold Pope up to ridicule, so I shall not quote the commencement of the passage, which in the original is of great and celebrated beauty, and in translating which Pope has been singularly and notoriously fortunate. But the latter part of the passage, where Homer leaves the stars, and comes to the Trojan fires, treats of the plainest, most matter-of-fact subject possible, and deals with this, as Homer always deals with every subject, in the plainest and most straightforward style. 'So many in number, between the ships and the streams of Xanthus, shone forth in front of Troy the fires

kindled by the Trojans. There were kindled a thousand fires in the plain; and by each one there sat fifty men in the light of the blazing fire. And the horses, munching white barley and rye, and standing by the chariots, waited for the bright-throned Morning.'[1]

In Pope's translation, this plain story becomes the following:—

> So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
> And brighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays;
> The long reflections of the distant fires
> Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.
> A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,
> And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.
> Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,
> Whose umbered arms, by fits, thick flashes send;
> Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,
> And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

It is for passages of this sort, which, after all, form the bulk of a narrative poem, that Pope's style is so bad. In elevated passages he is powerful, as Homer is powerful, though not in the same way; but in plain narrative, where Homer is still powerful and delightful, Pope, by the inherent fault of his style, is ineffective and out of taste. Wordsworth says somewhere, that wherever Virgil seems to have composed 'with his eye on the object,' Dryden fails to render him. Homer invariably composes 'with his eye on the object,' whether the object be a moral or a material one: Pope composes with his eye on

[1] *Iliad*, viii. 560.

his style, into which he translates his object, whatever it is. That, therefore, which Homer conveys to us immediately, Pope conveys to us through a medium. He aims at turning Homer's sentiments pointedly and rhetorically; at investing Homer's description with ornament and dignity. A sentiment may be changed by being put into a pointed and oratorical form, yet may still be very effective in that form; but a description, the moment it takes its eyes off that which it is to describe, and begins to think of ornamenting itself, is worthless.

Therefore, I say, the translator of Homer should penetrate himself with a sense of the plainness and directness of Homer's style; of the simplicity with which Homer's thought is evolved and expressed. He has Pope's fate before his eyes, to show him what a divorce may be created even between the most gifted translator and Homer by an artificial evolution of thought and a literary cast of style.

Chapman's style is not artificial and literary like Pope's, nor his movement elaborate and self-retarding like the Miltonic movement of Cowper. He is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and, to a certain degree, rapid; and all these are Homeric qualities. I cannot say that I think the movement of his fourteen-syllable line, which has been so much commended, Homeric; but on this point I shall have more to say by and by, when I come to speak of Mr. Newman's metrical

exploits. But it is not distinctly anti-Homeric, like the movement of Milton's blank verse; and it has a rapidity of its own. Chapman's diction, too, is generally good, that is, appropriate to Homer; above all, the syntactical character of his style is appropriate. With these merits, what prevents his translation from being a satisfactory version of Homer? Is it merely the want of literal faithfulness to his original, imposed upon him, it is said, by the exigences of rhyme? Has this celebrated version, which has so many advantages, no other and deeper defect than that? Its author is a poet, and a poet, too, of the Elizabethan age; the golden age of English literature as it is called, and on the whole truly called; for, whatever be the defects of Elizabethan literature (and they are great), we have no development of our literature to compare with it for vigour and richness. This age, too, showed what it could do in translating, by producing a masterpiece, its version of the Bible.

Chapman's translation has often been praised as eminently Homeric. Keats's fine sonnet in its honour every one knows; but Keats could not read the original, and therefore could not really judge the translation. Coleridge, in praising Chapman's version, says at the same time, 'It will give you small idea of Homer.' But the grave authority of Mr. Hallam pronounces this translation to be 'often exceedingly Homeric'; and its latest editor boldly declares

that by what, with a deplorable style, he calls 'his own innative Homeric genius,' Chapman 'has thoroughly identified himself with Homer'; and that 'we pardon him even for his digressions, for they are such as we feel Homer himself would have written.'

I confess that I can never read twenty lines of Chapman's version without recurring to Bentley's cry, 'This is not Homer!' and that from a deeper cause than any unfaithfulness occasioned by the fetters of rhyme.

I said that there were four things which eminently distinguished Homer, and with a sense of which Homer's translator should penetrate himself as fully as possible. One of these four things was, the plainness and directness of Homer's ideas. I have just been speaking of the plainness and directness of his style; but the plainness and directness of the contents of his style, of his ideas themselves, is not less remarkable. But as eminently as Homer is plain, so eminently is the Elizabethan literature in general, and Chapman in particular, fanciful. Steeped in humours and fantasticality up to its very lips, the Elizabethan age, newly arrived at the free use of the human faculties after their long term of bondage, and delighting to exercise them freely, suffers from its own extravagance in this first exercise of them, can hardly bring itself to see an object quietly or to describe it temperately. Happily, in the translation of the

Bible, the sacred character of their original inspired the translators with such respect that they did not dare to give the rein to their own fancies in dealing with it. But, in dealing with works of profane literature, in dealing with poetical works above all, which highly stimulated them, one may say that the minds of the Elizabethan translators were *too* active; that they could not forbear importing so much of their own, and this of a most peculiar and Elizabethan character, into their original, that they effaced the character of the original itself.

Take merely the opening pages to Chapman's translation, the introductory verses, and the dedications. You will find :—

> An Anagram of the name of our Dread Prince,
> My most gracious and sacred Mæcenas,
> Henry, Prince of Wales,
> Our Sunn, Heyr, Peace, Life,—

Henry, son of James the First, to whom the work is dedicated. Then comes an address,

> To the sacred Fountain of Princes,
> Sole Empress of Beauty and Virtue, Anne, Queen
> Of England, etc.

All the Middle Age, with its grotesqueness, its conceits, its irrationality, is still in these opening pages; they by themselves are sufficient to indicate to us what a gulf divides Chapman from the 'clearest-souled' of poets, from Homer; almost as great a gulf as that which divides

him from Voltaire. Pope has been sneered at for saying that Chapman writes 'somewhat as one might imagine Homer himself to have written before he arrived at years of discretion.' But the remark is excellent: Homer expresses himself like a man of adult reason, Chapman like a man whose reason has not yet cleared itself. For instance, if Homer had had to say of a poet, that he hoped his merit was now about to be fully established in the opinion of good judges, he was as incapable of saying this as Chapman says it, — 'Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora, and Ganges, few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun,'—I say, Homer was as incapable of saying this in that manner, as Voltaire himself would have been. Homer, indeed, has actually an affinity with Voltaire in the unrivalled clearness and straightforwardness of his thinking; in the way in which he keeps to one thought at a time, and puts that thought forth in its complete natural plainness, instead of being led away from it by some fancy striking him in connection with it, and being beguiled to wander off with this fancy till his original thought, in its natural reality, knows him no more. What could better show us how gifted a race was this Greek

race? The same member of it has not only the power of profoundly touching that natural heart of humanity which it is Voltaire's weakness that he cannot reach, but can also address the understanding with all Voltaire's admirable simplicity and rationality.

My limits will not allow me to do more than shortly illustrate, from Chapman's version of the *Iliad*, what I mean when I speak of this vital difference between Homer and an Elizabethan poet in the quality of their thought; between the plain simplicity of the thought of the one, and the curious complexity of the thought of the other. As in Pope's case, I carefully abstain from choosing passages for the express purpose of making Chapman appear ridiculous; Chapman, like Pope, merits in himself all respect, though he too, like Pope, fails to render Homer.

In that tonic speech of Sarpedon, of which I have said so much, Homer, you may remember, has:—

εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
ἔσσεσθ',—

if indeed, but once *this* battle avoided,
We were for ever to live without growing old and immortal.

Chapman cannot be satisfied with this, but must add a fancy to it:—

if keeping back
Would keep back age from us, and death, and *that we might not wrack*
In this life's human sea at all;

and so on. Again; in another passage which I have before quoted, where Zeus says to the horses of Peleus,

τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆϊ ἄνακτι
θνητῷ; ὑμεῖς δ' ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε·[1]

Why gave we you to royal Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal.

Chapman sophisticates this into :—

Why gave we you t' a mortal king, when immortality
And *incapacity of age so dignifies your states?*

Again; in the speech of Achilles to his horses, where Achilles, according to Homer, says simply, 'Take heed that ye bring your master safe back to the host of the Danaans, in some other sort than the last time, when the battle is ended,' Chapman sophisticates this into :—

When with blood, for this day's fast observed, revenge shall yield
Our heart satiety, bring us off.

In Hector's famous speech, again, at his parting from Andromache, Homer makes him say: 'Nor does my own heart so bid me' (to keep safe behind the walls), 'since I have learned to be staunch always, and to fight among the foremost of the Trojans, busy on behalf of my father's great glory, and my own.'[2] In Chapman's hands this becomes :—

The spirit I first did breathe
Did never teach me that; much less, since the contempt of death

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[1] *Iliad*, xvii. 443.

[2] *Iliad*, vi. 444.

Was settled in me, *and my mind knew what a worthy was,*
Whose office is to lead in fight, and give no danger pass
Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine:
Here must his country, father, friends, be in him made divine.

You see how ingeniously Homer's plain thought is *tormented*, as the French would say, here. Homer goes on: 'For well I know this in my mind and in my heart, the day will be, when sacred Troy shall perish':—

ἔσσεται ἦμαρ, ὅτ' ἄν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρή.

Chapman makes this:—

And such a *stormy* day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
When sacred Troy *shall shed her towers, for tears of overthrow.*

I might go on for ever, but I could not give you a better illustration than this last, of what I mean by saying that the Elizabethan poet fails to render Homer because he cannot forbear to interpose a play of thought between his object and its expression. Chapman translates his object into Elizabethan, as Pope translates it into the Augustan of Queen Anne; both convey it to us through a medium. Homer, on the other hand, sees his object and conveys it to us immediately.

And yet, in spite of this perfect plainness and directness of Homer's style, in spite of this perfect plainness and directness of his ideas, he is eminently *noble;* he works as entirely in the grand style, he is as grandiose, as Phidias, or Dante, or Michael Angelo. This is what makes his translators despair. 'To give relief,' says

Cowper, 'to prosaic subjects' (such as dressing, eating, drinking, harnessing, travelling, going to bed), that is to treat such subjects nobly, in the grand style, 'without seeming unreasonably tumid, is extremely difficult.' It *is* difficult, but Homer has done it. Homer is precisely the incomparable poet he is, because he has done it. His translator must not be tumid, must not be artificial, must not be literary; true: but then also he must not be commonplace, must not be ignoble. I have shown you how translators of Homer fail by wanting rapidity, by wanting simplicity of style, by wanting plainness of thought: in a second lecture I will show you how a translator fails by wanting nobility.

II

I must repeat what I said in beginning, that the translator of Homer ought steadily to keep in mind where lies the real test of the success of his translation, what judges he is to try to satisfy. He is to try to satisfy *scholars*, because scholars alone have the means of really judging him. A scholar may be a pedant, it is true, and then his judgment will be worthless; but a scholar may also have poetical feeling, and then he can judge him truly; whereas all the poetical feeling in the world will not enable a man who is not a scholar to judge him truly. For the

translator is to reproduce Homer, and the scholar alone has the means of knowing that Homer who is to be reproduced. He knows him but imperfectly, for he is separated from him by time, race, and language ; but he alone knows him at all. Yet people speak as if there were two real tribunals in this matter,—the scholar's tribunal, and that of the general public. They speak as if the scholar's judgment was one thing, and the general public's judgment another ; both with their shortcomings, both with their liability to error ; but both to be regarded by the translator. The translator who makes verbal literalness his chief care 'will,' says a writer in the *National Review* whom I have already quoted, 'be appreciated by the scholar accustomed to test a translation rigidly by comparison with the original, to look perhaps with excessive care to finish in detail rather than boldness and general effect, and find pardon even for a version that seems bare and bold, so it be scholastic and faithful. But, if the scholar in judging a translation looks to detail rather than to general effect, he judges it pedantically and ill. The appeal, however, lies not from the pedantic scholar to the general public, which can only like or dislike Chapman's version, or Pope's, or Mr. Newman's, but cannot *judge* them ; it lies from the pedantic scholar to the scholar who is not pedantic, who knows that Homer is Homer by his general effect, and not

by his single words, and who demands but one thing in a translation,—that it shall, as nearly as possible, reproduce for him the *general effect* of Homer. This, then, remains the one proper aim of the translator : to reproduce on the intelligent scholar, as nearly as possible, the general effect of Homer. Except so far as he reproduces this, he loses his labour, even though he may make a spirited *Iliad* of his own, like Pope, or translate Homer's *Iliad* word for word, like Mr. Newman. If his proper aim were to stimulate in any manner possible the general public, he might be right in following Pope's example ; if his proper aim were to help schoolboys to construe Homer, he might be right in following Mr. Newman's. But it is not : his proper aim is, I repeat it yet once more, to reproduce on the intelligent scholar, as nearly as he can, the general effect of Homer.

When, therefore, Cowper says, 'My chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original' ; when Mr. Newman says, 'My aim is to retain every peculiarity of the original, to be *faithful*, exactly as is the case with the draughtsman of the Elgin marbles' ; their real judge only replies : 'It may be so : reproduce then upon us, reproduce the effect of Homer, as a good copy reproduces the effect of the Elgin marbles.'

When, again, Mr. Newman tells us that 'by an exhaustive process of argument and experiment' he has found a metre which is at once the metre of 'the modern Greek epic,' and a metre 'like

in moral genius' to Homer's metre, his judge has still but the same answer for him: 'It may be so; reproduce then on our ear something of the effect produced by the movement of Homer.'

But what is the general effect which Homer produces on Mr. Newman himself? because, when we know this, we shall know whether he and his judges are agreed at the outset, whether we may expect him, if he can reproduce the effect he feels, if his hand does not betray him in the execution, to satisfy his judges and to succeed. If, however, Mr. Newman's impression from Homer is something quite different from that of his judges, then it can hardly be expected that any amount of labour or talent will enable him to reproduce for them *their* Homer.

Mr. Newman does not leave us in doubt as to the general effect which Homer makes upon him. As I have told you what is the general effect which Homer makes upon me,—that of a most rapidly moving poet, that of a poet most plain and direct in his style, that of a poet most plain and direct in his ideas, that of a poet eminently noble,—so Mr. Newman tells us his general impression of Homer. 'Homer's style,' he says, 'is direct, popular, forcible, quaint, flowing, garrulous.' Again: 'Homer rises and sinks with his subject, is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean.'

I lay my finger on four words in these two sentences of Mr. Newman, and I say that the man who could apply those words to Homer can never render Homer truly. The four words are these: *quaint*, *garrulous*, *prosaic*, *low*. Search the English language for a word which does not apply to Homer, and you could not fix on a better than *quaint*, unless perhaps you fixed on one of the other three.

Again; 'to translate Homer suitably,' says Mr. Newman, 'we need a diction sufficiently antiquated to obtain pardon of the reader for its frequent homeliness.' 'I am concerned,' he says again, 'with the artistic problem of attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible.' And again, he speaks of 'the more antiquated style suited to this subject.' Quaint! antiquated!—but to whom? Sir Thomas Browne is quaint, and the diction of Chaucer is antiquated: does Mr. Newman suppose that Homer seemed quaint to Sophocles, when he read him, as Sir Thomas Browne seems quaint to us, when we read him? or that Homer's diction seemed antiquated to Sophocles, as Chaucer's diction seems antiquated to us? But we cannot really know, I confess, how Homer seemed to Sophocles: well then, to those who can tell us how he seems to them, to the living scholar, to our only present witness on this matter,—does Homer make on the Provost of Eton, when he reads him, the im-

pression of a poet quaint and antiquated? does he make this impression on Professor Thompson, or Professor Jowett? When Shakspeare says, 'The princes *orgulous*,' meaning 'the proud princes,' we say, 'This is antiquated'; when he says of the Trojan gates, that they

> With massy staples
> And corresponsive and fulfilling bolts
> *Sperr* up the sons of Troy,

we say, 'This is both quaint and antiquated.' But does Homer ever compose in a language which produces on the scholar at all the same impression as this language which I have quoted from Shakspeare? Never once. Shakspeare is quaint and antiquated in the lines which I have just quoted; but Shakspeare—need I say it?—can compose, when he likes, when he is at his best, in a language perfectly simple, perfectly intelligible; in a language which, in spite of the two centuries and a half which part its author from us, stops us or surprises us as little as the language of a contemporary. And Homer has not Shakspeare's variations: Homer always composes as Shakspeare composes at his best; Homer is always simple and intelligible, as Shakspeare is often; Homer is never quaint and antiquated, as Shakspeare is sometimes.

When Mr. Newman says that Homer is garrulous, he seems, perhaps, to depart less

widely from the common opinion than when he calls him quaint; for is there not Horace's authority for asserting that 'the good Homer sometimes nods,' *bonus dormitat Homerus?* and a great many people have come, from the currency of this well-known criticism, to represent Homer to themselves as a diffuse old man, with the full-stocked mind, but also with the occasional slips and weaknesses of old age. Horace has said better things than his 'bonus dormitat Homerus'; but he never meant by this, as I need not remind any one who knows the passage, that Homer was garrulous, or anything of the kind. Instead, however, of either discussing what Horace meant, or discussing Homer's garrulity as a general question, I prefer to bring to my mind some style which *is* garrulous, and to ask myself, to ask you, whether anything at all of the impression made by that style is ever made by the style of Homer. The mediæval romancers, for instance, are garrulous; the following, to take out of a thousand instances the first which comes to hand, is in a garrulous manner. It is from the romance of Richard Cœur de Lion.

> Of my tale be not a-wondered!
> The French says he slew an hundred
> (Whereof is made this English saw)
> Or he rested him any thraw.
> Him followed many an English knight
> That eagerly holp him for to fight,—

and so on. Now the manner of that composition I call garrulous; every one will feel it to be garrulous; every one will understand what is meant when it is called garrulous. Then I ask the scholar,—does Homer's manner ever make upon you, I do not say, the same impression of its garrulity as that passage, but does it make, ever for one moment, an impression in the slightest way resembling, in the remotest degree akin to, the impression made by that passage of the mediæval poet? I have no fear of the answer.

I follow the same method with Mr. Newman's two other epithets, *prosaic* and *low*. 'Homer rises and sinks with his subject,' says Mr. Newman; 'is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean.' First I say, Homer is never, in any sense, to be with truth called prosaic; he is never to be called low. He does not rise and sink with his subject; on the contrary, his manner invests his subject, whatever his subject be, with nobleness. Then I look for an author of whom it may with truth be said, that he 'rises and sinks with his subject, is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean.' Defoe is eminently such an author; of Defoe's manner it may with perfect precision be said, that it follows his matter; his lifelike composition takes its character from the facts which it conveys, not from the nobleness of the composer. In *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, Defoe is

undoubtedly prosaic when his subject is tame, low when his subject is mean. Does Homer's manner in the *Iliad*, I ask the scholar, ever make upon him an impression at all like the impression made by Defoe's manner in *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack?* Does it not, on the contrary, leave him with an impression of nobleness, even when it deals with Thersites or with Irus?

Well then, Homer is neither quaint, nor garrulous, nor prosaic, nor mean: and Mr. Newman, in seeing him so, sees him differently from those who are to judge Mr. Newman's rendering of him. By pointing out how a wrong conception of Homer affects Mr. Newman's translation, I hope to place in still clearer light those four cardinal truths which I pronounce essential for him who would have a right conception of Homer; that Homer is rapid, that he is plain and direct in word and style, that he is plain and direct in his ideas, and that he is noble.

Mr. Newman says that in fixing on a style for suitably rendering Homer, as he conceives him, he 'alights on the delicate line which separates the *quaint* from the *grotesque*.' 'I ought to be quaint,' he says, 'I ought not to be grotesque.' This is a most unfortunate sentence. Mr. Newman is grotesque, which he himself says he ought not to be; and he ought not to be quaint, which he himself says he ought to be.

'No two persons will agree,' says Mr.

Newman, 'as to where the quaint ends and the grotesque begins'; and perhaps this is true. But, in order to avoid all ambiguity in the use of the two words, it is enough to say, that most persons would call an expression which produced on them a very strong sense of its incongruity, and which violently surprised them, *grotesque;* and an expression, which produced on them a slighter sense of its incongruity, and which more gently surprised them, *quaint.* Using the two words in this manner, I say, that when Mr. Newman translates Helen's words to Hector in the sixth book,

> Δᾶερ ἐμεῖο, κυνὸς κακομηχάνου, ὀκρυοέσσης,[1]—
>
> O, brother thou of me, who am a mischief-working vixen,
> A numbing horror,—

he is grotesque; that is, he expresses himself in a manner which produces on us a very strong sense of its incongruity, and which violently surprises us. I say, again, that when Mr. Newman translates the common line,

> Τὴν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ,—
>
> Great Hector of the motley helm then spake to her responsive,—

or the common expression ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί, 'dapper-greaved Achaians,' he is quaint; that is, he expresses himself in a manner which produces on us a slighter sense of incongruity, and which

[1] *Iliad*, vi. 344.

more gently surprises us. But violent and gentle surprise are alike far from the scholar's spirit when he reads in Homer *κυνὸς κακομηχάνου*, or, *κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ*, or, *ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί*. These expressions no more seem odd to him than the simplest expressions in English. He is not more checked by any feeling of strangeness, strong or weak, when he reads them, than when he reads in an English book 'the painted savage,' or, 'the phlegmatic Dutchman.' Mr. Newman's renderings of them must, therefore, be wrong expressions in a translation of Homer, because they excite in the scholar, their only competent judge, a feeling quite alien to that excited in him by what they profess to render.

Mr. Newman, by expressions of this kind, is false to his original in two ways. He is false to him inasmuch as he is ignoble; for a noble air, and a grotesque air, the air of the address,

> *Δᾶερ ἐμεῖο, κυνὸς κακομηχάνου, ὀκρυοέσσης,—*

and the air of the address,

> O, brother thou of me, who am a mischief-working vixen,
> A numbing horror,—

are just contrary the one to the other: and he is false to him inasmuch as he is odd; for an odd diction like Mr. Newman's, and a perfectly plain natural diction like Homer's,—'dapper-greaved Achaians' and *ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί*,—are also just contrary the one to the other. Where, indeed,

Mr. Newman got his diction, with whom he can have lived, what can be his test of antiquity and rarity for words, are questions which I ask myself with bewilderment. He has prefixed to his translation a list of what he calls 'the more antiquated or rarer words' which he has used. In this list appear, on the one hand, such words as *doughty*, *grisly*, *lusty*, *noisome*, *ravin*, which are familiar, one would think, to all the world; on the other hand, such words as *bragly*, meaning, Mr. Newman tells us, 'proudly fine'; *bulkin*, 'a calf'; *plump*, 'a mass'; and so on. 'I am concerned,' says Mr. Newman, 'with the artistic problem of attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible.' But it seems to me that *lusty* is not antiquated: and that *bragly* is not a word readily understood. That this word, indeed, and *bulkin*, may have 'a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity,' I admit; but that they are 'easily intelligible,' I deny.

Mr. Newman's syntax has, I say it with pleasure, a much more Homeric cast than his vocabulary; his syntax, the mode in which his thought is evolved, although not the actual words in which it is expressed, seems to me right in its general character, and the best feature of his version. It is not artificial or rhetorical like Cowper's syntax or Pope's: it is simple, direct, and natural, and so far it is like Homer's. It fails, however, just where, from the inherent

fault of Mr. Newman's conception of Homer, one might expect it to fail,—it fails in nobleness. It presents the thought in a way which is something more than unconstrained,—over-familiar; something more than easy,—free and easy. In this respect it is like the movement of Mr. Newman's version, like his rhythm, for this, too, fails, in spite of some good qualities, by not being noble enough; this, while it avoids the faults of being slow and elaborate, falls into a fault in the opposite direction, and is slip-shod. Homer presents his thought naturally; but when Mr. Newman has—

> A thousand fires along the plain, *I say*, that night were burning,—

he presents his thought familiarly; in a style which may be the genuine style of ballad-poetry, but which is not the style of Homer. Homer moves freely; but when Mr. Newman has—

> Infatuate! O that thou wert lord to some other army,[1]—

he gives himself too much freedom; he leaves us too much to do for his rhythm ourselves, instead of giving to us a rhythm like Homer's,

[1] From the reproachful answer of Ulysses to Agamemnon, who had proposed an abandonment of their expedition. This is one of the 'tonic' passages of the *Iliad*, so I quote it:—

'Ah, unworthy king, some other inglorious army
Should'st thou command, not rule over *us*, whose portion for ever
Zeus hath made it, from youth right up to age, to be winding
Skeins of grievous wars, till every soul of us perish.'

Iliad, xiv. 84.

easy indeed, but mastering our ear with a fulness of power which is irresistible.

I said that a certain style might be the genuine style of ballad-poetry, but yet not the style of Homer. The analogy of the ballad is ever present to Mr. Newman's thoughts in considering Homer; and perhaps nothing has more caused his faults than this analogy,—this popular, but, it is time to say, this erroneous analogy. 'The moral qualities of Homer's style,' says Mr. Newman, 'being like to those of the English ballad, we need a metre of the same genius. Only those metres, which by the very possession of these qualities are liable to degenerate into *doggerel*, are suitable to reproduce the ancient epic.' 'The style of Homer,' he says, in a passage which I have before quoted, 'is direct, popular, forcible, quaint, flowing, garrulous: in all these respects it is similar to the old English ballad.' Mr. Newman, I need not say, is by no means alone in this opinion. 'The most really and truly Homeric of all the creations of the English muse is,' says Mr. Newman's critic in the *National Review*, 'the ballad-poetry of ancient times; and the association between metre and subject is one that it would be true wisdom to preserve.' 'It is confessed,' says Chapman's last editor, Mr. Hooper, 'that the fourteen-syllable verse' (that is, a ballad-verse) 'is peculiarly fitting for Homeric translation.' And the editor of Dr. Maginn's clever and popular *Homeric*

Ballads assumes it as one of his author's greatest and most undisputable merits, that he was 'the first who consciously realised to himself the truth that Greek ballads can be really represented in English only by a similar measure.'

This proposition that Homer's poetry is *ballad-poetry*, analogous to the well-known ballad-poetry of the English and other nations, has a certain small portion of truth in it, and at one time probably served a useful purpose, when it was employed to discredit the artificial and literary manner in which Pope and his school rendered Homer. But it has been so extravagantly over-used, the mistake which it was useful in combating has so entirely lost the public favour, that it is now much more important to insist on the large part of error contained in it, than to extol its small part of truth. It is time to say plainly that, whatever the admirers of our old ballads may think, the supreme form of epic poetry, the genuine Homeric mould, is not the form of the Ballad of Lord Bateman. I have myself shown the broad difference between Milton's manner and Homer's ; but, after a course of Mr. Newman and Dr. Maginn, I turn round in desperation upon them and upon the balladists who have misled them, and I exclaim : 'Compared with you, Milton is Homer's double ; there is, whatever you may think, ten thousand times more of the real strain of Homer in—

> Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old,—

than in—

> Now Christ thee save, thou proud portèr,
> Now Christ thee save and see,[1]—

or in—

> While the tinker did dine, he had plenty of wine.[2]

For Homer is not only rapid in movement, simple in style, plain in language, natural in thought; he is also, and above all, *noble*. I have advised the translator not to go into the vexed question of Homer's identity. Yet I will just remind him that the grand argument—or rather, not argument, for the matter affords no data for arguing, but the grand source from which conviction, as we read the *Iliad*, keeps pressing in upon us, that there is one poet of the *Iliad*, one Homer—is precisely this nobleness of the poet, this grand manner; we feel that the analogy drawn from other joint compositions does not hold good here, because those works do not bear, like the *Iliad*, the magic stamp of a master; and the moment you have *anything* less than a masterwork, the co-operation or consolidation of several poets becomes possible, for talent is not uncommon; the moment you have *much* less than a masterwork, they become easy, for mediocrity is everywhere. I can imagine fifty Bradies

[1] From the ballad of *King Estmere*, in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, i. 69 (edit. of 1767).

[2] *Reliques*, i. 241.

joined with as many Tates to make the New Version of the Psalms. I can imagine several poets having contributed to any one of the old English ballads in Percy's collection. I can imagine several poets, possessing, like Chapman, the Elizabethan vigour and the Elizabethan mannerism, united with Chapman to produce his version of the *Iliad*. I can imagine several poets, with the literary knack of the twelfth century, united to produce the *Nibelungen Lay* in the form in which we have it,—a work which the Germans, in their joy at discovering a national epic of their own, have rated vastly higher than it deserves. And lastly, though Mr. Newman's translation of Homer bears the strong mark of his own idiosyncrasy, yet I can imagine Mr. Newman and a school of adepts trained by him in his art of poetry, jointly producing that work, so that Aristarchus himself should have difficulty in pronouncing which line was the master's, and which a pupil's. But I cannot imagine several poets, or one poet, joined with Dante in the composition of his *Inferno*, though many poets have taken for their subject a descent into Hell. Many artists, again, have represented Moses; but there is only one Moses of Michael Angelo. So the insurmountable obstacle to believing the *Iliad* a consolidated work of several poets is this: that the work of great masters is unique; and the *Iliad* has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*.

Poets who cannot work in the grand style instinctively seek a style in which their comparative inferiority may feel itself at ease, a manner which may be, so to speak, indulgent to their inequalities. The ballad-style offers to an epic poet, quite unable to fill the canvas of Homer, or Dante, or Milton, a canvas which he is capable of filling. The ballad-measure is quite able to give due effect to the vigour and spirit which its employer, when at his very best, may be able to exhibit; and, when he is not at his best, when he is a little trivial, or a little dull, it will not betray him, it will not bring out his weaknesses into broad relief. This is a convenience; but it is a convenience which the ballad-style purchases by resigning all pretensions to the highest, to the grand manner. It is true of its movement, as it is *not* true of Homer's, that it is 'liable to degenerate into doggerel.' It is true of its 'moral qualities,' as it is *not* true of Homer's, that 'quaintness' and 'garrulity' are among them. It is true of its employers, as it is *not* true of Homer, that they 'rise and sink with their subject, are prosaic when it is tame, are low when it is mean.' For this reason the ballad-style and the ballad-measure are eminently *in*appropriate to render Homer. Homer's manner and movement are always both noble and powerful: the ballad manner and movement are often either jaunty and smart, so not noble; or jog-trot and humdrum, so not powerful.

The *Nibelungen Lay* affords a good illustration of the qualities of the ballad-manner. Based on grand traditions, which had found expression in a grand lyric poetry, the German epic poem of the *Nibelungen Lay*, though it is interesting, and though it has good passages, is itself anything rather than a grand poem. It is a poem of which the composer is, to speak the truth, a very ordinary mortal, and often, therefore, like other ordinary mortals, very prosy. It is in a measure which eminently adapts itself to this commonplace personality of its composer, which has much the movement of the well-known measures of Tate and Brady, and can jog on, for hundreds of lines at a time, with a level ease which reminds one of Sheridan's saying that easy writing may be often such hard reading. But, instead of occupying myself with the *Nibelungen Lay*, I prefer to look at the ballad-style as directly applied to Homer, in Chapman's version and Mr. Newman's, and in the *Homeric Ballads* of Dr. Maginn.

First I take Chapman. I have already shown that Chapman's conceits are un-Homeric, and that his rhyme is un-Homeric; I will now show how his manner and movement are un-Homeric. Chapman's diction, I have said, is generally good ; but it must be called good with this reserve, that, though it has Homer's plainness and directness, it often offends him who knows Homer, by wanting Homer's nobleness.

In a passage which I have already quoted, the address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles, where Homer has—

> ἆ δειλώ, τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆϊ ἄνακτι
> θνητῷ, ὑμεῖς δ' ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε;
> ἦ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχητον;[1]

Chapman has—

> '*Poor wretched beasts*,' said he,
> 'Why gave we you to a mortal king, when immortality
> And incapacity of age so dignifies your states?
> Was it to haste[2] the miseries poured out on human fates?'

There are many faults in this rendering of Chapman's, but what I particularly wish to notice in it is the expression 'Poor wretched beasts' for ἆ δειλώ. This expression just illustrates the difference between the ballad-manner and Homer's. The ballad-manner—Chapman's manner—is, I say, pitched sensibly lower than Homer's. The ballad-manner requires that an expression shall be plain and natural, and then it asks no more. Homer's manner requires that an expression shall be plain and natural, but it also requires that it shall be noble. ἆ δειλώ is as plain, as simple as 'Poor wretched beasts'; but it is also noble, which 'Poor wretched beasts' is not. 'Poor wretched beasts' is, in truth, a little over-familiar, but this is no objection to it for the ballad-manner; it is good

[1] *Iliad*, xvii. 443.

[2] All the editions which I have seen have 'haste,' but the right reading must certainly be 'taste.'

enough for the old English ballad, good enough for the *Nibelungen Lay*, good enough for Chapman's *Iliad*, good enough for Mr. Newman's *Iliad*, good enough for Dr. Maginn's *Homeric Ballads;* but it is not good enough for Homer.

To feel that Chapman's measure, though natural, is not Homeric; that, though tolerably rapid, it has not Homer's rapidity; that it has a jogging rapidity rather than a flowing rapidity; and a movement familiar rather than nobly easy, one has only, I think, to read half a dozen lines in any part of his version. I prefer to keep as much as possible to passages which I have already noticed, so I will quote the conclusion of the nineteenth book, where Achilles answers his horse Xanthus, who has prophesied his death to him.[1]

Achilles, far in rage,
Thus answered him: — It fits not thee thus proudly to presage
My overthrow. I know myself it is my fate to fall
Thus far from Phthia; yet that fate shall fail to vent her gall
Till mine vent thousands.—These words said, he fell to horrid deeds,
Gave dreadful signal, and forthright made fly his one-hoofed steeds.

For what regards the manner of this passage, the words 'Achilles Thus answered him,' and 'I know myself it is my fate to fall Thus far from Phthia,' are in Homer's manner, and all the rest is out of it. But for what regards its movement,

[1] *Iliad*, xix. 419.

who, after being jolted by Chapman through such verse as this,—

> These words said, he fell to horrid deeds,
> Gave dreadful signal, and forthright made fly his one-hoofed steeds,

who does not feel the vital difference of the movement of Homer,—

> ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἐν πρώτοις ἰάχων ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους ?

To pass from Chapman to Dr. Maginn. His *Homeric Ballads* are vigorous and genuine poems in their own way; they are not one continual falsetto, like the pinchbeck *Roman Ballads* of Lord Macaulay; but just because they are ballads in their manner and movement, just because, to use the words of his applauding editor, Dr. Maginn has 'consciously realised to himself the truth that Greek ballads can be really represented in English only by a similar manner,'—just for this very reason they are not at all Homeric, they have not the least in the world the manner of Homer. There is a celebrated incident in the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*, the recognition by the old nurse Eurycleia of a scar on the leg of her master Ulysses, who has entered his own hall as an unknown wanderer, and whose feet she has been set to wash. 'Then she came near,' says Homer, 'and began to wash her master; and straightway she recognised a scar which he had got in former days from the white tusk of a wild boar,

when he went to Parnassus unto Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus, his mother's father and brethren.'[1] This, 'really represented' by Dr. Maginn, in 'a measure similar' to Homer's, becomes :—

> And scarcely had she begun to wash
> Ere she was aware of the grisly gash
> Above his knee that lay.
> It was a wound from a wild-boar's tooth,
> All on Parnassus' slope,
> Where he went to hunt in the days of his youth
> With his mother's sire,—

and so on. That is the true ballad-manner, no one can deny ; 'all on Parnassus' slope' is, I was going to say, the true ballad-slang ; but never again shall I be able to read,

> νίζε δ' ἄρ' ἆσσον ἰοῦσα ἄναχθ' ἑόν· αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
> οὐλήν·

without having the detestable dance of Dr. Maginn's—

> And scarcely had she begun to wash
> Ere she was aware of the grisly gash,—

jigging in my ears, to spoil the effect of Homer, and to torture me. To apply that manner and that rhythm to Homer's incidents, is not to imitate Homer, but to travesty him.

Lastly I come to Mr. Newman. His rhythm, like Chapman's and Dr. Maginn's, is a ballad-rhythm, but with a modification of his

[1] *Odyssey*, xix. 392.

own. 'Holding it,' he tells us, 'as an axiom, that rhyme must be abandoned,' he found, on abandoning it, 'an unpleasant void until he gave a double ending to the verse.' In short, instead of saying,

> Good people all with one accord
> Give ear unto my *tale*,—

Mr. Newman would say,

> Good people all with one accord
> Give ear unto my *story*.

A recent American writer[1] gravely observes that for his countrymen this rhythm has a disadvantage in being like the rhythm of the American national air *Yankee Doodle*, and thus provoking ludicrous associations. *Yankee Doodle* is not our national air: for us Mr. Newman's rhythm has not this disadvantage. He himself gives us several plausible reasons why this rhythm of his really ought to be successful: let us examine how far it *is* successful.

Mr. Newman joins to a bad rhythm so bad a diction that it is difficult to distinguish exactly whether in any given passage it is his words or his measure which produces a total impression of such an unpleasant kind. But with a little attention we may analyse our total impression, and find the share which each element has in producing it. To take the passage which I

[1] Mr. Marsh, in his *Lectures on the English Language*, New York, 1860, p. 520.

have so often mentioned, Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus. Mr. Newman translates this as follows :—

O gentle friend ! if thou and I, from this encounter 'scaping,
Hereafter might forever be from Eld and Death exempted
As heavenly gods, not I in sooth would fight among the foremost,
Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle.
Now,—sith ten thousand shapes of Death do any-gait pursue us
Which never mortal may evade, though sly of foot and nimble ;—
Onward ! and glory let us earn, or glory yield to some one.—

Could all our care elude the gloomy grave
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave—

I am not going to quote Pope's version over again, but I must remark in passing, how much more, with all Pope's radical difference of manner from Homer, it gives us of the real effect of

εἰ μὲν γάρ, πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε—

than Mr. Newman's lines. And now, why are Mr. Newman's lines faulty ? They are faulty, first, because, as a matter of diction, the expressions 'O gentle friend,' 'eld,' 'in sooth,' 'liefly,' 'advance,' 'man-ennobling,' 'sith,' 'any-gait,' and 'sly of foot,' are all bad ; some of them worse than others, but all bad : that is, they all of them as here used excite in the scholar, their sole judge,—excite, I will boldly affirm, in Professor Thompson or Professor Jowett,—a feeling totally different from that excited in them by the words of Homer which these expressions

profess to render. The lines are faulty, secondly, because, as a matter of rhythm, any and every line among them has to the ear of the same judges (I affirm it with equal boldness) a movement as unlike Homer's movement in the corresponding line as the single words are unlike Homer's words. *οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν,*—'Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle';—for whose ears do those two rhythms produce impressions of, to use Mr. Newman's own words, 'similar moral genius'?

I will by no means make search in Mr. Newman's version for passages likely to raise a laugh; that search, alas! would be far too easy. I will quote but one other passage from him, and that a passage where the diction is comparatively inoffensive, in order that disapproval of the words may not unfairly heighten disapproval of the rhythm. The end of the nineteenth book, the answer of Achilles to his horse Xanthus, Mr. Newman gives thus:—

'Chestnut! why bodest death to me? from thee this was not needed.
Myself right surely know alsó, that 't is my doom to perish,
From mother and from father dear apart, in Troy; but never
Pause will I make of war, until the Trojans be glutted.'
He spake, and yelling, held afront the single-hoofed horses.

Here Mr. Newman calls Xanthus *Chestnut*, indeed, as he calls Balius *Spotted*, and Podarga *Spry-foot;* which is as if a Frenchman were to call Miss Nightingale *Mdlle. Rossignol*, or Mr.

Bright *M. Clair*. And several other expressions, too,—'yelling,' 'held afront,' 'single-hoofed,'—leave, to say the very least, much to be desired. Still, for Mr. Newman, the diction of this passage is pure. All the more clearly appears the profound vice of a rhythm, which, with comparatively few faults of words, can leave a sense of such incurable alienation from Homer's manner as, 'Myself right surely know alsó that 'tis my doom to perish,'—compared with the *εὖ νύ τοι οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς, ὅ μοι μόρος ἐνθάδ' ὀλέσθαι* of Homer.

But so deeply seated is the difference between the ballad-manner and Homer's, that even a man of the highest powers, even a man of the greatest vigour of spirit and of true genius,—the Coryphæus of balladists, Sir Walter Scott,—fails with a manner of this kind to produce an effect at all like the effect of Homer. 'I am not so rash,' declares Mr. Newman, 'as to say that if *freedom* be given to rhyme as in Walter Scott's poetry,'—Walter Scott, 'by far the most Homeric of our poets,' as in another place he calls him,—'a genius may not arise who will translate Homer into the melodies of *Marmion*.' 'The *truly* classical and the *truly* romantic,' says Dr. Maginn, 'are one; the moss-trooping Nestor reappears in the moss-trooping heroes of Percy's *Reliques*'; and a description by Scott, which he quotes, he calls 'graphic, and therefore Homeric.' He forgets our fourth axiom,—

that Homer is not *only* graphic; he is also noble, and has the grand style. Human nature under like circumstances is probably in all ages much the same; and so far it may be said that 'the truly classical and the truly romantic are one'; but it is of little use to tell us this, because we know the human nature of other ages only through the representations of them which have come down to us, and the classical and the romantic modes of representation are so far from being 'one,' that they remain eternally distinct, and have created for us a separation between the two worlds which they respectively represent. Therefore to call Nestor the 'moss-trooping Nestor' is absurd, because, though Nestor may possibly have been much the same sort of man as many a moss-trooper, he has yet come to us through a mode of representation so unlike that of Percy's *Reliques*, that, instead of 'reappearing in the moss-trooping heroes' of these poems, he exists in our imagination as something utterly unlike them, and as belonging to another world. So the Greeks in Shakspeare's *Troilus and Cressida* are no longer the Greeks whom we have known in Homer, because they come to us through a mode of representation of the romantic world. But I must not forget Scott.

I suppose that when Scott is in what may be called full ballad swing, no one will hesitate to pronounce his manner neither Homeric

nor the grand manner. When he says, for instance,

> I do not rhyme to that dull elf
> Who cannot image to himself,[1]

and so on, any scholar will feel that *this* is not Homer's manner. But let us take Scott's poetry at its best; and when it is at its best, it is undoubtedly very good indeed :—

> Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
> His life-blood stains the spotless shield;
> Edmund is down,—my life is reft,—
> The Admiral alone is left.
> Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,—
> With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
> Full upon Scotland's central host,
> Or victory and England's lost.[2]

That is, no doubt, as vigorous as possible, as spirited as possible; it is exceedingly fine poetry. And still I say, it is not in the grand manner, and therefore it is not like Homer's poetry. Now, how shall I make him who doubts this feel that I say true; that these lines of Scott are essentially neither in Homer's style nor in the grand style? I may point out to him that the movement of Scott's lines, while it is rapid, is also at the same time what the French call *saccadé*, its rapidity is 'jerky'; whereas Homer's rapidity is a flowing rapidity. But this is something external and material; it is but the outward and visible sign of an inward and

[1] *Marmion*, canto vi. 38. [2] *Marmion*, canto vi. 29.

spiritual diversity. I may discuss what, in the abstract, constitutes the grand style; but that sort of general discussion never much helps our judgment of particular instances. I may say that the presence or absence of the grand style can only be spiritually discerned; and this is true, but to plead this looks like evading the difficulty. My best way is to take eminent specimens of the grand style, and to put them side by side with this of Scott. For example, when Homer says:—

> ἀλλά, φίλος, θάνε καὶ σύ· τίη ὀλυφύρεαι οὕτως; ·
> κάτθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὅπερ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων,[1]

that is in the grand style. When Virgil says:—

> Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,
> Fortunam ex aliis,[2]

that is in the grand style. When Dante says:—

> Lascio lo fele, et vo pei dolci pomi
> Promessi a me per lo verace Duca;
> Ma fino al centro pria convien ch' io tomi,[3]

---

[1] 'Be content, good friend, die also thou! why lamentest thou thyself on this wise? Patroclus, too, died, who was a far better than thou.'—*Iliad*, xxi. 106.

[2] 'From me, young man, learn nobleness of soul and true effort: learn success from others.'—*Æneid*, xii. 435.

[3] 'I leave the gall of bitterness, and I go for the apples of sweetness promised unto me by my faithful Guide; but far as the centre it behoves me first to fall.'—*Hell*, xvi. 61.

that is in the grand style. When Milton says:—

> His form had yet not lost
> All her original brightness, nor appeared
> Less than archangel ruined, and the excess
> Of glory obscured,[1]

that, finally, is in the grand style. Now let any one, after repeating to himself these four passages, repeat again the passage of Scott, and he will perceive that there is something in style which the four first have in common, and which the last is without; and this something is precisely the grand manner. It is no disrespect to Scott to say that he does not attain to this manner in his poetry; to say so, is merely to say that he is not among the five or six supreme poets of the world. Among these he is not; but, being a man of far greater powers than the ballad-poets, he has tried to give to their instrument a compass and an elevation which it does not naturally possess, in order to enable him to come nearer to the effect of the instrument used by the great epic poets,—an instrument which he felt he could not truly use,—and in this attempt he has but imperfectly succeeded. The poetic style of Scott is—(it becomes necessary to say so when it is proposed to 'translate Homer into the melodies of *Marmion*')—it is, tried by the highest standards, a bastard epic style; and that is why, out of his own powerful hands, it has had so little success.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, i. 591.

It is a less natural, and therefore a less good style, than the original ballad-style; while it shares with the ballad-style the inherent incapacity of rising into the grand style, of adequately rendering Homer. Scott is certainly at his best in his battles. Of Homer you could not say this; he is not better in his battles than elsewhere; but even between the battle-pieces of the two there exists all the difference which there is between an able work and a masterpiece.

> Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
> His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
> Edmund is down,—my life is reft,—
> The Admiral alone is left.

—'For not in the hands of Diomede the son of Tydeus rages the spear, to ward off destruction from the Danaans; neither as yet have I heard the voice of the son of Atreus, shouting out of his hated mouth; but the voice of Hector the slayer of men bursts round me, as he cheers on the Trojans; and they with their yellings fill all the plain, overcoming the Achaians in the battle.' —I protest that, to my feeling, Homer's performance, even through that pale and far-off shadow of a prose translation, still has a hundred times more of the grand manner about it, than the original poetry of Scott.

Well, then, the ballad-manner and the ballad-measure, whether in the hands of the old ballad poets, or arranged by Chapman, or arranged by Mr. Newman, or, even, arranged by Sir Walter

Scott, cannot worthily render Homer. And for one reason: Homer is plain, so are they; Homer is natural, so are they; Homer is spirited, so are they; but Homer is sustainedly noble, and they are not. Homer and they are both of them natural, and therefore touching and stirring; but the grand style, which is Homer's, is something more than touching and stirring; it can form the character, it is edifying. The old English balladist may stir Sir Philip Sidney's heart like a trumpet, and this is much: but Homer, but the few artists in the grand style, can do more; they can refine the raw natural man, they can transmute him. So it is not without cause that I say, and say again, to the translator of Homer: 'Never for a moment suffer yourself to forget our fourth fundamental proposition, *Homer is noble*.' For it is seen how large a share this nobleness has in producing that general effect of his, which it is the main business of a translator to *re*produce.

I shall have to try your patience yet once more upon this subject, and then my task will be completed. I have shown what the four axioms respecting Homer which I have laid down, exclude, what they bid a translator not to do; I have still to show what they supply, what positive help they can give to the translator in his work. I will even, with their aid, myself try my fortune with some of those passages of Homer which I have already noticed; not

indeed with any confidence that I more than others can succeed in adequately rendering Homer, but in the hope of satisfying competent judges, in the hope of making it clear to the future translator, that I at any rate follow a right method, and that, in coming short, I come short from weakness of execution, not from original vice of design. This is why I have so long occupied myself with Mr. Newman's version; that, apart from all faults of execution, his original design was wrong, and that he has done us the good service of declaring that design in its naked wrongness. To bad practice he has prefixed the bad theory which made the practice bad; he has given us a false theory in his preface, and he has exemplified the bad effects of that false theory in his translation. It is because his starting-point is so bad that he runs so badly; and to save others from taking so false a starting-point, may be to save them from running so futile a course.

Mr. Newman, indeed, says in his preface, that if any one dislikes his translation, 'he has his easy remedy; to keep aloof from it.' But Mr. Newman is a writer of considerable and deserved reputation; he is also a Professor of the University of London, an institution which by its position and by its merits acquires every year greater importance. It would be a very grave thing if the authority of so eminent a Professor led his students to misconceive entirely the chief work

of the Greek world ; that work which, whatever the other works of classical antiquity have to give us, gives it more abundantly than they all. The eccentricity too, the arbitrariness, of which Mr. Newman's conception of Homer offers so signal an example, are not a peculiar failing of Mr. Newman's own ; in varying degrees they are the great defect of English intellect, the great blemish of English literature. Our literature of the eighteenth century, the literature of the school of Dryden, Addison, Pope, Johnson, is a long reaction against this eccentricity, this arbitrariness ; that reaction perished by its own faults, and its enemies are left once more masters of the field. It is much more likely that any new English version of Homer will have Mr. Newman's faults than Pope's. Our present literature, which is very far, certainly, from having the spirit and power of Elizabethan genius, yet has in its own way these faults, eccentricity and arbitrariness, quite as much as the Elizabethan literature ever had. They are the cause that, while upon none, perhaps, of the modern literatures has so great a sum of force been expended as upon the English literature, at the present hour this literature, regarded not as an object of mere literary interest but as a living intellectual instrument, ranks only third in European effect and importance among the literatures of Europe ; it ranks after the literatures of France and Germany. Of these two

literatures, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a *critical* effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science,—to see the object as in itself it really is. But, owing to the presence in English literature of this eccentric and arbitrary spirit, owing to the strong tendency of English writers to bring to the consideration of their object some individual fancy, almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires—*criticism*. It is useful to notice any signal manifestation of those faults, which thus limit and impair the action of our literature. And therefore I have pointed out how widely, in translating Homer, a man even of real ability and learning may go astray, unless he brings to the study of this clearest of poets one quality in which our English authors, with all their great gifts, are apt to be somewhat wanting—simple lucidity of mind.

III

Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner. Cowper renders him ill because he is slow in his

movement, and elaborate in his style; Pope renders him ill because he is artificial both in his style and in his words; Chapman renders him ill because he is fantastic in his ideas; Mr. Newman renders him ill because he is odd in his words and ignoble in his manner. All four translators diverge from their original at other points besides those named; but it is at the points thus named that their divergence is greatest. For instance, Cowper's diction is not as Homer's diction, nor his nobleness as Homer's nobleness; but it is in movement and grammatical style that he is most unlike Homer. Pope's rapidity is not of the same sort as Homer's rapidity, nor are his plainness of ideas and his nobleness as Homer's plainness of ideas and nobleness: but it is in the artificial character of his style and diction that he is most unlike Homer. Chapman's movement, words, style, and manner, are often far enough from resembling Homer's movement, words, style, and manner; but it is the fantasticality of his ideas which puts him farthest from resembling Homer. Mr. Newman's movement, grammatical style, and ideas, are a thousand times in strong contrast with Homer's; still it is by the oddness of his diction and the ignobleness of his manner that he contrasts with Homer the most violently.

Therefore the translator must not say to himself: 'Cowper is noble, Pope is rapid, Chapman has a good diction, Mr. Newman has a good cast of sentence; I will avoid Cowper's

slowness, Pope's artificiality, Chapman's conceits, Mr. Newman's oddity ; I will take Cowper's dignified manner, Pope's impetuous movement, Chapman's vocabulary, Mr. Newman's syntax, and so make a perfect translation of Homer.' Undoubtedly in certain points the versions of Chapman, Cowper, Pope, and Mr. Newman, all of them have merit ; some of them very high merit, others a lower merit ; but even in these points they have none of them precisely the same kind of merit as Homer, and therefore the new translator, even if he can imitate them in their good points, will still not satisfy his judge, the scholar, who asks him for Homer and Homer's kind of merit, or, at least, for as much of them as it is possible to give.

So the translator really has no good model before him for any part of his work, and has to invent everything for himself. He is to be rapid in movement, plain in speech, simple in thought, and noble ; and *how* he is to be either rapid, or plain, or simple, or noble, no one yet has shown him. I shall try to-day to establish some practical suggestions which may help the translator of Homer's poetry to comply with the four grand requirements which we make of him.

His version is to be rapid ; and of course, to make a man's poetry rapid, as to make it noble, nothing can serve him so much as to have, in his own nature, rapidity and nobleness. *It is the spirit that quickeneth ;* and no one will so well

render Homer's swift-flowing movement as he who has himself something of the swift-moving spirit of Homer. Yet even this is not quite enough. Pope certainly had a quick and darting spirit, as he had, also, real nobleness; yet Pope does not render the movement of Homer. To render this the translator must have, besides his natural qualifications, an appropriate metre.

I have sufficiently shown why I think all forms of our ballad-metre unsuited to Homer. It seems to me to be beyond question that, for epic poetry, only three metres can seriously claim to be accounted capable of the grand style. Two of these will at once occur to every one,—the ten-syllable, or so-called *heroic*, couplet, and blank verse. I do not add to these the Spenserian stanza, although Dr. Maginn, whose metrical eccentricities I have already criticised, pronounces this stanza the one right measure for a translation of Homer. It is enough to observe, that if Pope's couplet, with the simple system of correspondences that its rhymes introduce, changes the movement of Homer, in which no such correspondences are found, and is therefore a bad measure for a translator of Homer to employ, Spenser's stanza, with its far more intricate system of correspondences, must change Homer's movement far more profoundly, and must therefore be for the translator a far worse measure than the couplet of Pope. Yet I will say, at the same time, that the verse of Spenser is more fluid,

slips more easily and quickly along, than the verse of almost any other English poet.

> By this the northern wagoner had set
> His seven-fold team behind the steadfast star
> That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
> But firm is fixt, and sendeth light from far
> To all that in the wide deep wandering are.[1]

One cannot but feel that English verse has not often moved with the fluidity and sweet ease of these lines. It is possible that it may have been this quality of Spenser's poetry which made Dr. Maginn think that the stanza of *The Faery Queen* must be a good measure for rendering Homer. This it is not: Spenser's verse is fluid and rapid, no doubt, but there are more ways than one of being fluid and rapid, and Homer is fluid and rapid in quite another way than Spenser. Spenser's manner is no more Homeric than is the manner of the one modern inheritor of Spenser's beautiful gift,—the poet, who evidently caught from Spenser his sweet and easy-slipping movement, and who has exquisitely employed it; a Spenserian genius, nay, a genius by natural endowment richer probably than even Spenser; that light which shines so unexpected and without fellow in our century, an Elizabethan born too late, the early lost and admirably gifted Keats.

I say then that there are really but three metres,—the ten-syllable couplet, blank verse, and a third metre which I will not yet name,

[1] *The Faery Queen*, canto ii. stanza 1.

but which is neither the Spenserian stanza nor any form of ballad-verse,—between which, as vehicles for Homer's poetry, the translator has to make his choice. Every one will at once remember a thousand passages in which both the ten-syllable couplet and blank verse prove themselves to have nobleness. Undoubtedly the movement and manner of this,—

> Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice,—

are noble. Undoubtedly, the movement and manner of this,—

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,—

are noble also. But the first is in a rhymed metre; and the unfitness of a rhymed metre for rendering Homer I have already shown. I will observe, too, that the fine couplet which I have quoted comes out of a satire, a didactic poem; and that it is in didactic poetry that the ten-syllable couplet has most successfully essayed the grand style. In narrative poetry this metre has succeeded best when it essayed a sensibly lower style, the style of Chaucer, for instance; whose narrative manner, though a very good and sound manner, is certainly neither the grand manner nor the manner of Homer.

The rhymed ten-syllable couplet being thus excluded, blank verse offers itself for the translator's use. The first kind of blank verse

which naturally occurs to us is the blank verse of Milton, which has been employed, with more or less modification, by Mr. Cary in translating Dante, by Cowper, and by Mr. Wright in translating Homer. How noble this metre is in Milton's hands, how completely it shows itself capable of the grand, nay, of the grandest, style, I need not say. To this metre, as used in the *Paradise Lost*, our country owes the glory of having produced one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are to be found in the modern languages; the *Divine Comedy* of Dante is the other. England and Italy here stand alone; Spain, France, and Germany have produced great poets, but neither Calderon, nor Corneille, nor Schiller, nor even Goethe, has produced a body of poetry in the true grand style, in the sense in which the style of the body of Homer's poetry, or Pindar's, or Sophocles's, is grand. But Dante has, and so has Milton; and in this respect Milton possesses a distinction which even Shakspeare, undoubtedly the supreme poetical power in our literature, does not share with him. Not a tragedy of Shakspeare but contains passages in the worst of all styles, the affected style; and the grand style, although it may be harsh, or obscure, or cumbrous, or overlaboured, is never affected. In spite, therefore, of objections which may justly be urged against the plan and treatment of the *Paradise Lost*, in spite of its possessing, certainly, a far less

enthralling force of interest to attract and to carry forward the reader than the *Iliad* or the *Divine Comedy*, it fully deserves, it can never lose, its immense reputation ; for, like the *Iliad* and the *Divine Comedy*, nay, in some respects to a higher degree than either of them, it is in the grand style.

But the grandeur of Milton is one thing, and the grandeur of Homer is another. Homer's movement, I have said again and again, is a flowing, a rapid movement ; Milton's, on the other hand, is a laboured, a self-retarding movement. In each case, the movement, the metrical cast, corresponds with the mode of evolution of the thought, with the syntactical cast, and is indeed determined by it. Milton charges himself so full with thought, imagination, knowledge, that his style will hardly contain them. He is too full-stored to show us in much detail one conception, one piece of knowledge ; he just shows it to us in a pregnant allusive way, and then he presses on to another ; and all this fulness, this pressure, this condensation, this self-constraint, enters into his movement, and makes it what it is,—noble, but difficult and austere. Homer is quite different ; he says a thing, and says it to the end, and then begins another, while Milton is trying to press a thousand things into one. So that whereas, in reading Milton, you never lose the sense of laborious and condensed fulness, in reading Homer you never lose the sense of flowing

and abounding ease. With Milton line runs into line, and all is straitly bound together: with Homer line runs off from line, and all hurries away onward. Homer begins, Μῆνιν ἄειδε Θεά,—at the second word announcing the proposed action: Milton begins:—

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing, heavenly muse.

So chary of a sentence is he, so resolute not to let it escape him till he has crowded into it all he can, that it is not till the thirty-ninth word in the sentence that he will give us the key to it, the word of action, the verb. Milton says:—

> O for that warning voice, which he, who saw
> The Apocalypse, heard cry in heaven aloud.

He is not satisfied, unless he can tell us, all in one sentence, and without permitting himself to actually mention the name, that the man who heard the warning voice was the same man who saw the Apocalypse. Homer would have said, 'O for that warning voice, which *John* heard,' —and if it had suited him to say that John also saw the Apocalypse, he would have given us that in another sentence. The effect of this allusive and compressed manner of Milton is, I need not say, often very powerful; and it is an effect which other great poets have often

sought to obtain much in the same way: Dante is full of it, Horace is full of it; but wherever it exists, it is always an un-Homeric effect. 'The losses of the heavens,' says Horace, 'fresh moons speedily repair; we, when we have gone down where the pious Æneas, where the rich Tullus and Ancus are,—*pulvis et umbra sumus.*'[1] He never actually says *where* we go to; he only indicates it by saying that it is that place where Æneas, Tullus, and Ancus are. But Homer, when he has to speak of going down to the grave, says, definitely, ἐς Ἠλύσιον πεδίον . . . ἀθάνατοι πέμψουσιν,[2]—'The immortals shall send thee *to the Elysian plain*'; and it is not till after he has definitely said this, that he adds, that it is there that the abode of departed worthies is placed: ὅθι ξανθὸς Ῥαδάμανθυς,—'Where the yellow-haired Rhadamanthus is.' Again; Horace, having to say that punishment sooner or later overtakes crime, says it thus:—

> Raro antecedentem scelestum
> Deseruit pede Poena claudo.[3]

The thought itself of these lines is familiar enough to Homer and Hesiod; but neither Homer nor Hesiod, in expressing it, could possibly have so complicated its expression as Horace complicates it, and purposely complicates it, by his use of the word *deseruit.* I say that

[1] *Odes*, IV. vii. 13. [2] *Odyssey*, iv. 563.
[3] *Odes*, III. ii. 31.

this complicated evolution of the thought necessarily complicates the movement and rhythm of a poet; and that the Miltonic blank verse, of course the first model of blank verse which suggests itself to an English translator of Homer, bears the strongest marks of such complication, and is therefore entirely unfit to render Homer.

If blank verse is used in translating Homer, it must be a blank verse of which English poetry, naturally swayed much by Milton's treatment of this metre, offers at present hardly any examples. It must not be Cowper's blank verse, who has studied Milton's pregnant manner with such effect, that, having to say of Mr. Throckmorton that he spares his avenue, although it is the fashion with other people to cut down theirs, he says that Benevolus 'reprieves The obsolete prolixity of shade.' It must not be Mr. Tennyson's blank verse.

> For all experience is an arch, wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose distance fades
> For ever and for ever, as we gaze.

It is no blame to the thought of those lines, which belongs to another order of ideas than Homer's, but it is true, that Homer would certainly have said of them, 'It is to consider too curiously to consider so.' It is no blame to their rhythm, which belongs to another order of movement than Homer's, but it is true that these three lines by themselves take up nearly as

much time as a whole book of the *Iliad*. No; the blank verse used in rendering Homer must be a blank verse of which perhaps the best specimens are to be found in some of the most rapid passages of Shakspeare's plays, — a blank verse which does not dovetail its lines into one another, and which habitually ends its lines with monosyllables. Such a blank verse might no doubt be very rapid in its movement, and might perfectly adapt itself to a thought plainly and directly evolved; and it would be interesting to see it well applied to Homer. But the translator who determines to use it, must not conceal from himself that in order to pour Homer into the mould of this metre, he will have entirely to break him up and melt him down, with the hope of then successfully composing him afresh; and this is a process which is full of risks. It may, no doubt, be the real Homer that issues new from it; it is not certain beforehand that it cannot be the real Homer, as it is certain that from the mould of Pope's couplet or Cowper's Miltonic verse it cannot be the real Homer that will issue: still, the chances of disappointment are great. The result of such an attempt to renovate the old poet may be an Æson: but it may also, and more probably will, be a Pelias.

When I say this, I point to the metre which seems to me to give the translator the best chance of preserving the general effect of Homer,—that third metre which I have not yet

expressly named, the hexameter. I know all that is said against the use of hexameters in English poetry; but it comes only to this, that, among us, they have not yet been used on any considerable scale with success. *Solvitur ambulando:* this is an objection which can best be met by *producing* good English hexameters. And there is no reason in the nature of the English language why it should not adapt itself to hexameters as well as the German language does; nay, the English language, from its greater rapidity, is in itself better suited than the German for them. The hexameter, whether alone or with the pentameter, possesses a movement, an expression, which no metre hitherto in common use amongst us possesses, and which I am convinced English poetry, as our mental wants multiply, will not always be content to forego. Applied to Homer, this metre affords to the translator the immense support of keeping him more nearly than any other metre to Homer's movement; and, since a poet's movement makes so large a part of his general effect, and to reproduce this general effect is at once the translator's indispensable business and so difficult for him, it is a great thing to have this part of your model's general effect already given you in your metre, instead of having to get it entirely for yourself.

These are general considerations; but there are also one or two particular considerations

which confirm me in the opinion that for translating Homer into English verse the hexameter should be used. The most successful attempt hitherto made at rendering Homer into English, the attempt in which Homer's general effect has been best retained, is an attempt made in the hexameter measure. It is a version of the famous lines in the third book of the *Iliad*, which end with that mention of Castor and Pollux from which Mr. Ruskin extracts the sentimental consolation already noticed by me. The author is the accomplished Provost of Eton, Dr. Hawtrey; and this performance of his must be my excuse for having taken the liberty to single him out for mention, as one of the natural judges of a translation of Homer, along with Professor Thompson and Professor Jowett, whose connection with Greek literature is official. The passage is short;[1] and Dr. Hawtrey's

[1] So short, that I quote it entire :—

Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-eyed sons of Achaia ;
Known to me well are the faces of all ; their names I remember ;
Two, two only remain, whom I see not among the commanders,
Castor fleet in the car,—Polydeukes brave with the cestus,—
Own dear brethren of mine,—one parent loved us as infants.
Are they not here in the host, from the shores of loved Lacedæmon,
Or, though they came with the rest in ships that bound through the waters,
Dare they not enter the fight or stand in the council of Heroes,
All for fear of the shame and the taunts my crime has awakened ?
So said she ;—they long since in Earth's soft arms were reposing,
There, in their own dear land, their Fatherland, Lacedæmon.

English Hexameter Translations; London, 1847 ; p. 242.

I have changed Dr. Hawtrey's 'Kastor,' 'Lakedaimon,' back

version of it is suffused with a pensive grace which is, perhaps, rather more Virgilian than Homeric ; still it is the one version of any part of the *Iliad* which in some degree reproduces for me the original effect of Homer : it is the best, and it is in hexameters.

This is one of the particular considerations that incline me to prefer the hexameter, for translating Homer, to our established metres. There is another. Most of you, probably, have some knowledge of a poem by Mr. Clough, *The Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich*, a long-vacation pastoral, in hexameters. The general merits of that poem I am not going to discuss ; it is a serio-

to the familiar 'Castor,' 'Lacedæmon,' in obedience to my own rule that everything *odd* is to be avoided in rendering Homer, the most natural and least odd of poets. I see Mr. Newman's critic in the *National Review* urges our generation to bear with the unnatural effect of these rewritten Greek names, in the hope that by this means the effect of them may have to the next generation become natural. For my part, I feel no disposition to pass all my own life in the wilderness of pedantry, in order that a posterity which I shall never see may one day enter an orthographical Canaan ; and, after all, the real question is this : whether our living apprehension of the Greek world is more checked by meeting in an English book about the Greeks, names not spelt letter for letter as in the original Greek, or by meeting names which make us rub our eyes and call out, 'How exceedingly odd !'

The Latin names of the Greek deities raise in most cases the idea of quite distinct personages from the personages whose idea is raised by the Greek names. Hera and Juno are actually, to every scholar's imagination, two different people. So in all these cases the Latin names must, at any inconvenience, be abandoned when we are dealing with the Greek world. But I think it can be in the sensitive imagination of Mr. Grote only, that 'Thucydides' raises the idea of a different man from Θουκυδίδης.

comic poem, and, therefore, of essentially different nature from the *Iliad*. Still in two things it is, more than any other English poem which I can call to mind, like the *Iliad*: in the rapidity of its movement, and the plainness and directness of its style. The thought in this poem is often curious and subtle, and that is not Homeric; the diction is often grotesque, and that is not Homeric. Still, by its rapidity of movement, and plain and direct manner of presenting the thought however curious in itself, this poem, which being as I say a serio-comic poem, has a right to be grotesque, is grotesque *truly*, not, like Mr. Newman's version of the *Iliad*, *falsely*. Mr. Clough's odd epithets, 'The grave man nicknamed Adam,' 'The hairy Aldrich,' and so on, grow vitally and appear naturally in their place; while Mr. Newman's 'dapper-greaved Achaians,' and 'motley-helmed Hector,' have all the air of being mechanically elaborated and artificially stuck in. Mr. Clough's hexameters are excessively, needlessly rough; still, owing to the native rapidity of this measure, and to the directness of style which so well allies itself with it, his composition produces a sense in the reader which Homer's composition also produces, and which Homer's translator ought to *re*produce,—the sense of having, within short limits of time, a large portion of human life presented to him, instead of a small portion.

Mr. Clough's hexameters are, as I have just

said, too rough and irregular ; and indeed a good model, on any considerable scale, of this metre, the English translator will nowhere find. He must not follow the model offered by Mr. Longfellow in his pleasing and popular poem of *Evangeline ;* for the merit of the manner and movement of *Evangeline*, when they are at their best, is to be tenderly elegant ; and their fault, when they are at their worst, is to be lumbering ; but Homer's defect is not lumberingness, neither is tender elegance his excellence. The lumbering effect of most English hexameters is caused by their being much too dactylic ;[1] the translator must learn to use spondees freely. Mr. Clough has done this, but he has not sufficiently observed another rule which the translator cannot follow too strictly ; and that is, to have no lines which will not, as it is familiarly said, *read themselves*. This is of the last importance for rhythms with which the ear of the English public is not thoroughly acquainted. Lord Redesdale, in two papers on the subject of Greek and Roman metres, has some good remarks on the outrageous disregard of quantity in which English verse, trusting to its force of accent, is apt to indulge itself. The predominance of

[1] For instance ; in a version (I believe, by the late Mr. Lockhart) of Homer's description of the parting of Hector and Andromache, there occurs, in the first five lines, but one spondee besides the necessary spondees in the sixth place ; in the corresponding five lines of Homer there occur ten. See *English Hexameter Translations*, 244.

accent in our language is so great, that it would be pedantic not to avail one's self of it; and Lord Redesdale suggests rules which might easily be pushed too far. Still, it is undeniable that in English hexameters we generally force the quantity far too much; we rely on justification by accent with a security which is excessive. But not only do we abuse accent by shortening long syllables and lengthening short ones; we perpetually commit a far worse fault, by requiring the removal of the accent from its natural place to an unnatural one, in order to make our line scan. This is a fault, even when our metre is one which every English reader knows, and when he can see what we want and can correct the rhythm according to our wish; although it is a fault which a great master may sometimes commit knowingly to produce a desired effect, as Milton changes the natural accent on the word *Tirésias* in the line:—

> And Tíresias and Phineus, prophets old;

and then it ceases to be a fault, and becomes a beauty. But it is a real fault, when Chapman has:—

> By him the golden-throned Queen slept, the Queen of Deities;

for in this line, to make it scan, you have to take away the accent from the word *Queen*, on which it naturally falls, and to place it on *throned*,

which would naturally be unaccented; and yet, after all, you get no peculiar effect or beauty of cadence to reward you. It is a real fault, when Mr. Newman has :—

> Infatuate! O that thou wert lord to some other army—

for here again the reader is required, not for any special advantage to himself, but simply to save Mr. Newman trouble, to place the accent on the insignificant word *wert*, where it has no business whatever. But it is still a greater fault, when Spenser has (to take a striking instance) :—

> Wot ye why his mother with a veil hath covered his face?

for a hexameter; because here not only is the reader causelessly required to make havoc with the natural accentuation of the line in order to get it to run as a hexameter; but also he, in nine cases out of ten, will be utterly at a loss how to perform the process required, and the line will remain a mere monster for him. I repeat, it is advisable to construct *all* verses so that by reading them naturally—that is, according to the sense and legitimate accent,—the reader gets the right rhythm; but, for English hexameters, that they be so constructed is indispensable.

If the hexameter best helps the translator to the Homeric rapidity, what style may best help him to the Homeric plainness and directness? It is the merit of a metre appropriate to your

subject, that it in some degree suggests and carries with itself a style appropriate to the subject; the elaborate and self-retarding style, which comes so naturally when your metre is the Miltonic blank verse, does not come naturally with the hexameter; is, indeed, alien to it. On the other hand, the hexameter has a natural dignity which repels both the jaunty style and the jot-trot style, to both of which the ballad-measure so easily lends itself. These are great advantages; and, perhaps, it is nearly enough to say to the translator who uses the hexameter that he cannot too religiously follow, in style, the inspiration of his metre. He will find that a loose and idiomatic grammar—a grammar which follows the essential rather than the formal logic of the thought—allies itself excellently with the hexameter; and that, while this sort of grammar ensures plainness and naturalness, it by no means comes short in nobleness. It is difficult to pronounce, certainly, what is idiomatic in the ancient literature of a language which, though still spoken, has long since entirely adopted, as modern Greek has adopted, modern idioms. Still one may, I think, clearly perceive that Homer's grammatical style is idiomatic,—that it may even be called, not improperly, a loose grammatical style.[1]

[1] See, for instance, in the *Iliad*, the loose construction of ὅστε, xvii. 658; that of ἴδοιτο, xvii. 681; that of οἵτε, xviii. 209; and the elliptical construction at xix. 42, 43; also the idiomatic construction of ἐγὼν ὅδε παρασχεῖν, xix. 140. These instances are

Examples, however, of what I mean by a loose grammatical style, will be of more use to the translator if taken from English poetry than if taken from Homer. I call it, then, a loose and idiomatic grammar which Shakspeare uses in the last line of the following three :—

> He's here in double trust :
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> *Strong both against the deed ;—*

or in this :—

> Wit, *whither wilt?*

What Shakspeare means is perfectly clear, clearer, probably, than if he had said it in a more formal and regular manner ; but his grammar is loose and idiomatic, because he leaves out the subject of the verb 'wilt' in the second passage quoted, and because, in the first, a prodigious addition to the sentence has to be, as we used to say in our old Latin grammar days, *understood*, before the word 'both' can be properly parsed. So, again, Chapman's grammar is loose and idiomatic where he says :—

> Even share hath he that keeps his tent, and *he to field* doth go,—

because he leaves out, in the second clause, the relative which in formal writing would be required. But Chapman here does not lose dignity by this idiomatic way of expressing himself, any more than Shakspeare loses it by

all taken within a range of a thousand lines ; any one may easily multiply them for himself.

neglecting to confer on 'both' the blessings of a regular government: neither loses dignity, but each gives that impression of a plain, direct, and natural mode of speaking, which Homer, too, gives, and which it is so important, as I say, that Homer's translator should succeed in giving. Cowper calls blank verse 'a style further removed than rhyme from the vernacular idiom, both in the language itself and in the arrangement of it'; and just in proportion as blank verse is removed from the vernacular idiom, from that idiomatic style which is of all styles the plainest and most natural, blank verse is unsuited to render Homer.

Shakspeare is not only idiomatic in his grammar or style, he is also idiomatic in his words or diction; and here, too, his example is valuable for the translator of Homer. The translator must not, indeed, allow himself all the liberty that Shakspeare allows himself; for Shakspeare sometimes uses expressions which pass perfectly well as he uses them, because Shakspeare thinks so fast and so powerfully, that in reading him we are borne over single words as by a mighty current; but, if our mind were less excited,—and who may rely on exciting our mind like Shakspeare?—they would check us. 'To grunt and sweat under a weary load';—that does perfectly well where it comes in Shakspeare; but if the translator of Homer, who will hardly have wound our minds up to the pitch at which

these words of Hamlet find them, were to employ, when he has to speak of one of Homer's heroes under the load of calamity, this figure of 'grunting' and 'sweating,' we should say, *He Newmanises*, and his diction would offend us. For he is to be noble; and no plea of wishing to be plain and natural can get him excused from being this: only, as he is to be also, like Homer, perfectly simple and free from artificiality, and as the use of idiomatic expressions undoubtedly gives this effect,[1] he should be as idiomatic as he can be without ceasing to be noble. Therefore the idiomatic language of Shakspeare—such language as, 'prate of his *whereabout*'; '*jump* the life to come;' 'the damnation of his *taking-off*'; 'his *quietus make* with a bare *bodkin*'—should be carefully observed by the translator of Homer, although in every case he will have to decide for himself whether the use, by him, of Shakspeare's liberty, will or will not clash with his indispensable duty of nobleness. He will find one English book and one only, where, as in the *Iliad* itself, perfect plainness of speech is allied with perfect

[1] Our knowledge of Homer's Greek is hardly such as to enable us to pronounce quite confidently what is idiomatic in his diction, and what is not, any more than in his grammar; but I seem to myself clearly to recognise an idiomatic stamp in such expressions as τολυπεύειν πολέμους, xiv. 86; φάος ἐν νήεσσιν θήης, xvi. 94; τιν' οἴω ἀσπασίως αὐτῶν γόνυ κάμψειν, xix. 71; κλοτοπεύειν, xix. 149; and many others. The first-quoted expression, τολυπεύειν ἀργαλέους πολέμους, seems to me to have just about the same degree of freedom as the '*jump* the life to come,' or the '*shuffle off* this mortal coil,' of Shakspeare.

nobleness; and that book is the Bible. No one could see this more clearly than Pope saw it: 'This pure and noble simplicity,' he says, 'is nowhere in such perfection as in the Scripture and Homer': yet even with Pope a woman is a 'fair,' a father is a 'sire,' and an old man a 'reverend sage,' and so on through all the phrases of that pseudo-Augustan, and most unbiblical, vocabulary. The Bible, however, is undoubtedly the grand mine of diction for the translator of Homer; and, if he knows how to discriminate truly between what will suit him and what will not, the Bible may afford him also invaluable lessons of style.

I said that Homer, besides being plain in style and diction, was plain in the quality of his thought. It is possible that a thought may be expressed with idiomatic plainness, and yet not be in itself a plain thought. For example, in Mr. Clough's poem, already mentioned, the style and diction is almost always idiomatic and plain, but the thought itself is often of a quality which is not plain; it is *curious*. But the grand instance of the union of idiomatic expression with curious or difficult thought is in Shakspeare's poetry. Such, indeed, is the force and power of Shakspeare's idiomatic expression, that it gives an effect of clearness and vividness even to a thought which is imperfect and incoherent; for instance, when Hamlet says:—

To take arms against a sea of troubles,—

the figure there is undoubtedly most faulty, it by no means runs on four legs; but the thing is said so freely and idiomatically, that it passes. This, however, is not a point to which I now want to call your attention; I want you to remark, in Shakspeare and others, only that which we may directly apply to Homer. I say, then, that in Shakspeare the thought is often, while most idiomatically uttered, nay, while good and sound in itself, yet of a quality which is curious and difficult; and that this quality of thought is something entirely un-Homeric. For example, when Lady Macbeth says:—

> Memory, the warder of the brain,
> Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
> A limbeck only,—

this figure is a perfectly sound and correct figure, no doubt; Mr. Knight even calls it a 'happy' figure; but it is a *difficult* figure: Homer would not have used it. Again, when Lady Macbeth says:—

> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man,—

the thought in the two last of these lines is, when you seize it, a perfectly clear thought, and a fine thought; but it is a *curious* thought: Homer would not have used it. These are favourable instances of the union of plain style and words with a thought not plain in quality;

but take stronger instances of this union,—let the thought be not only not plain in quality, but highly fanciful: and you have the Elizabethan conceits; you have, in spite of idiomatic style and idiomatic diction, everything which is most un-Homeric; you have such atrocities as this of Chapman:—

> Fate shall fail to vent her gall
> Till mine vent thousands.

I say, the poets of a nation which has produced such conceit as that, must purify themselves seven times in the fire before they can hope to render Homer. They must expel their nature with a fork, and keep crying to one another night and day: 'Homer not only moves rapidly, not only speaks idiomatically; he is, also, *free from fancifulness*.'

So essentially characteristic of Homer is his plainness and naturalness of thought, that to the preservation of this in his own version the translator must without scruple sacrifice, where it is necessary, verbal fidelity to his original, rather than run any risk of producing, by literalness, an odd and unnatural effect. The double epithets so constantly occurring in Homer must be dealt with according to this rule; these epithets come quite naturally in Homer's poetry; in English poetry they, in nine cases out of ten, come, when literally rendered, quite unnaturally. I will not now discuss why this is so, I assume it as an indisputable fact that it is so; that

Homer's *μερόπων ἀνθρώπων* comes to the reader as something perfectly natural, while Mr. Newman's 'voice-dividing mortals' comes to him as something perfectly unnatural. Well then, as it is Homer's general effect which we are to reproduce, it is to be false to Homer to be so verbally faithful to him as that we lose this effect: and by the English translator Homer's double epithets must be, in many places, renounced altogether; in all places where they are rendered, rendered by equivalents which come naturally. Instead of rendering *Θέτι τανύπεπλε* by Mr. Newman's 'Thetis trailing-robed,' which brings to one's mind long petticoats sweeping a dirty pavement, the translator must render the Greek by English words which come as naturally to us as Milton's words when he says, 'Let gorgeous Tragedy With sceptred pall come sweeping by.' Instead of rendering *μώνυχας ἵππους* by Chapman's 'one-hoofed steeds,' or Mr. Newman's 'single-hoofed horses,' he must speak of horses in a way which surprises us as little as Shakspeare surprises us when he says, 'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds.' Instead of rendering *μελιηδέα θυμόν* by 'life as honey pleasant,' he must characterise life with the simple pathos of Gray's 'warm precincts of the cheerful day.' Instead of converting *ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων;* into the portentous remonstrance, 'Betwixt the outwork of thy teeth what word hath slipt?' he must remonstrate in

English as straightforward as this of St. Peter, 'Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee'; or as this of the disciples, 'What is this that he saith, a little while? we cannot tell what he saith.' Homer's Greek, in each of the places quoted, reads as naturally as any of those English passages: the expression no more calls away the attention from the sense in the Greek than in the English. But when, in order to render literally in English one of Homer's double epithets, a strange unfamiliar adjective is invented,—such as 'voice-dividing' for μέροψ,—an improper share of the reader's attention is necessarily diverted to this ancillary word, to this word which Homer never intended should receive so much notice; and a total effect quite different from Homer's is thus produced. Therefore Mr. Newman, though he does not purposely import, like Chapman, conceits of his own into the *Iliad*, does actually import them; for the result of his singular diction is to raise ideas, and odd ideas, not raised by the corresponding diction in Homer; and Chapman himself does no more. Cowper says: 'I have cautiously avoided all terms of new invention, with an abundance of which persons of more ingenuity than judgment have not enriched our language but encumbered it'; and this criticism so exactly hits the diction of Mr. Newman, that one is irresistibly led to imagine his present appearance in the flesh to be at least his second.

A translator cannot well have a Homeric rapidity, style, diction, and quality of thought, without at the same time having what is the result of these in Homer,—nobleness. Therefore I do not attempt to lay down any rules for obtaining this effect of nobleness,—the effect, too, of all others the most impalpable, the most irreducible to rule, and which most depends on the individual personality of the artist. So I proceed at once to give you, in conclusion, one or two passages in which I have tried to follow those principles of Homeric translation which I have laid down. I give them, it must be remembered, not as specimens of perfect translation, but as specimens of an attempt to translate Homer on certain principles ; specimens which may very aptly illustrate those principles by falling short as well as by succeeding.

I take first a passage of which I have already spoken, the comparison of the Trojan fires to the stars. The first part of that passage is, I have said, of splendid beauty ; and to begin with a lame version of that would be the height of imprudence in me. It is the last and more level part with which I shall concern myself. I have already quoted Cowper's version of this part in order to show you how unlike his stiff and Miltonic manner of telling a plain story is to Homer's easy and rapid manner :—

So numerous seemed those fires the bank between
Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece,
In prospect all of Troy—

I need not continue to the end. I have also quoted Pope's version of it, to show you how unlike his ornate and artificial manner is to Homer's plain and natural manner :—

So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
And brighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays ;
The long reflections of the distant fires
Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires,—

and much more of the same kind. I want to show you that it is possible, in a plain passage of this sort, to keep Homer's simplicity without being heavy and dull ; and to keep his dignity without bringing in pomp and ornament. 'As numerous as are the stars on a clear night,' says Homer,

So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of Xanthus,
Between that and the ships, the Trojans' numerous fires.
In the plain there were kindled a thousand fires : by each one
There sat fifty men, in the ruddy light of the fire :
By their chariots stood the steeds, and champed the white barley
While their masters sat by the fire, and waited for Morning.

Here, in order to keep Homer's effect of perfect plainness and directness, I repeat the word 'fires' as he repeats *πυρά,* without scruple ; although in a more elaborate and literary style of poetry this recurrence of the same word would be a fault to be avoided. I omit the epithet of Morning, and, whereas Homer says that the

steeds 'waited for Morning,' I prefer to attribute this expectation of Morning to the master and not to the horse. Very likely in this particular, as in any other single particular, I may be wrong : what I wish you to remark is my endeavour after absolute plainness of speech, my care to avoid anything which may the least check or surprise the reader, whom Homer does not check or surprise. Homer's lively personal familiarity with war, and with the war-horse as his master's companion, is such that, as it seems to me, his attributing to the one the other's feelings comes to us quite naturally ; but, from a poet without this familiarity, the attribution strikes as a little unnatural ; and therefore, as everything the least unnatural is un-Homeric, I avoid it.

Again, in the address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles, Cowper has :—

> Jove saw their grief with pity, and his brows
> Shaking, within himself thus, pensive, said.
> 'Ah hapless pair ! wherefore by gift divine
> Were ye to Peleus given, a mortal king,
> Yourselves immortal and from age exempt ?'

There is no want of dignity here, as in the versions of Chapman and Mr. Newman, which I have already quoted ; but the whole effect is much too slow. Take Pope :—

> Nor Jove disdained to cast a pitying look
> While thus relenting to the steeds he spoke.
> 'Unhappy coursers of immortal strain !

Exempt from age and deathless now in vain ;
Did we your race on mortal man bestow
Only, alas ! to share in mortal woe ? '

Here there is no want either of dignity or rapidity, but all is too artificial. 'Nor Jove disdained,' for instance, is a very artificial and literary way of rendering Homer's words, and so is, 'coursers of immortal strain.'

μυρομένω δ' ἄρα τώ γε ἰδὼν ἐλέησε Κρονίων,—

And with pity the son of Saturn saw them bewailing,
And he shook his head, and thus addressed his own bosom :—
'Ah, unhappy pair, to Peleus why did we give you
To a mortal ? but ye are without old age and immortal.
Was it that ye, with man, might have your thousands of sorrows ?
For than man, indeed, there breathes no wretcheder creature
Of all living things, that on earth are breathing and moving.'

Here I will observe that the use of 'own,' in the second line, for the last syllable of a dactyl, and the use of 'To a,' in the fourth, for a complete spondee, though they do not, I think, actually spoil the run of the hexameter, are yet undoubtedly instances of that over-reliance on accent, and too free disregard of quantity, which Lord Redesdale visits with just reprehension.[1]

[1] It must be remembered, however, that, if we disregard quantity too much in constructing English hexameters, we also disregard accent too much in reading Greek hexameters. We read every Greek dactyl so as to make a pure dactyl of it ; but, to a Greek, the accent must have hindered many dactyls from sounding as pure dactyls. When we read *αἰόλος ἵππος*, for instance, or *αἰγιόχοιο*, the dactyl in each of these cases is made by us as pure a dactyl as 'Tityre,' or 'dignity' ; but to a Greek it was not so. To him *αἰόλος* must have been nearly as impure a dactyl as 'death-

I now take two longer passages in order to try my method more fully; but I still keep to passages which have already come under our notice. I quoted Chapman's version of some passages in the speech of Hector at his parting with Andromache. One astounding conceit will probably still be in your remembrance,—

When sacred Troy shall *shed her tow'rs for tears of overthrow*,—

as a translation of ὅτ' ἄν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρή. I will quote a few lines which may give you, also, the keynote to the Anglo-Augustan manner of rendering this passage and to the Miltonic manner of rendering it. What Mr. Newman's manner of rendering it would be, you can by this time sufficiently imagine for yourselves. Mr. Wright, — to quote for once from his meritorious version instead of Cowper's, whose strong and weak points are those of Mr. Wright also,—Mr. Wright begins his version of this passage thus :—

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destined' is to us; and αἰγιόχ nearly as impure as the 'dressed his own' of my text. Nor, I think, does this right mode of pronouncing the two words at all spoil the run of the line as a hexameter. The effect of αἰόλλος ἵππος (or something like that), though not *our* effect, is not a disagreeable one. On the other hand, κορυθαιόλος as a paroxytonon, although it has the respectable authority of Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* (following Heyne), is certainly wrong; for then the word cannot be pronounced without throwing an accent on the first syllable as well as the third, and μέγας κορρυθαιόλλος Ἕκτωρ would have been to a Greek as intolerable an ending for a hexameter line as 'accurst *orphanhood-destined* houses' would be to us. The best authorities, accordingly, accent κορυθαίολος as a proparoxytonon.

All these thy anxious cares are also mine,
Partner beloved ; but how could I endure
The scorn of Trojans and their long-robed wives,
Should they behold their Hector shrink from war,
And act the coward's part ? Nor doth my soul
Prompt the base thought.

Ex pede Herculem : you see just what the manner is. Mr. Sotheby, on the other hand (to take a disciple of Pope instead of Pope himself), begins thus :—

'What moves thee, moves my mind,' brave Hector said,
'Yet Troy's upbraiding scorn I deeply dread,
If, like a slave, where chiefs with chiefs engage,
The warrior Hector fears the war to wage,
Not thus my heart inclines.'

From that specimen, too, you can easily divine what, with such a manner, will become of the whole passage. But Homer has neither

What moves thee, moves my mind,—

nor has he

All these thy anxious cares are also mine.

Ἦ καὶ ἐμοὶ τάδε πάντα μέλει, γύναι· ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς,—

that is what Homer has, that is his style and movement, if one could but catch it. Andromache, as you know, has been entreating Hector to defend Troy from within the walls, instead of exposing his life, and, with his own life, the safety of all those dearest to him, by fighting in the open plain. Hector replies :—

Woman, I too take thought for this ; but then I bethink me
What the Trojan men and Trojan women might murmur,

If like a coward I skulked behind, apart from the battle.
Nor would my own heart let me; my heart, which has bid me be valiant
Always, and always fighting among the first of the Trojans,
Busy for Priam's fame and my own, in spite of the future.
For that day will come, my soul is assured of its coming,
It will come, when sacred Troy shall go to destruction,
Troy, and warlike Priam too, and the people of Priam.
And yet not that grief, which then will be, of the Trojans,
Moves me so much—not Hecuba's grief, nor Priam my father's,
Nor my brethren's, many and brave, who then will be lying
In the bloody dust, beneath the feet of their foemen—
As thy grief, when, in tears, some brazen-coated Achaian
Shall transport thee away, and the day of thy freedom be ended.
Then, perhaps, thou shalt work at the loom of another, in Argos,
Or bear pails to the well of Messeïs, or Hypereia,
Sorely against thy will, by strong Necessity's order.
And some man may say, as he looks and sees thy tears falling:
See, the wife of Hector, that great pre-eminent captain
Of the horsemen of Troy, in the day they fought for their city.
So some man will say; and then thy grief will redouble
At thy want of a man like me, to save thee from bondage.
But let me be dead, and the earth be mounded above me,
Ere I hear thy cries, and thy captivity told of.

The main question, whether or no this version reproduces for him the movement and general effect of Homer better than other versions[1] of the same passage, I leave for the judgment of the scholar. But the particular points, in which the operation of my own rules is manifested, are as follows. In the second line I leave out the epithet of the Trojan women, ἑλκεσιπέπλους,

[1] Dr. Hawtrey also has translated this passage; but here, he has not, I think, been so successful as in his 'Helen on the walls of Troy.'

altogether. In the sixth line I put in five words, 'in spite of the future,' which are in the original by implication only, and are not there actually expressed. This I do, because Homer, as I have before said, is so remote from one who reads him in English, that the English translator must be even plainer, if possible, and more unambiguous than Homer himself; the connection of meaning must be even more distinctly marked in the translation than in the original. For in the Greek language itself there is something which brings one nearer to Homer, which gives one a clue to his thought, which makes a hint enough; but in the English language this sense of nearness, this clue, is gone; hints are insufficient, everything must be stated with full distinctness. In the ninth line Homer's epithet for Priam is ἐυμμελίω,—'armed with good ashen spear,' say the dictionaries; 'ashen-speared,' translates Mr. Newman, following his own rule to 'retain every peculiarity of his original,'—I say, on the other hand, that ἐυμμελίω has not the effect of a 'peculiarity' in the original, while 'ashen-speared' has the effect of a 'peculiarity' in English; and 'warlike' is as marking an equivalent as I dare give for ἐυμμελίω, for fear of disturbing the balance of expression in Homer's sentence. In the fourteenth line, again, I translate χαλκοχιτώνων by 'brazen-coated.' Mr. Newman, meaning to be perfectly literal, translates it by 'brazen-cloaked,' an expression which

comes to the reader oddly and unnaturally, while Homer's word comes to him quite naturally; but I venture to go as near to a literal rendering as 'brazen-coated,' because a 'coat of brass' is familiar to us all from the Bible, and familiar, too, as distinctly specified in connection with the wearer. Finally, let me further illustrate from the twentieth line the value which I attach, in a question of diction, to the authority of the Bible. The word 'pre-eminent' occurs in that line; I was a little in doubt whether that was not too bookish an expression to be used in rendering Homer, as I can imagine Mr. Newman to have been a little in doubt whether his 'responsively accosted' for *ἀμειβόμενος προσέφη*, was not too bookish an expression. Let us both, I say, consult our Bibles: Mr. Newman will nowhere find it in his Bible that David, for instance, '*responsively accosted* Goliath'; but I do find in mine that 'the right hand of the Lord hath the *pre-eminence*'; and forthwith I use 'pre-eminent,' without scruple. My Bibliolatry is perhaps excessive; and no doubt a true poetic feeling is the Homeric translator's best guide in the use of words; but where this feeling does not exist, or is at fault, I think he cannot do better than take for a mechanical guide Cruden's *Concordance*. To be sure, here as elsewhere, the consulter must know how to consult,—must know how very slight a variation of word or circumstance makes the

difference between an authority in his favour and an authority which gives him no countenance at all; for instance, the 'Great simpleton!' (for μέγα νήπιος) of Mr. Newman, and the 'Thou fool!' of the Bible, are something alike; but 'Thou fool!' is very grand, and 'Great simpleton!' is an atrocity. So, too, Chapman's 'Poor wretched beasts' is pitched many degrees too low; but Shakspeare's 'Poor venomous fool, Be angry and despatch!' is in the grand style.

One more piece of translation and I have done. I will take the passage in which both Chapman and Mr. Newman have already so much excited our astonishment, the passage at the end of the nineteenth book of the *Iliad*, the dialogue between Achilles and his horse Xanthus, after the death of Patroclus. Achilles begins:—

'Xanthus and Balius both, ye far-famed seed of Podarga!
See that ye bring your master home to the host of the Argives
In some other sort than your last, when the battle is ended;
And not leave him behind, a corpse on the plain, like Patroclus.'
Then, from beneath the yoke, the fleet horse Xanthus addressed him:
Sudden he bowed his head, and all his mane, as he bowed it,
Streamed to the ground by the yoke, escaping from under the collar;
And he was given a voice by the white-armed Goddess Hera.
'Truly, yet this time will we save thee, mighty Achilles!
But thy day of death is at hand; nor shall *we* be the reason—
No, but the will of heaven, and Fate's invincible power.
For by no slow pace or want of swiftness of ours
Did the Trojans obtain to strip the arms from Patroclus;
But that prince among Gods, the son of the lovely-haired Leto,

Slew him fighting in front of the fray, and glorified Hector.
But, for us, we vie in speed with the breath of the West-Wind,
Which, men say, is the fleetest of winds; 't is thou who art fated
To lie low in death, by the hand of a God and a Mortal.'
Thus far he; and here his voice was stopped by the Furies.
Then, with a troubled heart, the swift Achilles addressed him:
'Why dost thou prophesy so my death to me, Xanthus? It needs not.
I of myself know well, that here I am destined to perish,
Far from my father and mother dear: for all that I will not
Stay this hand from fight, till the Trojans are utterly routed.'

So he spake, and drove with a cry his steeds into battle.

Here the only particular remark which I will make is, that in the fourth and eighth line the grammar is what I call a loose and idiomatic grammar. In writing a regular and literary style, one would in the fourth line have to repeat, before 'leave' the words 'that ye' from the second line, and to insert the word 'do'; and in the eighth line one would not use such an expression as 'he was given a voice.' But I will make one general remark on the character of my own translations, as I have made so many on that of the translations of others. It is, that over the graver passages there is shed an air somewhat too strenuous and severe, by comparison with that lovely ease and sweetness which Homer, for all his noble and masculine way of thinking, never loses.

Here I stop. I have said so much, because I think that the task of translating Homer into English verse both will be re-attempted, and

may be re-attempted successfully. There are great works composed of parts so disparate that one translator is not likely to have the requisite gifts for poetically rendering all of them. Such are the works of Shakspeare, and Goethe's *Faust;* and these it is best to attempt to render in prose only. People praise Tieck and Schlegel's version of Shakspeare : I, for my part, would sooner read Shakspeare in the French prose translation, and that is saying a great deal ; but in the German poets' hands Shakspeare so often gets, especially where he is humorous, an air of what the French call *niaiserie !* and can anything be more un-Shakspearian than that ? Again ; Mr. Hayward's prose translation of the first part of *Faust*—so good that it makes one regret Mr. Hayward should have abandoned the line of translation for a kind of literature which is, to say the least, somewhat slight—is not likely to be surpassed by any translation in verse. But poems like the *Iliad*, which, in the main, are in one manner, may hope to find a poetical translator so gifted and so trained as to be able to learn that one manner, and to reproduce it. Only, the poet who would reproduce this must cultivate in himself a Greek virtue by no means common among the moderns in general, and the English in particular,—*moderation.* For Homer has not only the English vigour, he has the Greek grace ; and when one observes the boistering, rollicking way in which his English admirers—even men

of genius, like the late Professor Wilson—love to talk of Homer and his poetry, one cannot help feeling that there is no very deep community of nature between them and the object of their enthusiasm. 'It is very well, my good friends,' I always imagine Homer saying to them: if he could hear them: 'you do me a great deal of honour, but somehow or other you praise me too like barbarians.' For Homer's grandeur is not the mixed and turbid grandeur of the great poets of the north, of the authors of *Othello* and *Faust;* it is a perfect, a lovely grandeur. Certainly his poetry has all the energy and power of the poetry of our ruder climates; but it has, besides, the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky.

LAST WORDS

Multi, qui persequuntur me, et tribulant me: a testimoniis non declinavi.

BUFFON, the great French naturalist, imposed on himself the rule of steadily abstaining from all answer to attacks made upon him. 'Je n'ai jamais répondu à aucune critique,' he said to one of his friends who, on the occasion of a certain criticism, was eager to take up arms in his behalf; 'je n'ai jamais répondu à aucune critique, et je garderai le même silence sur

celle-ci.' On another occasion, when accused of plagiarism, and pressed by his friends to answer, 'Il vaut mieux,' he said, 'laisser ces mauvaises gens dans l'incertitude.' Even when reply to an attack was made successfully, he disapproved of it, he regretted that those he esteemed should make it. Montesquieu, more sensitive to criticism than Buffon, had answered, and successfully answered, an attack made upon his great work, the *Esprit des Lois*, by the *Gazetier Janséniste*. This Jansenist Gazetteer was a periodical of those times,—a periodical such as other times, also, have occasionally seen,—very pretentious, very aggressive, and, when the point to be seized was at all a delicate one, very apt to miss it. 'Notwithstanding this example,' said Buffon,—who, as well as Montesquieu, had been attacked by the Jansenist Gazetteer,—'notwithstanding this example, I think I may promise my course will be different. I shall not answer a single word.'

And to any one who has noticed the baneful effects of controversy, with all its train of personal rivalries and hatreds, on men of letters or men of science; to any one who has observed how it tends to impair, not only their dignity and repose, but their productive force, their genuine activity; how it always checks the free play of the spirit, and often ends by stopping it altogether; it can hardly seem doubtful, that the rule thus imposed on himself by Buffon was

a wise one. His own career, indeed, admirably shows the wisdom of it. That career was as glorious as it was serene; but it owed to its serenity no small part of its glory. The regularity and completeness with which he gradually built up the great work which he had designed, the air of equable majesty which he shed over it, struck powerfully the imagination of his contemporaries, and surrounded Buffon's fame with a peculiar respect and dignity. 'He is,' said Frederick the Great of him, 'the man who has best deserved the great celebrity which he has acquired.' And this regularity of production, this equableness of temper, he maintained by his resolute disdain of personal controversy.

Buffon's example seems to me worthy of all imitation, and in my humble way I mean always to follow it. I never have replied, I never will reply, to any literary assailant; in such encounters tempers are lost, the world laughs, and truth is not served. Least of all should I think of using this Chair as a place from which to carry on such a conflict. But when a learned and estimable man thinks he has reason to complain of language used by me in this Chair,—when he attributes to me intentions and feelings towards him which are far from my heart, I owe him some explanation,—and I am bound, too, to make the explanation as public as the words which gave offence. This is the reason why I revert once more to

the subject of translating Homer. But being thus brought back to that subject, and not wishing to occupy you solely with an explanation which, after all, is Mr. Newman's affair and mine, not the public's, I shall take the opportunity,—not certainly to enter into any conflict with any one,—but to try to establish our old friend, the coming translator of Homer, yet a little firmer in the positions which I hope we have now secured for him ; to protect him against the danger of relaxing, in the confusion of dispute, his attention to those matters which alone I consider important for him ; to save him from losing sight, in the dust of the attacks delivered over it, of the real body of Patroclus. He will, probably, when he arrives, requite my solicitude very ill, and be in haste to disown his benefactor ; but my interest in him is so sincere that I can disregard his probable ingratitude.

First, however, for the explanation. Mr. Newman has published a reply to the remarks which I made on his translation of the *Iliad*. He seems to think that the respect which at the outset of those remarks I professed for him must have been professed ironically ; he says that I use 'forms of attack against him which he does not know how to characterise' ; that I 'speak scornfully' of him, treat him with 'gratuitous insult, gratuitous rancour' ; that I 'propagate slanders' against him, that I wish to 'damage him with my readers,' to 'stimulate my readers to despise'

him. He is entirely mistaken. I respect Mr. Newman sincerely; I respect him as one of the few learned men we have, one of the few who love learning for its own sake; this respect for him I had before I read his translation of the *Iliad*, I retained it while I was commenting on that translation, I have not lost it after reading his reply. Any vivacities of expression which may have given him pain I sincerely regret, and can only assure him that I used them without a thought of insult or rancour. When I took the liberty of creating the verb *to Newmanise*, my intentions were no more rancorous than if I had said *to Miltonise;* when I exclaimed, in my astonishment at his vocabulary, 'With whom can Mr. Newman have lived?' I meant merely to convey, in a familiar form of speech, the sense of bewilderment one has at finding a person to whom words one thought all the world knew seem strange, and words one thought entirely strange, intelligible. Yet this simple expression of my bewilderment Mr. Newman construes into an accusation that he is 'often guilty of keeping low company,' and says that I shall 'never want a stone to throw at him.' And what is stranger still, one of his friends gravely tells me that Mr. Newman 'lived with the fellows of Balliol.' As if that made Mr. Newman's glossary less inexplicable to me! As if he could have got his glossary from the fellows of Balliol! As if I could believe that

the members of that distinguished society—of whose discourse, not so many years afterwards, I myself was an unworthy hearer—were in Mr. Newman's time so far removed from the Attic purity of speech which we all of us admired, that when one of them called a calf a *bulkin*, the rest 'easily understood' him; or, when he wanted to say that a newspaper-article was 'proudly fine,' it mattered little whether he said it was that or *bragly!* No; his having lived with the fellows of Balliol does not explain Mr. Newman's glossary to me. I will no longer ask 'with whom he can have lived,' since that gives him offence; but I must still declare that where he got his test of rarity or intelligibility for words is a mystery to me.

That, however, does not prevent me from entertaining a very sincere respect for Mr. Newman, and since he doubts it, I am glad to reiterate my expression of it. But the truth of the matter is this: I unfeignedly admire Mr. Newman's ability and learning; but I think in his translation of Homer he has employed that ability and learning quite amiss. I think he has chosen quite the wrong field for turning his ability and learning to account. I think that in England, partly from the want of an Academy, partly from a national habit of intellect to which that want of an Academy is itself due, there exists too little of what I may call a public force of correct literary opinion, possessing within

certain limits a clear sense of what is right and wrong, sound and unsound, and sharply recalling men of ability and learning from any flagrant misdirection of these their advantages. I think, even, that in our country a powerful misdirection of this kind is often more likely to subjugate and pervert opinion than to be checked and corrected by it.[1] Hence a chaos of false tendencies, wasted efforts, impotent conclusions, works which ought never to have been undertaken. Any one who can introduce a little order into this chaos by establishing in any quarter a single sound rule of criticism, a single rule which clearly marks what is right as right, and what is wrong as wrong, does a good deed ; and his deed is so much the better the greater force he counteracts of learning and ability applied to thicken the chaos. Of course no one can be sure that he has fixed any such rules ; he can only do his best to fix them ; but somewhere or other, in the literary opinion of Europe, if not in the literary opinion of one nation, in fifty years, if not in five, there is a final judgment on these matters, and the critic's work will at last stand or fall by its true merits.

[1] 'It is the fact, that scholars of fastidious refinement, but of a judgment which I think far more masculine than Mr. Arnold's, have passed a most encouraging sentence on large specimens of my translation. I at present count eight such names.'—'Before venturing to print, I sought to ascertain how unlearned women and children would accept my verses. I could boast how children and half-educated women have extolled them, how greedily a working man has inquired for them, without knowing who was the translator.' —Mr. Newman's Reply, pp. 2, 12, 13.

Meanwhile, the charge of having in one instance misapplied his powers, of having once followed a false tendency, is no such grievous charge to bring against a man; it does not exclude a great respect for himself personally, or for his powers in the happier manifestation of them. False tendency is, I have said, an evil to which the artist or the man of letters in England is peculiarly prone; but everywhere in our time he is liable to it,—the greatest as well as the humblest. 'The first beginnings of my *Wilhelm Meister*,' says Goethe, 'arose out of an obscure sense of the great truth that man will often attempt something for which nature has denied him the proper powers, will undertake and practise something in which he cannot become skilled. An inward feeling warns him to desist' (yes, but there are, unhappily, cases of absolute judicial blindness!), 'nevertheless he cannot get clear in himself about it, and is driven along a false road to a false goal, without knowing how it is with him. To this we may refer everything which goes by the name of false tendency, dilettanteism, and so on. A great many men waste in this way the fairest portion of their lives, and fall at last into wonderful delusion.' Yet after all,—Goethe adds,—it sometimes happens that even on this false road a man finds, not indeed that which he sought, but something which is good and useful for him; 'like Saul, the son of Kish, who went forth to look for his

father's asses, and found a kingdom.' And thus false tendency as well as true, vain effort as well as fruitful, go together to produce that great movement of life, to present that immense and magic spectacle of human affairs, which from boyhood to old age fascinates the gaze of every man of imagination, and which would be his terror, if it were not at the same time his delight.

So Mr. Newman may see how widespread a danger it is, to which he has, as I think, in setting himself to translate Homer, fallen a prey. He may be well satisfied if he can escape from it by paying it the tribute of a single work only. He may judge how unlikely it is that I should 'despise' him for once falling a prey to it. I know far too well how exposed to it we all are; how exposed to it I myself am. At this very moment, for example, I am fresh from reading Mr. Newman's Reply to my Lectures, a reply full of that erudition in which (as I am so often and so good-naturedly reminded, but indeed I know it without being reminded) Mr. Newman is immeasurably my superior. Well, the demon that pushes us all to our ruin is even now prompting me to follow Mr. Newman into a discussion about the digamma, and I know not what providence holds me back. And some day, I have no doubt, I shall lecture on the language of the Berbers, and give him his entire revenge.

But Mr. Newman does not confine himself to

complaints on his own behalf, he complains on Homer's behalf too. He says that my 'statements about Greek literature are against the most notorious and elementary fact'; that I 'do a public wrong to literature by publishing them'; and that the Professors to whom I appealed in my three Lectures, 'would only lose credit if they sanctioned the use I make of their names.' He does these eminent men the kindness of adding, however, that 'whether they are pleased with this parading of their names in behalf of paradoxical error, he may well doubt,' and that 'until they endorse it themselves, he shall treat my process as a piece of forgery.' He proceeds to discuss my statements at great length, and with an erudition and ingenuity which nobody can admire more than I do. And he ends by saying that my ignorance is great.

Alas! that is very true. Much as Mr. Newman was mistaken when he talked of my rancour, he is entirely right when he talks of my ignorance. And yet, perverse as it seems to say so, I sometimes find myself wishing, when dealing with these matters of poetical criticism, that my ignorance were even greater than it is. To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it. To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is

dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world. The 'thing itself' with which one is here dealing,—the critical perception of poetic truth,—is of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be indeed the 'ondoyant et divers,' the *undulating and diverse* being of Montaigne. The less he can deal with his object simply and freely, the more things he has to take into account in dealing with it,—the more, in short, he has to encumber himself,—so much the greater force of spirit he needs to retain his elasticity. But one cannot exactly have this greater force by wishing for it; so, for the force of spirit one has, the load put upon it is often heavier than it will well bear. The late Duke of Wellington said of a certain peer that 'it was a great pity his education had been so far too much for his abilities.' In like manner, one often sees erudition out of all proportion to its owner's critical faculty. Little as I know, therefore, I am always apprehensive, in dealing with poetry, lest even that little should prove 'too much for my abilities.'

With this consciousness of my own lack of learning,—nay, with this sort of acquiescence in

it, with this belief that for the labourer in the field of poetical criticism learning has its disadvantages,—I am not likely to dispute with Mr. Newman about matters of erudition. All that he says on these matters in his Reply I read with great interest: in general I agree with him; but only, I am sorry to say, up to a certain point. Like all learned men, accustomed to desire definite rules, he draws his conclusions too absolutely; he wants to include too much under his rules; he does not quite perceive that in poetical criticism the shade, the fine distinction, is everything; and that, when he has once missed this, in all he says he is in truth but beating the air. For instance: because I think Homer noble, he imagines I must think him elegant; and in fact he says in plain words that I do think him so, — that to me Homer seems 'pervadingly elegant.' But he does not. Virgil is elegant,—'pervadingly elegant,'—even in passages of the highest emotion:

> O, ubi campi,
> Spercheosque, et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis
> Taygeta![1]

Even there Virgil, though of a divine elegance, is still elegant: but Homer is not elegant; the word is quite a wrong one to apply to him, and Mr. Newman is quite right in blaming any one

[1] 'O for the fields of Thessaly and the streams of Spercheios! O for the hills alive with the dances of the Laconian maidens, the hills of Taygetus!'—*Georgics*, ii. 486.

he finds so applying it. Again; arguing against my assertion that Homer is not quaint, he says: 'It is quaint to call waves *wet*, milk *white*, blood *dusky*, horses *single-hoofed*, words *winged*, Vulcan *Lobfoot* (Κυλλοποδίων), a spear *longshadowy*,' and so on. I find I know not how many distinctions to draw here. I do not think it quaint to call waves *wet*, or milk *white*, or words *winged;* but I do think it quaint to call horses *single-hoofed*, or Vulcan *Lobfoot*, or a spear *longshadowy*. As to calling blood *dusky*, I do not feel quite sure; I will tell Mr. Newman my opinion when I see the passage in which he calls it so. But then, again, because it is quaint to call Vulcan *Lobfoot*, I cannot admit that it was quaint to call him Κυλλοποδίων; nor that, because it is quaint to call a spear *longshadowy*, it was quaint to call it δολιχόσκιον. Here Mr. Newman's erudition misleads him: he knows the literal value of the Greek so well, that he thinks his literal rendering identical with the Greek, and that the Greek must stand or fall along with his rendering. But the real question is, not whether he has given us, so to speak, full change for the Greek, but *how* he gives us our change: we want it in gold, and he gives it us in copper. Again: 'It is quaint,' says Mr. Newman, 'to address a young friend as "O Pippin!"—it is quaint to compare Ajax to an ass whom boys are belabouring.' Here, too, Mr. Newman goes much too fast, and his category of quaintness is

too comprehensive. To address a young friend as 'O Pippin!' is, I cordially agree with him, very quaint; although I do not think it was quaint in Sarpedon to address Glaucus as ὦ πέπον: but in comparing, whether in Greek or in English, Ajax to an ass whom boys are belabouring, I do not see that there is of necessity anything quaint at all. Again; because I said that *eld*, *lief*, *in sooth*, and other words, are, as Mr. Newman usès them in certain places, bad words, he imagines that I must mean to stamp these words with an absolute reprobation; and because I said that 'my Bibliolatry is excessive,' he imagines that I brand all words as ignoble which are not in the Bible. Nothing of the kind: there are no such absolute rules to be laid down in these matters. The Bible vocabulary is to be used as an assistance, not as an authority. Of the words which, placed where Mr. Newman places them, I have called bad words, every one may be excellent in some other place. Take *eld*, for instance: when Shakspeare, reproaching man with the dependence in which his youth is passed, says:—

> all thy blessed youth
> Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
> Of palsied *eld*, . . .

it seems to me that *eld* comes in excellently there, in a passage of curious meditation; but when Mr. Newman renders ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε

by 'from *Eld* and Death exempted,' it seems to me he infuses a tinge of quaintness into the transparent simplicity of Homer's expression, and so I call *eld* a bad word in that place.

Once more. Mr. Newman lays it down as a general rule that 'many of Homer's energetic descriptions are expressed in coarse physical words.' He goes on: 'I give one illustration, —Τρῶες προὔτυψαν ἀολλέες. Cowper, misled by the *ignis fatuus* of "stateliness," renders it absurdly:—

> 'The powers of Ilium gave the first assault
> Embattled close;

but it is, strictly, "The Trojans *knocked forward* (or, thumped, butted forward) *in close pack.*" The verb is too coarse for later polished prose, and even the adjective is very strong (*packed together*). I believe, that "forward in pack the Trojans pitched," would not be really unfaithful to the Homeric colour; and I maintain, that "forward in mass the Trojans pitched," would be an irreprovable rendering.' He actually gives us all that as if it were a piece of scientific deduction; and as if, at the end, he had arrived at an incontrovertible conclusion. But, in truth, one cannot settle these matters quite in this way. Mr. Newman's general rule may be true or false (I dislike to meddle with general rules), but every part in what follows must stand or fall by itself, and its soundness or unsoundness has nothing at all to do with the truth or

falsehood of Mr. Newman's general rule. He first gives, as a strict rendering of the Greek, 'The Trojans knocked forward (or, thumped, butted forward), in close pack.' I need not say that, as a 'strict rendering of the Greek,' this is good,—all Mr. Newman's 'strict renderings of the Greek' are sure to be, as such, good; but 'in close pack,' for ἀολλέες, seems to me to be what Mr. Newman's renderings are not always,—an excellent *poetical rendering* of the Greek; a thousand times better, certainly, than Cowper's 'embattled close.' Well, but Mr. Newman goes on: 'I believe that, "forward in pack the Trojans pitched," would not be really unfaithful to the Homeric colour.' Here, I say, the Homeric colour is half washed out of Mr. Newman's happy rendering of ἀολλέες; while in 'pitched' for προὔτυψαν, the literal fidelity of the first rendering is gone, while certainly no Homeric colour has come in its place. Finally, Mr. Newman concludes: 'I maintain that "forward in mass the Trojans pitched," would be an irreprovable rendering.' Here, in what Mr. Newman fancies his final moment of triumph, Homeric colour and literal fidelity have alike abandoned him altogether; the last stage of his translation is much worse than the second, and immeasurably worse than the first.

All this to show that a looser, easier method than Mr. Newman's must be taken, if we are to arrive at any good result in these questions.

I now go on to follow Mr. Newman a little further, not at all as wishing to dispute with him, but as seeking (and this is the true fruit we may gather from criticisms upon us) to gain hints from him for the establishment of some useful truth about our subject, even when I think him wrong. I still retain, I confess, my conviction that Homer's characteristic qualities are rapidity of movement, plainness of words and style, simplicity and directness of ideas, and, above all, nobleness, the grand manner. Whenever Mr. Newman drops a word, awakens a train of thought, which leads me to see any of these characteristics more clearly, I am grateful to him ; and one or two suggestions of this kind which he affords, are all that now,—having expressed my sorrow that he should have misconceived my feelings towards him, and pointed out what I think the vice of his method of criticism,—I have to notice in his Reply.

Such a suggestion I find in Mr. Newman's remarks on my assertion that the translator of Homer must not adopt a quaint and antiquated style in rendering him, because the impression which Homer makes upon the living scholar is not that of a poet quaint and antiquated, but that of a poet perfectly simple, perfectly intelligible. I added that we cannot, I confess, really know how Homer seemed to Sophocles, but that it is impossible to me to believe that

he seemed to him quaint and antiquated. Mr. Newman asserts, on the other hand, that I am absurdly wrong here; that Homer seemed 'out and out' quaint and antiquated to the Athenians; that 'every sentence of him was more or less antiquated to Sophocles, who could no more help feeling at every instant the foreign and antiquated character of the poetry than an Englishman can help feeling the same in reading Burns's poems.' And not only does Mr. Newman say this, but he has managed thoroughly to convince some of his readers of it. 'Homer's Greek,' says one of them, 'certainly seemed antiquated to the historical times of Greece. Mr. Newman, taking a far broader historical and philological view than Mr. Arnold, stoutly maintains that it did seem so.' And another says: 'Doubtless Homer's dialect and diction were as hard and obscure to a later Attic Greek as Chaucer to an Englishman of our day.'

Mr. Newman goes on to say, that not only was Homer antiquated relatively to Pericles, but he is antiquated to the living scholar; and, indeed, is in himself 'absolutely antique, being the poet of a barbarian age.' He tells us of his 'inexhaustible quaintnesses,' of his 'very eccentric diction'; and he infers, of course, that he is perfectly right in rendering him in a quaint and antiquated style.

Now this question,—whether or no Homer seemed quaint and antiquated to Sophocles,—

I call a delightful question to raise. It is not a barren verbal dispute ; it is a question 'drenched in matter,' to use an expression of Bacon ; a question full of flesh and blood, and of which the scrutiny, though I still think we cannot settle it absolutely, may yet give us a directly useful result. To scrutinise it may lead us to see more clearly what sort of a style a modern translator of Homer ought to adopt.

Homer's verses were some of the first words which a young Athenian heard. He heard them from his mother or his nurse before he went to school ; and at school, when he went there, he was constantly occupied with them. So much did he hear of them that Socrates proposes, in the interests of morality, to have selections from Homer made, and placed in the hands of mothers and nurses, in his model republic ; in order that, of an author with whom they were sure to be so perpetually conversant, the young might learn only those parts which might do them good. His language was as familiar to Sophocles, we may be quite sure, as the language of the Bible is to us.

Nay, more. Homer's language was not, of course, in the time of Sophocles, the spoken or written language of ordinary life, any more than the language of the Bible, any more than the language of poetry, is with us ; but for one great species of composition—epic poetry—it was still the current language ; it was the language in

which every one who made that sort of poetry composed. Every one at Athens who dabbled in epic poetry, not only understood Homer's language,—he possessed it. He possessed it as every one who dabbles in poetry with us, possesses what may be called the poetical vocabulary, as distinguished from the vocabulary of common speech and of modern prose: I mean, such expressions as *perchance* for *perhaps*, *spake* for *spoke*, *aye* for *ever*, *don* for *put on*, *charméd* for *charm'd*, and thousands of others.

I might go to Burns and Chaucer, and, taking words and passages from them, ask if they afforded any parallel to a language so familiar and so possessed. But this I will not do, for Mr. Newman himself supplies me with what he thinks a fair parallel, in its effect upon us, to the language of Homer in its effect upon Sophocles. He says that such words as *mon*, *londis*, *libbard*, *withouten*, *muchel*, give us a tolerable but incomplete notion of this parallel; and he finally exhibits the parallel in all its clearness, by this poetical specimen:—

> Dat mon, quhich hauldeth Kyngis af
> Londis yn féo, niver
> (I tell 'e) feereth aught; sith hee
> Doth hauld hys londis yver.

Now, does Mr. Newman really think that Sophocles could, as he says, 'no more help feeling at every instant the foreign and antiquated character of Homer, than an Englishman can

help feeling the same in hearing' these lines? Is he quite sure of it? He says he is; he will not allow of any doubt or hesitation in the matter. I had confessed we could not really know how Homer seemed to Sophocles;—'Let Mr. Arnold confess for himself,' cries Mr. Newman, 'and not for me, who know perfectly well.' And this is what he knows!

Mr. Newman says, however, that I 'play fallaciously on the words familiar and unfamiliar'; that 'Homer's words may have been familiar to the Athenians (*i.e.* often heard) even when they were either not understood by them or else, being understood, were yet felt and known to be utterly foreign. Let my renderings,' he continues, 'be heard, as Pope or even Cowper has been heard, and no one will be "surprised."'

But the whole question is here. The translator must not assume that to have taken place which has not taken place, although, perhaps, he may wish it to have taken place,—namely, that his diction is become an established possession of the minds of men, and therefore is, in its proper place, familiar to them, will not 'surprise' them. If Homer's language was familiar,—that is, often heard,—then to this language words like *londis* and *libbard*, which are not familiar, offer, for the translator's purpose, no parallel. For some purpose of the philologer they may offer a parallel to it; for the translator's purpose they offer none. The question is not, whether

a diction is antiquated for current speech, but whether it is antiquated for that particular purpose for which it is employed. A diction that is antiquated for common speech and common prose, may very well not be antiquated for poetry or certain special kinds of prose. 'Peradventure there shall be ten found there,' is not antiquated for Biblical prose, though for conversation or for a newspaper it is antiquated. 'The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng,' is not antiquated for poetry, although we should not write in a letter, 'he *spake* to me,' or say, 'the British soldier is *arméd* with the Enfield rifle.' But when language is antiquated for that particular purpose for which it is employed,—as numbers of Chaucer's words, for instance, are antiquated for poetry,—such language is a bad representative of language which, like Homer's, was never antiquated for that particular purpose for which it was employed. I imagine that Πληϊάδεω for Πηλείδου, in Homer, no more sounded antiquated to Sophocles than *arméd* for *arm'd*, in Milton, sounds antiquated to us; but Mr. Newman's *withouten* and *muchel* do sound to us antiquated, even for poetry, and therefore they do not correspond in their effect upon us with Homer's words in their effect upon Sophocles. When Chaucer, who uses such words, is to pass current amongst us, to be familiar to us, as Homer was familiar to the Athenians, he has to be modernised, as Wordsworth and others set to

work to modernise him; but an Athenian no more needed to have Homer modernised, than we need to have the Bible modernised, or Wordsworth himself.

Therefore, when Mr. Newman's words *bragly*, *bulkin*, and the rest, are an established possession of our minds, as Homer's words were an established possession of an Athenian's mind, he may use them; but not till then. Chaucer's words, the words of Burns, great poets as these were, are yet not thus an established possession of an Englishman's mind, and therefore they must not be used in rendering Homer into English.

Mr. Newman has been misled just by doing that which his admirer praises him for doing, by taking a 'far broader historical and philological view than' mine. Precisely because he has done this, and has applied the 'philological view' where it was not applicable, but where the 'poetical view' alone was rightly applicable, he has fallen into error.

It is the same with him in his remarks on the difficulty and obscurity of Homer. Homer, I say, is perfectly plain in speech, simple, and intelligible. And I infer from this that his translator, too, ought to be perfectly plain in speech, simple, and intelligible; ought not to say, for instance, in rendering

οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν . . .

'Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-

ennobling battle,'—and things of that kind. Mr. Newman hands me a list of some twenty hard words, invokes Buttman, Mr. Malden, and M. Benfey, and asks me if I think myself wiser than all the world of Greek scholars, and if I am ready to supply the deficiencies of Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon !* But here, again, Mr. Newman errs by not perceiving that the question is one not of scholarship, but of a poetical translation of Homer. This, I say, should be perfectly simple and intelligible. He replies by telling me that *ἀδινός*, *εἰλίποδες*, and *σιγαλόεις* are hard words. Well, but what does he infer from that? That the poetical translation, in his rendering of them, is to give us a sense of the difficulties of the scholar, and so is to make his translation obscure? If he does not mean that, how, by bringing forward these hard words, does he touch the question whether an English version of Homer should be plain or not plain? If Homer's poetry, as poetry, is in its general effect on the poetical reader perfectly simple and intelligible, the uncertainty of the scholar about the true meaning of certain words can never change this general effect. Rather will the poetry of Homer make us forget his philology, than his philology make us forget his poetry. It may even be affirmed that every one who reads Homer perpetually for the sake of enjoying his poetry (and no one who does not so read him will ever translate him well), comes at last

to form a perfectly clear sense in his own mind for every important word in Homer, such as *ἀδινός*, or *ἠλίβατος*, whatever the scholar's doubts about the word may be. And this sense is present to his mind with perfect clearness and fulness, whenever the word recurs, although as a scholar he may know that he cannot be sure whether this sense is the right one or not. But poetically he feels clearly about the word, although philologically he may not. The scholar in him may hesitate, like the father in Sheridan's play; but the reader of poetry in him is, like the governor, fixed. The same thing happens to us with our own language. How many words occur in the Bible, for instance, to which thousands of hearers do not feel sure they attach the precise real meaning; but they make out *a* meaning for them out of what materials they have at hand; and the words, heard over and over again, come to convey this meaning with a certainty which poetically is adequate, though not philologically. How many have attached a clear and poetically adequate sense to 'the *beam*' and 'the *mote*,' though not precisely the right one! How clearly, again, have readers got a sense from Milton's words, 'grate on their *scrannel* pipes,' who yet might have been puzzled to write a commentary on the word *scrannel* for the dictionary! So we get a clear sense from *ἀδινός* as an epithet for grief, after often meeting

with it and finding out all we can about it, even though that all be philologically insufficient; so we get a clear sense from *εἰλίποδες* as an epithet for cows. And this his clear poetical sense about the words, not his philological uncertainties about them, is what the translator has to convey. Words like *bragly* and *bulkin* offer no parallel to these words; because the reader, from his entire want of familiarity with the words *bragly* and *bulkin*, has no clear sense of them poetically.

Perplexed by his knowledge of the philological aspect of Homer's language, encumbered by his own learning, Mr. Newman, I say, misses the poetical aspect, misses that with which alone we are here concerned. 'Homer *is* odd,' he persists, fixing his eyes on his own philological analysis of *μώνυξ*, and *μέροψ*, and *Κυλλοποδίων*, and not on these words in their synthetic character;—just as Professor Max Müller, going a little farther back, and fixing his attention on the elementary value of the word *θυγάτηρ*, might say Homer was 'odd' for using *that* word;—'if the whole Greek nation, by long familiarity, had become inobservant of Homer's oddities,'—of the oddities of this 'noble barbarian,' as Mr. Newman elsewhere calls him, this 'noble barbarian' with the 'lively eye of the savage,'—'that would be no fault of mine. That would not justify Mr. Arnold's blame of me for rendering the words correctly.'

Correctly,—ah, but what *is* correctness in this case? This correctness of his is the very rock on which Mr. Newman has split. He is so correct that at last he finds peculiarity everywhere. The true knowledge of Homer becomes at last, in his eyes, a knowledge of Homer's 'peculiarities, pleasant and unpleasant.' Learned men know these 'peculiarities,' and Homer is to be translated because the unlearned are impatient to know them too. 'That,' he exclaims, 'is just why people want to read an English Homer,—*to know all his oddities, just as learned men do.*' Here I am obliged to shake my head, and to declare that, in spite of all my respect for Mr. Newman, I cannot go these lengths with him. He talks of my 'monomaniac fancy that there is nothing quaint or antique in Homer.' Terrible learning,—I cannot help in my turn exclaiming,—terrible learning, which discovers so much!

Here, then, I take my leave of Mr. Newman, retaining my opinion that his version of Homer is spoiled by his making Homer odd and ignoble; but having, I hope, sufficient love for literature to be able to canvass works without thinking of persons, and to hold this or that production cheap, while retaining a sincere respect, on other grounds, for its author.

In fulfilment of my promise to take this opportunity for giving the translator of Homer a little further advice, I proceed to notice one

or two other criticisms which I find, in like manner, *suggestive;* which give us an opportunity, that is, of seeing more clearly, as we look into them, the true principles on which translation of Homer should rest. This is all I seek in criticisms; and, perhaps (as I have already said) it is only as one seeks a positive result of this kind, that one can get any fruit from them. Seeking a negative result from them,—personal altercation and wrangling,—one gets no fruit; seeking a positive result,—the elucidation and establishment of one's ideas,—one may get much. Even bad criticisms may thus be made suggestive and fruitful. I declared, in a former lecture on this subject, my conviction that criticism is not the strong point of our national literature. Well, even the bad criticisms on our present topic which I meet with, serve to illustrate this conviction for me. And thus one is enabled, even in reading remarks which for Homeric criticism, for their immediate subject, have no value,—which are far too personal in spirit, far too immoderate in temper, and far too heavy-handed in style, for the delicate matter they have to treat,—still to gain light and confirmation for a serious idea, and to follow the Baconian injunction, *semper aliquid addiscere*, always to be adding to one's stock of observation and knowledge. Yes, even when we have to do with writers who,—to quote the words of an exquisite critic, the master of us all in criticism,

M. Sainte-Beuve,—remind us, when they handle such subjects as our present, of 'Romans of the fourth or fifth century, coming to hold forth, all at random, in African style, on papers found in the desk of Augustus, Mæcenas, or Pollio,'—even then we may instruct ourselves if we may regard ideas and not persons; even then we may enable ourselves to say, with the same critic describing the effect made upon him by D'Argenson's *Memoirs:* 'My taste is revolted, but I learn something;—*Je suis choqué mais je suis instruit.*'

But let us pass to criticisms which are suggestive directly and not thus indirectly only, — criticisms by examining which we may be brought nearer to what immediately interests us,—the right way of translating Homer.

I said that Homer did not rise and sink with his subject, was never to be called prosaic and low. This gives surprise to many persons, who object that parts of the *Iliad* are certainly pitched lower than others, and who remind me of a number of absolutely level passages in Homer. But I never denied that a *subject* must rise and sink, that it must have its elevated and its level regions; all I deny is, that a poet can be said to rise and sink when all that he, as a poet, can do, is perfectly well done; when he is perfectly sound and good, that is, perfect as a poet, in the level regions of his subject as well as in its elevated regions. Indeed, what

distinguishes the greatest masters of poetry from all others is, that they are perfectly sound and poetical in these level regions of their subject,—in these regions which are the great difficulty of all poets but the very greatest, which they never quite know what to do with. A poet may sink in these regions by being falsely grand as well as by being low; he sinks, in short, whenever he does not treat his matter, whatever it is, in a perfectly good and poetic way. But, so long as he treats it in this way, he cannot be said to *sink*, whatever his matter may do. A passage of the simplest narrative is quoted to me from Homer :—

> ὤτρυνεν δὲ ἕκαστον ἐποιχόμενος ἐπέεσσιν,
> Μέσθλην τε, Γλαῦκόν τε, Μέδοντά τε, Θερσίλοχόν τε. . .[1]

and I am asked, whether Homer does not sink *there;* whether he '*can* have intended such lines as those for poetry?' My answer is: Those lines are very good poetry indeed, poetry of the best class, *in that place*. But when Wordsworth, having to narrate a very plain matter, tries *not* to sink in narrating it, tries, in short, to be what is falsely called poetical, he does sink, although he sinks by being pompous, not by being low.

> Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
> While crossing Magdalen Bridge, a glimpse of Cam,
> And at the Hoop alighted, famous inn.

That last line shows excellently how a poet may

[1] *Iliad*, xvii. 216.

sink with his subject by resolving not to sink with it. A page or two farther on, the subject rises to grandeur, and then Wordsworth is nobly worthy of it :—

> The antechapel, where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

But the supreme poet is he who is thoroughly sound and poetical, alike when his subject is grand, and when it is plain: with him the subject may sink, but never the poet. But a Dutch painter does not rise and sink with his subject,—Defoe, in *Moll Flanders*, does not rise and sink with his subject,—in so far as an artist cannot be said to sink who is sound in his treatment of his subject, however plain it is: yet Defoe, yet a Dutch painter, may in one sense be said to sink with their subject, because though sound in their treatment of it, they are not *poetical*,—poetical in the true, not the false sense of the word; because, in fact, they are not in the grand style. Homer can in no sense be said to sink with his subject, because his soundness has something more than literal naturalness about it; because his soundness is the soundness of Homer, of a great epic poet; because, in fact, he is in the grand style. So he sheds over the simplest matter he touches the charm of his grand manner; he makes everything noble. Nothing has raised more questioning among my

critics than these words,—*noble*, *the grand style*. People complain that I do not define these words sufficiently, that I do not tell them enough about them. 'The grand style,—but what *is* the grand style?'—they cry; some with an inclination to believe in it, but puzzled; others mockingly and with incredulity. Alas! the grand style is the last matter in the world for verbal definition to deal with adequately. One may say of it as is said of faith: 'One must feel it in order to know what it is.' But, as of faith, so too one may say of nobleness, of the grand style: 'Woe to those who know it not!' Yet this expression, though indefinable, has a charm; one is the better for considering it; *bonum est, nos hic esse;* nay, one loves to try to explain it, though one knows that one must speak imperfectly. For those, then, who ask the question,—What is the grand style?—with sincerity, I will try to make some answer, inadequate as it must be. For those who ask it mockingly I have no answer, except to repeat to them, with compassionate sorrow, the Gospel words: *Moriemini in peccatis vestris*,—Ye shall die in your sins.

But let me, at any rate, have the pleasure of again giving, before I begin to try and define the grand style, a specimen of what it *is*.

> Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues. . . .

There is the grand style in perfection ; and any one who has a sense for it, will feel it a thousand times better from repeating those lines than from hearing anything I can say about it.

Let us try, however, what *can* be said, controlling what we say by examples. I think it will be found that the grand style arises in poetry, *when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject.* I think this definition will be found to cover all instances of the grand style in poetry which present themselves. I think it will be found to exclude all poetry which is not in the grand style. And I think it contains no terms which are obscure, which themselves need defining. Even those who do not understand what is meant by calling poetry noble, will understand, I imagine, what is meant by speaking of a noble nature in a man. But the noble or powerful nature—the *bedeutendes individuum* of Goethe—is not enough. For instance, Mr. Newman has zeal for learning, zeal for thinking, zeal for liberty, and all these things are noble, they ennoble a man ; but he has not the poetical gift : there must be the poetical gift, the 'divine faculty,' also. And, besides all this, the subject must be a serious one (for it is only by a kind of license that we can speak of the grand style in comedy) ; and it must be treated *with simplicity or severity.* Here is the great difficulty : the poets of the world have been many ; there has been

wanting neither abundance of poetical gift nor abundance of noble natures ; but a poetical gift so happy, in a noble nature so circumstanced and trained, that the result is a continuous style, perfect in simplicity or perfect in severity, has been extremely rare. One poet has had the gifts of nature and faculty in unequalled fulness, without the circumstances and training which make this sustained perfection of style possible. Of other poets, some have caught this perfect strain now and then, in short pieces or single lines, but have not been able to maintain it through considerable works ; others have composed all their productions in a style which, by comparison with the best, one must call secondary.

The best model of the grand style simple is Homer ; perhaps the best model of the grand style severe is Milton. But Dante is remarkable for affording admirable examples of both styles ; he has the grand style which arises from simplicity, and he has the grand style which arises from severity ; and from him I will illustrate them both. In a former lecture I pointed out what that severity of poetical style is, which comes from saying a thing with a kind of intense compression, or in an allusive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many and such grave matters, that he would not deign to treat any one of them explicitly. Of this severity the last line of the following stanza

of the *Purgatory* is a good example. Dante has been telling Forese that Virgil had guided him through Hell, and he goes on :—

> Indi m' han tratto su gli suoi conforti,
> Salendo e rigirando la Montagna
> *Che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti.*[1]

'Thence hath his comforting aid led me up, climbing and circling the Mountain, *which straightens you whom the world made crooked.*' These last words, 'la Montagna *che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti*'—'the Mountain *which straightens you whom the world made crooked*,'—for the Mountain of Purgatory, I call an excellent specimen of the grand style in severity, where the poet's mind is too full charged to suffer him to speak more explicitly. But the very next stanza is a beautiful specimen of the grand style in simplicity, where a noble nature and a poetical gift unite to utter a thing with the most limpid plainness and clearness :—

> Tanto dice di farmi sua compagna
> Ch' io sarò là dove fia Beatrice ;
> Quivi convien che senza lui rimagna.[2]

'So long,' Dante continues, 'so long he (Virgil) saith he will bear me company, until I shall be there where Beatrice is ; there it behoves that without him I remain.' But the noble simplicity of that in the Italian no words of mine can render.

[1] *Purgatory*, xxiii. 124. [2] *Ibid.* xxiii. 127.

Both these styles, the simple and the severe, are truly grand ; the severe seems, perhaps, the grandest, so long as we attend most to the great personality, to the noble nature, in the poet its author ; the simple seems the grandest when we attend most to the exquisite faculty, to the poetical gift. But the simple is no doubt to be preferred. It is the more *magical :* in the other there is something intellectual, something which gives scope for a play of thought which may exist where the poetical gift is either wanting or present in only inferior degree : the severe is much more imitable, and this a little spoils its charm. A kind of semblance of this style keeps Young going, one may say, through all the nine parts of that most indifferent production, the *Night Thoughts*. But the grand style in simplicity is inimitable :

> αἰὼν ἀσφαλὴς
> οὐκ ἔγεντ᾽ οὔτ᾽ Αἰακίδῳ παρὰ Πηλεῖ,
> οὔτε παρ᾽ ἀντιθέῳ Κάδμῳ· λέγονται μὰν βροτῶν
> ὄλβον ὑπέρτατον οἱ σχεῖν, οἵ τε καὶ χρυσαμπύκων
> μελπομενᾶν ἐν ὄρει Μοισᾶν, καὶ ἐν ἑπταπύλοις
> ἄϊον Θήβαις . . .[1]

There is a limpidness in that, a want of salient points to seize and transfer, which makes imitation impossible, except by a genius akin to the genius which produced it.

[1] 'A secure time fell to the lot neither of Peleus the son of Æacus, nor of the godlike Cadmus ; howbeit these are said to have had, of all mortals, the supreme of happiness, who heard the golden-snooded Muses sing, one of them on the mountain (Pelion), the other in seven-gated Thebes.'

Greek simplicity and Greek grace are inimitable; but it is said that the *Iliad* may still be ballad-poetry while infinitely superior to all other ballads, and that, in my specimens of English ballad-poetry, I have been unfair. Well, no doubt there are better things in English ballad-poetry than

> Now Christ thee save, thou proud portér, . . .

but the real strength of a chain, they say, is the strength of its weakest link; and what I was trying to show you was, that the English ballad-style is not an instrument of enough compass and force to correspond to the Greek hexameter; that, owing to an inherent weakness in it as an epic style, it easily runs into one of two faults, —either it is prosaic and humdrum, or, trying to avoid that fault, and to make itself lively (*se faire vif*), it becomes pert and jaunty. To show that, the passage about King Adland's porter serves very well. But these degradations are not proper to a true epic instrument, such as the Greek hexameter.

You may say, if you like, when you find Homer's verse, even in describing the plainest matter, neither humdrum nor jaunty, that this is because he is so incomparably better a poet than other balladists, because he is Homer. But take the whole range of Greek epic poetry, —take the later poets, the poets of the last ages of this poetry, many of them most indifferent,

—Coluthus, Tryphiodorus, Quintus of Smyrna, Nonnus. Never will you find in this instrument of the hexameter, even in their hands, the vices of the ballad-style in the weak moments of this last: everywhere the hexameter—a noble, a truly epical instrument—rather resists the weakness of its employer than leads itself to it. Quintus of Smyrna is a poet of merit, but certainly not a poet of a high order; with him, too, epic poetry, whether in the character of its prosody or in that of its diction, is no longer the epic poetry of earlier and better times, nor epic poetry as again restored by Nonnus: but even in Quintus of Smyrna, I say, the hexameter is still the hexameter; it is a style which the ballad-style, even in the hands of better poets, cannot rival. And in the hands of inferior poets, the ballad-style sinks to vices of which the hexameter, even in the hands of a Tryphiodorus, never can become guilty.

But a critic, whom it is impossible to read without pleasure, and the disguise of whose initials I am sure I may be allowed to penetrate, —Mr. Spedding,—says that he 'denies altogether that the metrical movement of the English hexameter has any resemblance to that of the Greek.' Of course, in that case, if the two metres in no respect correspond, praise accorded to the Greek hexameter as an epical instrument will not extend to the English. Mr. Spedding seeks to establish his proposition by pointing out

that the system of accentuation differs in the English and in the Virgilian hexameter; that in the first, the accent and the long syllable (or what has to do duty as such) coincide, in the second they do not. He says that we cannot be so sure of the accent with which Greek verse should be read as of that with which Latin should; but that the lines of Homer in which the accent and the long syllable coincide, as in the English hexameter, are certainly very rare. He suggests a type of English hexameter in agreement with the Virgilian model, and formed on the supposition that 'quantity is as distinguishable in English as in Latin or Greek by any ear that will attend to it.' Of the truth of this supposition he entertains no doubt. The new hexameter will, Mr. Spedding thinks, at least have the merit of resembling, in its metrical movement, the classical hexameter, which merit the ordinary English hexameter has not. But even with this improved hexameter he is not satisfied; and he goes on, first to suggest other metres for rendering Homer, and finally to suggest that rendering Homer is impossible.

A scholar to whom all who admire Lucretius owe a large debt of gratitude,—Mr. Munro,—has replied to Mr. Spedding. Mr. Munro declares that 'the accent of the old Greeks and Romans resembled our accent only in name, in reality was essentially different'; that 'our

English reading of Homer and Virgil has in itself no meaning' ; and that 'accent has nothing to do with the Virgilian hexameter.' If this be so, of course the merit which Mr. Spedding attributes to his own hexameter, of really corresponding with the Virgilian hexameter, has no existence. Again ; in contradiction to Mr. Spedding's assertion that lines in which (in our reading of them) the accent and the long syllable coincide,[1] as in the ordinary English hexameter, are 'rare even in Homer,' Mr. Munro declares that such lines, 'instead of being rare, are among the very commonest types of Homeric rhythm.' Mr. Spedding asserts that 'quantity is as distinguishable in English as in Latin or Greek by any ear that will attend to it' ; but Mr. Munro replies, that in English 'neither his ear nor his reason recognises any real distinction of quantity except that which is produced by accentuated and unaccentuated syllables.' He therefore arrives at the conclusion that in constructing English hexameters, 'quantity must be utterly discarded ; and longer or shorter unaccentuated syllables can have no meaning, except so far as they may be made to produce sweeter or harsher sounds in the hands of a master.'

It is not for me to interpose between two such combatants ; and indeed my way lies, not up the highroad where they are contending, but

[1] Lines such as the first of the *Odyssey:*
ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλά . . .

along a bypath. With the absolute truth of their general propositions respecting accent and quantity, I have nothing to do; it is most interesting and instructive to me to hear such propositions discussed, when it is Mr. Munro or Mr. Spedding who discusses them; but I have strictly limited myself in these Lectures to the humble function of giving practical advice to the translator of Homer. He, I still think, must not follow so confidently, as makers of English hexameters have hitherto followed, Mr. Munro's maxim,—*quantity may be utterly discarded.* He must not, like Mr. Longfellow, make *seventeen* a dactyl in spite of all the length of its last syllable, even though he can plead that in counting we lay the accent on the first syllable of this word. He may be far from attaining Mr. Spedding's nicety of ear;—may be unable to feel that 'while *quantity* is a dactyl, *quiddity* is a tribrach,' and that '*rapidly* is a word to which we find no parallel in Latin';—but I think he must bring himself to distinguish, with Mr. Spedding, between '*th' o'er*-wearied eyelid,' and '*the* wearied eyelid,' as being, the one a correct ending for a hexameter, the other an ending with a false quantity in it; instead of finding, with Mr. Munro, that this distinction 'conveys to his mind no intelligible idea.' He must temper his belief in Mr. Munro's dictum,—*quantity must be utterly discarded*,—by mixing with it a belief in this other dictum of the same

author,—*two or more consonants take longer time in enunciating than one.*[1]

Criticism is so apt in general to be vague and impalpable, that when it gives us a solid and definite possession, such as is Mr. Spedding's parallel of the Virgilian and the English hexameter with their difference of accentuation distinctly marked, we cannot be too grateful to it. It is in the way in which Mr. Spedding proceeds to press his conclusions from the parallel which he has drawn out, that his criticism seems to me to come a little short. Here even he, I think, shows (if he will allow me to say so) a little of that want of pliancy and suppleness so common among critics, but so dangerous to their

[1] Substantially, however, in the question at issue between Mr. Munro and Mr. Spedding, I agree with Mr. Munro. By the italicised words in the following sentence, 'The rhythm of the Virgilian hexameter depends entirely on *cæsura*, *pause*, and a due arrangement of words,' he has touched, it seems to me, in the constitution of this hexameter, the central point, which Mr. Spedding misses. The accent, or *heightened tone*, of Virgil in reading his own hexameters, was probably far from being the same thing as the accent or *stress* with which we read them. The general effect of each line, in Virgil's mouth, was probably therefore something widely different from what Mr. Spedding assumes it to have been: an ancient's accentual reading was something which allowed the metrical beat of the Latin line to be far more perceptible than our accentual reading allows it to be.

On the question as to the *real* rhythm of the ancient hexameter, Mr. Newman has in his *Reply* a page quite admirable for force and precision. Here he is in his element, and his ability and acuteness have their proper scope. But it is true that the *modern* reading of the ancient hexameter is what the modern hexameter has to imitate, and that the English reading of the Virgilian hexameter is as Mr. Spedding describes it. Why this reading has not been imitated by the English hexameter, I have tried to point out in the text.

criticism ; he is a little too absolute in imposing his metrical laws : he too much forgets the excellent maxim of Menander, so applicable to literary criticism :—

> *καλὸν οἱ νόμοι σφόδρ' εἰσίν· ὁ δ' ὁρῶν τοὺς νόμους*
> *λίαν ἀκριβῶς, συκοφάντης φαίνεται·*

'Laws are admirable things ; but he who keeps his eye too closely fixed upon them, runs the risk of becoming'—let us say, a purist. Mr. Spedding is probably mistaken in supposing that Virgil pronounced his hexameters as Mr. Spedding pronounces them. He is almost certainly mistaken in supposing that Homer pronounced his hexameters as Mr. Spedding pronounces Virgil's. But this, as I have said, is not a question for us to treat ; all we are here concerned with is the imitation, by the English hexameter, of the ancient hexameter *in its effect upon us moderns.* Suppose we concede to Mr. Spedding that his parallel proves our accentuation of the English and of the Virgilian hexameter to be different : what are we to conclude from that ; how will a criticism—not a formal, but a substantial criticism—deal with such a fact as that ? Will it infer, as Mr. Spedding infers, that the English hexameter, therefore, must not pretend to reproduce better than other rhythms the movement of Homer's hexameter for us,—that there can be no correspondence at all between the movement of these two hexameters,—that if we want to

have such a correspondence, we must abandon the current English hexameter altogether, and adopt in its place a new hexameter of Mr. Spedding's Anglo-Latin type,—substitute for lines like the

Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-eyed sons of Achaia . . .

of Dr. Hawtrey, lines like the

Procession, complex melodies, pause, quantity, accent,
After Virgilian precedent and practice, in order . . .

of Mr. Spedding? To infer this, is to go, as I have complained of Mr. Newman for sometimes going, a great deal too fast. I think prudent criticism must certainly recognise, in the current English hexameter, a fact which cannot so lightly be set aside; it must acknowledge that by this hexameter the English ear, the genius of the English language, have, in their own way, adopted, have *translated* for themselves the Homeric hexameter, and that a rhythm which has thus grown up, which is thus, in a manner, the production of nature, has in its general type something necessary and inevitable, something which admits change only within narrow limits, which precludes change that is sweeping and essential. I think, therefore, the prudent critic will regard Mr. Spedding's proposed revolution as simply impracticable. He will feel that in English poetry the hexameter, if used at all, must be, in the main, the English hexameter now current. He will perceive that its having

come into existence as the representative of the Homeric hexameter proves it to have, for the English ear, a certain correspondence with the Homeric hexameter, although this correspondence may be, from the difference of the Greek and English languages, necessarily incomplete. This incompleteness he will endeavour,[1] as he may find or fancy himself able, gradually somewhat to lessen through minor changes, suggested by the ancient hexameter, but respecting the general constitution of the modern : the notion of making it disappear altogether by the critic's inventing in his closet a new constitution of his own for the English hexameter, he will judge to be a chimerical dream.

When, therefore, Mr. Spedding objects to the

[1] Such a minor change I have attempted by occasionally shifting, in the first foot of the hexameter, the accent from the first syllable to the second. In the current English hexameter, it is on the first. Mr. Spedding, who proposes radically to subvert the constitution of this hexameter, seems not to understand that any one can propose to modify it partially ; he can comprehend revolution in this metre, but not reform. Accordingly he asks me how I can bring myself to say, '*Bé*tween that and the ships,' or '*Thére* sat fifty men' ; or how I can reconcile such forcing of the accent with my own rule, that 'hexameters must *read themselves*.' Presently he says that he cannot believe I do pronounce these words so, but that he thinks I leave out the accent in the first foot altogether, and thus get a hexameter with only five accents. He will pardon me : I pronounce, as I suppose he himself does, if he reads the words naturally, 'B*etween* that and the ships,' and 'there *sát* fifty men.' Mr. Spedding is familiar enough with this accent on the second syllable in Virgil's hexameters ; in 'et *té* montosa,' or 'Ve*ló*ces jaculo.' Such a change is an attempt to relieve the monotony of the current English hexameter by occasionally altering the position of one of its accents ; it is not an attempt to

English hexameter, that it imperfectly represents the movement of the ancient hexameters, I answer : We must work with the tools we have. The received English type, in its general outlines, is, for England, the necessary given type of this metre ; it is by rendering the metrical beat of its pattern, not by rendering the accentual beat of it, that the English language has adapted the Greek hexameter. To render the metrical beat of its pattern is something ; by effecting so much as this the English hexameter puts itself in closer relations with its original, it comes nearer to its movement than any other metre which does not even effect so much as this ; but Mr. Spedding is dissatisfied with it for not effecting more still, for not rendering the accentual beat too. If he asks me *why* the English hexameter has not tried to render this too, *why* it has confined itself to rendering the metrical beat, *why*, in short, it is itself, and not Mr. Spedding's

make a wholly new English hexameter by habitually altering the position of four of them. Very likely it is an unsuccessful attempt ; but at any rate it does not violate what I think is the fundamental rule for English hexameters,—that they be such as to *read themselves* without necessitating, on the reader's part, any non-natural putting-on or taking-off accent. Hexameters like these of Mr. Longfellow,

'In that delightful land which is washed by the Delaware's waters,'

and,

'As if they fain would appease the Dryads, whose haunts they molested,'

violate this rule ; and they are very common. I think the blemish of Mr. Dart's recent meritorious version of the *Iliad* is that it contains too many of them.

new hexameter,—that is a question which I, whose only business is to give practical advice to a translator, am not bound to answer ; but I will not decline to answer it nevertheless. I will suggest to Mr. Spedding that, as I have already said, the modern hexameter is merely an attempt to imitate the effect of the ancient hexameter, as read by us moderns ; that the great object of its imitation has been the hexameter of Homer ; that of this hexameter such lines as those which Mr. Spedding declares to be so rare, even in Homer, but which are in truth so common,—lines in which the quantity and the reader's accent coincide,—are, for the English reader, just from that simplicity (for him) of rhythm which they owe to this coincidence, the master-type ; that so much is this the case, that one may again and again notice an English reader of Homer, in reading lines where his Virgilian accent would not coincide with the quantity, abandoning this accent, and reading the lines (as we say) *by quantity*, reading them as if he were scanning them ; while foreigners neglect our Virgilian accent even in reading Virgil, read even Virgil by quantity, making the accents coincide with the long syllables. And no doubt the hexameter of a kindred language, the German, based on this mode of reading the ancient hexameter, has had a powerful influence upon the type of its English fellow. But all this shows how extremely powerful accent is for us moderns, since we find not

even Greek and Latin quantity perceptible enough without it. Yet in these languages, where we have been accustomed always to look for it, it is far more perceptible to us Englishmen than in our own language, where we have not been accustomed to look for it. And here is the true reason why Mr. Spedding's hexameter is not and cannot be the current English hexameter, even though it is based on the accentuation which Englishmen give to all Virgil's lines, and to many of Homer's,—that the quantity which in Greek or Latin words we feel, or imagine we feel, even though it be unsupported by accent, we do not feel or imagine we feel in English words when it is thus unsupported. For example, in repeating the Latin line

Ipsa tibi blandos *fundent* cunabula flores,

an Englishman feels the length of the second syllable of *fundent*, although he lays the accent on the first ; but in repeating Mr. Spedding's line,

Softly cometh slumber *closing* th' o'erwearied eyelid,

the English ear, full of the accent on the first syllable of *closing*, has really no sense at all of any length in its second. The metrical beat of the line is thus quite destroyed.

So when Mr. Spedding proposes a new Anglo-Virgilian hexameter he proposes an impossibility ; when he 'denies altogether that the metrical movement of the English hexameter

has *any* resemblance to that of the Greek,' he denies too much ; when he declares that, 'were every other metre impossible, an attempt to translate Homer into English hexameters might be permitted, *but that such an attempt he himself would never read*,' he exhibits, it seems to me, a little of that obduracy and over-vehemence in liking and disliking,—a remnant, I suppose, of our insular ferocity,—to which English criticism is so prone. He ought to be enchanted to meet with a good attempt in any metre, even though he would never have advised it, even though its success be contrary to all his expectations ; for it is the critic's first duty—prior even to his duty of stigmatising what is bad—*to welcome everything that is good.* In welcoming this, he must at all times be ready, like the Christian convert, even to burn what he used to worship, and to worship what he used to burn. Nay, but he need not be thus inconsistent in welcoming it ; he may retain all his principles : principles endure, circumstances change ; absolute success is one thing, relative success another. Relative success may take place under the most diverse conditions ; and it is in appreciating the good in even relative success, it is in taking into account the change of circumstances, that the critic's judgment is tested, that his versatility must display itself. He is to keep his idea of the best, of perfection, and at the same time to be willingly accessible to every second best which offers itself. So

I enjoy the ease and beauty of Mr. Spedding's stanza,

Therewith to all the gods in order due . . .

I welcome it, in the absence of equally good poetry in another metre,[1] although I still think the stanza unfit to render Homer thoroughly well,—although I still think other metres fit to render him better. So I concede to Mr. Spedding that every form of translation, prose or verse, must more or less break up Homer in order to reproduce him; but then I urge that that form which needs to break him up least is

[1] As I welcome another more recent attempt in stanza,—Mr. Worsley's version of the *Odyssey* in Spenser's measure. Mr. Worsley does me the honour to notice some remarks of mine on this measure: I had said that its greater intricacy made it a worse measure than even the ten-syllable couplet to employ for rendering Homer. He points out, in answer, that 'the more complicated the correspondences in a poetical measure, the less obtrusive and absolute are the rhymes.' This is true, and subtly remarked; but I never denied that the single shocks of rhyme in the couplet were more *strongly felt* than those in the stanza; I said that the more frequent recurrence of the same rhyme, in the stanza, necessarily made this measure more *intricate*. The stanza repacks Homer's matter yet more arbitrarily, and therefore changes his movement yet more radically, than the couplet. Accordingly, I imagine a nearer approach to a perfect translation of Homer is possible in the couplet, well managed, than in the stanza, however well managed. But meanwhile Mr. Worsley,—applying the Spenserian stanza, that beautiful romantic measure, to the most romantic poem of the ancient world; making this stanza yield him, too (what it never yielded to Byron), its treasures of fluidity and sweet ease: above all, bringing to his task a truly poetical sense and skill,—has produced a version of the *Odyssey* much the most pleasing of those hitherto produced, and which is delightful to read.

For the public this may well be enough, nay, more than enough; but for the critic even this is not yet quite enough.

to be preferred. So I concede to him that the test proposed by me for the translator—a competent scholar's judgment whether the translation more or less reproduces for him the effect of the original—is not perfectly satisfactory; but I adopt it as the best we can get, as the only test capable of being really applied; for Mr. Spedding's proposed substitute—the translations making the same effect, more or less, upon the unlearned which the original makes upon the scholar—is a test which can never really be applied at all. These two impressions—that of the scholar, and that of the unlearned reader—can, practically, never be accurately compared; they are, and must remain, like those lines we read of in Euclid, which, though produced ever so far, can never meet. So, again, I concede that a good verse-translation of Homer, or, indeed, of any poet, is very difficult, and that a good prose-translation is much easier; but then I urge that a verse-translation, while giving the pleasure which Pope's has given, might at the same time render Homer more faithfully than Pope's; and that this being possible, we ought not to cease wishing for a source of pleasure which no prose-translation can ever hope to rival.

Wishing for such a verse-translation of Homer, believing that rhythms have natural tendencies which, within certain limits, inevitably govern them; having little faith, therefore, that rhythms

which have manifested tendencies utterly un-Homeric can so change themselves as to become well adapted for rendering Homer,—I have looked about for the rhythm which seems to depart least from the tendencies of Homer's rhythm. Such a rhythm I think may be found in the English hexameter, somewhat modified. I look with hope towards continued attempts at perfecting and employing this rhythm ; but my belief in the immediate success of such attempts is far less confident than has been supposed. Between the recognition of this rhythm as ideally the best, and the recommendation of it to the translator for instant practical use, there must come all that consideration of circumstances, all that pliancy in foregoing, under the pressure of certain difficulties, the absolute best, which I have said is so indispensable to the critic. The hexameter is, comparatively, still unfamiliar in England ; many people have a great dislike to it. A certain degree of unfamiliarity, a certain degree of dislike, are obstacles with which it is not wise to contend. It is difficult to say at present whether the dislike to this rhythm is so strong and so wide-spread that it will prevent its ever becoming thoroughly familiar. I think not, but it is too soon to decide. I am inclined to think that the dislike of it is rather among the professional critics than among the general public ; I think the reception which Mr. Longfellow's *Evangeline* has met with indicates this.

I think that even now, if a version of the *Iliad* in English hexameters were made by a poet who, like Mr. Longfellow, has that indefinable quality which renders him popular,—something *attractive* in his talent, which communicates itself to his verses,—it would have a great success among the general public. Yet a version of Homer in hexameters of the *Evangeline* type would not satisfy the judicious, nor is the definite establishment of this type to be desired; and one would regret that Mr. Longfellow should, even to popularise the hexameter, give the immense labour required for a translation of Homer, when one could not wish his work to stand. Rather it is to be wished that by the efforts of poets like Mr. Longfellow in original poetry, and the efforts of less distinguished poets in the task of translation, the hexameter may gradually be made familiar to the ear of the English public; at the same time that there gradually arises, out of all these efforts, an improved type of this rhythm; a type which some man of genius may sign with the final stamp, and employ in rendering Homer; a hexameter which may be as superior to Vosse's as Shakspeare's blank verse is superior to Schiller's. I am inclined to believe that all this travail will actually take place, because I believe that modern poetry is actually in want of such an instrument as the hexameter.

In the meantime, whether this rhythm be

destined to success or not, let us steadily keep in mind what originally made us turn to it. We turned to it because we required certain Homeric characteristics in a translation of Homer, and because all other rhythms seemed to find, from different causes, great difficulties in satisfying this our requirement. If the hexameter is impossible, if one of these other rhythms must be used, let us keep this rhythm always in mind of our requirements and of its own faults, let us compel it to get rid of these latter as much as possible. It may be necessary to have recourse to blank verse; but then blank verse must *de-Cowperise* itself, must get rid of the habits of stiff self-retardation which make it say '*Not fewer* shone,' for '*So many shone*.' Homer moves swiftly: blank verse *can* move swiftly if it likes, but it must remember that the movement of such lines as

A thousand fires were burning, and by each . . .

is just the slow movement which makes us despair of it. Homer moves with noble ease: blank verse must not be suffered to forget that the movement of

Came they not over from sweet Lacedæmon . . .

is ungainly. Homer's expression of his thought is simple as light: we know how blank verse affects such locutions as

While the steeds *mouthed their corn aloof* . . .

and such modes of expressing one's thought are sophisticated and artificial.

One sees how needful it is to direct incessantly the English translator's attention to the essential characteristics of Homer's poetry, when so accomplished a person as Mr. Spedding, recognising these characteristics as indeed Homer's, admitting them to be essential, is led by the ingrained habits and tendencies of English blank verse thus repeatedly to lose sight of them in translating even a few lines. One sees this yet more clearly, when Mr. Spedding, taking me to task for saying that the blank verse used for rendering Homer 'must not be Mr. Tennyson's blank verse,' declares that in most of Mr. Tennyson's blank verse all Homer's essential characteristics—'rapidity of movement, *plainness of words and style*, *simplicity and directness of ideas*, and, above all, nobleness of manner—are as conspicuous as in Homer himself.' This shows, it seems to me, how hard it is for English readers of poetry, even the most accomplished, to feel deeply and permanently what Greek plainness of thought and Greek simplicity of expression really are: they admit the importance of these qualities in a general way, but they have no ever-present sense of them; and they easily attribute them to any poetry which has other excellent qualities, and which they very much admire. No doubt there are plainer things in Mr. Tennyson's poetry than the three lines I quoted; in choosing them, as

in choosing a specimen of ballad-poetry, I wished to bring out clearly, by a strong instance, the qualities of thought and style to which I was calling attention ; but when Mr. Spedding talks of a plainness of thought *like Homer's*, of a plainness of speech *like Homer's*, and says that he finds these constantly in Mr. Tennyson's poetry, I answer that these I do not find there at all. Mr. Tennyson is a most distinguished and charming poet ; but the very essential characteristic of his poetry is, it seems to me, an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of thought, an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of expression. In the best and most characteristic productions of his genius, these characteristics are most prominent. They are marked characteristics, as we have seen, of the Elizabethan poets ; they are marked, though not the essential, characteristics of Shakspeare himself. Under the influences of the nineteenth century, under wholly new conditions of thought and culture, they manifest themselves in Mr. Tennyson's poetry in a wholly new way. But they are still there. The essential bent of his poetry is towards such expressions as—

> Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars ;
>
> O'er the sun's bright eye
> Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud ;
>
> When the cairned mountain was a shadow, sunned
> The world to peace again ;
>
> The fresh young captains flashed their glittering teeth,
> The huge bush-bearded barons heaved and blew ;

> He bared the knotted column of his throat,
> The massive square of his heroic breast,
> And arms on which the standing muscle sloped
> As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
> Running too vehemently to break upon it.

And this way of speaking is the least *plain*, the most *un-Homeric*, which can possibly be conceived. Homer presents his thought to you just as it wells from the source of his mind: Mr. Tennyson carefully distils his thought before he will part with it. Hence comes, in the expression of the thought, a heightened and elaborate air. In Homer's poetry it is all natural thoughts in natural words; in Mr. Tennyson's poetry it is all distilled thoughts in distilled words. Exactly this heightening and elaboration may be observed in Mr. Spedding's

> While the steeds *mouthed their corn aloof*,

(an expression which might have been Mr. Tennyson's) on which I have already commented; and to one who is penetrated with a sense of the real simplicity of Homer, this subtle sophistication of the thought is, I think, very perceptible even in such lines as these,—

> And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
> Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,—

which I have seen quoted as perfectly Homeric. Perfect simplicity can be obtained only by a genius of which perfect simplicity is an essential characteristic.

So true is this, that when a genius essentially subtle, or a genius which, from whatever cause, is in its essence not truly and broadly simple, determines to be perfectly plain, determines not to admit a shade of subtlety or curiosity into its expression, it cannot ever then attain real simplicity; it can only attain a semblance of simplicity.[1] French criticism, richer in its vocabulary than ours, has invented a useful word to distinguish this semblance (often very beautiful and valuable) from the real quality. The real quality it calls *simplicité*, the semblance *simplesse*. The one is natural simplicity, the other is artificial simplicity. What is called simplicity in the productions of a genius essentially not simple, is, in truth, *simplesse*. The two are distinguishable from one another the moment they appear in company. For instance, let us take the opening of the narrative in Wordsworth's *Michael*:—

> Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
> There dwelt a shepherd, Michael was his name;
> An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength; his mind was keen,
> Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs;
> And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
> And watchful more than ordinary men.

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[1] I speak of poetic genius as employing itself upon narrative or dramatic poetry,—poetry in which the poet has to go out of himself and to create. In lyrical poetry, in the direct expression of personal feeling, the most subtle genius may, under the momentary pressure of passion, express itself simply. Even here, however, the native tendency will generally be discernible.

Now let us take the opening of the narrative in Mr. Tennyson's *Dora* :—

> With Farmer Allan at the farm abode
> William and Dora. William was his son,
> And she his niece. He often looked at them,
> And often thought, 'I'll make them man and wife.'

The simplicity of the first of these passages is *simplicité;* that of the second, *simplesse.* Let us take the end of the same two poems : first, of *Michael* :—

> The cottage which was named the Evening Star
> Is gone,—the ploughshare has been through the ground
> On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought
> In all the neighbourhood : yet the oak is left
> That grew beside their door : and the remains
> Of the unfinished sheepfold may be seen
> Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

And now, of *Dora* :—

> So those four abode
> Within one house together ; and as years
> Went forward, Mary took another mate :
> But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

A heedless critic may call both of these passages simple if he will. Simple, in a certain sense, they both are ; but between the simplicity of the two there is all the difference that there is between the simplicity of Homer and the simplicity of Moschus.

But—whether the hexameter establish itself or not, whether a truly simple and rapid blank verse be obtained or not, as the vehicle for a standard English translation of Homer—I feel

sure that this vehicle will not be furnished by the ballad-form. On this question about the ballad-character of Homer's poetry, I see that Professor Blackie proposes a compromise: he suggests that those who say Homer's poetry is pure ballad-poetry, and those who deny that it is ballad-poetry at all, should split the difference between them; that it should be agreed that Homer's poems are ballads *a little*, but not so much as some have said. I am very sensible to the courtesy of the terms in which Mr. Blackie invites me to this compromise; but I cannot, I am sorry to say, accept it; I cannot allow that Homer's poetry is ballad-poetry at all. A want of capacity for sustained nobleness seems to me inherent in the ballad-form, when employed for epic poetry. The more we examine this proposition, the more certain, I think, will it become to us. Let us but observe how a great poet, having to deliver a narrative very weighty and serious, instinctively shrinks from the ballad-form as from a form not commensurate with his subject-matter, a form too narrow and shallow for it, and seeks for a form which has more amplitude and impressiveness. Every one knows the *Lucy Gray* and the *Ruth* of Wordsworth. Both poems are excellent; but the subject-matter of the narrative of *Ruth* is much more weighty and impressive to the poet's own feeling than that of the narrative of *Lucy Gray*, for which latter, in its unpretending simplicity, the ballad-

form is quite adequate. Wordsworth, at the time he composed *Ruth*,—his great time, his *annus mirabilis*, about 1800,—strove to be simple; it was his mission to be simple; he loved the ballad-form, he clung to it, because it was simple. Even in *Ruth* he tried, one may say, to use it; he would have used it if he could: but the gravity of his matter is too much for this somewhat slight form; he is obliged to give to his form more amplitude, more augustness, to shake out its folds.

> The wretched parents all that night
> Went shouting far and wide;
> But there was neither sound nor sight
> To serve them for a guide.

That is beautiful, no doubt, and the form is adequate to the subject-matter. But take this, on the other hand:—

> I, too, have passed her on the hills,
> Setting her little water-mills
> By spouts and fountains wild;
> Such small machinery as she turned,
> Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,
> A young and happy child.

Who does not perceive how the greater fulness and weight of his matter has here compelled the true and feeling poet to adopt a form of more *volume* than the simple ballad-form?

It is of narrative poetry that I am speaking; the question is about the use of the ballad-form for *this*. I say that for this poetry (when in the

grand style, as Homer's is) the ballad-form is entirely inadequate ; and that Homer's translator must not adopt it, because it even leads him, by its own weakness, away from the grand style rather than towards it. We must remember that the matter of narrative poetry stands in a different relation to the vehicle which conveys it,—is not so independent of this vehicle, so absorbing and powerful in itself,—as the matter of purely emotional poetry. When there comes in poetry what I may call the *lyrical cry*, this transfigures everything, makes everything grand ; the simplest form may be here even an advantage, because the flame of the emotion glows through and through it more easily. To go again for an illustration to Wordsworth ;—our great poet, since Milton, by his performance, as Keats, I think, is our great poet by his gift and promise ; —in one of his stanzas to the Cuckoo, we have :—

> And I can listen to thee yet ;
> Can lie upon the plain
> And listen, till I do beget
> That golden time again.

Here the lyrical cry, though taking the simple ballad-form, is as grand as the lyrical cry coming in poetry of an ampler form, as grand as the

> An innocent life, yet far astray !

of *Ruth ;* as the

> There is a comfort in the strength of love

of *Michael.* In this way, by the occurrence of this lyrical cry, the ballad-poets themselves rise sometimes, though not so often as one might perhaps have hoped, to the grand style.

> O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
> Wi' their fans into their hand,
> Or ere they see Sir Patrick Spence
> Come sailing to the land.
>
> O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
> Wi' their gold combs in their hair,
> Waiting for their ain dear lords,
> For they'll see them nae mair.

But from this impressiveness of the ballad-form, when its subject-matter fills it over and over again,—is, indeed, in itself, all in all,—one must not infer its effectiveness when its subject-matter is not thus overpowering, in the great body of a narrative.

But, after all, Homer is not a better poet than the balladists, because he has taken in the hexameter a better instrument; he took this instrument because he was a *different* poet from them; so different,—not only so much better, but so essentially different,—that he is not to be classed with them at all. Poets receive their distinctive character, not from their subject, but from their application to that subject of the ideas (to quote the *Excursion*)

> On God, on Nature, and on human life,

which they have acquired for themselves. In

the ballad-poets in general, as in men of a rude and early stage of the world, in whom their humanity is not yet variously and fully developed, the stock of these ideas is scanty, and the ideas themselves not very effective or profound. From them the narrative itself is the great matter, not the spirit and significance which underlies the narrative. Even in later times of richly developed life and thought, poets appear who have what may be called a *balladist's mind;* in whom a fresh and lively curiosity for the outward spectacle of the world is much more strong than their sense of the inward significance of that spectacle. When they apply ideas to their narrative of human events, you feel that they are, so to speak, travelling out of their own province: in the best of them you feel this perceptibly, but in those of a lower order you feel it very strongly. Even Sir Walter Scott's efforts of this kind,—even, for instance, the

> Breathes there the man with soul so dead,

or the

> O woman! in our hours of ease,—

even these leave, I think, as high poetry, much to be desired; far more than the same poet's descriptions of a hunt or a battle. But Lord Macaulay's

> Then out spake brave Horatius,
> The captain of the gate:
> 'To all the men upon this earth
> Death cometh soon or late,'

(and here, since I have been reproached with undervaluing Lord Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, let me frankly say that, to my mind, a man's power to detect the ring of false metal in those Lays is a good measure of his fitness to give an opinion about poetical matters at all), —I say, Lord Macaulay's

> To all the men upon this earth
> Death cometh soon or late,

it is hard to read without a cry of pain. But with Homer it is very different. This 'noble barbarian,' this 'savage with the lively eye,'—whose verse, Mr. Newman thinks, would affect us, if we could hear the living Homer, 'like an elegant and simple melody from an African of the Gold Coast,'—is never more at home, never more nobly himself, than in applying profound ideas to his narrative. As a poet he belongs —narrative as is his poetry, and early as is his date—to an incomparably more developed spiritual and intellectual order than the balladists, or than Scott and Macaulay; he is here as much to be distinguished from them, and in the same way, as Milton is to be distinguished from them. He is, indeed, rather to be classed with Milton than with the balladists and Scott; for what he has in common with Milton — the noble and profound application of ideas to life—is the most essential part of poetic greatness. The most essentially grand

and characteristic things of Homer are such things as—

> ἔτλην δ᾽ οἷ᾽ οὔπω τις ἐπιχθόνιος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
> ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνοιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ᾽ ὀρέγεσθαι,[1]

or as—

> καὶ σέ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι,[2]

or as—

> ὣς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν,
> ζώειν ἀχνυμένους· αὐτοὶ δέ τ᾽ ἀκηδέες εἰσίν,[3]

and of these the tone is given, far better than by any thing of the balladists, by such things as the

> Io no piangeva : sì dentro impietrai :
> Piangevan elli . . .[4]

of Dante ; or the

> Fall'n Cherub ! to be weak is miserable

of Milton.

I suppose I must, before I conclude, say a word or two about my own hexameters ; and yet really, on such a topic, I am almost ashamed

[1] 'And I have endured—the like whereof no soul upon the earth hath yet endured—to carry to my lips the hand of him who slew my child.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 505.

[2] 'Nay and thou too, old man, in times past wert, as we hear, happy.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 543. In the original this line, for mingled pathos and dignity, is perhaps without a rival even in Homer.

[3] 'For so have the gods spun our destiny to us wretched mortals, —that we should live in sorrow ; but they themselves are without trouble.'—*Iliad*, xxiv. 525.

[4] '*I* wept not : so of stone grew I within :—*they* wept.'—*Hell*, xxxiii. 49 (Carlyle's Translation, slightly altered).

to trouble you. From those perishable objects I feel, I can truly say, a most Oriental detachment. You yourselves are witnesses how little importance, when I offered them to you, I claimed for them,—how humble a function I designed them to fill. I offered them, not as specimens of a competing translation of Homer, but as illustrations of certain canons which I had been trying to establish for Homer's poetry. I said that these canons they might very well illustrate by failing as well as by succeeding: if they illustrate them in any manner, I am satisfied. I was thinking of the future translator of Homer, and trying to let him see as clearly as possible what I meant by the combination of characteristics which I assigned to Homer's poetry,—by saying that this poetry was at once rapid in movement, plain in words and style, simple and direct in its ideas, and noble in manner. I do not suppose that my own hexameters are rapid in movement, plain in words and style, simple and direct in their ideas, and noble in manner; but I am in hopes that a translator, reading them with a genuine interest in his subject, and without the slightest grain of personal feeling, may see more clearly, as he reads them, what I mean by saying that Homer's poetry is all these. I am in hopes that he may be able to seize more distinctly, when he has before him my

So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of the Xanthus,

or my

> Ah, unhappy pair, to Peleus why did we give you!

or my

> So he spake, and drove with a cry his steeds into battle,

the exact points which I wish him to avoid in Cowper's

> So numerous seemed those fires the banks between,

or in Pope's

> Unhappy coursers of immortal strain,

or in Mr. Newman's

> He spake, and, yelling, held a-front his single-hoofed horses.

At the same time there may be innumerable points in mine which he ought to avoid also. Of the merit of his own compositions no composer can be admitted the judge.

But thus humbly useful to the future translator I still hope my hexameters may prove; and he it is, above all, whom one has to regard. The general public carries away little from discussions of this kind, except some vague notion that one advocates English hexameters, or that one has attacked Mr. Newman. On the mind of an adversary one never makes the faintest impression. Mr. Newman reads all one can say about diction, and his last word on the subject is, that he 'regards it as a question about to open hereafter, whether a translator of Homer ought not to adopt the old dissyllabic *landis*,

houndis, *hartis*' (for lands, hounds, harts), and also 'the final *en* of the plural of verbs (we *dancen*, they *singen*, etc.),' which 'still subsists in Lancashire.' A certain critic reads all one can say about style, and at the end of it arrives at the inference that, 'after all, there is some style grander than the grand style itself, since Shakspeare has not the grand manner, and yet has the supremacy over Milton'; another critic reads all one can say about rhythm, and the result is, that he thinks Scott's rhythm, in the description of the death of Marmion, all the better for being *saccadé*, because the dying ejaculations of Marmion were likely to be 'jerky.' How vain to rise up early, and to take rest late, from any zeal for proving to Mr. Newman that he must not, in translating Homer, say *houndis* and *dancen*; or to the first of the two critics above quoted, that one poet may be a greater poetical force than another, and yet have a more unequal style; or to the second, that the best art, having to represent the death of a hero, does not set about imitating his dying noises! Such critics, however, provide for an opponent's vivacity the charming excuse offered by Rivarol for his, when he was reproached with giving offence by it:—'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'no one considers how much pain every man of taste has had to *suffer*, before he ever inflicts any.'

It is for the future translator that one must work. The successful translator of Homer will

have (or he cannot succeed) that true sense for his subject, and that disinterested love of it, which are, both of them, so rare in literature, and so precious; he will not be led off by any false scent; he will have an eye for the real matter, and, where he thinks he may find any indication of this, no hint will be too slight for him, no shade will be too fine, no imperfections will turn him aside,—he will go before his adviser's thought, and help it out with his own. This is the sort of student that a critic of Homer should always have in his thoughts; but students of this sort are indeed rare.

And how, then, can I help being reminded what a student of this sort we have just lost in Mr. Clough, whose name I have already mentioned in these lectures? He, too, was busy with Homer; but it is not on that account that I now speak of him. Nor do I speak of him in order to call attention to his qualities and powers in general, admirable as these were. I mention him because, in so eminent a degree, he possessed these two invaluable literary qualities,—a true sense for his object of study, and a single-hearted care for it. He had both; but he had the second even more eminently than the first. He greatly developed the first through means of the second. In the study of art, poetry, or philosophy, he had the most undivided and disinterested love for his object in itself, the greatest aversion to mixing up with it anything

accidental or personal. His interest was in literature itself; and it was this which gave so rare a stamp to his character, which kept him so free from all taint of littleness. In the saturnalia of ignoble personal passions, of which the struggle for literary success, in old and crowded communities, offers so sad a spectacle, he never mingled. He had not yet traduced his friends, nor flattered his enemies, nor disparaged what he admired, nor praised what he despised. Those who knew him well had the conviction that, even with time, these literary arts would never be his. His poem, of which I before spoke, has some admirable Homeric qualities;—out-of-doors freshness, life, naturalness, buoyant rapidity. Some of the expressions in that poem,—'*Dangerous Corrievreckan . . . Where roads are unknown to Loch Nevish*,'—come back now to my ear with the true Homeric ring. But that in him of which I think oftenest is the Homeric simplicity of his literary life.

END OF VOL. V.

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Arnold, Matthew
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