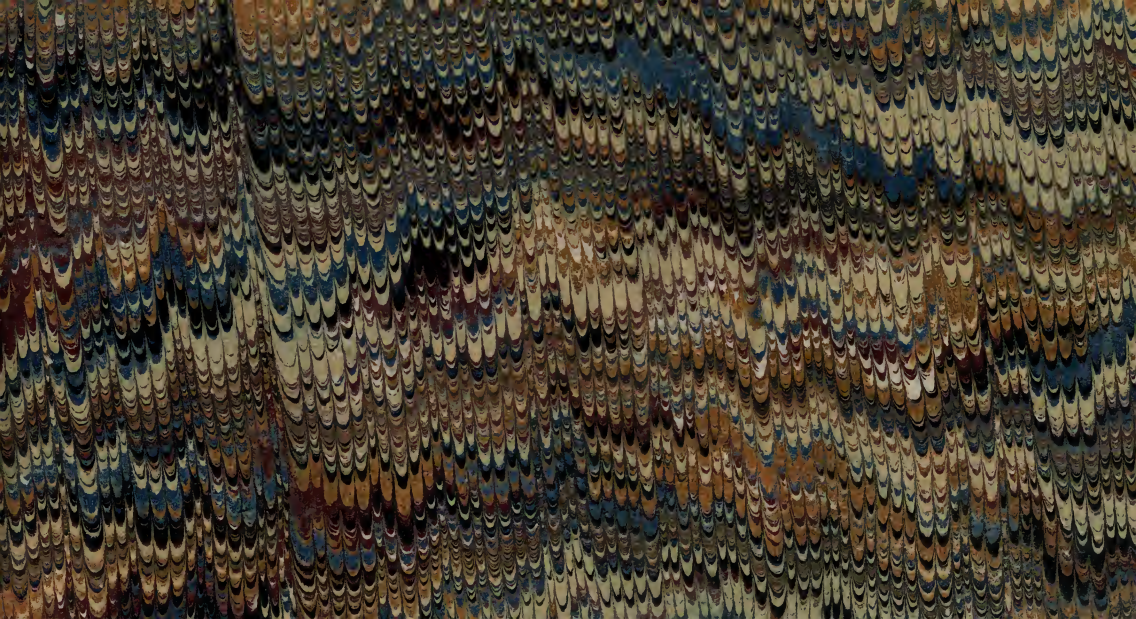
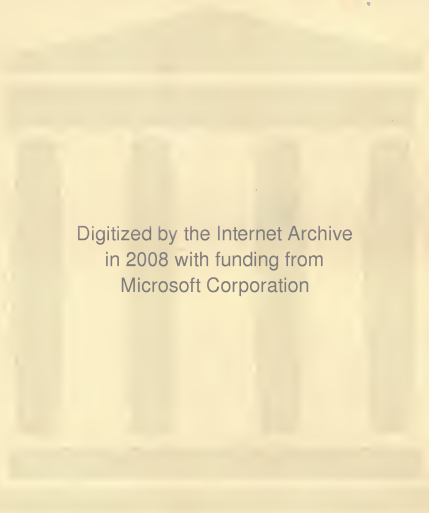

BE MINDFUL





THE ROUND TABLE.

THE

ROUND TABLE:

A COLLECTION OF

ESSAYS

ON

LITERATURE, MEN, AND MANNERS,

By WILLIAM HAZLITT.

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO.
AND LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, LONDON.

1817.

Printed by George Ramsay & Co.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following work falls somewhat short of its title and original intention. It was proposed by my friend, Mr Hunt, to publish a series of papers in the Examiner, in the manner of the early periodical Essayists, the Spectator and Tatler. These papers were to be contributed by various persons on a variety of subjects; and Mr Hunt, as the Editor, was to take the characteristic or dramatic part of the work upon himself. I undertook to furnish occasional Essays and Criticisms; one or two other friends promised their assistance: but the essence of the work was to be miscellaneous. The next thing was to fix upon a title for it. After much doubtful consultation, that of The Round Table was agreed upon as most descriptive of its nature and design. But our

plan had been no sooner arranged and entered upon, than Buonaparte landed at Frejus, *et voila la Table Ronde dissoûte*. Our little congress was broken up as well as the great one: Politics called off the attention of the Editor from the Belles Lettres; and the task of continuing the work fell chiefly upon the person who was least able to give life and spirit to the original design. A want of variety in the subjects and mode of treating them, is, perhaps, the least disadvantage resulting from this circumstance. All the papers, in the two volumes here offered to the public, were written by myself and Mr HUNT, except a letter communicated by a friend in the seventeenth number. Out of the fifty-two numbers, twelve are Mr HUNT'S, with the signatures L. H. or H. T. For all the rest I am answerable.

W. HAZLITT.

January 5, 1817.

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THE ROUND TABLE.

No. I.

Introduction.

It has often struck me, in common with other luxurious persons who are fond of reading at breakfast, and who are well-tempered enough, particularly on such occasions, to put up with a little agreeable advice, that there has now been a sufficient distance of time since the publication of our good old periodical works, and a sufficient change in matters worthy of social observation, to warrant the appearance of a similar set of papers.

Upon this design, with the assistance of a few companions, and with all sorts of determinations to be equally instructive and delightful, I am accordingly now entering; and must give the reader to understand, in their name as well as my own, that,

wishing to be regarded as his companions also, we act as becomes all honest persons under such circumstances, and profess to be no other than what we are:—in other words, we assume no fictitious characters, or what an acquaintance of ours, in his becoming disdain of the original French, would call *names of war.*

A hundred years back, when the mode of living was different from what it is now, and taverns and coffee-houses made the persons of the wits familiar to every body, assumptions of this kind may have been necessary. *Captain* Steele, for instance, the gay fellow about town, might not always have been listened to with becoming attention, or even gravity, especially if he had been a little too inarticulate over-night;—he therefore put on the wrinkles and privileges of Isaac Bickerstaff, the old gentleman. *Sir Richard* might be a little better, but not perhaps during an election, or after the failure of a fish-pool; and so he retreated into the ancient and impregnable composition of Nestor Ironside.

I do not mean to say that we have none of the foibles of our illustrious predecessors. It would be odd, indeed, (to speak candidly, and with that humility which becomes frail beings like men,) if our numerous and very eminent virtues had no

drawback;—but more on this subject presently. All that I say is, that we have not the same occasion for disguise; and, therefore, as we prefer at all times a plain, straight-forward behaviour, and, in fact, choose to be as original as we can in our productions, we have avoided the trouble of adding assumed characters to our real ones; and shall talk, just as we think, walk, and take dinner, in our own proper persons. It is true, the want of old age, or of a few patriarchal eccentricities to exercise people's patronage on, and induce their self-love to bear with us, may be a deficiency in our pretensions with some; but we must plainly confess, with whatever mortification, that we are still at a flourishing time of life; and that the trouble and experience, which have passed over our heads, have left our teeth, hair, and eyes, pretty nearly as good as they found them. One of us, (which, by the way, must recommend us to all the married people, and admirers of Agesilaus,) was even caught the other day acting the great horse with a boy on his shoulders; and another (which will do as much for us among the bachelors, and give Lord's Ground in particular a lively sense of our turn of thinking) was not a vast while ago counted the second best cricketer in his native town.

On the other hand, as we wish to avoid the solitary and dictatorial manner of the latter Essayists, and, at the same time, are bound to shew our readers, that we have something to make up for the want of flapped waistcoats and an instructive decay of the faculties, we hereby inform them, that we are, literally speaking, a small party of friends, who meet once a week at a Round Table to discuss the merits of a leg of mutton, and of the subjects upon which we are to write. This we do without any sort of formality, letting the stream of conversation wander through any ground it pleases, and sometimes retiring into our own respective cogitations, though it must be confessed, very rarely,—for we have a lively, worn-visaged fellow among us, who has a trick, when in company, of leaping, as it were, on the top of his troubles, and keeping our spirits in motion with all sorts of pleasant interludes. After dinner, if the weather requires it, we draw round the fire, with a biscuit or two, and the remainder of a philosophic bottle of wine; or, as we are all passionately fond of music, one of us touches an instrument, in a manner that would make a professor die with laughter to see him using his thumb where he should put his finger, or his finger where he should use his thumb; but nevertheless in such a way as

to ravish the rest of us, who know still less than he does. At an Italian air we even think him superior to Tramezzani, though we generally give vent to our feelings on this point in a whisper. We suspect, however, that he overheard us one evening, as he immediately attempted some extraordinary graces, which, with all our partiality, we own were abominable.

The reader will see, by this account, that we do not mean to be over austere on the score of domestic enjoyments. Then for our accomplishments as writers, one of us is deep in mathematics and the learned languages, another in metaphysics, and a third in poetry; and, as for experience, and a proper sympathy with the infirmities of our species, the former of which is absolutely necessary for those who set up to be instructors, and the latter quite as much so to give it a becoming tone, and render it lastingly useful,—we shall not break in upon a greater principle by imitating the reckless candour of Rousseau, and make a parade of what other weaknesses we may have,—but for sickness, for ordinary worldly trouble, and in one or two respects, for troubles not very ordinary, few persons, perhaps, at our time of life, can make a handsomer shew of infirmities. Of some we shall only say, that they have been common to most

men, as well as ourselves, who were not born to estates of their own: but these and others have enabled us to buy, what money might have still kept us poor in,—some good real knowledge, and at bottom of all our egotism, some warm-wishing unaffected humility. Even at school, where there is nothing much to get sick or melancholy with, if indulgent parents are out of the way, we were initiated into experience a little earlier than most people; the tribulations we have fallen into before and after this time are almost innumerable; and we may add, as a specimen of our experience after the fashion of Ulysses, that we have all of us, at separate periods from one another, been in France. I must confess, however, for my own part, that I was not of an age to make much use of my travels, having gone thither in my childhood to get rid of one sickness, and only staid long enough to survive another. It was just before the decrees that altered religious as well as political matters in that country, and almost all that I remember is a good old woman, our landlady, who used to weep bitterly over me, because I should die a heretic, and be buried in unconsecrated ground. I have made an exception ever since, out of the whole French nation, in favour of the people at Calais; and was delighted, though not surprised, to hear the other

day from one of our Round Table, that the women there were all pretty and prepossessing, and still looked as if they could be kind to young heretics.

Of this accomplished and experienced party of ours, circumstances have made me the president; but I wish it to be distinctly understood, that I do not on that account claim any pre-eminence but a nominal one. We shall all choose our own subjects, only open to the suggestions and comments of each other. Correspondents, therefore, (and I must here mention that all persons not actually admitted to the said Table, must write to us in the form of a letter,) may address, as they please, either to the President of the Round Table; or to the President and his fellows in general, as, "Mr President,—Gentlemen of the Round Table;" or to any one of my friends in particular, according to his signature, as, "To the Member of the Round Table, T. or W." This perhaps will be determined by the nature of the communication; but I was the more anxious to say something on the point, inasmuch as my situation often reminds me of other great men who have sat at the head of tables, round or square, such as Charlemagne with his peers, who were persons of greater prowess than himself; or King Arthur, who, in spite of his re-

nown, was nothing, after all, to some of his knights, Launcelot or Tristan, for instance; or, to give a more familiar example, Robin Hood and his fellows, every one of whom, before he could be admitted into the company, must have beaten the captain.

I must not, however, before I conclude, pass over King Arthur so slightly, as our Round Table, to a certain degree, is inevitably associated in our minds with his. The name, indeed, was given to us by one of that sex, who have always been the chief ornaments and promoters of chivalrous institutions; and for my part, when I am sitting at the head of it, with my knights on each side, I can hardly help fancying that I am putting a triumphant finish to the old prophecy, and feeling in me, under an unexpected but more useful character, the revived spirit of that great British Monarch, who was to return again to light from his subterraneous exile, and repair the Round Table in all its glory:—

"He is a King ycrownid in Fairie
With scepter and sword, and with his regally
Shall resort as lord and sovereigne
Out of Fairie, and reigne in Britaine,
And repaire againe the old Round Table,
Among Princes King incomparable."

LYDGATE.

To this idea, and the long train of romantic associations and inspired works connected with it, we shall sometimes resort in our poetical moments, just as we shall keep the more familiar idea of the dining table before us in our ordinary ones. Nor will it always, indeed, be absent from our minds during our philosophical and most abstruse speculations; for what have the most chivalrous persons been from the earliest ages, but so many moral reformers, who encountered error and corruption with various weapons, who brought down brute force, however gigantic, who carried light into darkness, and liberty among the imprisoned, and dissipated, with some charm or other about them, the illusions of pleasure?

H. T.

No. II.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

As the reader has been given to understand, that the subjects which my friends and myself mean to discuss will form part of our conversation at Table, and that the conversation will nevertheless be as casual and unrestrained as it usually is among social parties, he may easily conclude that they will

be of a very various description. We shall confine ourselves, indeed, to no kinds in particular; and taking advantage sometimes of the character of table-talk, even the same article may contain a variety of subjects, and start off from one point to another with as unshackled and extemporaneous an enjoyment as one of Montaigne's. This, however, will be but seldom; for we are habitually fond of arrangement, and do not like to see even the dishes out of their proper positions. But, at the same time, though we shall generally confine ourselves to one subject in our Essays, and sometimes be altogether facetious, and sometimes exclusively profound, we shall always think ourselves at liberty to be both, if we please,—always at liberty to set out merrily in a first paragraph, or to be pleasant in a parenthesis. These things, while they refresh the writer, serve to give a fillip to the reader's attention; and act upon him as the handing round of a snuff-box may do in the middle of conversation.

Besides, there is a beauty of contrast in this variety; and as we mean to be very powerful writers, as well as every thing else that is desirable, power is never seen to so much advantage as when it goes about a thing carelessly. You like to see a light horseman, who seems as if he could abolish

you with a passing cut, and not a great heavy fellow, who looks as if he should tumble down in case of missing you, or a little red staring busybody, who would be obliged to wield his sword two-handed, and kill himself first with exertion. When Bonaparte set out on his Russian expedition, they say that he got into his carriage, twirling his glove about, and singing

"Marlbrouk to the wars is going:"

Perhaps we shall be quite as gay and buoyant when setting out on the loftiest speculations,—barring, of course, all comparisons with him on the score of success, though even we cannot answer for what a north-east wind or a fall of snow may do to us. I have myself, before now, had a whole host of fine ideas blown away by the one; and have been compelled to retreat from the other, mind and body, with my knees almost into the fire.

In short, to put an end to this preface exemplificatory, the most trifling matters may sometimes be not only the commencement, but the causes, of the gravest discussions. The fall of an apple from a tree suggested the doctrine of gravitation; and the same apple, for aught we know, served up in a dumpling, may have assisted the philoso-

pher in his notions of heat; for who has not witnessed similar causes and effects at a dinner table? I confess, a piece of mutton has supplied me with arguments, as well as chops, for a week; I have seen a hare or a cod's-head giving hints to a friend for his next Essay; and have known the most solemn reflections rise, with a pair of claws, out of a pigeon-pie.

There are two or three heads, however, under which all our subjects may be classed; and these it will be proper to mention, not so much for the necessity of any such classification, as for an indication of the particular views and feelings with which we may handle them. The first is Manners, or the surface of society,—the second Morals, metaphysically considered, or its inmost causes of action,—the third Taste, or its right feeling upon things both external and internal, which lies, as it were, between both.

With regard to the first, we are aware, and must advise the reader, that we do not possess so much food for observation as the authors of the earlier periodical works; and this is the case, not merely because we have not been in the habit of living so much as they did out in society, but because manners are of a more level surface than they were in their times, and people's characters

have, in a manner, been polished out. In fact, this is owing in great measure to the very writers in question. The extension of a general knowledge and good breeding were their direct objects; they succeeded; and there is not a domestic party now-a-days, in high life or in middle, but in its freedom from grossness and its tincture of literature, is indebted to Steele and his associates. The good was great and universal, and should alone render those men immortal, even without all the other claims of their wit and character.

Every general advantage, however, of this kind, has a tendency to overdo itself. A certain degree of knowledge and politeness being within every body's power, sufficient to enable them to pass smoothly with each other, every thing further is at last neglected; character first gives way to polish; polish by little and little carries away solidity; and all the community, who are to be acted upon in this way, are at length in danger of resembling so much worn-out coin, which has not only lost the features upon it, and grown blank by attrition, but begins to be weighed and found wanting even for the common purposes of society.

As far, then, as our observations on Manners go, it will be our endeavour to counteract this ex-

treme. Our mode of proceeding will be best explained by itself; but we shall endeavour to set men, not upon disliking smoothness, but avoiding insipidity,—not upon starting into roughness, but overcoming a flimsy sameness,—and this, too, not by pretending to characters which they have not, but by letting their own be seen as far as they possess them, and once more having faces to know them by.

Taste, as was inevitable, has sympathized completely with this superficial state of manners. In proportion as men were all to resemble each other, and to have faces and manners in common, their self-love was not to be disturbed by any thing in the shape of individuality. A writer might be natural, but he was to be natural only as far as their sense of nature would go, and this was not a great way. Besides, even when he was natural, he hardly dared to be so in language as well as idea;—there gradually came up a kind of dress, in which a man's mind, as well as body, was to clothe itself; and the French, whose wretched sophisticated taste had been first introduced by political circumstances, saw it increasing every day under the characteristic title of polite criticism, till they condescended to acknowledge that we were behaving ourselves well,—that Mr Pope was a truly

harmonious poet, and that Mr Addison's *Cato* made amends for the barbarism of Shakspeare. The praises, indeed, bestowed by the French in these and similar instances, went in one respect to a fortunate extreme, and tended to rouse a kind of national contradiction, which has perhaps not been without its effect in keeping a better spirit alive: but it must not be concealed, that both Shakspeare and Milton have owed a great part of their reputation of late years to causes which, though of a distinct nature, have been unconnected with a direct poetical taste. I allude to the art of acting with regard to the former, and to certain doctrines of religion with respect to the latter, both of which have no more to do with the fine spirit of either poet, than a jack-o'-lantern or a jugged hare. Milton still remains unknown to the better classes, in comparison with succeeding writers; and Chaucer and Spenser, the two other great poets of England, who have had no such recommendations to the pursuits or prejudices of society, are scarcely known at all, especially with any thing like an apprehension of their essential qualities. Chaucer is considered as a rude sort of poet, who wrote a vast while ago, and is no longer intelligible; and Spenser, a prosing one, not quite so old, who wrote nothing but allegories. They

startle to hear, that the latter has very little need of the glossary, and is dipt in poetic luxury; and that the former, besides being intelligible with a little attention, is in some respects a kindred spirit with Shakspeare for gravity as well as for mirth, and full of the most exquisite feeling of all kinds, especially the pathetic. It is curious, indeed, to see the length to which the levelling spirit in manners, and the coxcombical sort of exclusiveness it produces, have carried people in their habitual ideas of writers not of their generation. Nothing is young and in full vigour but themselves. Shakspeare may enjoy a lucky perpetuity of lustihead by means of school-compilations and stage-players; and Milton, in their imaginations, is a respectable middle-aged gentleman, something like the clergyman who preaches on Sundays; but Spenser is exceedingly quaint and rusty; and Chaucer is nothing but *old* Chaucer or honest Geoffrey, which is about as pleasant, though not intended to be so, as the lover's address to the sun in the *Gentle Shepherd*:—

> "And if ye're wearied, *honest light*,
> Sleep, gin ye like, a week that night."

You will even find them talking, with an air of patronage, of having found something good now and

then in *these old writers*,—meaning the great masters above mentioned, and the working heads that crowded the time of Shakspeare. They evidently present them to their minds as so many old gentlemen and grandfathers, half-doating; and, for aught I know, would think of Apollo himself in the same way, if it were not for Tooke's Pantheon, or an occasional plaster cast. As if perpetual youth, instead of age, was not the inheritance of immortal genius! As if a great poet could ever grow old, as long as Nature herself was young!

But I must restrain myself on this subject, or I shall exceed my limits. The reader will see that we are prepared to say a great deal of "these old poets;" and we are so,—not because they are old, but because they are beautiful and ever fresh. We shall also do as much for some of the old prose-writers; and endeavour, by means of both, and of the universal principles which inspired them, to wean the general taste, as far as we can, from the lingering influence of the French school back again to that of the English, or, in other words, from the poetry of modes and fashions to that of fancy, and feeling, and all-surviving Nature. We have had enough, in all conscience, of men who talk away, and write smoothly, and everlastingly copy each other;—let us, in the name of variety, if of

nothing else, have a little of men, who held it necessary to think and speak for themselves,—men who went to the fountain-head of inspiration, where the stream wept and sparkled away at its pleasure, and not where it was cut out into artificial channels, and sent smoothing up, pert and monotonous, through a set of mechanical pipes and eternally repeated images.

On the subject of Morals, which is one that requires the nicest developement, and will be treated by us with proportionate care and sincerity, we shall content ourselves with saying at present, that if we differ on this point also from the opinions of our predecessors and others, it is only where we think them hurtful to the real interests of charity and self-knowledge, and where they have made a compromise, to no real purpose, with existing prejudices. Here, as well as in Manners, we shall endeavour to pierce below the surface of things, but only to fetch out what we conceive to be a more valuable substance, and fitter for the kindlier purposes of intercourse. We may disturb the complacency of some exquisitely self-satisfied persons, and startle into a God-bless-me or so, (which we should be sorry to do over their tea-cups,) a number of worthy people, who lament that every body does not resemble

them: but the world have too long, even when most professing to be charitable, been taught to value themselves at the expence of others; and perhaps in our old zeal for the many instead of the few, we shall endeavour to reverse this kind of beginning at home, and exhort them to think somewhat better of others, even at a little expence to themselves.

In short, to recommend an independent simplicity in Manners, a love of nature in Taste, and truth, generosity, and self-knowledge in Morals, will be the object, dining or fasting, with blade in hand or with pen, of the Knights of the Round Table.

H. T.

No. III.

ON THE LOVE OF LIFE.

It is our intention, in the course of these papers, occasionally to expose certain vulgar errors, which have crept into our reasonings on men and manners. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these, is that which relates to the source of our general attachment to life. We are not going to enter into the question, whether life is,

on the whole, to be regarded as a blessing, though we are by no means inclined to adopt the opinion of that sage, who thought "that the best thing that could have happened to a man was never to have been born, and the next best to have died the moment after he came into existence." The common argument, however, which is made use of to prove the value of life, from the strong desire which almost every one feels for its continuance, appears to be altogether inconclusive. The wise and the foolish, the weak and the strong, the lame and the blind, the prisoner and the free, the prosperous and the wretched, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, from the little child who tries to leap over his own shadow, to the old man who stumbles blindfold on his grave, all feel this desire in common. Our notions with respect to the importance of life, and our attachment to it, depend on a principle, which has very little to do with its happiness or its misery.

The love of life is, in general, the effect not of our enjoyments, but of our passions. We are not attached to it so much for its own sake, or as it is connected with happiness, as because it is necessary to action. Without life there can be no action—no objects of pursuit—no restless desires—

no tormenting passions. Hence it is that we fondly cling to it—that we dread its termination as the close, not of enjoyment, but of hope. The proof that our attachment to life is not absolutely owing to the immediate satisfaction we find in it, is, that those persons are commonly found most loath to part with it who have the least enjoyment of it, and who have the greatest difficulties to struggle with, as losing gamesters are the most desperate. And farther, there are not many persons who, with all their pretended love of life, would not, if it had been in their power, have melted down the longest life to a few hours. "The school-boy," says Addison, "counts the time till the return of the holidays; the minor longs to be of age; the lover is impatient till he is married."—"Hope and fantastic expectations spend much of our lives; and while with passion we look for a coronation, or the death of an enemy, or a day of joy, passing from fancy to possession without any intermediate notices, we throw away a precious year." JEREMY TAYLOR. —We would willingly, and without remorse, sacrifice not only the present moment, but all the interval (no matter how long) that separates us from any favourite object. We chiefly look upon life, then, as the means to an end. Its common

enjoyments and its daily evils are alike disregarded for any idle purpose we have in view. It should seem as if there were a few green sunny spots in the desert of life, to which we are always hastening forward: we eye them wistfully in the distance, and care not what perils or suffering we endure, so that we arrive at them at last. However weary we may be of the same stale round—however sick of the past—however hopeless of the future—the mind still revolts at the thought of death, because the fancied possibility of good, which always remains with life, gathers strength as it is about to be torn from us for ever, and the dullest scene looks bright compared with the darkness of the grave. Our reluctance to part with existence evidently does not depend on the calm and even current of our lives, but on the force and impulse of the passions. Hence that indifference to death which has been sometimes remarked in people who lead a solitary and peaceful life in remote and barren districts. The pulse of life in them does not beat strong enough to occasion any violent revulsion of the frame when it ceases. He who treads the green mountain turf, or he who sleeps beneath it, enjoys an almost equal quiet. The death of those persons has always been accounted happy, who had at-

tained their utmost wishes, who had nothing left to regret or to desire. Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain—to the violence of our efforts, and the keenness of our disappointments—and to our earnest desire to find in the future, if possible, a rich amends for the past. We may be said to nurse our existence with the greatest tenderness, according to the pain it has cost us; and feel at every step of our varying progress the truth of that line of the poet—

"An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour."

The love of life is in fact the sum of all our passions and of all our enjoyments; but these are by no means the same thing, for the vehemence of our passions is irritated, not less by disappointment than by the prospect of success. Nothing seems to be a match for this general tenaciousness of existence, but such an extremity either of bodily or mental suffering as destroys at once the power both of habit and imagination. In short, the question, whether life is accompanied with a greater quantity of pleasure or pain, may be fairly set aside as frivolous, and of no practical utility; for our attachment to life depends on our interest in it; and it cannot be denied that we have more

interest in this moving, busy scene, agitated with a thousand hopes and fears, and checkered with every diversity of joy and sorrow, than in a dreary blank. To be something is better than to be nothing, because we can feel no interest in *nothing*. Passion, imagination, self-will, the sense of power, the very consciousness of our existence, bind us to life, and hold us fast in its chains, as by a magic spell, in spite of every other consideration. Nothing can be more philosophical than the reasoning which Milton puts into the mouth of the fallen angel:—

> ———" And that must end us, that must be our cure,
> To be no more; sad cure: for who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night,
> Devoid of sense and motion?"

Nearly the same account may be given in answer to the question which has been asked, *Why so few tyrants kill themselves?* In the first place, they are never satisfied with the mischief they have done, and cannot quit their hold of power, after all sense of pleasure is fled. Besides, they absurdly argue from the means of happiness placed within their reach to the end itself;

and, dazzled by the pomp and pageantry of a throne, cannot relinquish the persuasion that they *ought* to be happier than other men. The prejudice of opinion, which attaches us to life, is in them stronger than in others, and incorrigible to experience. The Great are life's fools—dupes of the splendid shadows that surround them, and wedded to the very mockeries of opinion.

Whatever is our situation or pursuit in life, the result will be much the same. The strength of the passion seldom corresponds to the pleasure we find in its indulgence. The miser "robs himself to increase his store;" the ambitious man toils up a slippery precipice only to be tumbled headlong from its height: the lover is infatuated with the charms of his mistress, exactly in proportion to the mortifications he has received from her. Even those who succeed in nothing, who, as it has been emphatically expressed—

> ——— "Are made desperate by too quick a sense
> Of constant infelicity; cut off
> From peace like exiles, on some barren rock,
> Their life's sad prison, with no more of ease,
> Than sentinels between two armies set;"

are yet as unwilling as others to give over the unprofitable strife: their harassed feverish existence

refuses rest, and frets the languor of exhausted hope into the torture of unavailing regret. The exile, who has been unexpectedly restored to his country and to liberty, often finds his courage fail with the accomplishment of all his wishes, and the struggle of life and hope ceases at the same instant.

We once more repeat, that we do not, in the foregoing remarks, mean to enter into a comparative estimate of the value of human life, but merely to shew, that the strength of our attachment to it is a very fallacious test of its happiness.

W. H.

No. IV.

ON CLASSICAL EDUCATION.

The study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect, than as "a discipline of humanity." The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views;

it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind, which can never be occupied again. They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

"Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.
Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!"

It is this feeling, more than any thing else, which produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which,

from the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages.

It is hard to find in minds otherwise formed, either a real love of excellence, or a belief that any excellence exists superior to their own. Every thing is brought down to the vulgar level of their own ideas and pursuits. Persons without education certainly do not want either acuteness or strength of mind in what concerns themselves, or in things immediately within their observation; but they have no power of abstraction, no general standard of taste, or scale of opinion. They see their objects always near, and never in the horizon. Hence arises that egotism which has been remarked as the characteristic of self-taught men, and which degenerates into obstinate prejudice or petulant fickleness of opinion, according to the natural sluggishness or activity

of their minds. For they either become blindly bigotted to the first opinions they have struck out for themselves, and inaccessible to conviction; or else (the dupes of their own vanity and shrewdness) are everlasting converts to every crude suggestion that presents itself, and the last opinion is always the true one. Each successive discovery flashes upon them with equal light and evidence, and every new fact overturns their whole system. It is among this class of persons, whose ideas never extend beyond the feeling of the moment, that we find partizans, who are very honest men, with a total want of principle, and who unite the most hardened effrontery, and intolerance of opinion, to endless inconsistency and self-contradiction.

A celebrated political writer of the present day, who is a great enemy to classical education, is a remarkable instance both of what can and what cannot be done without it.

It has been attempted of late to set up a distinction between the education *of words*, and the education *of things*, and to give the preference in all cases to the latter. But, in the first place, the knowledge of things, or of the realities of life, is not easily to be taught except by things themselves, and, even if it were, is not so absolutely indispen-

sable as it has been supposed. " The world is too much with us, early and late ;" and the fine dream of our youth is best prolonged among the visionary objects of antiquity. We owe many of our most amiable delusions, and some of our superiority, to the grossness of mere physical existence, to the strength of our associations with words. Language, if it throws a veil over our ideas, adds a softness and refinement to them, like that which the atmosphere gives to naked objects. There can be no true elegance without taste in style. In the next place, we mean absolutely to deny the application of the principle of utility to the present question. By an obvious transposition of ideas, some persons have confounded a knowledge of useful things with useful knowledge. Knowledge is only useful in itself, as it exercises or gives pleasure to the mind : the only knowledge that is of use in a practical sense, is professional knowledge. But knowledge, considered as a branch of general education, can be of use only to the mind of the person acquiring it. If the knowledge of language produces pedants, the other kind of knowledge (which is proposed to be substituted for it) can only produce quacks. There is no question, but that the knowledge of astronomy, of chemistry, and of agriculture, is highly useful to

the world, and absolutely necessary to be acquired by persons carrying on certain professions: but the practical utility of a knowledge of these subjects ends there. For example, it is of the utmost importance to the navigator to know exactly in what degree of longitude and latitude such a rock lies: but to us, sitting here about our Round Table, it is not of the smallest consequence whatever, whether the map-maker has placed it an inch to the right or to the left; we are in no danger of running against it. So the art of making shoes is a highly useful art, and very proper to be known and practised by some body: that is, by the shoemaker. But to pretend that every one else should be thoroughly acquainted with the whole process of this ingenious handicraft, as one branch of useful knowledge, would be preposterous. It is sometimes asked, What is the use of poetry? and we have heard the argument carried on almost like a parody on *Falstaff's* reasoning about Honour. "Can it set a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Poetry hath no skill in surgery then? No." It is likely that the most enthusiastic lover of poetry would so far agree to the truth of this statement, that if he had just broken a leg, he would send for a surgeon, instead of a volume of poems from a library.

But, " they that are whole need not a physician." The reasoning would be well founded, if we lived in an hospital, and not in the world.

W. H.

No. V.

ON THE TATLER.

Of all the periodical Essayists, (our ingenious predecessors,) the *Tatler* has always appeared to us the most accomplished and agreeable. Montaigne, who was the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and person, which he does with a most copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist, good-naturedly, lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of his neighbours. A young lady, on the other side of Temple Bar, cannot be seen at her glass for half a day together, but Mr

Bickerstaff takes due notice of it; and he has the first intelligence of the symptoms of the *belle* passion appearing in any young gentleman at the west end of the town. The departures and arrivals of widows with handsome jointures, either to bury their grief in the country, or to procure a second husband in town, are regularly recorded in his pages. He is well acquainted with the celebrated beauties of the last age at the Court of Charles II. and the old gentleman often grows romantic in recounting the disastrous strokes which his youth suffered from the glances of their bright eyes and their unaccountable caprices. In particular, he dwells with a secret satisfaction on one of his mistresses who left him for a rival, and whose constant reproach to her husband, on occasion of any quarrel between them, was,—"I, that might have married the famous Mr Bickerstaff, to be treated in this manner!" The club at the Trumpet consists of a set of persons as entertaining as himself. The cavalcade of the justice of the peace, the knight of the shire, the country squire, and the young gentleman, his nephew, who waited on him at his chambers, in such form and ceremony, seem not to have settled the order of their precedence to this hour; and we should hope the Upholsterer and his companions in the Green Park

stand as fair a chance for immortality as some modern politicians. Mr Bickerstaff himself is a gentleman and a scholar, a humourist and a man of the world; with a great deal of nice easy *naïveté* about him. If he walks out and is caught in a shower of rain, he makes us amends for this unlucky accident, by a criticism on the shower in Virgil, and concludes with a burlesque copy of verses on a city-shower. He entertains us, when he dates from his own apartment, with a quotation from Plutarch or a moral reflection; from the Grecian coffeehouse with politics; and from Will's or the Temple with the poets and players, the beaux and men of wit and pleasure about town. In reading the pages of the *Tatler*, we seem as if suddenly transported to the age of Queen Anne, of toupees and full-bottomed periwigs. The whole appearance of our dress and manners undergoes a delightful metamorphosis. We are surprised with the rustling of hoops and the glittering of paste buckles. The beaux and the belles are of a quite different species; we distinguish the dappers, the smarts, and the pretty fellows, as they pass; we are introduced to Betterton and Mrs Oldfield behind the scenes; are made familiar with the persons of Mr Penkethman and Mr Bullock; we listen to a dispute at a tavern on the merits of the Duke

of Marlborough or Marshal Turenne; or are present at the first rehearsal of a play by Vanbrugh, or the reading of a new poem by Mr Pope.—The privilege of thus virtually transporting ourselves to past times, is even greater than that of visiting distant places. London, a hundred years ago, would be better worth seeing than Paris at the present moment.

It may be said that all this is to be found, in the same or a greater degree, in the *Spectator*. We do not think so; or, at least, there is in the last work a much greater proportion of common-place matter. We have always preferred the *Tatler* to the *Spectator*. Whether it is owing to our having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, our pleasure in reading the two works is not at all in proportion to their comparative reputation. The *Tatler* contains only half the number of volumes, and we will venture to say, at least an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. "The first sprightly runnings" are there: it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent, the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more

like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet only to set down what he observed out of doors; Addison seems to have spun out and wire-drawn the hints, which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. We do not mean to depreciate Addison's talents, but we wish to do justice to Steele, who was, upon the whole, a less artificial and more original writer. The descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches or fragments of a comedy; those of Addison are ingenious paraphrases on the genuine text. The characters of the club, not only in the *Tatler*, but in the *Spectator*, were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among them. Addison has gained himself eternal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Those of Will. Wimble and Will. Honeycomb are not a whit behind it in delicacy and felicity. Many of the most exquisite pieces in the *Tatler* are also Addison's, as the Court of Honour, and the Personification of Musical Instruments. We do not know whether the picture of the family of an old acquaintance, in which the children run to let Mr Bickerstaff in at the door, and the one that

loses the race that way turns back to tell the father that he is come,—with the nice gradation of incredulity in the little boy, who is got into *Guy of Warwick*, and the *Seven Champions*, and who shakes his head at the veracity of *Æsop's Fables*, —is Steele's or Addison's. * The account of the two sisters, one of whom held her head up higher than ordinary, from having on a pair of flowered garters, and of the married lady who complained to the *Tatler* of the neglect of her husband, are unquestionably Steele's. If the *Tatler* is not inferior to the *Spectator* in manners and character, it is very superior to it in the interest of many of the stories. Several of the incidents related by Steele have never been surpassed in the heart-rending pathos of private distress. We might refer to those of the lover and his mistress when the

* It is Steele's; and the whole paper (No. 95.) is in his most delightful manner. The dream about the mistress, however, is given to Addison by the Editors, and the general style of that number is his; though, from the story's being related personally of Bickerstaff, who is also represented as having been at that time in the army, we conclude it to have originally come from Steele, perhaps in the course of conversation. The particular incident is much more like a story of his than of Addison's.—H. T.

theatre caught fire, of the bridegroom who, by accident, kills his bride on the day of their marriage, the story of Mr Eustace and his wife, and the fine dream about his own mistress when a youth. What has given its superior popularity to the *Spectator*, is the greater gravity of its pretensions, its moral dissertations and critical reasonings, by which we confess we are less edified than by other things. Systems and opinions change, but nature is always true. It is the extremely moral and didactic tone of the *Spectator* which makes us apt to think of Addison (according to Mandeville's sarcasm) as "a parson in a tie-wig." Some of the moral essays are, however, exquisitely beautiful and happy. Such are the reflections in Westminster Abbey, on the Royal Exchange, and some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonizing. His critical essays we do not think quite so good. We prefer Steele's occasional selection of beautiful poetical passages, without any affectation of analysing their beauties, to Addison's fine spun theories. The best criticism in the *Spectator*, that on the *Cartoons* of Raphael, is by Steele. We owed this acknowledgment to a writer who has so often put us

in good humour with ourselves and every thing about us, when few things else could.*

W. H.

No. VI.

ON COMMON-PLACE PEOPLE.

AGREEABLY to our chivalrous as well as domestic character, and in order to shew further in what sort of spirit we shall hereafter confer blame and praise,—whom we shall cut up for the benefit of humanity, and to whom apply our healing balsams, we have thought fit, in our present Number, to take the part of a very numerous and ill-treated body of persons, known by the various appellations of common-place people, dull fellows,—or people who have nothing to say.

It is perhaps wrong, indeed, to call these persons

* We had in our hands the other day an original copy of the *Tatler*, and a list of the subscribers. It is curious to see some names there which we should hardly think of, (that of Sir Isaac Newton is among them,) and also to observe the degree of interest excited by those of the different persons, which is not adjusted according to the rules of the Herald's College.

common-place. Those who are the most vehement in objecting to them have the truest right to the title, however little they may suspect it; but of this more hereafter. It is a name by which the others are very commonly known; though they might rather be called persons of simple common sense, and, in fact, have just enough of that valuable quality to inspire them with the very quietness, which brings them into so much contempt.

We need not, however, take any pains to describe a set of people so well known. They are, of course, what none of our readers are, but many are acquainted with. They are the more silent part of companies, and generally the best behaved people at table. They are the best of dumb waiters near the lady of the house. They are always at leisure to help you to good things, if not to say them. They will supply your absence of mind for you while you are talking, and believe you are taking sugar for pepper. Above all,—which ought to recommend them to the very hardest of their antagonists, they are uninquiring laughers at jokes, and most exemplary listeners.

Now, we do not say that these are the very best of companions, or that, when we wished to be particularly amused or informed, we should invite

them to our houses, or go to see them at theirs; all we demand is, that they should be kindly and respectfully treated when they are by, and not insolently left out of the pale of discourse, purely because they may not bring with them as much as they find, or say as brilliant things as we imagine we do ourselves.

This is one of the faults of over-civilization. In a stage of society like the present, there is an intellectual as well as personal coxcombry apt to prevail, which leads people to expect from each other a certain dashing turn of mind, and an appearance at least of having ideas, whether they can afford them or not. Their minds endeavour to put on intelligent attitudes, just as their bodies do graceful ones; and every one, who, from conscious modesty, or from not thinking about the matter, does not play the same monkey tricks with his natural deficiency, is set down for a dull fellow, and treated with a sort of scornful resentment for differing with the others. It is equally painful and amusing to see how the latter will look upon an honest fellow of this description, if they happen to find him in a company where they think he has no business. On the first entrance of one of these intolerant men of wisdom,—to see, of course, a brilliant friend of his,—he concludes

that all the party are equally lustrous; but finding, by degrees, no flashes from an unfortunate gentleman on his right, he turns stiffly towards him at the first common-place remark, measures him from head to foot with a kind of wondering indifference, and then falls to stirring his tea with a half-inquiring glance at the rest of the company, —just as much as to say, " a fellow not over-burthened, eh?"—or, " who the devil has Tom got here?"

Like all who are tyrannically given, and of a bullying turn of mind,—which is by no means confined to those who talk loudest,—these persons are apt to be as obsequious and dumb-stricken before men of whom they have a lofty opinion, as they are otherwise in the case above mentioned. This, indeed, is not always the case; but you may sometimes find out one of the cast by seeing him waiting with open mouth and impatient eyes for the brilliant things which the great Gentleman to whom he has been introduced is bound to utter. The party, perhaps, are waiting for dinner, and as silent as most Englishmen, not very well known to each other, are upon such occasions. Our hero waits with impatience to hear the celebrated person open his mouth, and is at length gratified; but not hearing very distinctly, asks his next neigh-

bour, in a serious and earnest whisper, what it was.

Pray, Sir, what was it that Mr W. said?

He says, that it is particularly cold.

Oh—particularly cold.

The Gentleman thinks this no very profound remark for so great a man, but puts on as patient a face as he can, and, refreshing himself with shifting one knee over the other, waits anxiously for the next observation. After a little silence, broken only by a hem or two, and by somebody's begging pardon of a gentleman next him for touching his shoe, Mr W. is addressed by a friend, and the stranger is all attention.

By the by, W. how did you get home last night?

Oh very well, thank'ye; I could'nt get a coach, but it was'nt very rainy, and I was soon there, and jumped into bed.

Ah—there's nothing like bed after getting one's coat wet.

Nothing, indeed. I had the clothes round me in a twinkling, and in two minutes was as fast as a church.

Here the conversation drops again; and our delighter in intellect cannot hide from himself his disappointment. The description of pulling the clothes round, he thinks, might have been much

more piquant; and the simile—as fast as a church,—appears to him wonderfully common-place from a man of wit. But such is his misfortune. He has no eyes but for something sparkling or violent; and no more expects to find any thing simple in genius, than any thing tolerable in the want of it.

Persons impatient of other's deficiencies are in fact likely to be equally undiscerning of their merits; and are not aware, in either case, how much they are exposing the deficiencies on their own side. Not only, however, do they get into this dilemma, but what is more, they are lowering their respectability beneath that of the dullest person in the room. They shew themselves deficient, not merely in the qualities they miss in him, but in those which he really possesses, such as self-knowledge and good temper. Were they as wise as they pretend to be, they would equal him in these points, and know how to extract something good from them in spite of his deficiency in the other; for intellectual qualities are not the only ones that excite the reflections, or conciliate the regard, of the truly intelligent,—of those who can study human nature in all its bearings, and love it or sympathize with it, for all its affections. The best part of pleasure is the communication of it. Why must we be perpetually craving for amuse-

ment or information for others, (an appetite which, after all, will be seldom acknowledged,) and never think of bestowing them ourselves? Again, as the best part of pleasure is that we have just mentioned, the best proof of intellectual power is that of extracting fertility from barrenness, or so managing the least cultivated mind, which we may happen to stumble upon, as to win something from it. Setting even this talent aside, there are occasions when it is refreshing to escape from the turmoil and final nothingness of the understanding, and repose upon that contentedness of mediocrity, which seems to have attained its end without the trouble of wisdom. It has often delighted me to observe a profound thinker of my acquaintance, when a good-natured person of ordinary understanding has been present. He is reckoned severe, as it is called, in many of his opinions; and is thought particularly to overrate intellectual qualities in general; and yet it is beautiful to see how he will let down his mind to the other's level, taking pleasure in his harmless enjoyment, and assenting to a thousand truisms, one after another, as familiar to him as his finger-ends. The reason is, that he pierces deeper into the nature of the human being beside him, can make his very deficiencies subservient to his own speculations, and,

above all, knows that there is something worth all the knowledge upon earth,—which is happiness and a genial nature. It is thus, that the sunshine of happy faces is reflected upon our own. We may even find a beam of it in every thing that Heaven looks upon. The dullest minds do not vegetate for nothing, any more than the grass in a green lawn. We do not require the trees to talk with us, or get impatient at the monotonous quiet of the fields and hedges. We love them for their contrast to noise and bustle, for their presenting to us something native and elementary, for the peaceful thoughts they suggest to us, and the part they bear in the various beauty of creation.

Is a bird's feather exhibited in company, or a piece of sea-weed, or a shell that contained the stupidest of created beings,—every one is happy to look at it, and the most fastidious pretender in the room will delight to expatiate on its beauty and contrivance. Let this teach him charity and good sense, and inform him, that it is the grossest of all coxcombry, to dwell with admiration on a piece of insensibility, however beautiful, and find nothing to excite pleasing or profitable reflections in the commonest of his fellow men.

H. T.

No. VII.

ON MODERN COMEDY.

THE question which has often been asked, *Why there are so few good modern Comedies?* appears in a great measure to answer itself. It is because so many excellent Comedies have been written, that there are none written at present. Comedy naturally wears itself out—destroys the very food on which it lives; and by constantly and successfully exposing the follies and weaknesses of mankind to ridicule, in the end leaves itself nothing worth laughing at. It holds the mirror up to nature; and men, seeing their most striking peculiarities and defects pass in gay review before them, learn either to avoid or conceal them. It is not the criticism which the public taste exercises upon the stage. but the criticism which the stage exercises upon public manners, that is fatal to comedy, by rendering the subject-matter of it tame, correct, and spiritless. We are drilled into a sort of stupid decorum, and forced to wear the same dull uniform of outward appearance; and yet it is asked, why the Comic Muse does not point, as she was wont, at the peculiarities of our gait and gesture, and exhibit the picturesque contrast of our

dress and costume, in all that graceful variety in which she delights. The genuine source of comic writing,

"Where it must live, or have no life at all,"

is undoubtedly to be found in the distinguishing peculiarities of men and manners. Now, this distinction can subsist, so as to be strong, pointed, and general, only while the manners of different classes are formed immediately by their particular circumstances, and the characters of individuals by their natural temperament and situation, without being everlastingly modified and neutralized by intercourse with the world—by knowledge and education. In a certain stage of society, men may be said to vegetate like trees, and to become rooted to the soil in which they grow. They have no idea of any thing beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action; they are, as it were, circumscribed, and defined by their particular circumstances; they are what their situation makes them, and nothing more. Each is absorbed in his own profession or pursuit, and each in his turn contracts that habitual peculiarity of manners and opinions, which makes him the subject of ridicule to others, and the sport of the Comic Muse. Thus the physician is nothing but a physician, the law-

yer is a mere lawyer, the scholar degenerates into a pedant, the country squire is a different species of being from the fine gentleman, the citizen and the courtier inhabit a different world, and even the affectation of certain characters, in aping the follies or vices of their betters, only serves to shew the immeasurable distance which custom or fortune has placed between them. Hence the early comic writers, taking advantage of this mixed and solid mass of ignorance, folly, pride, and prejudice, made those deep and lasting incisions into it, —have given those sharp and nice touches, that bold relief to their characters,—have opposed them in every variety of contrast and collision, of conscious self-satisfaction and mutual antipathy, with a power which can only find full scope in the same rich and inexhaustible materials. But in proportion as comic genius succeeds in taking off the mask from ignorance and conceit, as it teaches us to

"See ourselves as others see us,"—

in proportion as we are brought out on the stage together, and our prejudices clash one against the other, our sharp angular points wear off; we are no longer rigid in absurdity, passionate in folly, and we prevent the ridicule directed at our habitual foibles, by laughing at them ourselves.

If it be said, that there is the same fund of absurdity and prejudice in the world as ever—that there are the same unaccountable perversities lurking at the bottom of every breast,—I should answer, be it so: but at least we keep our follies to ourselves as much as possible—we palliate, shuffle, and equivocate with them—they sneak into bye-corners, and do not, like *Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims*, march along the high road, and form a procession—they do not entrench themselves strongly behind custom and precedent—they are not embodied in professions and ranks in life—they are not organized into a system—they do not openly resort to a standard, but are a sort of straggling nondescripts, that, like *Wart*, "Present no mark to the foeman." As to the gross and palpable absurdities of modern manners, they are too shallow and barefaced, and those who affect, are too little *serious* in them, to make them worth the detection of the Comic Muse. They proceed from an idle, impudent affectation of folly in general, in the dashing *bravura* style, not from an infatuation with any of its characteristic modes. In short, the proper object of ridicule is *egotism;* and a man cannot be a very great egotist, who every day sees himself represented on the stage. We are deficient in Comedy, because we are without characters

in real life—as we have no historical pictures, because we have no faces proper for them.

It is, indeed, the evident tendency of all literature to generalize and *dissipate* character, by giving men the same artificial education, and the same common stock of ideas; so that we see all objects from the same point of view, and through the same reflected medium;—we learn to exist, not in ourselves, but in books;—all men become alike mere readers—spectators, not actors in the scene, and lose all proper personal identity. The templar, the wit, the man of pleasure, and the man of fashion, the courtier and the citizen, the knight and the squire, the lover and the miser—*Lovelace*, *Lothario*, *Will. Honeycomb*, and *Sir Roger de Coverley*, *Sparkish*, and *Lord Foppington*, *Western* and *Tom Jones*, *my Father*, and *my Uncle Toby*, *Millamant* and *Sir Sampson Legend*, *Don Quixote* and *Sancho*, *Gil Blas* and *Guzman d'Alfarache*, *Count Fathom* and *Joseph Surface*,—have all met, and exchanged common-places on the barren plains of the *haute littérature*—toil slowly on to the Temple of Science, seen a long way off upon a level, and end in one dull compound of politics, criticism, chemistry, and metaphysics!

We cannot expect to reconcile opposite things. If, for example, any of us were to put ourselves

into the stage-coach from Salisbury to London, it is more than probable we should not meet with the same number of odd accidents, or ludicrous distresses on the road, that befel *Parson Adams;* but why, if we get into a common vehicle, and submit to the conveniences of modern travelling, should we complain of the want of adventures? Modern manners may be compared to a modern stage-coach: our limbs may be a little cramped with the confinement, and we may grow drowsy; but we arrive safe, without any very amusing or very sad accident, at our journey's end.

Again, the alterations which have taken place in conversation and dress in the same period, have been by no means favourable to Comedy. The present prevailing style of conversation is not *personal*, but critical and analytical. It consists almost entirely in the discussion of general topics, in dissertations on philosophy or taste: and Congreve would be able to derive no better hints from the conversations of our toilettes or drawing-rooms, for the exquisite raillery or poignant repartee of his dialogues, than from a deliberation of the Royal Society. In the same manner, the extreme simplicity and graceful uniformity of modern dress, however favourable to the arts, has certainly stript Comedy of one of its richest orna-

ments and most expressive symbols. The sweeping pall and buskin, and nodding plume, were never more serviceable to Tragedy, than the enormous hoops and stiff stays worn by the belles of former days were to the intrigues of Comedy. They assisted wonderfully in heightening the mysteries of the passion, and adding to the intricacy of the plot. Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not have spared the dresses of Vandyke. These strange fancy-dresses, perverse disguises, and counterfeit shapes, gave an agreeable scope to the imagination. "That sevenfold fence" was a sort of foil to the lusciousness of the dialogue, and a barrier against the sly encroachments of *double entendre*. The greedy eye and bold hand of indiscretion were repressed, which gave a greater licence to the tongue. The senses were not to be gratified in an instant. Love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief, and the desires might wander for ever round the circumference of a quilted petticoat, or find a rich lodging in the flowers of a damask stomacher. There was room for years of patient contrivance, for a thousand thoughts, schemes, conjectures, hopes, fears, and wishes. There seemed no end of difficulties and delays; to overcome so many obstacles was the work of ages. A mistress was an an-

gel concealed behind whalebone, flounces, and brocade. What an undertaking to penetrate through the disguise! What an impulse must it give to the blood, what a keenness to the invention, what a volubility to the tongue! "Mr Smirk, you are a brisk man," was then the most significant commendation. But now-a-days—A woman can be *but undressed!*

The same account might be extended to Tragedy. Aristotle has long since said, that Tragedy purifies the mind by terror and pity; that is, substitutes an artificial and intellectual interest for real passion. Tragedy, like Comedy, must therefore defeat itself; for its patterns must be drawn from the living models within the breast, from feeling or from observation; and the materials of Tragedy cannot be found among a people, who are the habitual spectators of Tragedy, whose interests and passions are not their own, but ideal, remote, sentimental, and abstracted. It is for this reason chiefly, we conceive, that the highest efforts of the Tragic Muse are in general the earliest; where the strong impulses of nature are not lost in the refinements and glosses of art; where the writers themselves, and those whom they saw about them, had "warm hearts of flesh and blood beating in their bosoms, and were not embowelled of their

natural entrails, and stuffed with paltry blurred sheets of paper." Shakspeare, with all his genius, could not have written as he did, if he had lived in the present times. Nature would not have presented itself to him in the same freshness and vigour; he must have seen it through all the refractions of successive dulness, and his powers would have languished in the dense atmosphere of logic and criticism. "Men's minds," he somewhere says, "are parcel of their fortunes;" and his age was necessary to him. It was this which enabled him to grapple at once with nature, and which stamped his characters with her image and superscription.

W. H.

No. VIII.

ON MR KEAN'S IAGO.

We certainly think Mr Kean's performance of the part of Iago one of the most extraordinary exhibitions on the stage. There is no one within our remembrance who has so completely foiled the critics as this celebrated actor: one sagacious person imagines that he must perform a part in a

certain manner,—another virtuoso chalks out a different path for him; and when the time comes, he does the whole off in a way that neither of them had the least conception of, and which both of them are therefore very ready to condemn as entirely wrong. It was ever the trick of genius to be thus. We confess that Mr Kean has thrown us out more than once. For instance, we are very much inclined to adopt the opinion of a contemporary critic, that his *Richard* is not gay enough, and that his *Iago* is not grave enough. This he may perhaps conceive to be the mere caprice of idle criticism; but we will try to give our reasons, and shall leave them to Mr Kean's better judgment. It is to be remembered, then, that *Richard* was a princely villain, borne along in a sort of triumphal car of royal state, buoyed up with the hopes and privileges of his birth, reposing even on the sanctity of religion, trampling on his devoted victims without remorse, and who looked out and laughed from the high watch-tower of his confidence and his expectations on the desolation and misery he had caused around him. He held on his way, unquestioned, "hedged in with the divinity of kings," amenable to no tribunal, and abusing his power *in contempt of mankind.* But as for *Iago*, we conceive differently of him.

He had not the same natural advantages. He was a mere adventurer in mischief, a pains-taking plodding knave, without patent or pedigree, who was obliged to work his up-hill way by wit, not by will, and to be the founder of his own fortune. He was, if we may be allowed a vulgar allusion, a sort of prototype of modern Jacobinism, who thought that talents ought to decide the place,—a man of "morbid sensibility," (in the fashionable phrase,) full of distrust, of hatred, of anxious and corroding thoughts, and who, though he might assume a temporary superiority over others by superior adroitness, and pride himself in his skill, could not be supposed to assume it as a matter of course, as if he had been entitled to it from his birth. We do not here mean to enter into the characters of the two men, but something must be allowed to the difference of their situations. There might be the same insensibility in both as to the end in view, but there could not well be the same security as to the success of the means. *Iago* had to pass through a different ordeal: he had no appliances and means to boot; no royal road to the completion of his tragedy. His pretensions were not backed by authority; they were not baptized at the font; they were not holy-water proof. He had the whole to answer for in his

own person, and could not shift the responsibility to the heads of others. Mr Kean's *Richard* was, therefore, we think, deficient in something of that regal jollity and reeling triumph of success which the part would bear; but this we can easily account for, because it is the traditional commonplace idea of the character, that he is to "play the dog—to bite and snarl."—The extreme unconcern and laboured levity of his *Iago*, on the contrary, is a refinement and original device of the actor's own mind, and therefore deserves consideration. The character of *Iago*, in fact, belongs to a class of characters common to Shakspeare, and at the same time peculiar to him, namely, that of great intellectual activity, accompanied with a total want of moral principle, and therefore displaying itself at the constant expence of others, making use of reason as a pander to will—employing its ingenuity and its resources to palliate its own crimes, and aggravate the faults of others, and seeking to confound the practical distinctions of right and wrong, by referring them to some overstrained standard of speculative refinement.—Some persons, more nice than wise, have thought the whole of the character of *Iago* unnatural. Shakspeare, who was quite as good a philosopher as he was a poet, thought otherwise. He knew that the love

of power, which is another name for the love of mischief, was natural to man. He would know this as well or better than if it had been demonstrated to him by a logical diagram, merely from seeing children paddle in the dirt, or kill flies for sport. We might ask those who think the character of *Iago* not natural, why they go to see it performed, but from the interest it excites, the sharper edge which it sets on their curiosity and imagination? Why do we go to see tragedies in general? Why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers of dreadful fires and shocking murders, but for the same reason? Why do so many persons frequent executions and trials, or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost? Whenever this principle is not under the restraint of humanity, or the sense of moral obligation, there are no excesses to which it will not of itself give rise, without the assistance of any other motive, either of passion or self-interest. *Iago* is only an extreme instance of the kind; that is, of diseased intellectual activity, with an almost perfect indifference to moral good or evil, or rather with a pre-

ference of the latter, because it falls more in with his favourite propensity, gives greater zest to his thoughts, and scope to his actions.—Be it observed, too, (for the sake of those who are for squaring all human actions by the maxims of Rochefoucault,) that he is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; that he runs all risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage; and is himself the dupe and victim of his ruling passion—an incorrigible love of mischief—an insatiable craving after action of the most difficult and dangerous kind. Our "Ancient" is a philosopher, who fancies that a lie that kills, has more point in it than an alliteration or an antithesis; who thinks a fatal experiment on the peace of a family a better thing than watching the palpitations in the heart of a flea in an air-pump; who plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his understanding, and stabs men in the dark to prevent *ennui*. Now this, though it be sport, yet it is dreadful sport. There is no room for trifling and indifference, nor scarcely for the appearance of it; the very object of his whole plot is to keep his faculties stretched on the rack, in a state of watch and ward, in a sort of breathless suspense, without a moment's interval of repose. He has a desperate stake to play for, like a man who fences with poisoned

weapons, and has business enough on his hands to call for the whole stock of his sober circumspection, his dark duplicity, and insidious gravity. He resembles a man who sits down to play at chess, for the sake of the difficulty and complication of the game, and who immediately becomes absorbed in it. His amusements, if they are amusements, are severe and saturnine—even his wit blisters. His gaiety arises from the success of his treachery; his ease from the sense of the torture he has inflicted on others. Even, if other circumstances permitted it, the part he has to play with *Othello* requires that he should assume the most serious concern, and something of the plausibility of a confessor. "His cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam." He is repeatedly called "honest *Iago*," which looks as if there were something suspicious in his appearance, which admitted a different construction. The tone which he adopts in the scenes with *Roderigo*, *Desdemona*, and *Cassio*, is only a relaxation from the more arduous business of the play. Yet there is in all his conversation an inveterate misanthropy, a licentious keenness of perception, which is always sagacious of evil, and snuffs up the tainted scent of its quarry with rancorous delight. An exuberance of spleen is the essence of the charac-

ter.—The view which we have here taken of the subject (if at all correct) will not therefore justify the extreme alteration which Mr Kean has introduced into the part. Actors in general have been struck only with the wickedness of the character, and have exhibited an assassin going to the place of execution. Mr Kean has abstracted the wit of the character, and makes *Iago* appear throughout an excellent good fellow, and lively bottle-companion. But though we do not wish him to be represented as a monster, or fiend, we see no reason why he should instantly be converted into a pattern of comic gaiety and good humour. The light which illumines the character should rather resemble the flashes of lightning in the mirky sky, which make the darkness more terrible. Mr Kean's *Iago* is, we suspect, too much in the sun. His manner of acting the part would have suited better with the character of *Edmund* in *King Lear*, who, though in other respects much the same, has a spice of gallantry in his constitution, and has the favour and countenance of the ladies, which always gives a man the smug appearance of a bridegroom!

W. H.

No. IX.

ON THE LOVE OF THE COUNTRY.

To the Editor of the Round Table.

Sir,—I do not know that any one has ever explained satisfactorily the true source of our attachment to natural objects, or of that soothing emotion which the sight of the country hardly ever fails to infuse into the mind. Some persons have ascribed this feeling to the natural beauty of the objects themselves, others to the freedom from care, the silence and tranquillity which scenes of retirement afford—others to the healthy and innocent employments of a country life—others to the simplicity of country manners—and others to different causes; but none to the right one. All these causes may, I believe, have a share in producing this feeling; but there is another more general principle, which has been left untouched, and which I shall here explain, endeavouring to be as little sentimental as the subject will admit.

Rousseau, in his Confessions, (the most valuable of all his works,) relates, that when he took

possession of his room at Annecy, at the house of his beloved mistress and friend, he found that he could see "a little spot of green" from his window, which endeared his situation the more to him, because, he says, it was the first time he had had this object constantly before him since he left Boissy, the place where he was at school when a child.* Some such feeling as that here described will be found lurking at the bottom of all our attachments of this sort. Were it not for the recollections habitually associated with them, natural objects could not interest the mind in the manner they do. No doubt, the sky is beautiful; the clouds sail majestically along its bosom; the sun is cheering; there is something exquisitely graceful in the manner in which a plant or tree puts forth its branches; the motion with which they bend and tremble in the evening breeze is soft and lovely; there is music in the babbling of a brook; the view from the top of a mountain is full of grandeur; nor can we behold the ocean with indifference. Or, as the Minstrel sweetly sings—

* Pope also declares that he had a particular regard for an old post which stood in the court-yard before the house where he was brought up.

" Oh how can'st thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
Oh how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!"

It is not, however, the beautiful and magnificent alone that we admire in Nature; the most insignificant and rudest objects are often found connected with the strongest emotions; we become attached to the most common and familiar images as to the face of a friend whom we have long known, and from whom we have received many benefits. It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in solitude, when the mind takes the strongest hold of things, and clings with the fondest interest to whatever strikes its attention; with change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends; it is because they have surrounded us in almost all situations, in joy and in sorrow, in pleasure and in pain; because they have been one chief source and nourishment of our feelings,

and a part of our being, that we love them as we do ourselves.

There is, generally speaking, the same foundation for our love of Nature as for all our habitual attachments, namely, association of ideas. But this is not all. That which distinguishes this attachment from others is the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects; the associations connected with any one object extending to the whole class. My having been attached to any particular person does not make me feel the same attachment to the next person I may chance to meet; but, if I have once associated strong feelings of delight with the objects of natural scenery, the tie becomes indissoluble, and I shall ever after feel the same attachment to other objects of the same sort. I remember when I was abroad, the trees, and grass, and wet leaves, rustling in the walks of the Thuilleries, seemed to be as much English, to be as much the same trees and grass, that I had always been used to, as the sun shining over my head was the same sun which I saw in England; the faces only were foreign to me. Whence comes this difference? It arises from our always imperceptibly connecting the idea of the individual with man, and only the idea of the class with natural objects. In the one case,

the external appearance or physical structure is the least thing to be attended to; in the other, it is every thing. The springs that move the human form, and make it friendly or adverse to me, lie hid within it. There is an infinity of motives, passions, and ideas, contained in that narrow compass, of which I know nothing, and in which I have no share. Each individual is a world to himself, governed by a thousand contradictory and wayward impulses. I can, therefore, make no inference from one individual to another; nor can my habitual sentiments, with respect to any individual, extend beyond himself to others. But it is otherwise with respect to Nature. There is neither hypocrisy, caprice, nor mental reservation in her favours. Our intercourse with her is not liable to accident or change, interruption or disappointment. She smiles on us still the same. Thus, to give an obvious instance, if I have once enjoyed the cool shade of a tree, and been lulled into a deep repose by the sound of a brook running at its feet, I am sure that wherever I can find a tree and a brook, I can enjoy the same pleasure again. Hence, when I imagine these objects, I can easily form a mystic personification of the friendly power that inhabits them, Dryad or Naiad, offering its cool fountain

or its tempting shade. Hence the origin of the Grecian mythology. All objects of the same kind being the same, not only in their appearance, but in their practical uses, we habitually confound them together under the same general idea; and, whatever fondness we may have conceived for one, is immediately placed to the common account. The most opposite kinds and remote trains of feeling gradually go to enrich the same sentiment; and in our love of Nature, there is all the force of individual attachment, combined with the most airy abstraction. It is this circumstance which gives that refinement, expansion, and wild interest to feelings of this sort, when strongly excited, which every one must have experienced who is a true lover of Nature. The sight of the setting sun does not affect me so much from the beauty of the object itself, from the glory kindled through the glowing skies, the rich broken columns of light, or the dying streaks of day, as that it indistinctly recals to me numberless thoughts and feelings with which, through many a year and season, I have watched his bright descent in the warm summer evenings, or beheld him struggling to cast a "farewel sweet" through the thick clouds of winter. I love to see the trees first covered with leaves in the spring, the primroses

peeping out from some sheltered bank, and the innocent lambs running races on the soft green turf; because, at that birth-time of Nature, I have always felt sweet hopes and happy wishes—which have not been fulfilled! The dry reeds rustling on the side of a stream,—the woods swept by the loud blast,—the dark massy foliage of autumn,—the grey trunks and naked branches of the trees in winter,—the sequestered copse and wide extended heath,—the warm sunny showers, and December snows,—have all charms for me; there is no object, however trifling or rude, that has not, in some mood or other, found the way to my heart; and I might say, in the words of the poet,

> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Thus Nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks.

> ——————"Nature did ne'er betray
> The heart that lov'd her, but through all the years
> Of this our life, it is her privilege
> To lead from joy to joy."

For there is that consent and mutual harmony among all her works, one undivided spirit pervad-

ing them throughout, that, if we have once knit ourselves in hearty fellowship to any of them, they will never afterwards appear as strangers to us, but, which ever way we turn, we shall find a secret power to have gone out before us, moulding them into such shapes as fancy loves, informing them with life and sympathy, bidding them put on their festive looks and gayest attire at our approach, and to pour all their sweets and choicest treasures at our feet. For him, then, who has well acquainted himself with Nature's works, she wears always one face, and speaks the same well-known language, striking on the heart, amidst unquiet thoughts and the tumult of the world, like the music of one's native tongue heard in some far off country.

We do not connect the same feelings with the works of art as with those of nature, because we refer them to man, and associate with them the separate interests and passions which we know belong to those who are the authors or possessors of them. Nevertheless, there are some such objects, as a cottage, or a village church, which excite in us the same sensations as the sight of nature, and which are, indeed, almost always included in descriptions of natural scenery.

" Or from the mountain's sides
View wilds and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires,
And hear their simple bell."

Which is in part, no doubt, because they are surrounded with natural objects, and, in a populous country, inseparable from them; and also because the human interest they excite relates to manners and feelings which are simple, common, such as all can enter into, and which, therefore, always produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.

A.

No. X.

ON POSTHUMOUS FAME,—

Whether Shakspeare was influenced by a love of it?

It has been much disputed whether Shakspeare was actuated by the love of fame, though the question has been thought by others not to admit of any doubt, on the ground that it was impossible for any man of great genius to be without this feeling. It was supposed, that that immortality, which was the natural inheritance of men

of powerful genius, must be ever present to their minds, as the reward, the object, and the animating spring, of all their efforts. This conclusion does not appear to be well founded, and that for the following reasons:

First, The love of fame is the offspring of taste, rather than of genius. The love of fame implies a knowledge of its existence. The men of the greatest genius, whether poets or philosophers, who lived in the first ages of society, only just emerging from the gloom of ignorance and barbarism, could not be supposed to have much idea of those long trails of lasting glory which they were to leave behind them, and of which there were as yet no examples. But, after such men, inspired by the love of truth and nature, have struck out those lights which become the gaze and admiration of after times,—when those who succeed in distant generations read with wondering rapture the works which the bards and sages of antiquity have bequeathed to them,—when they contemplate the imperishable power of intellect which survives the stroke of death and the revolutions of empire,—it is then that the passion for fame becomes an habitual feeling in the mind, and that men naturally wish to excite the same sentiments of admiration in others which they

themselves have felt, and to transmit their names with the same honours to posterity. It is from the fond enthusiastic veneration with which we recal the names of the celebrated men of past times, and the idolatrous worship we pay to their memories, that we learn what a delicious thing fame is, and would willingly make any efforts or sacrifices to be thought of in the same way. It is in the true spirit of this feeling that a modern writer exclaims—

> "Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
> The poets—who on earth have made us heirs
> Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays!
> Oh! might my name be number'd among theirs,
> Then gladly would I end my mortal days!"

The love of fame is a species of emulation; or, in other words, the love of admiration is in proportion to the admiration with which the works of the highest genius have inspired us, to the delight we have received from their habitual contemplation, and to our participation in the general enthusiasm with which they have been regarded by mankind. Thus there is little of this feeling discoverable in the Greek writers, whose ideas of posthumous fame seem to have been confined to the glory of heroic actions; whereas the Roman

poets and orators, stimulated by the reputation which their predecessors had acquired, and having those exquisite models constantly before their eyes, are full of it. So Milton, whose capacious mind was embued with the rich stores of sacred and of classic lore, to whom learning opened her inmost page, and whose eye seemed to be ever bent back to the great models of antiquity, was, it is evident, deeply impressed with a feeling of lofty emulation, and a strong desire to produce some work of lasting and equal reputation:—

> ——————" Nor sometimes forget
> Those other two, equall'd with me in fate,
> So were I equall'd with them in renown,
> Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias and Phineus prophets old." *

Spenser, who was a man of learning, had a high opinion of the regard due to "famous poets' wit;" and Lord Bacon, whose vanity is as well known as his excessive adulation of that of others, asks, in a tone of proud exultation, "Have not the poems of Homer lasted five-and-twenty hundred years, and not a syllable of them is lost?" Chaucer seems to have derived his notions of fame more

* See also the passage in his prose works relating to the first design of *Paradise Lost*.

immediately from the reputation acquired by the Italian poets, his contemporaries, which had at that time spread itself over Europe; while the latter, who were the first to unlock the springs of ancient learning, and who slaked their thirst of knowledge at that pure fountain-head, would naturally imbibe the same feeling from its highest source. Thus, Dante has conveyed the finest image that can perhaps be conceived of the power of this principle over the human mind, when he describes the heroes and celebrated men of antiquity as "serene and smiling," though in the shades of death,

> ——————"Because on earth their names
> In fame's eternal volume shine for aye."

But it is not so in Shakspeare. There is scarcely the slightest trace of any such feeling in his writings, nor any appearance of anxiety for their fate, or of a desire to perfect them, or make them worthy of that immortality to which they were destined. And this indifference may be accounted for from the very circumstance, that he was almost entirely a man of genius, or that in him this faculty bore sway over every other: he was either not intimately conversant with the productions of the great writers who had gone before

him, or at least was not much indebted to them: he revelled in the world of observation and of fancy; and perhaps his mind was of too prolific and active a kind to dwell with intense and continued interest on the images of beauty or of grandeur presented to it by the genius of others. He seemed scarcely to have an individual existence of his own, but to borrow that of others at will, and to pass successively through "every variety of untried being,"—to be now *Hamlet*, now *Othello*, now *Lear*, now *Falstaff*, now *Ariel*. In the mingled interests and feelings belonging to this wide range of imaginary reality, in the tumult and rapid transitions of this waking dream, the author could not easily find time to think of himself, nor wish to embody that personal identity in idle reputation after death, of which he was so little tenacious while living. To feel a strong desire that others should think highly of us, it is, in general, necessary that we should think highly of ourselves. There is something of egotism, and even pedantry, in this sentiment; and there is no author who was so little tinctured with these as Shakspeare. The passion for fame, like other passions, requires an exclusive and exaggerated admiration of its object, and attaches more consequence to literary attainments and pursuits than

they really possess. Shakspeare had looked too much abroad into the world, and his views of things were of too universal and comprehensive a cast, not to have taught him to estimate the importance of posthumous fame, according to its true value and relative proportions. Though he might have some conception of his future fame, he could not but feel the contrast between that and his actual situation; and, indeed, he complains bitterly of the latter in one of his sonnets. * He would perhaps think, that, to be the idol of posterity, when we are no more, was hardly a full compensation for being the object of the glance and scorn of fools while we are living; and that, in truth, this universal fame so much vaunted, was a vague phantom of blind enthusiasm; for what is the amount even of Shakspeare's fame?—

* "Oh! for my sake do you with fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmless deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

At another time, we find him "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope:" so little was Shakspeare, as far as we can learn, enamoured of himself!

That, in that very country which boasts his genius and his birth, perhaps not one person in ten has ever heard of his name, or read a syllable of his writings!

We will add another observation connected with this subject, which is, that men of the greatest genius produce their works with too much facility (and, as it were, spontaneously) to require the love of fame as a stimulus to their exertions, or to make them seem deserving of the admiration of mankind as their reward. It is, indeed, one characteristic mark of the highest class of excellence to appear to come naturally from the mind of the author, without consciousness or effort. The work seems like inspiration—to be the gift of some God, or of the Muse. But it is the sense of difficulty which enhances the admiration of power, both in ourselves and in others. Hence it is that there is nothing so remote from vanity as true genius. It is almost as natural for those who are endowed with the highest powers of the human mind to produce the miracles of art, as for other men to breathe or move. Correggio, who is said to have produced some of his divinest works almost without having seen a picture, probably did not know that he had done any thing extraordinary.

Z.

No. XI.

ON HOGARTH'S MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE.

THE superiority of the pictures of Hogarth, which we have seen in the late collection at the British Institution, to the common prints, is confined chiefly to the *Marriage a-la-Mode*. We shall attempt to illustrate a few of their most striking excellencies, more particularly with reference to the expression of character. Their merits are indeed so prominent, and have been so often discussed, that it may be thought difficult to point out any new beauties; but they contain so much truth of nature, they present the objects to the eye under so many aspects and bearings, admit of so many constructions, and are so pregnant with meaning, that the subject is in a manner inexhaustible.

Boccacio, the most refined and sentimental of all the novel-writers, has been stigmatised as a mere inventor of licentious tales, because readers in general have only seized on those things in his works which were suited to their own taste, and have reflected their own grossness back upon the writer. So it has happened that the majority of critics having been most struck with the strong and de-

cided expression in Hogarth, the extreme delicacy and subtle gradations of character in his pictures have almost entirely escaped them. In the first picture of the *Marriage a-la-Mode*, the three figures of the young Nobleman, his intended Bride, and her inamorato, the Lawyer, shew how much Hogarth excelled in the power of giving soft and effeminate expression. They have, however, been less noticed than the other figures, which tell a plainer story, and convey a more palpable moral. Nothing can be more finely managed than the differences of character in these delicate personages. The Beau sits smiling at the looking-glass, with a reflected simper of self-admiration, and a languishing inclination of the head, while the rest of his body is perked up on his high heels with a certain air of tip-toe elevation. He is the Narcissus of the reign of George II. whose powdered peruke, ruffles, gold lace, and patches, divide his self-love unequally with his own person,—the true *Sir Plume* of his day;

> "Of amber-lidded snuff-box justly vain,
> And the nice conduct of a clouded cane."

There is the same felicity in the figure and attitude of the Bride, courted by the Lawyer. There is the utmost flexibility, and yielding softness in

her whole person, a listless languor and tremulous suspense in the expression of her face. It is the precise look and air which Pope has given to his favourite Belinda, just at the moment of the *Rape of the Lock*. The heightened glow, the forward intelligence, and loosened soul of love in the same face, in the assignation scene before the masquerade, form a fine and instructive contrast to the delicacy, timidity, and coy reluctance expressed in the first. The Lawyer in both pictures is much the same—perhaps too much so—though even this unmoved, unaltered appearance may be designed as characteristic. In both cases he has "a person, and a smooth dispose, framed to make women false." He is full of that easy good-humour and easy good opinion of himself, with which the sex are delighted. There is not a sharp angle in his face to obstruct his success, or give a hint of doubt or difficulty. His whole aspect is round and rosy, lively and unmeaning, happy without the least expence of thought, careless and inviting; and conveys a perfect idea of the uninterrupted glide and pleasing murmur of the soft periods that flow from his tongue.

The expression of the Bride in the Morning Scene is the most highly seasoned, and at the same time the most vulgar in the series. The figure, face,

and attitude of the Husband, are inimitable. Hogarth has with great skill contrasted the pale countenance of the husband with the yellow whitish colour of the marble chimney-piece behind him, in such a manner as to preserve the fleshy tone of the former. The airy splendour of the view of the inner-room in this picture is probably not exceeded by any of the productions of the Flemish School.

The Young Girl in the third picture, who is represented as the victim of fashionable profligacy, is unquestionably one of the Artist's *chef-d'œuvres*. The exquisite delicacy of the painting is only surpassed by the felicity and subtlety of the conception. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person, and the hardened indifference of her character. The vacant stillness, the docility to vice, the premature suppression of youthful sensibility, the doll-like mechanism of the whole figure, which seems to have no other feeling but a sickly sense of pain,—shew the deepest insight into human nature, and into the effects of those refinements in depravity, by which it has been good-naturedly asserted, that "vice loses half its evil in losing all its grossness." The story of this picture is in some parts very obscure and enigmatical. It is

certain that the Nobleman is not looking straitforward to the Quack, whom he seems to have been threatening with his cane, but that his eyes are turned up with an ironical leer of triumph to the Procuress. The commanding attitude and size of this woman, the swelling circumference of her dress, spread out like a turkey-cock's feathers,—the fierce, ungovernable, inveterate malignity of her countenance, which hardly needs the comment of the clasp-knife to explain her purpose, are all admirable in themselves, and still more so, as they are opposed to the mute insensibility, the elegant negligence of the dress, and the childish figure of the girl, who is supposed to be her *protegée*.—As for the Quack, there can be no doubt entertained about him. His face seems as if it were composed of salve, and his features exhibit all the chaos and confusion of the most gross, ignorant, and impudent empiricism.

The gradations of ridiculous affectation in the Music Scene are finely imagined and preserved. The preposterous, overstrained admiration of the Lady of Quality, the sentimental, insipid, patient delight of the Man, with his hair in papers, and sipping his tea,—the pert, smirking, conceited, half-distorted approbation of the figure next to him, the transition to the total insensibility of the

round face in profile, and then to the wonder of the Negro-boy at the rapture of his Mistress, form a perfect whole. The sanguine complexion and flame-coloured hair of the female Virtuoso throw an additional light on the character. This is lost in the print. The continuing the red colour of the hair into the back of the chair has been pointed out as one of those instances of alliteration in colouring, of which these pictures are every where full. The gross bloated appearance of the Italian Singer is well relieved by the hard features of the instrumental performer behind him, which might be carved of wood. The Negro-boy, holding the chocolate, both in expression, colour, and execution, is a masterpiece. The gay, lively derision of the other Negro-boy, playing with the Acteon, is an ingenious contrast to the profound amazement of the first. Some account has already been given of the two lovers in this picture. It is curious to observe the infinite activity of mind which the artist displays on every occasion. An instance occurs in the present picture. He has so contrived the papers in the hair of the Bride, as to make them look almost like a wreathe of half-blown flowers, while those which he has placed on the head of the musical Amateur very much resemble a *cheveux-de-fris* of horns,

which adorn and fortify the lack-lustre expression and mild resignation of the face beneath.

The Night Scene is inferior to the rest of the series. The attitude of the Husband, who is just killed, is one in which it would be impossible for him to stand or even to fall. It resembles the loose pasteboard figures they make for children. The characters in the last picture, in which the Wife dies, are all masterly. We would particularly refer to the captious, petulant self-sufficiency of the Apothecary, whose face and figure are constructed on exact physiognomical principles, and to the fine example of passive obedience and non-resistance in the Servant, whom he is taking to task, and whose coat of green and yellow livery is as long and melancholy as his face. The disconsolate look, the haggard eyes, the open mouth, the comb sticking in the hair, the broken, gapped teeth, which, as it were, hitch in an answer, every thing about him denotes the utmost perplexity and dismay.—The harmony and gradations of colour in this picture are uniformly preserved with the greatest nicety, and are well worthy the attention of the artist.

No. XII.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

It has been observed, that Hogarth's pictures are exceedingly unlike any other representations of the same kind of subjects—that they form a class, and have a character, peculiar to themselves. It may be worth while to consider in what this general distinction consists.

In the first place, they are, in the strictest sense, *Historical* pictures; and if what Fielding says be true, that his novel of *Tom Jones* ought to be regarded as an epic prose-poem, because it contained a regular developement of fable, manners, character, and passion, the compositions of Hogarth will, in like manner, be found to have a higher claim to the title of Epic Pictures, than many which have of late arrogated that denomination to themselves. When we say that Hogarth treated his subjects historically, we mean that his works represent the manners and humours of mankind in action, and their characters by varied expression. Every thing in his pictures has life and motion in it. Not only does the business of the scene never stand still, but every feature and muscle is

put into full play; the exact feeling of the moment is brought out, and carried to its utmost height, and then instantly seized and stamped on the canvass for ever. The expression is always taken *en passant*, in a state of progress or change, and, as it were, at the salient point. Besides the excellence of each individual face, the reflection of the expression from face to face, the contrast and struggle of particular motives and feelings in the different actors in the scene, as of anger, contempt, laughter, compassion, are conveyed in the happiest and most lively manner. His figures are not like the back-ground on which they are painted: even the pictures on the wall have a peculiar look of their own.—Again, with the rapidity, variety, and scope of history, Hogarth's heads have all the reality and correctness of portraits. He gives the extremes of character and expression, but he gives them with perfect truth and accuracy. This is, in fact, what distinguishes his compositions from all others of the same kind, that they are equally remote from caricature, and from mere still life. It of course happens in subjects from common life, that the painter can procure real models, and he can get them to sit as long as he pleases. Hence, in general, those attitudes and expressions have been chosen which could be as-

sumed the longest; and in imitating which, the artist, by taking pains and time, might produce almost as complete fac-similes as he could of a flower or a flower-pot, of a damask curtain, or a china vase. The copy was as perfect and as uninteresting in the one case as in the other. On the contrary, subjects of drollery and ridicule affording frequent examples of strange deformity and peculiarity of features, these have been eagerly seized by another class of artists, who, without subjecting themselves to the laborious drudgery of the Dutch School and their imitators, have produced our popular caricatures, by rudely copying or exaggerating the casual irregularities of the human countenance. Hogarth has equally avoided the faults of both these styles, the insipid tameness of the one, and the gross vulgarity of the other, so as to give to the productions of his pencil equal solidity and effect. For his faces go to the very verge of caricature, and yet never (we believe in any single instance) go beyond it: they take the very widest latitude, and yet we always see the links which bind them to nature: they bear all the marks and carry all the conviction of reality with them, as if we had seen the actual faces for the first time, from the precision, consistency, and good sense, with which the whole and every part is made out.

They exhibit the most uncommon features with the most uncommon expressions, but which are yet as familiar and intelligible as possible, because with all the boldness they have all the truth of nature. Hogarth has left behind him as many of these memorable faces, in their memorable moments, as perhaps most of us remember in the course of our lives, and has thus doubled the quantity of our observation.

We have, in a former paper, attempted to point out the fund of observation, physical and moral, contained in one set of these pictures, the *Marriage a-la-Mode*. The rest would furnish as many topics to descant upon, were the patience of the reader as inexhaustible as the painter's invention. But as this is not the case, we shall content ourselves with barely referring to some of those figures in the other pictures, which appear the most striking, and which we see not only while we are looking at them, but which we have before us at all other times.—For instance, who having seen can easily forget that exquisite frost-piece of religion and morality, the antiquated Prude in the Morning Scene; or that striking commentary on the *good old times*, the little wretched appendage of a Foot-boy, who crawls half famished and half frozen behind her? The French Man and Woman

in the Noon are the perfection of flighty affectation and studied grimace; the amiable *fraternization* of the two old Women saluting each other is not enough to be admired; and in the little Master, in the same national group, we see the early promise and personification of that eternal principle of wondrous self-complacency, proof against all circumstances, and which makes the French the only people who are vain even of being cuckolded and being conquered! Or shall we prefer to this the outrageous distress and unmitigated terrors of the Boy, who has dropped his dish of meat, and who seems red all over with shame and vexation, and bursting with the noise he makes? Or what can be better than the good housewifery of the Girl underneath, who is devouring the lucky fragments, or than the plump, ripe, florid, luscious look of the Servant-wench embraced by a greasy rascal of an Othello, with her pye-dish tottering like her virtue, and with the most precious part of its contents running over? Just—no, not quite —as good is the joke of the Woman over head, who, having quarrelled with her husband, is throwing their Sunday's dinner out of the window, to complete this chapter of accidents of baked-dishes. The husband in the Evening Scene is certainly as meek as any recorded in history; but we cannot

say that we admire this picture, or the Night Scene after it. But then, in the Taste in High Life, there is that inimitable pair, differing only in sex, congratulating and delighting one another by " all the mutually reflected charities " of folly and affectation, with the young Lady coloured like a rose, dandling her little, black, pug-faced, white-teethed, chuckling favourite, and with the portrait of Mons. Des Noyers in the back-ground, dancing in a grand ballet, surrounded by butterflies. And again, in the Election-Dinner, is the immortal Cobler, surrounded by his Peers, who, " frequent and full,"—

" In *loud* recess and *brawling* conclave sit :"—

the Jew in the second picture, a very Jew in grain !—innumerable fine sketches of heads in the Polling for votes, of which the Nobleman overlooking the caricaturist is the best ;—and then the irresistible tumultuous display of broad humour in the Chairing the Member, which is, perhaps, of all Hogarth's pictures, the most full of laughable incidents and situations—the yellow, rusty-faced Thresher, with his swinging flail, breaking the head of one of the Chairmen, and his redoubted antagonist, the Sailor, with his oak-stick, and stumping wooden leg, a supplemental cudgel—

the persevering ecstasy of the hobbling Blind Fiddler, who, in the fray, appears to have been trod upon by the artificial excrescence of the honest Tar—Monsieur, the Monkey, with piteous aspect, speculating the impending disaster of the triumphant candidate, and his brother Bruin, appropriating the paunch—the precipitous flight of the Pigs, souse over head into the water, the fine Lady fainting, with vermilion lips, and the two Chimney-sweepers, satirical young rogues! We had almost forgot the Politician who is burning a hole through his hat with a candle in reading the newspaper; and the Chickens, in the *March to Finchley*, wandering in search of their lost dam, who is found in the pocket of the Serjeant. Of the pictures in the *Rake's Progress*, in this collection, we shall not here say any thing, because we think them, on the whole, inferior to the prints, and because they have already been criticised by a writer, to whom we could add nothing, in a paper which ought to be read by every lover of Hogarth and of English genius. *

W. H.

* See an Essay on the genius of Hogarth, by C. Lamb, published in a periodical work, called the *Reflector*.

No. XIII.

ON MILTON'S LYCIDAS.

" At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new."

Of all Milton's smaller poems, *Lycidas* is the greatest favourite with us. We cannot agree to the charge which Dr Johnson has brought against it, of pedantry and want of feeling. It is the fine emanation of classical sentiment in a youthful scholar—" most musical, most melancholy." A certain tender gloom overspreads it, a wayward abstraction, a forgetfulness of his subject in the serious reflections that arise out of it. The gusts of passion come and go like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The loss of the friend whose death he laments seems to have recalled, with double force, the reality of those speculations which they had indulged together; we are transported to classic ground, and a mysterious strain steals responsive on the ear while we listen to the poet,

" With eager thought warbling his Doric lay."

We shall proceed to give a few passages at length

in support of our opinion. The first we shall quote is as remarkable for the truth and sweetness of the natural descriptions, as for the characteristic elegance of the allusions.

——"Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,
We drove a-field; and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night;
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Towards Heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute:
Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Dametas loved to hear our song.
But oh the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear!"

After the fine apostrophe on Fame which Phœbus is invoked to utter, the poet proceeds:—

"Oh fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood;
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea.
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?
And question'd every gust of rugged winds
That blows from off each beaked promontory.
They knew not of his story:
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd."

If this is art, it is perfect art; nor do we wish for any thing better. The measure of the verse, the very sound of the names, would almost produce the effect here described. To ask the poet not to make use of such allusions as these, is to ask the painter not to dip in the colours of the rainbow, if he could.—In fact, it is the common cant of criticism to consider every allusion to the classics, and particularly in a mind like Milton's, as pedantry and affectation. Habit is a second nature; and, in this sense, the pedantry (if it is to

be called so) of the scholastic enthusiast, who is constantly referring to images of which his mind is full, is as graceful as it is natural. It is not affectation in him to recur to ideas and modes of expression, with which he has the strongest associations, and in which he takes the greatest delight. Milton was as conversant with the world of genius before him as with the world of nature about him; the fables of the ancient mythology were as familiar to him as his dreams. To be a pedant, is to see neither the beauties of nature nor art. Milton saw both; and he made use of the one only to adorn and give new interest to the other. He was a passionate admirer of nature; and, in a single couplet of his, describing the moon,—

> "Like one that had been led astray
> Through the heaven's wide pathless way,"—

there is more intense observation, and intense feeling of nature, (as if he had gazed himself blind in looking at her,) than in twenty volumes of descriptive poetry. But he added to his own observation of nature the splendid fictions of ancient genius, enshrined her in the mysteries of ancient religion, and celebrated her with the pomp of ancient names.

"Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.
Oh! who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake."—

There is a wonderful correspondence in the rhythm of these lines to the ideas which they convey. This passage, which alludes to the clerical character of *Lycidas*, has been found fault with, as combining the truths of the Christian religion with the fictions of the Heathen mythology. We conceive there is very little foundation for this objection, either in reason or good taste. We will not go so far as to defend Camoens, who, in his *Lusiad*, makes Jupiter send Mercury with a dream to propagate the Catholic religion; nor do we know that it is generally proper to introduce the two things in the same poem, though we see no objection to it here; but of this we are quite sure, that there is no inconsistency or natural repugnance between this poetical and religious faith in the same mind. To the understanding, the belief of the one is incompatible with that of the other; but, in the imagination, they not only may, but do constantly co-exist.—We will venture

to go farther, and maintain, that every classical scholar, however orthodox a Christian he may be, is an honest Heathen at heart. This requires explanation.—Whoever, then, attaches a reality to any idea beyond the mere name, has, to a certain extent, (though not an abstract,) an habitual and practical belief in it. Now, to any one familiar with the names of the personages of the Heathen mythology, they convey a positive identity beyond the mere name. We refer them to something out of ourselves. It is only by an effort of abstraction that we divest ourselves of the idea of their reality; all our involuntary prejudices are on their side. This is enough for the poet. They impose on the imagination by all the attractions of beauty and grandeur. They come down to us in sculpture and in song. We have the same associations with them, as if they had really been; for the belief of the fiction in ancient times has produced all the same effects as the reality could have done. It was a reality to the minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and through them it is reflected to us. And, as we shape towers, and men, and armed steeds, out of the broken clouds that glitter in the distant horizon, so, throned above the ruins of the ancient world, Jupiter still nods sublime on the top of blue Olympus, Hercules leans upon his

club, Apollo has not laid aside his bow, nor Neptune his trident; the sea-gods ride upon the sounding waves, the long procession of heroes and demi-gods passes in endless review before us, and still we hear

> ——————" The Muses in a ring
> Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
> . . . . . .
> Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
> And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

If all these mighty fictions had really existed, they could have done no more for us!—We shall only give one other passage from *Lycidas;* but we flatter ourselves that it will be a treat to our readers, if they are not already familiar with it. It is the passage which contains that exquisite description of the flowers:—

> " Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
> That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
> And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
> Their bells, and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
> Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
> Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,
> On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
> Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
> That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
> And purple all the ground with vernal flowers;
> Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,

The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head,
And every flower, that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little cause,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Waft far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold,
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth,
And, O ye Dolphins, waft the hapless youth."

Dr Johnson is very much offended at the introduction of these Dolphins; and, indeed, if he had had to guide them through the waves, he would have made much the same figure as his old friend Dr Burney does, swimming in the *Thames* with his wig on, with the water-nymphs, in the picture by Barry at the Adelphi.

There is a description of flowers in the *Winter's Tale*, which we shall give as a parallel to Milton's. We shall leave it to the reader to decide which is the finest; for we dare not give the preference. *Perdita* says,—

———" Here's flowers for you,
Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram,
The marygold, that goes to bed with the sun,
And with him rises, weeping; these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think, they are given
To men of middle age. Y'are welcome.
" *Camillo.* I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,
And only live by gazing.
" *Perdita.* Out, alas!
You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
Would blow you through and through. Now, my fairest friends,
I would I had some flowers o' th' spring, that might
Become your time of day: O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that, frighted, you let fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips, and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower de lis being one. O, these I lack

To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend
To strew him o'er and o'er."

Dr Johnson's general remark, that Milton's genius had not room to shew itself in his smaller pieces, is not well-founded. Not to mention *Lycidas*, the *Allegro*, and *Penseroso*, it proceeds on a false estimate of the merits of his great work, which is not more distinguished by strength and sublimity than by tenderness and beauty.—The last were as essential qualities of Milton's mind as the first. The battle of the angels, which has been commonly considered as the best part of the *Paradise Lost*, is the worst.

W. H.

No. XIV.

ON MILTON'S VERSIFICATION.

MILTON'S works are a perpetual invocation to the Muses; a hymn to Fame. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination; and he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius, as he did to the exercise of virtue, or the good of his country. He does not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a de-

termination to leave nothing undone which it is in his power to do. He always labours, and he almost always succeeds. He strives to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost. He surrounds it with all the possible associations of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, or physical, or intellectual. He refines on his descriptions of beauty, till the sense almost aches at them, and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that "makes Ossa like a wart." He has a high standard, with which he is constantly comparing himself, and nothing short of which can satisfy him:—

> ——————"Sad task, yet argument
> Not less but more heroic than the wrath
> Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued,
> If answerable stile I can obtain.
> ——Unless an age too late, or cold
> Climate, or years, damp my intended wing."

Milton has borrowed more than any other writer; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. The power of his mind is stamped on every line. He is a writer of centos, and yet in originality only inferior to Homer. The quantity of art shews the strength of his genius; so much art would have overloaded any other writer.—Milton's

learning has all the effect of intuition. He describes objects of which he had only read in books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature. He makes words tell as pictures :—

"Him followed Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
Of Abbana and Pharphar, *lucid* streams."

And again :—

"As when a vulture on Imaus bred,
Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
Dislodging from a region scarce of prey
To gorge the flesh of lambs or yeanling kids
On hills where flocks are fled, *flies towards the springs*
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams ;
But in his way lights on the barren plains
Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
With sails and wind their cany waggons light."

Such passages may be considered as demonstrations of history. Instances might be multiplied without end. There is also a decided tone in his descriptions, an eloquent dogmatism, as if the poet spoke from thorough conviction, which Milton probably derived from his spirit of partisanship, or else his spirit of partisanship from the natural firmness and vehemence of his mind. In this Milton resembles Dante, (the only one of the moderns with whom he has any thing in common,)

and it is remarkable that Dante, as well as Milton, was a political partisan. That approximation to the severity of impassioned prose which has been made an objection to Milton's poetry, is one of its chief excellencies. It has been suggested, that the vividness with which he describes visible objects, might be owing to their having acquired a greater strength in his mind after the privation of sight; but we find the same palpableness and solidity in the descriptions which occur in his early poems. There is, indeed, the same depth of impression in his descriptions of the objects of the other senses. Milton had as much of what is meant by *gusto* as any poet. He forms the most intense conceptions of things, and then embodies them by a single stroke of his pen. Force of style is perhaps his first excellence. Hence he stimulates us most in the reading, and less afterwards.

It has been said that Milton's ideas were musical rather than picturesque, but this observation is not true, in the sense in which it was meant. The ear, indeed, predominates over the eye, because it is more immediately affected, and because the language of music blends more immediately with, and forms a more natural accompaniment to, the variable and indefinite associations of ideas con-

veyed by words. But where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. The strongest and best proof of this, as a characteristic power of his mind, is, that the persons of Adam and Eve, of Satan, &c. are always accompanied, in our imagination, with the grandeur of the naked figure ; they convey to us the ideas of sculpture. As an instance, take the following :—

——————— "He soon
Saw within ken a glorious Angel stand,
The same whom John saw also in the sun:
His back was turned, but not his brightness hid;
Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders fledge with wings
Lay waving round ; on some great charge employ'd
He seem'd, or fix'd in cogitation deep.
Glad was the spirit impure, as now in hope
To find who might direct his wand'ring flight
To Paradise, the happy seat of man,
His journey's end, and our beginning woe.
But first he casts to change his proper shape,
Which else might work him danger or delay:
And now a stripling cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smiled celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd :

Under a coronet his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek play'd; wings he wore
Of many a colour'd plume sprinkled with gold,
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a silver wand."

The figures introduced here have all the elegance and precision of a Greek statue.

Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakspeare's) which is readable. Dr Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the *Paradise Lost* as harsh and unequal. We shall not pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case; for where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted, the poet must sometimes fail. But we imagine that there are more perfect examples in Milton of musical expression, or of an adaptation of the sound and movement of the verse to the meaning of the passage, than in all our other writers, whether of rhyme or blank verse, put together, (with the exception aleady mentioned.) Spenser is the most harmonious of our poets, and Dryden is the most sounding and varied of our rhymists. But in neither is there any thing like the same ear for music, the same power of approximating the varieties of poetical to those of musical rhythm, as

there is in our great epic poet. The sound of his lines is moulded into the expression of the sentiment, almost of the very image. They rise or fall, pause or hurry rapidly on, with exquisite art, but without the least trick or affectation, as the occasion seems to require.

The following are some of the finest instances:—

——————— "His hand was known
In Heaven by many a tower'd structure high;—
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece: and in the Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber: and how he fell
From Heav'n, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle: this they relate,
Erring."—

——————— "But chief the spacious hall
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flow'rs
Fly to and fro: or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
Swarm'd and were straiten'd; till the signal giv'n,
Behold a wonder! They but now who seem'd

In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds."

We can only give another instance; though we have some difficulty in leaving off. "What a pity," said an ingenious person of our acquaintance, "that Milton had not the pleasure of reading *Paradise Lost!*"—

"Round he surveys (and well might, where he stood
So high above the circling canopy
Of night's extended shade) from eastern point
Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
Beyond th' horizon: then from pole to pole
He views in breadth, and without longer pause
Down right into the world's first region throws
His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
Through the pure marble air his oblique way
Amongst innumerable stars that shone
Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds;
Or other worlds they seem'd or happy isles," &c.

The verse, in this exquisitely modulated passage, floats up and down as if it had itself wings. Milton has himself given us the theory of his versification.

> "In many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out."

Dr Johnson and Pope would have converted his vaulting Pegasus into a rocking-horse. Read any other blank verse but Milton's,—Thomson's, Young's, Cowper's, Wordsworth's,—and it will be found, from the want of the same insight into "the hidden soul of harmony," to be mere lumbering prose.

W. H.

To the President of the Round Table.

SIR,—It is somewhat remarkable, that in *Pope's Essay on Criticism* (not a very long poem) there are no less than half a score couplets rhyming to the word *sense*.

> "But of the two, less dangerous is the offence,
> To tire our patience than mislead our sense."—*lines* 3, 4.
> "In search of wit these lose their common sense,
> And then turn critics in their own defence."—*l.* 28, 29.

" Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense."—*l.* 209, 10.
" Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense."—*l.* 324, 5.
" 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence;
The sound must seem an echo to the sense."—*l.* 364, 5.
" At every trifle scorn to take offence;
That always shews great pride, or little sense."—*l.* 386, 7.
" Be silent always, when you doubt your sense,
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence."—*l.* 366, 7.
" Be niggards of advice on no pretence,
For the worst avarice is that of sense."—*l.* 578, 9.
" Strain out the last dull dropping of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence."—*l.* 608, 9.
" Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense."—*l.* 653, 4.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A SMALL CRITIC.

No. XV.

ON MANNER.

IT was the opinion of Lord Chesterfield, that *manner* is of more importance than *matter*. This opinion seems at least to be warranted by the practice of the world; nor do we think it so entirely without foundation as some persons of more solid

than shewy pretensions would make us believe. In the remarks which we are going to make, we can scarcely hope to have any party very warmly on our side; for the most superficial coxcomb would be thought to owe his success to sterling merit.

What any person says or does is one thing; the mode in which he says or does it is another. The last of these is what we understand by *manner*. In other words, manner is the involuntary or incidental expression given to our thoughts and sentiments by looks, tones, and gestures. Now, we are inclined in many cases to prefer this latter mode of judging of what passes in the mind to more positive and formal proof, were it for no other reason than that it is involuntary. "Look," says Lord Chesterfield, "in the face of the person to whom you are speaking, if you wish to know his real sentiments; for he can command his words more easily than his countenance." We may perform certain actions from design, or repeat certain professions by rote: the manner of doing either will in general be the best test of our sincerity. The mode of conferring a favour is often thought of more value than the favour itself. The actual obligation may spring from a variety of questionable motives, vanity, affectation, or in-

terest: the cordiality with which the person from whom you have received it asks you how you do, or shakes you by the hand, does not admit of misinterpretation. The manner of doing any thing, is that which marks the degree and force of our internal impressions; it emanates most directly from our immediate or habitual feelings; it is that which stamps its life and character on any action; —the rest may be performed by an automaton. What is it that makes the difference between the best and the worst actor, but the manner of going through the same part? The one has a perfect idea of the degree and force with which certain feelings operate in nature, and the other has no idea at all of the workings of passion. There would be no difference between the worst actor in the world and the best, placed in real circumstances, and under the influence of real passion. A writer may express the thoughts he has borrowed from another, but not with the same force, unless he enters into the true spirit of them. Otherwise he will resemble a person reading what he does not understand, whom you immediately detect by his wrong emphasis. His illustrations will be literally exact, but misplaced and awkward; he will not gradually warm with his subject, nor feel the force of what he says, nor produce the same effect on his

readers. An author's style is not less a criterion of his understanding than his sentiments. The same story told by two different persons shall, from the difference of the manner, either set the table in a roar, or not relax a feature in the whole company. We sometimes complain (perhaps rather unfairly) that particular persons possess more vivacity than wit. But we ought to take into the account, that their very vivacity arises from their enjoying the joke; and their humouring a story by drollery of gesture or archness of look, shews only that they are acquainted with the different ways in which the sense of the ludicrous expresses itself. It is not the mere dry jest, but the relish which the person himself has of it, with which we sympathize. For in all that tends to pleasure and excitement, the capacity for enjoyment is the principal point. One of the most pleasant and least tiresome persons of our acquaintance is a humourist, who has three or four quaint witticisms and proverbial phrases, which he always repeats over and over; but he does this with just the same vivacity and freshness as ever, so that you feel the same amusement with less effort than if he had startled his hearers with a succession of original conceits. Another friend of ours, who never fails to give vent to one or

two real *jeu-d'esprits* every time you meet him, from the pain with which he is delivered of them, and the uneasiness he seems to suffer all the rest of the time, makes a much more interesting than comfortable companion. If you see a person in pain for himself, it naturally puts you in pain for him. The art of pleasing consists in being pleased. To be amiable is to be satisfied with one's self and others. Good-humour is essential to pleasantry. It is this circumstance, among others, that renders the wit of Rabelais so much more delightful than that of Swift, who, with all his satire, is "as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage." In society, good-temper and animal spirits are nearly every thing. They are of more importance than sallies of wit, or refinements of understanding. They give a general tone of cheerfulness and satisfaction to the company. The French have the advantage over us in external manners. They breathe a lighter air, and have a brisker circulation of the blood. They receive and communicate their impressions more freely. The interchange of ideas costs them less. Their constitutional gaiety is a kind of natural intoxication, which does not require any other stimulus. The English are not so well off in this respect; and *Falstaff's* commenda-

tion on sack was evidently intended for his countrymen,—whose "learning is often a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil, till wine commences it, and sets it in act and use."* More undertakings fail for want of spirit than for want of sense. Confidence gives a fool the advantage over a wise man. In general, a strong passion for any object will ensure success, for the desire of the end will point out the means. We apprehend that people usually complain, without reason, of not succeeding in various pursuits according to their deserts. Such persons, we will grant, may have great merit in all other respects; but in that in which they fail, it will almost invariably hold true, that they do not deserve to succeed. For instance, a person who has spent his life in thinking will acquire a habit of reflection; but he will neither become a dancer nor a singer, rich nor beautiful. In like manner, if any one complains of not succeeding in affairs of gallantry, we will venture to say, it is because he is not gallant.

* "A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold operation in it; it ascends me into the brain, dries me there all the foolish, dull, and crudy vapours which environ it; and makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes, which, delivered over to the tongue, becomes excellent wit," &c.—*Second Part of Henry IV.*

He has mistaken his talent—that's all. If any person of exquisite sensibility makes love awkwardly, it is because he does not feel it as he should. One of these disappointed sentimentalists may very probably feel it upon reflection, may brood over it till he has worked himself up to a pitch of frenzy, and write his mistress the finest love-letters in the world, in her absence; but, be assured, he does not feel an atom of this passion in her presence. If, in paying her a compliment, he frowns with more than usual severity, or, in presenting her with a bunch of flowers, seems as if he was going to turn his back upon her, he can only expect to be laughed at for his pains; nor can he plead an excess of feeling as an excuse for want of common sense. She may say, "It is not with me you are in love, but with the ridiculous chimeras of your own brain. You are thinking of *Sophia Western*, or some other heroine, and not of me. Go and make love to your romances."

Lord Chesterfield's character of the Duke of Marlborough is a good illustration of his general theory. He says, "Of all the men I ever knew in my life, (and I knew him extremely well,) the late Duke of Marlborough possessed the graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them;

for I will venture (contrary to the custom of profound historians, who always assign deep causes for great events) to ascribe the better half of the Duke of Marlborough's greatness and riches to those graces. He was eminently illiterate; wrote bad English, and spelt it worse. He had no share of what is commonly called parts; that is, no brightness, nothing shining in his genius. He had most undoubtedly an excellent good plain understanding with sound judgment. But these alone would probably have raised him but something higher than they found him, which was page to King James II.'s Queen. There the Graces protected and promoted him; for while he was Ensign of the Guards, the Duchess of Cleveland, then favourite mistress of Charles II. struck by these very graces, gave him five thousand pounds, with which he immediately bought an annuity of five hundred pounds a-year, which was the foundation of his subsequent fortune. His figure was beautiful, but his manner was irresistible by either man or woman. It was by this engaging, graceful manner, that he was enabled, during all his wars, to connect the various and jarring powers of the grand alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war, notwithstanding their private and separate views, jealousies, and wrong-

headedness. Whatever Court he went to, (and he was often obliged to go himself to some resty and refractory ones,) he as constantly prevailed, and brought them into his measures."*

Grace in women has more effect than beauty. We sometimes see a certain fine self-possession, an habitual voluptuousness of character, which reposes on its own sensations, and derives pleasure from all around it, that is more irresistible than any other attraction. There is an air of languid enjoyment in such persons, "in their eyes, in their arms, and their hands, and their face," which robs us of ourselves, and draws us by a secret sympathy towards them. Their minds are a shrine where pleasure reposes. Their smile diffuses a sensation like the breath of spring. Petrarch's description of Laura answers exactly to this character, which is indeed the Italian character. Titian's portraits are full of it: they seem sustained by sentiment, or as if the persons whom he painted sat to music. There is one in the Louvre (or there was) which had the most of this expression we ever remember. It did not look

* We have an instance in our own times of a man, equally devoid of understanding and principle, but who manages the House of Commons by his *manner* alone.

downward; "it looked forward, beyond this world." It was a look that never passed away, but remained unalterable as the deep sentiment which gave birth to it. It is the same constitutional character (together with infinite activity of mind) which has enabled the greatest man in modern history to bear his reverses of fortune with gay magnanimity, and to submit to the loss of the empire of the world with as little discomposure as if he had been playing a game at chess.

Grace has been defined, the outward expression of the inward harmony of the soul. Foreigners have more of this than the English,—particularly the people of the southern and eastern countries. Their motions appear (like the expression of their countenances) to have a more immediate communication with their feelings. The inhabitants of the northern climates, compared with these children of the sun, are like hard inanimate machines, with difficulty set in motion. A strolling gipsy will offer to tell your fortune with a grace and an insinuation of address that would be admired in a court.* The Hindoos that we see about the streets

* Mr Wordsworth, who has written a sonnet to the King on the good that he has done in the last fifty years, has made an attack on a set of gipsies for having done nothing in four

are another example of this. They are a different race of people from ourselves. They wander about

and twenty hours. "The stars had gone their rounds, but they had not stirred from their place." And why should they, if they were comfortable where they were? We did not expect this turn from Mr Wordsworth, whom we had considered as the prince of poetical idlers, and patron of the philosophy of indolence, who formerly insisted on our spending our time "in a wise passiveness." Mr W. will excuse us if we are not converts to his recantation of his original doctrine; for he who changes his opinion loses his authority. We did not look for this Sunday-school philosophy from him. What had he himself been doing in these four and twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower, or writing a sonnet? We hate the doctrine of utility, even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet: for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment, and the end is, in all cases, better than the means. A friend of ours from the north of England proposed to make Stonehenge of some use, by building houses with it. Mr W.'s quarrel with the gipsies is an improvement on this extravagance, for the gipsies are the only living monuments of the first ages of society. They are an everlasting source of thought and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilization: they are a better answer to the cotton manufactories than Mr W. has given in the "*Excursion*." "They are a grotesque ornament to the civil order." We should be sorry to part with Mr Wordsworth's poetry, because it amuses and interests us: we should be still sorrier to part with the tents of our old friends, the Bohemian philosophers, because they

in a luxurious dream. They are like part of a glittering procession,—like revellers in some gay carnival. Their life is a dance, a measure; they hardly seem to tread the earth, but are borne along in some more genial element, and bask in the radiance of brighter suns. We may understand this difference of climate by recollecting the difference of our own sensations at different times, in the fine glow of summer, or when we are pinched and dried up by a north-east wind. Even the foolish Chinese, who go about twirling their fans and their windmills, shew the same delight in them as the children they collect around them. The people of the East make it their business to sit and think and do nothing. They indulge in endless reverie; for the incapacity of enjoyment does not impose on them the necessity of action. There is a striking example of this passion for castle-building in the story of the glass-man in the Arabian Nights.

After all, we would not be understood to say

amuse and interest us more. If any one goes a journey, the principal event in it is his meeting with a party of gipsies. The pleasantest trait in the character of Sir Roger de Coverley, is his interview with the gipsy fortune-teller. This is enough.

that manner is every thing. Nor would we put Euclid or Sir Isaac Newton on a level with the first *petit-maitre* we might happen to meet. We consider *Æsop's Fables* to have been a greater work of genius than Fontaine's translation of them; though we doubt whether we should not prefer Fontaine, for his style only, to Gay, who has shewn a great deal of original invention.—The elegant manners of people of fashion have been objected to us to shew the frivolity of external accomplishments, and the facility with which they are acquired. As to the last point, we demur. There is no class of people who lead so laborious a life, or who take more pains to cultivate their minds as well as persons, than people of fashion. A young lady of quality, who has to devote so many hours a day to music, so many to dancing, so many to drawing, so many to French, Italian, &c. certainly does not pass her time in idleness; and these accomplishments are afterwards called into action by every kind of external or mental stimulus, by the excitements of pleasure, vanity, and interest. A Ministerial or Opposition Lord goes through more drudgery than half a dozen literary hacks; nor does a reviewer by profession read half the same number of productions as a modern fine lady is obliged to labour through. We confess,

however, we are not competent judges of the degree of elegance or refinement implied in the general tone of fashionable manners. The successful experiment made by *Peregrine Pickle*, in introducing his strolling mistress into genteel company, does not redound greatly to their credit. In point of elegance of external appearance, we see no difference between women of fashion and women of a different character, who dress in the same style. T. T.

No. XVI.

ON CHAUCER.

We have great pleasure in giving the Correspondent before us a hearing at our Round Table. He is fond of Chaucer and the *Arabian Nights;* and this is as instant a bond of fellowship with us, as talking of dishes with a voluptuary, or of sunshine with a stray Italian, or dolls with a little girl, or of the little girl with her mother, or horses with a buck or a little boy, or those plagues of servants with a housewife, or Horace with a schoolboy, or the playhouse with a collegian, or bankrupts with a tradesman, or high breeding with a

city beau, or the east wind with an invalid, or snuff with a spare talker, or any thing with a chatterbox, or of pleasant fellows, with a pleasant fellow, or of somebody's defects, with those, of course, who have none. Besides, from the nature of our establishment, we have a more than ordinary sympathy with King Cambuscan and his festal board; we become doubly conscious of our state and dignity, as our Correspondent approaches us with the subject; and feel as if we were mutually acting the commencement of the story over again,—we, as the king with his men about him, and he, as the strange knight coming up the hall;—only our visitor retains nothing of that personage but his courtesy; and we, instead of sitting down, diademed and o'er canopied, to a course of swans, are obliged to be content with plain heads of hair and a shoulder of mutton.—What further we have to say, we shall keep till he has done speaking.

To the President and Companions of the Round Table.

" Or call up him, that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,

That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar King did ride."

IL PENSEROSO.

GENTLEMEN,—As every inquiry that either the antiquary or the critic has made has been made in vain, we come to the melancholy conclusion, that the tale of Chaucer's accomplished Squire was left half told. Mr Tyrwhit, to whom the lovers of our ancient Bard are under the greatest obligation, tells us that he has never been able to discover the probable origin of the tale—though he adds, "I should be very hardly brought to believe that the whole, or even any considerable part of it, was of Chaucer's invention."

We are not told by that enlightened critic the grounds of this opinion; but we may reasonably infer that he considered it to be of the class of Arabian fictions; and that if was highly probable it had reached our Poet in some translation, and was adopted by him as matter highly congenial to his splendid fancy, and awaiting only the consecrating powers of his verse. Spenser, who, with Milton, had cast his eye upon this tale with peculiar regret, undertook to give a supplement; but of the deficient parts took that which had the weaker interest. The combat in the lists for

Canace perhaps better suited the design of his Faery Queen. It would not be an unprofitable speculation, to consider how far the wild *adventures of the horse of brass* were within the grasp of his rich but moral imagination. However, our present inquiry is what supplement may be offered; for it would be too bold to presume that we have settled the very incidents, which would have completed this delightful fiction.

Our readers will excuse us for recalling to their minds the actual state of Chaucer's story. The King of Tartary, with his wife, his daughter, and his two sons, are sitting amid the nobles of their court, solemnly holding his anniversary. The board was served so abundantly, that the Poet disclaims the task of recounting what "would occupy a somers day." However, while the Minstrels are playing their most animated compositions, and the third course had been removed, suddenly, by the hall door, a Knight entered upon a steed of brass. He bore in his hand a mirror of glass, on his thumb a ring of gold, and a naked sword was hanging by his side. He rode at once up to the *highe bord*, and an awful silence was the immediate and natural effect of so extraordinary a visitor. The Knight, it seems, is sent by the King of Araby and Inde to salute Cambuscan on this

solemn occasion. The horse and the sword are presents to his Majesty. The mirror and the ring are offered to his lovely daughter. By the one, every danger menacing the state is instantly discerned—treachery is unfolded either in love or politics; by the other, the language of birds is bestowed upon the wearer, to understand what they say, and to make the suitable replies. The sword of our Knight heals as readily as it wounds, and has certainly been disused by monarchs ever since the days of Cambuscan.

Canace soon puts the virtues of her ring to proof, and, with its lovely disclosures, ends the adventure. The Poet then promises, first to recount the warlike achievements of Cambuscan. He will after *speke of Algarsife*, who won Theodora for his wife, and of the perils from which he was relieved by the horse of brass; and finally, of Camball fighting in the lists with the Brethren for Canace. Of the horse of brass he tells us nothing, but that, after having quietly endured the gaze, and the philosophy too, of the vulgar, it was displayed by the Knight fully to his Majesty, when he no doubt was graciously pleased to express his full admiration; and then says Chaucer—

> "The hors vanisht, I n'ot in what manere,
> Out of hir (*their*) sight, ye get no more of me."

Let it be recollected, that Algarsife won the Princess Theodora for his wife, and that the horse is peculiarly destined to relieve him in his perils.

Our readers see that we consider the tale as an Arabian fiction, and we think that we find adventures in the *Mille et une Nuits*, that admirably answer the promise of the Poet, if, indeed, they were not the very inventions which Chaucer designed to adopt. We allude to the story of the *Enchanted Horse*. Let us briefly analyze this fanciful production.

The King of Persia, surrounded by his nobles at Schiraz, is celebrating an important anniversary. An Indian, with an enchanted horse, governed by a pin, (like Chaucer's,) suddenly enters the palace. The king's son is rashly tempted to make a trial of him. Not having been so attentive as he should have been, and, like many aspiring princes, only knowing how to get into motion, he mounts, and, with more than the speed of an arrow, is instantly hurried from the sight of his anxious parent. His ascent is terrific—mountains become indistinct from his height—he loses every thing terrestrial at last, and is endangered by too close a pressure against the marble floor of heaven. He keeps his seat, however, and, at all events, does not drop his courage in the flight. The first and most na-

tural thought is, that, to descend, the pin must be turned in a mode opposite to that which enabled him to rise. To his infinite dismay, this effort produces no alteration in his course. At length he discovers a second pin in the enchanted courser, and, upon moving it, he descends at night on the terrace of the Princess of Babylon's summer palace. Why should we display their mutual surprise? The beauty of the princess was a wonder that a horse full of enchantments could never hope to equal, and beauty exerts its usual power even amidst the feats of magic. He is, however, now anxious to relieve a father's anxiety, and prevails upon the princess to accompany him to Persia. She, captivated with his person, and it may be also, that, in some degree, she was

"Witch'd with noble horsemanship,"

consents to accompany him in a flight, which is to terminate in their union. They arrive upon the horse, in perfect safety, at a pleasure-house, not far from the capital of Persia. The prince sets out to visit his royal father, and also to announce the unlooked-for partner of his journey. No objections whatever were raised to receiving her at court. The Indian, who, upon the apprehended loss of the prince, had been thrown into prison, is set at

liberty. But causeless imprisonment does not always leave the mind full of gratitude for the end of it, and, with the avenging subtlety of his black character, he hurries instantly to the Princess of Babylon, where she awaits the return of her lover; tells her that he is sent by both king and prince to convey her on the steed, and, as soon as they are mounted, hovers over Schiraz, to announce to his enemy the exquisite consummation of his revenge. With his reluctant companion, the Indian at length arrives at the kingdom of Cashmir. Nothing can be more meritorious in the mind of the king than to punish the robber of a legitimate sovereign; he accordingly puts the Indian to death. But, notwithstanding his indignation at the spoiler, he has no objection to the spoil, and therefore speedily determines to wed the princess himself. She avoids the union by feigning madness. The royal physicians, it may be supposed, are all put in requisition, but they, greatly to the credit of their skill, leave the patient as they found her. Luckily the Prince of Persia, disguised as a Dervise, arrives with the only medicine that could effect her cure. She is soon, as may be supposed, in condition to bear another flight, and then, by a stratagem, regaining the horse of brass, they sublimely ascend to-

gether, before the astonished Court of Cashmir, and return once more to Schiraz, and to happiness. Such are the grand features of this beautiful tale.

Surely it would not be very difficult to adapt this most lovely fiction to Chaucer's "Cambuscan bold." The attempt at Chaucer's style and versification might confound the best of us, but there could be no objection to new model and translate the whole into either the rhymed couplet of Dryden, with his vigour and freedom, or perhaps it might grace, and be graced by, the swelling stanza of Spenser. B."

We sympathize heartily with our Correspondent's wishes to have Chaucer's story completed; but how or by whom it should be done, it is not perhaps so easy to desire. We have an infinite regard for Spenser; but, in despite of our love for Italian romance, all stanzas, particularly those that are remarkable as such, appear to us to be as unfit for the ease and freedom of narrative poetry, as a horse which should have a trick of stopping at every twenty yards, whether you wanted him to get on or not. The couplet, we think, would be the best; nor would it be any drawback on its merits, if the reader were occa-

sionally reminded of Dryden, for the best parts of Dryden's versification are some of the best music of which English rhythm is capable; or, in other words, are imitated from the best part of the versification of Chaucer himself,—an assertion that may make some persons smile, who always think of the Father of English Poetry as a mere clown compared with his children, but which we may be able to prove to their satisfaction in some future papers. The writer, however, who undertook to finish a story of Chaucer, should come to his task, not only with as much rhythmical vigour as Dryden, but with twenty times his nature and sentiment, and with at least a great portion of the abstract poetical luxury of Spenser, whose attempt, nevertheless, of this very task, is one of the least happy passages of his poem. A writer like our Correspondent, who is able to relish Chaucer, must demand that which delighted him *in* Chaucer,—that is to say, idiom and simplicity of style, and real unsophisticated, strait-forward nature in the manners, sentiment, and description; but how difficult to get hold of these, when the style of our poetry has been little else, for these hundred and fifty years, but a kind of classical cant, and some of those, who have latterly undertaken to improve it, have substituted another sort of cant, a busi-

ness of *yeas* and *haths*, for simplicity? A continuer of Chaucer must write as Chaucer wrote, in the best kind of his own every-day language;—like Chaucer, he must dare to speak and think as nature tells him, and not as the French tell him, or his books:—but to do all this, he must be a true poet as well as his original. He must be born of the same breed, or how shall he take to the same atmosphere? He must have a like grace and vigour of wing, or how shall he sport about at will,—how shall he descend, and gambol, and sparkle, and soar? Spenser himself, in continuing Chaucer's story, thinks it necessary to make an ardent apology for so doing, and thus addresses the shade of his great predecessor:—

"Then pardon, O most sacred, happie spirit,
That I thy labours lost may thus revive,
And steale from thee the meede of thy due merit,
That none durst ever whilest thou wast alive,
And, being dead, in vaine yet many strive:
Ne dare I like; but, through infusion sweete
Of thine owne spirit which doth in me survive,
I follow here the footing of thy feete,
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete."

Faerie Queene, Book IV. Canto 2.

The plain fact is, that none but true poets can continue, as none but such can translate, each

other; and this is the reason why there have ever been, and are ever likely to be, so few good translations; for a true poet will generally feel the ambition of originality as well as his fellows, and endeavour to make work for the translators himself.

But there are two reasons why we should scarcely wish to see Chaucer's story finished by the very best modern hand. The one is, because it would take away a certain venerable grace and interest, which accompanies the very idea of a noble fragment, and which seems, in the same way, to have struck the Italian sculptor, who refused to supply the limb of an ancient statue;—the other, because modern versions, strictly so called, of an old poet, tend to divert attention from the illustrious original, and to foster an additional ignorance of him, in consequence of what are supposed to be the rudeness of his style, and obscurities of his language.—But we shall say more of these matters in two or three future numbers, which we propose to write on the subject of Chaucer's genius, and on the proper way of reading and enjoying him, accompanied with specimens, and a comment.

In the mean time, we cannot close the present article in a better manner, than by giving a sample or two of the story, which has called forth the

analysis of our Correspondent. And here we shall anticipate an observation on what appears to us to be the best method of modernizing the Father of English Poetry, if modernized he need be at all; and even then we would always have the original kept by the side. It should be, we think, after the mode of the Italian *rifacimento*, altering only just as much as is necessary for comfortable intelligibility, and preserving all the rest, that which appears quaint as well as that which is more modern,—in short, as much of the author,—his nature,—his own mode of speaking and describing, as possible. By thus preserving his best parts, we should keep the model of Nature, his own model, before us, and make modern things bend to her,—not her, as is the custom of our self-love, bend to every thing which happens to be modern.

The commencements of Chaucer's stories have always to us a certain morning freshness in them, —in some measure, perhaps, from his fondness for adorning them with descriptions of that time of day, or of the spring. There is a sparkling passage of this sort in the story of Cambuscan, and those who know how to read the author with the proper attention to the vowels after the manner still used in France, will see in it the beauty of his versification as well as description :—

" Phœbus the sonne ful jolif was and clere,
For he was nigh his exaltation
In Marte's face, and in his mansion
In Aries, the colerike hot signe:
Ful lusty was the wether and benigne:
For which the foules again the sonne shene,
What for the seson and the yonge grene,
Ful loude songen hir affections:
Hem semed hem han gotten hem protections
Again the swerd of winter kene and cold."

Which, if it were to be re-written in the way mentioned above, would surely want little more than a change of the spelling :—

" Phœbus the sun full jolly was and clear;
For he was nigh his exaltation
In Mars's face, and in his mansion
In Aries, the cholerick hot sign :—
Full lusty was the weather and benign,
For which the birds, against the sunny sheen,
What for the season and the crisp young green,
Full out in the fine air sang their affections;
It seemed to them that they had got protections
Against the sword of winter, keen and cold."

The following is the description of the Knight's entrance :—

" And so befell, that after the thridde cours,
While that this king sit thus in his nobley,
Herking his minstralles her thinges play

Beforne him at his bord deliciously,
In at the halle dore al sodenly
Ther came a knight upon a stede of brass,
And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging;
And up he rideth to the highe borde.
In all the halle ne was ther spoke a word
For mervaille of this knight;—him to behold
Ful besily they waiten, yong and old."

This scarcely wants any thing for the most indolent modern reader, but a little change of the same kind:—

"And so befell, that after the third course,
While that this king sat thus in his nobley,
Hearing his minstrels their productions play
Before him at his board deliciously,
In at the great hall door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirror of glass;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging;
And up he rideth to the royal board.—
In all the hall there was not spoke a word
For marvel of this knight:—him to behold
Full busily they wait, both young and old."

What truth and simplicity in this picture! Every thing tells precisely as it should do:—the King's state is before you, but the most prominent image

is the Knight, and the wonder he creates. You seem to feel the silence of the hall, and to hear the dotting of the horse's brazen feet up the pavement.

After explaining his message as the reader has heard, he goes out and alights from his steed, which, shining as the " sun bright,"

> " Stood in the court as still as any stone."

The talking and guessing of the common people who crowd about it are then excellently detailed, and may be compared with the same sort of picture in Spenser, where he describes the people coming about the dragon slain by the Red-cross Knight. At night time, the Court find themselves " gaping," and go to bed: but Canace cannot help dreaming about her ring, and gets up earlier than usual to go and make trial of it in the garden. She

> ——— " slept her firste slepe, and than awoke:
> For welle a joy she in hire herte toke
> Both of hire quainte ring, and of hire mirroure,
> That twenty time she chaunged her colour:
> And in hire slepe, right for the impression
> Of hire mirrour, she had a vision."

We conclude with one of his usual morning touches. Canace, in leaving her bed, calls up her

women and her old nurse, who does not exactly understand what her mistress can be stirring so early for; but they all seem ready enough to wait upon her, and up she gets,

" As rody and bright as the yonge Sonne,
That in the Ram is foure degrees yronne;
No higher was he, when she redy was;
And forth she walketh esily a pace,
Arrayed after the lusty seson sote
Lightly for to playe, and walken on fote,
Nought but with five or sixe of hire meinie;
And in a trenche forth in the park goth she.
The vapour, which that fro the erthe glode,
Maketh the Sonne to seme rody and brode."

This wants as little modernizing as the former: —up rises Canace,

" As ruddy and as bright as the young Sun
That in the Ram but four degrees has run;
No higher was he, when she ready was;
And forth she walketh easily a pace,
Dress'd, with the lovely time of year to suit,
Lightly to play and walk about on foot,
With only five or six in company;
And in a trench forth in the park goes she.
The vapour, that up glided from the ground,
Made the sun seem ruddy, and broad, and round."

In this manner, perhaps, it might be warrantable to touch Chaucer's language, but still with

himself by the side to see it done reverently, and to correct the passages which an inferior hand might leave faulty. It is possible, that something of a vapour, at least to common eyes, might be thus removed from *his* glorious face; but to venture any further, we are afraid, would be to attempt to improve the sun itself, or to go and recolour the grass it looks upon.

L. H.

No. XVII.

ON THE TENDENCY OF SECTS.

THERE is a natural tendency in sects to narrow the mind.

The extreme stress laid upon differences of minor importance, to the neglect of more general truths and broader views of things, gives an inverted bias to the understanding; and this bias is continually increased by the eagerness of controversy, and captious hostility to the prevailing system. A party-feeling of this kind once formed will insensibly communicate itself to other topics; and will be too apt to lead its votaries to a contempt for the opinions of others, a jealousy of

every difference of sentiment, and a disposition to arrogate all sound principle as well as understanding to themselves, and those who think with them. We can readily conceive how such persons, from fixing too high a value on the practical pledge which they have given of the independence and sincerity of their opinions, come at last to entertain a suspicion of every one else as acting under the shackles of prejudice or the mask of hypocrisy. All those who have not given in their unqualified protest against received doctrines and established authority, are supposed to labour under an acknowledged incapacity to form a rational determination on any subject whatever. Any argument, not having the presumption of singularity in its favour, is immediately set aside as nugatory. There is, however, no prejudice so strong as that which arises from a fancied exemption from all prejudice. For this last implies not only the practical conviction that it is right, but the theoretical assumption that it cannot be wrong. From considering all objections as in this manner "null and void," the mind becomes so thoroughly satisfied with its own conclusions, as to render any farther examination of them superfluous, and confounds its exclusive pretensions to reason with the absolute possession of it. Those who, from their

professing to submit every thing to the test of reason, have acquired the name of rational Dissenters, have their weak sides as well as other people: nor do we know of any class of disputants more disposed to take their opinions for granted, than those who call themselves Freethinkers. A long habit of objecting to every thing establishes a monopoly in the right of contradiction;—a prescriptive title to the privilege of starting doubts and difficulties in the common belief, without being liable to have our own called in question. There cannot be a more infallible way to prove that we must be in the right, than by maintaining roundly that every one else is in the wrong!—Not only the opposition of sects to one another, but their unanimity among themselves, strengthens their confidence in their peculiar notions. They feel themselves invulnerable behind the double fence of sympathy with themselves, and antipathy to the rest of the world. Backed by the zealous support of their followers, they become equally intolerant with respect to the opinions of others, and tenacious of their own. They fortify themselves within the narrow circle of their new-fangled prejudices; the whole exercise of their right of private judgment is after a time reduced to the repetition of a set of watch-

words, which have been adopted as the Shiboleth of the party; and their extremest points of faith pass as current as the bead-roll and legends of the Catholics, or St Athanasius's Creed, and the Thirty-nine Articles. We certainly are not going to recommend the establishment of articles of faith, or implicit assent to them, as favourable to the progress of philosophy; but neither has the spirit of opposition to them this tendency, as far as relates to its immediate effects, however useful it may be in its remote consequences. The spirit of controversy substitutes the irritation of personal feeling for the independent exertion of the understanding; and when this irritation ceases, the mind flags for want of a sufficient stimulus to urge it on. It discharges all its energy with its spleen. Besides, this perpetual cavilling with the opinions of others, detecting petty flaws in their arguments, calling them to a literal account for their absurdities, and squaring their doctrines by a pragmatical standard of our own, is necessarily adverse to any great enlargement of mind, or original freedom of thought. *—

* The Dissenters in this country (if we except the founders of sects, who fall under a class by themselves) have produced only two remarkable men, Priestley and Jonathan Edwards. The work of the latter on the Will is written with as much power of logic, and more in the true spirit of

The constant attention bestowed on a few contested points, by at once flattering our pride, our prejudices, and our indolence, supersedes more general inquiries; and the bigoted controversialist, by dint of repeating a certain formula of belief, shall not only convince himself that all those who differ from him are undoubtedly wrong on that point, but that their knowledge on all others must be comparatively slight and superficial. We have known some very worthy and well informed biblical critics, who, by virtue of having discovered that one was not three, or that the same body could not be in two places at once, would be disposed to treat the whole Council of Trent, with Father Paul at their head, with very little deference, and to consider Leo X. with all his Court, as no better than drivellers. Such persons will hint to you, as an additional proof of his genius, that Milton was a non-conformist, and will excuse the faults of Paradise Lost, as Dr Johnson magnified them, because the author was a republican.

philosophy, than any other metaphysical work in the language. His object throughout is not to perplex the question, but to satisfy his own mind and the reader's. In general, the principle of dissent arises more from want of sympathy and imagination, than from strength of reason. The spirit of contradiction is not the spirit of philosophy.

By the all-sufficiency of their merits in believing certain truths which have been "hid from ages," they are elevated, in their own imagination, to a higher sphere of intellect, and are released from the necessity of pursuing the more ordinary tracks of inquiry. Their faculties are imprisoned in a few favourite dogmas, and they cannot break through the trammels of a sect. Hence we may remark a hardness and setness in the ideas of those who have been brought up in this way, an aversion to those finer and more delicate operations of the intellect, of taste and genius, which require greater flexibility and variety of thought, and do not afford the same opportunity for dogmatical assertion and controversial cabal. The distaste of the Puritans, Quakers, &c. to pictures, music, poetry, and the fine arts in general, may be traced to this source as much as to their affected disdain of them as not sufficiently spiritual and remote from the gross impurity of sense. *

We learn from the interest we take in things, and according to the number of things in which

* The modern Quakers come as near the mark in these cases as they can. They do not go to plays, but they are great attenders of spouting-clubs and lectures. They do not frequent concerts, but run after pictures. We do not know exactly how they stand with respect to the circulating libraries. A Quaker poet would be a literary phenomenon.

we take an interest. Our ignorance of the real value of different objects and pursuits, will in general keep pace with our contempt for them. To set out with denying common sense to every one else, is not the way to be wise ourselves; nor shall we be likely to learn much, if we suppose that no one can teach us any thing worth knowing. Again, a contempt for the habits and manners of the world is as prejudicial as a contempt for their opinions. A puritanical abhorrence of every thing that does not fall in with our immediate prejudices and customs, must effectually cut us off, not only from a knowledge of the world and of human nature, but of good and evil, of vice and virtue; at least, if we can credit the assertion of Plato, (which, to some degree, we do,) that the knowledge of every thing implies the knowledge of its opposite. "There is some soul of goodness in things evil." A most respectable sect among ourselves (we mean the Quakers) have carried this system of negative qualities nearly to perfection. They labour diligently, and with great success, to exclude all ideas from their minds which they might have in common with others. On the principle that evil communication corrupts good manners, they retain a virgin purity of understanding, and laud-

able ignorance of all liberal arts and sciences; they take every precaution, and keep up a perpetual quarantine against the infection of other people's vices—or virtues; they pass through the world like figures cut out of pasteboard or wood, turning neither to the right nor the left; and their minds are no more affected by the example of the follies, the pursuits, the pleasures, or the passions of mankind, than the clothes which they wear. Their ideas want *airing;* they are the worse for not being used: for fear of soiling them, they keep them folded up, and laid by, in a sort of mental clothes-press, through the whole of their lives. They take their notions on trust from one generation to another, (like the scanty cut of their coats,) and are so wrapped up in these traditional maxims, and so pin their faith on them, that one of the most intelligent of this class of people, not long ago, assured us that "war was a thing that was going quite out of fashion!" This abstract sort of existence may have its advantages; but it takes away all the ordinary sources of a moral imagination, as well as strength of intellect. Interest is the only link that connects them with the world. We can understand the high enthusiasm and religious devotion of monks and anchorites, who gave up the world and its pleasures to dedi-

cate themselves to a sublime contemplation of a future state. But the sect of the Quakers, who have transplanted the maxims of the desert into manufacturing towns and populous cities, who have converted the solitary cells of the religious orders into counting-houses, their beads into ledgers, and keep a regular debtor and creditor account between this world and the next, puzzle us mightily!—The Dissenter is not vain, but conceited: that is, he makes up by his own good opinion for the want of the cordial admiration of others. But this often stands their self-love in so good stead, that they need not envy their dignified opponents who repose on lawn sleeves and ermine. The unmerited obloquy and dislike to which they are exposed has made them cold and reserved in their intercourse with society. The same cause will account for the dryness and general homeliness of their style. They labour under a sense of the want of public sympathy. They pursue truth for its own sake, into its private recesses and obscure corners. They have to dig their way along a narrow under-ground passage. It is not their object to shine; they have none of the usual incentives of vanity, light, airy, and ostentatious. Archiepiscopal Sees and mitres do not glitter in their distant horizon. They are not wafted on

the wings of fancy, fanned by the breath of popular applause. The voice of the world, the tide of opinion, is not with them. They do not therefore aim at *eclat*, at outward pomp and shew. They have a plain ground to work upon, and they do not attempt to embellish it with idle ornaments. It would be in vain to strew the flowers of poetry round the borders of the Unitarian controversy.

There is one quality common to all sectaries, and that is, a principle of strong fidelity. They are the safest partisans, and the steadiest friends. Indeed, they are almost the only people who have any idea of an abstract attachment either to a cause or to individuals, from a sense of duty, independently of prosperous or adverse circumstances, and in spite of opposition. *

Z.

* We have made the above observations, not as theological partisans, but as natural historians. We shall some time or other give the reverse of the picture; for there are vices inherent in establishments and their thorough-paced adherents, which well deserve to be distinctly pointed out.

No. XVIII.

ON JOHN BUNCLE.

JOHN BUNCLE is the English *Rabelais*. This is an author with whom, perhaps, many of our readers are not acquainted, and whom we therefore wish to introduce to their notice. As most of our countrymen delight in English Generals and in English Admirals, in English Courtiers and in English Kings, so our great delight is in English authors.

The soul of Francis Rabelais passed into John Amory, the author of the *Life and Adventures of John Buncle*. Both were physicians, and enemies of too much gravity. Their great business was to enjoy life. Rabelais indulges his spirit of sensuality in wine, in dried neats' tongues, in Bologna sausages, in botargos. John Buncle shews the same symptoms of inordinate satisfaction in tea and bread and butter. While Rabelais roared with Friar John and the Monks, John Buncle gossipped with the ladies; and with equal and uncontrolled gaiety. These two authors possessed all the insolence of health, so that their works give a fillip to the constitution; but they carried off the exuberance of their natural spirits

in different ways. The title of one of Rabelais' chapters (and the contents answer to the title) is—"How they chirped over their cups." The title of a corresponding chapter in John Buncle would run thus: "The author is invited to spend the evening with the divine Miss Hawkins, and goes accordingly, with the delightful conversation that ensued." Natural philosophers are said to extract sun-beams from ice: our author has performed the same feat upon the cold, quaint subtleties of theology. His constitutional alacrity overcomes every obstacle. He converts the thorns and briars of controversial divinity into a bed of roses. He leads the most refined and virtuous of their sex through the mazes of inextricable problems, with the air of a man walking a minuet in a drawing-room; mixes up in the most natural and careless manner the academy of compliments with the rudiments of algebra; or passes with rapturous indifference from the 1st of St John and a disquisition on the Logos, to the no less metaphysical doctrines of the principle of self-preservation, or the continuation of the species. *John Buncle* is certainly one of the most singular productions in the language; and herein lies its peculiarity. It is a Unitarian romance; and one in which the soul and body are equally attended to. The hero

is a great philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, philologist, and divine, with a good appetite, the best spirits, and an amorous constitution, who sets out on a series of strange adventures to propagate his philosophy, his divinity, and his species, and meets with a constant succession of accomplished females, adorned with equal beauty, wit, and virtue, who are always ready to discuss all kinds of theoretical and practical points with him. His angels (and all his women are angels) have all taken their degrees in more than one science :—love is natural to them. He is sure to find

"A mistress and a saint in every grove."

Pleasure and business, wisdom and mirth, take their turns with the most agreeable regularity. *A jocis ad seria, in seriis vicissim ad jocos transire.* After a chapter of calculations in fluxions, or on the descent of tongues, the lady and gentleman fall from Platonics to hoydening, in a manner as truly edifying as any thing in the scenes of Vanbrugh or Sir George Etherege. No writer ever understood so well the art of relief. The effect is like travelling in Scotland, and coming all of a sudden to a spot of habitable ground. His mode of making love is admirable. He takes it quite

easily, and never thinks of a refusal. His success gives him confidence, and his confidence gives him success. For example: in the midst of one of his rambles in the mountains of Cumberland, he unexpectedly comes to an elegant country-seat, where, walking on the lawn with a book in her hand, he sees a most enchanting creature, the owner of the mansion: our hero is on fire, leaps the ha-ha which separates them, presents himself before the lady with an easy but respectful air, begs to know the subject of her meditation, they enter into conversation, mutual explanations take place, a declaration of love is made, and the wedding-day is fixed for the following Tuesday. Our author now leads a life of perfect happiness with his beautiful Miss Noel, in a charming solitude, for a few weeks; till, on his return from one of his rambles in the mountains, he finds her a corpse. He "*sits with his eyes shut for seven days*," absorbed in silent grief; he then bids adieu to melancholy reflections, not being one of that sect of philosophers who think that "man was made to mourn,"—takes horse and sets out for the nearest watering-place. As he alights at the first inn on the road, a lady dressed in a rich green riding-habit steps out of a coach, John Buncle hands her into the inn, they drink tea

together, they converse, they find an exact harmony of sentiment, a declaration of love follows as a matter of course, and that day week they are married. Death, however, contrives to keep up the ball for him; he marries seven wives in succession, and buries them all.—In short, John Buncle's gravity sat upon him with the happiest indifference possible. He danced the hays with religion and morality, with the ease of a man of fashion and of pleasure. He was determined to see fair play between grace and nature, between his immortal and his mortal part, and in case of any difficulty, upon the principle of "first come, first served," made sure of the present hour. We sometimes suspect him of a little hypocrisy, but upon a closer inspection, it appears to be only an affectation of hypocrisy. His fine constitution comes to his relief, and floats him over the shoals and quicksands that lie in his way, "most dolphin-like." You see him from mere happiness of nature chuckling with inward satisfaction in the midst of his periodical penances, his grave grimaces, his death's heads, and *memento moris*.

——————"And there the antic sits
Mocking his state, and grinning at his pomp."

As men make use of olives to give a relish to

their wine, so John Buncle made use of philosophy to give a relish to life. He stops in a ball-room at Harrowgate to moralize on the small number of faces that appeared there out of those he remembered some years before: all were gone whom he saw at a still more distant period; but this casts no damp on his spirits, and he only dances the longer and better for it. He suffers nothing unpleasant to remain long upon his mind. He gives, in one place, a miserable description of two emaciated valetudinarians whom he met at an inn, supping a little mutton-broth with difficulty, but he immediately contrasts himself with them in fine relief. "While I beheld things with astonishment, the servant," he says, "brought in dinner—a pound of rump steaks, and a quart of green peas; two cuts of bread, a tankard of strong beer, and a pint of port wine; *with a fine appetite, I soon dispatched my mess,—and over my wine, to help digestion, began to sing the following lines!*"—The astonishment of the two strangers was now as great as his own had been.

We wish to enable our readers to judge for themselves of the style of our whimsical moralist, but are at a loss what to chuse—whether his account of his man O'Fin; or of his friend Tom Fleming; or of his being chased over the mountains by

robbers, "whisking before them like the wind away," as if it were high sport; or his address to the Sun, which is an admirable piece of serious eloquence; or his character of six Irish gentlemen, Mr Gollogher, Mr Gallaspy, Mr Dunkley, Mr Makins, Mr Monaghan, and Mr O'Keefe, the last "descended from the Irish kings, and first cousin to the great O'Keefe, who was buried not long ago in Westminster Abbey." He professes to give an account of these Irish gentlemen, "for the honour of Ireland, and as they were curiosities of the human kind." Curiosities, indeed, but not so great as their historian!

"Mr Makins was the only one of the set who was not tall and handsome. He was a very low, thin man, not four feet high, and had but one eye, with which he squinted most shockingly. But as he was matchless on the fiddle, sung well, and chatted agreeably, he was a favourite with the ladies. They preferred ugly Makins (as he was called) to many very handsome men. He was a Unitarian."

"Mr Monaghan was an honest and charming fellow. This gentleman and Mr Dunkley married ladies they fell in love with at Harrowgate Wells; Dunkley had the fair Alcmena, Miss Cox of Northumberland; and Monaghan, Antiope with

haughty charms, Miss Pearson of Cumberland. They lived very happy many years, and their children, I hear, are settled in Ireland."

Gentle reader, here is the character of Mr Gallaspy :—

" Gallaspy was the tallest and strongest man I have ever seen, well made, and very handsome : had wit and abilities, sung well, and talked with great sweetness and fluency, but was so extremely wicked, that it were better for him if he had been a natural fool. By his vast strength and activity, his riches and eloquence, few things could withstand him. He was the most profane swearer I have known : fought every thing, whored every thing, and drank seven in hand : that is, seven glasses so placed between the fingers of his right hand, that, in drinking, the liquor fell into the next glasses, and thereby he drank out of the first glass seven glasses at once. This was a common thing, I find from a book in my possession, in the reign of Charles II., in the madness that followed the restoration of that profligate and worthless prince. * But this gentleman was the only man I ever saw who could or would attempt to do it;

* Is all this a rhodomontade, or literal matter of fact, not credible in these degenerate days?

and he made but one gulp of whatever he drank: he did not swallow a fluid like other people, but if it was a quart, poured it in as from pitcher to pitcher. When he smoked tobacco, he always blew two pipes at once, one at each corner of his mouth, and threw the smoke out at both his nostrils. He had killed two men in duels before I left Ireland, and would have been hanged, but that it was his good fortune to be tried before a judge who never let any man suffer for killing another in this manner. (This was the late Sir John St Leger.) He debauched all the women he could, and many whom he could not corrupt" .... The rest of this passage would, we fear, be too rich for the Round Table, as we cannot insert it, in the manner of Mr Buncle, in a sandwich of theology. Suffice it to say, that the candour is greater than the candour of Voltaire's *Candide*, and the modesty equal to Colley Cibber's.

To his friend Mr Gollogher, he consecrates the following irresistible *petit souvenir* :—

" He might, if he had pleased, have married any one of the most illustrious and richest women in the kingdom; but he had an aversion to matrimony, and could not bear the thoughts of a wife. Love and a bottle were his taste: he was, however, the most honourable of men in his amours,

and never abandoned any woman in distress, as too many men of fortune do, when they have gratified desire. All the distressed were ever sharers in Mr Gollogher's fine estate, and especially the girls he had taken to his breast. He provided happily for them all, and left nineteen daughters he had by several women, a thousand pounds each. This was acting with a temper worthy of a man; *and to the memory of the benevolent Tom Gollogher, I devote this memorandum.*"

Lest our readers should form rather a coarse idea of our author from the foregoing passages, we will conclude with another list of friends in a different style.

" The Conniving-house (as the gentlemen of Trinity called it in my time, and long after) was a little public-house, kept by Jack Macklean, about a quarter of a mile beyond Rings-end, on the top of the beach, within a few yards of the sea. Here we used to have the finest fish at all times; and in the season, green peas, and all the most excellent vegetables. The ale here was always extraordinary, and every thing the best; which, with its delightful situation, rendered it a delightful place of a summer's evening. Many a delightful evening have I passed in this pretty thatched house with the famous Larry Grogan, who played

on the bagpipes extremely well; dear Jack Lattin, matchless on the fiddle, and the most agreeable of companions; that ever charming young fellow, Jack Wall, the most worthy, the most ingenious, the most engaging of men, the son of Counsellor Maurice Wall; and many other delightful fellows, who went, in the days of their youth, to the shades of eternity. When I think of them and their evening songs—*We will go to Johnny Macklean's, to try if his ale be good or no*, &c. and that years and infirmities begin to oppress me—What is life!"

We have another English author, very different from the last mentioned one, but equal in *naïveté*, and in the perfect display of personal character; we mean Isaac Walton, who wrote the *Complete Angler*. That well-known work has an extreme simplicity, and an extreme interest, arising out of its very simplicity. In the description of a fishing tackle you perceive the piety and humanity of the author's mind. This is the best pastoral in the language, not excepting Pope's or Philips's. We doubt whether Sannazarius's *Piscatory Eclogues* are equal to the scenes described by Walton on the banks of the River Lea. He gives the feeling of the open air. We walk with him along the dusty road-side, or repose on the banks of the

river under a shady tree, and in watching for the finny prey, imbibe what he beautifully calls " the patience and simplicity of poor, honest fishermen." We accompany them to their inn at night, and partake of their simple, but delicious fare, while Maud, the pretty milk-maid, at her mother's desire, sings the classical ditties of Sir Walter Raleigh. Good cheer is not neglected in this work, any more than in *John Buncle*, or any other history which sets a proper value on the good things of life. The prints in the " *Complete Angler*" give an additional reality and interest to the scenes it describes. While Tottenham Cross shall stand, and longer, thy work, amiable and happy old man, shall last! *

W. H.

* One of the most interesting traits of the amiable simplicity of Walton, is the circumstance of his friendship for Cotton, one of the " swash bucklers" of the age.—Dr Johnson said, there were only three works which the reader was sorry to come to the end of, *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Perhaps Walton's *Angler* might be added to the number.

No. XIX.

ON THE CAUSES OF METHODISM.

THE first Methodist on record was David. He was the first eminent person we read of, who made a regular compromise between religion and morality, between faith and good works. After any trifling peccadillo in point of conduct, as a murder, adultery, perjury, or the like, he ascended with his harp into some high tower of his palace; and having chaunted, in a solemn strain of poetical inspiration, the praises of piety and virtue, made his peace with heaven and his own conscience. This extraordinary genius, in the midst of his personal errors, retained the same lofty abstract enthusiasm for the favourite objects of his contemplation; the character of the poet and the prophet remained unimpaired by the vices of the man—

> "Pure in the last recesses of the mind;"

and the best test of the soundness of his principles and the elevation of his sentiments, is, that they were proof against his practice. The Gnostics afterwards maintained, that it was no matter what

a man's actions were, so that his understanding was not debauched by them—so that his opinions continued uncontaminated, and *his heart*, as the phrase is, *right towards God*. Strictly speaking, this sect (whatever name it might go by) is as old as human nature itself; for it has existed ever since there was a contradiction between the passions and the understanding—between what we are, and what we desire to be. The principle of Methodism is nearly allied to hypocrisy, and almost unavoidably slides into it: yet it is not the same thing; for we can hardly call any one a hypocrite, however much at variance his professions and his actions, who really wishes to be what he would be thought.

The Jewish bard, whom we have placed at the head of this class of devotees, was of a sanguine and robust temperament. Whether he chose "to sinner it or saint it," he did both most royally, with a fulness of gusto, and carried off his penances and his *faux-pas* in a style of oriental grandeur. This is by no means the character of his followers among ourselves, who are a most pitiful set. They may rather be considered as a collection of religious invalids; as the refuse of all that is weak and unsound in body and mind. To speak of them as they deserve, they are not well in the

flesh, and therefore they take refuge in the spirit; they are not comfortable here, and they seek for the life to come; they are deficient in steadiness of moral principle, and they trust to grace to make up the deficiency; they are dull and gross in apprehension, and therefore they are glad to substitute faith for reason, and to plunge in the dark, under the supposed sanction of superior wisdom, into every species of mystery and jargon. This is the history of Methodism, which may be defined to be religion with its slabbering-bib and go-cart. It is a bastard kind of Popery, stripped of its painted pomp and outward ornaments, and reduced to a state of pauperism. "The whole need not a physician." Popery owed its success to its constant appeal to the senses and to the weaknesses of mankind. The Church of England deprives the Methodists of the pride and pomp of the Romish Church: but it has left open to them the appeal to the indolence, the ignorance, and the vices of the people; and the secret of the success of the Catholic faith and evangelical preaching is the same—both are a religion by proxy. What the one did by auricular confession, absolution, penance, pictures, and crucifixes, the other does, even more compendiously, by grace,

election, faith without works, and words without meaning.

In the first place, the same reason makes a man a religious enthusiast that makes a man an enthusiast in any other way, an uncomfortable mind in an uncomfortable body. Poets, authors, and artists in general, have been ridiculed for a pining, puritanical, poverty-struck appearance, which has been attributed to their real poverty. But it would perhaps be nearer the truth to say, that their being poets, artists, &c. has been owing to their original poverty of spirit and weakness of constitution. As a general rule, those who are dissatisfied with themselves, will seek to go out of themselves into an ideal world. Persons in strong health and spirits, who take plenty of air and exercise, who are "in favour with their stars," and have a thorough relish of the good things of this life, seldom devote themselves in despair to religion or the Muses. Sedentary, nervous, hypochondriacal people, on the contrary, are forced, for want of an appetite for the real and substantial, to look out for a more airy food and speculative comforts. "Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works." A journeyman sign-painter, whose lungs have imbibed too great a quantity of the effluvia of white lead, will be seized with a

fantastic passion for the stage; and *Mawworm*, tired of standing behind his counter, was eager to mount a tub, mistaking the suppresion of his animal spirits for the communication of the Holy Ghost! * If you live near a chapel or tabernacle in London, you may almost always tell, from physiognomical signs, which of the passengers will turn the corner to go there. We were once staying in a remote place in the country, where a chapel of this sort had been erected by the force of missionary zeal; and one morning, we perceived a long procession of people coming from the next town to the consecration of this same chapel. Never was there such a set of scarecrows. Melancholy tailors, consumptive hair-dressers, squinting coblers, women with child or in the ague, made up the forlorn hope of the pious cavalcade. The pastor of this half-starved flock, we confess, came riding after, with a more goodly aspect, as if he had "with sound of bell been knolled to church, and sat at good men's feasts." He had in truth

* Oxberry's manner of acting this character is a very edifying comment on the text: he flings his arms about, like those of a figure pulled by strings, and seems actuated by a pure spirit of infatuation, as if one blast of folly had taken possession of his whole frame,

"And filled up all the mighty void of sense."

lately married a thriving widow, and been pampered with hot suppers, to strengthen the flesh and the spirit. We have seen several of these " round fat oily men of God,

" That shone all glittering with ungodly dew."

They grow sleek and corpulent by getting into better pasture, but they do not appear healthy. They retain the original sin of their constitution, an atrabilious taint in their complexion, and do not put a right-down, hearty, honest, good-looking face upon the matter, like the regular clergy.

Again, Methodism, by its leading doctrines, has a peculiar charm for all those, who have an equal facility in sinning and repenting,—in whom the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,—who have neither fortitude to withstand temptation, nor to silence the admonitions of conscience,—who like the theory of religion better than the practice,—and who are willing to indulge in all the raptures of speculative devotion, without being tied down to the dull, literal performance of its duties. There is a general propensity in the human mind (even in the most vicious) to pay virtue a distant homage; and this desire is only checked, by the fear of condemning ourselves by our own acknowledgments. What an admirable expedient then

in " that burning and shining light," Whitefield, and his associates, to make this very disposition to admire and extol the highest patterns of goodness, a substitute for, instead of an obligation to, the practice of virtue, to allow us to be quit for " the vice that most easily besets us," by canting lamentations over the depravity of human nature, and loud hosannahs to the Son of David! How comfortably this doctrine must sit on all those who are loth to give up old habits of vice, or are just tasting the sweets of new ones; on the withered hag who looks back on a life of dissipation, or the young devotee who looks forward to a life of pleasure: the knavish tradesman retiring from business, or entering on it; the battered rake; the sneaking politician, who trims between his place and his conscience, wriggling between heaven and earth, a miserable two-legged creature, with sanctified face and fawning gestures; the maudling sentimentalist, the religious prostitute, the disinterested poet-laureat, the humane war-contractor, or the Society for the Suppression of Vice! This scheme happily turns morality into a sinecure, takes all the practical drudgery and trouble off your hands, " and sweet religion makes a rhapsody of words." Its proselytes besiege the gates of heaven, like sturdy beggars about the doors of the

great, lie and bask in the sunshine of divine grace, sigh and groan and bawl out for mercy, expose their sores and blotches to excite commiseration, and cover the deformities of their nature with a garb of borrowed righteousness!

The jargon and nonsense which are so studiously inculcated in the system, are another powerful recommendation of it to the vulgar. It does not impose any tax upon the understanding. Its essence is to be unintelligible. It is a *carte blanche* for ignorance and folly! Those "numbers without number," who are either unable or unwilling to think connectedly or rationally on any subject, are at once released from every obligation of the kind, by being told that faith and reason are opposed to one another, and the greater the impossibility, the greater the merit of the faith. A set of phrases which, without conveying any distinct idea, excite our wonder, our fear, our curiosity and desires, which let loose the imagination of the gaping multitude, and confound and baffle common sense, are the common stock-in-trade of the conventicle. They never stop for the distinctions of the understanding, and have thus got the start of other sects, who are so hemmed in with the necessity of giving reasons for their opinions, that they cannot get on at all.

"Vital Christianity" is no other than an attempt to lower all religion to the level of the capacities of the lowest of the people. One of their favourite places of worship combines the noise and turbulence of a drunken brawl at an ale-house, with the indecencies of a bagnio. They strive to gain a vertigo by abandoning their reason, and give themselves up to the intoxications of a distempered zeal, that

> "Dissolves them into ecstasies,
> And brings all heaven before their eyes."

Religion, without superstition, will not answer the purposes of fanaticism, and we may safely say, that almost every sect of Christianity is a perversion of its essence, to accommodate it to the prejudices of the world. The Methodists have greased the boots of the Presbyterians, and they have done well. While the latter are weighing their doubts and scruples to the division of a hair, and shivering on the narrow brink that divides philosophy from religion, the former plunge without remorse into hell-flames,—soar on the wings of divine love,—are carried away with the motions of the spirit,—are lost in the abyss of unfathomable mysteries, election, reprobation, predestination,—and revel in a sea of boundless nonsense. It is a

gulf that swallows up every thing. The cold, the calculating, and the dry, are not to the taste of the many; religion is an anticipation of the preternatural world, and it in general requires preternatural excitements to keep it alive. If it takes a definite consistent form, it loses its interest: to produce its effect, it must come in the shape of an apparition. Our quacks treat grown people as the nurses do children;—terrify them with what they have no idea of, or take them to a puppet-show.

W. H.

No. XX.

ON THE POETICAL CHARACTER.

A STRONG sensation, as the phrase is, has been excited among our readers, by the article on Methodism of our Friend W. H.; and we feel ourselves inclined to say something to it, not indeed in contradiction, for we heartily agree with almost every particle of it, nor in emulation, for we know where our powers lie; but in addition to what he has thrown out on one or two incidental points. The reader must merely consider us as pursuing the subject at the ROUND TABLE, after a sufficient pause of admiration at our Friend's

chivalrous eloquence, broken only by the cracking of walnuts, and a grateful replenishing of his glass.

As to the Methodists, however, we do not pretend to argue with them. We only wonder how they can argue with others, seeing that they set out with renouncing reason itself. We do not object, neither, we are sure, does W. H., to David's proceedings being looked upon with an eye of charity, any more than we do to Charles the Second's or to Louis the Fourteenth's, whatever may be our objection to those who make certain differences where there are none. Methodism, in one respect, comes to the same end as Philosophy, in divesting merit of its self-love, and demerit of its hopelessness; but then it cuts up a great deal of good taste and virtue by the way; and after denying merit in practice, makes a still more ridiculous one consist in opinion. There is no arguing with people of these perceptions. A real Methodist (for all are not Methodists who call themselves so, any more than all persons think, who think that they do) has more need of a physician than a logician; he should take the road to the doctor's instead of the chapel; and before any one, who is falling into the same way, and has not yet been persuaded out of the reason that Providence

gave him to see with, undertakes to look after the state of his soul, which he is to enjoy in the next world, let him be able to say that he has properly attended to the state of his body, which was given him to enjoy in the present. If he has, he will very soon convince himself that he has saved both together; if not, the best road for him is a good horse-road. It is an excellent piece of advice, "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest;" but all the "inwardly digesting" in the world, of one sort, will not do without the other. Before the patient has ridden or walked two hours for a hundred days successively, we will be bound that he not only finds himself in infinitely better spirits, but every thing with a better aspect about him, and others, as well as the Methodists, in a much better way than he imagined. He will not *flatter* himself that he is comfortable, by reckoning himself as one of the preposterously small minority to be saved; but *feel* that he is so, by seeing that the infinite majority are upon the whole happier than otherwise, and quite as acceptable to a good Being as he. He will discover that actions are as much better than opinions, as exercise is than the want of it. He will no longer prefer the "light," as it is called, to the common daylight of health and reason; nor blind himself in order to see bet-

ter, like an infant who shuts his eyes to look through a pair of spectacles. The Methodists talk of the "vile world" and the "vile body," and boast of being able to view the next world better, in proportion as they see every thing discoloured in this; but they carry the same discolourment every where in spite of themselves; their optics resemble the burnt glasses, which enable us to look at the sun, but convert it into a blood-red fire. This is jaundice, and not religion. We do not honour the Maker by dispraising what he has made. The "vile world" and the "vile body" are very valuable and beautiful things to people in health; and health only, or what you remember of it, is the fit judge of the beautiful, because its perceptions only are in their natural state; its mouth, as the doctors say, is not out of taste. So to finish this long digression into which we have run unawares in behalf of the Methodists indirect, we once more disclaim all intention of arguing with the Methodists direct, unless they take up the question physically. It is with their livers they must discuss the matter, and not with their lungs; and, indeed, it is a mere pretence in them to affect that they ever talk otherwise. They are a kind of diseased ventriloquists, and speak from the diaphragm. Whenever we see the title of a methodistical

pamphlet, we always make an erratum as we go along, and read it, "How to discern things with the help of the jaundice,—By an Eye-Witness,"—or "Hints towards keeping a bad state of health when you get it,—By a Sufferer."

It was concerning the poets and others of their cast, whether in art or even philosophy, whether Raphael or Plato, that we intended to take up the conversation,—a race of men, among whom very few Methodists have been found; and for this reason, in addition to their natural powers of thinking,—that in their youth and health they have had too strong a sense of the beauties of things about them, for almost any adversity to tear away. They retain a certain healthiness of mind, as other people do of body, by a constant activity with nature,—a perpetual mental living, as it were, out of doors. Or rather they have more natural resources than other persons; they are richer when they begin the world. It is on this point, if any, that we differ with our Friend W. H. He attributes *original* poverty of spirit to poets, artists, &c. and we would substitute the word *occasional* or *incidental*. Poetry, in fact, with a reserve always as to first causes, or to the question why such a man is a poet and others are not, seems to be the result of an organization de-

licate, but not diseased, whatever disease may be induced afterwards. A young poet has perhaps the most pleasurable tendencies of any human being, and the greatest number of them;—at home or abroad, in the city or the country, in society or alone, he has an instinct to fasten on and fetch out the whole wealth of enjoyment; and as long as he is in health, this habit is of necessity the result of a love of pleasure, instead of a sense of pain, or of the want of resources. The smallest and most insignificant thing can administer to his pleasure by means of association; and it is from the same cause that he is enabled to render tenfold his sense of the beautiful, in what people admire in general,—that he has the brightest sense of the sunshine, and is the warmest lover of woman,—that he sees the splendour of an Arabian tale along the wealthy shops of a capital,—peoples every green field with all its pleasures at once,—and accompanies the movements of a beautiful figure with a host of graces and delights. It was in this feeling that Akenside, himself a young poet at the time, invoked his animal as well as intellectual spirits in the *Pleasures of Imagination*:—

" Be present, all ye Genii, who conduct
The wandering footsteps of the youthful bard
New to your springs and shades,—who touch his ear

With finer sounds,—who heighten to his eye
The bloom of nature, and before him turn
The gayest, happiest attitude of things."

On the other hand, it is evident that this exquisite tendency to pleasure is liable, from the delicacy of its nature, to degenerate into as exquisite a tendency to pain; and poets may exhibit the poverty in question more than other men, not because they have been always poor, but because, like other spendthrifts of great wealth, the change from riches to poverty is the greater.

Let a poet do his utmost to keep his health,—to hinder his nerves from being overwrought, and to preserve his blood in its proper flow, and we will answer for it, that his life runs sprightly to the last. But what are his temptations? To say nothing, for instance, of other sensualities, he has as strong a relish of repose as of action; the nature of modern education, and of modern customs in general, tends to throw him into sedentary enjoyment; and the single fact of his giving way to this propensity,—of his hanging over books, and cultivating his mental activity at the expence of his bodily,—may weaken his organs of digestion, and alter his sensations at once from pleasure to pain. This is a very unromantic circumstance, but it is a very true one. It is all very well to talk

of grief and misfortunes; we are not unexperienced in either; nor do we mean to say that we do not sympathize with those whom they afflict, let the cause be what it may. If self-caused, so much indeed the more to be pitied. But grief, though certainly not always to be done away by endeavouring to strengthen the body, may generally be more modified by it than is imagined. The mind is a very delicate thing, but the body was given us to keep it in. We must not wonder that we get weather-beaten, if we do not take care of our wainscots. In a "sea of troubles," a great deal surely depends on the boat.

Such, however, after all, is the natural tendency of poets to pleasure, that they retain more of it, we are persuaded, in the midst of pain, than any persons of the same delicate organization, who are not poets. In fact, their very ability to resort to fancy for the supply of enjoyment is a proof of it. Epicurus said, that it was a relief to him, in the severest torments of the stone, to call to mind the pleasures he had enjoyed; and such is the philosophical power of poetry, with the additional excitement of its being able to embody its recollections in verse, and to procure fame by them. We are aware but of six poets on record, whose nerves appear to have embittered their existence,—

Tasso, Salvator Rosa, Racine, Cowper, Collins, and Alfieri. The two latter had been rakes; the nerves of the third seem, from his very infancy, to have hung together by threads; and the second apparently resembled him, for he absolutely died of nervousness at losing the countenance of Louis the Fourteenth. The cause of Tasso's hypochondria is involved in mystery; and we believe, after all, that he got rid of it, as temperate people are apt to do, towards the latter part of their lives. If Parnell is to increase the list, it should be added, that his final bad spirits have been attributed to the loss of his wife, and that, to try and better them, he resorted to the bottle. We speak, of course, with reverence of the frailties of such beings, as well as of their other infirmities. Tasso was perhaps a little proud and assuming; but Parnell, Cowper, and Racine, were all most amiable men; and so must Collins have been, if we are to judge from the fondness exhibited for him by Dr Johnson. The most complete specimen of destitution of spirits, from first to last, and the only one we ever remember to have read of, is afforded by that accomplished genius, Salvator Rosa, who united, and with a certain degree of excellence too, poetry, painting, and music. He said of himself, if we rightly remember a passage we met

with somewhere, that nature seemed to have formed him purely to make an experiment how far human suffering could go. But certainly he wanted boldness in no respect.

Should Chatterton's name be mentioned, who promised to be a great poet, it is to be remembered, that no youth ever set out in the world with higher spirits, as may be seen from his letters to his mother and sister; but he too was a spendthrift of them; and the contrast of pain seems to have overset him by its suddenness as well as violence. The late excellent Henry Kirke White, who promised to be a poet also, was a martyr to study.

> " The spoiler swept that soaring lyre away,
> Which else had sounded an immortal lay.
> Oh what a noble heart was here undone,
> When Science' self destroyed her favourite son."
>
> BYRON.

So says of him a noble poet, who is fulfilling the promise of *his* youth, and who has known enough of the pleasures and pains of his nature, to think, we dare say, with us.

But the poets above mentioned are nothing in point of number to the poets in general,—taking, of course, only the true ones, among which Parnell himself perhaps is scarcely to be admitted.

Of the great mass, there is no reason to believe, but that if they had more pain, they had also more pleasure, than the rest of their fellow-creatures; and that pleasure, on the whole, was predominant. It has been supposed by some, that by "poverty of spirit," our Friend W. H. meant want of spirit, in the common sense of the term, as referring to courage; but he means, of course, what we have already said, and not a deficiency which would be incompatible with enthusiasm, as well as especially contradicted by the poets of his own country, whom nobody understands or enjoys more. There may be a deficiency of animal courage, where there is the very greatest courage arising from reflection; and the latter, no doubt, belongs more to a delicate organization than the former.

But to proceed with a glance at the principal poets. Little or nothing is known of the personal habits of the Grecian poets; but Homer has been handed down by tradition, probably from his delight in expatiating on good cheer, (which, however, would tell as much the other way,) as having been what is now called a jolly fellow;—Anacreon, in spite of his drinking, is understood to have been merry to the last;—the Greek wine was probably not very potent, nor drunk by him immo-

derately, or he must have taken as much exercise as a fox-hunter, for he lived to an old age. The Greek tragedians, generally speaking, were men who led active lives in the world, and in professions which could not have put up with poverty of spirit.

The two poets who have done more harm, perhaps, to the reputation of their professions for spirit than all their brethren put together, are Virgil and Horace, both of them flatterers of Augustus, and the one an absolute runaway; but if the former is said to have been of a nervous temperament, the latter, whatever may have been his asthma, or his occasional fits of indigestion, was surely gifted with a very agreeable run of sensations,—so agreeable, that who has not pardoned him (the rogue!) for all his transgressions? He is the very Gil Blas of poets, with talents and sentiment to boot.

To come to modern Italy, we have already spoken of Tasso and Alfieri, and hardly know what to say on the score of the great Dante, who appears to have been a grave personage from his youth, though there is a delightful sonnet of his extant, in which he talks of going on a boat-party with some friends, in a style that is very amiable and companionable. But Petrarch's youth, as he

himself tells us, was full of life and spirits; and so far from not having a relish for ordinary things, he was one of the greatest bucks at Avignon, and rallies himself and a friend of his on the exceeding care they used to take not to rumple their cloaks or splash their stockings. Ariosto, Pulci, Berni, * Bembo, Casa, Fortiguerri, Marino, all appear to have set out in similar health and spirits, and not to have lost them, generally speaking, afterwards, though most of them exhibited symptoms of delicate organization, and there is great reason to believe, had led very free lives. Guidi's temper is said to have been so diseased, that, as he was taking a copy of a new poem of his to court, in order to present it to the Pope, he died in the coach, of a fit of passion, on discovering some errors of the press. Filicaia, by his poems, appears to have been an habitual invalid and devotee; Redi describes himself as of a dry and chilly complexion; and Frugoni has written several little poems on his hypochondria, intermixed

* By the way, Berni's entertaining description of himself and his friend in the last canto of the *Orlando Innamorato*, seems to have been the origin, both of the general idea of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and of the personal introductions of one's self in poetry, as exemplified in that delightful little work.

with warm praises of his physicians for defeating its attacks, which they appear never to have failed to do. A friend, who pronounced his panegyric, represents him as dying old and robust. Sannazarius died at an advanced age also, though his life had been far from fortunate; and so did Metastasio, a hypochondriac professed, who talks very pleasantly to his friend Farinelli about headache, tension of the nerves, and "other gentilities;" and says, he finds it, after all, "a cursed business, this same trade of heroism." Tansillo's *Tears of Saint Peter*, written in his advanced years, was a mere piece of methodistical compromise, after the manner of David, for his previous rakery and his licentious poem of the *Vintager*.

Among the French poets, we have already mentioned Racine. We do not remember any thing of the private life of Corneille. Moliere, we believe, was a nervous man, and so was Boileau; La Fontaine, when he died, was found to have a hair shirt next his skin,—a piece of penance for his *Tales;* but the greater part of his life appears to have passed in a kind of contented infantine dream, half unconscious of the wit and fine things it uttered; and Chaulieu, La Fare, and above all Voltaire, what perfection of the animal as well as intellectual vivacity of their country-

men! Voltaire's cheerfulness is the last talent, perhaps, which his adversaries will forgive him.

To come home to England. It is not one of the least curious instances of the native spirit of this country, that three out of its four greatest poets,—Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton,—have been men of busy action in the political world,—that two out of the three were unequivocally on the side of freedom, and helped to procure us our present enjoyments,—and that the greater part of the rest, Gray, Collins, Pope, Thomson, Akenside, Andrew Marvell, &c. had a like feeling for independence. It is the same with the majority of the poets now living. There is no reason to believe that these celebrated men were not upon the whole very comfortable with themselves, and enjoyed what they have made so many others enjoy. Pope had evidently a quick relish of existence, in spite of his bodily infirmities. Gray and Collins were not so lively, but then it was after the season of youth. Thomson was of a cheerful temperament, so was Garth, so was Prior, Fenton, Congreve, so were Beaumont and Fletcher, so was Andrew Marvell, and so was Chaucer, till he got into prison in his old age. There is no doubt that Milton's infirmities arose from over-application, as well as political trouble;

yet, in the midst of his blindness and all the rest, " with darkness and with dangers compassed round," he expressly tells us that he had not abated " a jot of heart or hope." That fine fellow, Sir Philip Sydney, (whose biographers, by the way, have not told half, we suspect, of what might be discovered by an inquiring and unprejudiced writer,) is said to have been of a temperament inclined to melancholy, but not in his first youth; it was after all but a gentle one,—a twilight, in which he saw things softly, if not brilliantly.—Cowley's was of the same description,—a tendency to " the pensive pleasures." As to Shakspeare, who baffles one's speculations of every sort, it seems impossible, on the one hand, that he could have had such a complete feeling of the prostration of spirits,—of the wearisome sameness of a sickly eyesight,—as he has manifested in *Hamlet* and other characters, if he had not felt it in his own person; but then, on the other, what must have been his merriment and his volatility, if we are to judge from *Falstaff*, *Benedick*, and others of the laughing order? He must have been Democritus and Heraclitus in one person,—an anomaly not unaccountable on the very ground of melancholy itself; but this, after all, is a secondary question. His original

spirits, according to the account given us of his early life, appear to have been sprightly and sanguine, to a degree of defiance.

The same remarks will apply to the painters and musicians. They do not appear to have been originally deficient in any sort of spirit, whatever want some of them may have induced upon themselves. Mozart is said to have suffered under an exhausted sensibility in the latter part of his life; but we believe he had a strong sense of other pleasures besides those of his art; and music, in its direct vibrations upon the nerves, always seemed likely to us, as far as we could guess, to be a more trying thing to a composer who enjoyed it, and who was not of a very stout organization, than poetry itself. It is absolute dram-drinking at the ear. Yet Haydn, from the little we have heard of him, appears to have been a very staid personage; and Handel, with all his sublimities, and even his delicacies and tricksome graces, was a gross kind of jovial fellow, and announced by a plethoric person (to use the Gibbonian style) the ample use he made of his knife and fork.

A certain amorousness, and perception of beauty, appear to be the distinguishing features of Mozart's composition; and in this respect, as well as in others, perhaps, he had some resemblance to Ra-

phael, who seemed born for no other purpose but to feel what was amiable and beautiful, and to touch out anew, as it were, the sweetest note of our sphere. His very awfulness is lovely, like that of the cherub in Milton. Raphael received from nature such a sense of the pleasurable, that, if the general belief is well founded with respect to the occasion of his death, he fell a martyr to it in the 37th year of his age. Michael Angelo was of an austerer cast; but we do not know that his temper was melancholy. Rubens was a very high-toned spirit, and had a kind of princeliness and splendour in his style of living, that resembled the taste of his pictures.

The summary then of what we have been saying is this,—that poets, in our opinion, and those that partake of this character, have originally a wealth instead of poverty of spirit;—that they are very liable, however, from the temptations into which it leads them, to fall into such poverty;—but that, even then, they are more likely than most persons to retain a portion of their first resources, and feel some of that pleasure which they were made to communicate to the world. We say, moreover, that health is the great secret of wealth in this instance; and that a poet or painter, as well as any body else, who falls into lowness of

spirit, should do his best to help himself out of it, —on horseback if he wants a lift more than ordinary,—with his feet, if he does not,—but with some mode of bodily effort at any rate. And now, having ended our long fit of talking, we feel in us an exceeding tendency to the pleasure of a glass of wine, (a reasonable one, of course,) and shall drink it, with this toast, to all our brother authors, present and to come,—

> May good digestion wait on appetite,
> And health on both.

L. H.

No. XXI.

ON DEATH AND BURIAL.

The Christian mythology personifies Death by an animated skeleton;—the Pagan did it by the figure of a pale but beautiful female, or with a reconcilement still more agreeable, by that of a butterfly escaped from its chrysalis. This was death, and the life that followed it, at once,—the soul freed from the body, and fluttering in the fresh air of Heaven.

The cultivation of pleasant associations is, next

to health, the great secret of enjoyment; and, accordingly, as we lessen our cares and increase our pleasures, we may imagine ourselves affording a grateful spectacle to the Author of happiness. Error and misery, taken in their proportion, are the exceptions in his system. The world is most unquestionably happier upon the whole than otherwise; or light, and air, and the face of nature, would be different from what they are, and mankind no longer be buoyed up in perpetual hope and action. By cultivating agreeable thoughts, then, we tend, like bodies in philosophy, to the greater mass of sensations, rather than the less.

What we can enjoy, let us enjoy like creatures made for that very purpose: what we cannot, let us, in the same character, do our best to deprive of its bitterness. Nothing can be more idle than the voluntary gloom with which people think to please Heaven in certain matters, and which they confound with serious acknowledgment, or with what they call a due sense of its dispensations. It is nothing but the cultivation of the principle of fear, instead of confidence, with whatever name they may disguise it. It is carrying frightened faces to court, instead of glad and grateful ones; and is above all measure ridiculous, because the real cause of it, and, by the way, of a

thousand other feelings which religious courtiers mistake for religion, cannot be concealed from the Being it is intended to honour. There is a dignity certainly in suffering, where we cannot chuse but suffer ;—if we must take physic, let us do it like men ;—but what would be his dignity, who, when he had the choice in his power, should make the physic bitterer than it is, or even refuse to render it more palatable, purely to look grave over it, and do honour to the physician?

The idea of our dissolution is one of those which we most abuse in this manner, principally, no doubt, because it is abhorrent from the strong principle of vitality implanted in us, and the habits that have grown up with it. But what then? So much the more should we divest it of all the unpleasant associations which it need not excite, and add to it all the pleasant ones which it will allow.

But what is the course we pursue? We remember having a strong impression, years ago, of the absurdity of our mode of treating a deathbed, and of the great desirableness of having it considered as nothing but a sick one,—one to be smoothed and comforted, even by cordial helps, if necessary. We remember also how some persons, who, nevertheless, did too much justice to the very

freest of our speculations to consider them as profane, were startled by this opinion, till we found it expressed in almost so many words, by no less an authority than Lord Bacon. We got at our notion through a very different process, we dare say,—he through the depth of his knowledge, and we from the very buoyancy of our youth;—but we are not disposed to think it the less wise on that account. "The serious," of course, are bound to be shocked at so cheering a proposition; but of them we have already spoken. The great objection would be, that such a system would deprive the evil-disposed of one terror in prospect, and that this principle of determent is already found too feeble to afford any diminution. The fact is, the whole principle is worth little or nothing, except the penalty to be inflicted is pretty certain, and appeals also to the less sentimental part of our nature. It is good habits,—a well-educated conscience,—a little early knowledge,—the cultivation of generous motives,—must supply people with preventives of bad conduct; their sense of things is too immediate and lively to attend, in the long run, to any thing else. We will be bound to say, generally speaking, that the prospective terrors of a death-bed never influenced any others than nervous consciences, too weak, and inhabiting organiza-

tions too delicate, to afford to be very bad ones. But, in the mean time, they may be very alarming to such consciences in prospect, and very painful to the best and most temperate of mankind in actual sufferance; and why should this be, but, as we have said before, to keep bitter that which we could sweeten, and to persist in a mistaken want of relief, under a notion of its being a due sense of our condition? We know well enough what a due sense of our condition is in other cases of infirmity; and what is a death-bed but the very acme of infirmity,—the sickness, bodily and mental, that of all others has most need of relief?

If the death-bed happens to be an easy one, the case is altered; and no doubt it is oftener so than people imagine;—but how much pains are often taken to render it difficult?—First, the chamber, in which the dying person lies, is made as gloomy as possible with curtains, and vials, and nurses, and terrible whispers, and perhaps the continual application of handkerchiefs to weeping eyes;—then, whether he wishes it or not, or is fit to receive it or not, he is to have the whole truth told him by some busy-body, who never was so anxious perhaps in the cause of veracity before;—and lastly, some partings, and family assemblings, and confusion of the head with matters of faith,

and trembling prayers that tend to force upon dying weakness the very doubts they undertake to dissipate. Well may the soldier take advantage of such death-beds as these, to boast of the end that awaits him in the field.

But having lost our friend, we must still continue to add to our own misery at the circumstance. We must heap about the recollection of our loss all the most gloomy and distasteful circumstances we can contrive, and thus, perhaps, absolutely incline ourselves to think as little of him as possible. We wrap the body in ghastly habiliments, put it in as tasteless a piece of furniture as we can invent, dress ourselves in the gloomiest of colours, awake the barbarous monotony of the church-bell, (to frighten every sick person in the neighbourhood,) call about us a set of officious mechanics, of all sorts, who are counting their shillings, as it were, by the tears that we shed, and watching with jealousy every candle's end of their "perquisites,"—and proceed to consign our friend or relation to the dust, under a ceremony that takes particular pains to impress that consummation on our minds.—Lastly, come tasteless tombstones and ridiculous epitaphs, with perhaps a skull and cross-bones at top; and the tombstones are crowded together, generally in the middle of towns, al-

ways near the places of worship, unless the churchyard is overstocked. Scarcely ever is there a tree on the spot;—in some remote villages alone are the graves ever decorated with flowers. All is stony, earthy, and dreary. It seems as if, after having rendered every thing before death as painful as possible, we endeavoured to subside into a sullen indifference, which contradicted itself by its own efforts.

The Greeks managed these things better. It is curious that we, who boast so much of our knowledge of the immortality of the soul, and of the glad hopes of an after-life, should take such pains to make the image of death melancholy; while, on the other hand, Gentiles whom we treat with so much contempt for their ignorance on those heads, should do the reverse, and associate it with emblems that ought to belong rather to us. But the truth is, that we know very little what we are talking about, when we speak, in the gross, of the ancients, and of their ideas of Deity and humanity. The very finest and most amiable part of our notions on those subjects comes originally from their philosophers;—all the rest, the gloom, the bad passions, the favouritism, are the work of other hands, who have borrowed the better materials as they proceeded, and then pretended an original right in them. Even the ab-

surd parts of the Greek Mythology are less painfully absurd than those of any other; because, generally speaking, they are on the cheerful side instead of the gloomy. We would rather have a Deity, who fell in love with the beautiful creatures of his own making, than one, who would consign nine hundred out of a thousand to destruction, for not believing ill of him.

But not to digress from the main subject. The Ancients did not render the idea of death so harshly distinct, as we do, from that of life. They did not extinguish all light and cheerfulness in their minds, and in things about them, as it were, on the instant; neither did they keep before one's eyes, with hypochondriacal pertinacity, the idea of death's heads and skeletons, which, as representations of humanity, are something more absurd than the brick which the pedant carried about as the specimen of his house. They selected pleasant spots for sepulture, and outside the town; they adorned their graves with arches and pillars,—with myrtles, lilies, and roses; they kept up the social and useful idea of their great men by entombing them near the highway, so that every traveller paid his homage as he went; and latterly, they reduced the dead body to ashes,—a clean and inoffensive substance,—gathered into

a tasteful urn, and often accompanied it with other vessels of exquisite construction, on which were painted the most cheerful actions of the person departed, even to those of his every-day life,—the prize in the games, the toilet, the recollections of his marriages and friendships,—the figures of beautiful females,—every thing, in short, which seemed to keep up the idea of a vital principle, and to say, "the creature, who so did and so enjoyed itself, cannot be all gone." The image of the vital principle and of an after-life was, in fact, often and distinctly repeated on these vessels by a variety of emblems, animal and vegetable, particularly those mentioned in the beginning of this article, the image of Psyche or the soul by means of the butterfly,—an association which, in process of time, as other associations gathered about it, gave rise to the most exquisite allegory in the world, the story of *Cupid* and *Psyche*.

Now, we do not mean to say, that every body who thinks as we do upon this subject, should or can depart at once from existing customs, especially the chief ones. These things must either go gradually or by some convulsive movement in society, as others have gone; and mere eccentricity is no help to their departure. What we cannot undo, let us only do as decently as possible; but

we might render the dying a great deal more comfortable, by just daring a little to consider their comforts and not our puerility; we might allow their rooms also to be more light and cheerful; we might take pains to bring pleasanter associations about them altogether; and when they were gone, we might cultivate our own a little better; our tombstones might at least be in better taste; we might take more care of our graves; we might preserve our sick neighbours from the sound of the death-bell; a single piece of ribbon or crape would surely be enough to guard us against the unweeting inquiries of friends, while, in the rest of our clothes, we might adopt, by means of a ring or a watch-ribbon, some cheerful instead of gloomy recollection of the person we had lost,—a favourite colour, for instance, or device,—and thus contrive to balance a grief which we must feel, and which, indeed, in its proper associations, it would not be desirable to avoid. Rousseau died gazing on the setting sun, and was buried under green trees. Petrarch, who seemed born to complete and render glorious the idea of an author from first to last, was found dead in his study with his head placidly resting on a book. What is there in deaths like these to make us look back with

anguish, or to plunge into all sorts of gloominess and bad taste?

We know not whether it has ever struck any of our readers, but we seem to consider the relics of ancient taste, which we possess, as things of mere ornament, and forget that their uses may be in some measure preserved, so as to complete the idea of their beauty, and give them, as it were, a soul again. We place their urns and vases, for instance, about our apartments, but never think of putting any thing in them; yet when they are not absolutely too fragile, we might often do so,—fruit, flowers,—toilet utensils,—a hundred things, with a fine opportunity (to boot) of shewing our taste in inscriptions. The Chinese, in the *Citizen of the World*, when he was shewn the two large vases from his own country, was naturally amused to hear that they only served to fill up the room, and held no supply of tea in them as they did at home. A lady, a friend of ours, who shews in her countenance her origin from a country of taste, and who acts up to the promise of her countenance, is the only person, but one, whom we ever knew to turn antique ornament to account in this respect. She buried a favourite bird in a vase on her mantle-piece; and there the little rogue lies, with more kind and tasteful asso-

ciations about him, than the greatest dust in Christendom. The other instance is that of two urns of marble, which have been turned as much as possible to the original purposes of such vessels, by becoming the depository of locks of hair. A lock of hair is an actual relic of the dead, as much so, in its proportion, as ashes, and more lively and recalling than even those. It is the part of us that preserves vitality longest; it is a clean and elegant substance: and it is especially connected with ideas of tenderness, in the cheek or the eyes about which it may have strayed, and the handling we may have given it on the living head. The thoughts connected with such relics time gradually releases from grief itself, and softens into nothing but tender enjoyment; and we know that in the instance alluded to, the possessor of those two little urns would no more consent to miss them from his study, than he would any other cheerful association that he could procure. It is a feeling, which he would not forego for a great deal, that the venerable and lovely dust to which they belonged lies in a village church-yard, and has left the most unfading part of it inclosed in graceful vessels.

L. H.

No. XXII.

ON THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Bottom the weaver is a character that has not had justice done him. He is the most romantic of mechanics. And what a list of companions he has—*Quince* the carpenter, *Snug* the joiner, *Flute* the bellows-mender, *Snout* the tinker, *Starveling* the tailor; and then, again, what a group of fairy attendants, *Puck*, *Peaseblossom*, *Cobweb*, *Moth*, and *Mustardseed!* It has been observed that Shakspeare's characters are constructed upon deep physiological principles; and there is something in this play which looks very like it. *Bottom* the weaver, who takes the lead of

> "This crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
> That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,"

follows a sedentary trade, and he is accordingly represented as conceited, serious, and fantastical. He is ready to undertake any thing and every thing, as if it was as much a matter of course as the motion of his loom and shuttle. He is for

playing the tyrant, the lover, the lady, the lion. " He will roar that it shall do any man's heart good to hear him;" and this being objected to as improper, he still has a resource in his good opinion of himself, and " will roar you an 'twere any nightingale." *Snug* the joiner is the moral man of the piece, who proceeds by measurement and discretion in all things. You see him with his rule and compasses in his hand. " Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study." " You may do it extempore," says *Quince*, " for it is nothing but roaring." *Starveling* the tailor keeps the peace, and objects to the lion and the drawn sword. " I believe we must leave the killing out, when all's done." *Starveling*, however, does not start the objections himself, but seconds them when made by others, as if he had not spirit to express his fears without encouragement. It is too much to suppose all this intentional: but it very luckily falls out so. Nature includes all that is implied in the most subtle and analytical distinctions; and the same distinctions will be found in Shakspeare. *Bottom*, who is not only chief actor, but stage-manager for the occasion, has a device to obviate the danger of frightening the ladies: " Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say, we

will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear." *Bottom* seems to have understood the subject of dramatic illusion at least as well as any modern essayist. If our holiday mechanic rules the roast among his fellows, he is no less at home in his new character of an ass, "with amiable cheeks, and fair large ears." He instinctively acquires a most learned taste, and grows fastidious in the choice of dried peas and bottled hay. He is quite familiar with his new attendants, and assigns them their parts with all due gravity. "Monsieur *Cobweb*, good Monsieur, get your weapon in your hand, and kill me a red-hipt humble bee on the top of a thistle, and good Monsieur, bring me the honey-bag." What an exact knowledge is shewn here of natural history!

Puck or *Robin Goodfellow* is the leader of the fairy band. He is the *Ariel* of the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* and yet as unlike as can be to the *Ariel* in the *Tempest*. No other poet could have made two such different characters out of the same fanciful materials and situations. *Ariel* is a minister of retribution, who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. *Puck* is

a mad-cap sprite, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads.—" Lord, what fools these mortals be!" *Ariel* cleaves the air, and executes his mission with the zeal of a winged messenger; *Puck* is borne along on his fairy errand, like the light and glittering gossamer before the breeze. He is, indeed, a most Epicurean little gentleman, dealing in quaint devices, and faring in dainty delights. *Prospero* and his world of spirits are a set of moralists: but with *Oberon* and his fairies, we are launched at once into the empire of the butterflies. How beautifully is this race of beings contrasted with the men and women actors in the scene, by a single epithet which *Titania* gives to the latter, " the human mortals!" It is astonishing that Shakspeare should be considered not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but " Gorgons and Hydras and Chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said, that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. His delicacy and sportive gaiety are infinite. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range

of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages, to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed, displaying equal fancy and imagery. Shall we mention the remonstrance of *Helena* to *Hermia*, or *Titania's* description of her fairy train, or her disputes with *Oberon* about the Indian boy, or *Puck's* account of himself and his employments, or the Fairy Queen's exhortation to the elves to pay due attendance upon her favourite, *Bottom:** or *Hippolita's* description of a chace, or *Theseus's* answer? The two last are as heroical and spirited, as the others are full of luscious tenderness. The reading of this play is like wandering in a grove

* The following lines are remarkable for a certain cloying sweetness in the repetition of the rhymes :—

" *Titania.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes,
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise:
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon beams from his sleeping eyes;
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies."

by moonlight: the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odours thrown from beds of flowers.

Shakspeare is almost the only poet of whom it may be said, that

> "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale
> His infinite variety."

His nice touches of individual character, and marking of its different gradations, have been often admired; but the instances have not been exhausted, because they are inexhaustible. We will mention two which occur to us. One is where *Christopher Sly* expresses his approbation of the play, by saying. "'Tis a good piece of work, would 'twere done," as if he were thinking of his Saturday night's job. Again, there cannot well be a finer gradation of character than that in *Henry IV.* between *Falstaff* and *Shallow*, and *Shallow* and *Silence*. It seems difficult to fall lower than the Squire; but this fool, great as he is, finds an admirer and humble foil in his cousin *Silence*. Vain of his acquaintance with *Sir John*, who makes a butt of him, he exclaims, "Would, cousin *Silence*, that thou had'st seen that which this Knight and I have seen!"—"Aye, master *Shallow*, we have heard the chimes at midnight," says

Sir John. The true spirit of humanity, the thorough knowledge of the stuff we are made of, the practical wisdom with the seeming fooleries, in the whole of this exquisite scene, and afterwards in the dialogue on the death of old *Double*, have no parallel any where else.

It has been suggested to us, that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* would do admirably to get up as a Christmas after-piece; and our prompter proposes that Mr Kean should play the part of *Bottom*, as worthy of his great talents. He might offer to play the lady like any of our actresses that he pleased, the lover or the tyrant like any of our actors that he pleased, and the lion like "the most fearful wild fowl living." The carpenter, the tailor, and joiner, would hit the galleries. The young ladies in love would interest the side boxes; and *Robin Goodfellow* and his companions excite a lively fellow-feeling in the children from school. There would be two courts, an empire within an empire, the Athenian and the Fairy King and Queen, with their attendants, and with all their finery. What an opportunity for processions, for the sound of trumpets and glittering of spears! What a fluttering of urchins' painted wings; what a delightful profusion of

gauze clouds, and airy spirits floating on them! It would be a complete English fairy tale.

W. H.

No. XXIII.

ON THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

We have begun this Essay on a very coarse sheet of damaged foolscap, and we find that we are going to write it, whether for the sake of contrast, or from having a very fine pen, in a remarkably nice hand. Something of a similar process seems to have taken place in Gay's mind, when he composed his *Beggar's Opera*. He chose a very unpromising ground to work upon, and he has prided himself in adorning it with all the graces, the precision and brilliancy of style. It is a vulgar error to call this a vulgar play. So far from it, that we do not scruple to declare our opinion that it is one of the most refined productions in the language. The elegance of the composition is in exact proportion to the coarseness of the materials: by "happy alchemy of mind," the author has extracted an essence of refinement

from the dregs of human life, and turns its very dross into gold. The scenes, characters, and incidents are, in themselves, of the lowest and most disgusting kind: but, by the sentiments and reflections which are put into the mouths of highwaymen, turnkeys, their mistresses, wives, or daughters, he has converted this motley group into a set of fine gentlemen and ladies, satirists and philosophers. He has also effected this transformation without once violating probability, or "o'erstepping the modesty of nature." In fact, Gay has turned the tables on the critics; and by the assumed licence of the mock-heroic style, has enabled himself to *do justice to nature*, that is, to give all the force, truth, and locality of real feeling to the thoughts and expressions, without being called to the bar of false taste and affected delicacy. The extreme beauty and feeling of the song, "Woman is like the fair flower in its lustre," is only equalled by its characteristic propriety and *naïveté*. It may be said that this is taken from Tibullus; but there is nothing about Covent-garden in Tibullus. *Polly* describes her lover going to the gallows with the same touching simplicity, and with all the natural fondness of a young girl in her circumstances, who sees in his approaching catastrophe nothing but the misfor-

tunes and the personal accomplishments of the object of her affections. "I see him sweeter than the nosegay in his hand: the admiring crowd lament that so lovely a youth should come to an untimely end:—even butchers weep, and Jack Ketch refuses his fee rather than consent to tie the fatal knot." The preservation of the character and costume is complete. It has been said by a great authority—"There is some soul of goodness in things evil:"—and the *Beggar's Opera* is a good-natured but instructive comment on this text. The poet has thrown all the gaiety and sunshine of the imagination, all the intoxication of pleasure, and the vanity of despair, round the short-lived existence of his heroes; while *Peachum* and *Lockitt* are seen in the back-ground, parcelling out their months and weeks between them. The general view exhibited of human life, is of the most masterly and abstracted kind. The author has, with great felicity, brought out the good qualities and interesting emotions almost inseparable from the lowest conditions; and with the same penetrating glance, has detected the disguises which rank and circumstances lend to exalted vice. Every line in this sterling comedy sparkles with wit, and is fraught with the keenest sarcasm. The very wit, however, takes off from

the offensiveness of the satire; and we have seen great statesmen, very great statesmen, heartily enjoying the joke, laughing most immoderately at the compliments paid to them as not much worse than pickpockets and cut-throats in a different line of life, and pleased, as it were, to see themselves humanised by some sort of fellowship with their kind. Indeed, it may be said that the moral of the piece is to shew the *vulgarity* of vice; and that the same violations of integrity and decorum, the same habitual sophistry in palliating their want of principle, are common to the great and powerful, with the lowest and most contemptible of the species. What can be more convincing than the arguments used by these would-be-politicians, to shew that in hypocrisy, selfishness, and treachery, they do not come up to many of their betters? The exclamation of *Mrs Peachum*, when her daughter marries *Macheath*, "Hussey, hussey, you will be as ill used, and as much neglected, as if you had married a lord," is worth all Miss Hannah More's laboured invectives on the laxity of the manners of high life! *

W. H.

* The late ingenious Baron Grimm, of acute critical memory, was up to the merit of the *Beggar's Opera*. In his Correspondence, he says, "If it be true that the nearer a

No. XXIV.

ON THE NIGHT-MARE.

I do not hesitate to declare to the reader, even in this free-thinking age, that I am no small adept in the uses of the Occult Philosophy, as I

writer is to Nature, the more certain he is of pleasing, it must be allowed that the English, in their dramatic pieces, have greatly the advantage over us. There reigns in them an inestimable tone of nature, which the timidity of our taste has banished from French pieces. M. Patu has just published, in two volumes, *A selection of smaller dramatic pieces, translated from the English*, which will eminently support what I have advanced. The principal one among this selection is the celebrated *Beggar's Opera* of Gay, which has had such an amazing run in England. We are here in the very worst company imaginable; the *Dramatis Personæ* are robbers, pickpockets, gaolers, prostitutes, and the like; yet we are highly amused, and in no haste to quit them; and why? Because there is nothing in the world more original or more natural. There is no occasion to compare our most celebrated comic operas with this, to see how far we are removed from truth and nature, and this is the reason that, notwithstanding our wit, we are almost always flat and insipid. Two faults are generally committed by our writers, which they seem incapable of avoiding. They think they have done wonders if

shall thoroughly make manifest.—Be it known then, that I am sometimes favoured with the visits of a nocturnal spirit, from whom I receive the most excellent lessons of wisdom. His appearance is not highly prepossessing, and the weight of his manner of teaching, joined to the season he chuses for that purpose, has in it something not a little tremendous; but the end of his instruction is the enjoyment of virtue, and as he is conscious of the alarming nature of his aspect, he takes leave of the initiated the moment they reduce his theory to practice. It is true, there are a number of foolish persons living in and about this metropolis, who, instead of being grateful for his friend-

they have only faithfully copied the dictionaries of the personages they bring upon the stage, forgetting that the great art is to chuse the moments of character and passion in those who are to speak, since it is those moments alone that render them interesting. For want of this discrimination, the piece necessarily sinks into insipidity and monotony. Why do almost all M. Vade's pieces fatigue the audience to death? Because all his characters speak the same language; because each is a perfect resemblance of the other. Instead of this, in the *Beggar's Opera*, among eight or ten girls of the town, each has her separate character, her peculiar traits, her peculiar modes of expression, which give her a marked distinction from her companions."—Vol. I. p. 185.

ly offices, have affected to disdain them, in the hope of tiring him out, and thus getting rid of his disagreeable presence; but they could not have taken a worse method, for his benevolence is as unwearied as his lessons and appearances are formidable, and these unphilosophic scorners are only punished every night of their lives in consequence. If any curious person wishes to see him, the ceremony of summoning him to appear is very simple, though it varies according to the aspirant's immediate state of blood. With some, nothing more is required than the mastication of a few unripe plums or a cucumber, just before midnight: others must take a certain portion of that part of a calf, which is used for what are vulgarly called veal-cutlets: others, again, find the necessary charm in an omelet or an olio. For my part, I am so well acquainted with the different ceremonies, that, without any preparation, I have only to lie in a particular posture, and the spirit is sure to make its appearance. The figures under which it presents itself are various, but it generally takes its position upon the breast in a shape altogether indescribable, and is accompanied with circumstances of alarm and obscurity, not a little resembling those which the philosophers underwent on their initiation into the Eleusinian and other my-

steries. The first sensations you experience are those of a great oppression and inability to move; these you endeavour to resist, but after an instant resign yourself to their control, or rather flatter yourself you will do so, for the sensation becomes so painful, that in a moment you struggle into another effort, and if in this effort you happen to move yourself and cry out, the spirit is sure to be gone, for it detests a noise as heartily as a monk of La Trappe, a traveller in the Alps, or a thief. Could an intemperate person in this situation be but philosopher enough to give himself up to the spirit's influence for a few minutes, he would see his visitant to great advantage, and gather as much knowledge at once as would serve him instead of a thousand short visits, and make him a good liver for months to come.

It was by this method some time ago, that I not only obtained a full view of the spirit, but gradually gathering strength from sufferance, as those who are initiated into any great wisdom must, contrived to enter into conversation with it. The substance of our dialogue I hereby present to the reader, for it is a mistaken notion of the pretenders to the Cabala, that, to reveal the secrets on these occasions, is to do harm, and incur the displeasure of our spiritual acquaintances. All the harm, as I

have said before, is in not understanding the secrets properly, and explaining them for the benefit of mankind; and on this head I have an objection to make to that ancient and industrious order of Illuminati the Freemasons, who, though they hold with my familiar that eating suppers is one of the high roads to experimental wisdom, differ with him in confining their knowledge to such persons as can purchase it.

I had returned at a late hour from the representation of a new comedy, and after eating a sleepy and not very great supper, reclined myself on the sopha in a half sitting posture, and took up a little Horace to see if I could keep my eyes open with a writer so full of contrast to what I had been hearing. I happened to pitch upon that Ode, *At O Deorum quisquis, &c.*, describing an ancient witches-meeting, and fell into an obscure kind of reverie upon the identity of popular superstition in different ages and nations. The comic dramatist, however, had been too much for me; the weather, which had been warm, but was inclining to grow cloudy, conspired with my heaviness, and the only sounds to be heard, were the ticking of a small clock in the room, and the fitful sighs of the wind as it rose without,

The moaning herald of a weeping sky.

By degrees my eyes closed, my hand with the book dropped one way, and my head dropped back the other upon a corner of the sopha.

When you are in a state the least adapted to bodily perception, it is well known that you are in the precise state for spiritual. I had not been settled, I suppose, for more than a quarter of an hour, when the lid of a veal-pye, which I had lately attacked, began swelling up and down with an extraordinary convulsion, and I plainly perceived a little figure rising from beneath it, which grew larger and larger as it ascended, and then advanced with great solemnity towards me over the dishes. This phenomenon, which I thought I had seen often before, but could not distinctly remember how or where, was about two feet high, six inches of which, at least, went to the composition of its head. Between its jaws and shoulders there was no separation whatever, so that its face, which was very broad and pale, came immediately on its bosom, where it quivered without ceasing in a very alarming manner, being, it seems, of a paralytic sensibility like blanc-mange. The fearfulness of this aspect was increased by two staring and intent eyes, a nose turned up, but large, and a pair of thick lips turned despondingly down at the corners. Its hair, which stuck about its ears like

the quills of a porcupine, was partly concealed by a bolster rolled into a turban, and decorated with duck's feathers. The body was dressed in a kind of armour, of a substance resembling what is called crackling, and girded with a belt curiously studded with Spanish olives, in the middle of which, instead of pistols, were stuck two small bottles containing a fiery liquor. On its shoulders were wings shaped like the bat's, but much larger; its legs terminated in large feet of lead; and in its hands, which were of the same metal, and enormously disproportioned, it bore a Turkish bowstring.

At sight of this formidable apparition, I felt an indescribable and oppressive sensation, which by no means decreased, as it came nearer and nearer, staring and shaking its face at me, and making as many ineffable grimaces as Munden in a farce. It was in vain, however, I attempted to move; I felt, all the time, like a leaden statue, or like Gulliver pinned to the ground by the Lilliputians; and was wondering how my sufferings would terminate, when the phantom, by a spring off the table, pitched himself with all his weight upon my breast, and I thought began fixing his terrible bowstring. At this, as I could make no opposition, I determined at least to cry out as lustily as possible, and was beginning to make the effort, when the spirit mo-

tioned me to be quiet, and, retreating a little from my throat, said, in a low suffocating tone of voice, "Wilt thou never be philosopher enough to leave off sacrificing unto calf's flesh?"

"In the name of the Great Solomon's ring," I ejaculated, "what art thou?"

"My name," replied the being, a little angrily, "which thou wast unwittingly going to call out, is Mnpvtglnau-auw-auww, and I am Prince of the Night-mares."

"Ah, my Lord," returned I, "you will pardon my want of recollection, but I had never seen you in your full dress before, and your presence is not very composing to the spirits. Doubtless this is the habit in which you appeared with the other genii at the levee of the mighty Solomon."

"A fig for the mighty Solomon!" said the spirit, good humouredly; "this is the cant of the Cabalists, who pretend to know so much about us. I assure you, Solomon trembled much more at me than I did at him. I found it necessary, notwithstanding all his wisdom, to be continually giving him advice; and many were the quarrels I had on his account with Peor, the Dæmon of Sensuality, and a female devil named Ashtoreth."

"The world," said I, "my Prince, do not give you credit for so much benevolence."

" No," replied he, " the world are never just to their best advisers. My figure, it is true, is not the most prepossessing, and my manner of teaching is less so; but I am nevertheless a benevolent spirit, and would do good to the most ungrateful of your fellow-creatures. This very night, between the hours of ten and one, I have been giving lessons to no less than twelve priests, and twenty-one citizens. The studious I attend somewhat later, and the people of fashion towards morning.—But as you seem inclined at last to make a proper use of my instructions, I will recount you some of my adventures, if you please, that you may relate them to your countrymen, and teach them to appreciate the trouble I have with them."

" You are really obliging," said I, " and I should be all attention, would you do me the favour to sit a little more lightly, for each of your fingers appears heavier than a porter's load, and, to say the truth, the very sight of that bowstring almost throttles me."

L. H.

No. XXV.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

At these words the spectre gave a smile, which I can compare to nothing but the effect of vinegar on a death's-head. However, he rose up, though very slowly, and I once more breathed with transport, like a person dropping into his chair after a long journey. He then seated himself with much dignity on the pillow at the other end of the sopha, and thus resumed the discourse:—"I have been among mankind, ever since the existence of cooks and bad consciences, and my office is twofold, to give advice to the well-disposed, and to inflict punishment on the ill. The spirits over which I preside are of that class called by the ancients Incubi, but it was falsely supposed that we were fond of your handsome girls, as the Rosicrucians maintain, for it is our business to suppress, not encourage the passions, as you may guess by my appearance."

"Pardon me," interrupted I, "but the poets and painters represent your Highness as riding about on horseback; some of them even make

you the horse itself, and it is thus that we have been taught to account for the term Night-mare."

Here the phantom gave another smile, which made me feel sympathetically about the mouth as though one of my teeth was being drawn. "A pretty jest," said he: "as if a spiritual being had need of a horse to carry him! The general name of my species in this country is of Saxon origin; the Saxons, uniting as they did the two natures of Britons and Germans, eat and drank with a vengeance; of course they knew me very well, and being continually visited by me in all my magnificence, called me, by way of eminence, the Night *Mara*, or Spirit of Night. As to the poets and painters, I do not know enough of them to be well acquainted with their misrepresentations of me, though all of those gentlemen who could afford it have been pretty intimate with me. The moralizing Epicurean, whom you have in your hand there, I knew very well. Very good things he wrote, to be sure, about temperance and lettuces; but he eat quite as good at Mecænas's table. You may see the delicate state of his faculties by the noise he makes about a little garlick. Anacreon was so fond of drinking and raking that he had little leisure to eat,—and I did not see him much till latterly, but then my visits were pretty constant

and close. His wine killed him at last, and this is the event which his successors have so neatly shadowed forth as the effect of a grape-stone. As rakes rather than eaters, I knew also Politian, Boccace, and other Italians, whose hot complexion made them suffer for every excess. A great eater suffers the pains of a rake, and a rake, if he does not half starve himself, suffers the pains of a great eater. The French poets have lived too lightly to be much troubled with my attendance, and I cannot say I know much of your English ones. There was Congreve, indeed, who dined every day with a duchess, and had the gout: I visited him often enough, and once wreaked on him a pretty set of tortures under the figure of one Jeremy Collier. My Lord Rochester, who might have displayed so true a fancy of his own without my assistance, had scarcely a single idea with which I did not supply him, for five years together, during which time, you know, he confessed himself to have been in a state of intoxication. But I am sorry to say, that I have had no small trouble with some of your poetical moralists, as well as men of pleasure. Something, I confess, must be allowed to Pope, whose constitution hardly allowed him an hour's enjoyment; but an invalid so fond of good things might have spared the citizens and clergy a little.

It must be owned also, that the good temper he really possessed did much honour to his philosophy; but it would have been greater, could he have denied himself that silver saucepan. It seduced him into a hundred miseries. One night, in particular, I remember, after he had made a very sharp attack on Addison and a dish of lampreys, he was terribly used by my spirits, who appeared to him in the shapes of so many flying pamphlets:—he awoke in great horror, crying out with a ghastly smile, like a man who pretends to go easily through a laborious wager, 'These things are my diversion.' With regard to Dr Johnson, about whose masticating faculties so much has been said, people do not consider his great bulk and love of exercise. He may have eaten twice as much as any one of his companions; but then he was twice as large, and wanted twice as much enjoyment. I assure you, all the tea he drank did not hurt him a jot. Consider the size of the cups in those days, and of the great man who emptied them, and it was nothing but an April shower on Plinlimmon. It is true, he compelled my attendance somewhat too often, but no oftener than men of less size and much less right. The worst night he passed was after he received his pension: he thought he was Osborne the bookseller, and that he was knocked

down with the second volume of his folio dictionary.—As to your painters, I have known still less of them, though I am acquainted with one now living, who has so long tried to be horrible, that he has at last spoiled his genius, and become entirely so. I once sat to this gentleman at midnight for my portrait, and the likeness is allowed by all of us to be excellent."

"Well," interrupted I, "but it is not at all like you in your present aspect."

"No," replied the phantom, "it is my poetical look. I have all sorts of looks and shapes, civic, political, and poetical. Last night, for instance, I appeared to a city baronet, and sat upon his chest in the shape of a bale of goods. I then went to a Minister's, who had been at a dinner with his brethren to consult what they should do six months hence against a pressing emergency; and after I had horrified him with all sorts of fancies about taxes, and Whigs, and Reformers, want of place, want of words, political convulsions, Austria, and Bonaparte, I finished my night's work with a still greater personage, upon whom I took my seat in the likeness of a huge and indescribable compound, made up of tight clothes, turtle, and quart bottles, with a double-faced wig-block for the head, and a jacket laced with bills and billets-doux, and hung

with needles and thread for epaulets. It is by particular favour," continued he, " that I appear to you as I really am; but as you have not seen many of my shapes, I will, if you please, give you a sample of some of my best."

" Oh, by no means," said I, somewhat hastily, " I can imagine quite enough from your descriptions. The philosophers certainly ill-used you when they represented you as a seducer."

" The false philosophers did," replied the spectre; " the real philosophers knew me better. It was at my instance that Pythagoras forbade the eating of beans; Plato owed some of his schemes to my hints, though I confess not his best; and I also knew Socrates very well from my intimacy with Alcibiades, but the familiar that attended him was of a much higher order than myself, and rendered my services unnecessary. However, my veneration for that illustrious man was so great, that, on the night when he died, I revenged him finely on his two principal enemies. People talk of the flourishing state of vice, and the happiness which guilty people sometimes enjoy in contrast with the virtuous; but they know nothing of what they talk. You should have seen Alexander in bed after one of his triumphant feasts, or Domitian or Heliogabalus after a common supper, and you

would have seen who was the true monarch, the master of millions, or the master of himself. The Prince retired perhaps amidst lights, garlands, and perfumes, with the pomp of music, and through a host of bowing heads: every thing he saw and touched reminded him of empire; his bed was of the costliest furniture, and he reposed by the side of beauty. Reposed, did I say? As well might you stretch a man on a gilded rack, and fan him into forgetfulness. No sooner had he obtained a little slumber, but myself and other spirits revenged the crimes of the day; in a few minutes the convulsive snatches of his hands and features announce the rising agitation; his face blackens and swells; his clenched hands grasp the drapery about him; he tries to turn but cannot, for a hundred horrors, the least of which is the fear of death, crowd on him and wither his faculties, till at last, by an effort of despair, he wakes with a fearful outcry, and springs from the bed, pale, trembling, and aghast, afraid of the very assistance he would call, and terrified at the consciousness of himself. Such are the men, before whom millions of you rational creatures consent to tremble."

"You talk like an orator," said I; "but every ambitious prince, I suppose, has not horrors like

these, for every one is neither so luxurious as Alexander, nor so indolent and profligate as a Domitian or Heliogabalus. Conquerors, I should think, are generally too full of business to have leisure for consciences and night-mares."

"Why, a great deal may be done," answered the spirit, "against horrors of any kind by mere dint of industry. But too much business, especially of a nature that keeps passion on the stretch, will sometimes perform the office of indolence and luxury, and turn revengefully upon the mind. To this were owing, in great measure, the epilepsies of Cæsar and Mohammed. In the same way, I revenged the world on Dionysius of Syracuse, Henry VIII., Charles IX., on monks, nabobs, inquisitors, women of pleasure, and other tormentors of mankind. With the faces of most of the Roman Emperors I am as familiar as an antiquary, particularly from Tiberius down to Caligula; and again from Constantine downwards. But if I punished the degenerate Romans, I nevertheless punished their enemies too. They were not aware, when scourged by Attila, what nights their tormentor passed. Luckily for justice, he brought from Germany not only fire and sword, but a true German appetite. I know not a single conqueror of modern times,

who equalled him in horror of dreaming, unless it was a little, spare, aguey, peevish, supper-eating fellow, whom you call Frederick the Great. Those exquisite ragouts, the enjoyment of which added new relish to the sarcasms he dealt about him with a royalty so unanswerable, sufficiently revenged the sufferers for their submission. Nevertheless, he dealt by his dishes as some men do by their mistresses; he loved them the more they tormented him. Poor Trenck, with his bread and water in the dungeon of Magdeburg, enjoyed a repose fifty times more serene than the royal philosopher in his palace of Sans Souci, or Without Care. Even on the approach of death, this great conqueror—this warrior full of courage and sage speculation—could not resist the customary pepper and sauce piquant, though he knew he should inevitably see me at night, armed with all his sins, and turning his bed into a nest of monsters."

"Heaven be praised," cried I, "that he had a taste so retributive! The people under arbitrary governments must needs have a respect for the dishes at court. I now perceive, more than ever, the little insight we have into the uses of things. Formerly one might have imagined that eating and drinking had no use but the vulgar one of

sustaining life; but it is manifest that they save the law a great deal of trouble, and the writers of cookery books can be considered in no other light than as expounders of a criminal code. Really, I shall hereafter approach a dish of turtle with becoming awe, and already begin to look upon a ragout as something very equitable and inflexible."

"You do justice," observed the spirit, "to those eminent dishes, and in the only proper way. People who sit down to a feast with their joyous darting of eyes and rubbing of hands, would have very different sensations, did they know what they were about to attack. You must know, that the souls of tormented animals survive after death, and become instruments of punishment for mankind. Most of these are under my jurisdiction, and form great part of the monstrous shapes that haunt the slumbers of the intemperate. Fish crimped alive, lobsters boiled alive, and pigs whipped to death, become the most active and formidable spirits, and if the object of their vengeance take too many precautions to drown his senses when asleep, there is the subtle and fell Gout waiting to torment his advanced years, a spirit partaking of the double nature of the Night-mare and Salamander, and more terrible than any one

of us, inasmuch as he makes his attacks by day as well as by night."

"I shudder to think," interrupted I, "even of the monstrous combinations which have disturbed my own rest, and formed so horrible a contrast to the gaiety of a social supper."

"Oh, as for that matter," said the phantom, in a careless tone, "you know nothing of the horrors of a glutton, or an epicure, or a nefarious debauchee. Suffocation with bolsters, heaping of rocks upon the chest, buryings alive, and strugglings to breathe without a mouth, are among their common-place sufferings. The dying glutton in La Fontaine never was so reasonable, as when he desired to have the remainder of his fish. He was afraid that if he did not immediately go off, he might have a nap before he died, which would have been a thousand times worse than death. Had Apicius, Ciacco the Florentine, Dartineuf, or Quin, been able and inclined to paint what they had seen, Callot would have been a mere Cipriani to them. I could produce you a jolly fellow, a corpulent nobleman, from the next hotel, the very counterpart of the glutton in Rubens's *Fall of the Damned*, who could bring together a more hideous combination of fancies than are to be found in Milton's Hell. He is not with-

out information, and a disposition naturally good, but a long series of bad habits have made him what they call a man of pleasure, that is to say, he takes all sorts of pains to get a little enjoyment which shall produce him a world of misery. One of his passions, which he *will* not resist, is for a particular dish, pungent, savoury, and multifarious, which sends him almost every night into Tartarus. At this minute, the spectres of the supper-table are busy with him, and Dante himself could not have worked up a greater horror for the punishment of vice than the one he is undergoing. He fancies that though he is *himself*, he is nevertheless four different beings at once, of the most odious and contradictory natures,—that his own indescribable feelings are fighting bodily and maliciously with each other,—and that there is no chance left him either for escape, forgetfulness, or cessation."

"Gracious powers!" cried I; "what, all this punishment for a dish?"

"You do not recollect," answered the spirit, "what an abuse such excesses are of the divine gift of reason, and how they distort the best tendencies of human nature. The whole end of existence is perverted by not taking proper care of the body. This man will rise to-morrow morning, pallid, nervous, and sullen; his feelings must be

reinforced with a dram to bear the ensuing afternoon; and I foresee, that the ill-temper arising from his debauch, will lead him into a very serious piece of injustice against his neighbour. To the same cause may be traced fifty of the common disquietudes of life, its caprices, and irritabilities. To-night a poor fellow is fretful because his supper was not rich enough, but to-morrow night he will be in torture because it was too rich. An hysterical lady shall flatter herself she is very sentimentally miserable, when most likely her fine feelings are to be deduced, not from sentiment, but a surfeit. Your Edinburgh wits thought they had laid down a very droll impossibility when they talked of cutting a man's throat with a pound of pickled salmon, whereas much less dishes have performed as wonderful exploits. I have known a hard egg to fill a household with dismay for days together; a cucumber has disinherited an only son; and a whole province has incurred the royal anger of its master at the instigation of a set of woodcocks."

"It is a thousand pities," said I, "that history, instead of habituating us to love 'the pomp and circumstance' of bad passions, cannot trace the actions of men to their real sources."

"Well, well," said the spirit, "now that you are

getting grave on the subject, I think I may bid you adieu. Your nation has produced excellent philosophers, who were not the less wise for knowing little of me. Pray tell your countrymen that they are neither philosophic nor politic in feasting as they do on all occasions, joyful, sorrowful, or indifferent: that good sense, good temper, and the good of their country, are distinct things from indigestion; and that, when they think to shew their patriotic devotion by carving and gormandizing, they are no wiser than the bacchanals of old, who took serpents between their teeth, and tortured themselves with knives."

So saying, the spectre rose, and stretching out his right hand, with a look which I believe he intended to be friendly, advanced towards me; he then took my hand in his own, and perceiving signs of alarm in my countenance, burst into a fit of laughter, which was the very quintessence of discord, and baffles all description, being a compound of the gabblings of geese, grunting of hogs, quacking of ducks, squabbling of turkies, and winding up of smoke-jacks. When the fit was pretty well over, he gave me a squeeze of the hand, which made me jump up with a spring of the knees, and gradually enveloping himself in a kind of steam, vanished with a noise like the

crash of crockery ware. I looked about me; I found that my right hand, which held the Horace, had got bent under me, and gone to sleep, and that, in my sudden start, I had kicked half the dishes from the supper-table.

L. H.

No. XXVI.

ON PATRIOTISM.—A FRAGMENT.

PATRIOTISM, in modern times, and in great states, is and must be the creature of reason and reflection, rather than the offspring of physical or local attachment. Our country is a complex, abstract existence, recognised only by the understanding. It is an immense riddle, containing numberless modifications of reason and prejudice, of thought and passion. Patriotism is not, in a strict or exclusive sense, a natural or personal affection, but a law of our rational and moral nature, strengthened and determined by particular circumstances and associations, but not born of them, nor wholly nourished by them. It is not possible that we should have an individual attach-

ment to sixteen millions of men, any more than to sixty millions. We cannot be *habitually* attached to places we never saw, and people we never heard of. Is not the name of Englishman a general term, as well as that of man? How many varieties does it not combine within it? Are the opposite extremities of the globe our native place, because they are a part of that geographical and political denomination, our country? Does natural affection expand in circles of latitude and longitude? What personal or instinctive sympathy has the English peasant with the African slave-driver, or East India Nabob? Some of our wretched bunglers in metaphysics would fain persuade us to discard all general humanity, and all sense of abstract justice, as a violation of natural affection, and yet do not see that the love of our country itself is in the list of our general affections. The common notions of patriotism are transmitted down to us from the savage tribes, where the fate and condition of all was the same, or from the states of Greece and Rome, where the country of the citizen was the town in which he was born. Where this is no longer the case,—where our country is no longer contained within the narrow circle of the same walls,—where we can no longer behold its glimmering horizon from the top of our native moun-

tains—beyond these limits, it is not a natural but an artificial idea, and our love of it either a deliberate dictate of reason, or a cant term. It was said by an acute observer, and eloquent writer (Rousseau) that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice: the same might be said, with considerable truth, of the love of our country. It is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, and social happiness. We do not say that other indirect and collateral circumstances do not go to the superstructure of this sentiment, (as language,* literature, manners, national customs) but this is the broad and firm basis.

* He who speaks two languages has no country. The French, when they made their language the common language of the Courts of Europe, gained more than by all their subsequent conquests.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

Printed by George Ramsay & Co.
Edinburgh, 1816.


BE MINDFULL