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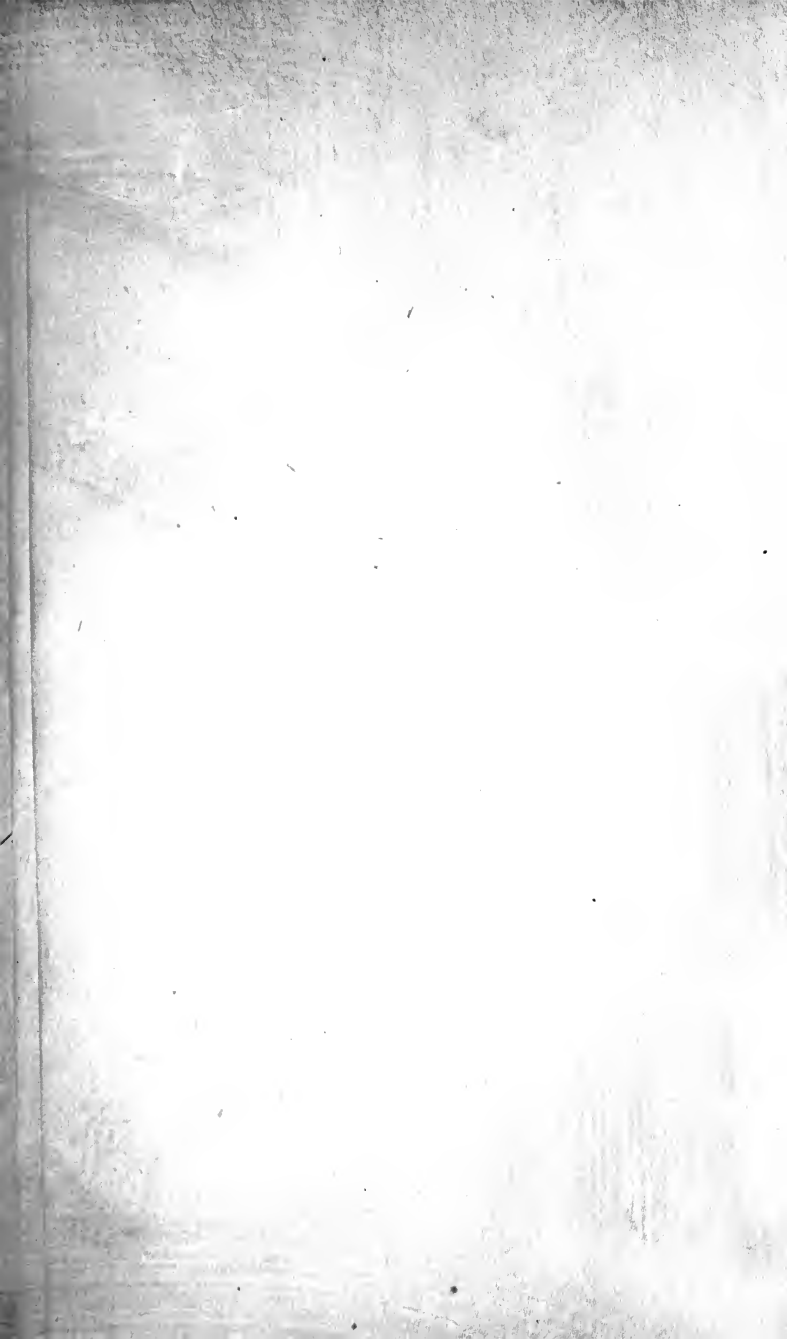
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SKETCHES

OF

MODERN LITERATURE,

AND

EMINENT LITERARY MEN,

(BEING A GALLERY OF LITERARY PORTRAITS,)

BY GEORGE GILFILLAN.

REPRINTED ENTIRE FROM THE LONDON EDITION.

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THE Author of the following Sketches is aware that he may be accused of exaggeration and extravagance, particularly in his panegyrics of the various characters he has attempted to portray. He has only to plead, in mitigation of sentence, that his praise is perfectly sincere ; that the men he has selected are, in his judgment, the leading lights—the *decora et tutamina*—of their age ; that some of them are less known and less appreciated than they deserve ; and that he is not afraid, once for all, to avow himself, even in this late age, a “Hero Worshipper,” and to avow his conviction that, even now, there are many heroes.

Perhaps the life of every thinking man may be divided into three eras—the era of admiration, the era of action, and the era of repose. Should this division be esteemed correct, the Author would beg leave, as an additional apology, to suggest that, in the following work,

he has garnered up the results of his young love and wonder for the masterpieces of his country's genius ; that, with it, one mental period of his history is closing, and that it is for the public to decide whether he be encouraged to gird up his loins for some other more manlike, more solid, and strenuous achievement.

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GALLERY
OF
LITERARY PORTRAITS.

LORD JEFFREY.

LORD JEFFREY, like many remarkable men of our era, is a striking instance of many-sidedness: critic, lawyer, politician, judge, are some of the phases in which he has exhibited his spirit in the course of a long and active existence. As a critic, he has stood in "glorious and well-foughten field" side by side with the chivalry of Hazlitt. As a pleader, he was equalled at his native bar by Cockburn alone. As a philosopher, besides the general vein of subtle reflection which pervades all his writings, he has, in one beautiful region of metaphysics, excelled the elegant Stewart, and the captivating Alison. As a politician, he has been a model of uprightness and consistency. And as a judge, he has, it is understood, gathered new and verdant laurels.

With the name of Jeffrey the idea of *The Edinburgh Review* is inseparably connected. For nearly thirty years

he was its conductor ; and though backed by a host of varied talent, he might truly be called its life and soul : the spirit of the editor was seen in every article, in every page. Even the bolder, coarser, and more original writers who contributed to it, became insensibly tinctured by the pervading tone—of polite badinage, of refined sarcasm, of airy cleverness—which was the established *esprit de corps*. To this, the wild sallies of Sidney Smith, the fiercer sarcasms and darker passions of Brougham, the eloquent gall of Hazlitt, had all to be subservient ; and smoothed down they must often have been under the cautious and gentlemanly influence of the editor, ere they met the public eye. And hence the rapid and boundless popularity of the *Review*. It succeeded because it came forth, quarter after quarter, not a tissue of jarring though ingenious speculations, but a regular and brilliant whole ; and the instrument of fusion was unquestionably the accomplished mind of Jeffrey. During the earlier part of his career he was the ideal of an editor, not writing the half, or perhaps the tithe of his periodical, but, far better, breathing his own spirit as a refining and uniting principle over the whole.

Lord Jeffrey's character as a critic is now very generally agreed on. When he criticises an author whom he thoroughly appreciates, he is a refined, and beautiful, and just, and discriminating judge. He throws his whole spirit into the work ; he executes his analysis in a fine and rapid style ; he brings out, not merely the meaning, but the soul of his author ; he throws a number of pleasing, if not profound, lights upon his subject ; he weaves the whole into a tissue of beautiful and buoyant, rich and rapid diction ; and there stands a criticism airy as the gossamer, brilliant as the glow-worm, yet solid as the pillared firmament. Witness his reviews of Crabbe, which, by their timely aid, lifted

the modest and exquisite, but half-forgotten, writer into the full blaze of his reputation, threw a friendly veil over his frequent asperity and coarseness, and were, in short, his salvation as a poet, just as Burke's fatherly interference was his fortune as a man. Who that has read, retains not a vivid and pleasing memory of his reviews of Campbell's "Gertrude," and Campbell's "Specimens of the English Poets," particularly the latter; of his kindly and most eloquent panegyric on Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays;" of his laboured and masterly analysis of Moore's "Lalla Rookh;" of his honest and powerful article on Lord Byron's Tragedies; and high above all these, of the finest piece of elegant philosophizing in the language, the review of Alison's "Taste," afterwards matured and expanded into the article "Beauty," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Nor have his doings in the way of quiz and cutting-up been at all inferior in their way. We will not soon forget that most witty and wicked running commentary which he kept up for many years on Southey's interminable productions; nor did the laureate. We entertain a keen memory of the soreness of sides wherewith we perused, many years after its first appearance, his account of Walker's "Defence of Order," an unfortunate bundle of stiff pompous inanities of verse, which the worthy man, singed and heated, without being inspired by his acquaintance with Burns, had inflicted on that minority of the public who chose to buy it. (Poor old Josiah! we remember him well as a Professor of Humanity; not a little partial, but kind-hearted, a gauger-looking man, with a big brow, but mean unpoetic face, well read, with rather a nice vein of critical discrimination, who prided himself on his classical English style, and elegance of translation. He got a little weak-minded in his old days, and proved

himself better, though not much, at defending the order of his country than preserving that of his class. Peace to the manes of the old man! a peace which all his books already and profoundly enjoy.) His annihilation of a host of other poetasters, from drunken Dermody down to poor prosing Hayley; his attempted demolition of that clever transgressor, Tommy Little, who, however, showed fight; and his incessant, persevering, powerful, but unsuccessful attempts to make Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth, the laughing-stocks of the world. And this brings us to what would require a volume for its elucidation, the sore subject of the faults, errors, and delinquencies of *The Edinburgh Review*. In a word or two on the ungracious subject we must be indulged.

The great error of the early numbers was one incident to, perhaps inseparable from, the age of its principal writers. It lay in an air of levity and dogmatism, added to a sneering, captious, skeptical spirit, imbibed from intimacy with "Candide" and the "Philosophical Dictionary." It seemed their aim to transplant the "Encyclopædiast" spirit, in all its brilliant wickedness, into the Scottish soil. This appeared at first a hazardous experiment, but it was done so dexterously and so boldly as, for the time, to be completely successful. Fired by success, its authors dared every thing, sneered at every thing, attempted to solve the foundations of all things, in an atmosphere of universal ridicule. They themselves, young men though they were, had not only no enthusiasm, but proclaimed themselves enemies to enthusiasm, in all its forms, in politics, in poetry, in religion. Whatever transcended the common standards of feeling and of thought, whatever towered up into the regions of the extravagantly sublime, the eccentric, the original, and the infinite, they sought to reduce to its level, by the one sove-

reign receipt of indiscriminate and reckless sneering. The flower of German poetry, then opening its magnificent petals into day, they laughed to scorn, as if it had been a vulgar and gaudy weed, or a useless and noisome fungus. They assailed with bitter ridicule at once republicanism and methodism, careless of the fine spirit involved in and extractable from both. But especially, from the first, they applied all their energies to the demolition of the Lake Poets, whose revolutionary genius was then threatening to alter the whole tone and spirit, and matter and manner of our literature. Of these attacks upon Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, we have ever entertained one opinion. They were not atrociously savage assaults, like those of *The Quarterly* on Keats and Shelley, but they were, on this very account, the more formidable. Their sole aim, and it was for a while successful, was to make the Lakers, not hateful, but ridiculous; to hold them up as a set of harmless, crazy men, overflowing with vanity and childish verse; not without genius, certainly, but their genius by no means first rate, and altogether neutralized by false taste and self-conceit. Such was the prevailing tone and style of those celebrated criticisms; and their effect was, first of all, to intensify, almost to madness, the egotism and the resolution of the parties assailed, to drive their works out of general circulation, to increase the attachment of their devoted adherents, and ultimately to provoke a reaction, the most signal and irreversible of which we have any example in the history of letters. The men whose names were, for twenty years, laughed at in every form of ridicule, and identified with all that was vain, silly, childish, egotistical, and affected, are now looked up to with universal love and reverence, and have been hailed by acclamation as the leading stars in the bright host of our literary heaven. Let

it be a lesson to succeeding critics for ever ; and let us, in looking back upon the prophecies of those reviewers, which have not been fulfilled—their sneers, which have fallen powerless ; their laughter, which has died away ; their abuse, which time has robbed of its sting ; their criticisms, on which experience has set the seal of worthlessness ;—blame not so much the men, as the false and bad system on which they acted, and draw the solid and sober inference, that ridicule is no more a test of poetry than it is of truth.

But, to pass from this topic, on which, after all, we have only touched, we would now, in order fully to convey our idea of Lord Jeffrey's criticism, compare it with that of some others of his coadjutors and contemporaries. It wants the racy originality, the sweeping and springing strength, the tumultuous overflow of humour, which distinguishes the author of "Peter Plymley's Letters ;" but, on the other hand, possesses always a subtlety of distinction, and often a splendour of illustration, to which Sidney Smith has no pretensions. The one could no more have written the review of "Styles," than the other the review of Alison. It has not the massive strength of Brougham ; but is superior in refinement, fluency, and elegance, and never falls into his more offensive faults,—the overbearing dogmatism, the arrogance, the fierce and truculent spirit, which breathes in more articles than in that on Don Pedro Cevallos. Less comprehensive, less *judicial*, less learned, than the criticism of Mackintosh, it is more lively, more varied, and animated by a sweeter, purer and more natural vein of eloquence. It is not so glowing, or so imaginative, as the criticism of Wilson ; but is more subtle in its thinking, and more sober in its style. It wants the nerve, the antithesis, the rich literary allusion, the radiant fancy, the magnificent isolated

pictures of Macaulay's elaborate writings ; but has far less of the air of effort and of mannerism. It is inferior to that of Hazlitt, alike in solidity and in splendour. It has not his fierce sincerity, his intense but sinister acuteness ; his discrimination, infallible as an instinct ; his direct and masculine vigour ; but, on the other hand, it is not disfigured by his fits of spleen, his bursts of egotistical passion, his deliberate paradoxes, his sudden breaks, his ungainly apostrophes, his distortions, fantasies, and frenzies,—the “pimples of red and blue corruption,” which now and then bestud his uneasy and uneven, yet brilliant page. As specimens of pure and perfect English, of refined sense, expressed in lucid language, and studded with modest and magnificent ornaments, Jeffrey has produced few compositions equal to those by which Robert Hall irradiated the early pages of *The Eclectic Review*. Nor has his criticism the pith and profundity of Foster ; nor the chary but precious encomium, the gorgeous diffusion, the unearthly stand of laughing superiority to his author, assumed by Thomas Carlyle. But he is incomparably more versatile and vivacious than the first, has not the cumbrous march of the second, and is totally free from the unfathomable obscurities, and wild Babylonish dialect of the third.

The day, we trust, is near, when, like Sidney Smith, Macaulay, and Carlyle, this accomplished man will do himself and his fame the justice of collecting his principal articles in *The Edinburgh Review*, in *The Edinburgh Magazine*, in *The Scotsman* newspaper, &c., along with his speeches at the bar, and at public meetings, into some fixed and permanent shape. And when he has done so, we may affirm that he has reared a monument which shall only perish when the steam engine, which he has eulogized, has ceased its Titanic play,—ceased to “pick up a pin and rend an oak, cut steel :

into ribbons, and propel a vessel against the fury of the winds and waves ;” and when that principle of beauty, which he has so finely analyzed, has withered from the grass and the flower, and the deep soul of man itself.*

In the commencement of our sketch, we called the subject of it a philosopher ; and in employing with regard to him this term, we are justified, not merely by that spirit of refined and subtle thinking which pervades his writings, but by one distinct contribution he has made to metaphysical science. We are aware that, in his theory of the beautiful, he may not claim the merit of originality ; nor can Alison. For, to go no farther back, his conception of beauty, which represents it as consisting chiefly in trains of thought and feeling, is evidently implied in that gorgeous dream—the Berkleian theory, which, resolving the universe into Mind, of course included, in the same daring analysis, all its colours, and forms, and landscapes, and soft or stormy sounds : as well as announced in Akenside’s celebrated lines, beginning—

’Tis Mind alone, bear witness, Earth and Heaven !

But what we mean, in ascribing to Lord Jeffrey the credit of this addition to our metaphysical truth, is, that he first put the theory upon solid ground. He first, redeeming it from the verbiage of Alison, on the one hand, and the dim, dreamy touch of the Berkleians on the other, made it at once intelligible and generally popular ; and he became, if not the richest and most copious, the most distinct, succinct, memorable, and eloquent expounder of the astonishing truth. He first fully reconciled us, by his subtle argument and his

* Since the above was written, we are glad to observe that Lord Jeffrey has collected his articles in *The Edinburgh Review*, into a separate publication.

glowing imagery, to what seemed the glaring paradox, or the insane idealism, that beauty resides not so much in the object as in the mind; that "we receive but what we give;" that our own soul is the urn which sprinkles beauty upon the universe; that flower and star are lovely, because the mind has breathed upon them; that the imagination and the heart of man are the twin beautifiers of the creation; that the dwelling of beauty is not in the light of setting suns, nor in the beams of morning stars, nor in the waves of summer seas, but in the human spirit; that sublimity tabernacles not in the palaces of the thunder, walks not on the wings of the winds, rides not on the forked lightning, but that it is the soul which is lifted up there; that it is the soul which, in its high aspirings, "yokes itself with whirlwinds and the northern blast," and scatters grandeur around it on its way.—To him be the praise, along with Alison, of first popularizing the conception which had passed before for the reveries of poets and philosophers, that the universe is but a great mirror of the mind of man; that, in contemplating the fairest scene, we are ourselves more than half creating its beauty; and that, in standing on a mountain summit, we are "monarchs of all we survey," in a new sense, by showering down, from our own central bosoms, on the gardens their freshness, on the lakes their spiritual calm, on the forests their majesty, on the torrents their tempestuous joy, on the distant snow-clad hills their look of serene eternity; nay, by lending the light of imagination and of love to the clouds, and reflecting upwards the depth and dignity of our own feelings, upon all the "dread magnificence of heaven." He also first brought fully into view that singular power we possess, of shedding beauty and interest on the darkest, the dreariest, and the tamest scenes and circumstances, by the mere magic of our own clustering associations; so that there is no object in na-

ture but may, to some eye, appear wreathed with a halo ; so that not only the "meanest flower that blows, can give thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears," but even weeds, thorns, and thistles, springing above the primeval curse, may, to certain visions, appear lovelier than the fairest minions of the garden ; so that such objects as single moss-covered stones, withered and stunted trees, grave-yards putrefying in the heart of populous cities, moors, cold and wet in winter time, sullen and shapeless hills, marshes given over to desolation from immemorial ages, bones unearthed by the stony spade of the sexton, wo-begone and emaciated visages, cheeks burning in fever, faces sharpened by hunger or decay, eyes glaring in frenzy, &c., may, in some minds, through this strange mental machinery, excite more emotion and interest than the stars of the sky, than woods of loveliest umbrage, than the quiet kirk-yards of our pastoral solitudes, than sun-sprinkled lakes, than aerial and peaked summits, than bean or clover-fields at evening, than the mausoleums of monarchs, or than the shining faces of happy infants, rejoicing youths, bold bridegrooms, brides blushing and trembling at their own exceeding joy, poets smiling at the rising pomps of their imagery, enthusiasts starting from dreams of heaven ; so that ugliness is henceforth not a positive, but a relative term, if it be not exhaled utterly from the universe ; so that the soul of man becomes the true philosopher's stone, able to turn very dross and defilement into gold ; so that all the works of God thus, and thus only, appear to be "very good." Jeffrey, we repeat, did not originate these wonderful ideas, but he has formed the first comprehensive and intelligible digest of them. He has first circulated them in a light and fascinating form, and has supported them by many original arguments and illustrations. Need we allude to what has probably occur-

red to the minds of our readers as the finest of all these—indeed one of the most beautiful passages in our literature,—the contrast drawn between the quiet, calm scenery of England, and the stern grandeur of a Highland landscape, with its “mountain echoes repeating the scream of the eagle and the roar of the cataract.”

As a pleader and public speaker, he enjoys what must now be called a great traditional reputation. Only the echoes of that eloquence with which the Parliament-House, the Assembly Rooms, the Pantheon, were made to ring, remains to tell what it was. The author of this critique never enjoyed the privilege of hearing him save once; but it was in very interesting circumstances. It was at the meeting which took place in Edinburgh, immediately after the death of Sir Walter Scott, to commemorate his memory. There appeared at it the *élite* of Dunedin society; the flower of its literature, of its fashion, of its resident nobility. Men of all parties came that day to the Assembly Rooms, (so Lord Jeffrey said,) “as into the temple of the Deity,” burying their animosities in the grave of the mighty Wizard, and consenting to mourn, as one man, their common and inestimable loss. Lord Jeffrey’s speech was not long, or loud, or vehement; it was a calm, manly, discriminating *éloge*, fit to be spoken by a great critic over the corpse of a greater poet, and delivered in tones which, now and then, trembled under the images they uttered, and under the burden of the occasion. And after him arose the stalwart form, and pealed forth the solemn voice of Professor Wilson, taking up his part in the threnody, and rolling out from his organ-chest a few deep notes of more passionate praise. We think we hear him still repeating the couplet—

Ne’er to those dwellings, where the mighty rest,
Since their foundations came a nobler guest;

and after he had described the sun "smiting the column erected to the departed," closing by the prediction, that he would

A mightier monument command—
The mountains of his native land.

But though labouring under the disadvantage of never having heard Jeffrey in his best days, we can easily believe every traditionary testimony to the beauty and effect of his eloquence. It neither sought nor reached those giddy heights of imaginative and declamatory power which have ever been the element of Irish orators. It had not the pathos and rich diffusion of Curran, the antithesis and devouring energy of Grattan, Burke's prophetic fury, Sheridan's elaborate glare, or Sheil's brilliant froth. Nor was it a specimen of what is called Scottish oratory: it had not the mastery, the ardent animation, the crushing force, the demoniac bitterness of sarcasm, the variety of resources, displayed by Brougham; nor the philosophical tone and laboured vehemence of Mackintosh; nor the energy, boldness, and superb bursts of Erskine; nor, to compare him with his brethren at the bar, had he the legal lore of Jameson; the coarse, Cobbett-like strength of John Clerk; the massive intellectuality of Moncreiff; nor the humour, feeling, and natural eloquence of Henry Cockburn. Nor was it what has been termed English oratory—that happy medium between the vertiginous flights of the Irish school, and the comparatively unimpassioned and unimaginative style of the Scottish: it had not the fervid excitement of Fox; nor the stately and sonorous roll of Pitt's oratory; nor the seductive and fascinating finish of Canning. It was a style entirely peculiar to himself,—uncopied and inimitable,—combining more than the subtlety of the lawyer with more than the eloquence of the barrister;

uniting metaphysics and poetry, literature and law, in one subtle and winding whole; generally rapid and urgent; often brilliant; never pathetic; and rarely overpowering. It resembled rather a gay exhibition of gladiatorial skill, than a mortal struggle. It never sounded the depths of passion, nor did it scale the highest heaven of fancy. It possessed little stern sarcasm, no ebullient humour, but a great deal of refined wit, which played about the surface, instead of searing to the centre. His manner was the mere medium of his matter and his mind. His voice had not Brougham's thrilling whisper, or his high and harsh notes; nor the hoarse thunder of Chalmers; nor those wild and wailing cadences by which Wilson accomplishes his oratorical triumphs; but it was not devoid of a shrill yet mild melody, like that of a female tongue, which moved, and pierced, and enthralled the spirit. Such was the oratory which, at one time, was the glory of the bar, of the bench, and of the public,—the delight at once of the ladies and of the literati of the Modern Athens. Every body knows that Lord Jeffrey, like Horne Tooke, Flood, and Sir Daniel Sandford, among the many whose fame had preceded them there, and who entered in the glare of great expectation, failed in Parliament. It is curious noting the causes of these respective failures. Horne Tooke's was attributed, by himself, to the fact of his being a clergyman; it is ascribed, by Hazlitt, a fairer judge in this case, to the coldness and pettiness of his manner, which was more that of a special pleader, than of a hearty and honest advocate. Small seemed the gimlet of his subtle discrimination and impalpable wit amid the terrible play of the axes and hammers which were then resounding within the walls of the British Senate; and what could a clever speechifier do when planted beside the orators of England,—Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Windham, and Burke? Flood was too coarse for

the atmosphere of the English Parliament, although, like Grattan, he entered it in one of those deep lulls which succeed great storms of eloquence, and are peculiarly favourable to fresh aspirants. But then Grattan was a demon of power, and cut his way into an English reputation by the sheer saw of his energy and his eye. Sir Daniel Sandford's failure surprised no one who knew him. A better teacher, indeed, never sat in a professor's chair. Hardly, in the high sense, a man of genius, he was a genuine enthusiast; his enthusiasm proved itself true by uplifting a load of the green fuel of affectation and mannerism, and piercing it with living flame. His tones, the glances of his dull yet speaking eye, the movements, though somewhat theatrical, of his arms, holding the plays of Sophocles, as you could conceive Sophocles himself to have held them, while pleading them in his own behalf, all contributed to suck his students in within the *mare magnum* of Grecian lore, and to inspire a burning ardour of scholarship. He had not his predecessor, Young's, fiery bursts or sonorous pomp of style, or vastitude of erudition; but, as a teacher, he was incomparably superior, and his soul lived along every line he read and word he uttered. But this was not suitable for the Parliament of our mechanical era. He failed, therefore, ignominiously,—resented it bitterly,—returned, like Lord Grenville, to "Plato and to the Iliad," and died, (of typhus fever,) reciting Homer. Poor fellow, methinks we hear him now, reading one of his Saturday lectures, with his yearning, quivering voice; and with that face of his, which threw out, as he warmed with the theme, a certain pallid spiritual radiance, reminding us of that which breaks forth from the countenance of the "Alchymist," when he has risen to the "height of his great argument," and sends out pure spirit, not blood, to report progress on his "dim and perilous way." Lord Jeffrey,

again, ascribes his own failure on that dangerous floor, to his age. He was "too old," he said, "to transplant." He had already, besides, secured all his great objects in life, and the applause, even of a senate, could add nothing to the fortune, and little to the fame, of the autocrat of critics. And, if even a college or provincial reputation be so prejudicial to the prospects of one who aspires to parliamentary renown, we can easily understand why the prestige of an European fame should, in his case, have raised expectation to a pitch where it could not be gratified, particularly in an excited crisis, when common men had become eloquent, and eloquent men had become inspired. Perhaps, had he appeared on the arena earlier, and in more favourable circumstances, the result had justified the most sanguine prognostications of his friends.

Of society, Lord Jeffrey is well known to be a distinguished ornament. His talk is gay, lively, witty, abundant, thickly garnished with those French epithets and turns of phrase which were the fashion in his youth. He shines not in monologue, but in sharp short dialogue. It is said, that, on one occasion, long before he was Lord Advocate, pleading a case at the bar of the House of Lords, he broke down, and disappointed, grievously, the many clever men who had assembled to hear him; but, in the rebound of his failure, had his revenge in the evening, at a private party, where he astonished the same critics, by the brilliance of his conversational bravuras. By the testimony of his very enemies, he is a high-minded and generous man. His liberality to poor authors,—his general courtesy and urbanity of manners,—his gaiety of disposition,—his constant flow of soul,—his superiority to the vile and vulgar feelings of envy, jealousy, and political spite, are universally conceded. Like Curran, the life and light of society, he is rumoured, like him, to be

subject, in solitude, to deep fits of depression. Of late, he has commanded the avowed admiration and praise of his literary and political opponents. It was, for him, a proud moment, when the most formidable of these took the chair at a public dinner to his honour ; and a pleasing remembrance it is for all who grieve to see men of worth and genius at variance, that the most eloquent and glowing panegyric ever pronounced on Francis Jeffrey came from the lips of John Wilson.

WILLIAM GODWIN.

“ Who’s Godwin ?” said once a respectable person to us, while panegyricizing in our own way the venerable sage. As we hear the question echoed by some of our readers, we propose to tell them a little about him, and do not despair of getting them to love him, ere we be done. William Godwin was a philosopher, and a philosophical novelist, an essayist, a biographer, at one period a preacher, and the author of a volume of sermons, the writer of one or two defunct tragedies, a historian, the founder of a small but distinguished school of writers, in England and America ; and, in spite of his errors, an exceedingly candid, generous, simple-minded, and honest man. His intellect was clear, searching, sagacious, and profound. He thought every subject out and out for himself, using, however, the while, the aids derived from an enlarged intimacy with still deeper and subtler understandings. His was not that one-sided intensity of original view which is at once the power and the weakness of a very rare order of minds. He had not the huge one-glaring orb of a Cyclops, letting in a flood of rushing and furious splen-

dour, and rendering its possessor miserable in his might ; his mental glance was mild, full, penetrating, and comprehensive. He was not gifted with the power of adding any new truth to the precious catalogue. He was not a Berkeley, a Hobbes, a Hume, an Edwards, a Coleridge, or a Ricardo ; but he was the eloquent interpreter and fearless follower out of the subtle speculations of such men. There was a "daring consistency" in the mode by which he built up his system of the universe. Seizing on the paradoxes of preceding philosophers, stones rejected by other builders, he put them together, interfused them with a certain cement of his own, and reared with them a towering and terrible structure. His "Theory of Political Justice" was a tower of Babel composed of the most contradictory materials "in ruin reconciled ;" partly of the sophistries of Hume, partly of the subtleties of Jonathan Edwards ; here a stone from the quarries of Spinoza, and there a bale of goods from the warehouse of Adam Smith. The grand principle pervading his works was, that love to being in general ought, if not to annihilate, to overshadow private relations, and individual charities. Snatching this paradox, or, at best, partial truth, from the holy hand of the author of the "Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will," he carried it around as a touchstone to every institution of society. We can easily conceive what wild work he would thus make. He became, indeed, in the language of Burke, one of the "ablest architects of ruin," as if he had learned it from the "old earthquake demon," described by his great son-in-law. On titles and on property, on monarchy and on marriage, on commerce and on gratitude, he trode with disdain. Necessity, he proclaimed, in one of the most fascinating and eloquent chapters of philosophical criticism we have ever read, to be the Mother of the World. Every thing must be changed. Thrones were bub-

bles ; titles, nicknames ; crowns, momentary circles in the stream of ages ; the marriage-ring, degrading as the link of the prisoner, or the round fetter of the slave. Old things were to pass away : all things to be made new. Even the "law and the testimony" were to be veiled, if not obliterated. A new era must burst upon the world. Man must erect himself from his thousand slaveries—free—

————— Equal sceptreless ;
 Unclassed, tribeless, and nationless ;
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself, just, gentle, wise, but man—
 Passionless ? No ; but free from guilt and pain,
 Which were, for his will made and suffered them ;
 Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
 From chance, and death, and mutability ;—
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended Heaven,
 Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

It was a brilliant, but dangerous vision ; one of those sun-tinted phantasmas which rose from the gulf of the French Revolution, ere it had yet become an abyss of blood. We have recounted it thus calmly, because its author was a harmless and sincere enthusiast ; because, gossamer though its web was, it caught for a season such dragon-flies as Coleridge and Wordsworth, (who said to a student, "Burn your books of chemistry, and read 'Godwin on Necessity ;' ") because, thirdly, it has long ago vanished from the public attention, and, indeed before his death, its more obnoxious parts were either expressly or silently renounced by the writer himself.

It were vain at this time of day to analyze or argue against a forgotten dream. Enough to acknowledge, which we do now with all safety, that it was a work of much power

and eloquence,—that it was written in a clear, terse, fluent, and even brilliant style,—that, though the root of the thinking lay generally in other writers, yet the bold turn and shoot of the branches, and the fell lustre of the fruit, were all his own ; and that it must always be interesting as one of the most deliberate, laboured, and daring attempts ever made by man, to found a system of society utterly distinct and insulated from every other. It may be called an effort by a single hand to “roll back the eternal wheels of the universe.” And now, to recur to a former figure, it seems to the imagination, through the vista of half a century, to rise up a great, grotesque structure, which, uncrowned with Deity, unfinished by its architect, deserted by its friends, mutilated by its foes, stands an everlasting monument of the mingled wisdom and folly, the strength and the weakness, of man.

Never did book rise or sink more rapidly. Now it flared a meteor, “with fear of change perplexing monarchs,” as well as lightening into many a still chamber, and many an enthusiastic heart ; and now it sunk a cold and heavy dreg upon the ground. While “Caleb Williams” is in every circulating library, and needs more frequently, we have heard, than almost any novel, to be replaced, the “Inquiry into Political Justice,” is read only by a few hardy explorers, and reminds them, contrasting its past influence with its present neglect, of some cataract, once the terror and the glory of the wilderness, but which, by the fall of its cliff of vantage, has been robbed of its voice of thunder, shorn of its Samson-like locks of spray, dwarfed into comparative insipidity, deserted by its crowding admirers, and left to pine alone in the desert of which it was once the pride, and to sigh for the days of other years. And yet, while of “Caleb Williams” it was predicted by some sapient friend, that,

if published, it would be the grave of his literary reputation, the other lifted him, as on dragon wings, into instant and dangerous popularity; the "Inquiry" was the balloon which bore him giddily up, the novel the parachute which broke his fall.

As a novelist, indeed, Godwin, apart from the accidents of opinion and popular caprice, occupies a higher place than as a philosopher. As a philosopher, he is neither altogether new nor altogether true; he is ingenious, but unsafe, and the width of the field he traverses, and the celerity with which he runs across it, and the calm dogmatism with which he announces the most extreme and startling opinions, excite suspicions as to the depth of his knowledge, and the comprehension of his views. They surround the figure of the sage with an air and edging of charlatanerie. As a novelist, on the contrary, he passes for no more than he is,—a real and robust original. He proceeds in this walk with the exulting freedom and confidence of one, who has hit on a vein entirely new. He imagines a character after his own heart; a quiet, curious, prying, philosophical being, with a strong underdash of the morbid, if not of the mad; and he thickens around him circumstances, which, by making him altogether a misanthrope, and nearly a maniac, bring out all the powers and the passions of his nature. The main actor in each of his tales, at first recumbent, is, at length, ere you leave him, rampant with whatever may be the pervading principle of his being. And so with the author himself; he, too, catches fire by running. At first slow, embarrassed, uninteresting, commonplace, he becomes rapid, ardent, overpowering. The general tone of his writing, however, is calm. "In the very whirlwind of his passion, he begets a temperance which gives it smoothness." His heat is never that of the sun with all his beams around him; but of the

round rayless orb seen shining from the summit of Mont Blanc, still and stripped in the deep black ether. He has more passion than imagination. And even his passion he has learned more by sympathy than by personal feeling. And amid his most tempestuous scenes, you see the calm and stern eye of philosophic analysis looking on. His imagery is not copious, nor always original, but its sparseness is its strength ; it startles you with unexpected and momentary brilliance ; the flash comes sudden as the lightning ; like it, too, it comes from the cloud, and like it, it bares the breast of heaven in an instant, and in an instant is gone. No preparatory flourish or preliminary sound,—no sheets of useless splendour ;—each figure is a fork of fire which strikes, and needs no second blow. Nay, often his images are singularly commonplace, and you wonder how they move you so, till you resolve this into the power of the hand which jaculates its own energy in them. His style is not the least remarkable thing about his compositions. It is a smooth succession of short and simple sentences, each clear as crystal, and none ever distracting the attention from the subject to its own construction. It is a style in which you cannot explain how the total effect rises out of the individual parts, and which is forgotten as entirely during perusal as is the pane of glass through which you gaze at a comet or a star. The *form*, too, favours the general effect. Each narrative takes the shape of an autobiography, and the incessant recurrence of the pronoun *I* transports you to a confessional, where you hear told you, in subdued tones, a tale which might “rouse the dead to hear.” Systematically, he rejects the use of supernatural machinery, profuse descriptions, and mere mechanical horrors. Like Brockden Brown, he despises to summon up a ghost from the grave ; he invokes the “mightier might” of the passions of living flesh ; he excites terror

often, but it is the terror which dilated man wields over his fellow, colossal and crushing, but distinct; not the vague and shadowy form of fear which springs from preternatural agency. His path is not, like that of Monk Lewis and Maturin, sulphureous and slippery, as through some swart mine; it is a *terribil via*, but clear, direct, above ground—a line of light passing through dark forests, over mountains, and by the brink of tremendous precipices. He wants, of course, the multitudinous variety of Scott, the uniform sparkle of Bulwer, the wit of the author of "Anastasius," the light effervescent humour of Dickens, the oriental gusto and gorgeousness of Beckford, the severe truth of Mrs. Inchbald, and Miss Austin, the caustic vein and ripe scholarship of Lockhart, the refined elegance of Ward, the breadth of Cooper, the rough, sarcastic strength of Marryatt, the grotesque horror of the Victor Hugo school; not to speak of the Shakspearean power of Cervantes, the humour of Le Sage, the farce of Smollett, Fielding's anatomizing eye, Richardson's mastery over the tragedies of the fireside, Defoe's minute and lingering touch; but in one savage corner of the art, we see him seated, Salvator like, among the fiercest forms of nature, scarcely seen, yet insensibly mingling with his thoughts, and directing his pencil—drawing with fearless dash the ruins, not of cities, but of men—painting, to use his own words, the "sublime desolation of mighty souls," and searching, not, like Byron, the "dark bosoms" of pirates, and red-handed lords, and men of genius exalted to the cold and dismal elevation of universal doubt, and self-exiled and insulated sinners, mad with the memory of crime, changing the still bosom of Alpine solitudes into the howling bedlam of their own remorse, and shriving themselves amid eternal snow; but turning inside out the "dark bosoms" of dismissed body men, and moody solitaries, and chivalric murderers, and strong

spirits soured into something more dreadful than misanthropy, and alchemists, cut off by gold, as by a great gulf, from the sympathies of their fellow men; in exploring such breasts, Godwin is one of the mightiest of masters. His novels resemble the paintings of John Martin, being a gallery, nay, a world in themselves; and it is a gloomy gallery and a strange world. In both, monotony and mannerism are incessant; but the monotony is that of the sounding deep, the mannerism that of the thunderbolts of heaven. Martin might append to his one continual flash of lightning, which is present in all his pictures, now to reveal a deluge, now to garland the brow of a fiend—now to rend the veil of a temple, and now to guide the invaders through the breach of a city—the words, “John Martin, his mark.” Godwin’s novels are not less terribly distinguished, to those who understand their cypher—the deep scar of misery, branded, whether literally, as in “Mandeville,” or figuratively, as in all his other tales, upon the brow of the “Victim of Society.”

We well remember our first reading of “Caleb Williams.” We commenced it about nine o’clock at night, sitting by ourselves in a lonely room—read on and on, forgetful of time, place, and of the fact, especially, that our candle was going out, till, lo! at one of the most enchaining of its situations, it suddenly dropped down and we were in darkness! It was a most provoking position. The family were “dead asleep,” not a spark of light to be got, and there were we, sitting with the book we had been devouring in our hands, pressing it in our enthusiasm to our breast, and yet unable to see a syllable of its contents. It was, we remember, in our seventeenth year, and we did not bear the disappointment so philosophically as we would now. We went to bed intensely chagrined, were long of sleeping,—when we did sleep, dreamed stupid sulky dreams about Haw-

kins and Tyrrell, and by earliest dawn were up and tearing out its heart. There is about it a stronger suction and swell of interest than in any novel we know, with the exception of one or two of Sir Walter's. You are in it ere you are aware. You put your hand playfully into a child's, and are surprised to find it held in the grasp of a giant. It becomes a fascination. Struggle you may, and kick—but he holds you by his glittering eye. There is no convulsion in the narrative either, few starts or spasms, no string of asterisks, (that base modern device,) to quicken your flagging curiosity; no frightful chasms yawn in your face; the stream is at once still as a mill-lead, and strong as a rapid. But it has higher merits than that of mere interest—a very subordinate kind of excellence, after all; for does not a will interest more than a "Waverley?"—the letter of a friend, more than the most sublime production of the human mind? There is a uniqueness in the whole conception of the tale, the incidents are imagined with consummate art, and succeed each other with breathless rapidity; the moral, so far as it respects the then wretched state of prison discipline and legal forms, is strongly pointed; and the writing, though far from elegant or finished, has in parts the rude power of those sentences which criminals, martyrs, and maniacs, scrawl upon their walls or windows, in the eloquence of desperation. The characters are not Englishmen, (none of Godwin's characters, indeed, seem to belong to any country; they are all, like their creator, philosophers, and citizens of the world, be they thieves or jailors, highwaymen or hags, ruffians or gentlemen,) but they are generally men. We like Falkland least of all, though we tremble at him, as the terrible incarnation of the principle of honour. He is certainly a striking creation; but resembles rather one of the fictitious beings of heraldry, than a real man. No such noble nature was ever so soured into

a fiend ; no such large heart was ever contracted into a scorpion-circle of fire, narrowing around its victim. Godwin's Falkland is in truth a more monstrous improbability than his daughter's Frankenstein. He is described as a paragon of benevolence and virtue, and yet to preserve, not the consciousness of honour, but, as Fuseli remarked, its mere reputation ; he sets himself deliberately, by every despicable art, by every enormous energy of injustice, to blast a being whom, all the while, he respects and admires. And you are expected, throughout the whole career of the injury, to blend admiration of the inflicter, with sympathy for the victim. It is an attempt to reconcile the most glaring moral contradictions, an attempt worthy of the author of the far-famed chapter on "Necessity," and an attempt in which, strange to say, he nearly succeeds. You never altogether lose your regard for Falkland ; and this chiefly because Caleb Williams himself never does. To his eye, above the blood of Tyrrell, and the gallows of the Hawkins, and his own unparalleled wrongs, the genius of Falkland continues to soar, and his spirit is "rebuked under it," as Mark Antony was by Cæsar. And how affecting his apparition toward the close ; his head, covered with untimely snow, his frame palsied by contending passions, dying of a broken heart ! Caleb, though he be standing at bay, relents at the sight of the hell which suppressed feeling has charactered upon his forehead ; and Falkland dies at length, forgiven by him, by you, by all. Williams himself is the creation of circumstance, and has all the prominent points in his character struck out by the rude collisions he encounters. Originally he is neither more nor less than a shrewd, inquisitive youth. He is never much more, indeed, than a foil to the power and interest of his principal. Tyrrell is a brute, nor even an English brute ; but a brute proper and positive. He is drawn sternly and *con amore*. The

other characters, Miss Melville, Raymond, Collins, &c., are very insipid, with the exception of Gines, the bloodhound, who is painted with the force, gusto, and almost inhuman sympathy of a Landseer ; and the hag who attempts the life of Caleb in the robber's den, a dire figure pointed into powerful relief by her butcher's cleaver, a coarser Clytemnestra, if great things may be likened to small. Such is "Caleb Williams," a work which made an era in the fictitious writing of the age, and which has not only created a school of imitators, but coloured insensibly many works, which profess and possess independent claims : such as the Paul Cliffords, Eugene Arams, Rookwoods, and Oliver Twists, of Bulwer, Ainsworth, and Boz, which, but for it, we verily believe, had never been. Written with the care and consciousness of one who felt himself writing for immortality, it still keeps its place amid the immense fry of ordinary tales, embalmed and insulated in the rough salt of its own essential and original power.

If "Caleb Williams" be the most interesting and popular, "St Leon" is the most pathetic and imaginative of his tales. It does not, indeed, in our judgment, do full justice to the character of an alchemist ;—a character which ought to attract more interest nowadays, when chemistry has approached the verge of transformations nearly as wonderful as that which he sought by self-denial, and abstinence, and unwearied perseverance, and solemn prayer. A genuine seeker after gold seems to us to have been one of the noblest characters in the dark ages. He was no wretched quack-salver, like Dousterswivel ; no half dupe, half devil, deceiving others no more than he was himself deceived, like Alasco,—a being driven, by the pure malignity of his nature, to converse with the family of poisons, as with familiar spirits ; seen, by fancy, surrounded by drugs as by demons,

and enjoying a tingling luxury from handling all the concentrations of death; squeezing out from leaf, and flower, and mineral, their most secret subtleties of mischief; and liking no looking-glass for his pale features, so well as that which a cup of distilled destruction, forced from the hand of reluctant Nature, supplied. Nor was he a mere slave of avarice; he was a being of quite another order. He gloried, like the hunter, not so much in the prey as in the chase; it was not the glittering dross he cared for; but partly the excitement, the enthusiasm, the terror, and the transport of the search; partly the power and the pleasure, the benevolent influence, and the glory, which were expected to result from the acquirement. He valued not the golden key, except that by it he hoped to open the vast folding doors, and to stand in the central halls of Nature's inmost temple,—halls flaming with "diamond and with gold." The true alchemist was a "true man, with the deep Demetrian idea of matter, as a Proteus, living in his heart; an impracticable dialectics, instead of a working logic, in his hands; and an imagination, distracted and oppressed by the variance of these—the divine idea, and the meanness of his instrumentality." He was no petty distiller, dissolver, and weigher; but the worthy ancestor of the true chemists who have followed in his track—the Stahls, the Priestleys, the Blacks, the Lavoisiers, the Daltons, Davys, and Faradays. It was not gold so much he sought, as the idea of gold. He looked on gold as the first bright round of the ladder of earthly perfection, the top of which reached into heaven. It was with him no ultimate eminence; but only a *πovστω*, whence he might move the world. As an attempt, too, to follow the most shadowy and sublime of Nature's footsteps; to take her in her form, to enter into her profoundest secrets, and learn her most unimaginable cypher,—it required the severest

training, habits of the minutest observation, the deepest study, combined with the most active and practical research. Nor was the alchemist, in our ideal of his character, one of those "fools who rush in where angels fear to tread." He sought not rashly to rend the robe of Nature, to gaze upon her "naked loveliness," or snatch the sceptre rudely from her hand. He was a modest and a holy worshipper; he lived on bread and water, he subdued the flesh, he mortified the spirit, he fasted, he prayed; he went to his crucible as to a shrine; he searched and tried his heart, as if he were about to celebrate a sacrament. Disappointed a thousand times, he still persevered; baffled by the turnings and windings of his goddess, he continued to follow her footsteps in the snow, and never despaired of reaching her very home; rejected of her great communion again and again, again and again he stretched out his daring hand to the dread elements on her table; and, though defeated in his ultimate end, verily he had his reward in the pangs of the purifying process, in the furnace of the refining affliction, in the glorious stoop of the attitude; which made him bend evermore, like one that prayeth, over the rarest operations of God, and in the glimpses of truth which shone upon him through the ruins of his hopes, and, at last, through the rents in his shattered frame. If Nature did not lead him to her bald and Pisgah pinnacle, she did conduct him to many a towering elevation, and many a fair prospect she expanded before him. If she taught him not to create gold, she taught him to analyze air, to simplify the forms of matter, to weigh gases in scales, and atoms in a balance. If she realized not his yet grander dream of living for ever, she combined, with the sounder hopes of Christianity, in qualifying him for an unearthly immortality, and she surrounded his death with an interest and a grandeur peculiar to herself. Yes,

Alchemy had her martyrs, worthy of the name; and the exit of the sublime visionary was often in fine keeping with his character. He died, not like Alasco, by the glass mask breaking, and permitting the fume of the poison to pierce his brain; nor by accidentally swallowing the draught he had prepared for others; nor by despairing suicide: but worn away to a skeleton by the watchings and fastings, the hopes and fears, the ecstasies and agonies, of many a studious year; on his cheek, the hectic of death contending with the flush of expectation: for have not the fingers of many a dream pointed to this night, as that when the light of gold is to break upon him, like a finer dawn from the ashes of the furnace, and the residuum of the process is to be the julep of immortality? The time, midnight; Arcturus shining through the skylight of his solitary room; standing on the very threshold of his hopes; another blast but to be given, another ingredient but to be added, and all is gained:—see, then and there the alchemist expires, with a light like the news of some great victory still shining on his features, ere they are settled into the rigidity of death!

This is our ideal of an alchemist: and has Godwin satisfied this ideal? We must answer, No. St. Leon is not a seeker for the philosopher's stone, nor yet its finder. He gains it by no protracted and painful process; he stumbles upon it by chance. It is not a reward; it is not a result: it drops at his feet as from the clouds. He wears, therefore, its mystic crown awkwardly, and like a *parvenu*. He never, somehow, seems satisfied that he has a proper claim to it, nor are you. What right, you say, has this broken-down moody gambler and ex-count to a gift so rare, which so many prophets and righteous men have desired in vain? Unworthy of its possession, no wonder that it avenges itself by making him the most miserable of men. The evils,

too, of the successful alchymist's position are, we think, somewhat overdrawn. Money, it is true, cannot unlock every dungeon, melt every refractory element, or quench the fury of devouring flames; but it is clearly not answerable for the calamities into which his own recklessness or extravagance, or the savage superstitions of his age, plunge the Count St. Leon. Because he neglects ordinary precautions, and indulges needless expense, must the power of gold, as an engine of vast benevolence and amelioration, be reduced to a negative quantity? Indeed, the book defeats its own apparent object. As a satire upon gold, it is dull and powerless. As a picture of its princely prerogatives, it is captivating in the extreme. More successfully still, though not more justly, does he depict the misery of immortality on earth. He impresses us with the deepest sense of the dreary position of a man, whose stupendous privileges have only rendered him "alone in the world." Who does not pity St. Leon burying his noble wife, bidding farewell to his charming daughters, and setting forward on his solitary journey, "friendless, friendless, alone, alone?" Who weeps not with him as he feels that his gift has insulated him for ever; that an immortal can form no abiding connexion with "the ephemeron of an hour?" This is the impression which the author wishes to give, and he does give it; and it is most melancholy. But, perhaps, he has not brought out with due force the other side of the medal;—the consolations of such a solitude; a solitude like that of the brideless sun, diffusing, unweariedly, his tide of power and splendour; of the solitary stars; of the "childless cherubs." All truly great men, indeed, whatever were their connexions, have felt the pleasures and the pangs of severe consecration to some high purpose; and that the former are not inferior to the latter. "The lion is alone, and so are they." Tenderly do they

love their kind ; but they see them from too great an elevation, to expect or extend much reciprocity of feeling. Genius is essential solitude ; and this solitude is sublime, if it be dreary. The man of imagination has a crucible in the inner chamber of his soul, where his heart is, and with which no stranger intermeddleth. Look at Wordsworth : he is as lonely in the most brilliant coterie, as amid the caves of Helvellyn. Coleridge talked away ; but his *eye was ever alone*. Byron stood among the crowd—and such a crowd !—“ among them, but not of them ”—as if gazing down the corries of Loch-na-Gar. Look at Chalmers : his wandering look proclaims that his spirit dwells apart from his audience, even while thrilling it into one soul. Hall, in his higher moments, seemed entirely unconscious of the presence of his congregation. Wilson’s voice, in the most crowded classroom, seems to go on alone, like a separate existence. Such a solitude who dares to pity ? who envies not ? And yet Godwin expects us to sympathize with the child of immortality, merely because he is alone ! Still, St. Leon is a magnificent romance. We all remember the grand outburst of his feelings after he knows the secret ; though it rises less from the fact that the mysteries of nature are open, than that they are open to *him*. Hence, in the celebrated exclamation, “ For me the wheels of the universe are made to roll backwards,” we must lay the emphasis on the second word. But, better than this is that melancholy figure of the stranger, whose name is not given ; whose history you must guess from the disconnected expressions of his despair ; whose mysterious entrance is announced in words so significant and thrilling, like a blast of trumpets, and whom you doubt in your perplexity, to be an incarnation of the fiend ; so disastrous is the influence he sheds on the cottage by the lake, and on the destiny of its inmates. He reminds us

of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." Like him, he is nameless; like him, he passes "like Night from land to land;" like him, he has strange power of speech; like him, he carries a deep burden of secret upon his breast, which he must disclose; like him, he has a special message to an individual, which colours all the after history of his being. Like the wedding guest, St. Leon becomes a wiser and a sadder man.

And then there is the noble Marguerite de Damville, the ideal of a matron, a mother, a wife, a woman; whose very step moves to the music of lofty purpose, and before whom her husband, even while holding the keys of nature and of immortal life, dwindles into insignificance. Blessings on thee, William Godwin, for this fine creation! a creation realizing all our fondest dreams of the majesty, purity, and wisdom which gracious Nature can build up, when she pleases, in one woman's form. She is the true magician of the tale; and you feel that a love like her's is stronger than death, and mightier than gold; and that God may give to the "insect of an hour" more of his own image and glory, than the most mysterious gifts, even eternal youth itself, can confer on the unworthy. She reminds us of the lines descriptive of Godwin's own daughter, written by her impassioned husband:—

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak.

Time may interpret to his silent years.

Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,

And in the light thine ample forehead wears,

And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,

And in thy gentle speech a prophecy

Is whispered to subdue my fondest fears.

And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see

A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,

Of glorious parents, thou aspiring child.
I wonder not ; for one then left the earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of her departing glory ; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter years ; and thou canst claim
The shelter from thy sire of an immortal name.

And while she is the loveliest, Bethlem Gabor is the most terrific character in this or in almost any tale. He is a "bear bereaved of his whelps." His castle has been burned ; his wife and babes, "all his pretty ones," murdered ; and he steps up upon their corpses into a giant of misanthropy. His figure itself proclaims his character. His stature is Titanic ; his hair, a dead black ; his face, all scarred and scorched with sword and flame ; one eye is gone, but the other has gathered up into its solitary orb the fury which fell from it, and glares with a double portion of demoniac meaning. His voice is thunder ; and as he talks in a torrent of imprecation against man, and nature, and Eternal Providence, his stature dilates, his breast swells and heaves like an angry wave, and a "supernatural eloquence seems to inspire and enshroud him." His every thought is tinctured with gall. "He never sees a festive board without being tempted to overturn it ; never a father surrounded with a smiling family, without feeling his soul thrill with suggestions of murder." Holding man to be a more mischievous reptile than any that crawls on Africa's sands ; a viler insect than any that floats in the thick atmosphere of India's jungles ; a more malignant monster than any that roams over the Arabian desert ; a more ravenous devourer than any that infests the Caribbean sea ;—he has sworn, both loud and deep, to wage against him an unmitigated and eternal war-

fare. He looks demoniacally even into the faces of little children. He would willingly see the whole race enclosed in the hollow of one curse. He hates God, because he is the father of man; he hates himself, because he is a man. He has no pleasure from any source but hatred; none from the works of creation, on which he casts a malignant scowl; none from love, for he loves no one, not even himself; none from devotion, for he will not kneel; none from hope, for his element is despair; none from anticipation, unless he could expect that the throats of all men were contracted into one, and that one were within the reach of his eager axe. He is the Polyphemus of the miserable; and is drawn by those few rude touches which proclaim the hand of a master. He seems, like that fatal bark in *Lycidas*, to have been "built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark;" conceived and finished in that gloomy hour of life, which falls at some time or other upon all earnest spirits, from which Shakspeare himself did not escape, as *Timon* terribly testifies; and which, in Godwin, was produced or exaggerated by the disappointment of the fresh hopes of his youth, and by the overthrow of the pyramidal pile of Political Justice which he had reared at such perverted pains. Charles we do not admire; and all his intercourse with his disguised father is in wretched taste, and brings the tale to a lame and impotent close. Fine descriptive passages are sprinkled throughout, such as that of "Gambling," the "Storm among the Mountains," &c. But the individual incidents are generally quite subordinate to the characters, and the moral of the story. From this statement, however, we must except the escape from the Inquisition. Nothing in fiction, (except the robber-scene in "Count Fathom," which is quite destitute of its moral grandeur,) surpasses in interest St. Leon's sudden dash from the midst of the procession of the victims of the auto-da-fe, through an

unexpected and momentary opening, down the lane ; his affair with the Jew, whom he compels to secrete him, and purchase for his use the materials of the elixir of immortal life ; his sudden and horrible feeling that he is dying ; his haste in compounding the julep ; the state of insensibility into which he sinks for a moment ; the attempt he makes with the last efforts of expiring nature to swallow the draught of immortality ; the sweet sleep, bedropt with golden dreams, that follows ; and his starting to consciousness, a new-made man, eternal youth rioting in his veins, the same Count Leon that he was on the morning of his marriage with Marguerite de Damville.

We must dismiss this enchanting fiction, with its minor beauties of style, its use of Scripture allusions, which are in fine keeping with the spiritual cast of the story ; its high tone of morality ; its sympathy with all those private affections which the Inquiry denounced ; its melting pathos. Next to *Ivanhoe*, we consider it the most ideal, sustained, and poetical romance in the English language.

Mandeville is, like Bethlem Gabor, a misanthrope, but wants the energy and grandeur of that extraordinary character. He is not maddened into the feeling by circumstances ; he hates, because he has nothing else to do. It is but in him the escape of immeasurable ennui. Godwin was probably seduced into this miscreation by the success of Gabor, forgetting that to reproduce any character is dangerous, and that what will pass, nay, tell, in a sketch, may be intolerable in a full-length portraiture. The power of this tale,—and it has great power,—lies not in story, for story there is little ; nor in variety, for variety there is none ; nor in characters, for character of any prominence there is but one—Mandeville himself ; but in the minute and painstaking analysis of hatred, as it roots itself in the soil of one

morbid spirit, and gradually, as it grows, covers all with the blackness of darkness; and in the eloquence of certain insulated passages, collecting the pith of the fell passion, and reminding you of those dark, soundless wells in the wilderness, into which you tremble to look down at noonday. And what an exit the hero has at length, leaving the stage with that ghastly gash upon his face, which grins out the intelligence that Clifford has set his mark on him, and that he is his for ever.

We notice in this work, and in his yet later productions, a vaster wealth and profusion of imagery than in his earlier works. We notice this also in Burke's "Regicide Peace," and in Scott's "Life of Napoleon." Whether it spring from a desire to hide the baldness of age by forced and thickening laurels, or arise from the imaginative power rallying all its forces previous to dissolution, certainly the phenomena is curious; and the contrast between the more than youthful riot of figure, and exuberance of language, and the age of the writer, produces in our minds strange and mournful emotions.

Fleetwood and Cloudesley, with many beauties of thought and style, are but faint, moony reflexes of the others, and we may silently drop both from the catalogue of the works, begirt by which he shall yet stand "before the dread tribunal of To-come," to receive the verdict of immortality.

His "Inquirer" is made up of orts and fragments which were over from the great feast of the "Inquiry." It contains "matter of much pith and moment," though it be too paradoxical, and stately, and dogmatic, to rank among the "Essays of England." His "Life of Chaucer" includes some ingenious dissertations, but is a total misnomer, inasmuch as it contains little or no biography. His "Essay on Sepulchres" is full of learning, and seems to have been a favourite

with its author; but, crushed down under its ominous title, it is now safely deposited in the tomb of the Capulets. His "Lives of Milton's Nephews" were another still birth. He is better at writing the life of a fictitious, than a real personage. His sermons,—called curiously "Sketches from History,"—which we glanced over, *à la* Charles Lamb, at a book-stall in Glasgow, a good many years ago, are desperately dry, and we do not wonder that he soon ceased to be a preacher. His tragedies were sins of youth, and—would it were so with all such!—are forgotten for ever. His "Life of Mary Wolstonecraft" does not add to his reputation. As an historian of the Commonwealth, he labours under the deep disadvantage of having little sympathy with the religious spirit of the period; nor does he narrate with peculiar interest or power, but is careful, inquisitive, ingenious, and rather cold and passionless. His final "Thoughts on Man" were collected into a posthumous volume, which we never saw. He was one of the most indefatigable of authors, and has founded a school, including his son, a youth of promise, early cut off; his daughter, the brilliant authoress of "Frankenstein," "The Last Man," &c.; that rare American, afterwards to be commemorated, Brockden Brown, whose "Wieland," "Ormond," "Arthur Mervyn," "Edgar Huntly," &c., track his path closely and daringly, yet possess a distinct originality of their own; and Shelley, whose eagle-winged genius did not disdain to "do errands in the vasty deep, and business i' the veins of earth," at the bidding of this potent Prospero, his father-in-law. Godwin was for a while a dissenting clergyman. What character he sustained as a preacher, or how and why he parted from his congregation, we know not. Traces of his early habits of thought and reading are to be found in his use of Scripture language, in the dictatorial tone, and the measured and solemn march

of his compositions. Coming to London, he acted for a while as a reporter for the public press. His genius seems to have remained totally unsuspected by his most intimate friends, till the publication of "Caleb Williams." They even thought him utterly destitute of "natural imagination!" Mary Wolstonecraft, that crazy, but excessively clever and brilliant creature, after flirting with Fuseli and Southey, honoured Godwin with her hand. She died in giving birth to the present Mrs. Shelley. In conversation, she was incomparably her husband's superior. This, indeed, was not his forte, and hence he was often put down by the stupid and superficial, as stupider and shallower than themselves. He cared not; but, though out-crowded in coteries, he retired to his study, and wrote "immortal things," leaving them to talk themselves hoarse. Even Coleridge never did justice to Godwin's powers. Hearing him boast of having maintained a dispute with Mackintosh for several hours, the Marinere replied, "Had there been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled it in five minutes." When the same distinguished twain were on one occasion making light of Wordsworth, Coleridge said, "He strides on so far before you both, that he dwindles in the distance." After Mary Wolstonecraft's death, he married a second time. His daughter spent a part of her youth among the sandy cliffs, and on the smooth beach of Broughty Ferry; and we never pass the place, without shaping to our imagination the buoyant figure, and pale, radiant face of the young enthusiast maiden, destined afterwards to wed Alastor, and, alas! to weep tumultuous tears over his remains in the bay of Spezia, refusing to be comforted, because he who, to her at least, had been all that was affectionate and amiable, "was not." One of Godwin's principal friends was Curran, who waxed ever eloquent in private, when defending him from the abuse

it became fashionable to pour upon his head. He was one of the most candid of men, and spoke well of those who were trampling him to the dust. He did, indeed, exhibit here and there throughout his career, symptoms of a slight misanthropical tendency; but in general well sustained the dignity of the sage and the conscious immortal. He had courage, too, of no ordinary kind, and needed it all to sustain the reaction of prodigious popularity; every species of attack, from the sun-shafts of Burke, Mackintosh, and Hall, to the reptile calumnies of meaner assailants; and a perpetual struggle with narrow circumstances. He enjoyed, we believe, however, a pension for a few years ere his death. He is now only a name, but it is a name as great as the fame of "Caleb Williams," as wide as the civilized world, and as lasting as the literature of his native land.

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

WE may begin by stating, that our principal qualification for writing about Hazlitt is, that we have learned to love him, in spite of himself. This is no ordinary attainment. There is at first sight something repulsive about his works. There is a fierceness and intellectual intolerance about him by no means attractive. He dashes paradoxes like putting stones in your face. He scatters firebrands, arrows, and death, in all directions. He now impales a literary reputation upon an antithesis, and now sends a political character limping away, with the point of a prose epigram sticking in its side. How he did fall foul of Rogers, for instance, in a description which must live in the annals of contemptuous

criticism,—it was so excessively like. It was a painting to the life of the weaknesses of that elegant, but finical poet. Moore, too, he has embalmed—not Moore of “The Twopenny Post-Bag,” and “The Fudge Family,” the most witty and subtle of satirists—but Moore of “The Loves of the Angels,” and “The Veiled Prophet;” the same, but oh, how different!—the elegant ephemeral,—the Bard of the Butterflies. How he discusses Crabbe, “describing the house of a poor man like one sent there to distrain for rent!” “giving us the petrification of a sigh, and carving a tear to the life in marble!” There was much injustice in all these attacks—all of them, at any rate, were provoking; but no matter; you remembered them; they stung and piqued you, though you could hardly at first love the savage hand which perpetrated such things. Yet we liked Hazlitt even in this wild work. He was honest in it. And there was a feeling of pity mingled with your admiration. You pitied power perversely and wantonly directed against popular idols, and doomed thus everlastingly to prevent its own popularity. He could denounce Moore for “changing the Harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box, and letting her tears of blood evaporate in lip-deep melodies;” but Moore, meanwhile, was singing them in drawing-rooms, where poor Hazlitt was not admitted. He could describe Moore barking at kings like a “pug-dog from the carriage of a lady of quality;” but Moore had his revenge in ridiculing a dear friend of Hazlitt’s,—*Hunt*, namely,—by a wicked little poem concerning a lion and a puppy dog. Hazlitt’s criticisms might be immortal, but they did not sell. “Cash, Corn, Currency, and Catholics,” did. When you recollected this, you forgave the critic. The quantity of verjuice in Hazlitt’s mind was indeed immense. How it breaks out perpetually upon his page, in sudden, fierce, and fantastic gushes! How spleen

burns in his declarations, darts athwart the pure light of his genius, imbitters his wit into satire, tinges his eloquence with frenzy, and sprinkles his enthusiastic criticisms on poetry and painting with bitter, jaundiced personalities! The effect of this upon his reputation has been most pernicious. He has taught men to imagine him a misanthrope, a modern Timon, with more bile than brains; a soured malignant cynic, who carried party and personal vindictiveness to the verge of madness. This, must we prove?—is but a segment of Hazlitt's character. He was a man, not a gall-bladder, though that needful organ was largely developed in his system. And he had deep wrongs to explain his spleen. Far are we from proposing him as a faultless or exemplary character. But will his enemies now deny that he was, for whatever reasons, made the mark of relentless and ramified persecution? and that his literary and moral sins were more than expiated, by those torrents of incessant abuse which descended on his head, till his name became identical with all that was absurd in Cockneyism, and infamous in London life? Why a man of keen warm temperament, with passions equal to his powers, and with a deep soul-rooted sense of his superiority to some, at least, of his assailants, should be exasperated by such treatment, we can understand well, upon the principle of the stag turning on his hunters, and finding in those horns which were meant only for ornament, means of defence and retaliation. Why, while others of his party were treated with comparative gentleness, he was so specially victimized,—why, while Jeffrey, for instance, was only tipped lightly with the lash, he was stripped naked and scourged to ribands,—he himself never could understand, and it is yet a mystery to many. The explanation, perhaps, lies in the history of those unhappy times, when

the foul hoof of the demon of politics was still allowed to pollute the streams of literature, and poison Castalia itself.

In the light of a better era, we approach the consideration of the character and genius of Hazlitt, as a great erring man, but one of whom it may truly be said, that he was more sinned against than sinning. And his first characteristic is that of absolute earnestness. In this respect he has few equals. Verily it is the rarest of qualities. Shreds of sincerity are common enough. Bits of truth come out every now and then from the most artificial of the mock-earnest. Those men are wrong, who think Byron always affected in his proclamations of personal misery. Often he is so palpably; but, at other times, the words bespeak their own truthfulness. They are the mere wringings of the heart. Who can doubt that his brow, the index of his soul, darkened as he wrote that fearful curse, the burden of which is forgiveness? or that he wept when he penned the last stanzas of the Second Canto of "Childe Harold," "Thou, too, art gone, thou loved and lovely one?" But, as a whole, his works are bad confessions. No one, indeed, should write confessions in rhyme. There is too strong a temptation, while employing the melody, to use the language of fiction. Not that Byron's letters are more faithful to his emotions than some of his poetry; they reflect the man in all his moods; but the "Dream" showed him in his reverie, in his trance of passion, and depth of inspiration. And that man, sitting alone, and with the warm tears falling upon the blurred and blotted pages,—that man was Byron. But while *he* frequently counterfeited, Hazlitt is always in earnest. Writing in prose, he had never to sacrifice a sentiment to a sound. His works are therefore a mirror of the heart. And we pardon their egotism, their spleen, their very rancour, for the sake of that eloquence of earnestness

in which their every sentence is steeped. In this respect, as well as in agreeable gossip, he reminds us of Montaigne, the fine old Gascon egotist, who possessed, however, a happier disposition, and whose lines fell in pleasanter places than the author of "Table Talk."

Hazlitt's ruling faculty was unquestionably a discriminating intellect. His forte lay in fastening, by sure swift instinct, upon the differential quality of the author, book, or picture, which was the topic of his criticism. And in saying this, we intend to intimate our belief that he does not belong to the very highest order of minds, in whom imagination, or more properly, creative intellect, is ever the presiding power. Here we are aware of going in opposition to Foster, who, in his critical estimate of Robert Hall, asserts that, "except in the opinion of very young people, and second-rate poets, intellect is the first faculty in every great mind." At the risk of being included in one or other of the two classes thus contemptuously discriminated, we venture to contradict the critic. We ask, what are the very highest minds, by universal admission, which have yet appeared among men? Are they not those of Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakspeare, Milton, Spenser; perhaps we should add, Sir Walter Scott, Goethe, Newton, and Lord Bacon? Now, with the exception of the two last mentioned, can any one doubt that imagination, though far from being the sole, was the presiding power, in all those majestic minds. Was it not this faculty which animated that old bard who, on the Chian strand,

Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea?

Was it not imagination which prompted the golden fantasies and eloquence of Plato? Was it not the same power,

in a darker and more demoniac shape, which took down the mighty Florentine through the descending circles of damnation, and up the bright steps of celestial blessedness? Did not imagination bind in, like a glorious girdle, all the varied and numberless faculties of Shakspeare, the myriad-minded? Did it not show to Milton's inward eye the secrets of eternity? Did it not pour all the "Arabian heaven" upon the nights and days of Spenser, whose pen was a limb of the rainbow? Did it not people the blank of the past with crowding forms and faces, to the exhaustless mind, and on the many-coloured page of Scott? Did not its magic robe bear Goethe harmless, as he entered with Faust and Mephistopheles amid the hurry and horror of the Walpurgis night? Nay, even in reference to Newton and Bacon, we can hardly persuade ourselves that, in both their minds, it was not the ruling, as we know in the latter it was a principal faculty; that it did not attend the one in the giant leaps of his geometry, as well as assist the other in making out his map of all the provinces of science, and of all the capabilities of mind. In somewhat lower, but still lofty regions, we find the same faculty presiding over the rest:—as in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Burke. In those writers who had the benefit of inspiration, it is the same. Think of Isaiah, with his glowing eloquence; Ezekiel, with his stupendous visions, tinged by the "terrible crystal;" the author of Job, with his gorgeous imagery; Daniel, with his awful allegory; David, with his gusts of lyric enthusiasm, dying away into the low wailings of penitential sorrow; and him of the Apocalypse, where the events of time and the cycles of eternity are blended in one tremendous tragedy, and enacted on one obscure and visionary stage.

We grant to this critic, that imagination should be based on a superstructure of solid reason, and its flights and intui-

tions restrained within the banks of nature and the limits of possibility. We grant that you never find it alone in any of the higher orders of mind ; but we maintain that, as it has somewhere been shown to be, in its ordinary degrees, the real differentia between man and the lower animals, who do reason, but never imagine,—so it seems, in its higher form, to be the sovereign faculty of the loftiest natures ; not perhaps of critics and logicians, but certainly of philosophers and poets. . Perhaps, after all, Foster, in underrating imagination is only committing the common error of confounding it with fancy,—confounding the faculty which supplies foliage, with that finer power which produces fruit,—the faculty which is the mere fountain of images and illustrations, with that which is the parent of thought. Imagination, in our sense of the term, is at once illustrative and creative. It sees by intuition, it illustrates by metaphor, it speaks in music. All great thought links itself instantaneously to imagery, and comes forth, like Minerva, in a panoply of glittering armour. All great thought is, in a word, poetical, and creates at once a rhythm of its own. With this explanation, we hold imagination to be the most godlike of human powers ; and being neither very young persons, nor yet guilty of the sin of verse, we can afford to retain our opinion in defiance of the anathema of the late admired and eloquent essayist.

The subject of the present sketch was far from destitute of this faculty. He had more of it than he himself would believe. But though we have heard him charged, by those who knew nothing about him, with a superabundance of this very quality, his great strength lay neither in imagination, nor—to take the word in the German sense,—in reason, but in acute and discriminating understanding. Unable to reach the aerial heights of poetry,—to grapple with

the greater passions of the human soul, or to catch, on immortal canvass, either the features of the human face, the lineaments of nature, or the eloquent passages of history,—he has become, nevertheless, through his blended discrimination and enthusiasm, one of our best critics on poetry; and, his enemies themselves being judges, a first rate, if not unrivalled connoisseur of painting. Add to this, his knowledge of human nature—his deep dissections of life, in all its varieties, his ingenious but imperfect metaphysical aspirations—his memorable points, jutting out in vigorous projection from every page,—the boldness of his paradoxes,—the allusions to his past history, which, like flowers on “murk and haggard rocks,” flash on you where you expect them not,—his imagery, chiefly culled from his own experience or from the pages of the early English dramatists,—his delicious gossip—his passionate panegyrics, bursting out so obviously from the heart,—his criticisms upon the drama, the fancy, and every department of the fine arts,—his frequent and vigorous irruptions into more abstruse regions of thought, such as the principles of human action, the Malthusian theory, legislation, pulpit eloquence, and criminal law; and his style, with its point, its terseness, its brilliance, its resistless charm of playful ease, alternating with fierce earnestness, and its rich profusion of poetical quotation,—take all this together, and we have a faint view of the sunny side of his literary character. His faults are,—an occasional ambition to shine—to sparkle—to dazzle,—a fondness for paradox, pushed to a passion,—a lack of simplicity in his more elaborate, and of dignity in his more conversational passages,—a delight in sudden breaks, marks of admiration, and other convulsive spasms, which we hate, even in a giant,—a play of strong prejudices, too plainly interfering with the dictates of his better judgment,

—a taste keen and sensitive, but capricious,—a habit of quoting favourite authors, carried so far as to interfere with the unity, freedom, and force of his own style,—occasional bursts of sheer fustian, like the bright sores of leprosy,—frequent, though petty, pilferings from other authors: and, akin to this, a sad trick of stealing from himself, by perpetually repeating the same quotation, the same image, the same thought, or even the same long and laboured passage. Many of these faults arise from his circumstances, as a victim of proscription and a writer for bread. And his excellencies are more than enough to counterbalance them, and form the tombstone of their oblivion.

William Hazlitt was the son of a dissenting minister in Wem, Shropshire. There he spent his speculative, aspiring, but uneasy youth; balancing between hope and despondency,—the dread of divinity as a study, and the love of painting,—obedience to his father, and the gratification of his own tastes. There, too, as the first era of his mental life, he met with Coleridge, whom he walked ten miles in the mud to hear preach; and who, by that sermon,—a sermon, he tells us, on peace and war, on church and state, descriptive of those who “inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore,”—startled and aroused the young spirit of Hazlitt as from deep slumber, an effect which the conversation of the gifted man, who came the next day to see the father, and predicted the future eminence of the son, greatly deepened and confirmed. What followed thereafter—Coleridge’s wonderful and flowing talk,—his appearance, with “long dark locks floating down his forehead—eyebrows light as if built of ivory, with eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre,—nose small, insufficient, nothing,—mouth open, eloquent, gross, voluptuous,”—old Hazlitt’s admiration expressed in silence, the son’s in straggling sen-

tences—his walk with the poet as he departed, in view of the Welch mountains, which skirted the prospect with their tempestuous confusion, and had heard no such mystic sounds since

Highborn Hoel's harp, and soft Llewellyn's lay,—

his promised visit to Coleridge in spring,—his return from his convoy, “pensive, but much pleased,”—his metaphysical and poetical studies in the interval,—his labouring in vain to express his recondite and evanescent thoughts on paper,—his shedding tears on the unfinished manuscript,—the coming of that much desired spring,—his departure,—his reading Paul and Virginia, for the first time, in an inn by the way,—his reception by the “noticeable man with large gray eyes,” as eloquent, and to him as kind as ever—his journey with him along the shores of the Bristol Channel, sounding on his way as he went—their entering a little solitary ale-house, where Coleridge took up a well-thumbed copy of “Thomson's Seasons,” and uttered the memorable words, “This is true fame,”—their meeting with Wordsworth, his homely dress and rugged recitation and manly eloquence; all this, and more, may be found in “My first acquaintance with Poets;”—to us the most delightful of all Hazlitt's essays, and which we can hardly read, or recall to memory, without tears, striking, as it does, upon chords, and awakening reminiscences in our own breasts, with which no stranger may intermeddle. The after incidents in his life were less pleasing. He went to London to reside with his brother. Deterred from the pursuit of painting, by the severity of his own standard, and the elevation of his own ideal, he became a professional author; in this capacity he had the usual blending of struggle and success. He became known as a critic, first, by contributing to *The Morning Chronicle*. He

drew up various compilations for the booksellers; among others, a masterly abridgment of "Tucker's Light of Nature," giving the essence of seven volumes in one. He published the result of his youthful studies in the shape of an "Essay on the Principles of Human Action." He became, at an early period, intimate with Charles Lamb, who thought, and called him "one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing;" and clung to him to the last. From his early idols of the Lake school, he was gradually estranged; but, though treated by them with coldness and contempt, he never ceased to be the warm admirer of their genius, and the intrepid advocate of their fame. About the year 1816, he became connected with *The Edinburgh Review*, and strenuously did he draw that Ulysses bow, "heroic to all times." We have seen many of his articles quoted as Jeffrey's. About the same time he delivered several series of lectures at the Surrey Institution. Though he suffered, according to Serjeant Talfourd, from the imperfect sympathies of his audience, his lectures were very effective. His delivery reminded Keates of Kean's. Having occasion to allude to Dr. Johnson's carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back, up Fleet Street, his hearers showed their sense and taste, by bursting out into a titter, but were subdued into deep silence when he added, in his sternest and most impressive manner, "an incident which realizes the parable of the good Samaritan." He got keenly entangled, for a time, in the Malthusian controversy, as well as in the fiercer disputes of politics. He was one of the most laborious of writers, and often cleared, by his writings, £600 a year. His private character was neither better nor worse than that of the class to which he belonged. At one period, he had sunk so deeply into habits of intemperance, that, for "four years, he did not know the sensation of sobriety;" but, by a noble effort, he

recovered himself, and for fourteen years before his death, drank nothing stronger than very potent tea. Let charity hope that his other excesses sprung from no originally debased taste, but from the sheer abandonment and desperation of an earnest mind, seeking for truth, but finding none,—yearning for, but never reaching any definite belief;—“wandering over God’s verdant earth like the unblessed over burning deserts, passionately digging wells, but drawing up only the dry quicksand; and, at length, dying, and making no sign.” In spite, however, of all this, and of a frightful exacerbation of temper, which hacked and hewed his countenance, rendered him preternaturally suspicious, and soured him against his kindest and oldest friends,—we concede him the possession of a noble nature. In conversation he was impetuous and eager, but wanted fluency. Yet it was fine, they tell us, to see his mind working and struggling out into expression,—to see his strong-winged thoughts beating and bloodying their pinions against the bars of a limited and ragged verbiage!

So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,
Thus beating up against the wind.

He was careless in the extreme of his personal appearance, of his reputation, and of his money. His prejudices were strong, and bitter the breath of his angry speech; yet he could say, as well as do, generous things. Once, on hearing read a splendid passage in praise of Napoleon, from *Blackwood*, he burst out,—“That’s fine, that’s noble. I’ll forgive the fellows all they’ve said of me.” His face was pale, and earnest, almost to haggardness, yet finely formed; his eye eager, like that of one seeking to see, rather than seeing, into the strange mystery of being around him; his

brow elevated, and worthy of Coleridge's encomium, pronounced in reference to his first interview,—“For these two hours, though he spoke not, I was conversing with his forehead;” his hair dark and abundant. Strange stories are told about his latter days and his death-bed. But we turn from this short summary of his perturbed personal existence, to glance at some of his principal works.

His first production, published anonymously, and entitled “An Essay on the Principles of Human Action,” sprung, as we have said, from his early and solitary studies. And this probably led its author to speak of it at all times, with parental pride, as his best. Certainly it is a shrewd and ingenious essay; but, without entering into its pretensions, as a defence of the natural benevolence of the human mind, its style, dry, stiff, and rigid, resembling rather the hard and sapless writing of Mills or Austen, than the soft flow of Dugald Stewart, or the rainbow radiance overhanging the dark metaphysic gulf of Brown, prevented altogether its popularity, but did not blind the sharp and candid eye of Sir James Mackintosh from perceiving its merit, even amid the enervating heat of Hindostan, and testifying it in a way most gratifying to its author's feelings. As it is, not a thousand persons have probably ever seen or heard of it. It rests on the same forgotten shelf with two still more original and powerful metaphysical treatises, Sir William Drummond's “Academical Questions,” and John Fearn's “Essay on Consciousness,” first written on slips of bark, in the intervals of severe sickness, as the author sailed down the Ganges.

His next considerable work was the “Characters of Shakspeare's Plays;” and no one ever had a better right to speak of Shakspeare than Hazlitt, for no one ever understood him better, or loved him more warmly. His intention was not to exhaust the profound subject; but simply to supply

short introductions to the separate plays, more worthy of Shakspeare than the wretched prefixes of Dr. Johnson. Viewed in this light, they are admirable. They not only embalm, in more choice and eloquent diction, those merits which civilized man allows, but they find out beauties which the watchful admiration of ages had not detected. And honour to him who discovers a new beauty lurking in the crevice of a great mind or work, more than to the discoverer of a new fossil or mineral. Thus had commentators and critics been talking about and about Lear, but, till Charles Lamb, no one noticed that sublime identification of the old man's age with the heavens, in the exclamation—

If ye do love old men, of your sweet sway,
Hallow obedience, *if yourselves are old* :
Make it your cause.

So, if Hazlitt has not stumbled upon any gem quite so precious, on what Voltaire is pleased to call the "enormous dunghill," he has, with throbbing finger, pointed out not a few modest and inestimable pearls. The willows had wept over Ophelia's watery grave for ages, but no one had observed that they were "gray" below, save the "inevitable eye" of Shakspeare, and of his congenial critic. And how thoroughly does he sympathize with his hero's boundless catholicity of mind—his power of "shooting his soul" from body to body, and spirit to spirit—of now ejaculating an Ariel, that arrow of the elements—now digging out a Caliban from the raw earth, and now forging a Faulconbridge or a Hotspur—whereby he was, "not one, but all mankind's epitome!" and had he let out from under the arch of his forehead, an Eschylus and a Moliere, a Sophocles and a Sheridan, a Byron and a Burns, would have missed them not. Shakspeare did not appear to Hazlitt, as to Coleridge, "a giant stripling,

who had never come to his full height, else he had not been a man but a monster." He seemed a full-grown and thoroughly expanded man, containing in him, moreover, the essence of all men; mirroring on that calm forehead and in that deep eye of his, the "great globe itself, and all which it inherit." Perhaps he is too eulogistic; and yet can the author of "Lear," "Timon," and "Macbeth," be overpraised? Enthusiasm here is sobriety, exaggeration truth. Without going the entire length of the Germans, who hold that King Shakspeare can do no wrong, as a counterpart to their creed in the infallibility of Goethe, we confess that, through hundreds of perusals, we have sought in vain to discover what are called his absurdities and his nonsense. What appears such, is either faithfully copied from the authors whom he frequently transcribes, or is necessary to the development of particular characters. We prefer the critic who, approaching Shakspeare, should feel like a man gazing on Ben Nevis or Mont Blanc, capable only of silent wonder, or bursting praise, having no wish or leisure to mark petty deformities in masses so sublime. Hazlitt, elsewhere so astute and distinctive, is here peculiarly characterized by this spirit. He does not criticise, but wonder; he does not examine, but adore.

The "Round Table," is a volume of Essays, not unworthy of the best days of that fine species of composition. In it he descants delightfully, as if from an arm-chair, upon a multitude of topics; such as the "Love of the Country," "John Bunce," "Gusto," "Izaak Walton," &c.; but by no means exhibits either the full force or depth of his intellect. You see him in his night-gown and slippers, in the undress of his mind; and you are pleased to find that a man who can now inveigh as fiercely and eloquently as if he had come from the tomb of Timon, and now reason as acutely as

if he had inherited the mantle of Hobbes, should sink down so smoothly into the chair of Addison and Steele, prattle so pleasantly; "babble of green fields;" and merge the stern and stalwart patriot so easily in the good fellow.

"Table Talk," was a continuation of the "Round Table," and, while hardly less easy and gossiping, is a much more intense and vigorous production. Here, he strikes upon deeper chords, abounds more in pensive reminiscences, rises to finer bursts of eloquence, and reveals more of the strange machinery of his own mind. It is a book full of thought, of character, and of himself. Its faults are personality and egotism. Among its various essays, we prefer those on the "Pleasures of Painting,"—a fine theme, and finely handled; on "Going a Journey;" on "Will-Making;" and on that striking peculiarity of his mind, which led him to prefer the past to the future. Of all his works, this is the one we would prefer putting into the hands of those who are prejudiced against him. It shows him in the light of a genuine practical philosopher. It is a shield which, to borrow the allusion of Dr. Johnson about the shield of Achilles in Homer, he may hold up against all his enemies.

In a similar spirit and style, he has written the "Plain Speaker," "Characteristics," (a little book, containing a digest of his entire philosophy, in the form of aphorisms,) "Travels Abroad," "Conversations with Northcote," &c., &c. But by these he is less generally known, than by his Lectures delivered at the Surrey Institution. As a lecturer, he proved more popular than was expected by those who knew his uncompromising scorn of all those tricks and petty artifices, which are frequently employed to pump up applause. His manner was somewhat abrupt and monotonous, but earnest and energetic. Lecturing has since become fashionable among men of genius; though we doubt greatly if it

tend either to their permanent credit or to the good of the public. It either seduces them into clap-trap, or presents them, unstudied in the art of oratory, in unfavourable and deteriorating lights; and, generally speaking, instead of instructing, it misleads and mystifies the public. The man stands up before his audience, half a prophet and half a play-actor; in a position intensely and almost ludicrously false. How utter burdens, to such a promiscuous audience as assembles to while away an evening hour in a lecture room! Conceive of an ancient prophet, delivered of one of his oracles through the established formula of "Ladies and gentlemen!" No; the lecture and the lecture-room are better fitted for the glib, clever, showy declaimer, who happens to have white hands and cultivated whiskers, than for the simple and fiercely-inspired sons of genius.

The "Surrey Lectures," when printed, were much abused and much read. They abound in fine and startling things, in eloquent dogmatism, in the impertinence of conscious power, in rude electric shocks to popular prejudices, in passages of sounding declamation. "The savage," he says, "is a poet, when he paints his idol with blood; the countryman, when he stops to look at the rainbow." Perhaps the best of his three series is that on the "Elizabethan Period." It is not easy to see the stars at noonday; but Lamb and Hazlitt possess a telescope which enables them to descry through the burning blaze of Shakspeare, his eclipsed but brilliant contemporaries,—Marston the witty; Marlowe, with his mighty line, "his lust of power," "his hunger and thirst after unrighteousness," his passionate pictures of maidens, "shadowing more beauty in their airy brows than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love," and one of whom "Apollo courted for her hair, and offered as a dower his burning throne;" Ben Jonson, the learned and saturnine,

with that slow, deep sneer sculptured upon his lip ; Webster, prince of the trembling line which divides the region of the terrible from that of the horrific ; Fletcher, the picturesque and romantic ; the severe and masculine Massinger. But neither Lamb nor Hazlitt have brought out sufficiently the “gentle Willy’s” superiority to these, not merely in intellectual qualities, but in the purity of his moral tone. Nothing about Shakspeare astonishes us so much as this. Some, indeed, there are who still prate of Shakspeare’s immorality, of his “being at home in Falstaff,” of the “gross obscenities” in which his genius indulges. We bid the talkers of this pitiful nonsense to compare Shakspeare not only with his dramatic coevals—with the brutalities of Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger ; not only with the dramatists of Charles the Second’s era, but with the preachers, theologians, and philosophers of his own day—to see how vastly clearer, purer, and healthier, is the stream of his morality ; how comparatively few in him the passages which can kindle a blush on the cheek of modesty ; and how deep and distinct is the large moral of his principal plays—of “Othello,” “Lear,” and “Macbeth,” nay, of “Timon,” “Measure for Measure,” and the “Winter’s Tale.” In the close of this series, Lord Bacon, with his wisdom, rich and mellow, as if it had been accumulating throughout antenatal ages ; Jeremy Taylor, the sweet, the quaint, the genial, prodigal of beauty and splendour as Nature herself, with that waving and wondrous style of his, “untwisting all the chords which tie the hidden soul of harmony,” and who, in his youth, by his “sublime and raised discourses, and his young and florid beauty, made men take him for an angel newly descended from the climes of glory, his long curls tawny with the noons of paradise ;” and Sir Thomas Browne, that Plato with a twist in his brains, oddest of humourists, most delicious of egotists, most

charitable of men ; translating the universe into one of its quaintest versions ; forcing, in the fantastic devices of the "Urn Burial," a grim smile from the jaws of the grave itself ; feeding his whim with every variety of learning and the rarest treasures of wisdom, till it grows gigantic and immeasurable ; going to bed to the tune of "The huntsmen are up in Arabia, and they have already passed their first sleep in Persia ;" and expressing his strange thoughts in a dress of language so grotesque, yet so gorgeous, that you cry out, with the fool in Shakspeare, "Motley's the only wear," and fall positively in love with the mother tongue of the "Chimeras ;"—to this illustrious triumvirate, Hazlitt has done justice, "heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Whenever he has occasion to speak of a cluster of genius, he rises above himself, and his words carol and curvet "like proud seas under him." And how eloquent and melting he becomes, when he couples the reading of a favourite work with some incident of his past history, when he illumines their pages with the pale moonbeam of memory, recording the inn where he first read "Paul and Virginia ;" the era made in his existence by Schiller's "Robbers," which "staggered him like a blow ;" the delight with which he saw, in Goethe's page, "the enthusiast (Werter) coming up from the valley," and the "long grass waving over his sepulchre ;" his first reading of Burke, of "Caleb Williams," and the "Man of Feeling." We like nothing better about Hazlitt than this reverting to the past. Sick of the noisy or nauseous now, he is for ever recurring to the glorious "has been." To him the past is more real, as well as dearer, than the future. The one is a cold blank, the other a warm and thickly-inscribed page. He broods incessantly upon the passages of his perished history, his early loves, hopes, fears, his raptures, and, even still dearer in the

consecrating ray of recollection, his miseries and chagrins, and cries out for the revolution of the great Platonic year to bring them round again. Indeed, his love to his past self—his *present* he heartily hates and despises—is a kind of insanity.

The “Spirit of the Age” was, in many respects, the best of Hazlitt’s productions. It was the “Harvest Home” of his mind. He collected into it the gathered essence of his *critical* thought. It contains his mature and deliberate opinion of many of his contemporaries, expressed in language “gorgeous as the sun at mid-summer.” In reading it, you feel as when passing through a gallery of pictures. Here you see Jeremy Bentham, with quiet, far eye, “meditating the coming age, and regarding the people around him no more than the flies of a summer day.” There, lapped in deeper meditation still, and his eye lost in a far larger vista, with misty uncertain look, and voice as the “echo of the roar of the congregated thought of ages,” sits, mid the spokes of a web wide as the universe, the wizard Coleridge. Yonder is Elia, “ever turning pensive to the past.” Wordsworth—Wordsworth of 1798—with fustian jacket, “a severe worn pressure of thought about the temples, and a fire in his eye, as if he saw something more in objects than other men,” stalks moodily along, or stops, startled into boyish delight by the sight of a round warm nest, in its inimitable completeness, its snug security; and with that calm look of mild confidence, which it sends up, as from an eye, to the encompassing heaven, as it hears the rustle of a brown passing leaf, “as though a god rushed by.” Southey passes with erect look, and “umbrella in his hand in the finest weather.” Irving launches his thunderbolts. Rogers polishes his pebbles. Moore minces his pretty sentimentalisms, or transfixes titled fools on his “diamond brooch.” Gifford “strikes at

the crutches of Mary Robinson." Eldon yawns out his slow syllables of decision. Chalmers "mouths an idea as a dog mouths a bone." Brougham utters his "high unmitigated voice, approaching to a scream." Jeffrey creams, and bubbles, and sparkles, like his own champaign. Campbell plies his file, and Sheridan Knowles his fishing-rod, on this true painter's pictured page. Many disquisitions, too, are interspersed on important topics, which met him in his way. For instance, in the course of a few pages, he exhausts the Malthusian controversy. The book, in fine, would not be Hazlitt's if it were not full of errors of judgment, exaggerations of statement, acerbities of temper, and *splendida vitia* of style.

Of *The Liberal*, Hazlitt was the home-editor. No one can have forgotten the history of this unfortunate periodical. It was meant for a bomb-shell, to be cast—and by such spirits! Byron, Shelley, Hazlitt, and Hunt—among the inflammable materials of England; but went off prematurely, and scorched and blistered only their own hands. Byron's proud stomach sickened of it. Poor Shelley was drowned. Hunt became dyspeptic and dull. And to Hazlitt, already a broad mark for the arrows of political and literary attack, was left the double and difficult task of bearing the brunt of its odium, and fulfilling the prestige of its fame. In fact, with the exception of the "Vision of Judgment," and the fragments by Shelley from Faust, his essays are the only readable things in it; and whether we admire their sentiment or not, we are forced to admit their bold earnestness, and feel their burning vigour.

As a critic on painting, his pretensions are high. Paintings were to him real existences, each figure in his favourite pieces he loved as well as though he had known it from infancy. With no single passage equal to one or two we could

produce from Fuseli,—destitute of that uniform manliness of taste and style which distinguished Allan Cunningham,—without Lamb's subtlety, or Coleridge's grand general view of the design and *morale* of paintings,—he has more enthusiasm, sympathies more unaffected and profound with the masters and master-pieces of the art, more discrimination and a finer tact in discerning latent beauties. Few have said such eloquent extravagances about the old masters, and yet none has more accurately analyzed and painted their solid merits. The heavy dark of Rembrandt weighing down his pictures under the pressure of *chiaro scuro*, Claude's vivid skies, Titian's lovely landscapes, are dearer to him than even the cartoons of Raffaele, or the frescos of Angelo. The silent splendours of that beautiful art lift him ever above himself, and touch his lips with living fire! He is the prose-poet of painting. His "Life of Napoleon" was the last and the largest of his books. It had loomed before his view for years, and he meant it for a proud and monumental work. He loved Napoleon as he loved all the other members of his intellectual seraglio, with idolatrous admiration. He saw him, enlarged in the haze of the hatred with which he regarded the despotisms which he overthrew—the Messiah of Democracy, the pale, yet bold pilot of that fire-ship which the French Revolution had launched amid its ocean of blood, to track through the nations its terrible path of dismay, ruin, and death! But the book, written in the decay of his mind, full of hasty and huddled narrative, breathing more the spirit of the partisan than that of the calm and dignified historian, is confessedly a failure, though redeemed by passages of paradoxical acuteness and passionate declamation, which yet display rather the convulsion of strong disease, than the sovereign energy of health; more the last throes and staggers of a ruined mind, than the sublime composure of a

spirit about to be "made perfect." One description in it, of the Reign of Terror,—a subject suited to the dark and permanent exasperation of his mind—is more like a bit of Tacitus than any thing we remember in modern history. There is in it the same gloomy concentration and massive grandeur. He paints the scene as with the torch of the Furies: one or two fierce waftures, and the thing is done. And although the work be imperfect and morbid, yet we believe that the memory of it ministered some consolation to poor Hazlitt on his premature and unhappy death-bed. On whatever misconduct and mishaps he might look back, with whatever "dimness of anguish" he may have contemplated the gloomy vast of the Future, he had, in language however rude and ragged, expressed his full idea of the idol of his soul, and so far was content.

Poor fellow, he had many things to wound him:

Let's own, since it can do no good on earth;

— It was a trying moment, that which found him

Standing alone, beside his desolate hearth,

While all his household gods lay shivered round him.

Well says Bulwer somewhere, that of all the mental wrecks which have occurred in our era, this was the most melancholy. Others may have been as unhappy in their domestic circumstances, and gone down steeper places of dissipation than he; but they had meanwhile the breath of popularity, if not of wealth and station, to give them a certain solace. It was so with Burns and Byron. But Hazlitt had absolutely nothing to support and cheer him. With no hope, no fortune, no status in society, no certain popularity as a writer, no domestic peace, little sympathy from kindred spirits, little support from his political party, no moral management, no definite belief; with great powers, and great pas-

sions within, and with a host of powerful enemies without, it was his to enact one of the saddest tragedies on which the sun ever shone.

Such is the faithful portraiture of an extraordinary man, whose restless intellect and stormy passions have now, for fifteen years, found that repose in the grave which was denied them above it. Let his enemies and friends divide between them twain this lesson, expressed in the language of another hapless son of genius, "that prudent, cautious self-control, is wisdom's root." But both will readily concede now, that a subtle thinker, an eloquent writer, a lover of beauty, and poetry, and man, and truth, one of the best of critics, and not the worst of men, expired in William Hazlitt.

ROBERT HALL.

ROBERT HALL was the *facile princeps* of English descent. And though his merits have been enshrined and emblazoned in the criticism of Foster, Dugald Stewart, Southey, and John Scott, as well as of Mackintosh and Parr, we may yet, gleaning after them in a field so rich, find a few stray ears. Following in their wake, we may, perchance, pick up a few floating fragments from the wreck of such an argosie. As a preacher, he enjoys the traditional fame of having outstripped all his contemporaries. Some sturdy sons of the Scottish Establishment continued, indeed, long to stand up for the superiority of Chalmers; but their voice, if not drowned, was overwhelmed by the general verdict of public opinion. We believe, however, that, in the mere force of immediate impression, the Scottish preacher had the

advantage. The rapidity of Hall's delivery, the ease with which finished sentences succeeded each other like a shower of pearls; the elevation of the sentiment, the purity of the composition, the earnestness of the manner, the piercing coruscations of the eye,—all these taken together, produced the effect of thrilling every bosom, and enchaining every countenance. But there lacked the struggle and the agony, the prophetic fury, the *insana vis*, the wild and mystic glance, "seeing the invisible," and (when the highest point of his oratory was reached) the "torrent rapture" of our countryman, "taking the reason prisoner," and hurrying the whole being as before a whirlwind. In listening to Hall, you felt as under the influence of the "cup which cheers but not inebriates." Hearing Chalmers was like tasting of the "insane root." Hall's oratory might be compared to a low but thrilling air; Chalmers' to a loud and barbaric melody. Hall's excitement was fitful, varying with the state of his health and feelings; that of Chalmers was constant and screwed up to a prodigious pitch, as if by the force of frenzy. Hall's inspiration was elegant and Grecian: you said of Chalmers, "he hath a demon, if he be not full of the God."

We speak merely of instant impression. In every other point, Chalmers yields to Hall. When you rob the writings of the former of the wild witchery of their delivery; when you take them into the closet; when you read them with an eye undazzled by the blaze of his spoken and acted declamation, they lose much of their interest. You may, indeed, as some do, reproduce, by an effort, the tone and rapid rhythm with which they were uttered, and imagine that you hear him all the while you read. But still, who has not felt a sad sinking down in the perusal of the writer's page, from the rapture with which he had listened to the spoken style? It had the effect of disenchantment. Sometimes,

what seemed force, became frenzy ; reasoning, sophistry ; imagination, verbiage ; sublimity, bombast. Beauties pointed by the tone and manner, lost their meaning ; and faults, hid in the gorgeous effulgence, loomed out in all their magnitude. A vast deal, indeed, that was excellent and eloquent remained, but, on the whole, your regret was that he had ever published, or, at least, that you had ever read. Far otherwise with Hall. His sentiments and style were of a kind which needed little save mere enunciation, to produce their appropriate impression. He read as well as he spoke. The classical charm which enchanted his hearers was transferred entire to the printed page.

We are not blind to the surpassing eloquence and power of Dr. Chalmers' "Astronomical Discourses,"—the only work quite worthy of its author's reputation. Like what we might conceive of a cataract in the Sun, his soul rushes on rejoicing through the magnificent theme ; and we feel, as we read, that the stars are the poetry and the religion of Heaven. The excitement of the subject becomes a substitute for the intoxication of his manner : and we breathe the wish that Fontenelle, D'Alembert, and La Place, had read their skepticism away over the heaving and glowing page. Nevertheless, a cool criticism will hesitate, ere it place a book which is neither close in argument, nor profound in insight, nor finished in artistic execution, nor pure in style, beside writings which form the finest models of the English tongue, (considered simply as the vehicle of mind,) and which are as refined in thinking as they are exquisite in diction. The one, if it survive, will survive as the catacomb of a strange variety of mind, worthy of preservation chiefly as a brilliant oddity. The others will live and shine, as vials containing the last refinement and quintessence of their land's language.

Hall's preaching is distinct from every other school of Christian eloquence. It is not at all akin to that of the early giants of the English pulpit. He has none of Jeremy Taylor's quaint and strange beauties, of his flow and variety of style, or of his richness of imagination, "as beautiful and bounding as a steed;" nor of Barrow's compass and masterly and conscious ease of diction; nor of Hooker's profound learning, and that rugged rhythm which interpenetrates his huge folios with music; and he is far inferior to John Howe in serene Platonic majesty, in the combination of a golden vein of poetry with profound and practical strength, and in those great, swelling, and highly wrought passages which are the main merit of the majority of his works. With the writers of a period partly synchronizing with, and partly succeeding this,—with the Owens, the Baxters, the Flavels, the Bateses, the Mantons, and the Charnocks, he has, except in sentiment, little in common. Still less does he resemble the principal preachers of Charles the Second's era in the English Church; and stands widely discriminated from the icy elegancies of Tillotson, the profound but cold-blooded speculations of Butler, the frost-work reasoning of Atterbury and Sherlock, the acid acumen of South, and the half-fledged Socinianism of Clarke. And though we may detect traces of the imitations of French models, now and then; and though here and there he equals Bossuet, Massillon, and Saurin, in their own giddy and perilous walk,—that of appeal, apostrophe, and the varied prosopopeia of the pulpit, he is entirely free from their faults, their laborious and convulsive flights of fancy, their bursts and starts of counterfeited passion, their disdain of simplicity, their wilful and incessant exaggerations, their queries and adjurations, repeated till the hearers and the heavens are weary. Not less distinct is he from the polemical,—we had almost said,

the pugilistic school of preaching, of which Warburton and Horsley are types ; and if destitute of their learning and controversial vigour, he has none of their paradoxical bias, nor of their insufferable arrogance. He has been accused in certain quarters of wanting the unction of Newton, Romaine, Thomas Scott, &c., but he possesses all their evangelical sentiment ; and let him not be hastily condemned, if he has paid a little more attention than they did to the structure of his sentences, and to the beauty of his style. In more modern times, besides Chalmers, we have heard only four preachers mentioned in the same breath with him, namely, Alison, Irving, Wardlaw, and Andrew Thomson ; but he is so distinct from all, as hardly to admit of comparison. He is less finical and more forcible than the first mentioned, not to speak of the far greater weight and abundance of his matter ; without the physique, and the stormy energy of the second, he has all that he lacked,—the curb of common sense, good taste, and a balance of faculties ; not equal to Wardlaw in the acuteness and amenity of controversy, he is an orator as well as a debater, a man of genius as well as of talent ; and though destitute of the sturdy force of the lamented Anti-apocryphist, he possesses a refinement and an elevation, a subtlety and a splendour—which lift him up into quite another region. Hall's characteristics as a writer are not difficult to hit. His thinking is not that of one who is able to cast much new light upon abstruse topics ; but of one who is admirably adapted to take metaphysical soundings upon all subjects ; his is a mind which the study of pneumatology has strengthened, but not mystified,—subjugated, but not enslaved ; and its insight, while always distinct, and often deep, is never daring. His was not a merely imitative, but neither was it a highly independent intellect. In this case his style, we think, had been less

exquisitely clear and terse. Original minds are rarely so pure and perspicuous. Tarns are dark. The ocean is sunless in its depths. "The Infinite has difficulty in explaining itself to the finite." A certain shade of obscurity does adhere to the very highest order of minds—to Platos, to Dantes, to Coleridges and Goethes. We do not, then, rate Hall so highly as a thinker, as we do in his character of writer, orator, and talker. His thought was vigorous, manly, refined, but not strikingly original, and seldom comprehensive. In his celebrated "Sermon on Infidelity," there is, amid a profusion of eloquence, not a new idea. Windham traced a greater part of its thinking to Burke; he could trace it no farther! The "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," again, is a tissue of splendid imitation. Burke, Johnson, and Junius, contribute each his share to the one imposing result. In his youth, he was a slavish copyist of the lexicographer's pointed and pompous talk, as well as of his inordinate thirst for tea. The former folly he outgrew; but from the influence of the principle of imitation he never altogether escaped. He rarely writes without some model in his eye; but his style is matchless. Less easy than Addison's, it is at once more nervous and more polished. Less rolling and rhythmical than Johnson's, it is chaster, terser, and freer from mannerism. Not so varied, copious, unexpected, and conversational as Burke's, it is more careful, less capricious and unequal, nearly as eloquent, and entirely free from his frequent coarseness and Irish rant. Less elaborate than Junius, it is less laconic, less formal, less coolly fiendish than the style of that "Spartan dog." It is beautiful, without ever descending to the pretty; elegant, without approaching the neat; simple, but never weak; sublime, but never inflated; strong, without being harsh; terse, but never curt; clear and brilliant as crystal, it approaches the

line which “trembles” on perfection. “It has,” says Dugald Stewart, “all the beauties of Addison, Johnson, and Burke, without their imperfections.” Frequently imitated, it is the most unapproachable of styles. While it presents not a single point to the caricaturist, it drives the imitator to despair. If it has any faults, they lie in a lack of ease,—in a tone of majesty too uniformly sustained,—in a slight and occasional mannerism in the construction of his sentences,—in an apparent ignorance of the charm which airy negligence, if it avoid affectation, can give to diction, as well as to the motion of a birch waving in the wind, and to the wandering tresses of female beauty,—and in the consequent want of some of those careless graces which delight us in Hume and Goldsmith. His imagination, again, is cast in a medium between the gorgeous and the tame. It is more that of the orator than the poet. Even its darings are rather those of the excited speaker, than of the wild-eyed bard. It is not a teeming and exhaustless faculty, like that of Jeremy Taylor, Burke, Curran, and Wilson. Nor is it a profound, though limited power, like that of Wordsworth, Chalmers, and Foster. Nor is it a turbid, earthy, but fertile source, like that of Warburton and Andrew Thomson. It is a high, pure, and cultivated energy, equal to the demands of his intellect, and nothing more; illustrative rather than combinative; epical, rather than dramatic; refined, rather than rich; select, not copious. It is an imagination resembling that of Thomas Campbell, or Lord Jeffrey, more than any other eminent man of the day. His taste, too, is exquisitely exclusive. It can bear nothing *outré*, nothing extravagant; it is impatient of all eccentricities, save his own. We could have anticipated it beforehand to revel in Milton, Bossuet, and Howe; to bear with Shakspeare,—to shrink from Coleridge,—to loathe Byron,—to abuse Pollok,—and to hold in

hate and suspicion all the miracles of modern poetry. We know how it estimated Edward Irving, and the author of "The Natural History of Enthusiasm." We can conceive what opinion it would (at the first blush) form of Thomas Carlyle, with his monstrous compound epithets, and his contempt and defiance of all the ordinary canons of criticism. We fancy we hear him saying—the big-browed, keen-eyed man—of "The French Revolution, a history," "Sir, it is a very clever book, in its own way; but if he's right, the rest are all wrong, sir. If Tacitus, Hume, Robertson, and M'Crie, be historians, sir, he is none." We must not omit, while enumerating his intellectual qualities, to notice his wit, which, we think, discovers the fertility and power of his mind, more than his serious writing. We find striking specimens of it in the conversational fragments which have been preserved; and also in his political writings and reviews. It is as sparkling and pointed as Johnson's, and far more broad and daring. He carried it with him to the madhouse. It is told, that when visited in his confinement by some person he did not like, and who asked him in a whining tone of affected condolence, "What brought you here, Mr. Hall?" Touching his brow, Hall answered, "What'll never bring you, sir,—too much brain." Sometimes his love of point hurried him to the brink of the profane. Talking of Dr. Ryland, he said, once, "Why, sir, Dr. Ryland's all piety; all piety together, sir. If there were not room in heaven, God would turn out an archangel for him." No one save Hall could or would have said this: "Is it true, Mr. Hall, that you are to marry Miss So-and-so?" "I marry Miss So-and-so! I would as soon marry Beelzebub's eldest daughter, and go home and live with the old folks." Frequently his repartee is as happy as it is bold. That, in calling Dr. Owen a "continent of mud," he has only stated

the truth, will be owned by most who have tried to flounder through his intolerable tediousness. And what can be better than his reply to Horsley, who, for his political opponents, had offered up a prayer in the spirit of indictment, "Miserable men, they are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." "Plenty of the first article," he says, "they must have, after he has distilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only because they are not within the reach of his mighty malice." Many other specimens, published and unpublished, might be given, but let these suffice.

Of his separate productions we can speak but shortly. They are at best only faint, though characteristic, revelations of his mind; footprints, not images. His reluctance to write became ultimately unconquerable. His finest effusions he could hardly be prevailed on to publish. When printed, he spoke of them with uniform indifference or contempt; nay, in more morbid moods, he has been known to proceed to the extremities of hiding, tearing, or committing them to the flames. This is often, though not always characteristic of high genius. Milton did not act nor feel thus, nor does Wordsworth. Indeed, we are inclined to trace such conduct to disease, or to fastidiousness; and to wonder at, rather than admire it. If productions are written with earnestness, men have a motive to love them, altogether apart from literary vanity. Of his "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," and his "Sermon on Infidelity," we have said somewhat already. The first has more juvenile warmth, the other more repose and finish. Both are radiant with eloquence; both are sketchy and imitative; neither is complete or satisfactory; and in point of political sentiment, the one is little else than a clever reply to the other. The finest image in the former, "The empire of darkness and despotism has been smitten

with a stroke which resounded through the universe," is borrowed from Grattan. The finest phrase in the latter, "A forsaken and a fatherless world," occurs in Warburton's letters. His "Sermon on the Present Crisis," (the French Invasion,) took, at the time, the head of a long catalogue of discourses on the subject, including one of Alison's most elaborate productions; and it still appears to us his best,—the most original in thought, and manly in diction. Never was the doctrine of expediency, "holding her balance with a hand which never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors," denounced with more lofty and indignant censurè. And when he comes to exhort his countrymen to battle, the "thing becomes a trumpet." The mantle of Tyrtæus descends upon him, and his eloquence swells, and widens, and rushes on in a torrent of fire. His "Discourse on War," is beautiful, but faint—done in water-colours, when he should have dipped his pencil in blood. Passing over others of inferior merit, we cannot omit noticing two of a softer and gentler character,—those on the death of the Princess Charlotte and of Dr. Ryland. They reach the ideal of funeral sermons. They are not so elaborate, or theatrical, or pompous, or fulsome, as the eulogies and *oraisons funebres* of the French; but in tenderness of pathos, beauty of language, and exquisite moral application, they stand alone. And how much does it say for our author, that while almost all the powerful spirits in Britain poured lamentations over the "mother of a moment," (Byron in his gorgeous verse, Chalmers in the meridian of his reputation, and John Wilson in the dawn of his promise,) Hall's tribute was, by acclamation, judged the best, and is perhaps the only one quite worthy of the dread catastrophe. His "Posthumous Sermons" are not, as a whole, worthy of his fame. They are skeletons; some of them Titanic, it is true, as witness the two on

“the Divine Concealment,” but lacking such flesh, and blood, and clothing as he only could have conferred. Had this most fastidious of men foreseen the vast volumes of remains which were to be culled from the sweepings of his study and his soul, surely he would have left some special protest against such egregious book-making, such profane trafficking in the memory of the dead. As it is, it might almost rouse the bones in his sepulchre, and “warm with red resentment the wan cheek.”

As a controversialist, his fame rests on two pamphlets, discussing, with much acuteness, the *questio vexata* of free communion. Their manner is mild, yet firm,—their reasoning candid, whether it be convincing or not,—their style, if it rarely rise to eloquence, is as elegant as usual, and abounds with his wonted *curiosa felicitas*. As a critic, he has written so well as to cause deep regret that he has not written more. Had he cultivated this field, Jeffrey might have been forced to look to his laurels. His discrimination, though not so profound as to qualify him for the intricacies of metaphysical controversy, is quite acute enough to render him an admirable judge, both of intellect and character; and, except where violent prejudices paralyze his opinions, they are generally as generous as they are just. Less lively than Jeffrey’s,—less pointed and nervous than Macaulay’s,—his reviews are, to us, *morceaux* quite as delicious. They are not dry catalogues of qualities, but paintings, warm and flushed with life. By a few strong, yet delicate touches, he forms a likeness, and his style supplies a frame of gold. His satire, too, comes out prominently in these productions, and is all his own. It has been compared to that of Junius; but it is tenderer, less terse in its expression, and less Satanic in its spirit. It is not so truculent as Burke’s, nor ever, like his, degenerates into invective. Less broad and bishop-like than Horseley’s it

has a far finer and keener edge. It is not so heavy as Foster's, who frequently suffocates his own wit under the ponderosity of his words. Than Smith's, it is graver and less boisterous; than Jeffrey's, less attenuated and refined. The author of "Zeal without Innovation" did not soon forget him, nor did Belsham. And who remembers not his picture of Cobbett, so graphic and so true;—"a firebrand, not a luminary,—the Polyphemus of the mob,—the one-eyed leader of the blind?"

With the incidents of Hall's life, and the main features of his character, every one is acquainted. We all know, from the prints, his personal appearance, full of rugged honesty, with deep lines of thought, and an aspect as of perpetual worship, with high sloping forehead, and large dark brilliant eye. Simplicity and sincerity were the leading traits of his character; which, besides, shone with the beauties of holiness. His faults were impetuosity of temper, and a habit of going daring lengths and using dangerous liberties in his talk. A distinguished Scottish divine, who visited him, expressed, to us, disappointment with his preaching, which was chiefly remarkable, he said, for the flow and facility with which fine and finished sentences issued from his lips; but added, that his conversational powers were unrivalled; and that, altogether, he was by far the most extraordinary specimen of human nature he had ever witnessed. He gave him the impression of a being detained among us by very slight and trembling tendrils. The well known story of Burke, that you could not go under a shed to shun a shower with him, without saying, "that is an extraordinary man," seems to have been applicable in part to Hall. Some of the incidents in his life were very singular. Who has forgot the history of his courtship, (not recorded in his biography); his going down to the kitchen of a brother minister, where his inamo-

rata lived in the shape of a most respectable and pious domestic ; his lighting the inseparable pipe ; his question, " Betty, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ ?" her answer, " I hope, sir, I do ;" and his succeeding and conclusive query, " Betty, do you love me ?" These were eccentricities. But there is one darker and more delicate passage in his history, to which we may passingly refer. The partition which, in his case, Nature had made thin between genius and derangement, at length burst asunder. The majestic orb of his intellect librated, wavered, wandered, went utterly out of its course, and " yet the light that led astray, was light from heaven." Hall's was no vulgar frenzy, no grinning, howling, and cursing mania ; it was cometary in its character, meteorous, sublime. It brought out his faculties into broader and more vigorous play. The burning hand of madness laid on his brain, did not sear up, but kindled his powers into lurid life. In the language of Lamb, applied to " Lear," " the storm of frenzy turned up, and laid bare that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches." He thought incessantly ; all that he had read or knew, came back streaming, rushing, like a tempest through his soul. The sun of his judgment, in health so vigorous and clear, was in eclipse ; but, in its stead, " glared the crested hydra" of imagination round the sultry solitudes of his soul. He jested bitterly, as we have seen ; declaimed powerfully. He preached magnificent sermons,—would they had been caught from his foaming lips ! He prayed fervent, unearthly prayers ; and we can conceive no sight more affecting or more awfully grand, than that of this lofty spirit conversing with God through the cloud of madness ; amid the eclipse of reason, still groping toward heaven ; praying, shall we say, as an angel would pray, were his glorious faculties unhinged, by gazing too nearly and too ardently at the Shechinah ! And if even a poor creature, like Christopher

Smart, "who indeed," says Johnson, "went to the tavern, but was always carried home again," could, in an asylum, and with a key on the wall, write poetry almost as grand as Job or David: if Nat. Lee soared into sublimity, as he wrote his insane tragedies by the light of the moon; if every clown be a Shakspeare in his dreams; if the speeches of ordinary men, in the brief and bright frenzy preceding the darkness of death, have far exceeded their capabilities in the day of health; if dramatists, and poets, and novelists, have dug some of their richest gems out of the mine of madness, and made their Lears and Ophelias, and Clementinas, and Eustace Grays, talk an eloquence which has hardly a parallel in the written language of men; how vivid must have been the impressions, and how eloquent the ravings, in such circumstances, of such a being as Hall! It is a subject for the noblest painting or poetry; it is a subject for solemn reflection, for humble searchings of heart, for pity, and for tears. In the supposed necessary nearness of "great wit" to madness, we do not believe; but much less can we subscribe to Elia's paper on the sanity of true genius. The truth lies between. Frequently, we are afraid, frenzy lurks in the neighbourhood of a lofty mind, like a lion near a fount, waiting the moment for its fell spring. But that the workings of noble faculties always near the abhorred brink of insanity; that the towering sons of men are most apt to be crowned and "maned" with the fire of madness,—we shrink from supposing. Still less do we think that, in Hall's case, it was designed as a thorn in the flesh to humble his pride. This is a mere assumption, intolerable in worms. Who told them to cry out "a judgment, a thorn?" Let us check our unbridled speculations, stifle our senseless curiosity, be humble, and look at home. Hall himself continued to look back upon this period with a certain melancholy and regretful interest. His mind

then, he averred, had exhausted itself. Obligated to keep up with his fire-winged frenzy, how could it but be crippled? His memory had been overstrained. His imagination, especially, had suffered. He had come out from the cloud, not with face shining, but with locks shorn. Much of his strength had departed, if he had not become weak as other men.—Others said that, on the contrary, he was bettered by the affliction, and that his preaching improved in beauty and unction, if the power and splendour of his ancient manner were for ever gone.

Alas, that, after all, his warmest admirers must admit that he has left behind him so little which can convey to posterity an adequate idea of his powers! Indolence; a sort of frantic fastidiousness; the pain produced by a calculus inserted on his spine, and which no power of opium or ether could deaden; not to speak of his love of talk, the undisputed pre-eminence he enjoyed among his brethren, and the soft flatteries which were constantly steaming up around him from the tongues of females, males, and mannikins, composing the small coterie over which he was content to preside, (he who could have shone a dictator in the loftiest literary circles,) besides the drain which two fits of frenzy made upon his mind, all combined not only to prevent him writing oftener, but to deaden and enfeeble him when he did. Hence, the most eloquent preacher and finished author of his age, must be judged hereafter from fragments and fugitive pieces, and the testimony of personal friends, and the breath of floating reputation, instead of having enshrined his soul, as he could and should have done, in some great theological, or ethical, or literary work. Still he may, without hesitation, be pronounced one of the most remarkable men of the age. The place which he occupies in public estimation, is not likely to narrow materially, but

will probably enlarge. His works may be proclaimed imperishable as the language in which they are written, and to the beauty and perfection of which they have so much contributed; and praise enough we count it "to fill the ambition of a private man," that *his* language is *our* mother tongue.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

THE most extraordinary beings, as imaginative objects, who ever appeared upon this planet, were the prophet bards of Israel. Mark one of those wondrous beings, in his most perfect character! He was a solitary and savage man, residing with lions when he was not way-laying kings, on whose brow the scorching sun of Syria had characterized its fierce and terrible hue; and whose wild eye swam with a fine insanity, gathered from solitary communings with the original forms of nature;—the sand, the sea, the mountains, and the sky; as well as with the light of a Divine afflatus. He had lain in the cockatrice's den; he had put his hand on the hole of the asp; he had spent the night on lion-surrounded trees, and slept and dreamed amid their hungry roar; he had swam in the Dead Sea, or haunted, like a ghost, those dreary caves which lowered around it; he had drank of the melted snow on the top of Lebanon; at Sinai he had traced and trode on the burning foot-prints of Jehovah; he had heard messages at midnight, which made his hair to arise and his skin to creep; he had been wet with dews of the night, and girt by the demons of the wilderness; he had been tossed up and down like a leaf upon the strong and awful storm of his inspiration. He was essentially a

lonely man, cut off, by gulf upon gulf, from all tender ties and human associations. He had no home,—a wife he might be permitted to marry, but the permission, as to Hosea, might only be a curse; and, when her death became necessary, as a sign, as in the case of Ezekiel, she died and left him in the same austere seclusion in which he had existed before. The power which came upon him, cut, by its fierce coming, all the threads which bound him to his kind,—tore him from the plough or from the pastoral solitude, and hurried him to the desert, and thence to the foot of the throne, or to the wheel of the triumphal chariot. And how startling his coming to crowned or conquering guilt! Wild from the wilderness, bearded like its lion lord, the fury of God glaring in his eye, his mantle heaving to his heaving breast; his words stern, swelling, tinged on their terrible edges with poetry; his attitude, dignity; his gesture, power; how did he burst upon the astonished gaze, how abrupt and awful his entrance, how short and spirit-like his stay, how dreamily dreadful the impression made by his words, long after they had ceased to tingle on the ears, and how mysterious the solitude into which he seemed to melt away! Poet, nay, prophet, were a feeble name for such a being. He was a trumpet filled with the voice of God—a chariot of fire carrying blazing tidings—a meteor kindled at the eye, and blown on the breath of the Eternal!

And how strange it is, that Percy Bysshe Shelley, of all the modern poets, with the exception of Coleridge in his youth, reminds us most of Israel's prophets. His was a burdened soul: he was the mere organ of the message he bore; and, like one of Ezekiel's wheels, his being moved in the might of an invisible spirit. And it is as much for the sake of his wild sincerity, as for his genius, that, deeply as we disapprove of his theoretical sentiments, we have

decided to give him a conspicuous and full niche in our Gallery.

Shelley was far too harshly treated in his speculative boyhood ; and it has often struck us that, had pity and kind-hearted expostulation been tried, instead of reproach and abrupt expulsion, they might have weaned him, ere long, from the dry dugs of atheism, to the milky breast of the faith and "worship of sorrow ;" and the touching spectacle had been renewed, of the demoniac sitting "clothed, and in his right mind," at the feet of Jesus. As it is, we deplore the atheism of such a spirit, with humility and bitterness of heart ; and "wonder at it with a great admiration," that a being of such richly endowed intellect, and warm quick-beating heart—who was no profligate, no worldling, tinged with no selfish or sinister motives, but a sincere, shy, and lofty enthusiast—standing up in a creation so infinitely full of testimonies to the existence of a Great Spirit ; where there is not a flower that blossoms in the garden but preaches that there is a God, nor a leaf that twinkles in the sunbeam, nor a cloud that passes over the moon, nor an insect which flutters in the breath of the gale, or creates a tiny tempest on the waves of the pool, but repeats and re-echoes the testimony that there is a God ; where the lion roars it out amid his native wilds, and the humming-bird says it in every colour of her plumage, and every wafture of her wing ; where the eagle screams up the tidings to the sun, and the sun, in reply, writes them round the burning iris of the eagle's eye ; where the thunder, like a funeral bell hung aloft in the clouds, tolls out there is a Deity, and the earthquake mutters and stammers the same great truth below ; where snow in its silence and storm in its turmoil ; summer in its beauty and winter in its wrath ; the blossoms of spring and the golden glories of autumn, alike testify to a God ; where the ten thousand

orators of Nature, the thunderbolts, the hailstones, the rain-drops, the winds, the ocean waves, the flushing and the falling foliage of the woods, the lightnings of the sky, and the cataracts of the wilderness, are all crashing out, blazing out, thundering out, whispering out, and murmuring out, true and solemn tidings about the Being who made them all; who gave the torrents

Their strength, their fury, and their joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam;

who clothed the woods; who scooped out the bed of the sea; "who bringeth the wind out of his treasures, and maketh a path for the lightning of the thunder!" That such a being, placed in the centre of so sublime a circle of witnesses, should say, "I doubt, I deny, I cannot believe that there is a God;" nay, that he should have realized, in his imaginary experience, the tremendous dream of Jean Paul—have lifted himself up through the starry splendours of the universe, but found no God—have risen above their remotest suns, but found no God—have descended to the lowest limits of space—have looked down into the abyss, and heard the rain-drops descending, and the everlasting storm raging, but found no God; should have come back from an empty heaven to a fatherless world, and said, "We are all orphans: neither I nor you have any God,"—is, in truth, a profound, and awful, and inscrutable mystery.

Oh, star-eyed Shelley, didst thou wander there?
To waft us home the message of despair?

What ailed, we may well inquire, this great but misled spirit, against the God who had so bountifully enriched him? What ailed him against his holy child Jesus, with his perfect character and his bleeding love? Why did he not just re-

verse his own first principle, which would have brought him to the first principle—the life and essence of the Christian faith? He said, "Love is God." Why did he not change it into "God is love?" He deified a vague but beautiful principle of Benevolence. Why did he not turn and see it in a purer, loftier form, condensed in the countenance, illustrated in the character, and sealed by the blood of Jesus?

And when, as the climax of his madness, he dared, in the album at Mont Anvert, to subscribe himself Atheos, do you not almost wonder that Nature, in her grandest forms surrounding the misguided man, did not, appalled at the spectacle, no longer able to endure, indignant at the conduct of him who was writing down, in God's power, a denial of his existence, burst silence and speak out—that the avalanches, rolling down, did not say, in every crash, "There is a God!"—that the mountain torrents, dashing by, did not cry, "There is a God!"—that the mountain snow, silent as death, did not awake to proclaim, ere it relapsed into everlasting dumbness, "There is a God!"—that Mont Blanc did not begin a chorus of acclamation which all his brother giants would take up, tossing the tidings from their lofty summits, "There is a great and a glorious God!" But all was silence; and perhaps that indifference, that "silent magnanimity of Nature and her God," did more powerfully than any words rebuke the blasphemy. Shelley, in that wild moment, would have almost triumphed had his single word disturbed the harmony of creation, or brought down the thunderbolts of heaven. But that silence of the sun above, and the glaciers and mountains below—that calm insulting silence—might have read a lesson to his proud heart, and taught him his own intense insignificance in the sight of Him, who no more regarded the denial to which he had summoned all the perverted heroism of his nature, and all the haughtiness of his

then Satanic spirit, than a charioteer the one upward indignant curl of a crushed worm !

Ultimately, indeed, he admitted more fully than at first, the existence of a great, pervading, though not creative mind, co-eternal with the universe. His tone, too, in reference to Christ, underwent a change. He continued to read the Scriptures with delight till the last ; and there are many grounds for believing that he was emerging from the awful shade of unbelief, when there came down upon him, so suddenly, the deeper darkness of death. We gladly turn from his creed to his poetical character. One grand objection to Shelley's poetry is its melancholious and whining tone. Even Thomas Carlyle seems to entertain this idea of it. We are surprised at this, and venture to deny it. Shelley was a doubter, a denier, a dogmatiser ; but he was no whiner, no blubbing Byronling brat, lying across the wheel-way, or reclining on the shore ; but a working man, or maniac, striving against real or imaginary ills ; now with the flush of hope, and now with the fury of despair. Shelley was a workman, though his undertaking was a desperate one. He shot a comparatively infant finger amid the tremendous thunder-crashing spokes of the grim wheel of necessity : it was crushed ; and if he did utter one wild wailing cry, as he drew it back, mangled, into his bosom, who shall blame him ? Did Carlyle, though he rank with his own heroes, ever do more than point, with firm finger, to the black cloudy revolutions of that awful wheel ? Shelley was a workman ; but such a workman, as, in Shinar of old, sought to reach heaven by piling brick on brick, and mortar on mortar ; working, too, alone, under a black sky, and with guardian lightning blinding his eyes. We see Carlyle the sage, standing behind the bewildered boy, half-shaken with laughter, yet half-wrapt in admiration of the

fearless insanity of the enterprise, and hear him saying, as he pats the fair head, prematurely gray, "Build on, since no better may be. Better build in Shinar than rot in Sodom: better build stones thus, than sepulchres with Nimrod. But, ah, poor child! were it not better still for thee to build with Noah an ark, or with Abraham an altar?" Another objection is, that mystic and shadowy obscurity which is said to adhere to his poetry. There are none readier than we to condemn wilful and deliberate mystification; it is the crying sin of our age's literature. From a leviathan Coleridge, with half of his huge shape in clear water, and the other imbedded in mud, down to the smallest "tritons of the minnows," splashing themselves into invisibility; from the great unshorn originals, to the merest "echo's echo," and shadow's shade, there is a perpetual straining to involve themselves in a larger or lesser degree of darkness. Like the bungling planner of a certain railway, who, when he might easily, by going round a little way, have carried it on all along in the light of Heaven, chose rather to lead it through the darkness of a costly and ridiculous tunnel; so, too many even of the gifted of the day plunge, of mere malice prepense, into the dim, mistaking it for the deep. But Shelley is seldom guilty of this deliberate "darkening of counsel." The masters in the art of obscurity—for it is reduced to a regular system—produce it generally by an affected, or by an encumbered, or by a deficient phraseology: now, Shelley's style is one of the purest, most natural, most copious, and most fluent ever written. His command of language is not merely great, but tyrannous: words, the shortest or the longest, the most simple, and the most abstract, Saxon or Latin, wait, winged and obedient, to body forth his rarest and most ethereal conceptions, instead of toiling after them leagues and lustres behind. Of versifica-

tion, too, he is a perfect master ; and we know that, in general, it flowed on him like a swift stream. He needed seldomer than most poets to sacrifice clearness of sense to the necessities of rhyme : what, then, the secret of his obscurity ?—for we must, of course, grant that obscure he often was. It sprung partly from his extreme subtlety of distinction ; partly from the dreamy character of his reading ; partly from his passion for interweaving the abstractions of the schools with the living laurels of Parnassus ; but principally from his incessant practice of allegory,—a figure into which he was at once seduced by the preternatural liveliness of his imagination, and driven by the daring peculiarity of his opinions. If we try parts of his works by the common standards of descriptive and didactic poetry, their darkness is rayless, solid, impenetrable ; but if we regard the whole as one mass of allegories, to which his system forms the master-key, we will not find them more obscure than the “Faery Queen.” Parts, again,—passages, entire poems,—are not only equal to the average in lucid transparency, but surpass, in that respect, the greater part of Byron and Wordsworth. Witness “The Cenci,” from beginning to end ; “Alastor,” which, though vague in purpose, is in language perfectly transparent ; the “Ode to Liberty ;” long speeches and soliloquies in “Prometheus ;” and many of his minor poems, which combine the clearness of the dewdrop and the grandeur of the uprolled thundercloud. And even when shades of hollow and soundless gloom alternate with points of dazzling lustre, the spell that comes upon the spirit is breathed up from the former as well as the latter, and you feel what is the “majesty of darkness :” and as nebulae of one sort are resolvable by the power of the stronger telescopes, and their first filmy whiteness, after long observation, breaks up into billions of suns,

so, continued and watchful observation of Shelley's darker passages, either explains them into beauties, crowded too thickly together, or at least makes them put on the resolvable aspect; and we feel that, were our eyes strengthened a little more, we could understand as well as wonder at them. Not a few other passages, indeed, are scattered throughout his voluminous works, which remind us rather of crude nebulae,—the curdlings of future creations,—and which we doubt whether the author fully comprehended himself. Such is his last and worst poem, "The 'Triumph of Life;'" which, notwithstanding its amber-like opening, some stray gleams of beauty throughout, and the strange Pilate-like question with which it abruptly closes, "Then, what is life? I cried,"—the last poetical words, we believe, he wrote,—is a piece of misty and melancholious madness. But, in general, a real reader of Shelley will find that,—as an aeronaut describes the sky of midnight, in the lofty regions of the air, to resemble a mass of black solid marble, which seemed, when he was come apparently within a yard or two of collision, to melt and admit him within,—so do the mystic writings of this strange and great poet yield and receive into their bosom the fearless explorer. His darkness is not that of Coleridge, which was partly, at least, the differential property of his mind; nor that of Carlyle, which proceeds from an uncouth terminology; nor that of Foster, which springs entirely from an *inopia verborum*, in proportion to his thinking powers; nor that of Hazlitt, which arises from a love of one-sided paradox; nor that of Byron, which is either the affectation of depth, or the mere turbulence of passion, tempesting and bedimming the waters with a sullen sediment; nor that of De Stael, which is the bewilderment of a sharp, but not subtle mind, in the fogs of a region too transcendental for its powers; nor that of Wordsworth,

which is caused by the refinement of peculiar and personal association, the links of which are not visible, nor sought to be shown to the common eye ; but something altogether distinct, partly indigenous, (like the dim nebula, or burr round certain stars, or, as though a rose were to carry around it a faint halo of mist,) and partly acquired ; a composite formed less from natural tendency, (for his juvenile works have least of it,) than from a habit of reading German and High Greek ; from another habit, relinquished long before death, of eating opium ; from an imperfect metaphysics, and from an imagination rendered morbid by a rambling life ; by embarrassed circumstances at one period, and by calumny and persecution throughout the whole of his existence. Thus much—and somewhat too much—for the charge of mysticism, which was not essential to his genius—which has not vitiated the general structure of his poetry, nor shadowed a single passage of his prose—which, at worst, was only a zodiacal light round the luminary, and would have worn away, and left its body clear as it was great, had the orb not so suddenly gone down in darkness.

Another objection to Shelley's poetry is its planless, purposeless character. And that his plan is often obscure, and his purpose difficult of comprehension, we grant ; but he seldom sets to work without an object, however shadowy that object be, and has perpetrated fewer fragments than almost any poet of the day. In "Queen Mab" the purpose is tolerably plain—it is to overset the whole system of things as they are ! There can be no more mistake about this object, than about that of the Giants, when they piled Pelion on Ossa. In his after and larger poems, such as the "Revolt of Islam" and "Prometheus Unbound," he pursues the same design, in a somewhat milder spirit, and swathes his dangerous thoughts in the golden mist of allegory. In fact, the ruin of his larger

poems has been, that his purpose is but too evident. Unskilled in the double entendre of Voltaire, and the sly, leering insinuations of Gibbon, where more is "meant than meets the ear," he startles the echoes with what they (cold-blooded cowards!) expressed in whispers—he glories in propounding the most volcanic and revolutionary proposals, as if they were self-evident truths. "The Cenci," again, is not only full of purpose, but is one of the most finished tragedies ever penned. Every line is, as it were, given in on evidence, and the whole reads like one of those strange transcripts from the "red-leaved tablets" of the heart—a judicial trial. The stream of the passion winds not for a moment into those nooks and eddies of beauty in which Shakspeare loves to linger: it flows right forward in its sullen, yet glittering darkness; it has the precision and terrible calmness of Alfieri, without his cold sterility of style; the power and pathos of our elder dramatists, without their indecency, their carelessness, and their inequality. We recollect, indeed, but two of his considerable poems, which are either totally void of purpose, or where the purpose is buried in beauty, like the lark in a sepulchre of sunshine, or like the nightingale in a grave of embowering leaves. We mean "Alastor" and "Episychidion." The first is a professed picture of the wanderings and death of a poet; but so enveloped in visionary beauty, that you lose sight of the object altogether. It is like the history of the shadow of a cloud in its progress across meadow, forest, lake, river, hill, and ocean, written by itself: so is the dim hero driven through a succession of splendid scenes, most splendidly pictured, to die, at length, unlamented and unwept; for who can weep for the departure of a shade? The other is, perhaps, the most eloquent rhapsody in the language. It is the "wild flower wine" of poetry: the madness of rapture dances in its sounding measures: its

“sky-tinctured” diction is like that of beings who bask under a brighter and hotter sun than this earth could bear—of the fiery-tressed inhabitants of Mercury or Venus, where a larger orb of day shines on mountains, to which the Andes and Himmaleh are pigmies; it is a chaos of beauty. No order reigns throughout; yet on its shadowy thread are strung rare and sparkling gems, such as that inimitable description of a Grecian island, beginning—

It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as the wreck of Paradise.

Nor can we find any substantial ground for the charge of morbidity in the choice of his subjects. We can discover no raking among forbidden things—no ghoulish gluttony of evil—no passion for dissecting depravity, peering into tombs, uplifting putrid shrouds, setting down beside crumbling coffins, diving into the depth of asylums, eliciting a phosphoric light from decayed and desolate brains, and, by the gross candle of corruption, thus kindled, sifting the evidences of incest, and inspecting the records of uttermost pollution. This description—and is it over-coloured?—applies to Monk Lewis, to Maturin, to Victor Hugo, but not to Shelley. It is characteristic of him, as it is also of Godwin, and the authoress of “Frankenstein,” that they generally keep within the limit which divides terror from horror, the singular from the morbid; and that, even when they touch upon interdicted topics, it is in a style the most delicate and inoffensive. The subject of “The Cenci,” for instance, is almost too horrible for belief or allusion; and yet, so tenderly has he treated the theme, that, but for the known historical facts, you could not, with certainty, infer the nature of the crime which led to parricide. So far from dwelling with morbid avidity, as a late critic in *The Edinburgh Review* insinuates,

upon the hideous subject, he throws a mystery around it ; he represents it as something horrible, but nameless ; no distinct finger-post points to its nature ; its name never occurs ; and the interest and power of the play are nearly independent of what is dark and disgusting in the theme. And we perceive that Shelley's motive in selecting the topic was not the wish for a strong and terrible stimulus to animate his tragedy with convulsive life, nor was it a desperate desire to astonish and affright the public by the hardihood of his choice, and to gather around him the interest of a man who, as a bravado, touches red-hot iron, or walks on the brink of a precipice ; but solely the profound impression made upon his memory by the portrait of the all-lovely Beatrice, which haunted his fancy till he shrined it in song.

We will notice only one other absurd notion rather common about Shelley. He was, it seems, made for a translator, and it was very ridiculous in him to be any thing else ! We grant freely, that he is one of the best translators of the age ; as witness both his "Cyclops" and his "May-day Night." But who would like a man, if confessedly of original genius, to subside into a mere translator ? Translation is very well as the amusement of a strong spirit ; but to set two such beings as Coleridge and Shelley to toil and drudge in rendering Homer or Goethe into English ! As soon put lions to the plough, or coursers of the sun to draw carts or caravans ! Garrick was not merely a great actor, but a first-rate mimic. What would you think of the wisdom which should regret that he had not cultivated the latter art exclusively ? A translator is a mimic—a splendid mimic, if you will. But was not Garrick better employed in tearing his white hair in Lear, or beating Desdemona, with that unspeakable look, in Othello, than though he had become the standing miracle of mimicry ? And was not Shelley better occupied when

hymning the "Sky-Lark"—heaping sublime curses on the Keats-killer—describing the plague, in the "Revolt of Islam"—mating Milton in his "Ode to Liberty"—or treading within the shadow of Shakspeare in the "The Cenci"—than in gutting the Faust, or translating odes to Mercury, the god of commerce and of thieves ?

In examining Shelley's poetry we must ever, in merest justice, remember his age. He died ere he had completed his twenty-ninth year ! We do not wish to plead this so much in extenuation of his faults ; far less under the unprofitable regret that he had not done more, to slur over and underrate his actual achievements ; but simply as a necessary element in our adequate estimate of their character. The first thing which strikes his reader, is the air of enthusiasm which breathes around : you find yourself caught up, from the low level of life, into the atmosphere of mountain summits—a rarer, purer, prouder element. As there was, we are told, much of the seraph in his face—a rapt spiritual expression—which no artist could fully convey to canvass, so, in his verse, poetry is transfigured before your sight. Every thing with him is in extremes. He has not joy, but rapture—not grief, but despair—not love, but agony—not courage, but martyrdom—not anger, but Pythian rage. His admiration of nature and of the great works of man, is a fine and noble delirium. The ardour which some poets affect, and which others can only sustain through short and occasional flights, is in him the mere motion of the mind. There is no resting, no dallying delay, no sleeping upon the wing, no looking round upon the spectators. It is an uninterrupted kindling flight as if for existence. A lyrical poet sustains with difficulty his maddening rapture through a flight of some fifty or a hundred lines, and at the close sinks exhausted and panting on the ground ; but few, save

Shelley, could support the transport of the ode, throughout twelve books of Spenserian verse. Here, indeed, is the grand fault of his poetry. It is not a majestic walk, nor even a rapid race; it is a long and stormy dance, in which few can keep up with the exhilarated and transported bard. As another feature akin to this, you observe traces of soul-felt and blood-felt earnestness. "The terms bard, and inspired," says Macaulay, "which seem so cold and affected, when applied to others, were perfectly applicable to him. He was not a versifier but a bard: his poetry was not an art but an inspiration." You remark, too, in all his writings, the complete and despotic predominance of the imaginative power, as in all truly great poets, from Homer to Scott: you see that over all his faculties and attainments, over his intellect, his erudition, his pomp and profusion of language, the great light of genius holds sway, like the still sun compelling his planets to obedience by a principle inherent in their own natures. He combines imagination, fresh as that of childhood, and strong as that of madness, with the powers of a manly understanding and the accomplishments of finished scholarship. You are amazed at the quantity of his images. Like sparks from a conflagration, brilliant and thick amid the smoke of his mysticism, flashes out incessantly a stream, a storm, or whirlwind of images. Such is the "Cloud," that fine tissue of poetical star-dust, and the "Witch of Atlas," which is throughout composed of the sparkling bubbles of fancy;—the Witch herself being a combination of Puck and Shakspeare's Mab, full of aerial waggery. You notice, too, the unearthly character of his images. They are culled from the rarest, the loftiest, and the wildest scenes of Nature: from the grandest idealisms of Art; from the most secret and singular chambers of the human soul; from the foam of hidden cataracts; from the

ravines of lonely mountains ; from snows untouched by the foot of man ; from the "hiss of homeless streams ;" from the heart of sad and solitary woods ; from the moan of midnight forests ; from the "thousand harmonious sounds which Nature creates in her solitudes ;" from the thrones of the thunder and the mansions of the dead ; from Rome with its flowery ruins and gigantic death-smiles of Art ; from sculpture and from painting ; from the dim philosophy of Plato, and the tragic furies and fervours of Eschylus. From all these he has gathered colours which are not of the earth : flowers of "arrowy odour," and figures of colossal magnitude and magnificence. He, and he alone, of the English poets in our age, has united the peculiarities of the Grecian and Gothic schools. "No writer," (again we quote Macaulay) "of this era had so many of the qualities which distinguished the great ancient masters. Had he lived to the full age of man, he would have produced a work of the very first rank in design and execution." You notice, as aforesaid, his prodigious command of language. A "reluctant dragon" to many, it is an obedient vassal to him. Whatever he bids it do is done. Be it to beautify still more the lovely, or to aggravate the dreadful ; to fix down the evanescent, or to decipher the dark ; to express either the last refinement of sentiment or the utmost rapture of feeling ; to paint homely horror or panic fear ; beauteous dream or sad reality ; scenes beyond the power of pencil, or such as a painter might copy in literal transcript—a rich, varied, unaffected, free, and powerful diction is equally and ever ready. His style reminds you of the "large utterance of the early gods." It is a giant speech, handed down from Plato to Dante, from Dante to Bacon, from Bacon to Milton, Jeremy Taylor, and John Howe ; from these to Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth. It is the "speech in which

Spenser wrote his 'Faery Queen,' and Milton discoursed the Areopagitica to men, to angels, and to eternity." It is a speech of which we fear the type is failing among modern men. You observe, finally, about Shelley's poetry, the exceeding strength, sweetness, beauty, and music of his versification. His blank verse, without having Miltonic majesty, is elegance itself. His Spenserian stanza has not, except in parts, the mellifluous flow of Spenser, but it is less rugged and arbitrary than Byron's; and in energy, fire, and sweep of sound, leaves Beattie, Thomson, &c., far behind. But it is perhaps in his odes that his intensely lyrical genius has produced the principal wonders of sweet or stormy melody. They rise or fall, sink or swell, linger or hurry, lull to repose, or awaken to tempestuous excitement, lap or pierce the soul, at the perfect pleasure of the poet, who can "play well upon his instrument," be it pan, pipe, or lyre; Jew's harp or organ, timbrel or trump.

In order, however, to bring out more fully our idea of Shelley's subtle nature, let us, following the style of criticism which, though sometimes deceptive, may, if sparingly employed, cast strong light upon the *angles* of character, compare him with the two of his contemporaries whom he most resembled, Keats and Coleridge. It was for a long time customary to name him with Byron, as if he were a minor disciple in the same school, only out-Heroding Herod, and "blaspheming an octave higher." This was another of those erroneous notions about Shelley, which sprung from an utter ignorance of the subject. Between the two poets thus arbitrarily coupled together for a common doom, there existed as deep a difference as between a vulture and a dove. The one was the personification of sublime hatred, the other of mystic love. The broad tree of Byron's genius, with its many manner of fruits, some sweet as grapes, and

others sour as the star Wormwood, was rooted deep in the soil of black loamy selfishness: the vine of Shelley's mind grew out of a disinterested benevolence: The secret of Byron's power was his sullen and concentered passion, whereas sentiment was the soul of all the poetry of Shelley. The one was an inveterate sensualist; the other, during the larger part of his life, abstemious as a hermit. The one was perpetually offending delicacy in his writings, the other was horrified at whatever approached its limits. Byron's imagination was powerful, but poisoned and polluted; Shelley's was alike more copious and more pure. Both were sometimes called sublime maniacs; but while the madness of the one was the fruit of remorse and the restlessness of a diseased spirit, Shelley's mania was that of a mild and sensitive mind; the one was the frenzy of Timon, the other of Hamlet. As a popular and passionate poet, as a wit, satirist, and declaimer, if Byron have the advantage, Shelley has, in our judgment, as decided a superiority, both as a genuine enthusiast, and as a consummate artist, in originality of conception, and in dominion over the resources of language. Both stood aloof from their fellow-men; but while retirement in Byron was the recoil of rage and scorn as of the stag at bay,—in Shelley it was the retreat of the stricken deer to bleed and die. Byron reminds us of his own "Manfred," transferring his affections, and willing, were it possible, to transfer his relationship, his very being, from a shunned and hated race of "human mortals" to the mountains or to their shadows, to the cataracts, or to their spray, to herbs, or stones, or eagles, or angels, or demons, or any thing but man; or rather he reminds us of his own "Cain," hating and killing his brother because he cannot comprehend his God; whereas Shelley is Prometheus writhing on his rock, blasted by a thousand thunderbolts, yet retaining

amid torture, and the fear of deeper agony, and solitude, and contempt, and madness, a love for the race of man. Byron ever reminds us of a demon, superior to us in power and misery, wearing his genius as a crown of pain, holding a sceptre of intellectual sovereignty which scorches his hand, baptized with poetic inspiration as with burning gold, wretched himself, and striving to breathe up his own wo upon the sun, the glad earth, the face of man, and the countenance of heaven ;—

To make the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,
The tomb a hell, and hell itself a murkier gloom ;

whereas Shelley is a milder, more patient, and more gentle being, who seeks to retain his sadness and circulate his joy, a playful, yet pensive Peri, wavering between Pandemonium and Paradise.

We are looking this moment upon the portraits of the twain, the “counterfeit presentment of two brothers,” and cannot but see the difference of their character expressed in every lineament. In the forehead and head of Byron there is more massive power and breadth : Shelley’s has a smooth, arched, spiritual expression : wrinkle there seems none on his brow : it is as if perpetual youth had there dropped its freshness : Byron’s eye seems the focus of pride and lust : Shelley’s is mild, pensive, fixed on you, but seeing you through the mild mist of his own idealism. Defiance curls on Byron’s nostril, and sensuality steeps his full large lip : the lower features of Shelley’s face are frail, feminine, flexible. Byron’s head is turned upwards, as if, having risen proudly above all his contemporaries, he were daring to claim kindred, or to demand a contest with a superior order of beings. Shelley’s is half bent, in reverence and humility, before some vast vision seen by his own eye alone.

Misery, erect and striving to cover its retreat under an aspect of contemptuous fury, is the permanent and pervading expression of Byron's countenance. Sorrow shaded away and softened by hope and habit, lies like a "holier day" of still moonshine upon that of Shelley. In the portrait of Byron, taken at the age of nineteen, you see the unnatural age of premature passion,—his hair is young, his dress is youthful, but his face is old. In Shelley you see the eternal child, none the less that his hair is gray, and that "sorrow seems half of his immortality." Byron's face irresistibly suggests to your memory the words of Milton,—

Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all, the archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride,
Waiting revenge.

Shelley recalls to us the description of the disguise assumed by him afterwards:—

And now a sprightly cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, but such that in his face
Youth smiles celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffused.
Under a coronet, his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek played; wings he wore,
Of many a coloured plume, sprinkled with gold.

Between Keats and Shelley there exist many more points of similarity. Both were men of trembling sensibility, and a genius almost feminine in its delicacy: both sinned in point of extravagance of imagery; both exhibited a promise which the most mature of their productions did not fulfil; both were essentially young poets; both, nevertheless, have left behind them imperishable monuments of their

powers; both, throughout their brief being, had to struggle with the infirmities of a feeble body and a fevered spirit; and of both, alas! the "sun went down while it was yet day." They were, the one the Wordsworth, and the other the Coleridge of a new school of Lakers, not inferior to the first; yet were they essentially distinct. Shelley, by one bound, attained early a manliness of thought and diction which Keats never altogether reached. His genius was fed, besides, by a far wider erudition, and came forth shining in the hues of German and Grecian lore, with neither of which the inspired apothecary's boy was acquainted, save through the dull medium of translations. Sustained, too, by a more determined and heroic spirit, Shelley bore the ordeal of attack much better than the trembling youth, who, when the bunch of early flowers, and "weeds of glorious feature," which he meekly presented, was spurned, had nothing left but to die. But if Keats could not have sustained the long enthusiasm of the "Revolt of Islam," nor have elaborated the masterful "Cenci," it lay alike out of the power of Shelley, or perhaps of any of the poets of the day, to produce "Hyperion," in its colossal magnificence, its unearthly calm, with its statuesque shapes, its eloquence of despair, and all the rich beauties, austere splendours, and high original purpose, which excite your wonder that a dying boy could wear the buskins of Eschylus, the thunder-shod shaker of the Grecian stage. Superior as Shelley is in sustained stateliness, in sounding march, in extent of knowledge, power of intellect, and purity of taste, and free as he is from his rival's babyism of manner, affectations of style, endless sinkings away from the finest eloquence, to the sheerest drivel; all those faults, in short, which in Keats' own words, "denote a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished;" still, there are even in the worst works of the author of "Endymion," such quaint

originalities, such dim grandeurs, single lines so unutterably sweet, single thoughts so piercingly profound ; so much, in fine, of that pure element of power which clings to the memory and the heart, according to his own line,

“ A thing of beauty is a joy for ever—”

as, taken in connexion with his age, justify and compel the prognostic, that had he but outlived the fearful tenderness of his sensibilities, and out-soared the onset of his foes, Adonais would, in the “heaven of song,” have sat above Alastor.

To Coleridge, Shelley bore a striking resemblance, in the wild and whirling movement of his mind, in the music of his verse, in the lyrical tone of his genius, in the pomp and power of his language, in the strange selection of his images, in the preternatural heat of his blood, in the diffusion and felt facility of his composition, and in that summer haze which swaddles so often the sun of his spirit. But in “energetic reason,” in variety of knowledge, in mental comprehension, in gleams of sudden and searching truth, clearing away centuries of gloom ; in incalculable unexpectedness, in single passages and figures, in occasional thoughts of extreme lustre, and in the might of a mysterious magic which floated about all the strange man did, from his most elaborate composition to his most careless table-talk, Coleridge rises at once above him and all his countrymen. As a poet, however, Shelley has displayed more variety of fancy, and is altogether swifter, subtler, more daring, more eccentric and ethereal. As a talker, Coleridge was slow, solemn, calm, and enchaining ; Shelley, loud, animated, fast and fervid, shrieking out his winged words. In appearance, Coleridge was of middle size ; in age, fat, unctuous, reclined, gray-haired, with dim metaphysic eye ; brow lofty, and very prominent in the ob-

serving organs ; rich dreamy lips, and voice resembling the "crush of the wood-pigeon's note. Shelley was tall, slender, stooping, worn to spirit and bone, "fair as a maid;" small-faced, with sweet mouth ; the hectic of death blooming on his cheek, and the fire of a fine madness rioting in his large open eye ; with much of the peacock's beauty, he had also the peacock's voice, harsh and shrill in its higher notes, piercing in its whisper. As men, both were amiable, sensitive, forgiving ; but while in Coleridge there was a strong tendency to sensual enjoyments, to irresolution, and to indolence, Shelley was purged, earnest, active, resolute, and stripped, as one who was soon to join a spiritual company. In one point there was no comparison—Coleridge was a meek and humble disciple of Jesus Christ ; and the latest cry of his majestic spirit, was, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Shelley's first published writings were two novels, one of which only, "Zastrozzi," we have read. It is quite unworthy of Shelley ; nor, though written at fifteen, does it display any remarkable precocity of talents. Though full of ravings about deep bosoms, "scintillating eyes," &c., it contains not a gleam of his peculiar genius. Yet, whether it was from some interest in the story, or from the fact of its being the first draught of the hand which wrote "The Cenci," we could not give it up till the close. How great the rise in two years, from this genuine product of the Minerva Press, to "Queen Mab." The middle part of that poem is, indeed, as bad as possible ; full of insane trash against commerce, monarchy, &c., as dull as it is disgusting ; but the first two hundred lines, descriptive of the sleep of Ianthe, and the ascent of the magic car, are equal, in sustained power, beauty, and refinement, to any thing in the English language. Through even the waste darkness of the metaphysics which

follow, are sprinkled some clear and picturesque descriptions. The figure of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, with his "non-essential shadow," is sublime; and a description of the millennium, written with transcendent eloquence, brings the poem to a golden close. And all this Shelley had accomplished at an age when few, even of clever boys, have finished their first sonnet to Mary, or their monody over the death of a favourite terrier. About this time, having published an absurd pamphlet, he was taken before the grave and reverend seigniors of his university, and, refusing to retract, was formally expelled. He ran straightway, the young fair-haired, bright-eyed enthusiast, to the lodgings of his friend, the author of "Shelley at Oxford," shrieking out with clasped hands, and streaming eyes, "I am expelled! I am expelled!" Thereafter he led a wild and wandering life, journeying through Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, &c., restless and wretched as Cain: collected the materials of "Alastor;" and, anticipating early dissolution from his consumptive habit, closed it by the death of the shadowy and spirit-like poet. To the same dark period of his history—

When black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the path in which he moved alone,

belongs the hapless history of his first marriage. With the circumstances of this unhappy affair we are not sufficiently acquainted to pass on it any definite judgment. The marriage, first of all, was gone about with the utmost possible imprudence. Shelley then found, when it was too late, that there was an utter want of sympathy between him and his wife. We will not believe that a man, so amiable to all others, could act cruelly to her; but certainly there ensued

a coldness, then an estrangement, and ultimately a separation. And terribly did the business terminate—in the suicide of the wretched wife, and in his own temporary derangement: a retreat from the world, even into the cave of madness, being a positive blessing and relief to his tormented spirit. And, alas! when he awoke from his dream, he found that his children, too, had been torn from his paternal embrace, under a law surely far too stern and summary. In the “serener hour” which followed his marriage with the present Mrs. Shelley, by the banks of the Thames, under the groves of Marlow, and in the “starlight smile” of the children she bore him, he wrote the “Revolt of Islam,” by many thought the loftiest, as it is the largest of his works. It was written principally in the open air, as the beautiful being sat in the twilight of the summer woods, or weltering in his boat upon the summer waters. He wrote it, he tells us, in six months; but the thoughts and feelings it included, had been slowly accumulating for as many years. It was the first we read—part of it on the half-moon battery of Edinburgh castle, while a thunder-storm was coming up the west—and we continue to regard it with all the ardour of early love. The melting music of the opening lines to Mary; the Spenser-like breadth and richness of its allegorical parts; its spiritual and ethereal tone; its raptures of natural description; the interest cast around the two lovers, who are its principal characters; the energy of its language; the strangeness of its story; the power of its individual pictures—such as that of the fight between the serpent and the eagle; the horrors of the plague, and the death of Laon and Laone; above all, the daring and dreamy representation of the future world,—in which, strange to tell, Shelley was a believer—all, taken together, produced on us a profound impression, and have rendered its perusal an interesting remi-

niscence in our intellectual history. We felt its occasional tediousness ; the unsuitableness of its stanza for narrative ; the length and labour with which its allegories are spun out ; the difficulty of keeping up such a high pitch of enthusiasm in its readers so long ; its failure as an epic ; and its impotence as an engine for the spread of opinion ; but we had, nevertheless, the pleasing, yet solemn impression throughout, of being in the presence of a searching, original, and sublime genius. "Rosalind and Helen" is a more pathetic, but much less powerful production. It is framed on an extremely simple plan. Two gentle females meet each other by the sides of Como's lake. A recognition follows. They had been friends in youth ; but their paths had diverged, and their affections had been estranged from one another. They tell their stories in language reminding you of what is softest in the style of Crabbe, and least peculiar in that of the Lakers. Both are tales of wo: one had married an old man, who, from his "putrid shroud," had completed the misery which, in life, his tyranny had begun, by branding her in his will as an abandoned woman, from which dark blast of falsehood she took refuge in Italy. The other had wedded a poet-lover, a fine and noble spirit, a fac-simile of Shelley, who, after persecution unheard-of, had "died and left her desolate." They meet here ; and by the interchange of their tales, are reconciled to each other, and to their sad and solitary doom. This slender stream of narrative the poet conducts through much green and fresh pathos, some homely tragedy, and some towering image. It is quite free from his besetting sin of allegory, and is altogether the most pleasing and life-like of his minor poems. Concerning "Prometheus Unbound," which he wrote under the bright blue sky of Rome, and amid the vine-covered ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, opinions have widely varied. While

some talk of it as a gigantic abortion, a long spasmodic grasp at a height once attained, but to be reached by mortal no more, others vow, by all that's Grecian, that it approaches Eschylus, and is, by far, Shelley's greatest work. We incline to a medium view of the matter. Than the figure of Prometheus, and his opening soliloquy, and many of his after speeches, nothing can be more austere and antique: he is the very being whom the father of the Grecian stage had in his eye; mild, majestic, casting a loveliness from his meek face upon the rocks which hear his groans, and the vulture which drinks his blood; a being between man, demon, and Deity, far different from the Satan of Milton, or the Lucifer of Byron; without the enormous pride of the one, or the lurid malignity of the other. The language, too, put into his mouth is quite worthy of him; free from sulphurous foam of passion, "champing the bit," and from the writhing sneers of crushed malice: it is calm amid its misery, dignified in the very depths of its wo. In describing the scenery of the Caucasus, the silence, the air of eternity, the "bright and burning cold," the dizzy ravines, the snowy sheen, the loneliness and the shadowy might of that unspeakable mountain, are admirably caught in the abrupt and tortured grandeur of Shelley's blank verse: and there is one short scene, descriptive of the downfall of Jupiter, sinking under the weight of Demogorgon, and of his final look,

Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep—

which reaches the acme of the sublime. How the cry of drowning deity "Ai! Ai!" rings in our ears. But the poem has great and incurable blemishes. It is utterly void of human interest. It is crushed under a load of thick allegorical darkness. As a catapult aimed at principalities

and powers, it is feeble in its very hugeness, and "like a devilish engine back recoils." And even as a work of art it fails, from attempting too much. It is too like Eschylus to be equal to Eschylus. It reads, in parts, like a translation from the Greek; and this is fatal to its success. What essayist would succeed now by writing in the style of Plato? or what Epic poet, by giving a duplicate of Homer? Besides, even as a revival of the Grecian drama, the work is imperfect. In the first part, Eschylus is emulated; but ere the close, the genius of Shelley, irresistibly breaking out in all its peculiarities of abstract thought, and in all its extravagancies of lyrical license, mars the verisimilitude. Still, if not the finest, this is the most wonderful and daring production of his pen, and perhaps calculated to give the highest impression of its author's powers, and the deepest sorrow for their premature obscuration. No where do we find more strongly than in its lyrics, a specimen of the Pythian *οιστρος*; the rush of poetic numbers, the tremendous gallop of an infuriated imagination.

"Adonais" is an elegy over John Keats, in the style of Lycidas, full of sweetness, sublimity, and pathos, but entangled with "wheel within wheel" of complicated allegory and thick-piled darkness. The best passage is that describing the procession of the mountain shepherds to mourn the death of their lost brother, "their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent." Byron comes, the "pilgrim of eternity, veiling all the lightnings of his song in sorrow," a proud and melancholy mourner. Moore disdains not to follow the hearse of the author of the "Pot of Basil," and thus is his presence described:—

From her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall in music from his tongue.

“What gentler form is hushed over the dead?” It is Leigh Hunt, the discoverer of the boy-poet, who found him as a naturalist finds a new variety of violet, while gazing on its native stream, amid the silent woods; and who “taught, loved, honoured, the departed one.” And in the rear of the laurelled company, lo! a strange, shadowy being, alone among the multitude. It is the poet of Prometheus, mourning with thin, spirit-like wail, the departure of his friend. Listen to Shelley’s picture of himself—one of those betrayals of personal emotion into which he is sometimes hurried, for he loved too many things, and thoughts, and beings, to be an egotist:

Mid others of less note came one frail form,
 A phantom amongst men—companionless
 As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
 Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
 Had gazed on nature’s naked loveliness,
 Actæon like, and then he fled astray
 With feeble steps, o’er the world’s wilderness,
 While his own thoughts along that rugged way
 Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.
 A pardlike spirit, beautiful and swift,
 A love in desolation masked, a power
 Girt round by weakness.

— Of that crew,

He came the last, neglected and apart,
 A herd-abandoned deer, pierced by the hunter’s dart.

The close of the poem is remarkable for containing the prediction, or presentiment, that as Keats and he had been alike in their lives, so in their deaths they were not long to be divided:

I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar,
 While, burning through the inmost vale of Heaven,
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,
 Beacons from the abode where the eternal are.

It has been fulfilled. All of the gifted two that could die, lies now side by side in the same churchyard, under the blue of the same Italian sky.

Our space forbids us dilating on the Cenci more than we have done already. It would require a lengthened article to do justice to its conception of character ; its firm and fearless, yet modest and dainty, depiction of the monstrous old man, whose gust of evil is so intense, and whose joy is so purely diabolical ; of his feeble and broken-hearted wife, who is as much out of place in her connexion with him, as were a red-breast wedded to a vulture ; above all, of Beatrice, that "loveliest specimen of the workmanship of God," with her "eyes swollen with weeping, and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene ;" her "head bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall down about her neck ;" her "forehead large and clear ; her eyebrows distinct and arched ; her lips with that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish ;" and preserving, amid the circle of giddy horrors which revolves around her, the purity and greatness of her own soul. Nor must we dwell on its rigid and strong stream of purpose,—its deep and quiet glances into the core of the human heart,—the energetic simplicity of its style,—the power of the murder scene,—the one exquisite bit, no more, of natural description which occurs in it,—and the art by which the fiendish horrors of the beginning, prepare for, and melt away into the heart-rending pathos of the end. How beautiful and affecting the last words of Beatrice, as she is being led along with her mother to early and horrible death :

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie

My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot: ay, that does well,
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another! now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

Meant for the first of a series, it stands alone, a colossal marble, the best of Shelley's productions; the first tragedy since Shakspeare, and one of the first poems in this or any age.

"Hellas," the poet himself called a mere improvise, but it is full of a rapid, torrent-like eloquence. As a drama, it limps, but as a poem it storms and hurries on like a very Phlegethon. The revolution in Greece,—in Greece! a country which had become a standing example, and moral, and monument of degeneracy, bursting out suddenly as if its stagnant waters had been disturbed by an angel plunging amid them from the battlements of Heaven,—roused the soul of Shelley, then just falling asleep in its misery. It was "Vesuvius wakening Etna," and the result is before us in this the most vigorous and volcanic of his secondary poems, in which the lava stream of his feelings, scattering away his frequent mist, runs, and rushes, and roars, with a motion like that of Byron's fierce genius, when it produced the "Siege of Corinth." In a kindred strain of rapid vehemence does Shelley exult over the downfall of the Turks, and predict the resurrection of old Greece. It is a wild prophetic impromptu, half white foam, and half red fire, lyrical withal, and only shadowed by the mystic shape of Ahasuerus; for here he takes a final farewell of the Wandering Jew, a figure which had haunted his genius all along from "Queen Mab," and another yet earlier poem, which he wrote along with Medwin, down to his "positively last appearance" in

“Hellas.” What strange charm the idea had over Shelley’s mind we cannot tell ; unless, perhaps, a resemblance between his own destiny and crime, and those of this fugitive and vagabond on the face of the earth. As it is, he makes in “Hellas” a very noble exit indeed, and we would back him against a score of Salathiels, and a century of “undying ones,” fabricated upon the perpetual motion principle, save the mark ! by Mrs. Norton.

Shelley’s smaller pieces are very various in style and merit, some of them most ingeniously and ineffably impenetrable, others as lovely and lively, or as soft and plaintive little morsels as ever dropt from human pen. Such, for instance, are the sweet and pure Anacreontic, beginning, “The fountains mingle with the river ;” the “Lines to an Indian Air ;” the “Lines written in dejection at Naples ;” the “Hymn to a Skylark,” which might be set to that blythe of bird’s own music, and whose words dance like a fay in the silver shine of the moon ; the “Sensitive Plant,” the sweetest, strangest, dreamiest, holiest thing in all his poetry, with that lone figure of the nameless lady in it, glorifying her garden for evermore ; the “Ode to Naples,” mounting, as on storm-wings of shadowy fire, into the very dome of the Temple of the Lyric Muse ; the “Poem on the Aziola,” and her “sad cry ;” the “Lines on the Euganean Hills,” with their eloquent remonstrance to the “Swan of Albion,” then soiling his desperate wing in the “sins and slaveries foul” of the sea-Sodom ; the “Mont Blanc ;” “Julian and Madallo,” with its fine portraiture of Byron and himself in the undress of their Titanic souls, “rolling billiard balls about,” instead of pointing their batteries against the wide-mouthed artillery of Heaven ; and lastly, “Peter Bell the Third,” which, published since his death, has discovered an under-current of burning sarcasm to have run on in secret under the lake of his genius.

Shelley's prose works must not be omitted from the catalogue, if works they can be called, which were never meant for any thing else than occasional effusions. They include two or three translations from Plato, the prefaces to his various poems, a few essays and criticisms, published posthumously, and a selection from his correspondence. Yet, brief and unlaboured as they are, they raise our estimation of the man. They are free from the fever and wildness of his poetry. Their sentiment is finely generous and discriminating. Their tone of criticism contrasts well with the exclusiveness of the Lakers. Shelley had an intensely catholic taste, tremblingly alive to every variety and degree of excellence, equally fond of the Grecian and the Gothic schools; loving at once Keats and Moore, Bowles and Byron, Leigh Hunt and Coleridge, Hogarth and Leonardo de Vinci. His criticisms bring out the peculiarities of his authors or painters, amid a blaze of native beauty, a halo communicated by his own mind. Raffaele was his especial favourite; and he held strong opinions as to his superiority to Michael Angelo, whose style he thought hard, coarse, and savage. His estimates of the remains of the classic school—of the Minerva—the Niobe, “shielding her children from some divine and inevitable wrong”—the Bacchantes, with their “hair caught in the whirlwind of their tempestuous dance,”—are confessedly superior even to Winkelman's. They are distinguished by chaste and Grecian beauty. His prefaces are undoubtedly too presumptuous, too plainly prejudicating the case, and flinging down defiance in the face of the public. Now, without wishing that he had descended to indite any servile apology—of such drivelling deprecation of doom, he was, indeed, incapable—we could have liked if he had followed a more just and modest taste in this matter;—if, stung though he was by depreciation into an intense and almost insane con-

sciousness of himself, he had copied the example of John Keats, whose preface to "Endymion" is, in our judgment, an ideal specimen of such things, filled, as it is, with a proud and noble humility. "No feeling man," he says, "will be forward to inflict punishment on me; he will leave me alone, knowing that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object." Still the tone of Shelley's prefaces is trumpet-like, their march stately and majestic, their criticism profound. Thus loftily does he describe his poetical education:—"I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests. Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer amongst distant fields; I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished on their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been, to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the imagery of my poems is generally drawn."

The correspondence of Shelley is distinguished by all his characteristics,—his fancy, feeling, fire, purity of sentiment, feminine delicacy of taste, suave stateliness of diction, and in addition to all this, by a piercing sagacity of observation,

and instinctive propriety of sentiment, on every-day topics, which you could never have expected from the visionary cast of his poetry. How clearly he sees through Lord Byron, amid his admiration!—how awake is he to his foibles!—how honest in his advices!—how alive to his true power, his true fame and happiness!—how deeply chagrined and disgusted at his miserable desecration of noble powers and amplest opportunities! How different from the crawling sycophants, who were glad to lick the very slime of sin from his proud feet! What tender gleams, too, are cast, in the same correspondence, upon Shelley's domestic feelings and habits, on his love to his wife and family, on his amiable, forgiving, and benevolent disposition. Altogether—to parody an expression of Dr. Johnson's—let him who would attain an English style, chaste but not cold, classical but not stiff, energetic but never extravagant, clear but never shallow, profound but never mystic, give his days and his nights to the prose of Shelley.

We are writing a criticism, not a life. But we would refer those who would know more about his personal and private manners, to Leigh Hunt's and Medwin's "Reminiscences," to Talfourd's "Oration in Defence of Moxon," and to a series of papers which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*, entitled, "Shelley at Oxford." All agree in describing him as the most warm-hearted, the most disinterested, the most child-like, and, withal, the most eccentric of human beings. Whether lying asleep on the hearth-rug, with his small round head thrust into almost the very fire; or launching on the Serpentine, in defect of a paper boat, a fifty pound note; or devouring large pieces of dry bread, amid his profound abstractions; or stalking along the streets of London, with his vast and quiet steps; or snatching a child from its nurse's arms, shaking, the while, his long fair

locks. and asking what it remembered of its antenatal state ; or now scalding, and now half-poisoning himself with chemical experiments ; or discussing a point in Plato, under the twilight trees, with far-heard shrieking voice ; or taking Leigh Hunt by the two hands, and asking him with the most comical earnestness,—“Can you tell me the amount of the national debt ?” or, another time, in a stage-coach, terrifying an old lady out of her wits, by saying suddenly to his companion, in quotation from Shakspeare, “Hunt, I pray thee, let us sit upon the ground, and tell strange stories of the deaths of kings ;” or, rushing out of the room, in sweltering terror, as his wild imagination painted to him a pair of eyes in a lady’s breast ; or, writing to Rowland Hill for the use of Surrey Chapel to preach Pantheism in ; or, like Dr. Johnson, lifting a poor, houseless outcast upon his back, and carrying her to a place of refuge ; or running about from cottage to cottage, in Marlow, visiting and helping the sick ; or swallowing endless cups of tea ; or basking in the hottest beams of an Italian sun, till he had made men suspect that he had been designed for the planet Mercury ; or, though on all other subjects the wisest of the wise, the gentlest of the gentle, the bravest of the brave, yet when *one* topic was introduced, becoming straightway insane, his eyes glaring, his voice screaming, his hand vibrating frenzy ; or, sailing in his crazy, Charon-like boat, upon the Serchio ; or *seen entering* a wood near Pisa, a little before his death, at a time when he was miles away,—his character, on the whole, was one of the most interesting, and his life among the most romantic in literary story. Every one must remember the catastrophe which robbed the world of this strange and great spirit. Every body knows that, on the news of the arrival of Leigh Hunt in Italy, Shelley hastened to meet him. During all the time he spent in Leghorn, he was in brilliant spirits,—

to him ever a sure prognostic of coming evil. On his return to his home and family, his skiff was overtaken by a fearful hurricane, and all on board perished. His body, when found, was in a state unfit for removal. It was, therefore, under the auspices of Byron and Hunt, burned on the sea-shore, all but the heart, which would not consume. To a gentleman who, at the time, was with a glass surveying the sea, the scene of his drowning assumed a very striking appearance. A great many vessels were visible, and among them one small skiff, which attracted his particular attention. Suddenly a dreadful storm, attended by thunder and columns of lightning, swept over the sea, and eclipsed the prospect. When it had passed, he looked again. The larger vessels were all safe, riding upon the swell, the skiff only had gone down for ever. And in that skiff was Alastor! Here he met his fate. Wert thou, oh "religious sea," only avenging on his head the cause of thy denied and insulted Deity? Were ye, ye elements, in your courses, commissioned to destroy him? Ah, there is no reply. The surge is silent. The elements have no voice. In the eternal Councils the secret is hid of the reason of this man's death. And there, too, rests the still more tremendous secret of the character of his destiny. Let us shut the book, and clasp the clasp.

DR. CHALMERS.

WE have somewhere heard the indolence of true genius deplored. But certainly the charge does not apply to men of genius in our day. In an age distinguished above all others for fervid excitement and unrelaxing energy, it was to be expected that the brighter and loftier spirits should

share in the general activity. And so verily it is. There is scarcely such a being now-a-days as your sluggish and slumbering literateur, reposing under the petty shadow of his laurels, dreaming of immortality, and soothing his soul with the pleasing idea that, because he is the stare of a coterie, he is the "observed of all observers;" and that every body else is as intensely conscious of his minute merits as a happy vanity has rendered himself. Nor are there, on the other hand, many specimens, now-a-days, of a still sadder species of illusion,—a man of fancied genius, dividing his days between the study and the tavern, enacting the part of Savage and Dermody, without a ray of their talent. This disgusting kind of absurdity is dead and buried. Genius, in our time, is up and doing, "working while it is day." The most vigorous are now also the most active, and may we not say, the most virtuous of minds.

And were we to name one quality amid the assemblage of peculiarities distinguishing the subject of this sketch, as more than another his, it would be that of activity; of rest less, burning, unappeasable activity. Some necessity of action seems laid upon him. Some invisible scourge seems suspended over his head, urging him onwards. We see this quality as strong on him at this hour, when the gray hairs of age are beginning, like a crown of glory, to gather round his head, as it was in his fiery youth. "A great river, in its ordinary state, is equal to a small one when swollen into a torrent." So the aged and ordinary state of Dr. Chalmers' feelings is equal to the extremes, the paroxysms, the juvenile raptures of less energetic minds. What others shrink from as the very brink of insanity, is his starting point,—the first step of his aspiring spirit.

We heard him the other day addressing an audience of two thousand persons. The audience was exciting, and we

saw from the first that he was to be sucked into the Mahlstrom of his passion sooner than is ordinary with him. Generally he rises by distinct and gradual stages into the full swell of his power ; but in the present case, after a few introductory remarks, he rushed at once into his most rapid and fervid manner. Ere the middle of his two hours' speech, he had reached a climax whence to rise seemed hopeless. Like an eagle who has reached his highest limit, and who remits and lowers his strong flight, so he consented to let himself down to a less giddy elevation, to dally with, if not to slur over his subject. A yawn began to spread through the audience. There were ominous revertings to the door ; watches, so appalling to orators, were beginning to appear ; and there were fearful whispers, with "dry lips," "When will he close?" And soon it became apparent that he was closing ; he suddenly struck again his former high key note ; he quoted the lines of Burns, "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs," &c. It was answered by a burst of applause. He replied by a ten minutes' torrent of the most brilliant eloquence, and sat down amid thunders of acclamations. The triumph of the orator was complete.

Dr. Chalmers has already found his level, and it is one equally removed from the over-estimates of partial friends, and the depreciation of party, he has no personal foes. A great thinker, enkindling original thought into eloquence, he can hardly be called. He is no Hall in the pellucid perfections of style ; no Coleridge, showering from the painted window of his mind rich and mystic light into the interior of the sanctuary. To Burke he has been often compared, though we could never well understand why. The only point of resemblance we can perceive between the two, is a certain hurrying, impetuous motion of style, which denotes the extreme degree of possible excitement ; which reveals in both the contortions of the Sybil along with the inspira-

tion. We notice this particularly in Burke's later and Chalmers' earlier works. In their fierce pages, the very connecting particles,—the very "ands" seem inspired and enkindled by the surrounding fury. But, bating this similarity, which is one rather of temperament than of genius, no two intellects can be more different than those of Burke and Chalmers. The great forte of Chalmers is immediate impression. Burke's speeches were, we know, generally delivered to empty benches. Chalmers' intellect is spacious and lofty, but in every thing like depth and comprehensiveness, inferior to Burke's. Chalmers' fancy is bold, but in its colours there is a sameness as well as splendour. Those of Burke are varied and brilliant as the hues of nature; his "imperial imagination" has brought the universe within its range. Of almost all styles, that of Chalmers is the most tinctured with mannerism. Burke's is much more diversified; it wanders at will, like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, now uttering sounds of deepest tragedy, and now of tenderest beauty. It is, like Shakspeare's, a style not to be anticipated, which changes upon you evermore, uncertain and unexpected. In the course of Chalmers' writings, there are many passages over which you hang and pause, in breathless admiration; but there are few striking things, few compact and aphoristic sentences, at which you start, which fix themselves down upon your memory, and which, once heard, are never forgotten. What you do carry away is generally a forcible alliteration. It is, on the other hand, the charm of Edmund Burke, that his winged words are heavy with golden ideas, that he scatters sentences of the most memorable character and precious worth, embodying in them lessons of profound and practical wisdom, amid the rushing whirlwind of his eloquence. Chalmers writes a barbarous and Babylonish diction, redeemed by great energy, and steeped in genuine enthusiasm, and set off with

rugged ornaments. Burke's style is English, or, if ever he coins new words, or makes new combinations, it is because the resources of the language are sometimes all unequal to the double demand of his understanding and his genius.

While admitting Chalmers to be the most powerful Christian orator, Irving excepted, our country has produced for two centuries, we must place him, as a writer, in the second rank, alike of past and present preachers. When you compare his style with Barrow's, you are ashamed to think that, in the course of two hundred years, the language seems so to have retrograded; the contrast is so great between the true taste, the copiousness, and the power of at once cutting the most delicate discriminations, and catching the freshest colours, which belongs to the diction of the one, and the comparative coarseness, and scantiness, and mannerism of the other. When you compare his imagination with Jeremy Taylor's, you become sensible of the difference between a strong, but bounded, and an inexhaustible faculty. When you put his discourses as wholes beside those of Horsley in their manly vigour, they seem imperfect, spasmodic, and monotonous. As a thinker, he is, compared to Foster, hackneyed, and to Isaac Taylor, timorous. But as an orator, hurried away himself by a demoniac energy, his faculties and his heart alike subservient to, and swimming in a current of ungovernable eloquence; and with the power of conveying entire to others his most peculiar emotions, and of breathing out upon them, as from snorting nostrils, his contagious fire; not only does he stand alone in this age, but we question if in any period, in this single quality, his equal has appeared. Demosthenes, every body knows, had immense energy, but his *Δεινότης* was broken, interrupted, and had rarely the rushing fluency we mean to ascribe to Chalmers. Cicero is ornate and elaborate; he is a river cut

through an artificial bed, rather than a mountain torrent. Jeremy Taylor's stream meanders, "gliding at its own sweet will," rather than sweeps right onward to the sea of its object. Barrow, to vary the figure, takes sometimes the gallop in grand style, but his eye never gets red in the race, nor do his nostrils breathe fire, or spring blood. Howe makes every now and then a noble leap, and then subsides into a quiet and deliberate pace. Burke is next him in this quality. Curran, Grattan, Sheil, and Phillips, frequently exhibit this rapid and involuntary movement of mind and style; but it is marred in the first by diffusion; in the two next by a certain irregular and starting motion, springing from their continual antithesis; and in the last by the enormous degree in which he possesses his country's diseases, of intellectual incontinence, and *diabetes verborum*. Hall occasionally rises to this style; but is too fastidious and careful of minute elegancies to sustain it long or reach it often. Irving shines in brief and passionate bursts, but never indulges in long and strong sweeps through the gulfs of ether. But with Chalmers such perilous movement is a mere necessity of his mind: his works read like one great sentence; a unique enthusiasm inspirits with one deep glow all his sermons, and all his volumes; and, so far from needing to lash, or sting himself into this rapid rate, he must pursue a break-neck pace, or come to a full stop. Animation is a poor word for describing either his style or manner. Excitement, convulsion, are fit, yet feeble terms for his appearance, either at the desk or the pulpit. And yet, what painter has ever ventured to draw him preaching? And hence the dulness and paltriness of almost all the prints; they show the sibyl off the stool, the eye dim and meaningless, not shot with excitement, and glaring at vacancy; the lion sleeping, not the mane-shaking, tail-tossing, and sand-spurn-

ing lord of the desert. In repose, neither his face nor form are much better than an unstrung bow, or an unlighted lustre.

After all that Chalmers has written, the "Astronomical Discourses" are, as we have stated already, in our opinion, his best and greatest work. They owe not a little, it is true, to their subject—Astronomy, that "star-eyed science," which, of all others, most denotes the grandeur of our destiny, and plumes our wing for the researches and the flights of unembodied existence; which, even in its infancy, has set a crown upon the head of man, worthy of an angelic brow—a crown of stars; which has recently made such marvellous revelations of the firmaments scattered throughout immensity, their multitude, their strange shapes, and the obscure laws which seem to regulate their motions, and explain their forms; of the double stars and their supposed *Annus Magnus* of revolution round each other, a period which dwarfs even the Chinese chronologies into insignificance; of those changes which appear to be going on above, on a scale so amazing, by which sheeted heavens are seemingly split or splitting up into individualized portions, suns torn away by handfuls from an abyss or ocean of kindred orbs, other chaoses curdling into existence, old stars extinguished by a power of which we cannot even conceive, and others hurried to and fro, at a rate so swift, and on a stream of energy so prodigious, as to bewilder and appal us; of the Milky Way, that unbanked river of stars; of the Nebulæ, and their unutterable revelations as to the growth of the universe, and the dim light they cast on its past and future history; of the Sun, and that faint train of zodiacal light which he carries as a finger pointing back to the mode of his creation, and how wonderful it is that he has retained so many thousands of years the heat which he received from

the one Breath, which bade him Be—be bright, be warm, and shine till time be no more ; of the Telescope, that angel-eye, by which man converses with the “loftiest star of unascended heaven ;” of Comets, those nondescript births of our system ; of the probable size of the Creation, a size so stupendous, as to justify the figure of the poet, who compares all we see of it, even through the telescope, to “a drop of dew, filling in the morning new, some eyed flower, whose young leaves waken on an unimagined world :”—Astronomy, which is advancing at a ratio of speed and splendour that promises results of which gravitation was only the germ, and even the discoveries of Herschell, like the May blade to the September corn ; which, even as we write, is telling us, through the approximate solution of the problem of the Stellar Parallax, of suns which are going *faster than their own light*, and of others, so distant from us, that the distance betwixt the earth and Sirius is but one unit in the awful sum of their surpassing and ineffable remoteness ; which, grasping in its giant hand the telescope of Lord Rosse, is about to sound the heavens with a far more powerful plummet than was twenty years ago even imagined ; to thaw down the most obstinate Nebulæ into heavens and “heavens of heavens,” and to see objects in the moon no larger than an ordinary church ; and which, uniting itself with daring chemical science, is venturing to conjecture that all those majestic masses owe their light and heat to mutual and incessant friction, star impinging upon star, as it pursues its eternal way. All this opens up a field so vast and magnificent, that it was impossible for a mind like that of Dr. Chalmers altogether to fail in its exposition. And, so far as the Newtonian astronomy goes, the poetry, as well as the religion of the sky, never found before such a worthy and enthusiastic expounder. Kindling his soul at those “street-lamps in the city of God,”

he descants upon creation in a style of glowing and unaffected ardour. He sets the "Principia" to music. He leaves earth behind him, and now drifts across the red light of Mars; now rests his foot upon the bright bosom of Sirius; now bespeaks the wild comet, and now rushes in to spike the guns of that battery against the Bible, which the bold hands of skeptical speculators have planted upon the stars. But it was reserved for Professor Nichol, as the Aaron to Herschell, the Moses of the science, to meet us at the place where Chalmers left us, and lift us up on subtler and softer pinions into far loftier regions, where imagination reels and breathes hard, as it is met by the chill, clear air of infinity, and sees the universe below it as "one plain, the spaces between its orbs appearing no more than the interstices between grains of dust or sand."

Hazlitt has recorded, with much gusto, his first perusal of Chalmers' enchanting volume, under an apple tree in the garden at Boxhill. We shall not soon forget the time and circumstances in which we first read it, in the solitude of a mountainous country, and at the age of fifteen. Fontenelle had previously taught us the doctrine of a plurality of worlds; but Chalmers drew first fully the curtain from the glories of the creation, and showed our young soul some of the secrets of that abyss which is foaming with worlds. We felt lifted up on his style, as on wings, into those regions "calm, of mild and serene air, where burn the innumerable and eternal stars." We learned, speaking it reverently, to take up earth, and all its isles, as a "very little thing." Such was the effect of the perusal of the first sermon of the series. But, stranger still it was, how those that followed brought back our thoughts and affections to this "dim spot which men call earth," seemed to invest it and its reptile race with a new and awful importance; and how the orator,

by his "so potent art," made the very stars, in their courses, attest the dignity, and set their seal to the hopes of man.

It is worth while recording even such boyish impressions, if they be of that profound and permanent cast which colour after life ; and perhaps one of the most memorable moments in every man's existence is that in which, by whatever hand, the veil of the universe is withdrawn, and the true starry scheme is seen in its unmeasured proportions, and unutterable grandeur. What though the heavens thus seem to "go farther off?" What though the poet laments that childhood's "lovely visions" yield their place to "cold material laws?" Such laws may be material, but they are not cold. They are not dead and sullen principles. They are warm as the light of the orbs which they regulate ; they are living as the inhabitants, if such there be, of the worlds which roll in their sway. It is a proud and lofty moment when the imagination first launches away into that great ocean, every wave in which is a world ! And we shall cherish its memory for ever.

We were not then aware that the logic of these sermons was principally derived from a book entitled the "Gospel its own Witness," by Andrew Fuller ; nor do we even now lay much stress upon the circumstance ; for so may the full and golden grain be traced to the bare and cold seed-corn,—the crowned oak to the acorn ! Andrew Fuller, a cold, acute, clear-headed man, perhaps made out the logic of the thing ; but who supplied the imagination, the passion, the overpowering declamation, all the qualities, in short, which made the book what it is ? They came—whence could they have come, but from the blood and brain of Chalmers ? A similar cry of plagiarism has assailed such names as Shakspeare, Milton, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, and Mirabeau. Shakspeare found, forsooth, his plots in Cynthio's

novels, and the skeleton of some of his speeches in Plutarch ; but where found he his sentiment, his imagery, his language, the flesh and blood with which he clothed those dead bones, and the magic of the word of genius by which he made them living men ? Milton drew, sometimes, out of other men's wells with a golden pitcher, which consecrated and hallowed whatever he drew. Coleridge, in momentary hallucination, copied down some pages of mystic metaphysics from Schelling ; but whence deduced he "Christabel," whence "Kubla Khan," whence aught but the mere germinal idea of the "Aunciente Marinere ?" To what fountain are we to trace the river of his matchless talk ? And from whom did he borrow the tarn of his mysterious eye, or the "rich thunder of his awful voice ?" Scott, too, borrowed, from black letter, every thing,—except his style, his spirit, his sympathies, and his genius. Byron caught up, from the crowd, certain fine floating thoughts, and set them to the proud music of his own song, even as Apollo might be supposed to set earthly tunes to his celestial lyre, or to place arrows cut from the woods of Delphi, upon his own golden bow ; but who lent the "Pythian of the age," "Cain," or "The Corsair," or "The Giaour," or "Don Juan," or those little pieces which are like audible beatings of his own burning heart ? Mirabeau submitted to be primed and loaded by others ; but were they the less pigmies, and he a giant ? Whether is he the author of the flame, who lays down the fuel, or who applies the torch ? Is an orator the less eloquent because he uses common words,—a writer the less powerful because he employs the alphabet,—or a warrior the less brave, who, in a mortal struggle, snatches a dagger from a common soldier, and wields it with his own strong arm ? Dumont supplied Mirabeau with sentiments and speeches ; did he give him his black boar's head, his stamp

of power, the energy of his gesticulation, the lightning of his eye, his short and passionate sentences, "winged with wrath?" Did he stand by him on his death-bed, prompting him with those sublime and terrible bursts which told that a "gigantic Heathen and Titan was stumbling down, undismayed, to his rest?"

And, whether borrowed or not, the logic of the astronomical discourses is not very much to our taste. We have a quarrel with him, first of all, for digging out an obscure objection, and slaying, publicly, what was long before dead and buried. Nor do we think he has stated the skeptical objection so fully and frankly as he might. Here is his version of it:—"Is it likely," says the infidel, "that God would send his Eternal Son to die for the puny occupiers of so insignificant a province in the mighty field of his creation? Are we the befitting objects of so great and so signal an interposition? Does not the largeness of that field, which astronomy lays open to the view of modern science, throw a suspicion over the truth of the Gospel history; and how shall we reconcile the greatness of that wonderful movement which was made in heaven for the redemption of fallen man, with the comparative meanness and obscurity of our species?" Now, perhaps it might be more explicitly stated thus:—It is impossible that he who made all these worlds, should have sent his Son to die for one so insignificant as earth;—that he who created and sustains the universe, should have stooped so far as to beget a son "from the family of David;"—that a field so narrow, should have been selected for God's greatest work;—and that among the innumerable inhabitants of teeming space, God should have selected the insect man for communion the most intimate, and supreme exaltation. "The king of a universe like this," they say, looking up to the stars, "select a Jewish carpenter to be the

vessel of his own indwelling and infinite glory! He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, shrink himself up into the shell of Joseph's reputed son! He who made all these vast worlds, suffer and die on a cross, in the meanest of them all! No! it is an affront to reason,—it is an outrage to common sense,—it is something the absurdity of which no language can express, and the truth of which a miracle could hardly prove." And, to this they sometimes add, "If the universe be so large, why does Scripture not seem apprized of its vastness? If peopled, why does Scripture not inform us with whom?" Such is a fair statement of the objection. And how does Chalmers meet it? By two truisms, and three assumptions. The first truism is, that genuine science is modest,—too modest to dogmatize on the moral history of other worlds,—too modest, he might have added, to dogmatize on the fact of those worlds being peopled at all. Science may, and does hope, that each fair star has its own beautiful and happy race of immortal intelligences; but science does not know. For aught science knows, there may be no immortal intelligences but men in the wide creation. For aught she knows, those suns and systems may be seen only by our eyes, and our telescopes. For aught she knows, the universe may only yet be beginning to be peopled, and earth have been selected as the first spot for the great colonization. The peopling of our own planet was a gradual process; why not that of the universe, of which it is a part? Are appearance and analogy pleaded? Appearance and analogy utter an uncertain sound; for, are not all the continents of the creation seemingly burning masses, uninhabitable by any beings we can conceive of; and do not many of the island-planets appear either too near or too remote from the central blaze, to support animal existence? Here science, therefore, is silent, or utters only a faltering, Perhaps. Is it said, that but for intelligent inhabitants space

would be empty? How empty? asks science, if it contain an entire Deity in its every particle. Is God not society enough for his own creation? Count you a room empty where sits and meditates one immortal man? And can space be empty if the Infinite be every where present within it, though he were present alone? Science, at the same time, grants it probable that much of the universe is peopled already, but she grants no more.

The second truism is, that God, having condescended to create, condescends to care for every being he has made. This was not the question at issue. The real difficulty lay in the mode, and not in the extent of the condescension. The real question was, why did he so condescend? And to this the microscope can return no reply. In fact, if the inquiry were about mere extent, the effect of the revelations of the microscope were to *lessen* the point of David's exclamation, "What is man that thou art mindful of him!" for, assuredly, the series of being discovered below is prodigiously longer than that as yet detected above the human family. In fact, it mattered not to whom the Deity condescended, for the gulf between him and the Archangel is infinite; and that between him and the insect is nothing more. In the strange and stupendous manner of the condescension—the marriage between the finite and the infinite—the creature and the creator, in order to achieve the salvation of the one and increase the glory of the other,—lies the wonder and the mystery; a wonder above the sweep of the telescope—a mystery beneath the microscope's keenest scrutiny. In the fourth discourse, he assumes, without an atom of substantial evidence, that man's moral history is known in distant parts of the creation, because known to angels, who, as ministering spirits, are "walking the earth, unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;" that, as by beacon-fires, all the events which occur in our earth are telegraphed across the universe, to

teach lessons of instruction, and to circulate thrills of warning. How far more likely the idea of Isaac Taylor, that, to secure the more perfect probation of moral beings, space has been broken up into fragments, all insulated from and unknown to each other. In the fifth, he leaps, in a similar way, from the revealed sympathy of angels with men, to the supposition that the creation, in its widest sense, is groaning and travailing, in pain, because of his sin and misery ; a most dismal idea, and destitute of every kind or degree of proof. And, in the sixth, he describes all the intelligent beings of the universe, bending over earth to witness a contest for an ascendancy over man, amongst the higher orders of intelligence ; thus gratuitously transferring anxiety and suspense, and other earthly, if not evil feelings, to the inhabitants of those high and serene stars, which seem so happy in their clearness, their order, their multitude, and their immortality. And this is really all the argument which those famed discourses contain !

We think, with submission, that the true way of meeting this objection, had been by asserting the ineffable dignity of that human spirit which the Son of God died to redeem. The creation, large as it is, magnificent as it is, is not equal in grandeur and value to one immortal spirit. Majestic the universe ; but can it think or feel, imagine or reason ? “ Talk to me of the sun ! ” one might say ; “ he is not alive : he is but a dead luminary after all. But I am alive ; I never was dead ; I never can die : and I could therefore put my foot upon that proud orb, and say, ‘ I am greater than thou ! ’ The sun cannot understand the geometry of his own motion, or read the laws of his own radiating light. I can do both ; and am therefore immeasurably greater than the sun. The sun cannot, with all his rays, write on flower or grass, or the broad page of ocean, the name of his Maker : a child of

seven can, and is therein greater than the sun. The sun cannot, from all his vast surface, utter an articulate sound : he is dumb in his magnificence ; but “ out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God perfects praise.” The sun cannot love one of the planets which revolve around his ray ; I can love all being : nay, were my heart large enough, could ‘ clasp the universe to my breast, and keep it warm.’ The sun shall perish ; but I have that within me that shall never die. ‘ The sun is but a spark of fire,—a transient meteor in the sky,—but I, immortal as his sire, shall never die.’ And if greater than the sun, I am greater than the whole material universe. It indeed ‘ might arise and crush me ; but I would know it was destroying me, while it would crush unconsciously.’ The universe may be too great now for the grasp of my intellect ; but my mind, I feel, can grow to grasp it. The universe, in fact, is only the nursery to my infant soul ; and whether is greater, the nursery or the child ? The universe—you may call it what you please ; you may lavish epithet after epithet of splendour upon it if you please, but you cannot call it one thing—you cannot call it a spirit : and if not a spirit, it is but a great and glorious clod. But I am a spirit, though a spirit disguised ; an immortality, though an immortality veiled ; a beam from the Father of Lights, though a beam that has gone astray ; and therefore do I dare to predicate, even of my own fallen nature, that it is of more dignity, and grandeur, and value, than the whole creation ; and that, to save no more than me, it had been worth while for the Saviour to have descended and to have died.”

His subordinate works—his Evidences, his Tron Church, and St. John’s, and Occasional Discourses, &c. &c. &c.—are all marked by the same peculiarities : the prominence of one idea, round which, as round a solar atom, cluster and

gravitate a thousand lesser particles of illustration and image ; incessant and furious movement, without progress ; his mind "turning on hinges, not wheels," but then the hinges are golden ; a trick of confronting opposite ideas so pertinaciously, that they seem ashamed of looking so long in each other's faces ; an emphasis, given frequently, as by the intonations of madness, to common truths ; "argument wrought out always, not in frost but in fire ;" a lavish supply of loose and dissonant diction ; a perpetual and systematic appeal to the "artful aid of alliteration ;" a melody in the general result of the style, strangely coexisting with barbarous discord in its particular parts ; sentences of breathless movement, and portentous length, rolling and revolving systematically, as if their motion were balanced between the centripetal and centrifugal forces ; a riveting interest, which drags you after him, go wherever he will ; and an air of frank, fearless earnestness, which secures to all his writings the charm and expression of "a bright-eyed face that laughs out openly."

Among his separate single sermons, we prefer that "On Cruelty to Animals," as the purest in style, and the most elevated in sentiment. One sentence from it, of perfect beauty, has lingered in our memory—"The lioness, robbed of her whelps, makes the wilderness to ring aloud with the proclamation of her wrongs ; and the bird whose little household has been stolen, fills and saddens all the grove with melodies of deepest pathos." Such sentences, so simple and so memorable, are, it must be confessed, rare in his writings.

From the questions connected with his political and Church career, we must abstain. His great fault has ever been, that his brain has been a caravansera of crotchets. Indeed, considering the ready welcome he has always given to each new, intellectual guest, our wonder is, that his course

has not been much more erratic, capricious, and inconsistent.

It can hardly be necessary to do more than allude to the events of his life, or to the manner of his public speaking. He was born in Anstruther, Fife, and educated at St. Andrews, where he distinguished himself much in the mathematical and chemical classes. When licensed to preach the gospel, he was settled in the parish of Kilmeny, the kirk of which stands so picturesquely among its embosoming woods, and by its still, rural burying-place. There, for many years, he is said to have paid more attention to his philosophical studies than to his flock. A story is yet current in Fife, that he was one Sabbath, during the interval of service, botanizing in the woods, when the bells rung for church. Huddling on his hat, full of specimens, earth, &c., he ran to the pulpit; but, as he went up the stair, imprudently took it off, and the grasses and flowers, tumbling about his ears, betrayed the secret of his unclerical pursuits to his gaping congregation. Some time ere leaving Kilmeny, a remarkable change took place in his character and deportment. Partly through the circumstance of being requested to write on the "Evidences of Christianity," for the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, his mind was deeply and permanently impressed with a sense of religion. He felt that his preaching had hitherto been a "sham." With characteristic determination, he altered it from its foundation. Ceasing to be an "Ape of Epictetus," he became, for the first time, a preacher of Christ crucified. The consequence was, that his popularity not only increased in the district, but far cities began to hear of his fame. After preaching some overwhelming public sermons in Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, &c., he was translated to the Tron Church in the last-named city. Here he was attended by great crowds; and, by all

accounts, his preaching deserved its popularity. Those who heard him, have told us, that we have no idea of what he was then from his more recent exhibitions. He "laid about him like a man inspired." He spoke with the freshness and fervour of one to whom all things had become new. His eye seemed to see the invisible. His body trembled and panted under the burden of the present God. He proclaimed openly and aloud the nuptials of science and faith. He took up the peculiarities of Calvinism, and bound them as a crown unto him. He assailed the money-loving and the skeptical spirit which then prevailed in our western metropolis. He set in motion, at the same time, a thousand schemes of benevolence. Glasgow was planet-struck: its gayest and most dissipated young men were arrested, and hung upon his lips like "bees on mountain flowers." It became suddenly a religious, or at least, an ecclesiastical city, and with all its mills and machineries, seemed to revolve for a season round the one pulpit of Chalmers. Not the least striking tribute to the power of his eloquence were the tears which he drew from Professor Young's old eyes! It was fine, they say, to see the stern Grecian's face, first radiant with rapture, and then dissolved and bedewed, under the power of an eloquence still higher than his own. His subsequent translation to St. John's, his removal to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in St. Andrews, the impulse he gave to that stagnant and grass-grown city, his transference to the Divinity Chair of Edinburgh, &c., are well known.

As a divine, his reputation is not of the highest order. He has cast no new light upon any topic within the range of the science. He is not a master of Exegesis: his critical knowledge of the Scriptures is limited. A plain and practical logician upon theological topics, his temperament forbids him ever to be. A profound metaphysician he is not called

by his warmest admirers. What is he to Jonathan Edwards, that master of metaphysical theology ; or to Paley, so profoundly versed in the "Christian Evidences ;" or to Andrew Thomson, in all that constitutes a proficient in Christian dialectics ; or to Barrow, in quantity and compass of thought ; or to Horsley, in ease and vigour of style ; or to Jeremy Taylor, in the richness and splendour of illustration ; or to Leighton, in the sweetness and savour of practical bearing ? And yet, as a divinity professor, we grant him much merit. Called by circumstances, rather than choice, to the theological chair, unprepared by previous training and habits of study, for its peculiar duties, he yet resolutely set himself and the resources of his mind to "do what he could." He read, and he made his students read. He taught himself while instructing them. He relieved the occasional sameness of his own style and imagery, by large and grateful excerpts from leading theological writers. He threw the glow of his genius into all that was done. He shook from the professorial chair the dust of ages. He evoked the spirit of great departed worthies. His enthusiasm became infectious : the most commonplace of his students caught it. The more ambitious "out-Heroded Herod" in imitations of his style, and manner, and voice.

Many who strove to imitate his flight,
With weaker wing, unearthly fluttering made.

Still much good was done, and an impression produced which has formed an era in the history of the Scottish Church, and of the entire religious world.

His appearance and mode of speaking have been often described. His eye, especially when excited, has a gray glare of insanity about it ; his brow is broad rather than lofty ; his step quick and eager ; his accents fast and hurry-

ing ; his pronounciation barbarous ; his gesture awkward ; his delivery monotonous ; but, need we say ? all these defects are forgotten and drowned in the fierce and rapid stream of his eloquence. We have seen his face flushing up, like crystal goblet when filled with wine, as he warmed with his theme : his eye the while almost starting out of its socket, as if determined, in spite of itself, to become eloquent. No one quotes poetry with more effect, and we have heard him give to a doggerel hymn an effect almost sublime. In private he is the most benign and cordial of men : a generous critic, and a warm sympathizer with every species of genuine excellence. Altogether, though with many of his peculiar views we do not coincide ; though with the flatteries of his parasites we do not agree ; though we do not think him a Jeremy Taylor, nor a Barrow, nor a Chrysostom, nor a Burke ; we are free to confess, that he is a good, a wise, an honest, and a great man.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

THOMAS CARLYLE is the truest Diogenes of these times. Pushed aside by the strong hand of a peculiar genius into a corner, he has thence marked and remarked strangely, angularly, yet truly, upon man and the universe ; and to that corner men are now beginning to flock, and the tub is towering into an oracle, and those rugged flame-words are fast becoming law ! In the course of his career, his mind has gone through two different phases. In the first he was little more than the chief interpreter between the German and the English mind ; in the second, he has "shot upwards like a pyramid of fire," into a gigantic original. In the first, he was only a distinguished member of the corps litteraire ; in the

second, he has started from the ranks, and become a separate and independent principality in the kingdom of letters. We propose to include both those aspects in our notice.

It is a well-known saying of Jean Paul Richter, that, while the French have the dominion of the land, and the English of the sea, to the Germans belongs the empire of the air: they inhabit "cloudland, gorgeous land." Repelled from earth by the flat and dreary prospects of their country, they have taken refuge, now in the abysses of infinity, and now in the abysses of their own strange and speculative intellects. Their poetry, their philosophy, and their religion, are all dreams; scientifically constructed, indeed, and gorgeously coloured, but still dreams of the wildest and most mystic character. These peculiarities they have carried, not merely into their romances, epics, and psychological treatises, but into their books of science; their practical works, nay, for aught we know, their very spelling-books are tinged by the same hue, and, perhaps, like the primer of the unfortunate schoolmaster, commemorated by Dr. Johnson, dedicated to the universe! Intermixed with such singularities, which stamp a cloudy character upon the literature of Germany, we need not, at this time of day, dilate upon its conspicuous merits; its depth, its truth, its splendour of imagination; its fine blending of the romantic and the everyday in sentiment, and of grandeur and simplicity in style; its reverent fearlessness, or its infinite variety. Nor need we enlarge on its principal writers: the strong simplicity of Lessing; the "burning frore" of Bürger; the mellow diffusion of Klopstock; the voluptuous grace and laughing devil of Wieland; Schlegel's aspiring æsthetics; Schiller's high-wrought enthusiasm; Goëthe's profound calm, like the light of sculpture or of snow; and the tumultuous glories of style and image, the warmth of all-embracing charity, the soft,

cheerful piety, the boundless fancy, the rambling, riotous energy which glistened in the eye, reigned in the heart, and revelled on the page, of Jean Paul Richter, that German of the Germans, the most perfect specimen of the powers and peculiarities of that country, which he loved so dearly.

There was a time when, if simple and humble folks like ourselves had talked in this style, we should instantly have been ranked with the Germans themselves, at the foot of the gamut of existence, or rather, on the frontier line which separates the reasonable from the insane. Who has *changé tout cela*? Who has redeemed Germans, and the admirers of the German mind, from the coarse stigmas which had been so long affixed to their names? Who has bridged across the gulf which divided us from the huge continent of their literature? Thomas Carlyle, in his first character as translator and illustrator of the German poetic sages. Not that he did it by his single arm: he was anticipated by Coleridge, and strongly backed, if not preceded by De Quincey, Moir, and others; but, notwithstanding, that German literature is no longer a sealed book, but an open fountain, and that German intellect has been at length fairly appreciated among us, we believe to be mainly owing to his persevering and undaunted efforts. And to this end, his very errors, and exaggerations, and over-estimates, and too obvious emulation of some of the faults of his favourites, have contributed.

Carlyle is a Scottish German: he has grafted on a strong original stock of Scottish earnestness, simplicity, shrewdness, and humour, much of the mysticism, exaggeration, and eccentricity of his adopted country. Even though he had never read a page of the Teutonic grammar, he would have been distinguished as a man of original powers, profound sincerity, and indomitable perseverance. But, having studied and swam, for years together, in the sea of German learning,

like a leviathan, he has become a literary monster, German above and Scottish below. The "voice is Jacob's, the hands are Esau's." He is a hybrid. The main tissue of his mind is homely worsted; but he has dyed it in the strangest colours, derived from Weimar and Bayreuth. Endued by nature with a "strong in-kneed soul," and fitted to be a prose Burns, he has become a British Richter. We have sometimes doubted if he did not *think in German*. Assuredly, he writes in it, uses its idioms, practises its peculiarities of construction; not merely defends, but exemplifies its most daring liberties, and spreads his strong wing over its glaring defects. Although possessed of undoubted originality, he long contented himself with being a gigantic echo-cliff to the varied notes of the German lyre, rendering back its harsh discords, as well as its soft and soul-like sounds. And here lies at once the source of his defects and his merits. One who is unacquainted with German authors, reads Carlyle with the utmost amazement: he is so utterly different from every other writer; his unmeasured sentences; his irregular density; his electric contrasts; his startling asseverations; his endless repetitions; the levity in which his most solemn and serious statements seem to swim; the air of mild, yet decisive scorn, with which he tosses about his thoughts and characters, and the incidents of his story; the unearthly lustre at which he shows his shifting panoramas; his peculiar, and patched-up dialect; the singular terms and terminations which he uses, in unscrupulous abundance; the far and foreign strain of his allusions and associations; the recondite profundity of his learning; and those bursts of eloquent mysticisms which alternate with yet wilder bursts of uncontrollable mirth and fuliginous irony,—produce an "altogetherness" of impression exceedingly startling. But, to one acquainted with German, the mystery is explained.

Some, at least, of the peculiarities we have mentioned, are seen to be those of a whole literature, not of a solitary *litterateur*; and he who laughs at Carlyle must be prepared to extend his derision to the sum and substance of German genius. Still we doubt, along with Johnson, Foster, and critics of equal name, if any human understanding has a right to form, whether by affectation, or imitation, or translation, a dialect entirely and ostentatiously singular. A peculiar diction, it is true, has been considered by some one of the immunities of intellectual sovereignty; but he who adopts a uniformly uncommon mode of enunciating his ideas, and, still more, he who transplants his style from a foreign country, does it at his peril, subjects himself to ugly and unjust charges, injures his popularity and influence, and must balance the admiration of the initiated few, with the neglect or disgust of the ignorant or malignant many.

But the defects to which we have referred, being chiefly of style and manner, rarely of substance, and never of spirit, form but a feeble counterpoise to his merits; his "pictorial omnipotence;" his insight into the motives and minds of men; his art of depicting character, often by one lightning word; his sardonic and savage humour; his intense hatred of the false, and love of the true; his bursts of indignant declamation and spiritual pathos; his sympathies with all power which is genuine; all genius which is unaffected, and all virtue which is merciful; his philosophy, at once mystic and homely,—obscure, indeed, in its premises, but most practical in its results; and, above all, that almost religious earnestness which casts over all his writings the shadow of deep seriousness. We know not what Carlyle's creed may be, but we honour his reverence for the religious principle in man. No one has a deeper sense of the Infinite and of the Eternal; no one has knelt with more solemn awe, under the soul-

quelling shadow of the universe, or looked up with a more adoring eye to the "silent immensity and palace of the Eternal, of which our sun is but a porch-lamp." No one has expressed a higher reverence for the "Worship of Sorrow;" and it was "worth a thousand homilies" to hear him, as we were privileged to do, talking for four miles of moonlit road, with his earnest, sagacious voice, of religion, baring, ever and anon, his head, as if in worship, amid the warm, slumberous August air. His intimacy with such men as Irving, Thomas Erskine, and Scott of Woolwich, is itself a voucher for his sincerity. And who that has read his spiritual autobiography in "Sartor," whether he adopt or understand his conclusions or not, can resist admiration for the intense fervour, and the awful struggle discovered in that immortal search?

A singular change, indeed, has, within these few years, taken place in the religious sentiments of literary men. Five-and-twenty, or even fifteen years ago, what was the spectacle? Literature and faith at variance: the leading Review of the country steeped so strongly in a cold materialistic skepticism, that pious men took it up with hesitation, and laid it down with disgust; the great body of literateurs either the fierce and open enemies, or the secret and insidious assailants of revealed truth; and, on the other hand, the religious public loathing that literature of which Byron and the Edinburgh reviewers were at the head, anathematizing its idols, and carefully excluding its style, and spirit, and sentiment, from the most distant contact with their own productions and periodicals. 'Twas a divorce, or rather exorcization; the spirit of religion having been cast out of literature, the religious revenged themselves by casting out the spirit of literature from religion. The consequence was, as might have been foreseen, the production of a brilliant but unbap-

tized science, a splendid but Satanic poetry, a witty but wicked criticism on the one side, and of a feeble, fanatical, illiberal, intolerant, religious literature on the other. Thus, both parties suffered from their separation ; but religion most. Such *was* the case : it is very different now. Advances towards a reconciliation have been made. Men of letters, in general, have dropt their animosities to religion, and, if they have not all yet given in their adherence to any particular form of Christianity, they are seeking truth, and have turned their faces in the proper direction. The Reviews now, without exception, speak of religion with affection or respect. That sneering, cold-blooded, Gibbonic style, once the rage, has withered out of our literature. Meanwhile, we admit, that the religious community is not reciprocating good understanding so fully as we would wish. There is still too much of jealousy and fear in the aspect with which they regard the literature and science of the day. Why should it be so ? Why should two powers, so similar, not interchange amicable offices ? Why should two chords, placed so near in the Æolian harp of creation, not sound in harmony ? Why should two sunbeams, both derived from the same bright eternal source, not mingle their radiance ?

But to return to Carlyle : the first light in which he appeared before the public, was as a translator. He is more faithful in his versions than Coleridge ; but inferior in the resources of style, and in that irrepressible originality which was ever sparkling out from the poet, communicating new charms to the beautiful, new terrors to the dreadful, and adding graces which his author never gave. If Coleridge must be confessed to have plagiarized from the German, it ought not to be forgotten that he returned what he stole with interest, and has, in translating improved, beautified, and filled up the ideal of Schiller.

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Besides "Wilhelm Meister," (a work which, by the way, contains, according to Carlyle and Edward Irving, the best character of Christ ever written,) he has published specimens of the German novels, accompanied by critical notices, which, though inferior to his after works in power and peculiarity, are quite equal, we think, to any thing he has written, in subtlety of discrimination, and superior in simplicity and idiomatic beauty of language. Carlyle's style was then not so deeply tinged with its idiosyncratic qualities, and in the *mare magnum* of Teutonic literature he had only as yet dipped his shoe. He was then obliged to conform more to the tastes and understandings of his readers. Ever since, although his thinking has been getting more independent and profound, and his eloquence more earnest and overpowering, his diction has certainly not improved.

His "Miscellanies," recently collected, appeared principally in the Edinburgh, Foreign, and Foreign Quarterly Reviews. Though full of faults, and all a-blaze with the splendid sins of their author's diction, they are nevertheless masterpieces of wit and wisdom, of strength and brilliance; the crushed essence of thought is in them, and the sparkling foam of fancy; and in their truthfulness, enthusiasm, and barbaric vigour, they leave on us the impression of something vast, abysmal, obscure, and formidable. Indeed, were a mountain to speak, or, to use his own bold language, "were the rocks of the sea to burst silence, and to tell what they had been thinking on from eternity," we imagine they would speak in some such rugged and prodigious style. Amid his many papers in *The Edinburgh*, we prefer his first on "Jean Paul," dear, dreaming, delirious Jean Paul, who used to write in the same poor apartment where his mother and sisters cooked, and his pigeons cooed, and they all huddled; who was seldom seen on the street without a flower on his

breast ; who, when once he visited Schiller, dressed fantastically in green, complained, poor fellow, that he frowned him off from his brow, "as from a precipice;" who taught wisdom after the maddest fashion yet known among men,—now recreating under the "cranium of a giantess," and now selecting from the "papers of the devil,"—but whose works are at once the richest and the deepest in the German language, glittering above like the spires of Golconda, and concealing below treasures sumless as the mines of Peru. The article excited at the time (1826) a sensation. Not merely was it a splendid piece of writing, but it was the first which fairly committed the Review in favour of that German taste and genius which it had been reviling from its commencement ; the first thunderbolt to the old regime of criticism, and the first introduction to the English public of the name and character and writings of one of the most extraordinary men which an age, fertile in real and in pretended prodigies, has hitherto produced.

Next to this we love his panegyric on Burns, written as he sojourned in the neighbourhood of that district which derives its glory and its shame from the memory of the great poet. We recalled it keenly to memory as, in his own company, we gazed with deep emotion upon Burns' house in Dumfries,—the scene of the dread tragedy which was transacted there while the still gold of an autumnal sunset was gilding its humble roof, and touching the window through which had so often rolled and glowed the ardent eye of the poet—the poet of whom Scotia, while "pale" with grief at his errors, is proud to ecstasy as she repairs to his honoured grave—whose tongue was only a produced heart, and whose heart loved all that he saw, from the sun to the sickle which he grasped in his hot hand ; from the star of his Mary to the mousie running from his ploughshare—whose soul, by the

side of a sounding wood, "rose to Him that walketh on the wings of the wind"—who, "walking in glory and joy behind his plough upon the mountain side," generally drew that joy from nature, and that glory from song,—whose dust, in its tomb, turns and shivers at the name "drunkard," which mean, or malignant, or prejudiced, or misinformed men have vainly sought to inscribe upon it—over whose follies and sins, all of them occasional, and none habitual or inveterate, let a mantle be drawn, warm as his own heart, bright as his own genius, and ample as his own understanding! Carlyle, like Wilson, always rises above himself when he speaks of Burns. And the secret is, that both see and love the man, as well as admire the poet. Altogether, indeed, Burns has been fortunate in his critics, although Jeffrey did try to trip up his heels, and Wordsworth made but a clumsy attempt to break his fall, forgetting that such an attempt was needless, for, falling at the plough, where could he light but on the fresh, soft, strong earth, and how could he rise but in the attitude of an Antæus?

His paper on the "Signs of the Times," contains an exposition of the difference between a mechanical and a dynamical age—ingenious, but hardly just. We wonder that a man of Carlyle's calibre can chime in with the cant against mechanism, raised by "mechanical salt butter rogues." Men, it is true, now-a-days, use more machines than they did, but are they therefore more machines themselves? Was James Watt an automaton? Has the Press become less an object of wonder or fear since it was worked by steam? Imagination, even, and mechanism are good friends. How sublime the stoppage of a mail as the index of rebellion? Luther's Bible was printed by a machine. The organ, as it heaves up earth's only fit reply to the thunder, is but a machine. A mechanical age! What do its steam carriages

convey? Is it not newspapers, magazines, reviews, poems? Are they not in this way the conductors of the fire of intellect and passion? Is not mechanism just the short-hand of poetry? Thomas Carlyle fears that the brood hen will yet be superseded! We deem this fear superfluous, and for our parts, never expect to sup on steam chickens, or breakfast on steam-laid eggs.

His last paper in *The Edinburgh* (save one on Ebenezer Elliott) was entitled "Characteristics," and of its author at least was eminently characteristic. It might, in fact, be proposed as a *Pons Asinorum* to all those who presume to approach the study of this remarkable man. It adds all the peculiarities of his philosophy to all the peculiarities of his style, and the result is a bit of pure unmixed Carlylism, which many of his admirers dote on as a fragment of heaven-born philosophy, and his detractors defame as a slice of chaos, but which we value principally as a revelation of the man. Whatever were its merits, it proved too strong and mystic food for the ordinary readers of *The Edinburgh*, and led, we have heard, to his withdrawal from its arena.

At an earlier date than this appeared his "Life of Schiller," a stately, rotund, and eloquent composition, of which its author is said now to be a little ashamed. We can see no more reason for this than for the preference which he since habitually gives to Goethe above the Author of "The Robbers."

We retain, too, a lively memory of a paper on Diderot, embodying a severe and masterly dissection of that brilliant charlatan—of another, containing a *con amore* account of Mirabeau—of various articles on Goethe—and of a paper on Sir Walter Scott, where we find his familiar features shown us in a new and strange light, as if in the gleam of an apothecary's evening window.

To *Fraser's Magazine* he has contributed much—among other things, a review of Croker's "Boswell," "The Diamond Necklace," &c. In the print of the "Fraserians," his face was not forgotten, though, amid the boisterous revelry, and waggish worldly countenances around, it seemed woefully out of place. We asked ourselves as we gazed, what business has that still, earnest, spiritual face there? And we put the same query still more strongly about two others included in the same scene,—Coleridge, with his great gray misty eyes, like an embodied abstraction; and Edward Irving, with his black locks tangled in gorgonic confusion, and in his eye the glare of insanity contending with the fire of coming death!

In Fraser also (much to the annoyance of a sapient nobleman, who asked the publisher when that "stupid series of articles by the tailor were to be done?") appeared the first draught of "Sartor Resartus." We have only of late become acquainted with this singular production, but few books have ever moved us more. It turned up our whole soul like a tempest. It reminded us of nothing so much as of Bunyan's *Autobiography*. With a like dreadful earnestness does Carlyle describe his pilgrimage from the "Everlasting No" of darkness and defiance—his City of Destruction—on to that final Beulah belief, that "Blessedness is better than happiness," which he calls the "Everlasting Yea," and on which, as on a pillow, he seems disposed to rest his head against eternity. In writing it, he has written, not his own life alone, but the spiritual history of many thinking and sincere men of the time. Whoever has struggled with doubts and difficulties almost to strangling—whoever has tossed for nights upon his pillow, and in helpless wretchedness cried out with shrieks of agony to the God of heaven—whoever has covered with his cloak a Gehenna of bitter dis-

appointment and misery, and walked out, nevertheless, firm, and calm, and silent, among his fellow-men—whoever has mourned for “all the oppressions which are done under the sun,” and been “mad for the sight of his eyes that he did see”—whoever has bowed down at night upon his pillow, in the belief that he was the most wretched and God-forsaken of mortal men—whoever has felt all the “wanderer in his soul,” and a sense of the deepest solitude, even when mingling in the business and the crowded thoroughfares of his kind—whoever at one time has leaned over the precipices of Mount Danger, and at another adventured a step or two on that dreary path of destruction, “which led to a wide field full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell, and rose no more;” and at a third, walked a gloom amid the glooms of the Valley and the shadow of death—whoever has at last attained, not peace, not happiness, not assurance, but child-like submission, child-like faith, and meek-eyed “blessedness”—let him approach, and study, and press to his breast, and carry to his bed, and bedew with his tears, Sartor Resartus, and bless the while its brave and true-hearted author. But whoever has not had a portion of this experience, let him pass on—the book has nothing to say to him, and he has nothing to do with the book. It is above him like a star—it is apart from him like a spirit. Let him laugh at it if he will—abuse it if he will—call it German trash, transcendental Neologism, if he will—only let him not read it. Its sweet and solemn “Evangel”—its deep pathos—its earnestness—its trenchant and terrible anatomy of not the least singular or least noble of human hearts—its individual passages and pictures, unsurpassed in power and grandeur, as that of the Night Thoughts of Teufelsdröckh, when he sat in his high attic, “alone with the stars”—the description of his appearance on the North Cape, “behind him all Europe and

Asia fast asleep, and before him the silent immensity and Palace of the Eternal, to which our sun is but a porch lamp"—the discovery to him of the glories of nature, as he felt for the "first time that she was his mother and divine"—his wanderings in vain effort to "escape from his own shadow"—the picture of the power and mystery of symbols—with all this, what has he, the reader of "Martin Chuzzlewit" and "The New Monthly," to do? Let him go, however, and chuckle over the sketch of the "worst of all possible Universities," Edinburgh, as Carlyle found it, and its picture of the two sects,—of dandies and poor Irish slaves. *These* he may comprehend and enjoy, but the other!—

We like his "Lectures on Heroes and Hero Worship," principally as a specimen of his conversational powers. They are just his recorded talk—the eloquent droppings of his mind. To them we could refer all who have never met him, and who would wish to form some idea of his conversation—the richest and strongest essence we ever took in withal. They were delivered to a very select audience, including six bishops, many clergymen, fashionable ladies, and the elite of the literature of London. The lecturer appeared at first somewhat timid, irresolute, bowed down, whether before the weight of the subject, or the imposing aspect of the audience, but soon recovered his self-possession; gradually, in the fine old Puritanic phrase, became "enlarged;" and was enabled, in firm, manly, flowing, almost warbling accents, to utter the truth and the feeling which were in him. The Lectures themselves contain many "strange matters." How he heats the old mythologies, and expiscates the meaning which lay within their cloudy wrappages! How he paints "Canopus shining down upon the wild Ishmaelish man, with its blue spiritual brightness, like an eye from the depths of immensity!" What desperate battle he does for that

“deep-hearted son of the wilderness, with the black, beaming eyes,” Mahomet, till you say with Charles Lamb, who, after listening to a long harangue in defence of him of Mecca, by an enthusiastic youth, asked as they were taking their hats to leave the house, “Where have you put your turban?” And how thoroughly does he sympathize with the severe and saturnine graces of Dante,—with Shakspeare’s kind-hearted laughter,—with Johnson’s rugged honesty,—with Rousseau’s fantastic earnestness,—with Napoleon’s apocalyptic revelation of the power and mystery of force,—and above all, with Cromwell’s iron-handed and robust unity of purpose. The great moral fault of the book is, that he idolizes energy and earnestness in themselves, and apart from the motives in which they move, and the ends to which they point.

“Chartism,” and “Past and Present,” are valuable as revealing many of the darker symptoms of our political and social disease. The remedy is nowhere to be found within them. It is characteristic of Carlyle, that he not unfrequently tantalizes his reader by glimpses, rather than satisfies him by distinct masses of thought. Does a difficulty occur? He shows every ordinary mode of solution to be false, but does not supply the true. Is a character to be described? He often, after darting scorn upon all common conceptions of it, leaves it to shift for itself, or only indicates his opinion. Why is this? Is he like Horne Tooke, who used to start puzzling questions at the Sunday meetings of his friends, and deferred their solution, that he might have the pleasure of keeping them in suspense till a week had revolved? Or is it, that he is only endowed with an energy of destruction, and is rather a tornado to overturn, than an architect to build? One message, at any rate, has been given him above all other men to deliver,—that of human ignorance. He is the prophet at once of the power and the weakness, the

greatness and the littleness of man. Fixing his foot firmly on the extreme limit of what man *kens* and *cans*, he tells him in one oracular voice what he kens and what he kens not, nor ever in this world shall ken—what he cans and what he cans not, nor ever on this side eternity can. “Know thyself! thyself thou wilt never know—know thy work, which were more to the purpose.” “Know God! it will take thee, I suspect, to eternity to learn even the rudiments of this awful knowledge; more to the point to know what God bids thee do, and to do it.” “Know Nature! never! thou mayest babble about electricity, for instance, but what is it? whence comes it? whither goes it? Thou canst not tell; but thou canst tell how to elevate thy lightning rod, and how to make the terrible thing, though all the while it remain a mystery to thee, to trickle along it tamely, as a woman’s tear.” Thus we paraphrase the avowed purpose of this prophet of the “Age of Tools.” It is, as with the precision and insight of a visitor from another world, to declare the business of man’s life, and to settle the boundaries of man’s understanding.

“The French Revolution, a History,” as his largest, and in every way his greatest work, we have reserved for a more lengthened criticism. We must premise, that our remarks concern it merely as a literary production, not as a historical work. We are not qualified to decide as to the accuracy of its matter-of-fact details. But we flatter ourselves that we are not unable to appreciate its merit, as the moralizing of a great and peculiar mind on the most singular series of transactions that earth ever saw—the most enormous “world-whirlpool” which ever boiled, and raved, and cast its bloody spray far up into the black hollow of night! The first thing that struck us about it, was the strangeness of the titles of its chapters. All of them are entitled, not as in the common way, from the principal event recorded therein, but

from some one word or phrase in the beginning, middle, or end, which has hit the writer's fancy, and given him an outlet for his peculiar sarcasm, such as "Astræa Redux;" "Astræa Redux without cash;" "Flame Picture;" "Danton no weakness;" "Go down to." If this be affectation, thought we, it is a new and a very clever kind of it. The best way of seeing the force and fun of these titles, is by reading them by themselves right down—no shrinking—from "Louis the Well-beloved" to "Vendemiare." We remember a heroic youth, who stated his intention of reading all Gibbon's notes apart from the text, for the sake of the learning crushed and crammed into them. The task of reading Carlyle's titles were easier, and far more amusing. Our next subject of wonder was the style, which reads as though the writer had sat down deliberately to caricature his former works. It could only be adequately described by itself. Fuliginous-flaming, prose-poetic, mock-heroic-earnest, Germanic-Scotch, colloquial-chaotic, satiric-serious, luminous-obscure—all these epithets are true, and equally true of it, and of it alone. We read part of it to a person the other day, who, at every other sentence, cried out, "The man's mad." We read on, till we shook him soul and body by its power. We noticed, too, concerning this same strange style, that it is a style now, at all events, necessary to the man's mind, and no more affected than Jean Paul's, Johnson's, and Milton's, and like theirs may be called the "hurley-burley nonsense of a giant, not to be used with impunity by any one less"—that it is a style, indeed, defying imitation, except in its glaring defects—and that on all great occasions it rises above its faults, throws them off as men do garments in a mortal struggle, and reaches a certain purity, and displays a naked nerve, and produces a rugged music. We observed, too, that it is a style in intense keeping with the

subject. Deep calleth unto deep. Demogorgon paints chaos. A turbid theme requires a turbid style. To write the story of the French revolution demanded a pen of a cloudy and colossal character, which should despise petty beauties, and lay iron grasp on the more prominent points. How would the whirling movements, the giddy and dream-like mutations, the gigantic virtues, and the black atrocities of intoxicated France, bear to be represented in neat and classical language, in measured and balanced periods, in the style of a state paper, or in the fripperies of brilliant antithesis? Who would like to see the dying gladiator, or the Laocoon, clothed in the mode of the day? No! show us them naked, or if ornaments be added, let them be severe and stony, in keeping with the terrible original. So Carlyle's style, from its very faults, its mistiness, its repetitions, its savage boldness, its wild humour blent with yet wilder pathos, its encircling air of ridicule, its startling abruptness, itself a revolution, is fitted better than the simple style of Scott, or the brilliant invective of Burke, or the unhealthy heat and laboured splendour of Hazlitt, to mirror in its unequal but broad surface, the scenery and circumstances of the wondrous era. Its great sin as a narrative is, that it presumes too much on the reader's previous acquaintance with the details of the period, and deals more in glancing allusion than in direct statement.

We noticed, too, and felt its enthralling interest. Once you are accustomed to the manner and style, you will find no historian who casts stronger ligaments of interest around you. We have heard an instance of this. Sir William Hamilton got hold of the book about three in the afternoon. He began to read, and could not lay it aside till four in the morning—thirteen hours at a stretch. We know nothing like this since the story of Sir Joshua Reynolds reading the

“Life of Savage” in a country inn, standing till his arm was stiff, cold, and glued to the mantel-piece. Like the suction of a whirlpool, the book draws you in, whether you will or no. Its very faults, like scars on the face of a warrior, contribute to rivet your attention. And even to those familiar with the events of the period, every thing seems new in the glare of Carlyle’s savage genius. We noticed, too, its epic character. It has been well called the epic poem, rather than the History of the Revolution. The author, ere writing it, seems to have read over, not Thucydides, but Homer, and truly the old Homeric fire burns in its every chapter. Sometimes it is mock-heroic rather than epic, and reminds us more of Fielding’s introductory chapters, or the better parts of Ossian, than of Melesigenes. But its spirit is epic, its figures are epic, its epithets are epic, and above all, its repetitions are quite in Homer’s way. The description of Louis’s flight is a fine episode, kindling in parts into highest poetry, as when he says, “O Louis, this all around thee is the great slumbering earth, and over head the great watchful Heaven. But right ahead, the great north-east sends up evermore his gray brindled dawn; from dewy branch, birds here and there, with short deep warble, salute the coming sun. Stars fade out, and galaxies, street lamps in the city of God. The universe, O my brother, is flinging wide its portals for the levee of the great high king.” And though the age of epics be gone, yet if histories like those of Carlyle take their place, we can have no reason to mourn their departure. Like Chapman, he “speaks out loud and bold.” He tramples upon petty beauties, and the fear of petty blemishes, and the shame of leaving a sentence unpolished, and the pride of rounding off a period, and all the miserable millineries of an artificial style. His strength, as that of every

genuine epic poet should, does not lie in the elegance and polish of particular parts, so much as in the grand general result and merit of the whole. One bad or middling line is unpardonable in a sonnet or epigram; but a hundred such cannot hurt the effect of a lengthened poem. So Carlyle, leaving minuteness of finish to the Lilliputians of literature—to the authors of single sermons, short articles, &c.—contents himself with throwing forth from his “fire-bosom” a gigantic *tout ensemble*. Undoubtedly, were he to combine delicacy with energy of execution, Titanic power with Pygmæan polish, he were a far more perfect and popular writer. But how few have exhibited an instance of such a combination! Not Shakspeare, not Eschylus, hardly Milton—perhaps, if we except Dante and Goethe, not one. Few great writers are fine writers, (understanding this in the sense of finished,) and few fine writers are great. They who have much to say care less for the mode of saying it, and though the most perfect specimens of writing, after all, occur in their pages, they occur through a sort of chance—they are there because their writers could not help it, not because they wished to be especially fine. Jeremy Taylor was not a fine writer, nor Burke, nor is Wilson; yet, who would prefer to them, with all their mannerism and carelessness, the writings of Blair or Alison, though they be, in point of style, almost faultless monsters? We, for our part, prefer soul to style, and like rough diamonds far better than polished pebbles. We noticed, again, its tone of strange charity. This principle, even while passing through the bloody chaos and monster-gallery of the worst period of the Revolution never forsakes him. Is the brand-mark of universal reprobation on any brow? That brow, be sure, he stoops down and kisses with a pitying and pardoning affection. For Danton he has an enthusiastic admiration; for

Robespierre a slight but marked penchant ; and even for Marat, a lurking tenderness. The world generally has set these men down for monsters, or, in the mildest point of view, madmen, and classed them in that corner of the moral museum railed in for *lusus naturae*. But here comes Thomas Carlyle to this abhorred and shunned corner, snuffing the tainted air, wondering at the singular formations, nay, reclaiming them to the catalogue of men. " Robespierre's poor landlord, the cabinet-maker in the Rue St. Honoré, loved him ; his brother died for him. May God be merciful to him and to us ! " Now, for our part, we like this spirit, were it for nothing but its rarity ; and, like Carlyle, we are no believers in monstrous births. We believe that millions of respectable and selfish men of the world have in them the elements of Marats, Robespierres, and Neros. We hear every day instances of petty tyranny, and minute and malignant cruelty, which, to our mind, let down a fiercer and farther light into the blackness of our depraved nature than a myriad of massacres done, not in cold, but in boiling blood, amid the heavings of a moral earthquake, and under the canopy of revolutionary night. The longer we live, the less we need extreme cases, to convince us that the heart is desperately wicked, and that he who has sounded the grave, the ocean, the darkest mountain tarn, cannot fathom the bottomless blackness of his own heart. We do not then join with Carlyle's Edinburgh Reviewer, in his grave rebuke of his charity ; yet, perhaps, it is carried too far sometimes. Perhaps it is expressed in a tone of too much levity, and the *sang froid* he assumes is rather Satanic ; perhaps for a mere man too lofty a point of view is assumed ; perhaps a hatred of cant, profound as the profound thing itself (cant is abysmal), has seduced him into a minor cantilena of his own. We have

amused ourselves in imagining how he would treat some of the Roman Emperors ; and have fancied him swallowing Nero, after a considerable gulp ; saying civil things of Heliogabalus ; and find a revelation on the tip of Domitian's bodkin, wherewith he amused his *ennui* in transfixing flies ! Seriously, however, we like this spirit. It reminds us, not unpleasantly, of Charles Lamb, who, we are told, never thoroughly loved a man till he had been thrown at his door, singed and blackened by the fire of general contempt and execration. This spirit, we cannot help thinking, contrasts well with that of Dr. Croly. In talking of the actors in the French Revolution, he often uses language unworthy of a Christian minister. He speaks of them uniformly in a tone of the most savage and truculent fury. This in a contemporary like Burke, was excusable ; but now that the men are dead, and have received their verdict from the lips of Eternal Justice, why do more than add a solemn "Amen" to the sentence, whatever it be, which has fixed their destiny ? It may be too much in Carlyle to breathe a sigh over a dead ruffian, who died amid the roar of liberated France, and the curses of mothers and children ; but of two extremes it is decidedly the better.

We noticed, too, that his prime favourites, next to Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland, whom every body admires, are Mirabeau and Danton. His style rises whenever he speaks of these gigantic men. Nor do we wonder, for surely they tower titanicallly above all the actors in that scene of "cinders and blood." Strong and loud must be the steps, which, like theirs, become audible amid an earthquake. Others appear passive in the scene, whirled about like straws in the vortex. But revolution is their element. They alone can ride upon its wild waters ; no vulgar democrats are they ; no petty, peddling retail revolutionists ; they resem-

ble rather the Pandemonian Princes, or the dethroned giants of the Saturnian reign, to whom Jupiter was but a beardless boy. Black as Erebus, ugly as sin, large, lowering, with tones of thunder, and looks of fire, seared consciences, and death-defying, yet death-expecting attitude, they stand up, filling the eye and the imagination, and their huge forms are never lost sight of for a moment, during the wildest turmoil and blackest tempest of the Revolution: civilians both, armed only with the bayonets of their eyes, and the artillery of their eloquence, and therefore to us more interesting than the little bustling, bloody Toulon officer, the "name of whom is Napoleon Buonaparte." Of the two, Carlyle prefers Mirabeau; we, with deference, Danton. Of course, the former filled a much larger space, and played a far more conspicuous part on the stage of history; but we speak of native manhood and capacity; of what Danton was and might have become. Mirabeau was a count, and had not a little of the old noblesse strut; Danton was of "good farmer people," dug out of the fresh ground, "of the earth earthy." Mirabeau was intensely theatrical, an actor, fond of splendid clap-traps, and too conscious of himself; Danton was an earnest, simple barbarian, a modern Maximin, or Milo, and spoke and acted from the fulness of an honest, though miserably mistaken zeal; Mirabeau was moveable by a kiss from female majesty; Danton was a tower, with this inscription, "No weakness:" once, indeed, he accepted a sop from the government, and then "walked on his own way." Mirabeau was a plagiarist, a sublime thief, submitted to be examined, primed, loaded by others; Danton's burning sentences were all his own; no friend could have lent them, any more than a quarry an aerolite. Mirabeau is a splendid charlatan; Danton a noble savage. Both spoke in short and striking sentences; but while Mirabeau's were spirit-stirring

and electric, Danton's were terribly sublime. The one on his death-bed, pointing to the sun, could say, "If he be not God, he is his cousin-german;" the other, "The coalesced kings threaten us: we hurl at them, in gage of battle, the head of a king." Mirabeau was perpetually protruding himself upon public notice. Danton was a "large nature that could rest;" he sat silent in his place on the Mountain for weeks, till a case of real emergency occurred, till his country was in danger; and then rose up, uttered from his lion throat a few strong words, and sat down again; his country safe, himself silent as before. The vices of both, like their powers, were gigantic. Those of Mirabeau were profligacy and vanity, which marked him out amid the vainest and most dissolute nation on the face of the earth. Danton's were a lust for gold, and an indifference to blood. Mirabeau died of the consequences of his dissipation. Danton had a grander death, and never did the guillotine shear off a stronger head. Is it fanciful to call the one the Byron, and the other the Burns of the period?

We cannot get out of our mind that last visit of Danton to his native village. We see him visiting, for the last time, Arcis sur Aube, the spot where his mother bore him, "for he, too, had a mother, and lay warm in his cradle like the rest of us"—where his vast form grew up, and the wild dream of liberty first crossed his daring soul. We see him straying along his native stream, in "haunts which knew him when a boy;" leaning down his Herculean stature upon its bank; the stream the while mirroring his black locks and moody brow; "silent, the great Titan! and wondering what the end of these things will be;" musing upon the bloody past, and looking forward gloomily to the future, and starting up suddenly with fierce energy and tempestuous resolve, as some wandering wind appears to whisper, "Robespierre;" or

as to his awakened fears the guillotine seems to glass itself in the passing waters. And with beating heart we follow him from this to the tribunal of Fouquier, and tremble as he gives in his address, "My name is Danton! a name tolerably well known in the Revolution. My dwelling shall soon be with annihilation, but I shall live in the Pantheon of history;" or as we hear his voice for the last time reverberating from the domes, in "words piercing from their wild sincerity, winged with wrath, fire flashing from the eyes of him, piercing to all republican hearts, higher and higher till the lion voice of him dies away in his throat;" or as we follow him to the guillotine, "carrying a high look in the death-cart"—saying to Camille Desmoulins as he struggles and writhes, "Courage, my friend, heed not that vile canaille"—to himself, "Oh, my dear wife, shall I never see thee more, then! but, Danton, no weakness"—to the executioner, "Thou wilt show my head to the people—it is worth showing." Surely this man had in him the elements of a noble being, and, had he lived, would, as effectually as even Napoleon, have backed and bridled the Bucephalus of the Revolution. "Thus passes, like a gigantic mass of valour, fury, ostentation, and wild revolutionary manhood, this Danton to his unknown home. He had many sins, but one worst sin he had not, that of cant. No hollow formalist, but a very man—with all his dross he was a man—fiery-real, from the great fire-bosom of Nature herself. He saved France from Brunswick—he walked straight his own wild road, whither it led him. He may live for some generations in the memory of men."

The Edinburgh Reviewer seems to have a strong liking for Robespierre, and takes our author to task for his treatment of that "sea green incorruptible." This liking on the part of the reviewer seems to us affected as well as absurd. He grounds it upon the fact that he was incorruptible, and

was a worshipper after a fashion of his own. Two pitiful pillars for bolstering up a character bowed down by the weight of Danton's blood, by the execrations of humanity, by the unanimous voice of female France, re-echoing the woman's wild cry, "Go down to hell with the curses of all wives and mothers." But, oh! he was above a bribe! Nay, he was only beneath it; and so is a hyena. He died a poor man; but so far from making him an Andrew Marvel therefore, let us rather say with Hall, that "ambition in his mind had, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up the whole fry of petty propensities;" and that there are "other virtues besides that of dying poor." Miserable counterbalance! incorruptibility against treachery, ingratitude, infernal cruelty, and systematic hypocrisy—one virtue to a thousand crimes. But he was a worshipper, it seems. Of what? Of Wisdom in the shape of a smoked statue! And this most ridiculous and monstrous of all farces ever enacted in this world—this tomfoolery of hell, with its ghastly ceremonies and ghastlier high-priest, "in sky-blue coat and black breeches," decreeing the existence of a Supreme Being with one foot in Danton's blood, and the immortality of the soul with another on the brink of ruin—this cowardly acknowledgment, more horrible than the blasphemous denial—this patronage of Deity by one of the worst and meanest of his creatures—has at length met with an admirer in the shape of a contributor to *The Edinburgh Review*! "O shame, where is thy blush?" But he had a party who died with him, while Danton stood almost alone. Why, Nero had his friends. "Some hand unseen strewed flowers upon his tomb." The brood of a tiger probably regard their parent as an amiable character, much misrepresented. Satan has his party. Can we wonder, then, that a set of miscreants, driven to desperation, should cling to each other, and to the greatest villain of their

number? And as to Danton, not only had he, too, his devoted adherents, Camille Desmoulins, Herault De Sechelles, &c., but the galleries had nearly rushed down and rescued him. His fall secured Robespierre's ruin; and when the wretch attempted to speak in his own behalf, what cry rung in his ears, telling how deeply the people had felt and mourned their Titan's death? "Danton's blood chokes him."

We noticed, too, and wondered at his epithets, and the curious art he has of compounding and recompounding them, till the resources of style stagger, and the reader's eye, familiarized to the ordered and measured tameness of the common run of writers, becomes dim with astonishment. Take some specimens which occur on opening the book:— "Fountain-ocean, flame-image, star-galaxies, sharp-bustling, kind-sparkling, Tantalus-Ixion, Amazonian-graceful, bushy-whiskered, fire-radiant, high-pendant, self-distractive, land-surgling, waste-flashing, honour-worthy, famous-infamous, real-imaginary, pale-dim." Such are a few, and but a few, of the strange, half-mad, contradictory and chaotic epithets, which furnish a barbaric garnish to the feast which Carlyle has spread before us. Whether in these he had Homer in his eye, or whether he has rather imitated his hero Mirabeau, who, we know, was very fond of such combinations as Grandison-Cromwell, Crispin-Catiline, &c., we cannot tell; while questioning their taste, we honestly admit that we love the book all the better for them, and would miss them much were they away. To such faults (as men to the taste of tobacco) we not only become reconciled, for the sake of the pleasure connected with them, but we learn positively to love what seemed at first to breathe the very nausea of affectation. It is just as when you have formed a friendship for a man, you love him all the better for his oddities, and

value as parts of him all his singularities, from the twist in his temper and the crack in his brain, to the cast in his eye and the stutter in his speech. So, Carlyle's epithets are not beautiful, but they are his.

We noticed, too, his passion for the personal. His ideas of all his characters are connected with vivid images of their personal appearance. He is not like Grant, of the "Random Recollections," whose soul is swallowed up in the minutiae of dress, and whose "talk is of" buttons. Carlyle is infinitely above this. But in the strength of his imagination, and the profound philosophical conviction, that nature has written her idea of character and intellect upon countenance and person, and that "faces never lie," he avails himself of all the traditionary and historical notices which he can collect; and the result is the addition of the charms of painting to those of history. His book will never need an illustrated edition. It is illustrated beforehand, in his graphic and perpetually repeated pictures. Mirabeau lifts up, on his canvass, his black boar's head, and carbuncled and grim-pitted visage, like "a tiger that had had the small-pox." Robespierre shows his sea-green countenance and bilious eyne, through spectacles, and, ere his fall, is "seen wandering in the fields with an intensely meditative air, and eyes blood-spotted, fruit of extreme bile." Danton strides along heavily, as if shod with thunder, shaking, above his mighty stature, profuse and "coal-black" locks, and speaking as with a cataract in his throat. Marat croaks hoarse, with "bleared soul, looking through bleared, dull, acrid, wo-struck face," "redolent of soot and horse-drugs." Camille Desmoulins stalks on with "long curling locks, and face of dingy blackguardism, wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naphtha lamp burnt within it." Abbé Sieyes, a "light thin" man, "elastic, wiry," weaves his everlasting

constitutions of still flimsier materials than himself. Bailly "trembles under the guillotine with cold." Vergniaud, during his last night in prison, sings "tumultuous songs." Gross David shows his "swoln cheek," type of genius, in a "state of convulsion." Charlotte Corday hies to Paris, a "stately Norman figure, with beautiful still countenance." Louis stands on the edge of the scaffold, speaking in dumb show, his "face very red." Marie Antoinette, Theresa's daughter, skims along, touching not the ground, till she drops down on it a corpse. Madame Theroigne flutters about, a "brown-locked figure," that might win laughter from the grim guillotine itself. Barbaroux, "beautiful as Antinous," "looks into Madame Roland's eyes, and in silence, in tragical renunciation, feels that she is all too lovely." And last, not least, stands at the foot of the scaffold Madame Roland herself, "a noble white vision, with high queenly face, soft proud eyes, and long black hair flowing down to her girdle." Thus do all Carlyle's characters live and move; no stuffed figures, or breathing corpses, but animated and flesh and blood humanities. And it is this intense love of the picturesque and personal which gives such a deep and dramatic interest to the book, and makes it above all comparison the most lively and eloquent history of the period which has appeared.

We might have dwelt, too, on the sardonic air which pervades the greater part of it. Carlyle's sarcasm is quite peculiar to himself. It is like that of an intelligence who has the power of viewing a great many grave matters at a strange sinister angle, which turns them into figures of mirth. He does not, indeed, resemble the author of "Don Juan," who describes the horrors of a shipwreck like a demon who had, invisible, sat amid the shrouds, choked with laughter;—with immeasurable glee had heard the wild

farewell rising from sea to sky ;—had leaped into the long boat, as it put off with its pale crew ;—had gloated over the cannibal repast ;—had leered, unseen, into the “dim eyes of those shipwrecked men,” and, with a loud and savage burst of derision, had seen them, at length, sinking into the waves. Carlyle’s laughter is not that of a fiend, but of a water kelpie,—wild, unearthly, but with a certain sympathy and sorrow shuddering down the wind on it as it dies away. More truly than Byron might he say, “And if I laugh at any mortal thing, ’tis that I may not weep.” For our parts, we love to see this great spirit, as he stands beside the boiling abyss of the French Revolution, not, like many, raving in sympathy ; nor, like others, coolly sounding the tumultuous surge ; nor, like others, vituperating the wild waters ; but veiling the profoundest pity, love, terror, and wonder, in inextinguishable peals of laughter. This laughter may be hearty, but assuredly it is not heartless.

We remarked, in fine, its singular compression of events, scarce one prominent point in the whole complicated history being omitted ;—the art he has of stripping off the prude flesh, and giving the lion’s marrow of history ;—his want of prejudice, and bias, producing, on the one hand, in him, a perfect and ideal impartiality, and, on the other, in you an unsatisfied and tantalized feeling, which prompts you to ask, “What, after all, does this man want us to think of the French Revolution,—to love or to hate, to bless or to ban it ?”—the appositeness and point of his quotations, which, like strong tributaries, mingle congenially with the main current of his narrative, and are drawn from remote and recondite regions ;—and his habitual use of the present tense, thus completing the epic cast of his work, giving a freshness and startling life to its every page, and producing an effect as different from the tame *past* of other writers,

as the smoothed locks of a coxcomb are from the roused hair of a Moenad or an Apollo standing bright in the breath of Olympus.

Such is our estimate of a book which, though no model in style, nor yet a final and conclusive history of the period, can never, as long as originality, power, and genius are admired, pass from the memories of men. We trust we shall live to see its grand sequel in the shape of a life of Napoleon, from the same pen. May it be worthy of the subject and the author, and come forth in the fine words of Symmons :—

Thundering the moral of his story,
And rolling boundless as his glory.

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, Annandale. His parents were "good farmer people," his father an elder in the Secession church there, and a man of strong native sense, whose words were said to "nail a subject to the wall." His excellent mother still lives, and we had the pleasure of meeting her lately in the company of her illustrious son ; and beautiful it was to see his profound and tender regard, and her motherly and yearning reverence,—to hear her fine old covenanting accents, concerting with his transcendental tones. He studied in Edinburgh. Previous to this, he had become intimate with Edward Irving, an intimacy which continued unimpaired to the close of the latter's eccentric career. Like most Scottish students, he had many struggles to encounter in the course of his education ; and had, we believe, to support himself by private tuition, translations for the booksellers, &c. The day star of German literature arose early in his soul, and has been his guide and genius ever since. He entered into a correspondence with Goethe, which lasted, at intervals, till the latter's death.

Yet he has never, we understand, visited Germany. He was, originally, destined for the church. At one period he taught an academy in Dysart, at the same time that Irving was teaching in Kirkaldy. After his marriage, he resided partly at Comely Bank, Edinburgh; and, for a year or two in Craigenputtock, a wild and solitary farm house in the upper part of Dumfriesshire. Here, however, far from society, save that of the "great dumb monsters of mountains," he wearied out his very heart. A ludicrous story is told of Lord Jeffrey visiting him in this out-of-the-way region, when they were unapprized of his coming—had nothing in the house fit for the palate of the critic, and had, in dire haste and pother, to send off for the wherewithal to a market town about fifteen miles off. Here, too, as we may see hereafter, Emerson, on his way home from Italy, dropped in like a spirit, spent precisely twenty-four hours, and then "forth uprose that lone wayfaring man," to return to his native woods. He has, for several years of late, resided in Chelsea, London, where he lives in a plain simple fashion; occasionally, but seldom, appearing at the splendid soirées of Lady Blessington, but listened to, when he goes, as an oracle; receiving, at his tea-table, visitors from every part of the world; forming an amicable centre for men of the most opposite opinions and professions, Poets and Preachers, Pantheists and Puritans, Tennysons and Scotts, Cavanaughs and Erskines, Sterlings and Robertsons, smoking his perpetual pipe, and pouring out, in copious stream, his rich and quaint philosophy. His appearance is fine, without being ostentatiously singular;—his hair dark,—his brow marked, though neither very broad nor very lofty,—his cheek tinged with a healthy red,—his eye, the truest index of his genius, flashing out, at times, a wild and mystic fire from its dark and quiet surface. He is above the middle size, stoops

slightly, dresses carefully, but without any approach to foppery. His address, somewhat high and distant at first, softens into simplicity and cordial kindness. His conversation is abundant, inartificial, flowing on, and warbling as it flows, more practical than you would expect from the cast of his writings,—picturesque and graphic in a high measure,—full of the results of extensive and minute observation, often terribly direct and strong, garnished with French and German phrase, rendered racy by the accompaniment of the purest Annandale accent, and coming to its climaxes, ever and anon, in long, deep, chest-shaking bursts of laughter.

Altogether, in an age of singularities, Thomas Carlyle stands peculiarly alone. Generally known, and warmly appreciated, he has of late become—popular, in the strict sense, he is not, and may never be. His works may never climb the family library, nor his name become a household word; but while the Thomsons and the Campbells shed their gentle genius, like light, into the hall and the hovel,—the shop of the artisan and the sheiling of the shepherd, Carlyle, like the Landors and Lambs of this age, and the Brownes and Burtons of a past, will exert a more limited but profounder power,—cast a dimmer but more gorgeous radiance,—attract fewer but more devoted admirers, and obtain an equal, and perhaps more enviable immortality.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

CONCEIVE a little, pale-faced, wo-begone, and attenuated man, with short indescribables, no coat, check shirt, and neckcloth twisted like a wisp of straw, opening the door of

his room in ——— street, advancing towards you with hurried movement, and half-recognizing glance; saluting you in low and hesitating tones, asking you to be seated; and after he has taken a seat opposite you, but without looking you in the face, beginning to pour into your willing ear, a stream of learning and wisdom as long as you are content to listen, or to lend him the slightest cue. Who is it? 'Tis De Quincey, the celebrated Opium eater, the friend and interpreter of Coleridge and Wordsworth, the sounder of metaphysic depths, and the dreamer of imaginative dreams, the most learned and most singular man alive, the most gifted of scholars, the most scholar-like of men of genius. He has come from his desk, where he has been prosecuting his profound researches, or, peradventure, inditing a popular paper for *Tait*, or a more elaborate and recondite paper for *Blackwood*. Your first feeling as he enters, is, Can this be he? Is this the distinguished scholar? Is this the impassioned autobiographer? Is this the man who has recorded such gorgeous visions, seen by him while shut up in the Patmos of a laudanum phial? His head is small, how can it carry all he knows? His brow is singular in shape, but not particularly large or prominent: where has nature expressed his majestic intellect? His eyes—they sparkle not, they shine not, they are lustreless: can that be a squint which glances over from them towards you? No! it is only a slight habit one of them has of occasionally looking in a different direction from the other; there is nothing else particular about them; there is not even the glare which lights up sometimes dull eyes into eloquence; and yet, even at first, the *tout ensemble* strikes you as that of no common man, and you say, ere he has opened his lips, "He is either mad or inspired."

But stand listen to him; hear his small, thin, yet piercing

voice, winding out so distinctly his subtleties of thought and feeling ; his long and strange sentences, evolving like a piece of complicated music, and including every thing in their comprehensive sweep ; his interminable digressions, striking off at every possible angle from the main stream of his discourse, and ever returning to it again ; his quotations from favourite authors, so perpetual and so appropriate ; his recitation of passages from the poets in a tone of tremulous earnestness ; his vast stores of learning, peeping out every now and then through the loopholes of his small and searching talk ; his occasional bursts of eloquent enthusiasm ; his rich collection of anecdote ; his uniform urbanity and willingness to allow you your full share in the conversation.—Witness all this for an hour together, and you will say at the close, “ This is the best living image of Burke and Coleridge,—this is an extraordinary man.” You sit and listen, and as the evening steals on, his sentences get longer and longer, and yet your inclination to weary gets less and less. Your attention is fixed by hooks of steel, and at three in the morning you rise unsatiated. You leave him on his way to his desk to study till peep of dawn, and going home, your dreams are haunted by the wondrous little man, and you seem still to hear him, with his keen low voice, out-Kanting Kant, or out-mystifying Coleridge, or demolishing some rickety literary reputation, or quoting, in his deep and quiet under tone, some of the burning words of Shelley or Wordsworth.

De Quincey has a powerful but imperfect mind. In one sense, indeed, it seems one of the most perfect and thoroughly furnished of understandings. It has imagination in a high measure. It has a still larger share of sympathy with the imagination of others. It has a most subtle and searching intellect. It has varied and boundless information. It has a dictatorial command of language. Where, then, lies its im-

perfection? It lies, we think, in the want of unity and proper compactness among its various faculties. They are all powerfully developed, but not properly balanced. The consequence is, that the one sometimes usurps the province of the other. He sometimes declaims when he should analyze, and sometimes analyzes when he should describe. And hence, too, all his efforts have been fragmentary,—each fragment colossal, indeed, and so far as it goes, finished, (for it is easy distinguishing the rude fragment of a rock from the splinter of a statue,) but still a fragment. He has produced no perfect and consummate whole. This was to be expected in his autobiographical sketches, but we find it pervading all his writings, and his only completed work (“Klosterheim”) is a completed failure. Perhaps the necessities of his lot, and his one unfortunate propensity, account for this. Perhaps, also, there is, amid his lofty endowments, an infirmity of purpose, one weak place which has damaged the whole, one leak in the stately vessel, which has, if not sunk it, at least abridged its voyages, and lessened its power. The “Confessions of an Opium Eater” took the public by storm. Its popularity was immediate and boundless; nor, even yet, has it declined. The copy of it we first read was from a circulating library, and had nearly crumbled away. The sources of its success were obvious enough. First of all, the thing was written with prodigious force and spirit. People who judge of De Quincey’s style from his contributions to *Tait* and *Blackwood*, have no proper idea of it. There the “line labours and the words move slow.” It is the noble charger jaded and worn out. In the “Confessions,” he is seen rioting in his strength. In his magazine articles the effort is visible, while the “Confessions” are sketched with a pencil of fire. The starvation scenes in London, the story of Ann, the poor street-stroller, who saved his life, and whom, in the

strong gratitude of his heart, he would pursue into the central darkness of a London brothel, or into the deeper darkness of the grave ; and, above all, the horrors of opium, and the sublime and dreary visions with which it drugged his spirit, were told so graphically, and with such easy and energetic skill, that they set him immediately at the head of the long list of those who have stood by the wayside, and shown their moral and spiritual ulcers to the pity and wonder of the passers by. They wanted the bonhomme of Augustine, the minute and passionate anatomy of Rousseau, the quaint and literal vigour of Charles Lamb ; but they were free from the indelicacy of the Repentant Father ; they were not sullied by the affectation and blasphemy of Jean Jacques ; they treated a topic more attractive than Elia's "Confessions of a Drunkard," and gave glimpses of a learning more profound, and a genius more daring than any of the three. There was another reason. The practice of opium-eating was then little known in England, ('tis otherwise now,) and was invested with an oriental haze of romantic interest. It was regarded as Turkish tobacco ; and, viewed in this mild light, the confessions of one who indulged in it awakened instant curiosity and attention. Besides, many thought it a novel, and read it with avidity as an agreeable change from Colburn's last. But whatever were the reasons, popular the book was, and popular it deserved to be, whether we look to its moral or literary value, whether we regard it as a most faithful and impressive statement of the evils of the particular indulgence, or as a picture of a nature originally noble, suffering in such circumstances as may never occur again, (to use his own words,) "a dire eclipse, and labouring in a dread extremity." Probably many thousands have had dreams as strange as those of De Quincey, but few could have described them as he has done,—could have retained

and expressed on paper their slumbrous charm,—preserved their volatile and evanishing interest,—dipped his pen in their unearthly gloom, and voiced forth that feeling of unutterable mystery, which makes the dreaming land so terrible and dear to all imaginative spirits. To this even their fragmentary character contributed; for, as a bust gives us, from its abrupt termination, an idea of the infinite which a full length statue never can suggest; so dreams best retain their mystic power when reflected as on the pieces of a broken mirror, and described in gasps of shuddering recollection.

Perhaps the continuation of these disclosures, recently published, and entitled, “*Suspiria de profundis*,” is still finer. Sighs, truly wails and bitter groans they are from the depths of his incommunicable misery, sounding like notes of the pibroch, borne on the breeze as on a bier, and eloquent and earnest beyond all his former earnestness and eloquence.

Next to the “*Confessions*,” it is by his articles in periodicals that De Quincey is best known to the literary world.—They consist partly of translations, and partly of original articles. Among the more prominent of the former, we recollect some translations from Jean Paul in *The Old London Magazine*, and some from Lessing in *Blackwood*. His knowledge of the literature of Germany is extensive; his judgments upon it discriminating. He has not that blind and ignorant hatred of all that is German, which was manifested even by such men as Dugald Stewart and Sir William Drummond, but neither has he the idolatrous feelings of Moir and Carlyle. He strikes, we think, a fair and fine medium, and we love him for preferring Richter to Goethe. But why does he not prefer Schiller to both,—Schiller, the most lovely character, the most heroic spirit, and the most exalted genius of his country?

To enumerate all his original articles, within reasonable

bounds, were a vain attempt. He has written some beautiful droppings of criticism in *The Old London*; among others, a paper on the Knocking in Macbeth, which is much admired; many masterly papers in "The Encyclopædia Britannica;" laboured articles in *Blackwood* on history and political economy by the thousand,—amid which a series on the Cæsars stands prominent; several *jeux d'esprit* in the same magazine; among others, the far-famed "Lecture on Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts,"—since continued by him unsuccessfully; and not a few papers on Hannah More, Animal Magnetism, &c., besides his autobiographies in *Tait*. His general character as a periodical writer may be summed up in a few words. He is remarkable, first of all, for the most decided and dogmatical assertion of his opinions. Were it not for the stores of learning by which he is manifestly backed, and for the visible and constant play of a strong intellect, you would charge him with extreme and offensive arrogance. As it is, you know not sometimes whether more to admire the acuteness, or to wonder at the acerbity of his strictures. He throws a paradox at you like a sledge-hammer,—he pulls down a favourite idol with as little ceremony or remorse, as you would snap a poppy which had shed its flowers. Witness his onset, in *The London*, at Grotius, or as he perversely persisted in calling him, Groot, from which, we fear, the fame of that greatly over-rated personage never can recover. Witness his perpetual sneers at Parr, and all that class of mere scholars! Witness the abating process he so dexterously applied to Watson, and with less success to Roscoe, and with least of all to Goethe! Nor does this habit spring from any feeling like envy, or the desire to detract. De Quincey is altogether above such feelings; but the truth is, the current of his literary sympathies, though strong as a cataract, and profound

as an abyss, is narrow as a footpath. He is too much engrossed in the admiration of two or three models of supreme excellence, to have much to spare for aught inferior. And for mere notoriety, and mere popularity, he has the most absolute contempt. He has studied Kant too closely to care much for Paley, and appreciated Wordsworth too intensely to admire the poetry of Moore. Another characteristic of his criticism, is its conversational cast; and hence its endless digressions, and its imperfect and unfinished character; and yet hence, too, its interest and its ease. His philosophy may be called a sublime gossip; and finely doth she chirp over her cups, and garnish the most abstruse speculations with tid-bits of literary scandal, and with a rich anecdote, teeming from the stores of a most circumstantial memory. In all his writings, we find a lavish display of learning. You see it bursting out, whether he will or no; never dragged in as by cart ropes. And his allusions, glancing in all directions, show, even more than his direct quotations, that his knowledge is encyclopædic. His book of reference is the brain. A friend of ours found him writing some most elaborate articles, and not a book beside him, but an odd volume of the "Casquet of Literary Gems!" Nor must we forget his style. It is massive, masculine, and energetic; ponderous in its construction, slow in its motion, thoroughly English, yet thickly sprinkled with archaisms and "big words," peppered to just the proper degree with the condiments of simile, metaphor, and poetical quotation; select without being fastidious; strong, without being harsh; elaborate, without being starched into formal and false precision. Its great faults are an air of effort, and a frequent use of scholastic terms, and the forms of logic. It is, as nearly as may be, the pure vehicle of his strong, subtle, fiery, and learned nature. Nor does it disdain frequently to express an

elephantine humour, more rich and racy, however, than choice or delicate. It is a style, in short, adapted well for pure metaphysical discussion,—better still for philosophical criticism or biography, and perhaps, best of all, for the sublime yet shifting purposes of some large national history. We refer those who doubt his capacity for this last undertaking, to a description he has written of the Exodus of a Tartar tribe from their native land to the paternal sway of the Emperor of China, which they will find in *Blackwood* for July 1837, and which, for broad and massive grandeur of historical depiction, we have never seen surpassed. In fact, the man has hitherto done comparatively nothing with his powers. In common with all who know him, we deem him to have been capable of the loftiest things, whether in the field of psychology, or in more verdant and popular regions. Especially was he qualified by his superb classical learning, by the taste and tendency of his mind, by the graver graces of his diction, by his intimacy with the spirit and philosophy of Roman story, and by his belief in the Christian faith, for the proud task of writing the history of the Fourth Monarchy. Gibbon, no one knows better than De Quincey, has not nearly exhausted the magnificent theme. He is, no doubt, a great, strutting, splendid writer, rolling on his huge periods, scattering his fiery sneers, mouthing out his oracular dogmatism, spreading forth the riches of his ostentatious learning, and, as with gorgeous colours, red, green, orange, and yellow, surrounding the great sinking sun of the Roman power. But his work is not only disfigured by the blue and blistering venom of infidelity; not only does it keep up a bitter, running fire against the blessed faith of Christ, from every corner and point, in the great guns of the celebrated two chapters, in the glancing side-fire of the text, and in the base bush-fighting of the notes, but it has other important blemishes; stu-

pendous as it is, it is incomplete ; it abounds with inaccuracies and indelicate allusions ; it wants a true and profound insight into the causes of Roman decline ; as a narrative, it is indirect, cumbrous, and frequently obscure ; as a composition, its colours are often false, barbaric, and overlaid, and though sparkling with sudden brilliances, it has no sustained power or splendour. What a different, and, in many respects, what a superior and monumental work of it might De Quincey have made, had he, ten or twenty years ago, set himself resolutely to the task ! In the year 1839, after long absence from the arena of *Blackwood's Magazine*, he leaped down upon it again, as with a thunder-tramp. He is the author of that series of scholarly articles which appeared since then, on "Milton," "The Philosophy of Roman History," "Dinner, Real and Reputed," "The Essenes," "Style," "The Opium Question," "Ricardo made Easy," &c., &c. And a marvellous series it is, when you take it in connexion with his advanced age and shattered system. We were particularly interested by his paper on the "Essenes." It is in the style of the best of Horsley's sermons. He begins, as that prelate was wont, by the statement of what seems a hopeless paradox ; but, ere he be done, he has surrounded it with such plausible analogies, he has darted upon it such a glare of learning, he has so fenced it in with bristling dilemmas, he has so cut the difficulties, and strangled the objections started against it, that you lay down the paper, believing, or, at least, wishing to believe, that the Essenes and the Christians were identical.

Besides this, Mr. De Quincey has written a long series of sketches in *Tait's Magazine*, of contemporary characters, of various merit, but some of which (we refer particularly to those of Coleridge, Southey, Charles Lamb, Hannah More, and Charles Lloyd) are quite worthy of his versatile and

vigorous pen. De Quincey ! farewell ! Many pleasing hours have we spent in the perusal of thy eloquent page, and not a few in listening to thy piercing words. Not a few tears have we given to thy early sorrows. With no little emotion have we followed the current of thy romantic narrative, now gliding by the "Towers of Julius," reflecting the abhorred agonies of hunger and abandonment, and mirroring the countenance of the lost Anne ; now darkened by the shadow of the Welsh mountains, and again by the deeper darkness of thine own diseased and dream-haunted spirit ; and now murmuring calmer measures in rocky Cumberland, with the high front of Wordsworth, and the dim eye of Coleridge, like a nebulous star, looking down upon the still waters. May it close its race in splendour. May thine be the golden evening which often succeeds a troubled and tempestuous day. Again, fare-thee-well !

JOHN FOSTER.

"THE Essay," wrote a bookseller to a friend of the author, "is a specious composition for which there is now little demand." And there cannot be a doubt that the sagacious bibliopole spoke the result of his experience, though to account for the fact might not a little have puzzled his acuteness. Why is it that this once most popular and delightful kind of literature, with all its slip-shod ease and fire-side graces, has died with Elia, or, if alive, preserves only a precarious and rickety existence ? Why, while treatise, poem, tragedy, speech, sermon, in short, every other kind of literary composition, preserves its pristine and palmy honours, have essays and epics gone together to the sepulchre ? Why,

while the classics in this department retain their proper niche in the library, and are read with eagerness and delight by those who go rather farther back in their literary researches than Nickleby and Jack Shepherd, is no one ambitious of adding to their number; of treading that quiet path where Addison, and Steele, and Franklin, and Hunt, and Lamb, have walked before; of recasting their limited but magic circle; swaying their tiny, but potent rod; emulating their nameless, but numberless graces, their good nature, their elegant raillery, their conversational ease, their fine shiftings to and fro, from tender sportiveness to sportive pathos, or their varied and idomatic style? Nay, who, though ambitious of this, could find a fit audience, if he found an audience at all? Is it that the cast of mind, of which the essay was the delicate offshoot, has disappeared from among men? Or is it that the essay is a kind of vegetable mule, like that from the *Dianthus Superbus*, which can be propagated, to a limited extent, but which, in the long run, dies away from lack of masculine vigour and real root in the literary herbarium? Or is it that the public has, from mere wantonness and caprice, "made a point," as poor Goldsmith has it, to read essays no more, however excellent in themselves? We think the cause lies somewhat deeper; though, after all, it is not very far from the surface. The essay was always a sort of literary light-horsemanship. It neither tested the highest powers of mind, nor did it propose to itself the noblest and profoundest purposes. Cast in a medium between the formality of a treatise, and the carelessness of a letter, it wanted the satisfactory completeness of the one, and the confidential charm of the other. It was suited eminently to an indolent and easy-minded age, like that on whose breakfast-tables shone *The Tatlers*, *The Spectators*, and *The Guardians*. For the amusement of the big-wigged and luxu-

rious generation of Queen Anne, the essay was as admirably adapted as the sofa, that paradise of the parlour. In the days of the Miltons, the Vanes, and the Seldens, it would have attracted no more notice than the flutter of an ephemeron's wings. The idea is ludicrous of Cromwell lounging over a number of *The Adventurer*, or of Milton's daughter reading to him the account of the Club of little men. That age of high intellects, of strong and stormy passions, of deep religious purpose, was an age for Areopagiticæ, not essays. Their light and elegant structure was better fitted for an age of French dress, small intrigue, modish manners, quiet, not keen, literary tastes, perfect politeness, and profound internal peace;—when, for Cromwells we had Bolingbrokes; for Miltons, Popes; for Seldens, Steeles; for goblets bubbling with royal blood, cups and saucers, brimful of the innocent novelty of tea! And it was clear that, if a more earnest and enthusiastic period were ever to dawn, the beautiful but somewhat flimsy pinions of the essay would be scorched in its radiance. It turned out as might have been expected. The French Revolution, while “innovating upon every thing, and leaving nothing,—no, nothing at all unchanged,” threw down, *en passant*, the old landmarks of literature,—changed the very style of the world, which began to heave as if the hands of the writers were shaken by an earthquake,—to hurry as if they were afraid premature and preternatural darkness would blot the page, and to glow as if with a reflection of the furnace heat of the surrounding excitement, and, for the essay substituted the review, a far more pliable and powerful instrument. Since, various attempts have been made to revive that faded form of writing; and, unquestionably, in the *Round Table* of Hazlitt, the *Indicator* and *Companion* of Hunt, and the *Reflector* and *Elia* of Lamb, we find many of the graces, and much of the spirit of our elder

essayists, blended with a deeper insight, and a warmer imagination; but still the age of essays, as of chivalry, is too obviously gone. In reviews we have not essays but dissertations. In magazines, their place is supplied by tales and sketches. In the pages of our cheap literature they still partially survive. The truth is, our age is not sufficiently at its ease to relish the essay. It is too much occupied in devouring newspapers, glancing over reviews, bolting novels, and tearing out the heart of treatises of mechanical science, to read, as it runs, such short, delicate, and refined productions. To be taught or to be amused, to probe practical questions to the bottom, or to be lapped over head and ears in dreams of romance, is the tendency of the popular taste at present. The essay answers but indifferently any of these ends. And if ever, as is possible, we shall see it restored to its former—and more than its former—popularity, we must first see the public mind in a less excited, a less eager, and more equable frame.

The subject of the following sketch was generally known as Foster the Essayist. But, in truth, the title was a misnomer. For his tone, style, purpose, beauties, and faults, alike marked him out from the ordinary herd of essayists, and from the gay writers of Queen Anne, and their imitators. Indeed it is not easy to say to what precise species of composition his extraordinary productions belong. They are not sermons, though they have much of the sermonizing vehemence, earnestness, and oracularity. They are not treatises, yet are elaborate, lengthy, and exhaustive. They are hardly essays, though they bear the name, and have much point, brilliance, and humour. Part of them profess to be letters to a friend; but all are greatly deficient in epistolary ease and grace. They are of the composite order of intellectual architecture; and, as such, require a severer

criticism than the common run of essays ; but one less rigid than would be requisite for works of greater pretensions and prouder name.

John Foster was, unquestionably, an original man. He had as distinct a faculty of seeing every thing through his own medium, as any writer of his day. Were the medium dim, or party-coloured, as it sometimes was, or were it vivid and lustrous, it was always his own. Authors, characters, books, the face of nature, were all seen and shown by him, in a new, strange, and striking light. "He read the universe, not by sunlight, nor starlight, nor moonlight, but just by the fairy lustre round his own head." His thought had a stamp about it altogether his own. With no air of affected singularity, with no desperate efforts at solving the inscrutable and sounding the fathomless, with little metaphysical verbiage, and with few carefully wrapt up commonplaces, his train of thinking ever sought the profound as its natural element. A necessity was laid upon his mind, not to think shallowly, or like other men. And even when he did bring up half truths, or whole errors, like sea-weed instead of coral, there was something in its very worthlessness which spoke of the depths, and betrayed the vigour and wind of the diver. He was one of the few writers, in an age of mystification, whose obscurities were entirely involuntary and unassumed, neither formed by the imitations of false models, nor by personal affectation, but by the necessities of his intellect, or the peculiarities of a style, which was sometimes an insufficient organ to his thought. His thinking was not that of the mere metaphysician, nor of the mere "logical grind-mill," nor of the mere poet, nor of the mere theologian ; it was that of a mind at once acute, imaginative, and tinctured with a solemn and peculiar piety. His defects as a thinker, were as essential as his merits ; they were, an oc-

casional one-sidedness of view, an habitual preference for the gloomy side of things, a morbidity of moral thinking, a dark estimate of human character, and a dreadful habit of dealing out perdition upon all who do not reach a certain standard, or hold a certain set of theoretical opinions. The force and comprehensiveness of his intellect were injured, too, not only by the party influences of one of the strictest sects of our religion, but by the limitation of his knowledge, which was apparently not proportionate to his powers. And your surprise was, that with such school-boy resources, his mind could do so much; that with a plaything for a club, this brawny Hercules could work such wonders of energetic thinking. He had of course the ordinary education of his class, and had read much and variedly. Still you missed that indescribable something, connected with a thoroughly learned mind, those far-flashing allusions, that general richness in style and imagery, of a most multifarious scholarship, which charms us in Burke and in Macaulay. Had he been as ripe and good a scholar, as he was a vigorous and eloquent thinker, he would probably have occupied a still higher place in the literary firmament.

Foster's style, like his thought, was his own. And in saying this, we state its principal, not its only merit. It was not periodic, measured, or elaborately polished; its sentences were of all lengths, and of all shapes,—sometimes extremely short, and often straggling along whole pages; now and then beautifully simple, but generally complicated and perplexed. It was a bony, muscular, masculine style, solid as iron, yet richly set with massive ornament. More terse and columnar than Isaac Taylor's, more nervous and native than Hall's, more subdued than Chalmers, more profound than Harris: it reminded us more, in its rough sublimity, of old John Scott, who wrote the "Christian Life," though it never reached

that author's higher raptures, which, like the "old poets, are all air and fire."

Its defects were very obvious,—its involution, its slow and cumbrous march, its unwieldy periods, grappling together huge masses of thought, its curious combination of some of the worst faults of sermon-writing, with some of the worst in epistolary style, and a certain barbarous dissonance, betokening the want of a fine ear, and murdering the music of almost all his periods. We were always struck with the difficulty, and iron toil, with which he manifestly expressed his thoughts. The task of Sisyphus was a joke compared to the labour dire and weary woe with which, we understand, this very able man, and rather voluminous author, composed to the last. Language with him was no delicate Ariel, but a drudging Caliban, doing the behest of his magic mind with slow and unconquerable reluctance. The effort, however, was of an interesting kind. It did not resemble the spasmodic struggle of mediocrists to dive into depths beyond their reach, nor the throes of the highest order of poetic genius to bring forth its giant progeny, nor the difficulty of retired and recluse students to seize, detain, and fix down their thoughts. It was a difficulty not in fashioning full-grown conceptions within, but in giving them form and pressure on the written page. We mark this strange struggle particularly in his "Essay on Popular Ignorance," where he gasps and tosses about in a sea of gloomy speculation and turbid words.

The tone of Foster's mind, and the cast of his writing, were exceedingly sombre. Some gay and brilliant passages occur. Little sunny spots lie at intervals, like patches of summer green amid forests of pine. Curlings, of a playful humour, pass transiently over his lips; veins of sarcasm are disclosed here and there; but a mood of abstraction, of dark investigation, and of awful piety, lies like a shadow

over all his works, and tinges the soul of his reader with the same sad and solemn hue. From the shades of early skepticism, he passed into another, though a tenderer and holier darkness. In this respect, he resembles Dr. Johnson more than any other writer. Even the Gospel gave but a troubled gladness to Foster's spirit. By a strange instinct he turned away from Goshen, to the surrounding and impervious darkness, and brooded with painful yet pious feelings under its sable canopy. The inscrutable decrees of God, the existence and the ravages of moral evil in this fair universe, the secrets of "hell's eternity," the evils of ignorance, the abuses of talent; such subjects possessed for him a dreary attraction, and drew him irresistibly toward the centre of those abysses of gloomy meditation, which they now open, and now seem to shut with violence in the face of the inquirer. No writer of this age has described so well, the majesty of moral darkness, the horrors of idolatry pressing down ages and continents under its demoniacal domination, the evils of perverted power, of national infatuation, and of national ignorance. And no one has ever turned a more reverent, yet a more eager and imploring eye, toward those ultimate questions which are folded up in their own inscrutability. No one has hung with such anxious steps, and beseeching looks, around the confines of that mystery which envelopes us on every side; the problem of all ages, the origin of evil, lies like a tangible weight on his mind, which it agitates to an injurious and distressing degree. When speaking, in his critical estimate of Robert Hall, of those whose very devotion is endangered by such speculations, he had manifestly himself in his eye. Not that he was less pious on this account—far from it—but his religion caught from such cogitations a cast and colour of its own, and became a light shining amid darkness. The text, "God is love," was

no text for him ; God a consuming fire, earth a wilderness of sin, masses of human beings, hurried by the grasp of moral destroyers off this into a darker stage, "the whole of human hopes, and wishes, and efforts, and projects, brought down in a long abortive series, by the torrent of ages, to be lost in final despair ;" such subjects incessantly recurred, and were treated in a style so far removed from vulgar fanaticism, cowardly complaint, or blasphemous objurgation, in a style so mournful, yet so submissive, as at once to depress and elevate, to sadden and sublimate, the mind of his reader.

Perhaps, after all, his forte lay in his microscopic observation of human character. Through his caustic and severe humour, as through a lens of subtlest power, he saw into the marrow of man, and his hand was as firm to dissect, as his vision was piercing to see. Possessing almost the insight of a Fielding, into the tortuosities of motive, he turned it to a very different account. The heart was the true field of Foster's power, and deep his knowledge of its vagaries, its self-deceptions, its devious windings, its vain ambitions, the varying shades which make up the blackness of its darkness. Perhaps he errs in the excessive refinement of his scrutiny, is too stern and sinister in his inferences, makes too little allowance for that tremendous press of tendency to evil, in which, the while, he so firmly believes, exaggerates the darker hues, is too rapid and uniform in his generalization of character, and flourishes too exultingly the knife by which he "pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart." We have reason to know, that the same searching power which distinguished the author, marked the man, and have heard of those who knew him, while testifying abundantly to his amiable and unassuming deportment, confessing that they have sometimes trembled at the weight of piercing silent scrutiny,

like that of a spirit, which his looks told was involuntarily brought to bear upon themselves.

His first essays are the best, and also the most popular of his productions. Perhaps, after Hall's exquisite criticism, (one giant hand of genius held forth to welcome another,) it may be presumptuous to pass any verdict on those very racy and original productions. They were written (it used to be universally said—though we see it questioned in a recent newspaper) to gain the ladye of his love, who refused to marry him, till he produced a work which should prove him to the world, what she knew him to be, a man of genius. This roused his sluggish spirit. It awoke in its strength, and sank not down into congenial indolence—till it had secured a bride, and made itself immortal! To her they were assuredly written. And yet such love letters! Compared to ordinary ones, they resemble the stupendous mis-sives of Brobdignagian swains, when put beside the penny-post productions of the lovers in Lilliput. They have no pretty nonsense; no fine-spun compliments; no high-flown gallantry; no lipping tenderness. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand females, could not have understood them. But they were addressed, we have heard, to a kindred spirit,—a mind little inferior to Foster's own,—and which inhabited a frame, high, cold, pale, beautiful, and majestic—like a statue—but, as he himself complained, "like a statue too, surrounded by an iron railing," which it required these essays to break down. Alas! some time ere his own departure, she, before whom he laid the first powerful productions of his intellect, and whose smiles he won by the sheer force of his intellect, became a cold corpse. The essays are more than worthy of the inspiration. In reading them, we feel like one, who, travelling over a dull champaign, is suddenly let down into a mine of gold; or, it

is a pleasure like that of the heroine of "The Revolt of Islam," who is carried by a "diver, lean, and strong," down amid the glories, the "mighty shapes, and mightier shadows," of a coral sea. The contrast between the dull and sickening sameness, the tame or turgid language, the cautious and creeping, or silly and ranting tone of ordinary religious literature, and the energy, the grasp, the freshness, boldness, and grandeur, of the author of the "Essay on Decision of Character," is immense. It is an eagle intermingling with a dance of twilight bats. It is a trumpet sounding suddenly amid a twang of Jews' harps. It is the ship of Heaven, described by Southey, shell-shaped, rigged with a rainbow, coloured with the green light of evening, bearing away boldly for the Swerga, from amongst a batch of river craft, which are creeping along the shore. That these figures do not too strongly express the difference, will be admitted by every one who recollects the state of religious literature at the time these essays appeared, or is capable of appreciating the vast *toto coelo* distinction between the cold, narrow, illiterate mode of presenting the truths of Christianity, which then prevailed, and the new, brilliant, and firmamental light, which the genius of Foster has poured around them.

"On Decision of Character," has been the most popular of the four essays; though, in passages, we think, inferior to any of the rest. It abounds in illustrations, many of them taken from the most commonplace classical sources, but all steeped in the author's native originality, and all subservient to a grand moral end. Foster is essentially a moralist,—indeed the last specimen of that class who have occupied the border ground between literature and theology,—and, though not so elegant as Addison, nor so sonorous as Johnson, he is the expounder of as profound a wisdom, and of a nobler, stricter, more ethereal, and more Christian ethics. If effect

be a test of true power, this essay meets it as effectually as any thing we know within the same compass. We have heard of many whose wavering inclinations it has fixed, whose scattered faculties it has condensed into one deep purpose—who have risen from its perusal “sadder and wiser” men, pledged as by a sacrament to a more consistent, independent, and energetic course of existence. Perhaps he overrates the force of a determined intellect. He frequently, indeed, protests against its abuse, yet he so much admires and ardently eulogizes the quality itself, as to give it a dangerous prominence, and to wreath around it a seductive charm. There can be no question, that while decision of character, in a virtuous spirit, is beneficial in the highest degree, it becomes, in a vicious character, the source and centre of immense evil. But Foster, in teaching us to idolize this quality, teaches us in effect, though not in intention, to regard it as a blind to errors, and an excuse for enormities which are distinguished by a daring decision. For one Howard or Whitfield, there have been a hundred Catilines and Buonapartes. Decision of character, in short, is not strictly a moral power, and it is extremely dangerous to pay that homage to any intellectual quality, which is sacred to virtue alone.

The Essay on a “Man’s Writing Memoirs of Himself,” has always been our chief favourite among Foster’s writings. Less finished in execution, and less sustained in mere style, than the former, it has a far deeper energy of thinking, and rises in parts to an overwhelming sublimity, and awfulness of tone. Who has forgot his demonstration, in a few sentences, of the folly and presumption of the atheist, (or rather, to use Dr. Chalmers’ distinction, of the anti-theist, who would deny the very possibility of a Supreme Being,) conveying to him a rebuke as if from the chambers of the thunder? We

admire too in this essay the deep side glances into the core of human nature; the fierce bitterness of sarcasm which tinges many of its sentences, and repays with rich interest the scoff of profane wittlings; the profound earnestness which pervades it, and the peculiar freshness of its originality, like the taste of virgin honey, or the smell of a strong soil turned up by the plough. Some passages, too, are written in a style of plaintive tenderness, and many of his thoughts flower into poetry. "Where," he asks of the aged man, "are all those vernal fancies which once had so much power to touch the heart? They died like the singing birds of that time, which now sing no more."

The essay "On the term Romantic," is not as a whole successful. It is an attempt, with what seems a total waste of force, to transpierce those bright bubbles which arise in young and visionary minds, and which are sure but too speedily to fall asunder of themselves. There is little risk of the world ever becoming over romantic. And is not the sport cruel, which singles out for savage chase those innocent illusions, which, if they do sometimes veil the real responsibilities, more frequently disguise the real calamities of existence? In fact it is not worth while. No use of throwing a sledge-hammer among the bonny bells which arise in their brief beauty on the surface of the mountain pool. They will soon sink into the black abyss whence they rose. One passage, however, on the absurdity of Utopian schemes for the regeneration of the world, is written with much energy, and a certain mournful grandeur, which nearly melt us to tears. Various projects, aspiring each to the character of the true panacea, pass in review before the stern observer, who keenly eyes, briefly questions, and dismisses them with the waive of summary disdain. His verdict is sometimes, we fear, too harsh and hasty, and he does but bare justice to the benevo-

lence, and self-sacrifice, which shine through the worst of those schemes ; and, though we cordially agree with him in thinking that the help of the world must in the [main come from above, and be wrought out by means as independent of human forethought as the "rising of the sun," we plead guilty to a lurking tenderness for those sincere enthusiasts, typified by the heroic Knight of La Mancha, who have sought, often by tears, and tortures, and blood, to stanch the wounds of this "poor, terrestrial citadel of man." We cannot, in a world so selfish as this, afford to sacrifice the disinterestedness, self-devotion, and honesty to be found in the annals of projectorism, even to the keenest and raciest of sneers. We are romantic enough to prefer the sublime visionary, to the utilitarian philosopher, to the calculating slave of worldly prudence, and to those, who—from motives very different from Foster's—pour indiscriminate derision upon all the efforts, noble, though ever defeated, of

"Poor humanity's afflicted will,
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

The essay, "On the Causes of Aversion in Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion," is the most elaborate and complete, if not the finest of his efforts. An outcry was raised against it, because it ridicules the use of the old theological phraseology, and omits to dwell on the grand cause of aversion—the depravity of human nature. Both charges are unjust. Foster does not ridicule the use, but the abuse of technical language, as applied to divine things ; and proposes, modestly, and merely as an experiment, to translate it in accommodation to fastidious tastes. And if he does not dilate on the depravity of man, he takes it for granted, and proceeds to examine the subordinate causes which tend to aggravate the virus of the corruption. Why blame him for not doing what

he never meant to do? for not writing a "Fourfold State," or a "Whole Duty of Man," when he merely intended an ethical essay? No one has ever expressed in terms of more entire conviction, or piercing eloquence, his belief in the radical depravity of human nature. But he does not protrude the doctrine in every page. This could only have been desired by the merest slaves of system. That part of the essay devoted to a review of the literature of ancient and modern times, might, we think, have been objected to with greater justice. It applies far too stern and rigid a standard. Would not even the "Paradise Lost" shrink from angelic criticism? But here Homer, Virgil, and Lucan are tried, not by their own law, the law of nature, but by the measure of a light in which they were not permitted to walk. Homer's heroes are the very men of Homer's age—sublime and sanguinary barbarians—what else could they have been expected to be? The traits of justice and of generosity, of pity and mildness, which they exhibit, are often given them by the pure grant of the poet, and in some measure serve to counteract the ferocious lessons taught by their vices. It will never do to apply the standard of Heaven's own purity to the two old works of a Pagan poet, and to complain that a "Greek gazette" breathes not a gospel spirit, and contains not the essence of a gospel morality.

The same harshness of tone characterizes his view of Modern Literature. We surrender to him Pope's "Essay on Man," *et hoc omne genus*, also the spawn of playwrights and the odes of demi-reps, on which he passes so sage and solemn a sentence. But we are not so willing to give up our belief in the Christianity of Addison and Johnson. True, they were not quite orthodox; but neither was Milton, whose genius Foster deems "worthy to have mingled with that of the angels who proclaimed the coming of Christ upon the

plain of Bethlehem ; to have shamed to silence the muses of Paganism, or softened the pains of a Christian martyr." True, they were not professed theologians, and did not protrude the peculiarities of the Gospel into miscellaneous and desultory papers ; but neither has always Foster himself. With regard to the private characters of the men, they had their faults—who wants them ? But they were sincere believers, and died in the faith of Christ. And more, they shrank not, in spite of Foster's assertions, from expressing their convictions of the truth of religion, on every proper opportunity, and in defiance of the scorn of a sneering and skeptical age. Dr. Johnson's impressions, especially, were profound as death ; and, in his last moments, he recommended a volume of sermons as fullest on the doctrine of propitiation. How long will it be till Christians understand the meaning of the words, "He that is not against us, is on our part ;" and, "the greatest of these is charity ?" We blush for those wretched trammels of sectarianism which induced a mind like John Foster's to cast cold-blooded doubts upon the religion of two such men, merely because they differed from him in this jot and yonder tittle of their creed, or because their mode of articulating their faith was more lax and less accurate than his own.

The "Essay on Popular Ignorance," is, in point of style and execution, decidedly the worst of all his productions. Clumsy in structure, cumbrous in style, obscure in purpose, and spasmodic in movement, it requires almost a martyr's patience to read it through. "He has run," said Hall, "a race after obscurity, and gained it." But if we look within the rough and awkward outside, we will be richly rewarded by its perusal. We will admire its benevolent intent, its grasp of thought, the thunders of indignation which are heard from its cloudy tabernacle against the kings, and priests,

and statesmen, who have kept the people in the bondage of ignorance; and will view with interest even the gigantic gropings of his mind amid the gloomy subject, like those of the Cyclops in the cave, or of Samsom stretching at the pillars. We will admit, however, that his tints are too uniform and too sombre; that he allows not sufficiently for that wild natural knowledge which (like the unconsolidated ether of the heavens) has been diffused at every period, in the shape of common sense, or fine superstition, or floating poetry; that he expects too much from the accumulation of mere unassimilated, unkindled, unbaptized information; and that he overrates the influence and responsibility of governments in the matter, forgetting that the primary end of all such institutions is to manage the temporal concerns and provide for the temporal wants of their subjects; that, in the wants and diseases of the spiritual nature, "the patient best ministers to himself;" that the exact value of mere mental education, as a means of morality and happiness, is not yet settled, and that the difficulties connected with its mode and management have always been so numerous and formidable, as to explain, if not excuse the reluctance of many of the ablest and wisest of state-physicians to intermeddle with a case so delicate and perilous. The book has been lately re-written and re-printed. We mention this for the purpose of noting Foster's character as a redacteur of his own works. He reminds us in it of some huge animal walking backwards. Expressions originally clumsy, are rubbed down and left in a state of more awkward and helpless clumsiness than before; unmusical periods are torn into harsher discord; obscurities are blotched into more hopeless obscurity still; his intricacies he deems he has clarified, when he has cast them into other and more perplexed arrangement. Some of his finest illustrations he spoils by addition; some of his strongest expres-

sions he emasculates by subtraction ; and leaves the whole uncongenial business with a shrug, half of chagrin, and half of ludicrous gratitude, that if he has made it no better, he has not left it much worse than it was before.

He published, so far as we are aware, but one sermon, if sermon it can be called, which is, in fact, an essay with a text at top. This was his celebrated discourse on Indian Idolatry. We never so fully saw its merit as when listening a while ago to some missionaries professing to give an account of Hindooism. In their hands, it became simply ludicrous and silly, instead of being an object of grave scorn and hatred ; and the farce was completed by their holding up a specimen of an idol, which was received with a shout of laughter. But Foster grapples with the real and comprehensive character of the system. While treating with all the austerity of his colossal contempt the multitudinous foeries of its mythology, he concedes to it the possession of a certain sublimity, springing from its antiquity, its prevalence, its power, and the splendour, as of mingled blood and fire, which surrounds its temples and confirms its reign. By proclaiming its possession of such attributes, he desires to awaken against it efforts commensurate with its greatness, and an animosity profound as its age. We never make sufficient exertions to oppose an enemy we despise. We must fear ere we can foil the foe. Nor can that system be purely ridiculous and contemptible which has gathered around it the grandeur and the associations of centuries, which chains to its throne millions of immortals, which has " established castes that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through immemorial tracts of time," and " barriers of utter abhorrence " between various classes, which have remained unbroken for ages, and cemented its foundations by many and many a Ganges of human blood. Poor expedient for kindling ire

against "an ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate" religion like this, the exhibition of one of its idols to a gaping and laughing audience! It was not, besides, giving the system its due. The idol which, here, in the grasp of an enemy, and held up in its naked absurdity, before an audience of enemies, was merely ridiculous, would, were we to change the scene, and see it the centre of a million flashing eyes, surrounded by the pomps of its ceremonial, overhung by the canopy of its burning heaven, mirrored in its gigantic stream, and perfumed by the incense of its swarthy adorers, become infinitely more respected, as well as infinitely more the object of terror and hatred. The half of this sermon is written in Foster's best style, is dipt in the deepest dye of his philosophy, and radiant with all the poetry of his nature. His picture of war is the best we have read, not excepting that very different one in Gulliver; but who can hope, in a sermon or sentence, to describe adequately the profound and prodigious thing, war? As easily have collected all the blood of Borodino or Waterloo in a basin. In the latter half he entangles himself with supposed objections, urged by fatalists against missions, as if one who had drunk the "coal-black wine" of that miserable delusion, were to be reasoned with any more than a wild beast or a maniac. Foster fighting with a fatalist, reminds us of

" Whole ocean into tempest tossed,
To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

He is the author, moreover, of a very long and very characteristic Preface to Doddridge's "Rise and Progress." We admire particularly its introduction, wherein he muses on a library in a peculiar and most impressive style, spreading the genius and the gloom of his mind over the place where a silent people have fixed their abode, filling the pop-

ulous solitude of books with his reveries, and weaving a cobweb of melancholy cogitation over the crowded shelves. Books talk to him as he sits pensive and alone: they tell him the history of those who read and those who wrote them; names inscribed centuries ago upon their margins or blank pages suggest strange surmises as to the fate of those who bore them; and the vices or virtues, the weal or the woe of their deceased authors seem to cluster round, or to flash out from the dumb volumes, and to stir the leaves with "airs from heaven or blasts from hell." It is the day-dream of a strange but holy soul. And turning round from his books, how closely does he grapple in a series of interrogations with the hearts and consciences of his readers! It is like a spirit talking to us of eternity, over the mouth of the grave, and by the light of a waning moon. How strict yet tender the questionings! The conscience, a discoloured form, is naked and bare before the questioner's eye, and writhes visibly in the force of his tremendous investigation.

He has written, besides all this, a series of very unequal articles in *The Eclectic Review*, (since collected into a volume,) where, amid much that was weighty and profound, he perpetrated a great deal of unwieldy, slovenly, dreary, and leaden prose. In them he has painted, with much force, what he calls the "Tragedy" of Hume's death-bed;—he has made a desperate but unsuccessful effort to solve the problem of Coleridge's genius,—a subject on which no one but Hazlitt has, hitherto, written adequately, who seemed created to criticise Coleridge;—he has written a long analysis and panegyric of Southey's prodigious poem, "The Curse of Kehama;" and condescended to break the butterfly, Mrs. Montague, on his austere wheel, and to moralize on the memoirs of the miserable Foote. We recollect, too, with much zest, some articles intensely and terribly sarcastic, on the

Hindoo mythologies, and their English defenders. His style ponderous, powerful, like the trample of an elephant, constantly bewrays him; but it is a proud reflection for his admirers, the more especially since his departure, that all his writings, anonymous or acknowledged, have the welfare of the human race as their grand object,—that, too peculiar, too unbent, before the Dagon of conventional taste, to be popular, in the ordinary sense at present, they bide their time,—that as it is, they have secured for him, already, an earthly immortality; and, what is far more, they are, doubtless, destined, from their moral and religious influences, to lend lustre to that crown of eternal life of which he was the eager but humble expectant. Of his private history we have heard little. In his youth, as we have hinted, he is said to have been tinged with skeptical sentiments, which were gradually exchanged for a consistent and genuine, though a gloomy form of religion. He was reared under the tutorship of Dr. Ryland, the well known Baptist minister of Broad-mead, Bristol, who told our informant that the first thing which attracted his particular notice, was a sermon he delivered before him, in which occurred the remarkable expression, “It was as impossible for Christ’s body to have rested in the sepulchre, as for snow to remain, unmelted, on the surface of the sun.” He became a preacher; but not a popular one. His matter was too profound for the apprehension of his audience,—his manner stiff and cold, his voice low and husky. To listen to a man solely from the prestige of his reputation, was soon found to be a tax too heavy to be paid often or long. He is currently said to have emptied—cleaned out—in the most masterly style,—two or three chapels. “His words,” said Hall, “may be fire within, but the moment they leave his lips they freeze, and fall down at his feet.” He ultimately gave up preaching, and came to

reside at Stapleton, near Bristol. He attended for years, while there, the ministry of Robert Hall. He enjoyed his intimacy, and so commanded his respect, and almost terror—that the great preacher felt embarrassed if he saw him while he was going on; and the Essayist used to sit in a corner of the chapel, where he could not be seen! He thus qualified himself for writing the somewhat hypercritical estimate which was published after Hall's death. Like Dr. Johnson, he was notoriously reluctant to write, and yet, like Dr. Johnson, he wrote a great deal;—much that has been published, and, perhaps, more that has fed the flames. He was a modest and unassuming man. Once introduced to Coleridge, he was asked, at the close of the interview, why he had been so silent? He replied, "Oh, who durst speak while *he* was talking." He was one of the most faithless and forgetful of correspondents, as Dr. Chalmers and others can testify. Within these few years he confined his composition principally to an article now and then in a newspaper. Several political papers in *The Morning Chronicle*, about the years 1834-5, and 6, were attributed to his pen. He took, all along, a lively interest in missions, and particularly in the Baptist mission to Hindostan. He was, as already stated, more awfully impressed, than most men, by the great mysteries of being; and was once known, in a moment of deep despondency, when asked for a subscription to some new means of religious instruction,—a chapel, we think,—to refuse, with the words, "What good can it do? Men seem determined to go to the Devil, do what we will to prevent it." This could only, however, have been a temporary ebullition. In his youth he was very romantic in his tendencies, and moonlight solitary walks of extraordinary length are laid to his charge. In October, 1843, at the advanced age of seventy-six, he rendered back his strong and gloomy soul to his Creator.

- PROFESSOR WILSON.

OUR sketch, at present, is of a very extraordinary man ; the wise, the witty, the warm-hearted, the eloquent Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University,—John Wilson, to his familiars ; Wilson, to his foes ; Professor Wilson, to his students ; Christopher North, to all Europe !

We know not at what corner of this many-sided man to commence our rapid review. John Wilson is a host, he is a continent in himself. Like “ Leviathan, he lies floating many a rood.” Whether we view him as the generous, copious, acute, and ardent critic,—as the pathetic and most eloquent lecturer,—as the tender poet,—as the popular and powerful tale-writer,—as the fervid politician,—as the kindly man ;—we have before us one of the most remarkable, and, next to Brougham, the *cleverest* man of the nineteenth century. It is probable, indeed, that the very variety and versatility of Wilson’s powers have done him an injury in the estimation of many. They can hardly believe that an actor, who can play so many parts, is perfect in all. Because he is, confessedly, one of the most eloquent of men, it is doubted if he can be profound : because he is a fine poet, he must be a shallow metaphysician ;—because he is the editor of *Blackwood*, he must be an inefficient professor. There are “ more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy.” There is such a thing, on this round earth, though not, perhaps, within the categories of their limited and false theories, as diffusion along with depth, as the versatile and vigorous mind of a man of genius mastering a multitude of topics, while they are blunderingly acquiring one,—as a man “ multiplying himself among mankind, the Proteus of

their talents," and proving that the Voltairian activity of brain has been severed, in one splendid instance at least, from the Voltairian sneer, and the Voltairian shallowness. Such an instance as that of our illustrious Professor, who is ready for every tack,—who can, at one time, scorch a poetaster to a cinder, at another cast illumination into the "dark deep holds" of a moral question, by a glance of his genius;—at one time dash off the picture of a Highland glen, with the force of a Salvator, at another, lay bare the anatomy of a passion with the precision and the power of an Angelo,—write, now, the sweetest verse, and now the most energetic prose,—now let slip, from his spirit, a single star, like the "evening cloud," and now unfurl a *Noctes* upon the wondering world,—now paint Avarice till his audience are dying with laughter, and now Emulation and Sympathy till they are choked with tears,—write now "The Elder's Deathbed," and now the "Address to a Wild Deer,"—be equally at home in describing the sufferings of an orphan girl, and the undressing of a dead Quaker, by a congregation of ravens, under the brow of Helvellyn.

Professor Wilson, as a lecturer and professor, has great and peculiar merit. Inferior to Dugald Stewart in the elegance and refinement of metaphysical criticism,—to Thomas Brown, in original and daring speculation—in the combination of subtlety, depth, and beauty which distinguished that prince of Scottish philosophers,—to Chalmers in the intensity of his mind, and the contagious fury of his manner, he is inferior to none in the richness of his fancy, and in that singular vein of pathetic and original eloquence which gives such a charm to his spoken style. Chalmers rouses, Wilson melts. Chalmers has, now at least, but slender command over the sources of tears, Wilson touches them at his pleasure. Chalmers has a strong but monotonous fancy, Wilson has

the rich and glowing, and fertile and forgetive imagination of a poet. Chalmers has a style of much energy but limited resources, Wilson is copious to a fault. Chalmers speaks with more rapidity—is more fluent—carries you more triumphantly away at the moment; Wilson does not strike you as so eloquent at the time, but there is a slow and solemn music in his voice, which fills at once the ear and the soul; he plants stings within you which can be plucked out only with the last bleeding fibres of the heart; his very tones linger in your ear—the very glances of his eye, years after, haunt your memory—the magic of his eloquence makes you its slave for life. Never shall we forget the manner in which he pronounced the final words of Thomson, “the melancholy main,” with deep lingering accents, as if his soul were swelling forth on the sound, while his look seemed to mirror “the great bright eye” of old Ocean. And who that has heard him describe Cæsar weeping at the tomb of Alexander, can cease to remember the very tremor of the voice, which brought out so finely his conception of that noble scene? The tones in which he uttered the words, “fading youth,” will be with us to our dying day. They involved in them a world of sentiment and pathos. In recitation of poetry, he is altogether unrivalled. His whole man—eye, lip, chest, arms, voice, become surcharged and overflowing with the spirit of the particular composition. He reads it as the poet’s own soul would wish it read. And you say, as you listen, now what an actor, and now what a preacher, would he have made. The main current, indeed, of his nature is rapt and religious. In proof of this, we have heard, that on one occasion, he was crossing the hills from St. Mary’s Loch to Moffat. It was a misty morning; but, as he ascended, the mist began to break into columns before the radiant finger of the rising sun. Wilson’s feelings be-

came too much excited for silence, and he began to speak, and, from speaking, began to pray; and prayed aloud and alone, for thirty miles together in the misty morn. We can conceive what a prayer it would be, and with what awe some passing shepherd may have heard the incarnate voice, "sounding on its dim and perilous way."

It has often appeared to us, that Wilson is somewhat damped by the imperfect sympathies of his audience. A large proportion of his general hearers is, necessarily, composed of plodding ethical inquirers, who come to get information, not to hear eloquence. Sitting, note-book and pencil in hand, fresh from Reid and Stewart, how can they relish those deep allusions in which he indulges? how can they worship that strange fire which has come from its far volcanic sources, to lighten on his brow and eye? To produce his highest style of impression, he would require an audience of poets. With a sympathizing and discriminating auditory he could work wonders of excitement,—move passions which Chalmers could not touch,—bring a glow to the brows of prepared spirits, like the sunset hues of a higher heaven. As it is, his true power, as a public speaker, is not fully felt. He is, indeed, always eloquent,—eloquent alike at the professorial desk, in the public meeting, amid the uproarious atmosphere of the after-dinner party, in the private circle,—every motion of his spirit, every where, is eloquence, but, not unfrequently, it misses by overshooting its mark, and the oratory, which might enthrall angels, fails to rouse men.

Into his merits, or demerits, as a political partizan, the plan of this publication does not permit us to enter. Let us turn, rather, to glance at him in the more pleasing light of a critic. His generous judgment of the essays written by the young men of his class, must not be overlooked.

His praise is not conveyed in scanty and envious driblets ; it is not meted out with mean and narrow-minded parsimony, —it is not confined in the conduit-pipes of set and formal phrases ; it is the free outpouring of a catholic and noble nature, intensely sympathizing with all excellence, and fearlessly expressing that sympathy. His blame is open,—honest, as to the matter of it,—gentle and measured as to the language. The author is justified, by the experience of hundreds of students of Edinburgh University, in declaring that a more gentlemanly, just, and honourable distributor of honours is not to be imagined ; and, in thanking him for the encouragement, sympathy, and praise which he has bestowed upon numberless deserving and struggling scholars, each and all of whom regard his compliments “as equal to an house or estate.”

The literature of his country is indebted to Wilson for a series of the most eloquent criticisms ever penned, from which passages of every variety of merit might be selected, in a style of execution altogether unparalleled, combining much of Macaulay's point, Hazlitt's gorgeousness, Jeffrey's vivacity, Sidney Smith's broad humour, with a freedom, force, variety, and rush of sounding words, and glow of whirling images, quite peculiar to himself. How powerful and fearless his criticisms on Moore's Byron ! With what a trumpet tongue did he talk of Homer and his translators ! With what a fine tact did he plunge us into the “witch element” of Spenser ! What beautiful morsels, moreover, of rich critical dust did his prodigal genius scatter amid the broad fun, the inextinguishable laughter, the Shakspearean imagination of the *Noctes* ! With what masterly ease, and sovereign good humour did he extinguish the author of *The Age*, Henry Sewell Stokes, &c., and clip the wings, though he could not, altogether, arrest the flight of Edwin Atherston !

And what a fine, fresh, and frank spirit did there breathe out from his reviews of William Howitt, Ebenezer Elliott, and others, of a school of politics directly opposite to his own! "Be mine," said Gray, "to read eternal novels of Marivaux and Crebillon." Give us eternal criticisms of Wilson.

His poetry is not, perhaps, his strongest claim to immortality, but there is much of it which must survive. It has not the stern and concentrated energy of Byron's verse, nor the depth and grand simplicity of Wordsworth's, nor the tumultuous glow and transcendental graces of Shelley's, nor the wild Ezekiel-like mystic energy of Coleridge's, nor the stately march and sounding eloquence of Croly's, nor the homely vigour of Crabbe's, nor the holy charm of Montgomery's, nor the robust and masculine strength of Ebenezer Elliott's. It is a poetry altogether distinct from that of any other author, living or dead. The sole spring of its inspiration is a kind of apostolic meekness or love, which overflows from his heart, as a centre, and colours all things with its own soft and fairy lustre. The result is, either a glad diffusion or a pensive melancholy. We find the former in "The Isle of Palms." Deficient as that poem is in profound purpose and overwhelming power, its beauty, like that of the child in "We are seven," makes us glad. A fairy world surrounds us; "strange and star-bright" flowers bloom around; humming-birds flutter amid the leaves; palms, undisturbed since the deluge, are stirred to make a music over our heads; unknown stars peep down upon us through the many-coloured foliage; breezes, sweet as those which awoke from their slumbers the roses of Eden, breathe a balm upon our brows. It is the very clime and home of love.

"An isle, 'under Atlantic skies,'
Beautiful as the wreck of Paradise."

The whole performance is, indeed, the first dizzy and dazzling leap of a fine and youthful fancy—the first sweet sin of a poetical genius; and therefore, we doat upon “The Isle of Palms.”

“The City of the Plague” is a more mature and elaborate production; and though it has failed in obtaining a general and giddy popularity, it is rising slowly and surely to its level in public estimation. It does not, perhaps, come up to the ideal of a great poem in the subject. It must not be named with the description of that dire calamity in Boccaccio, for picturesque interest; nor with the picture of it by De Foe, in homely horror; nor with the sketch of it in “The Revolt of Islam,” in ideal grandeur. It does not conduct us, with a throbbing heart and trembling footsteps, from bedside to bedside of the pest, till the minute, by multiplication, waxes into the magnificent; nor does it, on the other hand, show us, in distinct perspective, the plague-poison hanging in the air over the “high-iced city,” leaving it to imagination to tell us what is going on under that canopy of Fear. Between the two modes of painting the pest, the poem, we think, fails. It wants the literal interest of the one, and the high and bold relief of the other. It neither gives the harrowing disgust, nor the sublime moral of the evil. It has caught, however, a variety of the more pathetic and beautiful aspects of the scene, and steeped them in the rich dyes of fancy, and painted them with a tender and touching hand. We do not quarrel with the author of this exquisite poetical drama, for not combining all the qualities requisite to an ideal painter of the plague. Shakspeare alone would have been this; and, had he turned his mind to the theme, would have united more than the literal distinctness of De Foe to more than the fine picturesque of Boccaccio, and more than the lofty imagination of Shelley. But our complaint of Wil-

son is, that he has, in some measure, given the subject the slip—painted with great beauty and pathos some scenes on the outskirts of the judgment—but neither introduced us sufficiently into the heart of its blackness or darkness, nor placed that fearful gloom in the point of view where imagination would make it visible, in its lines of dim and distant magnificence. But whatever be our opinions of “The City of the Plague” as a whole, we cannot be blind to those graces of thought, imagery, and diction, which are scattered upon it with all the profusion of conscious wealth. These, however, are chiefly of a pathetic kind. He does not once, it is singular enough, in this his most elaborate work, touch the true sublime of tragedy, although there is hardly a sketch, or review, or *Noctes* from his pen, but discovers capabilities for moving not merely pity, but terror of a very high order.

His smaller poems are many of them exquisite. Who can have forgot “An evening in Furness Abbey,” “Unimore, or a Dream of the Highlands,” “Lines written in a Highland Glen?” Indeed Wilson, like Rob Roy, is never so much himself as on the heather. The Highlands! The very name stirs his blood and intensifies his eloquence.

Next to his writings in *Blackwood*, it is by his tales that Professor Wilson is chiefly known to the public; and the general opinion in reference to them, is so fixed and favourable, that nothing remains for us but to express our cordial concurrence in it. Perhaps “The Forresters,” and “Margaret Lindsay,” have never had justice done to them. It were vain to deny that a certain degree of sameness and tediousness adheres to their plan; but it is the sameness of excellence, the weariness springing from a repletion of good things. And what nice little pictures and sentences are sprinkled throughout their quiet and simple tenor!—The drowning of Henry Needham has seldom been equalled.—

The losing of Lucy Forrester is equally good in a different style.

And what shall we say of that noble series of Scottish studies, called the "Lights and Shadows?" Several of them are merely slight sketches, rough draughts thrown hastily off, as if at a single sitting. Some are pure fancy pieces, utterly unlike Scottish, or any life, and somewhat mawkish withal. Others are above praise. Witness the "Snow Storm," "Simon Gray," (an appalling story—Adam Blair in miniature,) the "Family Tryste," &c., &c. It were wasting time to criticize such things as these. As long as the thistle shakes in the Scottish breeze—and the heather, with its purple eye, looks up to the blue of the Scottish heaven—and the salmon springs in the Highland burn—and the gray ghost-like mist gathers in the hollows of Glen Etive—and the black thunder-cloud flings its weight of gloom upon Ben Nevis,—so long shall the Scottish eye sparkle up at the Lights, and weep over the Shadows, which the hand of one of the first of living Scotsmen has so faithfully and feelingly portrayed.

The sketch would not be complete without a word on the personal appearance of its subject. In spite of De Quincey's invectives against what he calls the "missy" spirit which prompts such inquiries about a celebrated man—as, what is he like? the feeling is natural, universal, and irresistible; and the Opium eater has condescended for a series of years himself to gratify it. Professor Wilson's appearance is that of a hale, stout, broad-shouldered man, with a golden mass of hair, now, alas! waxing thin upon the temples, with study and sorrow. He is a man of powerful bone and muscle, above six feet high, and one whom every one stops on the street to gaze after. His brow is more ample than prominent—a broad mass of imagination on either temple. His eye is quick, stern, and lively; but, greatly as it

is praised, we have seen far finer and more expressive eyes in men of much more prosaic mould. M'Nish of Glasgow says, somewhere, that he never knew a man of imagination who wanted fine eyes. He had forgot Dr. Chalmers, whose eyes are peculiar but not fine. He had also forgot Sir Walter Scott. We knew a man, not inferior to either of these in native genius, whose eyes were small, piggish, and, till excited, had no expression whatever.

Professor Wilson's eyes are certainly very characteristic of the volubility and impetuosity of his nature. They have sometimes an irresistibly comic look; at other times, they seem like Chatterton's, "as if fire rolled under them;" and we have seen them shining through unshed tears. His dress is generally negligent, whether from carelessness or caprice we cannot tell; but certainly not from affectation, from which no human being is more free. We can add only, concerning the personality of the man, that he writes with immense rapidity, and in a fierce, rapid, unintelligible scrawl; and that his voice is the richest and deepest in its tones of any we have heard. He has lately been tried by severe domestic affliction, under which his noble heart has bled profusely, and in which he has had the deep and universal sympathies of the public. How characteristic of him, and how affecting, was his saying to his students, in apology for not returning their essays at the usual time, "I could not see to read them in the Valley and the Shadow of Death."

EDWARD IRVING,
AND THE PREACHERS OF THE DAY.

WHAT is preaching? is a question to which there would probably be as many replies as to, What is truth? Almost

every minister, and almost every man, has his own taste, and his own standard, and his own weight, and his own measure on this subject. One man thinks, that to preach means accurately to divide a given topic, logically to illustrate it, and to observe a perfect but cold propriety through the various steps and stages of the discourse. This is the mechanical plan of preaching. Another imagines preaching to be the exposition of a particular passage of scripture, bringing out from it all that is in it, and nothing more. This is the textual idea of preaching. Another cares not a straw for a sermon, if it do not contain a train of rigid argumentation, diversified by occasional bursts of party rage, and strong squirts of the *odium theologicum*. This is the polemical idea of preaching. Another likes no preaching but what contains a string of appeals and queries and adjurations, unconnected with principles, unsupported by reasonings, and loose as a rope of sand. This is called, though falsely, practical preaching. Another wants a sermon to be a series of electrical shocks—one burst from beginning to end; the clouds returning after the rain, and no cotton so thick, and no conscience so hard as to exclude or resist the perpetual tumult. This is the clap-trap idea of preaching. Another wants flowers, whether natural and fresh from the soil, or artificial and faded, it does not matter; if he do but get flowers, and hear them rustling about his ears, in the breeze of brilliant declamation, he is quite satisfied, whether they keep him languishingly awake, or lull him into dreamy repose. This is the florid, or Corinthian idea of preaching. Another is content with exclamations: he is not pleased unless every other sentence begin with Oh; the interjection Ah, has to him a peculiarly pathetic sound: it seems to melt into his midriff like snow; and that preacher would be his *Magnus Apollo*, who should say, "Oh, we remark in the

next place." This is the interjectional idea of preaching. Another desiderates chiefly delivery: no minister is a favourite unless his voice be musical, and his attitude smack of the boards; unless he indulge in a profusion of studied declamation, pointing to the four winds when he names them, and laying his hand gently on the heart, when he wishes to indicate that interesting organ. This is the material or Anthropomorphic idea of preaching. Another judges of a sermon by its length, and likes it, either because it is an hour, or because it is only the half of the time. This is the arithmetical idea of preaching. One man abuses a sermon, because he does not understand it; another admires it, because he does understand it; and a third admires it, because he does not understand it. One man constantly asks, ere giving his verdict, What do the best judges say? Another, with some favourite model in his eye, says, What is this to Hall, or Chalmers, or Thomson? One man likes a discourse to be as full of ideas as a pudding of plums. Another prefers a sermon in which the gold, or even the brass, is beat so thin, that it trembles before the zephyr. A third likes one great general idea to pervade a sermon, and to gather round it, by the force of attraction, a host of illustrations. One likes a discourse endlessly subdivided, all hedges and ditches. Another would have it limitless, free and unenclosed, as a moor or a mountain. One wishes it to be gemmed with Scripture, and with nothing else. Another likes to see the Cairngorm pebbles of earthly poetry sparingly intermixed with the inestimable jewels of celestial song. One would hem a sermon in within very strait-laced limitations. Another would allow it a wide and varied range; to draw illustrations from the meanest and from the loftiest objects—from the flower and the star—from the ant and the leviathan—from the glow-worm under

the hedge, and from that final conflagration which shall whelm the universe in billows of fire. And so on, *ad infinitum*. What our idea of preaching is, we do not mean at present to state ; but, in lieu of this, to sketch, rapidly, the characters of some of the principal preachers of the day, closing with the greatest of them all—one who “ strove,” says Carlyle, “ to be a Christian Priest in an age most alien to the character,”—one who reminded the subtle Coleridge of Luther and Paul,—one who stormed on the solitary whirlwind of his eloquence into the very heart of London popularity, and hovered there unequalled and unapproached, till his own wild breath turned the current,—one whose errors were all of the blood, and none of the spirit,—the Herculean, misguided, but magnificent man—Edward Irving.

We may begin with the late Dr. Andrew Thomson. Rarely has there been a man in Scotland whose bodily and mental lineaments made so distinct and definite an impression upon the public mind. There could be no mistake about him. He was one of the best representatives of the national intellect and the national character, which has ever appeared. No subtle metaphysician, no dreaming pedant, no vain declaimer, was he. An intense virility marked all the structure of his understanding, and strung together all the nerves of his soul. His intellect, if not of the profoundest cast, was one of the strongest and clearest that ever wrought. His logic, untaught by the schools, and disdaining their petty jargons, was the mere result of this masculine understanding. His common sense was of that quick instinctive kind which verges on genius. His learning was not exceedingly varied or profound, but what he knew he knew thoroughly, and could use with complete and absolute mastery. Disdaining mysticism, as well as refinement, he struck on all

the hard, strong points of his subject till they rung again. His memory was enormous; his command of it was still more remarkable. His language was the perfect organ of his mind—always sharp, and clear, and strong, and knotty, frequently eloquent, never soft, and seldom beautiful. His sarcasm wanted the refinement and condensed accumulated bitterness of Junius (whom he read continually,) but was steeped in a broad and original humour. His invective could be now as overbearing as Horsley's, and now as rancorous as Burke's. His imagination was strong, but far inferior to his intellect. Fancy, he had little or none. His diction was seldom coloured; and the colours he did use were often coarse. His power over the sterner passions was great: over the finer feelings, limited. Pity he seldom produced: terror often, but generally by the reiteration of strong facts, seldom by the aggregation of energetic images. He had little poetry in his blood, but he had much music; his own voice was a fine instrument, giving out rather level vigorous tones than soft cadences or lofty bursts of sound. All these various powers were plunged, not into the pool of imagination, but into the *genium perfervidum Scotorum*—into the passions of a hot and noble heart. As a preacher, with few shining points or breathless bursts or rapid and kindling splendour, with no recondite trains of reasoning, with no violent appeals to feeling, with little imagery, and with less declamation, he was simple, searching, scriptural, strong. The subject lay before him, and he transferred his view of it fully and easily to his audience. The march of his mind through his discourse was not forced nor rapid, neither was it slow and reluctant: it was moderate, masterly, grave, and majestic. The heat he felt and kindled was not of furnace fierceness, but steady and growing. His argument in the pulpit was clear; his reply to objections signally short, rapid, and con-

clusive ; his appeals at the close, irresistible. He always commanded attention ; and he often produced deep and permanent effect. If he disappointed the lovers of the gaudy, the ornamental, the far-fetched, and the conclusive, he pleased the pious, he enlightened the ignorant, he satisfied the inquiring, he overawed the skeptical.

“ And fools who came to laugh remained to pray.”

As a platform speaker, he allowed himself greater scope and liberty. He gave his wit full play ; and who that ever heard, has forgot its side-splitting coruscations ? How did he, in his playful ire, delight to scarify the unlucky dunderheads who crossed his terrible *via*. It was then,

“ Hurrah, hurrah ! avoid the way of the avenging Childe.”

Often, however, his coarseness, his virulence, the bulldog tenacity with which he pinned down his victim to the earth, and the reckless audacity of his assertions, injured the effect he intended, and produced sympathy, instead of sneers. In his speeches, he rarely meddled with general principles : with their energies he could not grapple, nor unfold their consequences ; but then, how he did deal with particular facts ! It were hard to tell whether the minuteness with which he recollected, or the logical clearness with which he stated them, were the more admirable. On the platform his oratory came out in all its manly splendour. He delighted in the stimulus, the badgering, and the excitement of a public meeting. His nerve was prodigious : opposition never failed to rouse him. Even in preaching, he told our informant, that “ he never got on till he came to answer objections.” He was never so great as when turning up his brawny face against a storm of attack ; and the knife of his opponents alone could bring out the purest and richest blood of his elo-

quence. At the close of a train of triumphant argumentation, and having obtained thus the confidence, and commanded the respect of his hearers, there were no darings of declamation which he might not successfully attempt. Then it was that he could carry all before him by that splendid piece of egotism, "There is a reward for my exertions here, and there is a reward for them *yonder!*" pointing to the heavens which was, ere long, to receive him into its bosom. Then it was that he could electrify his audience by the burst, "Give me the hurricane, rather than the pestilence;" a figure only inferior to Lord Erskine's, (from which it was unquestionably imitated,) "Tempests may shake our dwellings and dissipate our commerce, but they scourge before them the *lazy elements* which otherwise would stagnate into pestilence." On such occasions, he rose above his pulpit-level; he laid about him as a man inspired; he proved that there is no oratory so impressive as that into which an intellectual man is roused and betrayed. He left an impression upon the souls and tingling ears of his auditors which many of them will carry to the grave; and, as the sun broadens and becomes a more imaginative object when near the setting, so was it with his eloquence, which never assumed a phase of more mellow and majestic splendour than when the orator stood a devoted man over the brink of the great precipice, and when his tongue was about to be arrested and stiffened for ever in the frost of death.

As a writer, we do not deem him destined for enduring reputation. Not merely has he bequeathed no elaborate or gigantic work, but there are few separable passages which might survive the works to which they belonged. His works were all written for, and admirably adapted to the nonce; but lack that tight compression which is the life of so many productions, and, as a whole, are destitute of the persevering salt of original genius.

The last time we saw him was in the year 1829, at a little bridge near the source of the Earn. He had come up from Dunira to fish; and there he was, eyeing the stream with as much determined pertinacity as though he were mauling a shoal of Apocryphists, and more eager, apparently, to get a glorious nibble in the Earn, than ever he was to awaken a ruff in the Assembly Rooms. We think we see him now, his massive face bent downwards, his eye gleaming with almost boyish eagerness, the fishing-rod held firmly and strongly in his nervous hand. The fish would not take: and, after some vain efforts, he stalked away with an aspect and attitude of impatience. We saw him no more. Alas, the winding-sheet was even then well up on his breast! That manly fisher had meddled with more troubled waters than those of the Earn,—darker passions than angling had possessed his soul; his constitution sunk and his “heart cracked” beneath their fury. He died—and died in a moment; but not till he had made himself a name imperishable as the freedom of the Negro, and glorious as the unadulterated book of God.

Dr. Gordon's popularity was, at one time, nearly as great as Dr. Thomson's, though founded upon quite another basis. Gordon's sphere was solely the pulpit, and his appearance was much in his favour. Grand was the repose of his lofty brow, dark eye, and aspect of soft and melancholy meaning. It was “sun-light sheathed.” It was a face from which every evil and earthly passion seemed purged. His eye, in Aird's fine language, was “as a prophet's burdened eye.” A deep gravity lay upon his countenance, which had the solemnity, without the sternness, of one of our old reformers. You could almost fancy a halo completing its apostolic character. This calm and reverend aspect was generally retained through the whole course of

his preaching, though sometimes, under high excitement, it threw out a more intense and eloquent meaning. We were never so fortunate as to hear him in his best days, but have abundant testimony to the force and impression of his oratory. His matter is never brilliant, but generally weighty and instructive. He excels in lecturing, as might have been expected, from the close geometrical character of his mind, and its training. His reasoning is candid and comprehensive, but never subtle, and inferior to that of Horsley or Thomson; of manliness and mastery of imagination he is nearly devoid. His passion is great, but its source lies deep, and it requires unusual circumstances to bring it up. Seldom impassioned, he is always in earnest. His style is his own—no echo—no duplicate—but entirely and absolutely the expression of his intellect. This, in truth, is its sole merit. It is destitute of the gay colours of fancy,—has no beauty, and little *lucidus ordo*. His Sermons were, at first, voted a disappointment, though they have passed since through four or five editions. They contain, indeed, much good matter, but few striking things—are heavy and lumbering—have no marked and memorable passages—no “single stones of lustre from the brook”—no gleams of profound or original thought. You miss, as you read them, the charm of the man’s gravity,—the solemn and sepulchral notes of his voice,—the point communicated by his eye,—the meaning, which lies like still winter sunshine upon his lofty forehead, and the eloquence of the thin and silvery locks which cluster round it.

Of Drs. Candlish, Cunninghame, Guthrie, of the Free Church, and Drs. Cook, Robertson, &c. of the Established Church, not being able to speak from personal observation, we prefer not to speak at all. Of Dr. Chalmers we have spoken at large already. We pass to a special favourite of

ours, the Rev. John Bruce, formerly of St. Andrew's Church. The first feeling with which he was saluted in Edinburgh was that of general disappointment. His size was rather diminutive ; his voice harsh, his accent pure Forfar, his style complicated and perplexed, his action *outré* and extravagant. But, with all those disadvantages, it was soon discovered that Bruce was a bold independent thinker, and had the power of thrilling his audience through and through ; in short, that he was a man of genius. We remember visiting his chapel a good many years ago. Our expectations, as usually happens, had prepared us for something altogether different from the real *bonâ fide* man. We expected a florid declaimer,—there was not, so it happened, one figure or flower in the whole lecture. We expected a high-wrought style,—we got no style at all ; his discourse was one long, loose, lumbering sentence. We expected great fire of action and utterance,—on that particular morning he read in a rather rapid but quite unexcited manner—once or twice, indeed, he uttered some favourite word with strong emphasis, and accompanied it with a glare of his eye. His matter seemed, to us, to be rather a roundabout way of arriving at ordinary truth, than absolutely new. On the whole, we were disappointed. We came back, however, and learned at length to feel the admiration which not a few were counterfeiting. We found that our first hearing had not been a full or favourable specimen of his preaching ; that, in fact, he had three manners and styles ; first, the impalpably obscure ; secondly, the darkness visible ; and, thirdly, the luminous and lofty. Sometimes his soul was wading through its subject, and you saw vigorous motion without definite result. And singular it was to see the man getting more animated and furious as he became the more obscure,—fighting desperately with the shadows of his own thoughts,—floundering amid a “sunless

sea" of strange and dreamy speculation; and, at last, confessing, with genuine *naïveté*, "that he feared he had not made himself perfectly intelligible." This, however, was his worst manner. At other times, even if he did not keep quite clear throughout the whole course of his argument,—if now and then he dipt out of sight, he was sure to come up at the close, and, by some striking burst or figure, to add a fiery sting to the long and serpentine coil of his thought. We remember him closing a metaphysical discussion, on the nature and attempted proof of the eternity of faith, by the following words: "But for faith, the righteous would have no security for the continuance of their heavenly joy;—but for faith, they would stop and tremble on the streets of the New Jerusalem, lest these New Heavens should pass away, and that New Earth be melted with fervent heat." The effect was electric. Another time, speaking of the importance of the doctrine of Christ's Deity, he thus broke out:—"Were a conspiracy formed in Hell, to destroy the planetary system, how would they carry it into execution? Would they first seek to blot out one planet and then another? No,—but by a master blow they would strike the sun from the centre. So would the deniers of the divinity of Jesus." Such bursts, brief, unexpected, springing out in a moment, with volcanic fury, and as suddenly subsiding into the dark stern ground-work of his discourses, had a peculiar power in awakening attention, in relieving the dry train of his reasonings, and burning in the results of his long processes of thought upon the mind and memory. And we liked to see his mind working itself up into one of those paroxysms, catching convulsively at some new and striking illustration, and, amid dead silence, labouring to set it before the audience in all its breadth and brilliance: his face, the while, flushing with a dusky fire,—his eye kindling like an angry star,—

his voice almost yelling out its words,—his head bending low to the writing before him,—his small figure distended and dilated by his emotion, and the foam of his furor flying off from his lips upon his manuscript, and far away among the assembly! The strangest thing about such jets of eloquence was the suddenness with which they arose. This moment the man was perfectly calm, pursuing, perhaps, a cold and misty train of reasoning; in five minutes, he was in a half mad state of excitement,—his whole being in combustion, and his audience jerked suddenly away with him, like the passengers in a railway train, who, in a few moments, exchanged perfect rest for impetuous motion. Once, in particular, we recollect him preaching on the words, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” He was investigating, after his usual fashion, the nature of Sonship. The audience were altogether unmoved and listless, when, of a sudden, the preacher’s voice began to rise; his face was flushing in the coming storm; he had got hold of some racy illustration, or, rather, it had got hold of him, for, during the five following minutes, we have seldom seen a speaker so thoroughly possessed and filled by his theme; it “tore him as fire tears a thunder-cloud;” he absolutely shrieked out his words,—the most listless were aroused, and the whole audience almost trembled at the excitement of the speaker, without, perhaps, fully perceiving his meaning, or comprehending the sudden spring which, touched by the hand of his demon, had set him off at such a fearful rate. The idea he brought out was to the following effect:—“Were a riotous rabble collected amid the darkness of the night, and were the officers of the law breaking in upon, and dispersing them, would they concern themselves about bringing the miscreants to their homes? no, they cared not whether the poor beings had homes at all: it was enough for them

that there should be midnight silence; nay, perhaps, they would tell them, in their fury, to go and starve—to go and be hanged—when they had quelled the riot, and dispersed the rabble, their duty was done. Far otherwise with the ministers of the Gospel—true peace-officers; they came to the scenes of sin and strife, not only to quell confusion but to point the rioters to a happy and eternal home—to tell them that they were children—that they had a father in heaven—that children's bread was provided for them, and to allure them, by every argument and every entreaty, to go home." This is an outline of what he said; but we despair of giving any idea of the half-inspired fury with which he wrought it up, and brought it out. And no sooner was it over than he returned to his reasonings, and his audience to their repose.

Perhaps the misty glimmer which was cast around the greater part of Bruce's sermons, added to our impression of their greatness. But there were occasions when he soared to a sustained and luminous elevation—when, throughout an entire sermon, he kept up a train of clear and masterly thought, now mounting to rugged sublimity, and now melting to pathos—when the orb of his mind, clearing away the mists which at once obscured and dilated it, shone out in its proper dimensions—when he kindled at one time into wild poetry, at another threw a solemn shadow over every face, and again touched the sacred fountain, and awakened the blessed flow of tears.

Mr. Bruce has published little. We are aware of nothing but a lecture on Church Establishments, and a sermon preached on the death of Mr. Martin, who, after Dr. Thomson, for a short time occupied the pulpit of St. George's. The latter is infinitely worthy of its author. As an exposition of the theme, it may be, in the cant of common

theologic criticism, imperfect ; that is, it does not profess to exhaust a subject which, possibly, in all its bearings, is not exhaustible by human intellect ; nor is it a finically finished piece of elegant inanity ; but it abounds in beautiful thoughts, produced a prodigious effect when delivered, and may be for some time remembered, both as a specimen of his very peculiar style, and as a memorial of the "meek and most holy" man over whose ashes it was preached.

Thus may Bruce, amid the dearth of truly original preachers which this age, fertile in imitations and surface idiosyncrasies, exhibits, be called a native well, somewhat turbid, indeed, in its colour, rough and stern in its site, as *drumly* as it is deep, but living, springing fresh from the soil, communicating with the centre, and reflecting the stars ; or, to vary the figure, if no spire of surpassing oratory, pointing to the sky, like Chalmers—no classic dome, shattered by the lightnings of Heaven, like Hall—no grand Gothic ruin, standing gloomy under the moon of madness, like Irving—no castellated fastness of intellectual might, lording it over subject lands by the terror of its artillery, like Thomson—no parish kirk, strong in its simplicity, and venerable from its age, like Gordon—to a lonely tower let us liken him, set sternly on its beaked promontory, overlooking a waste of waters, and

" Holding dark communion with the cloud."

On the principle of contrast and variety we name next Dr. George Croly. And were we seeking to characterize him in one word, we might call him the Burke of Theology. If far less searching and comprehensive in thought, and less easy and varied in diction, he has much of his master's splendour of imagery, and more than his pomp and profusion of language. His great merit is intensity : he never lowers

his flight, nor checks his pride ; and yet, notwithstanding all the gigantic figures which his imagination loves, and the kindling pace at which his mind moves, his thought never loses its strength or clearness, nor is his language often, though sometimes, turgid. Intellect bears up the mass of weighty words and images. The huge trump of his style is filled with the blast of genius. This peculiar passion for the grand and lofty—this preference for the great side of every dilemma, the stronger of any two words, the vaster of any two images—distinguishes all his writings alike. It gives a stately, statuesque air to his smallest poem. “His little fishes talk like whales.” It colours, with the hues of stormy sunshine, all the pages of that marvellous narrative which Salathiel tells, with lips which are never to kiss the ice-cold cup of death. It copes with the grandeurs of the French Revolution, an event which haunts his imagination, and heaves in his style. It makes him a congenial biographer of Burke, and conducts him, with eye unblenched and foot untrembling, through the visionary vastness, the muttering thunders, the bursting trumpets, the slow opening seals, the dark descending vials, the voices, tempests, tumultuating glories, mixing metaphors, shifting scenes, and palpable darkness, of the Apocalypse. Connected with this characteristic love of the lofty, is his principal defect as a writer. He wants repose ; he has few resting-places ; he loves the magnificent too exclusively ; he sometimes fatigues us by too long flights, and sometimes dazzles and stupefies us with too much splendour. Not that we would visit such faults so severely as would some timid and cold rhetoricians, who have talked, in dolorous terms, of excess, and a “table-land being a plain,” and the mischiefs springing from perpetual excellence. If in such a case there be an excess, it is an excess of glory ; if a table-land be merely a plain, it is an

elevated plain, nearer the mountains and the stars; if all be excellent, what if some parts be divine? If Croly's style be uniformly splendid, it is as uniformly his own; if his figures be numerous, they are new; if his imagination run riot, its gambols are gigantic; if you cannot read his three volumes, or one volume at a sitting, try several; if you cannot at several, then depend upon it, you yourself are to blame.

"Salathiel, or the Wandering Jew," had the disadvantage of a theme at once difficult and hackneyed. He that sought to breathe fresh interest on a topic so old, had no easy task. For just think how often this strange figure had appeared in modern literature, from poems and novels down to ballads and penny pamphlets. In spite of all this, Croly has put a bold hand to the plough. His book wants unity of purpose, and continuance of interest; it is a series of glowing pictures, strung somewhat loosely together, often over-drawn and over-coloured, but full of life, and fire, and imagery, and passion; and in parts and passages, laying an irresistible hold upon your attention, and hurrying you away, as the hero of the story was hurried, in that ghastly galley, the blaze of misery in his immortal eye out-shining the flames which were glaring around him.

How like, yet how different, Salathiel from St. Leon. Both are the sport of a terrible destiny, and have reason to curse the Nessus shirt of immortality which wraps them round. But while Salathiel frequently forgets, and causes you to forget, that he is the Wandering Jew at all, St. Leon never loses sight, nor you for a moment, of the blasting gift of the stranger. It is this fragmentary and disjointed character of Salathiel, which has prevented its popularity, and neutralized the brilliance of its description and the passionate pomp of its style, the fine oriental cast of its scenery, and

the bustling rapidity of its narrative. It is, on the other hand, the pertinacity of purpose, the unity of object, the strong gravitation of every thought, and incident, and image, and word, round one central design, which in this, as in Godwin's other works, explains the magic of their exceeding power, makes up for comparative meagreness of style and monotony of fancy, and weaves the chains of soft, yet strong interest, which bind you to his pages. Still is Salathiel a noble affair. We may call it, in allusion to the subject, a stately evergreen, a high holly tree, looking over the withered hedges and ungrowing grasses of the winter landscape.

His "Commentary on the Revelation" is his principal contribution to the literature of his own profession, and makes a bold attempt to grapple with the difficulties of this singular book, and to evolve certain steady pillars of truth from its broken abysses of light and shadow. The Apocalypse! what magic and mystery are included in the name. The grandeur of the stage, a solitary island "placed far amid the melancholy main;" the sole spectator, a grayhaired apostle of Jesus Christ, who had once, in happier days, lain on that dear bosom which bled for us, but who is now alone in the world; the time, the Lord's day, acquiring a deeper sacredness from the surrounding scenery, and the silence of nature; the trumpet voice, heard behind the rapt apostle; the appearance of the universal Bishop, clothed in the glories of eternity, gold-girt, head, foot, face, and eye blazing with unutterable splendour, and with a two-edged sword, and a voice like many waters issuing from his mouth; his charges to the churches, so simple, affectionate, and awful; the opening of one of the doors of heaven, on "golden hinges turning;" the rainbow-surrounded throne, stretching its great shadow across the sea of glass, illumed by lightnings, based on crowding thunders, echoing mystic voices, fringed by the seven lamps

of fire, and perfumed by the incense of ten thousand times ten thousand of the happy dead ; the opening of the seals by the Lion-Lamb ; the giant steeds,—one milk-white as the banner of the cross,—one red as blood,—one black as the face of the famine-bitten,—one pale with the “ paleness of what is dead ;” the trump and fire-armed angels, blowing their blasts through the silent universe ; the blood-dipped hailstones ; the vast volcano, dropped like a spark into the sea ; the opening of the bottomless pit, as if in reply to the opening of heaven, and sending forth a sun-darkening smoke, and a cloud of scorpion locusts ; the mustering and march of those horrible hybrids of hell, headed by Apollyon, their king ; the rising of the twin beasts of crowned blasphemy ; the huge clusters of the vine of the earth, cast into the wine-press of wrath, the vintage of blood ; the tremendous coming forth from the “ *smoke of the glory of God,*” of the seven angels, clothed in linen, girded with virgin-gold, and holding in hands unharmed and untrembling, the seven vials, containing the seven last plagues,—one for the earth, one for the sea, one for the rivers, one for the sun, to feed his old flame into tenfold fierceness, one for the seat of the beast, one for Euphrates, and one for the darkened, fire-tormented, and earthquake-listening air ; the woman, retiring on eagle wings to the desert, majestic and terrible in her very retreat ; the other woman, drunk and drenched in holy blood ; the gathering of the armies for the day of decision ; the cry from the angel in the sun, for the fowls to prepare against the supper of the great God ; the battle, the rout of the rebels, driven back upon the lake of fire ; the binding of the serpent ; the millennium ; the last struggle of the enemy ; the uprising, behind his defeat, of the great white throne ; and the ultimate and everlasting “ bridal of the earth and sky ;” —these form the constituents of a drama which we

fearlessly call the most sublime production of the human mind : they form, we believe, the hieroglyphics of the history of all time, and thus, by a twofold magnetism, have they attracted to its research a great host of erudite and pious spirits. Add to this the prodigious penumbra of difficulty which hangs about the book—the number of attempts which have been made to solve its Gordian riddles—the fact that some exalted spirits, such as Luther, Calvin, and Hall, have shrunk back from its mystic precincts,—and the sight which fancy sees of so many pale faces, eager eyes, and attenuated forms bending over the inscrutable page, and beseeching the obstinate oracle,—and you can account for the attraction which has led a lofty and daring mind like Croly's to the Apocalypse, or Revelation of Jesus Christ.

And whatever we may think of some of his views, his Commentary is succinct, clear and decided. As a history of the events symbolized, it is admirably compressed. As an explanation, it fails from a love of simplicity. One event, the French Revolution, being uppermost in his mind, he concludes it uppermost in the mind of the apostle too ; and hence has sprung some harsh twisting of figures, and some puerile trifling with words. Surely the supposed coincidence between the words Apollyon and Napoleon is not in good taste. As a literary work, it is one of the few books of the kind worth reading for its composition. No part of Scripture had been so unfortunate in the temperament of its expositors as the Revelation. In general, the contrast between the superhuman splendours of the text and the creeping character of the comment was glaring. But Croly is on fire throughout—interposes a thread of burning gold through his coldest calculations, and finds congenial employment in painting, as with the pencil of Martin, the gigantic glooms and glories of the theme. Irving may be named ; but his four volumes on

the Revelation are the poorest of all his productions, imperfect in form and substance, while the gleams of eloquence which occur are few and far between, spotting a deep and melancholy darkness. His wing is worn, and his eye dim; whereas Croly is fresh and strong as a mountain eagle "newly bathed," and is seen against the beams of day, like an "angel standing in the sun."

Altogether, though there be more pleasing, and polished, and popular preachers in London than Dr. Croly, we question if there be one who, taking him all in all, as poet, biographer, commentator, novelist, miscellaneous writer, public speaker, preacher, and talker, can be named in the same sentence.

The late Dr. M'All of Manchester, was one of those men whose eloquence would not bear transference from the pulpit or platform to the written page. Authentic accounts exist of extraordinary effects produced by his oratory. A speaking countenance—a voice at once of sweetness and commanding compass, rapid flow of sound, and great affluence of language—were the elements of the boundless popularity and influence which he gained among his party. He had also the possession of that highest kind of encomium, *laudari a laudato viro*. Robert Hall admired him to enthusiasm, and said once of the Liverpool people, "What a parcel of pigs they must be not to like M'All." But, as Charles Lamb was wont to say, "print settles all;" and in an evil hour, the friends of this distinguished man printed his sermons; sermons, too, which had, when delivered, produced an overwhelming impression, and had been written out by their author with the greatest care. And musical is the linked sweetness of their long and sounding sentences, and amazing their command of elegant and sparkling diction—but there their merit comes to a full stop. Their sentiment is common-

place, seeking self-oblivion amid a cloud of words ; a faint rich mist of philosophical verbiage steeps the whole composition ; there is continual flow and fluency, but rarely eloquence ; his sentences perpetually “threaten to move and astonish, but never do ;” few “live coals” of burning truth lie upon the even and monotonous surface ; the language is often tawdry, and the magnificent sound, like the swell of the organ, gives you a vague emotion of delight, but utters no articulate and memorable meaning. He has been compared to Dr. Thomas Brown—and has certainly his involution, but not his subtlety—his diffusion, but not his depth—his sparkle, but not his splendour—intellect and imagination, interpenetrating each other, as in the writings of Brown—but intellect less refined in energy, and imagination more limited in range. It is the gilded sheath without the sword. An orator, however, of a high order, M'All must have been. We will not soon forget the delightful story told of him by Wardlaw. At a missionary meeting, where he was present, some one told of a Negro boy, who when informed by his teacher, that God had sent his Son to die for the world, replied, “Oh massa, me no wonder at that—it be just like him.” M'All kindled at the story, rose up, and uttered a noble extempore harangue on the text the boy had given him ; dilating on Nature, Providence, and Redemption, and closing the other and the other paragraph with the words, “It be just like him.” We love M'All too, as one who struggled up his way to distinction, against prejudice and proscription, which were disgraceful only to the parties by whom they were employed. It was a fine saying of him, as, under the deep darkness of youthful doubt, he paced the beach at Dysart, and said to his friend, “Oh, this heart of mine is black enough to pollute all that ocean.”

As a thinker and writer, we deem Hamilton of Leeds

superior to M'All. His appearance is somewhat against him. He is a huge tun of a person, "a round, fat, oily man of God," with gross unspiritual face, and monotonous though fluent delivery. But there is a rich and racy originality about him—a bold independence of thinking, and an irregular gorgeousness of style. He is the Hazlitt of the pulpit. He affects an abrupt and jagged mode of utterance. His sentences remind you of the curt and clipped tail of a racer. He deals in quaint antithesis, and elaborate accumulations of natural imagery. He has the genuine blood of a poet in his veins; but in forcing itself through his curious materialism, no wonder though it had assumed forms somewhat odd and fantastic. Perhaps never since Thomson of the "Seasons," did the Parnassian spark—*divina particula auræ*—so completely cushion itself in soft and flabby flesh. He is withal a very amiable, good-humoured, companionable, and pious person, and preaches to a large and flourishing congregation in Leeds. He has a strong literary turn, and besides his "Sermons," "Essay on Missions," &c., has printed a book, entitled, "*Nugæ Literariæ*," an odd, clever, characteristic medley of prose and verse, for which the University of Glasgow has dignified him with an honorary degree.

Dr. Harris, of Cheshunt College, the author of "Mammon," the "Great Teacher," &c., claims a notice in these rapid sketches. As a man he is below the middle size, rather spare, fair, with fair hair, slightly browned, with curls on his neck, and about his ears—a genial, not remarkable face. His conversation is illustrative, not creative; chary, not abundant; fanciful, and by no means imaginative; humorous and good-humoured; the conversation, says one, "of a man, who is accustomed to teach in the play-ground of a school, rather than learn in the world of a universe—and is accordingly more dogmatic than is very tolerable, and

less thirsty-minded than one loves to see." In his first work—or "Great Teacher,"—he has turned his entire mind like a glove inside out; and in his other, and after productions, has been principally occupied in turning it outside in. His great power is the exhaustion, and ingenious illustration, of common-place topics. His manner of writing has a quiet earnestness about it, which is very impressive, and which characterizes his mode of public address. He has no new vein of thought to disclose—his style is a hybrid between Hall and Foster—his works seem gradually, in self-imitation, shadowing off toward zero; to gain a prize by an essay, seems to him the ultimatum of authorship—if not the end of being. Still let him have praise for the lively graces of "Mammon," and for the manful and masterful execution of the "Great Teacher," a book which contains the most successful full-length portraiture of the Divine Man we have ever read.

Passing by Parsons of York, Thomas Dale, &c., we return to Scotland, and meet the great author of the lives of Knox and Melville. M'Crie's original powers were clearness and strength of understanding. Robust force characterized every movement of his mind and every sinew of his style. He had even that rare gift, that gift which defies analysis, and ranks almost with the inscrutable laws of nature,—Power; and this not the power of passion, nor of fancy, nor of convulsive excitement, but the calm, still, yet warm and living energy of great intellect, compelling, from the echo of every mind, a full and faithful response. Like Andrew Thomson's, his mind disdained subtlety, refinement, the foliage of fancy, and the trickeries of display. He knew right well that he had been sent into the world for other purposes than that of rounding periods, "polishing away at the corners of ideas," and practising on

his readers the little arts of literary surprise. He would as soon have spent his life in furbishing fire-irons. His object was not to raise the eyebrows, but to reach the soul; and, to do this, he knew no other method or magic, but that of causing his strong thinking to shape itself, at once, into clear words. His mind was one of energetic common sense, enlightened by great reading; his imagination vivid and literal; his eloquence the spontaneous fervor of an earnest mind; and his style the "express image" of his intellect. In his perspicacious eye, too, there lurked a ray of scorching sarcasm, which needed only to be lighted up. Eminently pious, he had yet a thorough contempt for all whining, face-making, cant, and pretended unction;—all these, the essential manliness of his nature rebuked and withered from his presence: add to this, the perseverance, as of a blood-hound, in research; a masterly clear-sightedness in dealing with historical evidence; habits of mental independence, modified by a profound reverence for the wisdom of the past; an honesty not the less interesting that it was tinged by a strong shade of prejudice,—and you have [some of the qualifications] which constituted him a powerful partisan historian. A philosophical historian, in the sense of Hume, he is not;—he has neither his sublime of indifference, nor depth of ingenuity; for this he is too brawny in his intellectual motions, and too sincere in his religious spirit. As a historical painter, he has none of the brief and terrible hieroglyphics of Tacitus, like the handwriting on the wall predicting the fall of the Roman power, nor of the large and glowing canvass of Livy and Robertson. He is not, like Gibbon, or Carlyle, a poet in the guise of an historian, singing in barbaric, but gorgeous strains, the one the downfall of the Roman throne, like an avalanche, burying the middle ages in night; the other

the tumbling of the crown of Charlemagne into a sea of blood. Nor is he a dry detailer like Wodrow; nor a special pleader like Gilbert Stewart; nor a romance-writer like Voltaire; nor, like Malcolm Laing and Hallam, does he merge the historian in the ingenious dissertator; to considerable pictorial power, he unites much clear-minded sagacity. With the sterner siftings of the historian, he blends the ease, interest, and repose of the biographer. His narrative is clear, distinct, and flowing. His sketches of character are not, like Hume's and Robertson's, full-length, but short, succinct, and starting from the canvass. He loves to draw those who most nearly resemble his own ideal—perhaps his own character,—men of rugged outline, and stern unmitigated virtues. Thus he seems made to be the biographer of Knox. His mind was as a vessel for containing the ideal of Knox's character—a glove for measuring that mailed hand. Like all historians, he is compelled, sometimes, to diverge from the current of his story into digressions and reasonings; but is seldom seduced, like Godwin and others, into long and laboured digressions; he soon springs back into the main and middle stream. The Alps and aerial heights of history, where it touches on the dark skirts of tragedy, and plucks lone and lofty flowers of poetry, and grasps at the lightnings of eloquence, he never reaches. In this highest walk of the historic muse, giddy from its elevation, and dangerously nearing on ideal provinces, we can trace Tacitus, and Gibbon, and Livy, and Carlyle, but hardly M'Crice. Still he unites, more than any of these writers, the various qualities which combine to form an historian. Would he had grasped some such subject as the Decline of the Christian Church, or the Reformation, or the story of the Papacy. It had suited his taste, been a sufficient stimulus to his ambition, and filled up the measure

of his powers. His great fault, as a historian, apart from the lack of such minor qualities as grace, elasticity, and elegance, is the air of partisanship which colours all his writings. The member and head of a small sect flung back by disgust at what he deemed modern degeneracy, upon earlier and sterner times,—surrounded, habitually, by the piled-up folios, and the grim faces of the past,—haunted by memories of the Reformation and the Covenant, and having few sympathies with the age in which he lived, its advancing tendencies, and great united religious movements, he too often, to party, gives up what was meant for mankind. In mere hatred to Popery, he becomes an idolater of the Reformers. Though he sets up no claim of infallibility for John Knox, he is loth to admit the smallest speck upon his character, and fights desperately for the most objectionable parts of his conduct and tactique. This spice of party feeling, however, has secured earnestness, given his works an aspect of stern sincerity, and entitled their author to the character of a good, honest, hearty “hater.” Indeed prejudice, in M’Crie, as in Walter Scott, was, perhaps, the spring of his mental activity, and the tower of his mental strength.

Besides Knox and Melville, and his other historical works, which are too well known to require criticism, he has left some posthumous productions of various merit. His lectures on the book of Esther are a lucid and energetic exposition of that fine romantic fragment of Jewish history. They are a specimen, too, and legacy of his mode of lecturing—a mode of public instruction in which he greatly excelled. He had a thorough idea of the true nature of a lecture, as distinct from the discursiveness of a sermon, from the dryness of an exegesis, from the exhaustive necessities of a treatise, from the declamatory looseness of a harangue—as combining many various elements, learning, logic, annotation, doctrinal

and practical matter, into one interesting, instructive, and comprehensive whole. But superior to his lectures we deem his volume of sermons, which discover to us new qualities by which his former works were not peculiarly distinguished. They unite all his wonted energy with novelty of thought, strength of imagination, and richness and even fervour and passion of language. The "Thief on the Cross" has been called, by a competent judge, the finest sermon in the English language. Altogether, the book furnishes a model of preaching, the antithesis of what, we fear, is most popular in the South, and of which Henry Melville is the type; the latter all sparkle, and the former all solidity and savour; the one all strut, the other all simplicity; the one all toil and tumour, the other all easy and masculine strength; the one sometimes protruding the preacher before the Saviour, the other exhibiting him ever veiled in the presence of the great subject of the preaching; the one, after all its efforts and labour-ed brilliancies, barely successful in winning your applause, the other commanding it by the plain majestic movement of the preacher's mind; the sermons produced in conformity with the one, rich in figure, but thin and barren in thought; while those dictated by the severer taste of the other, are full of felicitous and sound reflection, the more impressive from the robust garb it wears;—the two measuring the whole length between the principal varieties of style and taste which prevail in the present day. Dr. M'Crie, notwithstanding the weight of his character and matter, was never a popular preacher; or rather, this very solidity, along with a dull manner, and a miserable sing-song in his voice, which, in direct and curious contrast to his intellectual calibre, was one of the most unmanly and puling which (even in an age of puling preachifiers) we ever heard, counteracted the impression of his earnestness, the majesty of his appearance,

and the peculiar brilliance of his eye. He was occupied on a *Life of Calvin* when he died. We regret that only the first sketch remains, having a profound reverence for the Genevese reformer, who, though Lake Lemman seldom reflected his smile, and the mountains of Savoy never struck his soul with their snowy grandeur; though his imagination was barren as the summit of the Jura, and his soul gloomy as the dungeon of Chillon;—was, nevertheless, a great, good, grim, and honest man. We recommend those who would know more of M'Crie, to a *Life*, which has recently appeared, from the pen of his son. He was unquestionably the *Ultimus Romanorum*,—the last genuine specimen of the Old Puritan.

Had space permitted, we would have had much pleasure in dilating on some of the leading spirits of the Dissenting body in Scotland:—On Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, who to a masculine eloquence and great popularity as a preacher, adds a knowledge of Hermeneutics equalled by few, and who, next perhaps to Moses Stuart and Pye Smith, is the most accomplished Scripture critic out of Germany; on Ritchie, with his ready elocution, his homely energetic eloquence, his matchless, though fatal facility, and rich, exuberant, original humour; on Marshall, a “scholar ripe and good,” an acute though not profound thinker, gifted with a clear, sharp, vigorous style, and a vein of sarcasm distinguished by cutting depth and quiet ferocity, but whose views are not so wide as his information, and whose arrogance is rather greater than his powers; on Young of Perth, the most penetrating judge of character, the most philosophical thinker, and one of the most eloquent writers in his church, whose essays prefixed to editions of Christian authors, published by Collins, and written in a style compounded of Chalmers and Foster, have extended his reputation far beyond

the bounds of his own body; on Anderson and Taylor of Glasgow, among the Relief, the one a most vigorous and original man,—in the words of Burns, “a strong in-kneed sort of a soul,” the other a man of general accomplishments; on Russell of Dundee, a person of profound penetration, and fluent, and sometimes powerful speech; on Alexander of Edinburgh, and Doctors King and Eadie of Glasgow, three promising and scholarly young divines; on the late Ballantine of Stonehaven, who, in his “Inquiry into the Human Mind,” has left a monument of his singular analytic powers; on Jamieson of the Dictionary, one of the most learned men in Europe; on Dr. Dick, that clear-headed theologian; on Dr. Ferrier of Paisley, who never did any thing worthy of the high talent with which all who knew, knew him to be endowed; on Jamieson of Methven, a man of fine and original genius, “blasted with poetic fire,” and many others. But we must pause at Dr. Wardlaw, who, if not in native powers, certainly in acquired reputation, is the *facile princeps* of Scottish Dissent. Mild elegance, added to acuteness and luminousness of understanding, are the leading properties of Wardlaw’s mind. Genius, if we mean by it the power which climbs the seventh heaven of invention, “which darts its eye, like a torch of fire, into dark deep holds,” which sees more in short and sudden glances of rapid and burning thought than others can in years of close and laborious investigation, which sees in the rose a richer red, and in the sky a deeper azure, and in the sun a more divine and dazzling ray, and in the sea a finer foam, and in the stars a more spiritual gold, than ever nature’s own “sweet and cunning hand put on,” and finds beauty and meaning rushing out from common objects upon its peculiar and purged eye, which to all others are invisible;—this magic of the soul, this medium, finer, truer, and clearer than air, this “light

which never was on sea or shore," is not, we think, possessed by the subject of the present sketch. But, understanding by genius the power which colours diction, which, without dying the whole mass, tinges the edges of meditation, which illustrates without inventing, touches with its finger, not seizes in its hand, the thunderbolts of imagination, binds the flowers of fancy, in modest and elegant garlands, round the marble statues of thought; this kind of genius Wardlaw possesses in a very considerable degree. He is never the slave, but always the master of his fancy. His imagination is his, he is never its. His figures come and go when he bids them; they pass over the stage and disappear; he is never tempted by their enchanting beauty to detain and clasp them to his bosom, nor does he ever summon up colossal and terrible shapes at which his own imagination shudders. His images have, however, much delicate and trembling loveliness, and are always felicitously attired in the draperies of style. Often they are like dew-drops from the womb of the morning, as soft as they are sparkling. As an intellectual man, he has no subtlety, nor much depth, but is logical and luminous. He excels in defining the subject in dispute, in clearing it of all extraneous matter, in laying down with precision his premises, and in compressing the sum and substance of the case into manageable compass. He is one of the best of religious controversialists. Less dogmatic, scornful, and overbearing, if also less learned, less powerful and profound, than Horsley or Magee, he is incomparably more lively and spirited than Jamieson; and while inferior to Pye Smith in research and erudition, he is a more agile and dexterous reasoner, and shows none of that almost criminal tenderness to his opponents with which the author of the "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah" has been, justly or unjustly, charged. While Horsley smites down his opponents

with a battle-axe ; while Jamieson assails them with a rude and heavy claymore ; while Moses Stuart gives them the *coup-de-grace* with a short and sharp dagger of mercy ; while Pye Smith flourishes rather than applies a baton over their heads ;—Wardlaw pierces them under the fifth rib with a rapier light and glancing as a sunbeam. He has, above most men, the art of making a dry controversy interesting. And this he does, not like Warburton, by the variety of irrelevant but entertaining matter which he brings up *en passant* ; nor like Horsley, by the stimulating effect of vehement and furious abuse ; nor like Pascal, by the layer of brilliant sarcasm interwoven into the argument ; nor like Junius, by the cool venom and snaky fascinations of his satire ; nor like Burke, by the magnificent divergencies of his incontrollable mind from the paths of his argument into eloquence, philosophy, history, and poetry, *extra flammantia mœnia mundi* ; nor like Thomson, by bursts of broad humour ; but by a combination of qualities ; by the lucidity of the style, the art of the arrangement, the ease of the transitions, the liveliness of the logic, the mild contempt he now and then discovers for his opponents, and the keen sarcasm and eloquence into which he often mounts, as if on a light ladder, from the solid ground of his argumentation. We notice in him, too, a quality which Dugald Stewart ascribes to Barrow, the masterly and conscious ease with which he accomplishes whatever he intends ; a quality springing less in him, however, from a rapid and intuitive habit of thought, than from the length of time he has revolved the particular subject, and the perfect command he has acquired over it. He does not so much improvise, as recite *memoriter* what he has thoroughly mastered. It is a proof of considerable power that he has handled so many different subjects ; dared to the outrance such opponents as Brougham, Bentham, and Chalmers ; and

that the announcement of a new work of controversy from his pen still excites a sensation in the religious world. And yet, withal, no one deems him a Chillingworth or Horley, or expects that, whatever angular originalities his mind may strike out in its way, that he will cast any general, new, or startling light upon any topic whatever ; or contends that his acquirements equal his accomplishments ; or ranks him with the sturdier and stronger order of polemical minds. But there is such a confidence in his intellectual and moral integrity, in his arrangement, and his art, and his skill, and his liveliness, and his comprehensiveness, and his grace, and his good temper, and his elegance, and his clearness, and his facility, that all are delighted to see a disputed or a delicate topic under his hand.

His miscellaneous sermons are not quite equal to his controversial works. His mind requires a wider surface for its development than the limits of a sermon supply. In writing sermons, too, he wants the salutary stimulus of opposition, without which a placid mind like his is apt to sink into tameness. Those on the deaths of Dr. Balfour and Mrs. Greville Ewing are the best. On the whole, though in the first rank of Christian controversialists, he must take the second among sermon writers.

As a speaker, Wardlaw's tones are soft, tender, and trembling. The key he assumes may be called a long audible whisper. There is a silvery sweetness in his notes, like that of gently flowing streams. He reads, and reads so easily and elegantly, with such earnest quiet of manner, and with such minute and fairy music of intonation, that you wish him to read on for ever. Yet there is nothing mawkish in his tones. You may, indeed, on reflection, wish that there had been a greater variety ; that, instead of the eternal dropping of honey from the rock, there had been a mixture

of manlier melodies, the crash of the thunder, the shivering burst of the cataract, the full-lipped harmony of the great deep river, the jagged music of the mountain stream, or the boom of the breakers in the "half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks;" but you do not feel this at the time. While the preacher's voice continues to sound, you listen as to the song of the Syrens; it winds round you like an enchanted thread; you suck it in like "honey-dew, or the milk of paradise." This mildness of tone comports with his character, (a man of timid and gentle temper, foaming and thundering in the pulpit, may well remind us, as well as the French, of a *mouton enragé*.) it points his sarcastic vein, (how do a mild lip and tone acerbate a keen sneer!) and it is in keeping with his personal appearance. Gravity without sternness, is the leading expression of his countenance, which also beams with a certain thoughtful sharpness, like the face of one who has often leant over and looked up from an adversary's book. A tinge of sadness, susceptible, we believe, of sad explanation, lies, like the "soft shadow of an angel's wing," upon his face and eye. A semi-circle of grey hair surmounts the whole. Dr. Wardlaw has been a voluminous and varied writer. What subject has he not touched, and what not adorned by the mild moonlight of his intellect? In his youth he wrote verse, and we have seen, in his own hand-writing, a satirical poem in Hudibrastic measure, against one Porteous, who, about the close of the last century, assailed Dissenters with extreme acrimony of abuse. It struck us, from a hurried glance, as clever but coarse, not quite worthy of the author of the Discourses on the Unitarian Controversy. It was never printed. Since then, he has busied himself with more solid matters; has written on Assurance, Infant Baptism, Christian Ethics, &c.; has published divers volumes of discourses, and many single ser-

mons; has flung a smooth stone or two from the brook at the Goliath-forehead of Brougham, who had sported certain Philistine heresies on the subject of man's responsibility for his belief; has had a regular stand up fight with Chalmers, on the Voluntary Question; has written lately an interesting and masterly Memoir of Dr. M'All; and is preparing, according to report, a Treatise on Congregationalism, meant for a facer to poor Presbyterians and their system for ever! Altogether, he is the most *accomplished* divine of the day, though to the day, in all probability, his reputation will be confined.

We come, in fine, to the greatest of them all, Edward Irving. And first, let us glance at the person of the man. In reference to other literary men, you think, or at least speak of their appearance last. But so it was of this remarkable man, that every body put his face and figure in the foreground, and spoke of his mental and moral faculties as belonging to them, rather than of them as belonging to the man. In this respect he bore a strong resemblance to the two heroes of the French Revolution, Mirabeau and Danton. Irving was a Danton spiritualized. Had he been born in France, and subjected to its desecrating influences, and hurled head foremost into the vortex of its revolution, he would, in all probability, have cut some such tremendous figure as the Mirabeau of the Sans-culottes; he would have laid about him as wildly at the massacres of September, and carried his huge black head as high in the death-cart, and under the guillotine. Had he been born in England, in certain circles, he had perhaps emerged from obscurity in the shape of an actor, the most powerful that ever trod the stage, combining the statuesque figure and sonorous voice of the Kemble family, with the energy, the starts, and bursts, and inspired fury of Kean, added to some qualities peculiarly

his own. Had he turned his thoughts to the tuneful art, he had written rugged and fervent verse, containing much of Milton's grandeur, and much of Wordsworth's oracular simplicity. Had he snatched the pencil, he would have wielded it with the savage force of Salvator Rosa, and his conceptions would have partaken, now of Blake's fantastic quaintness, and now of Martin's gigantic monotony. Had he lived in the age of chivalry, he might have stood side by side in glorious and well-foughten field with Cœur de Lion himself, and died in his steel harness full knightly. Had he lived in an age of persecution, he had been either a hardy martyr, leaping into the flames as into his wedding suit, or else a fierce inquisitor, aggravating by his portentous frown, and more portentous squint, the agonies of his victim. Had he been born in Calabria, he had been as picturesque a bandit as ever stood on the point of a rock between a belated painter and the red evening sky, at once an object of irresistible terror and irresistible admiration, leaving the poor artist in doubt whether to take to his pencil or to his heels. But in whatever part or age of the world he had lived, he must have been an extraordinary man, one of those rare specimens of humanity who balance all their lives between the pinnacle of genius and the abyss of frenzy, and whom the strong handwriting of nature itself, upon face, and figure, and bearing (and passing spirit-like glares and glances beyond the habitual expression of their countenance,) marks out as the foremost of their species, links fearfully and wonderfully connecting man with some superior order of intelligences. Nature had certainly given the world "assurance of a man" in the form, stature, broad brow, swarthy complexion, shaggy locks, and wild sinister glare of Edward Irving. But that those peculiarities alone accounted for his unexampled popularity, we by no means believe, except so far as they were

the exponents of his uncommon mental qualities. Had there been, as has been asserted, any marked disproportion between the splendid *personnel* and the intellect of the man; had his bodily qualities been only the decorations of a mediocrity of mind, instead of exciting admiration, they would have produced disgust. An insignificant person, o'er-informed with soul, is felt to be an incongruity; but much more anomalous were an ideal form and physiognomy animated by an ordinary, or less than an ordinary degree of intellectual power. It would remind you of the spelling-book in a folio edition, or Tomb Thumb illustrated by Martin! No mere size, however stupendous, or expression of face, however singular, could have uplifted a common man to the giddy height on which Irving stood for a while, calm and collected as the statue upon its pedestal. It was the correspondence, the reflection of his powers and passions upon his person; independence stalking in his stride, intellect enthroned on his brow, imagination dreaming on his lips, physical energy stringing his frame, and athwart the whole a cross ray, as from Bedlam, shooting in his eye! it was this which excited such curiosity, wonder, awe, rapture, and tears, and made his very enemies, even while abusing, confess his power, and tremble in his presence. It was this which made ladies flock and faint, which divided attention with the theatres, eclipsed the oratory of Parliament, drew demireps to hear themselves abused, made Canning's fine countenance flush with pleasure, "as if his veins ran lightning," accelerated in an alarming manner the twitch in Brougham's dusky visage, and elicited from his eye, as from "some pit miles back in his head," those singular glances half of envy and half of admiration, which are his truest tokens of applause, and made such men as Hazlitt protest, on returning, half squeezed to death, from one of his displays, that a monologue from

Coleridge, a recitation of one of his own poems from Wordsworth, a burst of puns from Lamb, and a burst of passion from Kean, were nothing to a sermon from Edward Irving.

His manner also contributed to the charm. His aspect, wild, yet grave as of one labouring with some mighty burden; his voice deep, clear, and with crashes of power alternating with cadences of softest melody; his action, now graceful as the wave of the rose-bush in the breeze, and now fierce and urgent as the midnight motion of the oak in the hurricane; the countenance, kindling, dilating, contracting, brightening, or blackening with the theme,—now attractive in its fine symmetrical repose, and now terrible to look at, in its strong lines, and glaring excitement, and an air of earnestness and enthusiasm which ever prevented the impression that it was a mere display;—all this formed an unparalleled combination of the elements of Christian oratory. Then there was the style, curiously uniting the beauties and faults of a sermon of the seventeenth century with the beauties and faults of a parliamentary harangue or magazine article of the nineteenth,—quaint as Browne, florid as Taylor, with the bleak wastes which intersect the scattered green spots of Howe, mixed here with sentences involved, clumsy, and cacophonous as the worst of Jeremy Bentham's, and interspersed there with patches from the magic robe of Coleridge. It was a strange amorphous Babylonish dialect, imitative yet original, rank with a prodigious growth of intertangled beauties and blemishes, enclosing amid vast tracts of jungle little bits of clearest and purest loveliness, and throwing out sudden volcanic bursts of real fire, amid jets of mere smoke and hot water. It had great passages, but not one finished sermon or sentence. It was a thing of shreds and yet a web of witchery. It was perpetually stumbling the least fastidious hearer or reader, and yet drawing both

impetuously on. And then, to make the medley "thick and slab," there was the matter, a grotesque compound, including here a panegyric on Burns, and there a fling at Byron; here a plan of future punishment, laid out with as much minuteness as if he had been projecting a bridewell, and there a ferocious attack upon *The Edinburgh Review*; here a glimpse of the gates of the Celestial City, as if taken from the top of Mount Clear, and there a description of the scenery and of the poet of the Lakes; here a pensive retrospect to the days of the Covenant, and there a dig at the heart of Jeremy Bentham; here a ray of prophecy, and there a bit of politics; here a quotation from the Psalms, and there from the "Rime of the Anciente Marinere." Such was the gigantic mess which the huge hand of our hero served out in great ladles-full to the gaping, staring, wondering, laughing, listening, weeping, and thrilling multitudes of fashionable, political, and literary London:

What has been the exact amount of benefit done, of impression made, and of real residuum left by his grand pulpit bravuras, and the momentary madness of admiration which followed them, we cannot as yet fully or accurately estimate; but we are fain to believe that his oratory did leave not a few stings behind it; and that, in "shaming the wisdom of the Sadducee," withering the sneer of the profane witling, bringing blushes to the blanched cheeks of jewelled courtezans, impressing statesmen with some sense of the dignity and grandeur of Christianity, telling home truths in thunder tones to the wise, and the learned, and the witty, and the fashionable, and the fair;—standing up, in short, a living Sinai in the midst of a second Sodom, he has been the means of much good, which may one day come out in noble prominence, when his foibles are all forgotten, his faults all forgiven, and his detractors and foes are "dark as night." In

judging of the mind of Irving, it is extremely difficult to do so by an act of abstraction, and apart from his personal appearance, his popularity, the singularities of his career, and his early and melancholy end. It was not one of those massive intellectual minds which constitute a great metaphysician, or a mathematical genius; and yet he was, we have heard, fond of geometrical study, and had dabbled not a little in metaphysics. Nor was it, on the other hand, of such a cast as to plunge him by a mere necessity of his intellect into the abyss of poetry, although poetry boiled in his blood, and imagination swam in his eye. Nor was it a mind of much dialectic energy, though he reasoned much, and could occasionally reason well, and while he sojourned in Glasgow was noted for the close and hard-headed ratiocination of his discourses. Nor did his mind exhibit a beautiful balance of powers. Nor was it a purely unique and original intellect;—it was a mind of great general powers and passions, determined in a particular direction by circumstances. It had a strong but irregular understanding, a powerful rather than a copious imagination, great decision and daring, various rather than profound or minute learning, sympathies wide and keen, taste always extremely imperfect, and sometimes wretchedly bad, a thirst for excitement raging in his blood, and a contagious enthusiasm forming the stormy atmosphere in which all his faculties lived, moved, and had their being. We must not omit, in merest justice, his extraordinary gift of prayer. Some few of his contemporaries might equal him in preaching, but none approached to the very hem of his garment while rapt up into the heaven of devotion. It struck you as the prayer of a great being conversant with God. Your thoughts were transported to Sinai, and you heard Moses speaking with the Majesty on high, under the canopy of darkness, amid the quaking of the solid mountain.

and the glimmerings of celestial fire ; or you thought of Elijah praying in the cave in the intervals of the earthquake, and the fire and the still small voice. The solemnity of the tones convinced you that he was conscious of an unearthly presence, and speaking to it, not to you. The diction and imagery showed that his faculties were wrought up to their highest pitch, and tasked to their noblest endeavour in that "celestial colloquy sublime." And yet the elaborate intricacies and swelling pomp of his preaching were exchanged for deep simplicity. A profusion of Scripture was used ; and never did inspired language better become lips than those of Irving. His public prayers told to those who could interpret their language of many a secret conference with Heaven ;—they pointed to wrestlings all unseen, and groanings all unheard,—they drew aside, involuntarily, the veil of his secret retirements, and let in a light into the sanctuary of the closet itself. Prayers more elegant and beautiful and melting have often been heard ; prayers more urgent in their fervid importunity have been uttered once and again, (such as those which were sometimes heard with deep awe to proceed from the chamber, where the perturbed spirit of Hall was conversing aloud with its Maker till the dawning of the day,) but prayers more majestic, and organ-like, and Miltonic, never. The fastidious Canning, when told by Sir James Mackintosh of Irving praying for a family of orphans as "cast upon the fatherhood of God," was compelled to start, and own the beauty of the expression.

Irving's works furnish no full criterion whereby to try his powers. They were written first of all amid innumerable avocations, and in the heated and intoxicating atmosphere of popularity, where a man can no more do justice to himself in composition than were he writing amid the bustle and blaze of a ball-room. They are full indeed of beautiful

things ; the prefaces to "Horne on the Psalms," and to Ben Ezra, are worthy of any pen that ever wrote the English language ; and even in his later works there is a mournful and passionate poetry of earnestness which compensates their mystic bewilderment. But when we compare them with the man from whom they proceeded, we are forced to exclaim, "What a falling off is here !" Was that intellect conferred, that brow expanded, and the cross lightning of that wild eye kindled, only for the sake of those books, bulky as many of them are, with their wide wastes of verbiage, repetition, error, mere sound and fury, here cloudy commonplace, and there the very delirium of genius ? Are the shining points, ever and anon occurring, or even the fiery columns of splendour, sometimes standing up suddenly, sufficient to relieve the surrounding wilderness ? No ; and so far is this from being derogatory to him, that it rather raises our estimate of the man. It is ever a compliment, when you turn from the works to the author, and say, "This is not worthy of you ; you could have done better." And it is no great soul which you can confine within the boards of any book, however big ; even Shakspeare stood above his works, and so assuredly did Irving. Written for the pulpit, yet necessarily deprived in publication of all those charms of voice and manner which secured their triumph there—dwarfed besides by the shadow of his own fame—how could his productions succeed ? All of them, accordingly, after one or two convulsive flutters and splashes, sunk to the bottom. In an hour fatal for his reputation, he published the "Orations." The getting up of this book, the strangeness, if not affectation, of the title, the uncouthness of its diction, the sheer absurdity of some of its passages, gave it, notwithstanding the marks of power in every page, the air of a clever caricature rather than a *bonâ*

vide effusion of his mind. Then came, winging a yet wilder flight, "Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed of God," which showed that he was beginning to tamper with strong excitements, and to bewilder himself among the mountains of vision. About this time, he came down to his native land, which went forth as one man to meet, if not to welcome him,—thousands and tens of thousands flocking to hear him in his own beloved Annandale, and Edinburgh rising at five in the morning to hear his expositions, then just mounting to predictions. Thence returning, elated beyond measure, he continued to pass from one new notion to another,—to print his opinions while still crude in his mind—so surround himself with poor weaklings and pietistic parasites, and to hear as though he heard them not the remonstrances of his real and wise friends, one of the most eminent of whom told him that "he was enacting a poor pickle-herring farce, which might probably end in a tragedy." Meanwhile, his general popularity had waned. "London forgot this man, who, alas! could not in his turn forget." Ah! how changed from him who from his pulpit, as from a throne, had launched his lightnings at feathered turbans and legislative brows! At length, separated from the church of his fathers, self-excluded, in a great measure, from the literary society he had so deeply relished, from their *noctes cœnaeque Deum*, worn out in body, exhausted in mind, sick, sick at heart, his fame set, his prospects clouded, his name a jest, clinging to his theories to the last, but to the last sincere as an angel, and simple as a child, what was left this good, great, misguided man, but to die? "God unloosed his weary star." God shut the frenzied eye of this eagle in mercy and for ever. He died; and every one, while deploring the fate of the man, felt that it was well; he died; and all who were con-

vinced that the fine gold had become dim, were glad that the Maker had taken it to himself, as we trust, to exalt it to shine for ever in the New Jerusalem.

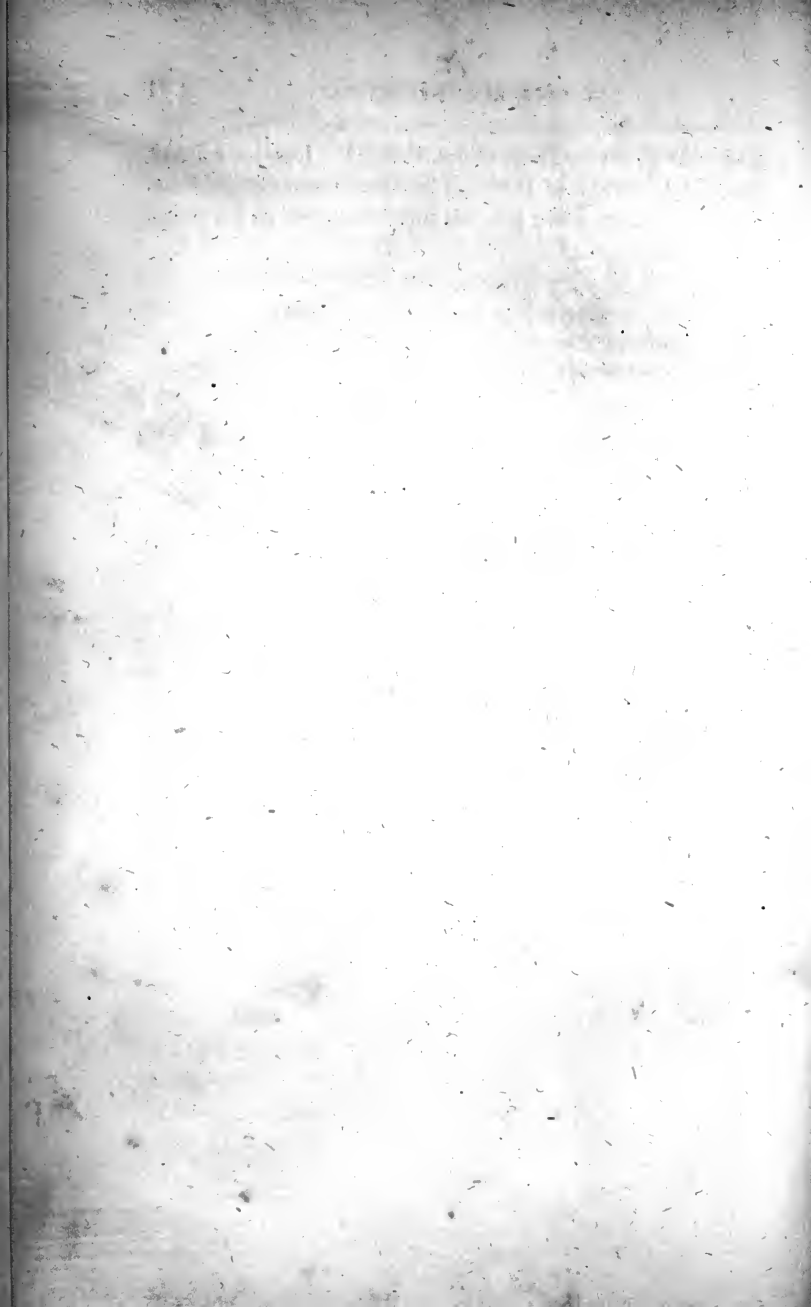
Of his private history and personal manners we cannot speak particularly. He was born in Annan. He taught some time in Kirkaldy, where he distinguished himself as a severe disciplinarian. He assisted Dr. Chalmers in Glasgow, and was by him recommended to London. All that followed is well known. His manner in company was exceedingly commanding; his temper warm and irritable; his affections strong; his talk rich and powerful. His generosity has been questioned of late, in that series of papers published by De Quincey in *Tait*. He instances his rough refusal of alms to a beggar; and we know besides, that De Quincey turned round and asked, "Upon what principle, Mr. Irving, do you refuse that beggar?" Now, Mr. Irving had perhaps learned by experience that street alms are in general worse than wasted; but, secondly, the principle on which he refused was probably that he had no money about him, for it is quite notorious that at one time his charities were so profuse and indiscriminate, that Mrs. Irving regularly emptied his pockets ere going out, else their contents, pence or pounds, were sure to be expended ere he returned; and, thirdly, many people are so simple as to imagine that there is as much generosity in paying an honest tradesman, as in relieving a dishonest and dissolute beggar.

We leave the subject with a mixture of feelings, but among them pitying love holds the principal place. We grant that his faults of taste were many; that some of his errors of opinion were pernicious; that his career was brief and disastrous; but throughout the whole his heart continued to live,—genius illumined his downfall, like lightning show.

ing the leap of the cataract, which then "lay low, but mighty still." His purity of motive remained unimpeached—his sincerity unquestioned; and his piety deepened as his popularity declined.

"No further seek his merits to disclose,
Nor draw his frailties from their dread abode;
There they alike in trembling hope repose,—
The bosom of his Father and his God."

END OF VOLUME I.



SKETCHES

OF

MODERN LITERATURE,

AND

EMINENT LITERARY MEN,

(BEING A GALLERY OF LITERARY PORTRAITS,)

BY GEORGE GILFILLAN.

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1900

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

GALLERY

OF

LITERARY PORTRAITS.

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WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

AMONG the great unknowns or half-knowns of the day, there are few less generally appreciated than the author of "Gebir," the "Imaginary Conversations," and the "Examination of Shakspeare." We remember once asking the keeper of a large public library if he had any of Landor's works? The reply was, "None, except his 'Travels in Africa.' Has he written any more?" confounding him, *proh pudor!* with Clapperton's enterprising body-man. It was in keeping with the story of a person in a commercial town, who, when some wight from Edinburgh was speaking of Coleridge and Shelley, asked eagerly, "What firm is that? I never heard of it before; does it drive a good business?" And yet there are not many authors of the age about whom Posterity will make more particular inquiries, than about this same recluse, saturnine, and high-minded Savage. His soul is deeply steeped in the proud element of the past. He

is not only a man of profound and varied erudition, but he lives and has his being in the olden time. His style is dyed in antiquity; his genius wears upon its wings, like a rich sunset, the hues of all perished ages. He goes farther back than Scott, whose view was bounded by the tenth century, who never could reproduce the classical periods, and whose sympathies were principally with the Gothic in the human soul. Landor, on the contrary, is a Greek, and yet holds of the romantic school too;—loves equally the stately and buskined heroes of Athenian song, and the “serene creators of immortal things,” who have written in the “shadow of Skiddaw and by Grasmere springs.” He is a solitary enthusiast sitting with half-shut eye in his still study, or under the groves of golden Italy, and in quaint dialogue or fine pantomimic conversing with the past. The “dead, but sceptred sovereigns who still rule our spirits from their urns,” appear at his spell, and range themselves around him. Pericles, the Jupiter of Athens, stands with folded arms and collected might, as when he was wont to “shake the arsenal and fulmine over Greece.” Aspasia bends beside him her majestic form, and turns toward him her lovelit eyes. Alcibiades, a restless shade wanders to and fro. Spenser stands up serene, pouring out melancholy and mellow accents, as erst on “Mulla’s shore.” Shakspeare’s divine front—Milton’s eyes, twinkling in vain to find the day—Cromwell’s haggard countenance—Chatham’s face inflamed, and tempestuous gesture—Fox’s choking accents of fervour—Pitt’s stately solemnity—Napoleon’s eagle gaze—Southey’s form, erect as his own holly tree—the large gray eyes of Porson,—are all reproduced as in a magic mirror, and the soul of the day-dreamer is glad. He speaks to them in their own language, for he has learned “the large utterance of those early Gods,” and as a younger brother do they make him, too, free of their awful

policy, and admit him into their lofty circle. Landor is suited for a former age ;—Greece in the days of its glory, or Rome when still a republic, or England when Elizabeth was on the throne, Burleigh in the council, Raleigh on the deck, Bacon on the woolsack, Shakspeare on the stage—any of these ages would have been the element of his spirit. The dim light of imperfect civilization, when rare, but rude virtues, and gigantic intellects, towering at deep angles from the crowd, loomed most largely, would have been the light for him. Every thing about him—his thought, his style, his disinterested daring of tone and spirit, the air of eld which breathes around, remind us of primitive ages, when the human heart, the human soul, the human size, were larger than now—when the heavens were nearer, the skies clearer, the clouds more gorgeous, the foam of the sea brighter, the fat of the earth richer, than in our degenerate days—when the sense of the ideal, and the infinite, of things unseen and eternal, still overtopped the seen, the tangible, and the temporal—when in our groves were still seen the shadows of angels, and on our mountains the smoking footsteps of God. How can such a man sympathize with the ongoings of an age like this? How turn from marking the fine parabola of the eagle's flight to watch the bickering movements of a railway train? No wonder, that while love and admiration are freely accorded by him to the past, his abiding feeling for the present is disdain. Some such feeling does at times curl his lip, and ruffle the deep of his mind. You see it, they tell us, in his air of reserve and haughty bearing. You see it, we know, in the impatient, large, fierce, and contemptuous character of his hand-writing, as if it were beneath him to sign his name. You have it dashed in your face in those ebullitions of personal and political prejudice by which it pleases him to spoil the symmetry and

mar the spirit of his best speculations, and to cause the very voices of the dead to ventriloquize the passions of his nature. You see it in the extreme fastidiousness of his taste, and the unmitigated harshness of the verdicts he passes on contemporary talent. Yet even in this disdain there is something noble ;—it resembles what we could imagine the feeling of some superhuman potentate, cast down from his starry throne to a subordinate station on earth, or that of one of the great of antiquity fallen from his high estate and heroic age upon the evil days and evil tongues of a cold and late generation ; or he may be compared to his own shell, which might be conceived to mingle contempt for the commonplace ornaments by which it is surrounded, with the joy wherewith—

“ Pleased it remembers its august abodes,  
And murmurs as the ocean murmurs there.”

These are the far-famed lines on a shell, which Wordsworth has imitated, and every body praised, and which, if they will not immortalize the name of Landor, nor embalm the poem of “ Gebir,” where they occur, have assuredly immortalized and embalmed themselves. And never, in remotest time, shall any one who has once heard or read them gaze into the white depth of the child of ocean, or apply to his ear its polished coolness, and hear, or seem to hear, the faint and far-off murmur of the main, without imagining that these are the words which the gentle oracle is uttering, and this the meaning of the spiritual and mysterious music. They are among those rare lines which, giving to a common thought or belief an expression poetic and ideally perfect, stamp themselves at once on the heart and memory of the world. Envidable the powers which, by one true and strong line, render oblivion impossible. Who does not bless the nameless warrior who has left the noble epitaph, *Siste viator,*

*heroem calcas*, as his sole memorial ; and with deeper gratitude the Eton boy, also nameless, who, when verses were prescribed on the miracle of turning water into wine, brought up the single line, "*Vidit et erubuit nymp̄ha pudica Deum?*" So cheaply, sometimes, does genius purchase immortal fame. But, apart from those felicitous lines, the "Conversations" form the main pillar of Landor's reputation. They are too often, it is true, destitute of vraisemblance and dramatic skill ; too often resemble uneasy interlocutions between the various faculties and phases of one mind ; are poisoned by political allusion ; swarm with quaintnesses and crotchets ; nor are the speeches always characteristic ; nor do the speakers, in Boswell phrase, always "talk their best." The Second Dialogue, published in Blackwood, between Southey and Porson, is senselessly and malignantly minute. No poetry can stand such criticism. It is itself a proof—Coleridge to the contrary notwithstanding—that malevolence may clothe itself in wealthy and redundant imagery, and remain malevolence still. We surrender it entire into the hands of its clever caricaturist. Not so Tasso and Cornelia, where, at length, the quicksilver of that strange mind is caught and fixed. It is worth many "Laments of Tasso." How delicately contrasted is the wayward irritability of the poet, and the more than motherly tenderness of the sister. It is "love watching madness with unalterable mien." Glide where the wild river of his mind may, she follows it like a soft green bank, at once restraining and beautifying its course. In all those dialogues we are compelled to admire the hoarded wisdom—the familiarity with the details of the most distant periods—the original apothegms—the infinite variety and quaint felicity of illustration. And we reflect with keen regret on the fantastic and fragmentary form in which they present themselves to our notice. In

these *disjecta membra* he has scattered and shattered powers adequate to the most heroic tasks. He has sent forth a flight of November meteors when he might have built up a sun.

Such is, perhaps we should say such was, Walter Savage Landor, who deems himself a hero in an unheroic age—a giant in Lilliput—and who is a sleep-walker amid the passing crowd. Gifted, in the very prodigality of nature, with “energetic reason and a shaping mind,”—with penetration, fancy, eloquence of a jagged brilliance, and an unrivalled power of reproducing and rekindling the cold ashes of the past, he has become little more than the echo-cliff, catching, concentrating, warping, repeating the varied voices of antiquity; and a picturesque, towering station he thus holds. Like Mont Blanc, reflecting the light of day after it has died to the valley, does he shower upon us the relict radiance of other ages. This is the high end he has in part fulfilled, and which in part covers his coldness and contempt for the “ignorant present time,” his faults of taste, and acerbities of temper. Enough surely for one man, in a period when labour is so intensely divided, when every corner of the literary vineyard is so fully occupied, to have heated the Athenian age in his “Pericles and Aspasia;” to have unrolled the shroud of Shakspeare; “built up” that pile of forehead, cleansed and kindled those sagacious eyes, and put into those rich revived lips words not unworthy of the myriad-minded, in the “Examination;” in his poetry to have illumined the intrenched obscurities of his unavoidable style by gleams of rare power and beauty; and in the “Imaginary Conversations” to have ranged over every age—shooting his soul into sages, and statesmen, and poets, and grammarians, and conquerors of every shape and degree—catching their spirit—dissecting their motives—thinking



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their thoughts—speaking their words, yet casting into, and over all, the peculiarity and boldness of his own intellect.

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### THOMAS CAMPBELL.

It is a fortunate thing for a poet to make a hit at starting. Once write a popular poem, or even song, and your name cleaves its native night, and obtains that floating notoriety which is rarely, if ever, lost, and which secures attention, if not fame, to whatever else you write. Not only are the booksellers for ever after your obedient humble servants, but the public, when once familiarized with a name, after once relaxing its sage face into a smile of complacency, is loath to write itself down an ass, by recalling, however it may modify, its verdict. Otherwise with one whose struggles after renown, however vigorous, have altogether failed of introducing him into any circle of admirers, much wider than that which any talented man can command by the private exercise of his abilities. His name, if alluded to by any of his devoted friends, comes like a staggering blow to the ignorance of the portion of the pensive public which never heard of him or of his works before. Its mention, accordingly, is resented as an impertinence, and inch by inch must he continue to climb the sides, and probably die ere he reach the summit of the difficult hill. Fortunate, in truth, for a poet is the early culmination of his name; but only in a secular point of view, or when he happens to be a disinterested and enthusiastic devotee of his art. If he have no high religious purposes in its prosecution—if he be greedy of its immediate gains—if he love the hasty garlands of reputation better than that slow, deep, rich flower of fame

which God, "who hardens the ruby in a million years, and works in duration in which Alps and Andes come and go like rainbows," rears by a long, late process—his rapid and instant popularity is a curse, and not a blessing to his genius. Not every one can, like a Schiller or a Goethe, dally a while with the meretricious mistress, reputation—drink from her hand the daintiest cup of her enchantments, and then, rejecting the wanton, bind himself up, by severe and solemn training, to gain the chary and chaste, but divine hand of fame—of that fame which is indeed "the spur that the clear spirit doth raise ;—

"The last infirmity of noble minds."

Too many besides Thomas Campbell tarry in the Calypso island till the sun be down, and Ithaca is still afar.

And yet we readily admit that this true poet began his career with a strong and pure love, if not the profoundest insight into the meaning and mystery of his art. Nowhere shall we find the poetical feeling more beautifully linked to the joyous rapture of youth than in the "Pleasures of Hope." It is the outburst of genuine enthusiasm; and even its glitter we love, as reminding us of the "shining morning face" of a schoolboy. But why we quarrel with Campbell is, that this precipitate shine of fame upon his young head has dazzled his eyes, has satisfied his ambition, chilled his love of his art, and excited the suspicion, that his real object all along has been the dowry of the muse, and not her sacred and inestimable self. The "Pleasures of Hope" bears no more proportion to the powers of its author than does the "Robbers" to those of Schiller, or "Werter" to those of Goethe. But where is Campbell's "Wallenstein," or his "Faust?" We have instead only such glimpses—the more tantalizing that they are beautiful—of a rare and

real vein of original genius as are furnished in the "Last Man," "Hohenlinden," and "O'Connor's Child."

Campbell's great power is enthusiasm—subdued. His tempest moves on gracefully, and as to the sound of music. His muse keeps the step at the same time that she shakes the wilderness. You see him arranging the dishevelled and streaming hair, smoothing the furrowed forehead, compressing the full and thrilling lips of inspiration. He can arrest the fury of his turbulent vein by stretching forth the calm hand of taste, as an escaped lunatic is abated in a moment by the whisper of his keeper, or by his more terrible tap of quiet, imperious command. There is a perpetual alternation going on in his mind. He is this moment possessed by his imagination; the next, he masters and tames it, to walk meekly in the harness of his purpose; or, to use his own fine image, while his genius is flaming above, his taste below, "like the dial's silent power,"

Measures inspiration's hour,  
And tells its height in heaven.

He is inferior thus to the very first class of poets, whose taste and art are unconscious. His are at once conscious to himself and visible to others. Their works, like Nature's, arrange themselves into elegance and order, amid their impetuous and ecstatic motion; their apparent extravagancies obey a law of their own, and create a taste for their appreciation; their hair, shed on the whirlwind, falls abroad, through its own divine instinct, in lines of waving beauty; their flashing eye enriches the day; their wild, uncontrollable step, "brings from the dust the sound of liberty." But if Campbell be too measured, and timid, and self-watchful, to appertain to those demi-urgi of poetry, he is far less to be classed with the imitative and the cold—the schools of Boi-

leau and Pope. He not only belongs to no school ; but in short, deep gushes of genuine genius—in single thoughts, where you do not know whether more to admire the felicity of the conception, or the delicate and tremulous finish of the expression—in drops of spirit-stirring or melting song—and in a general manliness and chastity of manner, Campbell is perhaps the finest ARTIST living. His mind has the refinement of the female intellect, added to the energy of the classic man. His taste is not of the Gothic order, neither is it of the Roman ; it is that of a Greek, neither grotesque nor finically fastidious. His imagery is select, not abundant ; out of a multitude of figures which throng on his mind, he has the resolution to choose only the one which, by pre-established harmony, seems destined to enshrine the idea. His sentiment is sweet, without being mawkish, and *recherché* without being affected. Here, indeed, is Campbell's fine distinction. He never becomes metaphysical in discriminating the various shades, nor morbid in painting the darker moods of sentiment. He preserves continually the line of demarcation between sentiment and passion. With the latter, in its turbulence—its selfish engrossment—the unvaried, but gorgeous colouring which it flings across all objects—the flames of speech which break out from its white lips, he rarely meddles. But of that quieter and nobler feeling, which may be called, from its stillness, its subdued tone, its whispered accents, its shade of pensiveness, the moonshine of the mind, he is pre-eminently the poet. His lines on “ Revisiting a Scene in Argyllshire,” and those on “ Leaving a Scene in Bavaria,” are the perfection of this species of poetry. They are meditations, imbued at once with all the tenderness of moonshine, and all the strength of sunshine. Manly is his melancholy, and even his sigh proclaims the breadth and depth of the chest from which it is upheaved.

“To bear is to conquer our fate,” is the motto of this brave philosophy, which contrasts well with the wayward recalcitration of Byron against the still strong order of things—with the whimper of poor Keats—with the unearthly shriek by which you track Shelley through his wildest wanderings in the mist—and with the sad propensity of the Lakers to analyze their tears ere they permit them to fall to the ground ; to refine away their robust emotions into shadow ; and to cover from their eyes the real calamities of existence by a veil of dream.

Campbell is *par excellence* the poet of the fair sex. There are no works which are more relished by cultivated females. His flight rises precisely to that pitch where they are able fully and gracefully to follow. The manly elegance, moreover, of his mental costume ; the unaffected and becoming purity of his speech, so distinct from finical purism ; the homage done to the private affections and gentle domestic ties,—these being the qualities which please them in a man, are sure to fascinate them in a poet. “Gertrude of Wyoming” has brought this enviable kind of popularity to a point. It strives to embody all the quiet, without the insipidity of domestic life ; and by the picturesque accompaniments of American woods, flageolets echoing from romantic towns, war-drums heard in the distance, tomahawks flashing in the sunset, Indians bursting across the stage, it does, to some extent, relieve that tedium and common-place, through which too often “glides the calm current of domestic joy.” It is not, however, on the whole, an artistically finished work. It has no story ; at least the tale it tells has little interest or novelty, and is somewhat wire-drawn. The characters are rather insipid. Gertrude’s father is a volcano burnt out. Gertrude herself is a pretty, romantic Miss of Pall Mall, dropt down by the side of the Susquehannah, where, undis-

mayed by the sight of the dim aboriginal woods, she pulls out her illustrated copy of Shakspeare, and, with rapt look, and hand elegantly lost in the tangles of her hair, proceeds to study the character of Imogen, or Lady Macbeth, or Mrs. Ann Page. Her lover is a "curled darling," who has gone the grand tour—has seen the world, and returned, like a good-mannered youth, from the saloons of London, and the carnivals of Venice, in search of this beauty of the woods. Of Brandt something might have been made, but nothing is. The poet thinks him hardly company for Master Henry the picturesque, and Miss Gertrude the romantic. Even Outalissi, ere qualified for intercourse with these paragons, must have his whiskers clipped, his nails pared, and become a sentimental savage, who shall go off with a fine nasal twang, (talking in his pathetic death-song, by the way, of a clock that had found out the perpetual motion; for surely more than eight days had elapsed from the departure of the happy pair to the last song of the Indian, and yet he says, "Unheard their clock repeats its hours.") Nevertheless, the poem contains some of Campbell's finest things—brief and sudden escapes of his richest vein. What can be finer than such lines as the following:—

Led by his dusky guide, like morning brought by night.  
Till now in Gertrude's eyes their ninth blue summer shone.

Nor far some Andalusian saraband  
Would sound to many a native roundelay;  
But who is he that yet a dearer land  
Remembers, over hills and far away.  
Green Albyn, &c.

Oh, earthly pleasure, what art thou in sooth?  
The torrent's smoothness, ere it dash below.

That fled composure's intellectual ray,  
As Etna's fires grow dim before the rising day.

And the exquisite words of Outalissi to his Henry :—

But thee, my flower, whose breath was given  
By milder genii o'er the deep,  
The spirits of the white man's heaven  
Forbid not thee to weep.

The dying speech of Gertrude is beautifully tender ; but a few sobbed-out words, in the circumstances, would have been more natural, and far more affecting. Shakspeare or Schiller would have made a monosyllable unlock the human heart as effectually as Campbell does by all the eloquence and linked sweetness of this artificial harangue. Let poets remember that the most affecting, and, on the whole, the most powerful words ever written by man, are probably those in Lear, "Prithee undo this button; thank you, sir." The opening description of Wyoming reminds us, at a distance, of that which commences the Castle of Indolence; but is less distinct in its grouping, less rich in its colouring, and unluckily, no more than it, resembles any actual scenery. So, at least, declare all Americans. It were ridiculous, therefore, to speak of Gertrude as a great poem. It is only a second-rate poem containing many first-rate things; a tame and tremulous string, supporting many inestimable pearls. Its tone is feeble; its spirit apologetic; the author is evidently afraid of his reputation. With gleams of truer genius than any thing in the "Pleasures of Hope," it wants its frank, fearless, and manly enthusiasm, and neither has been, nor has deserved to be, one tithe so popular; except, indeed, with those who prefer it because in preferring it they stand alone.

In "Theodric," again, and the "Pilgrim of Glencoe," you find the same sensitiveness as to renown, and sense of inferiority to his former self, attempting to conceal them-

selves under, we know not what, of a jaunty air of nonchalance and affected defiance. Intensely aware of the ludicrous aspect an old man would present mounted on a boy's stilts, he goes to the opposite extreme, and assumes a garrulous, free and easy, and somewhat pert and snappish tone, which we cordially dislike. "Theodric," indeed, is quite unworthy of its author's reputation, has scarcely a fine thing in it, and is little else than middling prose twisted into unmusical and shambling metre. In the other you see now and then robust vigour; but, on the whole, the wicked exclamation, "*Eheu quantum mutatus ab illo*," forces itself up into your lips at every turning of the bald and spiritless page. It is with a mixture of feelings, half pleasurable, half melancholy, that you revert from this faint reflection of the tartan to "Lochiel's Warning," the most sublime and spirit-stirring of all Campbell's minor poems. Nowhere, save in some of Scott's battle scenes, or in Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," do we find the old Homeric spirit in finer preservation. The poet has shot into it all his highland blood, like the *insanis vim leonis* by which the daring son of Iapetus inspired his primitive man. No one but a descendant of the Callummor—who had slept in his plaid nights together mid the mists—who had crossed the foaming friths of the Hebrides while the spirit of the storm was shrieking above the white waves—who had been lost for weeks among the mountains—who had sallied forth with Christopher North, in dead of winter, from Glasgow College to Campsie Glen, and spent three days in making a snow man, "a great fellow, with a noble phrenological development, and face after the most improved Lavater shape," and then spent other three in taking him down—who had shuddered at broad-day at finding himself alone with the ravens and the streams on the solitary hill-side, and trembled lest his every foot-fall, as it startled the deep



silence, might awaken something more fearful than a ghost—who had thrilled to the scalp at hearing in the far distance the long yell of the pibroch piercing the mist, or heard fitfully through the lulls in the autumn hurricane—who had once or twice, in wild frolic, drank destruction to the house of Brunswick, and the memory of Prince Charlie, in draughts of usquebae, unchristened by revenue and unmitigated by water, and rising up from the fierce potation a “prophet in drink,” while the mountains reeled around him, and the streams sang double, and two terrible suns flared in the afternoon heaven—no one who had not done all this, and, though born in Glasgow, much of this he actually did—could have risen to the height, or sustained the swell of “Lochiel’s Warning.” How finely contrasted are the language and the attitudes of the parties in this almost Shakspearean interlocation!—the chieftain serene, yet stern, collected in his conscious courage and integrity; his arms folded; his look bespeaking a calm indignation; the one erect, fixed, yet tremulous feather in his bonnet, but a type of the unity of his resolve and the chivalric determination of his soul. The wizard, bowing under the burden he proclaims, pale in the prospect of the measureless ruin which is at hand; his eye shot from the socket by the pressure of the bursting vision; erect before his chieftain, but bent low before his God;—the language of the one firm, direct, and contemptuous, tinged too with poetry, for he has a vision of his own, and his eye and his language kindle as he sees,

“ Like reapers descend to the harvest of death  
Clanranald the dauntless, and Moray the proud,  
All plaided and plumed in their tartan array;”—

that of the other abrupt, involved, vehement—all on end with the strange images of death which crowd in upon his soul,

from the burning eyrie, beaconing the blackness of heaven, to the bridle of the riderless steed, "red with the sign of despair,"—from the sighs of the iron-bound prisoner to the embers of the far-flaming summit, "like stars to the firmament cast." And fine at length it is to see how the terrors of the future pale before the courage of the present, as though a ghost were to tremble, and turn before the ghost-seer; how the blue clear steel cuts the shadowy circle, and dissolves the dreadful spell, and the warrior leaves the stage, towering above his mystic adviser, and defying destiny itself. Baffled and gloomy, you see the wizard melting into his clouds, rolled together like the wounded spirit of Loda, while the hero steps onward with a step which seems to tread on necks, and a port which carries in it the assurance, if not of victory, at least of a glorious death.

In a softer style Campbell has written "O'Connor's Child," the sweetest and most plaintive, and most romantic of all his strains. It is a poem, indeed, which can receive no adequate criticism but tears. Who durst make remarks on a production, while his eyes were making marks more eloquent and impressive far upon the blurred and blotted page? A tear is the truest and noblest Longinus. "To Barry we give loud applause, to Garrick only tears." We pass this poem by in silence. Never did the noblest harp that rung in "Tara's halls" send forth a strain so sweet and subtle, and mournfully desolate, as this. Soft as the voice of gentlest woman is the flow of the verse—heart-rending the pathos of the description, yet wild and high as the "Cameron's Gathering" rises the swell of the grandeur; and you say, as you might of that subterranean music which Humboldt describes rising from a cavern in South America, or as Ferdinand says of Ariel's music, "This is no mortal business, nor no sound that the earth owns."

“The Last Man” is in a more ambitious style. It was a ticklish and terrible topic, out of Campbell’s usual track, and verging on a field where the “giant angels” of genius have alone a right to disport themselves. It was such a subject as would have suited Dante, (and what a “Last Man” would he himself have made! what an abrupt and haggard terminus had he been to the species, turning up that scathed face in gloomy triumph to the darkening sun and the reeling constellations!) or Michael Angelo, or him who drew Medusa “gazing on the midnight sky upon the cloudy mountain peak supine.” And yet with what easy mastery has Campbell treated it! With what a firm and tender hand does he bear the “pall of a past world!” In what terse, yet bold language, does he describe the “twins in death!”—yonder the sun darkening at his meridian height, as the black hand, of which eclipse is one premonitory finger, passes over him; and here the solitary son of Adam receiving on his eye his last light, and addressing him as they enter together into the eternal shadow. We have seen the taste of the idea questioned; but surely, if there be poetry in the thought of a first man—alone between the virgin earth and the abyss of stars—there must be more in the figure of a last man, forming a momentary link between an earth that is dissolving and a sky that is rolling together as a scroll. If there be poetry in the thought of the last man of the deluge, standing on the last peak of a drowned world, there must be more in the idea of one, dauntless as, from the sepulchre of a perished earth, he is about to leap into the arms of death, and feels gaining on him the slow shadow of everlasting darkness. The execution of the poem is admirable—no exaggeration—no appearance of effort; and herein we deem it superior to Byron’s “Darkness,” which, in all but its dire literality and distinctness, is a dream of night-

mare, where, murky as the gloom is, it is not dark enough to conceal the sneer of the central object—the poet himself—making mouths, which he imagines unseen, at the great funeral. Campbell's "Last Man" is very properly nameless—his previous history unknown—the interest is given him by the circumstances in which he stands, and he rises to the grandeur of his position while feeling himself sole mourner at the obsequies of a world. Perhaps, to make him a Christian was an error, because, first, the whole idea of the poem is inconsistent with Christian truth; and, secondly, as a mere artistic matter, the dreary magnificence of the scene had been enhanced, had he been represented as the last projection of the entire human family, about to be sucked down into the sea of annihilation. The poem altogether discovers in our poet a new and extensive district in his mind, which he has never cultivated, but left shadowy, silent, and unbroken in the recesses of his spirit.

Had we been asked to give our vote for one best qualified to be the laureate of the rainbow, we should, even previous to experience, have preferred Campbell. His genius, pillared indeed on earth, yet rising by ethereal stages toward heaven, mildly reflective, rather than dazzlingly original, was just the genius to chant the praises of that fine old show of heaven, at which the "countryman stops to gaze," at the sight of which the little child claps his hands,—that arrowless bow which "encompasseth the sky with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it." On the green, glad, and glittering earth, and between the father Sun, and the fairest of his daughters, spanning the dark and dripping east, stands up the poet, and sings a strain which ascends like "a steam of rich distilled perfumes," which arrests and eternizes the brief beauty of the apparition, and which seems now the song of the earth's gratitude, and now the

voice of the sun's tenderness for his evanishing child. Campbell's "Rainbow" is not one of those "tearless rainbows, such as span the unclouded skies of Peristan," nor does it bear aloft his thoughts to that region where round the throne there appears a "rainbow like unto an emerald,"—his is of this "dear green earth,"—its beauty is the beauty of tears—it is the very rainbow which appeared in the departing clouds of the deluge, and—

"As fresh in yon horizon dark,  
As young its beauties seem,  
As when the eagle from the ark  
First sported in its beam."

It is not the rainbow as he has seen it shining above the Thames, and with hardly an eye among those of thousands marking its slighted loveliness: but the rainbow as he has seen it, binding Beneaw to Benvenue, Benmackdui to Cairngorm—the delight of the solitary shepherd or huntsman on the hill. And as we said, that never shall a shell be seen without recalling to the enthusiast the lines of Landor, so we can at least answer for ourselves, that never do we behold a rainbow, whether bridging the Highland valley, or seen by our eye alone over the silent and smokeless morning city, without recalling the lines of Campbell; and never shall we think of his genius but (if we may use the words) as "clothed with a rainbow."

Our author's "Lines to Emigrants" are in the style of his earliest poem, but chastened down into severer beauty. In them he waives a white poetic hand to his departing brothers, and boldly furrows up, by the wing of his imagination, those primeval forests "where now the panther laps a lonely stream," and becomes a pioneer and prophet of the

glorious future ages which he is privileged to read in their germ—

“As in a cradled Hercules we trace  
The lines of empire in his infant face.”

It is characteristic of Campbell, and how much does it say for his powers, that whatever he does is in its own line the best. Thus, next to “Scots wha hae,” “Hohenlinden” is the best war-song ever written. It catches as in a cup the spirit of the “revelry” of war—that wild steam of intoxication which hovers over the battle-field, till the genuine soldier awakens from a fight as from a giddy and gorgeous dream, and, like Caliban, “cries to sleep again.” And in his two celebrated sea-songs how proudly does he pace the deck! With what rough, tar-like confidence, does he face the terrors of the tempest of the sea-fight; and the “meteor flag of England,” blazing over the smoke of battle, is a grander spectacle to him than a comet’s hair, or than one of the serene and steadfast stars.

✕ As a poet, he is already, what Byron is not—a classic secure of immortality—his works already exalted to the same shelf with those of Goldsmith, Collins, and Thomson.

His prose is liable to the charge of over ambition, if not of affectation, but is clear, energetic and felicitous. His critical dicta, as given forth in his “Specimens of the British Poets,” in his “Life of Mrs. Siddons,” “Sir Thomas Laurence,” &c., have often a decisive vigour about them which reminds us of the oracularities of Dr. Johnson. He paints his author; and though you may dispute an opinion, who can deny a likeness?

Campbell, at college, was eminent for three things, his poverty, his wit, and his scholarship. A poor, little black-eyed boy, with his toes protruding through his shoes, he was

✕ *Staff*

wont to haunt the stove in the logic class ; and when driven from it by tall dunderheads from Belfast, used to pelt them with extempore epigrams till, to his infinite delight, he got them to chase him through the class-room ; and then the little vagabond, wheeling round, regained his warm corner. It was a high moment for him when he was raised to the post of Lord Rector in his native university. Unbounded was the enthusiasm which prevailed. Such crowding ! such cramming ! such questioning ! " Have you seen him ? and you ? and you ? " and after he was seen, and his fine, frank, inaugural address was delivered, " Does he come up to your expectations ? isn't he a better speaker than we thought he had been ? what fine dark eyes he has got ! " And better still when he mingled so familiarly with his constituents, walking arm in arm with them, and giving them (trembling to the very toes,) the other and the other grasp of his warm right hand. What proud men we all were, when each of us received a copy of his first inaugural oration, with the magic words, " To so and so, from Thomas Campbell. " We remember being in a debating society one evening, when the news arrived that the Lord Rector had unexpectedly come down from London on some matter affecting the interests of the students. It was an eccentric and chivalrous move on his part, and out rushed we in a body to meet and welcome him with respondent enthusiasm. We found him in his brother-in-law's, sipping his coffee, were most cordially received, and after some delightful chit-chat, and a warm-hearted speech or two, left him in a transport of admiration. He, too, felt his fame ; and never—not when composing the " Pleasures of Hope, "—did his blood boil higher ; and never was his tongue half so eloquent, as in his meetings with, and his buoyant and cordial speeches to, the students of Glasgow. In memory of the halcyon days of the " Good Lord Rector, "

some of the cleverer of his admirers established a Campbell Club. He was the first poet we ever saw ; and for us to meet, hear, feel the tingling touch of the author of "O'Connor's Child," was a "thing to dream of, not to see." Great as was the enthusiasm of all the red-gowned electors, there was none in whose heart it beat more warmly than in his, who now indites this feeble but sincere tribute to his fame.

Alas! since the above was written, the poet of Hope (who, doubly alas! had ere his death become the walking image of despondency) has departed from among us. And with him has passed away that era of literature which stretched between the fall of Pope and the rise of Wordsworth. In Westminster Abbey now lie entombed, not only the remains of a fine though frail spirit, but of one beautiful age of English poetry. Peace, but not oblivion, to their united manes!

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### L O R D B R O U G H A M .

BROUGHAM is an isthmus, uniting two times. He belongs partly to the past, and partly to the present. In his habits, intellectual and moral, he is of the eighteenth century ; in his views and deeper feelings he is the man of his own era. While Coleridge and Carlyle are the prophets of the coming age, the events of which will expound much that is obscure in their deliverances, Brougham seeks only, at the light of the past, to live and move in the present. Well aware of the feebleness of comparisons as gauges of character, we may yet call him a composite of Burke, Chatham, and Fox. Without the subtlety, profusion, and poetry of the first, he



has his variety of lore, and his power of making it all, though gathered from the remotest regions, strictly subservient to the purpose in hand. With less simplicity of language, straightforwardness of purpose, condensation of power, and energy of will, than Lord Chatham, he has much of his piercing sarcasm, his dash of charlatanism, his commanding air, and his impetuosity of temper. Like him, too, while steadfast to certain great principles, he is apt to shift and veer about in matters of minor importance, and is altogether incapable of acting in concert with inferior men. He seems made for an arbitrary sovereign, and is a colossus at once in size and solitude. He has the social disposition, without the *bonhomme* of Fox; his energy, but not his vehemence; his knowledge, strong sense, and fine constitution, but not that child-like simplicity, that transparent earnestness, that utter absence of the black and bilious passions, that frank and generous temperament, that forgetfulness of self, which made even Burke, in the depth of their disagreement, to declare that he was "made to be loved."

We confess that we are a little skeptical as to the truth of the common panegyrics on Brougham's encyclopædic knowledge. We will not say with one, while he was Lord Chancellor, "that if he only did know a little law, he would have a smattering of every thing;" for we believe that no man's learning is less empirical than Brougham's; none more accurate, distinct, and under the control of his understanding. But, in the first place, as to its variety, we doubt if he has thoroughly mastered more than two or three of the main branches of knowledge. He knows politics; he knows mathematics; he knows jurisprudence; he has the languages of Greece and Rome, and of modern Europe, like a bunch of keys slung to his girdle; and with literature, past and present, he is a little more conversant than the average of

well educated men. But that beyond the circle—wide as it certainly is—which we have thus described, his knowledge extends very far, we have never seen any satisfactory proof. Perhaps, indeed, in society, from the fluency of his conversation, and the exceeding quickness with which his mind moves, he may pass for a man of nearly universal acquirements. We are still more skeptical as to the *depth* of his information. In physical science, what is he to Sir John Herschell? in jurisprudence, to Bentham? in languages, to De Quincey? in history, to Macaulay? in philosophical lore, to Macintosh? in the gayer and lighter regions of the Belles Lettres, to Jeffrey? Where, since we are required to put him in the very topmost class of men, are the overpowering evidences? As a scholar, what pyramidal pile of learning has he accumulated? As a writer, where is his “*Novum Organon*,” or his “*De Augmentis Scientiarum* ;” his “*Mechanique Celeste*,” his “*Divine Legation*,” or his “*Lives of the Poets* ;” his “*Paradise Lost*,” or his “*Excursion* ?” He has, indeed, cast strong and startling light upon many old truths. He has given to impulses created by others, the prodigious momentum of his influence, and eloquence, and perseverance, and ardour. He has said, and written, and done things strange and splendid. He has accumulated a mass of miscellaneous and most available knowledge. He has, in the departure or obscuration of greater luminaries, filled a large space in the political, scientific, and literary horizon. And he has cast over all his powers, and acquirements, and motions, a triple glare of genius, eccentricity, and restlessness, which have surrounded him with the interest, uncertainty, and terror of a comet.

The grand feature of Brougham’s mind is energetic and elevated sense. Subjected long to severe mathematical training, he loves the plain, the practical, and the tangible.

For the visionary he has no taste ; for the subtle no faculty. Through all the labyrinthine coils and thick parentheses of his voluminous periods, you trace the strong line of a clear and manly reason. Coupled with this is a considerable gift of comprehension. He strives to exhaust every subject with which he meddles, though he rarely, like some, touches with playful finger the very core of a matter, cleans it out into one brief sentence, or into the golden cup of one consummate figure ; and never seems to burst on the whole subject, as in one exulting leap of intuition. It unrolls gradually, though swiftly, before his view, like a map of atlas proportions, not like a " banner bright that is unfurled before him suddenly." He has added, it need scarcely be said, no new or large truth to the stock of human knowledge. As an orator, he speaks with a tone of authority. An eloquent dogmatism breathes in his every sentence. You feel that this man sees his subject through and through ; has mastered all its bearings ; has rolled it over in his strong mind as a " pebble in the ocean." His general speech is on a conversational key. He talks ; but it is in a style to which inferior men can only rise by convulsive effort, or in circumstances of extreme excitement. " Half his strength he puts not forth, but stays his thunder in mid volley." Like a giant, his mere movement is equal to the spasms, and races, and " torrent raptures" of other men. You wonder what he could do were he fully roused. It is this bridled power, this restrained fury, this lion energy on the leash, which ever rivets your interest and your wonder in the oratory of Brougham. You deem him fit for the most august and thrilling crises of eloquence ; for the impeachment of some Colossus of crime, who might be entitled the enemy of the human race ; for the defence of a Brutus, were he at the bar for tyrannicide ; for a cause in which all the nations of the earth were interested, and for

the decision of which superior beings were waiting with tremulous expectation. And as you watch him rending asunder complicated webs of sophistry with his little finger; playing with every string of the human heart at pleasure; withering mailed men with a touch; you say, were this son of Anak in right earnest, and pricked up to his full power, what labours might he not accomplish, what heroes subdue! Nor does the knowledge that this masterly ease is the result of early and patient toil, of invincible perseverance, more than of inspired genius, much detract from the effect—an effect increased by the inscrutability of his features, which, though sharp and angular, conceal more meaning than they enunciate; the unkindled lightnings of his eye; the iron massiveness of his forehead; the saturnine swarthiness of his complexion; the meaning twitch of his cheek; and the clearness, flexibility, and power of a voice, over which his command is supreme, and which runs parallel with every movement of his sentences, and echoes every passion of his soul. And those who have seen him in his “loftier mood,” not now calmly bestriding, but fairly caught in the wind of his spirit—his face brightened into full and fierce meaning—his eye shining like a sunken pit of fire suddenly disclosed—his arms vibrating like sharp tongues of flame in the blast—his brow darkening like iron in the shade—his form dilating to his dilating soul—his voice now exalted to a harrowing shriek, and now sunk to a rasping and terrible whisper—those (and their number is now comparatively few) can alone tell how the promise of his calmer moments is amply fulfilled, and the word “orator” seems (like a transparency fluctuating in the breeze) to flame around his every look and gesture, word and movement. His power, too, is greater, inasmuch as it is based on a superstructure of intellect; as it is kept in severe reserve; and as, like the forces

of Nature, it never comes into play but on great occasions, and is then entirely irresistible. Hazlitt has, in the "Spirit of the Age," treated Brougham as the representative of the Scottish school of oratory, and drawn a very ingenious parallel between it and the Irish, giving the preference to the latter. It appears to us that he is rather a composite of the English and the Scottish, and unites the passion and boldness of John Bull to Sawney's carefulness, plodding perseverance, intense practicality, and instinctive common sense. He has little of the Irishman about him, except his irritable and impetuous temper; little of his bursting, bungling humour; less of his wild pathos; and less still of his fervid fancy. His wit is apt to darken into sarcasm, or to kindle into invective; his pathos is the feeblest of his powers; and his imagination, though vivid and strong to the verge of insanity, is never rich, and seldom poetical. Inflamed intellect is the brief and comprehensive description of his oratory. His sarcastic vein is as deep and dark a channel as ever the gall of a proud and powerful spirit found for itself. His sarcasm is equally compounded of irony and invective,

Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,  
That on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

His irony is not cold and stern, but fierce and hot. His invective is slow, measured, winding, indirect, accumulating gradually round its hapless victim. The garment he wraps round his enemy is of amplest drapery, and most voluminous folds; but it is the shirt of Nessus. Like a boa constrictor, he rolls himself slowly round his prey; first covers it from head to foot; administers then a fearful warmth; then beslavers it with portentous flattery; then gradually crushes in its sides; and then, with a fiendish ease and glee, devours it. And though humour, either in its

common or in its German sense, be a quality he possesses not, he can at times shed a wild gaiety over the darker motions of his mind, like stray and stormy sunshine on the troubled waters of a tarn, rather discovering than relieving the gloom. We do not profess much admiration for his far-famed going down on his knee as he said, "My Lords, I implore you to pass this bill." We fear it was a trick, though sitting as cool criticisers, we are perhaps scarcely qualified to decide whether it did not grow naturally out from, and, as it were, point and round off, the excitement of the speaker and the audience. If it did, it was undoubtedly a graceful and magnificent attitude; far better, certainly, than that absurd dagger of Burke, which some have professed to admire. Had Burke, indeed, worn, as was customary in his youth, a sword, and as the climax of one of his anti-Gallican harangues, drawn and flourished it in the eyes of the astonished house, it had been a natural and noble conductor to the excited feelings of such a man; and one would have recalled the words of Milton,—

He spake, and to confirm his words out flew  
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs  
Of mighty cherubim: the sudden blaze  
Far round illumined hell.

But to purchase a weapon at a cutler's,—to stow it away in his breast,—to watch his opportunity, and curve in the majestic wave of his eloquence to a point where he might, with some appearance of keeping, dash it down upon the floor,—it was the most hideous anti-climax, the trashiest clap-trap on record: unworthy of a Robespierre, how much more of a Burke!

Altogether, though in the houses of Parliament there are, or were, some deeper philosophers; two or three more accomplished debaters; several scholars more erudite; many

lawyers more profound ; more elegant rhetoricians ; much wittier men ; numbers who excel him in bursts of imaginative eloquence ; one or two who, in refinement, if not bitterness of sarcasm, approach very near him ;—as an orator—a mind-compeller—a wielder of Periclean thunders—a living power of irresistible influence, swaying the souls and bodies of intelligent men—Henry Brougham stands, or stood alone.

As an author, he has written books, pamphlets, and critiques. While very young, he produced a work on colonies, which, though little read now, showed his comprehensive grasp and reach of information. He is the author, too, of various papers on science, inserted in the Records of the Royal and other societies ; of a prefix to Paley, in which, amid many errors and inaccuracies, “and tares of haste,” he discovers all his fertility of intellect, and abundance of knowledge on a subject which seemed out of his line ; of an introduction to the “Library of Useful Knowledge,” which is written in a style resembling Cobbett’s best and most popular manner, being strongly simple in thought, and transparently clear and familiar, without coarseness in language ; of many articles in the *Edinburgh Review* ; and, finally, of that *Collectanea Majora*—the collection by himself of his leading speeches. Brougham in this has done what few of the mighty dead have been permitted to do—what Demosthenes, Bolingbroke, Chatham, Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, and Canning did not, and more fully what Cicero and Burke did, viz. corrected, condensed, subjected to the revision of his own after eye, and illustrated from the resources of his own teeming mind, the oratory of his life—erected his monument before his death—arrested all the accents of his own floating breath into forms of marble beauty and marble permanence—had the hardihood to anticipate the work of ages, by brushing away from his own speeches the delusive and enlarging

haze of tradition and immediate effect, and leaving them as they are, in fixed proportions and solid greatness.

Thus collected, his speeches unquestionably stand in the very first rank of oratorical master-pieces. They contain individual passages of eloquence, rhetoric, debate, logic, equal to any thing; besides condensed qualities of information brought powerfully to bear upon particular subjects, and a mass of masculine sense, variegated by sharp flings of sarcasm, and illustrated by a spray of wit, and seasoned by tart peculiarities of temper and language, which render them in their collected form one of the richest legacies which the genius of oratory ever bequeathed to the unborn time.

Brougham is "nothing if not critical." His mind, turn it to law, literature, politics, or science, is essentially critical. His intellect is an universal tribunal, before which men, authors, jurists, mathematicians, poems, political treatises, pictures, books of travels, manuals of education, problems, &c., compear, are scrutinized, and pass on. Instead of profoundly exploring, he vigorously remarks. Like the Abyssinian cattle drivers, he makes stern incisions, and cuts out quivering pieces from his subject, rather than dissects and disembowels the whole. His judgment of books is scarcely so much to be depended on as his verdicts on man. That is often hasty, harsh, and unconsidered, as witness his review of Byron's "Hours of Idleness;" these are generally true, as though given in on oath, and vivid as though stamped on canvas. His recent portraits of Fox, Pitt, Castlereagh, George the Fourth, &c., prove him a bold, minute, faithful, stern, yet generous limner. Gall still holds its place in his box of colours, but is wondrously faded from its first fierce tints. Not so mellow as Clarendon's, without the enigmatical and intricate terseness of Tacitus, or the subtle simplicities of Hume's inimitable style, or the calm summings up of



Hallam, or the gorgeous lights and deep shadows of Hazlitt's painting, or the waving, ideal, and richly adorned pictures of Macaulay, or the wild and rapid brush of Carlyle, his portraits are clear, direct, drawn with fearless fidelity of touch, and much fulness of characteristic detail. They resemble, both in the manner and the judgments pronounced, the criticisms published posthumously of Sir James Mackintosh, but are more energetic, less encomiastic, and steeped in the earnestness of a far more determined spirit.

As a barrister, Brougham enjoyed a place founded more upon his known abilities in other departments, than on any especial adaptation to that somewhat jealous and exclusive sphere where sits the stern goddess of law. In all that concerned the minute and plodding details, the knowledge of precedents, the power of drawing subtle, and almost invisible distinctions, he was surpassed by a large class, with Lord Abinger at their head. Law, more than any other science, from the multiplicity of its details, the technicality of its terms, the evasive nature of its distinctions, and the vast space which its records cover, demands the whole man. But, while Brougham has never narrowed down his wide mind to such an exclusive devotion as Themis would require; never "yellowed himself among rolls and records;" never shone as a special pleader, "bristling up with small facts;"—no barrister approached him in the rapid mastery with which he tore out the heart of a case, the dexterous energy with which he managed it, the clever charlatanism by which he made his wit, or his eloquence, or his ribaldry, or his abuse, supply the lack of his information; the pincer-like power of the machinery by which he squeezed out truth, or fun, or both, from witnesses; the lustre which his genius elicited from the dry wood and very rottenness of legal detail; or in his knowledge and application of the great leading principles

of jurisprudence, whether gathered from the devout study of Bentham, the demi-god of the science, or made his own by the workings of his restless understanding. A pleading in his hands, instead of being a cold and sapless document, full of quibbles, small sophistries, and other crooked things, became an animated and interesting production, crowded with information, passion, glancing lights, flung now back and now forward, and eloquence of the purest grain.

When chancellor, Brougham made up for the want of minute technical lore by prodigious exertions, both of mind and body. If in aught he was to blame, it was in the extreme rapidity of his decisions—the haste with which he pushed the business before him. His exercise of the patronage (lay and clerical) of that high office itself sufficed to prove, that here was seated on the woolsack no cold cast-iron figure, but a man—a man of glorious impulses, and quick, warm, beating heart. It was great in him promoting one to whom he had done “some wrong,” and was politically opposed—George Croly. It was greater still, upon reading a small volume of poems, to obey the instant impulse, and bestow a living upon the author of the “Village Poorhouse.” “These are deeds which must not pass away.” They blend a warm beam of love with our admiration. It needed this to cover his sins against the dignity of English law, personified in his office—the indiscreet personalities in which he indulged—the wild wit by which he shook the woolsack from its propriety, and the “strange fire” which he now and then presented on that solemn altar where he ministered as high priest.

As a leader, he has laboured under a twofold disqualification. In the first place, he never served a regular training to the trade—passing from under the banners of Tierney to those of Canning, and afterwards of Grey, he only for a

very short time led the opposition ; and, like all men of impetuous impulse, he is too rapid in his motions, too fiery in his blood, too abrupt in his turns, too self-centred in his conscious might, too capricious in his temper, and too progressive in his opinions, to be a trust-worthy guide. No man of exalted genius was ever a good leader, or ever had a powerful train behind him. Chatham was a dictator, not a leader. Burke during his life had no out and out followers, save Windham, who was rather one of a constellation Gemini. Fox could never lead but in a storm. Canning gained his richest trophies while Liverpool was at the helm. It is your acute, clear-headed, cautious, common-sense man, like Sir Robert Walpole, that weathers the storm.

Besides all this, the versatile being under notice is, we are told, a great talker—the life and ornament of society. Manifold, be sure, the subjects of his conversation. Like Talkative in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” he can speak about things terrestrial and things celestial, things moral and things profane. The story runs, that once for some juvenile frolic clapped into the watch-house, he found himself in company with an old soldier. He passed part of the night in talking of the campaigns in which his companion had been engaged ; got out of him all the information he possessed ; sucked him dry like an orange, and thought he had spent the night to some purpose. He has talked of law with Eldon, of literature with Jeffrey, of fluxions with Leslie, of astronomy with Arago, of bullion with Horner, of orthodoxy with Sidney Smith, of cause and effect with Thomas Brown, of the oriental tongues with Leyden, of border ballads with Scott, of jurisprudence with Bentham, of moral philosophy with Mackintosh, of the evidences of Christianity with Dr. Andrew Thomson, who found him on that subject alone slenderly informed, and disposed to shirk ; of the voluntary question with

Dr. Harper of Leith ; of humanity with Clarkson and Romilly, the latter of whom, when requested on one occasion to edit a book, pleaded want of time, but said, "Take it to that fellow Brougham ; he has time for every thing ;" and of pulpit oratory with Robert Hall, whom Mackintosh took him to hear—whom he pronounced the most eloquent of orators—requested after sermon to be introduced to—proceeded to compliment on the discourse, till checked by Hall's asking, "But what of the subject, sir ? What think you of it, sir ? Was it the truth of God, sir ?"—words very characteristic of the great preacher, while still steaming with the excitement, and absorbed in the interest of his theme. Of Brougham's talk we can speak only by report. It is said to be singularly abundant, lively and rapid, touching a vast variety of topics, with light, firm, hurrying finger ; at times flaming up into eloquence, and generally testifying a rich mind under rare excitement. He is not a lecturer, like Coleridge ; nor a hatcher of bon-mots, like Sidney Smith ; nor an elaborate discussor of given topics, like Mackintosh ; nor a riotous spirit, pouring out its riches in splendid confusion, like Curran ; nor an oracle coiled up in the corner of a drawing-room, like Wordsworth. Brougham's talk, like that of Burke and Wilson, is just the involuntary discharge of a full mind. His face is the "ugliest and shrewdest of human faces." Far from a fine, and scarcely a striking face, it has a uniqueness of expression seldom seen ; thought, as of centuries of common minds, is written on it in worn characters—it scrutinizes all, while defying scrutiny itself—its famous twitch palpitates out the eternal restlessness of the man—intellect is inscribed upon the brow—passion lurks within the whole ; and now and then, as we have often been told, from the soul within the eye darts forth an expression which has an almost withering, blinding, blasting effect upon the beholder.

This is not the place, nor, in truth, is the time yet come, for forming a final judgment upon the character of Brougham, as a whole ; for fully estimating the influences which he has scattered around him during his career ; for weighing his faults and excellencies in an even balance ; or for settling the precise room he will fill up in the great general gallery of ages. We may, however, even as to these points, state our impressions. We deem him, then, notwithstanding all his inconsistencies and eccentric notions, to have been from first to last a sincere and honest man, animated by the great motives, and seeking the pure and lofty objects of a patriot, none the less that the activity of his mind and the eagerness of his temper have led him sometimes to pursue them by a tortuous policy. We believe too, that his influence, though on no other than the two questions of slavery and education, has been co-extensive with the limits of the civilized world. As to his faults, looming now so largely to the eye of contemporary and crushed envy, what may be their bulk, when viewed beside his transcendent merits, through the vista of centuries ? In what light do we now regard the poltroonery of Demosthenes, the duplicity of Themistocles, the vanity of Cicero, compared to the blaze of their excellencies ? So what to a calm spectator in the twenty-second century, will the manœuvres and half-mad freaks of the Lord Chancellor seem, when balanced by the intellect, eloquence, learning, and positive achievements of Henry Brougham ? And as to his future place in the grand picture exhibition of the world, we are safe in predicting, that if to the range of Plato, and Demosthenes, and Cicero, and Bacon, and Shakspeare, and Milton, and Newton, and La Place, and Burke, and Coleridge, he be not admissible, he must, and will take place with such names as Clarendon, and Bolingbroke, and Chatham, and Pitt, and Fox, and Franklin, and Mirabeau, and Mackintosh ;

while, for versatility of powers, he will be held to surpass them all. So be it; and so shall it be.—

“Dum domus Eneae Capitoli immobile saxum  
Accolet, imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.”

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### SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

THERE is nothing more remarkable about the literature of this age, than the harmony it has exhibited in many signal instances, between the analytic and the imaginative powers; between the genius which combines, and the intellect which resolves,—between an energetic philosophy, and a most ideal and impassioned poetry. In former times, a profound disconnexion between faculties so seemingly opposite, was taken for granted; a gulf, great, fixed, and impassable, was presumed to yawn drearily between the two regions. Men looked upon a person who combined a lively fancy, with a discriminating judgment, as a kind of prodigy, or, centaur not fabulous. Poetry they thought a disease, or madness in the blood, incompatible either with patient research, or with close and consecutive thought. Philosophy, on the other hand, they defined to be a cold, tame, and wingless thing; exploring the depths of science—yea, gazing on the height of the stars, with an eye which never kindled or softened for a moment. Before passing any harsh sentence on such flagrant conceptions, let us remember that there were cases and circumstances in the ages immediately preceding our own, which accounted for, and, in part, excused their formation. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, intellect and imagination were in close and firm alliance. Luther, and Galileo, and Lord Ba-

con, and Shakspeare, and Spenser ; and, afterwards, Jeremy Taylor, Milton, Barrow, Howe, Donne, and Cowley, all added immense subtlety and strength of thought to great copiousness and fervour of imagery. They were all poets ; and, if not all metaphysicians, were all, in the true and broad sense of the term, philosophers. They loved life, and books, and men ; but they loved quite as well flowers, and trees, and gardens, and running streams, and mountain prospects, and the meaning sculptured in the blue sky, and the silent congregation of the stars. If they did not make nature so profound and peculiar a study as she has become to many in our day, and did not look upon her features with that mystic rapture which many feel, and more assume or aspire to, they loved her every whit as well, and with a fresher, warmer, heartier, and honester affection. Actæon-like, they saw her virgin and divine nakedness, but were not, Actæon-like, as is the case with our modern maddened enthusiasts, devoured by their own thoughts, as by ravening dogs. They were modest and holy worshippers. In the next century matters altered materially for the worse. The Restoration not only came like a blight to wither the roses of poetry, but drew a line of separation between the gardens where they grew and the cold arena of a mechanical science, and a common-sense metaphysics. To poets succeeded wits, and to philosophers philosophists. Even Newton, though with gleams of imagination and passion in his blood, contributed, by the extreme coldness of the external crust of his mind, to this unhappy and unnatural separation. Locke, again, the leader of the psychology of the nineteenth century, has scarcely poetry enough within him to colour a single sentence of his writings, and is, except Hobbes, the best specimen we remember of a clear, bare, snowy and mountainous pile of intellect, deriving, from its extreme elevation, no mystic sublimity, and no fiery

hues. Bishop Butler, with all his acuteness, had only the half of a mind—the intellectual part,—passion, fire, and imagination were wanting; his style is the coldest and tamest in the language. All the preachers of the century had drunk out of the same icy springs; wit and intellect were the only qualities in vogue. Imagination lingered, like the colours of expiring day, in the smooth sentences, and exquisite but timid beauties of Addison's prose, and in the polished and airy flights of Pope's verse. But, of the combination of powerful intellect, with equally strong imagination, there were, we think, only three instances in the whole eighteenth century, in Britain; one at the beginning,—Berkeley; another in the middle,—Young; and a third about the close,—Burke. In Dr. Johnson and Warburton, though their fancy was copious, a hard and stern understanding unquestionably predominated. Berkeley was the British Plato,—combining the subtlety of a schoolman with the free natural eloquence of a great poet. His prose has passages beside which the finest in "The Essay on Man," and "The Rape of the Lock," dwindle like a pin point against a true star. Dr. Edward Young, again, united imagination to a fancy more subtle and abundant than Pope's, and to an intellect sparkingly clear in its workings. Had he lived a century before or a century after, and thus altogether escaped the enervating and emasculating influences of the low age on which he fell, he would have written something more faultless,—more natural,—less gloomy,—less epigrammatic, if not more eloquent and majestic than the "Night Thoughts." As it is, this poem, after all that has been written on the theme, is the most conclusive and sublime pleading for the immortality of the soul. You hear in it the soul itself rising up in its majesty "like thunder heard remote," and spurning the base idea of annihilation. Thomas Brown has not approached its depth, or



touched the hem of that gorgeous garment of eloquence which surrounds it "star-inwrought." It is worth many "Rambles," as an exposition of the vanity of human life, and of those stings which, in every breast, point to a future existence; and never before did the Night find such an interpreter of its grandeur—its silence—its mystery—its religion—its gloom, and its unutterable joy. Of Burke we need not speak. Every one knows how, in his mind, the "starry-pointing pyramid" of radiant fancy rested on the deep foundations of a large understanding, and how his teeming stores of learning became fuel to the conflagration of his genius. But with these three exceptions, during the entire eighteenth century, intellect and imagination were, in a great measure, divorced.

Far otherwise in the nineteenth: in the coronal of our present literature, the rosebuds of poetry are beautifully intertangled with the yellow and bearded grain of science. Our poets are no insane rhapsodists, but build the lofty rhyme on philosophical principles, and sing their stately songs to the intellect as well as to the fancy and the ear. Wordsworth's smallest poems are gems of psychological, as well as poetic worth. He has attested his love of geometry to be only less than that of poetry, in that magnificent unpublished dream, where he describes an Arab mounted on a dromedary, riding off, with the waters of a second deluge in pursuit, to bury, beyond their reach, as the two most precious things in the world, the shell of the bard, and "The Elements of Euclid." And with what determined pertinacity has he prosecuted, throughout all his works, the great philosophic purpose with which he set out, of finding truth and poetry in the neglected and despised places and persons of nature and of human society! And has he not, above most poets, found the "haunt and the main region of his song," in the mind,—that mind which he has daringly pre-

ferred to the material universe,—nay, to the “choirs of shouting angels,” which he passes on his way to the high places of his own spirit? Byron, it is true, was no metaphysician; but what a strong, sharp, decided “*rem acu tetigisti*” kind of an intellect had he!—scarcely inferior to his fancy and his passion. Shelley was a Platonic philosopher; and his correspondence, and other prose works, discover, between the immense outstretched wings of his imagination, the clear face and brilliant eyes of cherubic intelligence. Southey possesses claims as an historian, a critic, and a biographer, nearly equal to his poetic pretensions. Scott added to his wizard powers great sense and shrewdness. Campbell was nearly as good a critic as poet. Joanna Baillie has analyzed, as well as painted, the passions, with the pencil of a mistress. Wilson’s philosophic acumen—we quote Sir W. Hamilton—is “not the least wondrous of his wondrous powers.” Foster’s intellect and imagination are equally ponderous. Hazlitt’s dark body of metaphysics is surmounted by a fine froth of fancy. Chalmers works the air-pump of his theories with the hot and hasty hand of a roused imagination. Then there were Sir Humphrey Davy, the poet of chemistry, who was equally at home in the depth of mines and the soft sides of sunny rivers; Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown, who sweetened the harsh cup of Scottish metaphysics with the honey of eloquent words, beautiful figures, and rich frequent extracts from the poets; Professor Ferrier, in whom are combined a delicate discrimination of truth, and an intense perception and love of the beautiful; Professor Nichol of Glasgow, of whom we heard De Quincey say, that he rarely met a man who threw out so many original ideas in the same space of time, and who, in his “Architecture of the Heavens,” has brought out some fine and solemn tones of eloquence and poetic thought from that “harp of million strings,” the mid-

night sky ; and last and greatest far, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom Lamb apostrophized, “logician, metaphysician, bard,” and of whom Shelley sang—

“ He was a mighty poet and  
A subtle-souled psychologist ;  
All things he seemed to understand,  
Of old or new, at sea or land,  
Save his own soul, which was a mist.”

In approaching the consideration of a mind so wierd and wonderful as that of Coleridge, we feel considerable diffidence. To catch the features of men who belong to any given class or genus, is, comparatively, an easy task. But to paint a man who was a class and a genus in himself—whose mental look, too, was so frequently shifting, and whose varied faculties were all shaded by a border of mysterious darkness, is about as difficult as to paint Chaos, or to define Demogorgon, to “make a portrait of Proteus, or to fix the figure of the fleeting air.” When we seek to present a direct and angular mind, such as Hall or Johnson, before our reader’s view, we are mightily helped, not only by the sharpness of its outline, but by the numerous points in which it either agrees with or differs from others, and the comparisons to which this naturally leads ; and thus we can hardly avoid producing a strong resemblance. But to describe a mind like that of Coleridge, retiring from our reach into the immensities of space, with its centre beside us, but its circumference unseen ; with its foot on the daisy, but its topmost round lost amid the dust of stars,—subtle and evasive as the electric element,—“dark, self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,” and owning little connexion or brotherhood, save with a limited number of minds, scattered throughout centuries,—would require a hand so firm, and an eye so far seeing,

and, at the same time, so microscopic, that we almost despair of succeeding in the presumptuous attempt.

Coleridge reminds us of one of those gigantic fossil forms from which geology has drawn her daring conclusions, in every thing but their ugliness. Some of these compound in one strange structure the properties of sea, land, and air animals; so to his universal genius, the populous earth, the ocean, and the air, are equally familiar. The depths of the one his intellect loves to explore; the second seems to sound in the varied melodies of his verse; and, of the air, he is as much an emperor as the authors of the Faust and the Hesperus themselves. His thought is shadowy as an evening battlement of clouds; yet, even as the mirror of "cloudland, gorgeous land," seems to reflect the forms of the mountains over which it rests, though exaggerated and enlarged, so Coleridge's ideas are never mere dreams, but bear a certain resemblance to earthly shapes. His language is even more singular than his thought;—his style is not a mongrel or Babylonish style; but his curious collocations,—his unlooked for endings,—the incalculable turns which his sentences take,—their irregular length,—the lack of all but a dim and shadowy unity between the various paragraphs making up a chapter, and the various periods composing a paragraph, remind you of the letters upon the wall, in his own dream,—bright yet obscure, which, taken separately, had a meaning, but of which the whole were riddles. Then—but who shall describe his versification, or untie the secret soul of its harmony? There is nothing in poetry so puzzles and astonishes us as the sweet, fitful, changing, aerial, spiritual, and truly magical charm of Coleridge's verse. It combines the softness of the breeze,—the shriek of the rising gale,—the lull of the wind, gathering itself up like a "midnight flower,"—the dirge-like wail of the November blast,—the shifting

gusts of a veering storm,—the solemn sound of a great north wind, blowing, for days, with one unmitigated tone, added to a certain unearthly modulation which an *Æolian* harp may image. How many varieties of versification has he attempted—to succeed in all! In his early poems, and in his “*Remorse*,” he has woven greater fire and passion, with the melody of *Otway* and *Rowe*. In his two principal odes, how great the pomp and swell of sound! In his sonnet to *Schiller*, the *Jew’s* harp structure of the sonnet “becomes a trumpet.” In his “*Lines on Mont Blanc*,” he dares to lift the lyre which was light only in *Milton’s* hand. In “*Kubla Khan*,” his dreaming soul produces a solemn and sustained sweetness, which is not of this earth. In the “*Rime of the Anciente Marinere*,” he gives aspecimen of every variety of rhythm, as well as of language, the homely, the harsh, the soft, the abrupt, and the dreamy. And in “*Christabel*,” he has wedded one of the purest of poetical creations to a harmony soft as the whispers of love, and sweet as the talk of *Elysium*. Ages may occur ere the combination of fancy, feeling, and ear, all moving to the tune of an ethereal inspiration, produce such “soft and soul-like sounds” again. It is as if pines, and waterfalls, and roses, and winds, and seas, and storms, and harps, and organs had yielded up their deepest secrets of harmony to the soul and the song of *Coleridge*.

*Coleridge* was a poet, a philosopher, a talker, and, (incredible as it may seem!) a man. His poems are fragments of an undiscovered orb of song, fallen down from the sky—snatches of superhuman melody dropping from the clouds—touches on a key which more than mortal hands were required to sustain—ecstacies filched before the time from the treasured glories of futurity, gay or serious, mild or mystic, placid or *Promethean*—“voices from a loftier

climate." Above almost all the poets of the day, he answers to our idea of a bard, a Vates, clad now with the beaming robe, and now with the "deep-furrowed garment of-trembling" which the prophet wears; less an author wielding his pen to write down his thought, than a pen seized and guided by the strong and sudden, or slow and solemn hand of overhanging and invisible power. If we were to try to state, in one word, the leading quality of his poetry, we should say, with an eloquent critic in *The Quarterly*, that it was unexpectedness—the occurrence of sentiments, images, and sounds, other than either you or the author were prepared for. This almost morbid agility of mind has led to the charges usually brought against his poetry, of mysticism, exaggeration, oddity, &c.; all which spring from an ignorance of the unavoidable action of the poet's mind, who met new thoughts at every turn of his way, and who, at least in his youth, when nearly all his poetry was produced, was

"Inspired beyond the guess of folly  
By each rude shape, and wild unconquerable sound."

Another characteristic of his poetry is the use he has made in it of his philosophical powers. Not that he has sought, like Lucretius or Akenside, to reduce any particular system to rhyme; nor that, when he wrote his leading poems, had his philosophical views assumed that total and expanded form which they took afterwards in his mind and talk; but you cannot read a page of his wildest verse without feeling that you have to do with a mind eminently watchful of mental phenomena, possessed of the introverted eye, "which broods and sleeps on its own heart." For example, how subtly has he refined on, as well as poetically represented, the passion of remorse; and though there are

far better acting plays than this contribution of Coleridge to his country's stage, we question if there be one, save the "Cenci," which in modern times so gratifies the metaphysical "searcher of dark bosoms." And how amazingly daring to suspend the interest of a tragedy so wide and deep as that of the "bright-eyed Marinere," upon the shooting of a bird! This, in fact, was another contribution to the philosophy of the same dark passion which gives the name to his principal play, which he had studied in his own heart, and which he knew could be startled up into all its hydra horrors and giant stature from a very small egg, and a very slight trampling upon it. Besides these two peculiarities, unexpectedness and philosophical tendency, the poetry of Coleridge is remarkable for the variety of its keys;—he is little of a mannerist: how unlike "France, an Ode," to the "Hymn written in the Valley of Chamouni;" or "Christabel," to his "Fears in Solitude;"—for the width of its sympathies; for its tenderness of feeling; for the shade of sorrow flung by early grief upon it all, up from its plaintive strains to its most victorious raptures; for the sensibility he shares with all the lake poets, to the sights and sounds of nature—a sensibility which he and his brethren cherish, partly as an infantine emotion, and partly as a philosophical delight, and which they have nursed into a passion of the blood and the soul; and for a spirit of profound piety, which has made his verse an organ, uniting his heart with heaven. He is chargeable with occasional obscurity of purpose; with a certain mawkishness, produced by the excess of his sympathy; here and there with an unnatural and unmanly despondence; in his earlier poems with the usual splendid sins of a boy-genius, imitation and turgidity of language; in his later productions with faults exactly the reverse—simplicity approaching silliness; all

the errors, in short, into which Wordsworth was seduced by the adoption of a system; and above all, with the unfinished and fragmentary cast of all his characteristic efforts. This, it is true, is an age of fragments, more or less colossal. "Childe Harold" is a fragment, as well as "Christabel;" "Don Juan," as really as "Kubla Khan;" "Faust," as well as "The Friend." Whence this fragmentary style has arisen, were a curious question. Is it from the union of immense ambition to limited power? or of creative energy disproportioned to artistic skill? or from a lack of mental foresight, and counting of intellectual cost? or is it from oddity and affectation? or from carelessness and caprice? or from a desire of piquing curiosity? or from the effect of those cold damps so incident to a high order of intellect, which often fall, even in the noon of genius, to quench its ardour, and the "hue of resolution to sickly o'er with the pale cast of thought?" or is it from the want of encouragement held out by a public, at once fastidious and incompetent, to truly original works? or is it from a combination of all, or many of these causes? In Coleridge, the influences which prevented him from completing his large and pregnant beginnings were various. It was partly indolence; partly opium; partly the "cold shade" of non-popularity and imperfect appreciation; partly the love of talk, which was far easier to him than writing; and partly the difficulty, in his manhood, of fully executing the designs of his teeming and glowing youth. And we can conceive few more melancholy sights than that of a great mind, conscious of the powers it once possessed, feeling the first dawns of an Indian summer of late and unexpected success, but conscious, too, that its hour has gone by—that its nerve of purpose and power is broken—that it has all the ambitions, and all the cherished designs of its early days, but has lost the



sustaining illusions, the enrapturing enthusiasm, the freshness of feeling, as well as the strength of constitution and the firmness of mind, necessary to take advantage of the turned tide, and to catch the favourable gale. Imagine his misery, whose soul had thus, to all intents and purposes, slipped from his grasp; whose youthful designs and dreams, all bright and gorgeous as they were, were separated from him by entire continents of mental gloom, disappointment, guilt, grief, pain of body, and fever of soul; and could no more be called his, than the stars, "distinct, but distant; clear, but, ah! how cold," which shone down on his waking agonies, or on his drugged and desperate repose. Coleridge continue "Christabel!" As well might a man of sixty hope to rival the high leap, or the far and strong stone-cast of himself at twenty-six! And still fonder and vainer the dream, cherished by him to the last, of writing an English "Faust" on the subject of Michael Scott—writing what it took Goethe, in the hey-day of his blood, to produce, with that faltering hand, that languid and shadowy look, that scorched liver, and that premature old age!

Instead of speculating as to what he might have done, let us look to what he has done. His juvenile poems are full of the faults incident to youth, and the first liberty of power let loose from its antenatal stillness. And yet never was the youthful joy of genius—a joy fed from the senses, the feelings, the intellect, and the imagination, into a four-fold strength—more faithfully mirrored than in these. The French Revolution found in Coleridge at first one of its most devoted admirers. He sang of it in fierce odes, forming, perhaps, the finest poetry which shone out, like spray, from that ocean of blood. The "Ode on the Departing Year," bating some harsh and wild truculence in the language, is an effusion full of the very frenzy and lightning of lyric

fire. In a similar spirit, though in a very different style, he wrote afterwards his "War Eclogue," perhaps the most Shakspearean of his strains. The parties in the brief dialogue are three abstractions, Fire, Famine, and Slaughter—hags of hate, to whom the witches of Middleton, Shakspeare, and Goethe are merciful, and who remind you rather of the furies in Eschylus. They meet—they discourse of politics and Pitt; laconic are the fiends; poetical also in their infernal hate. The blasted heath of Forres, nor the rafters of Pandemonium, ever listened to such tremendous talk. They have met to club their wits for the purpose of presenting a gift to an esteemed friend. What shall be given him? Shall he be "baited with the rabble's curse?" Shall he be ate by inches? Shall he be torn limb from limb? Poor, paltry tokens these of respect and attachment, not worth inserting in a newspaper! Something else must be given. Listen! it is Fire that speaks, like Ulrica on the blazing towers of Torquilstone; a fiendish form, consumed by her own burnings:—

" O thankless beldames and untrue ;  
 And is this all that ye can do  
 For him that did so much for you ?  
                                                 Away, away.  
 I alone am faithful. I  
 Cling to him everlastingly."

'Tis a grand and terrible *jeu d'esprit*, and as such never needed any apology. Coleridge then, as afterwards, would have put his own finger into the fire, rather than have seen Pitt, or any other man consumed, even to a hair of their heads. This vein of poetical and witty invective is one which we are sorry he did not prosecute to a greater extent; for there lurked, amid his branching powers, a Swiftian gift of sarcasm. Witness the "Devil's Walk," and his "Lines

on Mackintosh," worthy of the author of the "Legion Club." And whatever we think of the taste or propriety of such effusions, we see little to deplore in their spirit, when they are, as in this instance, the safety-valves of political or personal pique. Coleridge, after thus venting his momentary spleen, would like Mackintosh better ever afterwards. For this reason, as well as others, we should have rejoiced in a gallery of such things. But no, after all, the "Friend," who loved all he looked upon, from the orbed sun to the staff which supported his steps, as he wandered about Mr. Gillman's premises, in his amiable old age, was not meant for a systematic satirist, and was far better employed in apostrophizing Liberty—in singing of mariners who "come from a far countree"—and in building up, in his flowing talk, ten thousand glorious systems of clouds and wind—than in making caricatures, however clever, of his fellow worms.

We have alluded repeatedly to the hymn composed before sunrise in the vale of Chamouni. It is, if not the most Coleridgean of his poems, the most sustained and sublime. A hymn means an outpouring of lyric rapture, blended with devotional feeling, and tinged with the fire of the sanctuary. It supposes the accompaniment, not of organ, or of lyre, or of psalter, but of the human voice; an instrument invented and tuned by Omnipotence himself. And surely, since the eighteenth psalm, describing the descent of the Deity, when

"On cherub and on cherubim,  
Full royally he rode;  
And on the wings of mighty winds,  
Came flying all abroad;"

or, since the hymn Milton ascribes to our first parents at the door of their nuptial bower, there has never been a strain

more worthy of the intention or of the name of this divine species of poem. Chanted, probably, at first to the mountain echoes in Coleridge's deep and tender tones, it still sings itself, and is set everlastingly to a music of its own. The scene is the valley of Chamouni, filled with the voice of its "five torrents, fiercely glad," looking up with "awful reverence prone," to the monarch of mountains—with the star of morning glimmering over his crest, and all his avalanches, and virgin snows, and "livery flowers," expecting the dawning of day. In the centre of the august amphitheatre appears the lonely poet, who has risen early to pay homage to Nature, in the hour of her prime and grand levee; his eye kindling like a tarn when a sunbeam tinges it with splendour, and his soul mating with the majesty of the scene, and still in the hush of the expectation! But though the mountains and the snows, and the few last lingering stars, may keep silence, he cannot long; and as the conscious and commissioned representative and tongue of surrounding nature, he bursts into involuntary song. He speaks what the creation seems to struggle to do, but is unable. He interprets the feeling of the great hour. "His soul swells vast to heaven." He gathers into his own eye, and voice, and dilating form, and inspired verse, the trembling adoration of the morning star—the silent worship of the eternal snows—the prayerful stir and flutter of the flowers—the haughty homage of the eagles, and the storms, and the wild goats, and the pines, bending and blackening on the skirts of everlasting winter—the deep harmonies of the torrents, and the hoarse, interrupted, and spirit-like psalm of the avalanches—and he lays down the vast accumulated offering before God. Nay, in the transport of the moment, he animates the mountain with life; he shoots into him his soul; he cuts the strings of his tongue, as natural affection did those of the dumb son of

Crcesus, that he may speak aloud his adoration ; he constitutes him the ambassador of all the world,

“ To tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,  
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.”

With a like lyrical rapture he has imbued “France, or Liberty, an ode.” Here the poet represents himself standing on the verge of one of the chalky cliffs of his native shore ; below him the free waves of ocean are breaking in musical thunder ; around him woods are waving in the free winds ; above him free clouds are rushing through the free firmament ; and over all a sun, who “yields homage only to eternal laws,” is shining on a free land, and on the bared brow of a freeman. But beyond, what country lies across the waters ? France. And is she free ? Alas ! no ; for

“ The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,  
Slaves by their own compulsion, in mad game  
They burst their manacles, and wear the name  
Of freedom, graven on a heavier chain.”

And then, throughout the poem, he gives in monologue, addressed to all free and eternal things, a confession of his feelings and actings toward France—his first boundless joy at her revolution—his fears, arising only to be rebuked—his growing rapture of sympathy with her people, making head against “Cimmerian Europe”—his songs of congratulation, sent, not unheard, across the waters—the bitter disappointment of his hopes—and his ultimate and magnanimous resolve to retire into his own soul, and to find liberty there, and in the everlasting forms and chainless harmonies of nature. Such is a faint analysis of one of the most perfect poems in the language—perfect as an ode ; “the finest,” says Shelley, “extant”—perfect as a composition, being a harmony

without a break, a chrysolite without a flaw—perfect as the description of one entire. “mood of his own mind”—and perfect as the history of a political process, through which almost all the enlightened and imaginative minds of that day hurried in rapid circle.

Concerning “Christabel,” what shall we say? Trampled on by an Edinburgh reviewer, like a delicate flower by a blind beggar, the very reaction from this gross injustice has led to the opposite extreme. Nobody indeed but Coleridge could, from such slender and gossamer materials, have elaborated a structure at all. It is a written dream—a separated and vivified shadow; and who looks for bolts and draw-bridges, and solid masonry in a castle of clouds? Still, magic there must be in a web which caught such burnished flies as Scott and Byron; but where the charm lies, whether in the eel-like story sliding through your grasp, or in the Ariel-like versification, or in the child-angel prattle of the language, or in the character and figure of the heroine, seen against a dim-discovered gulf of horror, which gapes through breaks in the tissue of the fairy thing, nobody can tell. Our honest belief is, that it is a poetic puzzle, never meant by its author to be any thing else—an intended Torso—a finished fragment. It reminds us of no poem but “Kilmany,” which we think superior. “Kilmany” is complete, whereas “Christabel” is a bit of moonstone. The verse of “Kilmany” is as fine, the poetry is richer, and the pale face of that radiant maid, who was “caught up to Paradise, and who heard things unutterable,” is to us lovelier than the face of Christabel, though “beautiful exceedingly.” Yet is this poem truly a “plant divine and strange,”—bearing a dim and gorgeous flower, and emitting an unearthly odour. But how hopeless to dream of propitiating the mastiff of the *then* Blue and yellow with such a fairy nosegay! The animal

smelt it, and finding it was not of the earth earthy—fit neither for food nor fuel—tore it to pieces, trampled it in the dust; and the gardener who had reared, and who loved it, wept, it is said, like a child.

The “Rime of the Anciente Marinere” is a far more robust and powerful business. If “Christabel” be the quintessence of female grace, the “Marinere” is the ideal of wierd and withered grandeur. He is a *tertium quid* between the beings of another world and the creatures of clay. He is not a ghost, but his hand is worn, and his lean figure almost lets the moonbeams through. He is not a fiend, but lives in the company of demons, and has them ever in his eye. He is a man, but is almost drained of every thing human. He is on the earth but hardly of it. Himself alone, he passes from land to land, how we are not informed. His eye glitters with an unearthly dew. His beard is the untouched growth of years. His forefinger is skinny as the forefinger of death. A terrible attraction lurks about him. He has “strange power of speech.” He talks—all loathe, but all listen—yet is he withal mild, patient, and penitent; some great mountain of past crime for ever rearing its forked and blood-red peaks before his view. There is not such another character in poetry. He is a pure creation;—Apollo coming “like night,” and to the clang of his own celestial armour, upon the Grecian tents, is scarcely more appalling than this pale and wizard being, with the cold ring, produced by the weight of the albatross, still felt about his neck, and the “curse of a dead man’s eye” haunting his looks,—passing “like night from land to land,” and transferring the burden of his misery to the souls of the men who are appointed to be held by his eye, glittering as from the reflection of the white and beauteous bird which he slew. And then, such language as he uses—wild, unearthly, unlike the

discourse of human beings. And such imagery,—“nor dim nor red, like God’s own head, the glorious sun arise,”—“as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean.” And such a tale he tells! Like the phantasmagoria of a mind which, even by day, and when sober, is a magic lantern, but which, when drunk or delirious at midnight, hoists all sail, crying, “Hollo, my fancy, whither wilt thou go?” so do the vapoury incidents sweep over the stage, till the reader’s brain reels, and he becomes uncertain whether he or his author be mad, but sure that there is madness between them. And such *dramatis personæ*!—a nameless captain of a nameless ship—an albatross winnowing the sadly silent air—a mariner, in a freak, shooting the bird—a spirit, her lover, revenging the inhospitable deed—two skeleton figures dicing on the dead deck of a skeleton ship for the life of the mariner—a crew of demons reanimating a crew of corpses—two airy beings talking in strangest dialogue to each other about the guilty man—a being called Death in Life, found in no mythology—good spirits, who are not angels—a hermit, whom you can hardly believe not to be also a shadow—and a wedding guest forming the sole link connecting the super-human story with earthly life. The moral of the tale is pure and distinct, but so obvious, that we wonder, that to inculcate it, he has been at the pains of inventing a machinery so new and so stupendous.

His minor poems are like the rest, fragments; fine breathings of his spirit, not elaborate displays of his power. Like the careless touches of a great musician on the piano, which are often more impressive than his grand bravuras; or like the casual strokes of a painter, which are sometimes more striking than his finished pictures, so do these slight and short effusions surpass such laboured efforts as “Remorse” and “Zapolya.” In his stanzas entitled “Love,”



“earth has not any thing to show so fair” as the closing lines describing the enthusiastic and holy tenderness of the enamoured maiden. How different the love of Coleridge and Emerson from that of Byron! The one is a pure idealism, refined, gentle, chivalric, passing the love of women; the other is a combination of gross passion and flimsy sentimentalism; it is—but, pah! the subject is disgusting. “Kubla Khan” is a melody which, though with “sputtering noise rejected” by the critics of the *Edinburgh*, the spirit of the age values, not merely as a “psychological curiosity,” but loves for its ethereal imagery and its dream-like music. It is a new proof of the immortality of the soul. Coleridge was essentially a dreamer; and a gallery of the pictures of glory or of gloom which flashed upon his “half-shut eye,” if represented on canvas or in fresco, would have formed a second Sixine. There are, besides, many single little poems which fell casually from his pen; some of them reminding you of thunder drops, large, heavy, electric, while others glitter like the orbbed dew from the womb of the morning.

Coleridge’s prose is as peculiar as his verse. It is remarkable for length of sentence; for disregard of petty elegancies; for continual digression; for a horizon of thought, ever retiring and widening as we advance; for the use of frequent archaisms of expression; for perpetual unexpectedness and occasional obscurity; and for great freshness and fervour of poetic imagery. His light is often dim, but never dry, so constantly is it moistened and bedewed by feeling and fancy. His “Friend,” though rambling and discursive, unsuccessful as an elucidation of his opinions, and unfortunate in its first insane mode of publication, contains some noble prose writing; as, for instance, his picture of Luther in the Warteburg,—“The heroic student sitting beside his

lamp, which is seen by the lone traveller in the plain Bischofsroda like a star on the mountain ;” his picture of the spirit of law “ following the criminal like the sleepless eye of God ;” and the one tale of suffering and patience which he interposes amid the sterner disquisitions of the book. His “ *Biographia Literaria*” is a large ill-judged production. It is one vast digression ; plan or purpose it has none. Large passages are pilfered bodily from Schelling. It is a series of unfulfilled promises, hung upon a thread of curious and characteristic biography. His “ *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*” are such a chapter as he would have thrown off from his spirit in one oracular night at Highgate. Once, and only once in it does he kindle into high eloquence, in describing Deborah rising in the calm majesty of a “ mother in Israel,” from “ under her palm tree on the mountain, where she had dwelt in peace aforetime.” His “ *Aids to Reflection*,” and his tractate on the “ *Church Question*,” are vitiated by moon-eyed mysticism. How could a dreamer give practical directions, or manage a practical question ? Here, as in his poetry, we prefer his smaller pieces. His “ *Notes of a Journey to the Brocken*” prompt the wish that he had visited all the romantic regions in the world, from Norway to the Himalayan hills. And his “ *Wanderings of Cain*” is the most scriptural and primitive composition we know, except the “ *Vision of Mirza*.” Cain is indeed a most poetical subject. Stained by the first dye of gore, sealed by the hand of God from the punishment of men, but pursued by the cry of his brother’s blood, from which he could no more escape than from himself, which became a part of himself, and which, even as the sound of the sea fills the shell, as “ pleased it remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there,” filled the trembling hollows of his ear ; he is an object of profoundly pathetic, as

well as tragic interest, fit for the pen which drew Manfred on the Jungfrau, or for that which painted the Mariner in his "silent sea." And we cannot but think Coleridge has surpassed Byron in his representation of the first murderer. Byron's Cain is a being elaborately bad : the Cain of Coleridge has only the guilt of a moment upon his conscience. Byron's Cain is a metaphysical murderer : the Cain of Coleridge is the creature of impulse. In Byron the interest of Cain is dwarfed, and the fell grandeur of his guilt dwindles beside the lurid beauty and eloquent blasphemy of Lucifer, who becomes the hero of the drama : the Cain of Coleridge appears solitary, bearing his own iniquity like a covering, and scathed by the fire of his own devouring remorse. Byron could not have created that figure of Abel, "whose feet disturbed not the sands," nor have written that fearful sentence describing the blasted beauty and might of the pallid murderer, "whose mighty limbs were wasted as by fire, and whose hair was as the matted locks upon the bison's forehead : " although neither could Coleridge, nor perhaps any being that ever breathed but Byron, have so personified the despair, or talked the sophistry and the eloquence of hell, or carried us up with the grim pair along that sullen, but sublime flight, through the stars, trembling and darkening as the infernal wings swept by, and through the shadowy shapes of former worlds which had arisen, past, and perished, ere the "infant sun was rolled together, or had tried his beams athwart the gulf profound."

As a converser, Coleridge in the course of his life seems to have passed through three phases. In his youth, according to Lamb and Hazlitt, he was ardent, varied, impassioned, lofty ; his voice sounded much, and the woods and hills echoed to his talk. This was the golden age of his conversation ; and those who heard him, speak with rapture

of his exhibitions, the effect of which was increased by the dark profusion of his locks, the white and marble mass of his brow, the misty eloquence of his eye, the rich dreamy air of his lips, and the atmosphere of enthusiasm which seemed to surround him, and which "swayed to his outline gracefully." Then he talked continually—ere breakfast, in his morning walk—at breakfast, "over tea and toast and honey"—at dinner, as a relish to "Welch mutton and turnips"—after it, over his "flip"—in the stage-coach, to the wondering passengers—over the counter, to the staring shopmen—in the solitary inn, to the portly landlady, deeming him dropt from the moon; and, if he lacked company, to himself. He talked about all things, and a few others, from shoe-leather to the solar system; but his principal topics were metaphysics, theology, and poetry. He talked sometimes, though more rarely, in short and sparkling aphorism, and sometimes in long and linked declamation. He talked in the pulpit as well as in private; and by all accounts his sermons and their delivery were those of a poet. He talked, and many hearts burned within them. Wordsworth's guttural voice uttered its manly pleasure, Lamb's fine eye laughed over with joy, and Hazlitt's deep brow flushed in silence, or his tongue told in struggling accents his admiration of the man who first taught him to think, first agitated the pool of his sleeping soul. At the close of this brilliant period, refusing a fixed situation as a preacher, and not anxious to cage his eagle energies into the circle of any profession, (a determination which he lived bitterly to regret,) he took a tour to Germany, where he heard old Blumenbach; took the conceit out of Klopstock; visited the Brocken; and did and said a great many wonderful things. We refer to the recollections of De Quincey for the particulars of his after-career,—his Maltese excursion; his connexion with

the *Morning Post* ; his different series of lectures ; his acquaintance with Lord Byron ; and his deeper, and more fatal intimacy with opium, which he put on as a garment, a garment of burning poison. During this period, his conversation assumed its second phase,—became less brilliant, and less imposing ; equally abundant, but less uniformly successful ; more dreamily abstruse, and less exuberantly poetical ; less the overflowing of his mind than the motion produced by the spur of external stimulus. To this period belong his melancholy failures at the Royal Institution, where, with face inflamed and tongue parched, he sucked oranges and drank water, and could scarcely after all get his jaws to move ; his six-in-the-evening breakfasts, and his mode of conversation, as described to us by an eye-witness : —“ in the middle of the room stood a table, and on the table a paper full of snuff ; that paper was the centre of his motions ; around it he revolved, talking and snuffing, and snuffing and talking, rewarding every sentence with a pinch.” The third was perhaps the most interesting of all. It included his residence under the roof of Mr. Gillman, where, recovered in a measure from the influence of the dangerous drug, though still an invalid, the cloud of detraction having passed from off the sun of his fame as it drew toward the west, in the enjoyment of ease and plenty, and in the centre of friends and worshippers,—he sat a Socrates giving his little senate laws, and consulted as though one did inquire at an oracle. It was fine to hear of statesmen, and popular poets, and great preachers, and accomplished literati going out to sit as children at the feet of this once depreciated and abused man. Changed indeed from what he had been when his voice echoed in the woods of Foxden, when he could talk loftily and unwearied a live-long summer’s day, and when his dark hair floated over his ivory forehead ; he was now a frail and gray-haired old man, with

feeble voice and wasted system. The bard had sunk or risen into the sage. The fiery column which had once stood upright was now reclining with diminished splendour, but the wisdom and the genius were still there. The "Anciente Marinere" had still his glittering eye, and much of his strange power of speech. And how many were glad to drink wisdom on all subjects, from the science of the stars to the language of the flowers, at the now slender, soft, interrupted, but profound stream which issued from his lips! There might be seen the giant form of Edward Irving stooping to listen to the "old man eloquent." Leigh Hunt stopt in sometimes, and Coleridge took him to the garden, and talked to him of some favorite flower as an emblem and miniature of the universe. There Charles Lamb shot in often his spiritual countenance, ever sure of welcome for "auld langsyne." There Wordsworth and Southey showed occasionally their anointed heads. There Talfourd, and other young and generous spirits, including the blood relations of the bard, were no strangers. And there now and then appeared, from the hills of Scotland, the eagle eye, and the "storm of golden hair" adorning the head of Wilson. And thus living and talking, the centre of such a circle, and the cynosure of such eyes, the good old man at length fell asleep.

As a man he had his faults, all springing from one root—opium,—and terminating in one apex—remorse,—which ultimately softened into repentance, and was, we trust, crowned with pardon. But originally he had a heart as warm as his intellect was ample. If he sinned, he suffered, and rueful was the expiation. Let his admirers be warned from the rock where he split, and for him let this couplet in his epitaph be his excuse and his eulogium,—

" Mercy for praise, to be forgiven for fame,  
He asked and hoped through Christ. Do thou the same."

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

WHILE Thomas Carlyle was sojourning at Craigenputtock, there came in upon him, unannounced, and all the way from America, a stranger. He was young, fair haired, his face wearing an expression of spirit like a dye—an enthusiastic admirer of Carlyle, and of all that Carlyle loved. He had travelled from the far west to this mountain shrine; and his abrupt entrance,—his appearance,—his talk,—deeply affected the mind of the solitary; and he still speaks of it as an advent. The stranger's name was Emerson, a name which has since become a sound of note in his own country, and can, already, start many a spirit within the circuit of our own shores.

Ralph Waldo Emerson dwells in Concord, Massachusetts. He is a married abstemious man, who lives and labours upon a farm of his own, and whose sole luxury is tea. He writes occasionally in *The North American Review*, and in a periodical called *The Dial*. He has, in his own name, issued, first of all, a little tractate, called "Nature," containing the key to his metaphysical and ethical system; several lectures, delivered in various towns and colleges in his neighbourhood; and a volume of essays, which Carlyle has recently introduced to the English public, in a commendatory and characteristic preface. When he comes to lecture in Boston, he is hunted, crowded after by the elite of the town; and there he stands up, a middle sized, middle aged enthusiast, whose face, they say, as he goes on, gets absolutely "phosphorescent," and "as the face of an angel." He has founded a school of Transcendentalists in New England. "Did you meet with or hear of Emerson, when

in America?" asked a friend of ours, at a distinguished utilitarian. "Which of them?" was the reply. "I didn't know there was more than one." "Oh, I see whom you mean; it will be the *cracked one*." "Yes, depend on it, it is the cracked one *I'm* inquiring for." "Well, I heard him, and he is incomparably the most eloquent man I ever heard; but he gives his audience no—no—no—" "Wisdom, do you mean, Mr. C.?" "No information." (Statistics, we suppose, he meant!) Thus much of the man.

Ere estimating the writer Emerson, we must permit ourselves a glance, however cursory, at the state of American literature. Its inferiority has long been deplored with a bitterness proportioned to the height of the expectations which had been excited. It had been imagined that, far as the Andes transcend the Alps, minds were to appear in the western hemisphere, so far transcending our Shakspeares and Miltons. Many excellent reasons were given why Nature should bear such a progeny; but the Mighty Mother continued obstinately deaf to all those attempts to argue her into productiveness. Not a few, indeed, there were whom the puff of a coterie lifted, for a season, out of their place, to sink into obscurity again. "Dropsies" were, now and then, taken for "divinities." Mocking birds, approaching the perfection of the mimetic art, abounded, and were mistaken for the eagles of Joye. For every native product of Britain, there was a substitute in America, resembling the original, as the gilded and lettered back of a draught-board, does a princely volume. For Byron there was a Bryant; for Coleridge a Dana; for Wordsworth a Percival; for Addison a Washington Irving. Those writers, and many others, had varied talents and accomplishments, nay, genius; but it was timid and tottering as a child learning to walk, and sometimes reminded you of a person described by Robert Hall, "who



appeared to go about apologizing to every body for the unpardonable presumption of being in the world." It did not dare to draw its inspiration from its own woods, because they were not sung; from its own rivers, because, though the light of God's face shown on them, that of the "poet's dream" had not yet consecrated their waters; from its own skies, because, though they pillowed the Andes, they folded over no St. Paul's, and no Westminster Abbey; from its own sun, because, though the very sun of Homer and Shakspeare, he went down to their eyes amid the waves of the forest, and not amid those of the Atlantic Sea. It lived on borrowed force. It fed on alms. It was the reverse of a republican genius. It had not even audacity or literary licentiousness; not even the power of extravagance or the life of convulsion. Sometimes it selected for its models writers inferior to its own capabilities, because they were British, and you were reminded of the prophet stretching himself, eye to eye, and foot to foot, upon the child of the Shunamite. Still it has numbered the following great names in its intellectual heraldry;—Edwards, Dwight, Brockden Brown, Cooper, John Neal, Moses Stuart, Daniel Webster, Channing, and Emerson.

"Edwards," said Hall, enthusiastically, "is the greatest of the sons of men." He is certainly the acutest analyst the western world has hitherto produced. His work on the "Freedom of the Will," discovers consummate intellectual powers, thrown away on the most barren logomachy ever started; a question which one sentence might, for every practical purpose, set at rest for ever, *All is free ere it has occurred, all is necessary after.* And yet this question, we perceive, they are still vexing in America, with vain industry and acuteness! We admire, as much as any man, the naked and rigid grandeur of Edwards' analysis; still

more the depth of insight into human nature, displayed in his treatise on the "Affections;" and even yet more, the fervour of his sincerity, and the holy daring with which he pushes his views to their utmost consequences. But we humbly suggest, whether a man, whose soul never felt a single throb from the beauty and magnificence of creation,—whose style never rises into eloquence,—who has learned the dread premise, "Necessity," without learning the benign inference "Charity;" whose views of the character of the Deity are expressed in such a style, that you turn back to see if you are not reading a panegyrist of Moloch instead of Jehovah,—whether a man, who, while preaching once, was checked in a torrent of merciless denunciation by a brother minister exclaiming, from behind him, in the pulpit, "But is not God a merciful being, Mr. Edwards—is he not a merciful being?" be worthy of the title "Greatest of the Sons of Men?" In private he was one of the most austere, abstemious, and purged of human beings. His own family approached him trembling. He ate his spare diet out of silver. He assumed a manner high, remote, inscrutable. In the pulpit, his triumphs were those of the calm cherubic Reason. Unmoved himself, he sometimes set his audience in flame. He reminded you of Milton's line, "The ground burns froze, and cold performs the effect of fire." A signal instance of this is recorded. A large congregation, including many ministers, were assembled to hear a popular preacher, who did not fulfil his appointment. Edwards was selected to fill his place, principally because, being in the habit of reading his discourses, he happened to have a sermon ready in his pocket. He ascended the pulpit accordingly, amid almost audible marks of disappointment from the audience, whom, however, respect for the abilities and character of the preacher prevented from leaving the church. He chose for his

text, "Their foot shall slide in due time," and began to read in his usual quiet way. At first he had barely their attention; by and by he succeeded in riveting every one of them to his lips; a few sentences more, and they began to rise by twos and threes; a little farther, and tears were flowing at; the close of another particular, deep groans were heard, and one or two went off in fits; and ere he reached the climax of his terrible appeals, the whole audience had risen up in one tumult of grief and consternation. And, amid all this there stood the calm imperturbable man, reading on as softly and gently as if he were in his own study. And, in reading the sermon, we do not wonder at the impression it produced upon an audience constituted as that audience must have been. It is a succession of swift thunder claps, each drowning and deafening the one which preceded it. We read it once to a distinguished *savant*, who, while disapproving of its spirit, was compelled, literally, to shiver under the "fury of its power."

Dwight was a robust, persevering, indomitable American; with a strong logical intellect, a teeming but unpoetical fancy, and great energy of language. He is known in this country chiefly by a series of theological lectures, distinguished for their method, clearness, and vigour. His poetry has long since perished. His travels were unfortunate in the state in which they found America,—crude, incondite, —neither in the freshness of its primeval simplicity, nor in the ripeness of its advanced civilization. The tracts he traversed were neither precisely in nor out of the "Bush;" and the pictures he draws are, consequently, more graphic than they are pleasing.

Brockden Brown was a man of original genius, deriving from Godwin little more than the mould in which he cast his stories. A tall, black, lean, spectral-looking man, he was

wont to be seen, at all hours, moving about Philadelphia and New York, like an unlaid ghost; very poor,—very little known,—frequently having little food, save his own heart, which he did ravenously devour; but gifted with a genius strong, native, and limited as a monomania. His forte lay, to use the words of Carlyle, in “Natural supernaturalism.” Never venturing to colonize ghosts in New England, he sweats out, from the soil, superstitions more appropriate and more terrible. He delights in treading the border land between the material and spiritual worlds—the debateable country of dreams, sleep-walking, and ventriloquism. By a few chilly words, describing certain possible situations, produced by natural but uncommon circumstances, he creates a singular thrill of literal yet spiritual horror. You are staggered,—you know not how, and know not whence. You are in a spiritual presence, which, at the same time, you do not see. He separates the shiver of supernatural fear from the consciousness of supernatural agency, and gives you it entire, “lifting the skin from the scalp to the ankles.” He does, in broad summer day, what others can only do in the “wierd winter nights.” He makes you fear as much in company as when alone. He is deeply versed in the power of panic terror. He leaves you always in dreadful uncertainty. He never finishes a story, and wishes you to believe it is because he dares not. He drops the curtain hastily, and it is no longer a blank, but becomes to you the painting of unutterable horrors. You at once tremble and are tantalized, and rise from his page with this double sting planted,—buried in your soul; and therein lies his power. Apart from this, he is nothing. He has no style, no fire, no imagery, no description; nor are they necessary, any more than ornaments or superb draperies to a spirit from the dead. His only object is to interest you while with you, and to pro-

duce a shuddering recollection of him when gone ; and in this he is entirely successful.

Of Cooper we say little. "He is not a god of the mountain but of the plain." Be the plain that of ocean, or that of the wild billowing prairie, or that of the vast level forest, it is equally his "own domain." He describes a ship as a lover his mistress. In a storm, his style sinks and swells with the billow ; and as the masts are toppling and crashing over-board, you hear it speaking, like the captain through his trumpet, above the wild turmoil of waters. His introductions are leaden and dreary,—his dialogues spun out ; but few have grappled so with the two mighty elements, storm on ocean, and solitude on shore ; and we predict that his name, and many of his works, will live as long as the sea-surges sound, and the heart of the old woods is silent.

John Neale was a rough egotistical Yankee, who thought America the greatest country in the world, and himself the greatest man in America. He made no secret of either conviction. And in the union of boastful egotism and glorying nationality, lay such power as the man had. His works were chiefly novels, "Logan," "Seventy-six," "Brother Jonathan," &c., and, though full of faults, and running riot with all kinds of wilful extravagance, and exciting, in some instances, strong suspicions of the man's sanity, contained many vigorous passages, "equal," *he* was wont to say, "to any thing ever written ;" descriptions homely as the log-hut, and fresh as the forest ; and, above all, a bold sweeping independence of tone and manner, which contrasted well with the creeping and circumspective character of his country's literature. His books are all now defunct, or retain a precarious existence among the upper shelves of the circulating library ; the last glimpse we get of himself is in the

establishment of Jeremy Bentham, where we find him storming and dogmatizing at a great rate. Since then we have lost sight of him; but our impression is, that he has subsided into a professional man, in one of the cities of his native land.

Moses Stuart, of Andover University, is the prince of American exegesis. His works on the Hebrews, the Romans, the Divinity of Christ, &c., are too well known to require criticism. He is a strong, literal, plodding Polyphemus. His great error lies in pushing verbal criticism to excess. He does not "allow for the wind." He feels not, that to apply, in all cases, a literal interpretation to Scripture language, is to do violence to a "thing so majestic" as the mother tongue of Heaven. He has lately injured his reputation by a book on the Modern Geology, in which he seems afraid lest the progress of modern science should interfere with the celestial claims of Christianity; a terror as absurd as though one were to tremble lest the scythe of a mower, plying in the summer meadow, should shear the sun of his beams; and, in one place, almost blasphemes, or, at least, raves at the idea of God permitting the earth to be tenanted, for ages, by reptiles; talking as though, on this supposition, it were made in vain,—as if man had a right to dictate to the Almighty in what time or order he should produce his works;—as if Sahara were made in vain, because there still the lion is the lone lord;—as if Cotopaxi were made in vain, because the vast wing of the condor alone shadows it;—as if the depths of the ocean were made in vain, because the shark is the ruler there, and man they never see, till he descends, amid their awful realms, a corpse;—as if the heights of the sky were made in vain, because inhabited only by the storm and the eagle, the meteor and the thunderstone;—as if the very multitude of the ages which

preceded the coming of man, were not a proof of his dignity ; —as if the fossilized remains were not gems in his crown. We see no use in divines thus fighting, like maniacs, against the science of the civilized world.

Daniel Webster is, since the era of Patrick Henry, the best of Yankee orators. His eyes "open, and open, and open, and you would think they would never stop opening." It is impossible to pass a verdict on one we never saw or heard ; but our impression, founded upon many testimonies, is, that but for "one Mirabeau," and "one Chatham," and "one Fox," and "one Brougham," no speaker, entirely his match, has trode the world-stage, for full two centuries.

We pause for a more particular survey of Channing. He has been called the American Chalmers ; but the two men are essentially different. Chalmers is fond of two or three grand ideas, which seem to him to monopolize all thought, if not all existence, and round which all the powers of his mind, and all the resources of his imagery, revolve at the rate of the Cartesian vortices, or the Ptolemaic heavens. Channing's mind was planted as thick with thoughts as a back wood of his own magnificent land ; and, when loosened in eloquence, they moved down on the slow and solemn current of his style, like floats of fir descending one of the American rivers. Chalmers' eloquence is that of imagination and passion. Channing's was that of imagination and thought ; of mere passion he had little. The force of Chalmers' eloquence is nerved and aided by his prodigious physical energy. Channing's sprung solely from the weight of his matter, and the grace and gravity of his style. The motion of Chalmers' mind is impetuous beyond that of almost any on record. The rush of his onward soul is as that of "many horses and chariots running to battle." Channing's was deep, calm, and majestic. Both are men of genius ;

but, while the genius of the one has been a brighter, a more dazzling, and a more intoxicating blaze, that of the other had a steadier, broader, milder light; and may, perhaps, shine farther down into the gulf of years.

In the dictatorial power which Channing wielded over his country's literature, we are reminded more of Dr. Johnson than of any other writer. Not that we would put him on the same level with the lexicographer. To bear sway over an infant republic of letters, is a very different thing from stretching a sceptre of iron across an old, matured, and established empire. If Channing has doubtfully succeeded in the one, the other was competent to the overbearing intellect, manly sense, and sturdy honesty of Johnson alone. Channing's influence was more founded on love, and on the presumed purity and loftiness of his intentions and views. Johnson's supremacy was sustained by the double forces of talent and terror. Channing's style has no verbosity, nor tumour, nor perpetual antithesis; but neither has it Johnson's point, or compass, or grand roll and rhythm. Channing's intellect was more comprehensive and enlightened, but not nearly so acute. His utterances were broader in their surface, but less luminous on their edges; and he had none of those fine sparkling aphorisms which dropped, fully formed, rounded, and polished, from Johnson's lips. As an estimator of character, Channing, like Johnson, is better at giving the *tout ensemble* than the minuter shades; but while he generally leans to the favourable side, Johnson loves the dark and gloomy aspect, and is equally prompt to put his elephantine foot upon the thin and trembling tendrils of a foible, and upon the heavier branches of a fault. As a critic of books, the American is very generous; his criticisms are glowing panegyrics, and his excessive kindness detracts somewhat from their value. Johnson, on the contrary, learned



in the art of blame, and deep in the vocabulary of vituperation, is never anxious to hide those salvage gifts under a bushel; yet is his abuse admirable from its power, and refreshing in its honest heartiness; and if he seldom praises or expresses enthusiasm, his encomiums are worth their weight in gold; his stamp, when given, is that of immortality; and his enthusiasm, when it comes, is heaved up from the very depths of his spirit, and shines through tears.

Dr. Channing's paper on Milton has been thought by many his masterpiece. It includes, no doubt, many beautiful, and one or two noble sentences. But it will not do to speak of it, or of any one essay on the subject, as exhaustive or final. A man who could fully measure Milton, would be a Milton himself. It would require many minds, like many mirrors, to render back the colossal image of the prince of poets. Let us remember that Milton, contrary to the common notion, was many-sided. He *could*, in Johnson's language, at once cut a Colossus out of a rock, and carve heads upon cherry-stones. He could paint the fallen angels in their torpid or torrid despair, and our first parents in their lovely innocence; the mountain billows of the lake of fire, and the soft vales of Eden; Eve and Sin; Raphael and Death; Abdiel and Mammon; Satan and Samson Agonistes; L'Allegro and Penseroso. He could write the "Hymn on the Nativity," and the "Lines on Hobson;" the "Iconoclast," and the "Tractate on Education;" the sonnet on the Waldenses, and that on the jaw-breaking names of the Covenanters; the "Defensio pro populo Anglicano," with its truculent invective, and the "Areopagitica," with its stately argument and declamation. So far from being homogeneous—one star dwelling sullenly apart—Milton was an epic, and a dramatic; and a didactic poet; a lyrist, (witness the choruses in Agonistes,) a sonneteer, and a song-writer; a rhetor, a logician, and an

orator; a prose poet, a sophister, a wit, and a buffoon; a historian, dictionary-maker, spelling-book projector, and author of political pamphlets; besides being a fencer, dancer, musician, schoolmaster, and secretary;—in short, a very Admirable Crichton for many-sidedness. And yet men have talked as if one short review by Channing, and another rather longer by Macaulay, had emptied this ocean. It would require a whole gallery to do Milton justice. Something of the kind, indeed, we have already. Addison's papers, though Brougham calls them "poor things," were useful in their day as a plain finger-post, quietly pointing up to the stupendous sublimities of the subject. Johnson has brought out inimitably what may be called the material sublimity of the book. Macaulay has eloquently expressed his moral grandeur in comparing him with the great level orb of Italian song. Sir Egerton Brydges has defended the character of the man with characteristic ardour, and no little power. And the value of Channing's contribution to this fair gallery, lies in the light which he sheds on the spiritual cast of Milton's mind and poetry, and on that love of the beautiful, which was only second to his sense of the sublime; and which, curling round it like fresh laurels round the bald brow of Cæsar, completed the grand, soft, and serene structure of his mind. He has also taken the true ground in defending Milton against Johnson; not so much by meeting his charges individually; still less by any malignant depreciation of the one-eyed giant of criticism; but by stating simply and calmly the radical defects in Johnson's great, coarse mind, which rendered it insensible to the subtler and more ethereal beauties of Milton's poetry, and to the severe simplicity of his life—to aught about him but his broad and palpable grandeur. And there is much in the character of Channing's intellect—in his gravity and dignified march—

in his solemn and spiritual tone—which qualifies him to be such a critic as Milton would have loved. We fancy we see the old, blind, solitary bard, groping greatly to give him the squeeze of a kindred spirit!

Channing's "Napoleon" is, in our judgment, his most powerful and honest production. It contains the citation of a great, bad man to the bar of nations and of human nature. Were there a being worthy of the title which the maniac Cloutz is said to have assumed, the orator of the human race, commissioned to prosecute all great general wrongs, and wide continental guilts, and breaches of mighty trusts; and were Napoleon at the bar,—here, ready to the accuser's hand, were a pleading worthy of his lips, and of the august solemnity. Shearing off, with stern and unflinching hand, all the beams of the false glory which encircled that lofty head, Channing sees in it the head of a man full of blood, cruelty, and falsehood, like a red and rayless sun. Calmly he states the case; no vestige of prejudice or passion appears; calmly, but solemnly, he adduces the various steps and stages of the evidence; with an eye which, even before the blaze of his martial glory, never winks or turns aside for a moment, he follows the development of his ambition, treachery, usurpation, and crime; and if he does, ere the close, kindle into genuine Philippic indignation, it is not till he has made out and exposed all the iniquity of the monstrous case; not till he has seated himself upon the pyramidal pile of blood and baseness does he turn round, and do well to be angry with those who, though they had no pity for the millions of whose murder Napoleon was the cause, yet could breathe sighs and shed profuse tears over his miserable accommodation and his solitary grave!

As a writer of sermons Channing's place is not so high. There are none of his discourses we name so fondly or fre-

quently as his Milton, or his Napoleon, or his fine tribute to Fenelon, or his Letter on the Texas Question, or his useful Lectures to Working Men. The great fault of all his separate sermons is mannerism. The sentences rise and fall with a uniform and unvaried motion; the same topics frequently recur to be treated in the same way, and hence a feeling of tedium ensues. Mannerism with some writers is their charm. How delicious, for instance the mannerism of Milton, Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Burke, Wordsworth, and Charles Lamb! But that of Channing, consisting in an acquired and monotonous habit of thought, along with a stiff and set turn of phraseology, not welling forth from unavoidable originality, detracts from the effect and interest of his writings. Besides this great general objection, his sermons are deficient in unction; a certain frigidity mingles with their fervour; they breathe a benevolent spirit, but are not warm and heart-steeped effusions. At best, they are calm, clear, cold, eloquent, and ingenious dissertations.

This brave and high-minded man—the fourth estate of Yankee land, the oracle of that practical country,—set in no deep Dodonian grove, but in a clear, simple pulpit; uttering no fire-tipped and mystic responses, but sentences short, if not Sibylline; luminous, if not transcendental; who had in his breast a deep spring of enthusiasm, but a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; the strong arm of whose impulse was ever crossed and restrained by the stronger arm of his self-possession, and who never, perhaps, got the credit of all the power that was really his; with that thin film of flesh scarcely covering—that poor apron of skin scantily concealing—a large and bursting soul; with that cold manner belying a fervent heart; with those spirit-twinkling eyes, and that shadowy outline;—is of late, as we phrase it, no more, though the term be pitiable, nay, a lie of lies. And much

as we differ from his theological sentiments, we fear not, and we need not be ashamed, as we imperfectly sought to estimate his worth while living, now to add this smallest stone to his lonely cairn, and to strew this frailest garland on his silent grave.

Perhaps of a higher order than any we have named, is Ralph Waldo Emerson. He is the most original mind America has hitherto produced. After centuries of imitative slavery, it has at length born a native man. He has come straight from the wilderness, dripping with the dew of the aboriginal woods, and touched with their mild and solemn darkness. He is the first of a brood of Titans, who, in his own words, shall yet "laugh and leap on the continent, and run up the mountains of the west on the errands of Genius and Love." His province intellectually has been, to try to map out the domains of "Cloudland," and from the thick darkness of mysticism to protrude certain sharp points and brilliant edges of meaning. He has united in his single self much of the abstruse conception of the German, the ethereal subtlety of the Greek, and the practical acuteness of the American understanding. His insight is quiet and keen, may be called rather a mild, warm breath of enthusiasm passing over all things, and solving them as it goes by. He sees because he has first loved, and to this soft key, what lock but must yield? His utterances are abrupt, and scattered amid much surrounding darkness, and remind you of those tongues of flame which you sometimes see high up amid the smoke, and cut off from the fire beneath. On the wide moor of his thought stands up, every now and then, a little sentence, like a fairy, and tells us the way. His power comes and goes, like spasms of shooting pain. But then, how lucid are his intervals! They are like those intense bits of blue we catch through summer clouds. To be so

oracular in his power and mystery, and so practical withal—to be at home in the rarest regions of thought, and yet have an eye so keenly alive to the proprieties of every-day life, and the niceties of domestic economy—to have written at one time the “Oversoul,” and at another, “Prudence”—is the highest praise we can bestow on Emerson. His scenery has a fearless Americanism about it. He hates to talk of “Alps and Apennines, the Pyrenean and the river Po.” His own woods, that seem to “wait” till he has passed that they may resume their mystic converse—the clouds, forming themselves into cherubic shapes above his lonely walk—the wind, coming to him from the depth of the forest with music and meaning on its wings—are dearer far to him; and sweet to his ear is the rustle of his own green or yellow corn. There is a fine under-song in his eloquence, which reminds you of the “quiet tune” sung by a log in the fire, to one sitting by it half asleep at the eventide. Yet listen to that log, we charge you, ye sons of men! for there is an oracle in the simple unity of its sound, a deep mystery in its monotone. It has grown amid the old forests; in darkness it has drunk in strange meanings; whispers from the heart of the earth have come to it in secret; and, hark! how sweetly and sagely it discourses, touched into eloquence by the tongue of fire. Emerson understands well the virtue of “sitting still,” and the yet rarer virtue of silence. He knows that many scenes in nature, and works of art, are best described by not being described; best represented (as in the case of the artist who, called to paint Agamemnon’s grief over Iphigenia, gained the praises of all antiquity, and of all time, by not doing it at all) by dropping the curtain,—that to exclaim and make orations when the hills are reverberating the eloquence of the clouds; or when the deep breast of the earth is speaking with choked accents; or when

you stand before some masterpiece of genius; were nearly as absurd as to cheer the thunder or encore the earthquake—that a tear twinkling in the eye of enthusiasm as it beholds some great object, or half-uttered monosyllable, or a convulsive gesture, is a truer tribute to power and grandeur than a thousand artificial raptures—that silence is not only elder, but stronger than speech—that the greatest objects in the universe are the stillest—that the forests murmur, but the stars speak not; the ocean hath a voice, but the sun is silent; the seraphim sing, the Schechinah is dumb; Aaron spoke, Moses' face but shone; sweetly discoursed the high priest, but the Urim and Thummim, the silent stones upon his breast, flashed forth a meaning deeper and diviner far! This meek silence Emerson loves dearly. He is a "large nature that can rest." He sits quietly till the spirit comes; or rather, he lies supine, silent, dissolved, till lifted up into sudden stature by the passing power. His theoretical views we do not perfectly comprehend. They seem a strange, dim something, compounded of the views of Plato, Plotinus, Fichte, and Swedenborg. His mind, originally cognate to those men, has eagerly drunk in and digested their speculations; and added, as he reproduces them, a fir-tree odour from his own woods. Beautifully does he describe them, as "Babe-like Jupiters sitting on their clouds, and prattling from age to age to each other, and to no contemporary." He is another such, added to their number; and scattered, broken, and imperfect as are still his utterances, he has given to their notions a more perfect and poetic form than they ever had before, or than we deemed them susceptible of receiving.

The key to Emerson's entire nature and philosophy is love. A child-like tenderness and simplicity of affection breathe in his writings. He is, if not an "innocent," as it

is beautifully called, an infant, and will for ever be a child. He sees in infancy the "perpetual Messiah sent into men's arms to woo them back to Paradise." "Bard or hero cannot look down upon the word or gesture of a child—it is as great as they. Himself, we are told, one of the most innocent and ingenuous of human beings, he finds in the extension of this child-like disposition the hope of humanity; and thus he prophesies,—“All men shall yet be lovers, and then shall every calamity be dissolved in the universal sunshine.” As a writer, his mannerism lies in the exceeding unexpectedness of his transitions; in his strange, swift, and sudden yokings of the most distant and unrelated ideas; in brevity and abruptness of sentence; in the shreds of mysticism which are left deliberately on the web of his thought; and in the introduction, by almost ludicrous contrast, of the veriest vulgarisms of American civic phraseology and kitchen talk amid the flights of idealism.

His style falls often, as if dying away to the sound of music into sweet modulations; sometimes into a certain rounded and rolling grandeur of termination, as in the close of the "Method of Nature," where, speaking of the soul, he says, "Pusillanimity and fear she refuses with a beautiful scorn. These are not for her who putteth on her coronation robes, and goeth out through universal love to universal power." But his style is in general careless and neglected, as ever yet was the attire of prophets, and earnest men, and poets, rocking to and fro before the hand of the unseen power which swayed them. His "Nature" is the most finished of his works; his "Orations" the most sonorous and stately; his "Essays" the most practical and comprehensive. Among the latter we prefer "Compensation," "Spiritual Laws," and "Love." In the first two, like the shadow of Nemesis, he traverses the entire circle of human



life, and traces the austere and awful laws of sure and swift retribution, which preside over it all—vice its own punishment—the world full of judgment days—“punishment a fruit which grows unsuspected, and ripens unseen amid the pleasure which concealed it”—expounds the “stern ethics which sparkle on the chisel edge;”—and draws the sage, and within certain limits, and with many exceptions, the true inference, that justice is done now. In “Love” there burns the Greek fire of a genuine Platonist; and you are reminded in its melting diction and ethereal spirit of the fine fragment by Shelley, which bears the same title. He sees in it the radiance of the soul—the flowering of virtue—the fine madness of the mind seeking for one who had originally, and in some antenatal state, belonged to itself, and tries to draw from it his favourite deduction, that the soul is one. In “Prudence,” again, he shows himself admirably free from the cant of genius—dwells not on its immunities, but on its solemn obligations—proclaims, that for its pitiable and lamented sore, bleeding from age to age, the one simple plaster of prudence had ever been sufficient; and declares, that, for his own part, no golden mist of transcendentalism shall blind his eyes to the stern laws of nature and of life. Slowly are those essays of his making their way into public favour among us. This is owing partly to their style, partly to some extravagancies of statement, which have been eagerly caught at by persons as incapable of imbibing their real spirit as of breathing with ease the difficult air of Chimborazo, and partly to the fact, that he has put his most peculiar and staggering lucubrations in the foreground of the volume. What a choke-pear to beginners, for instance, is “History,” the drift of which is to prove that there never has been, and never can be, any such thing! Yet here and there we find a lonely spirit cherishing their strange and fitful utterances,

and rolling their musical cadences, "like a sweet morsel," in joyous secrecy. And many whose course of reading has been such, that they find nothing absolutely new in him, admit that he has given to certain old changeless truths a new and noble terminology, and contend that he is the only practical transcendentalist that has yet existed. And at times you find a secluded thinker who recognizes in Emerson his own "rejected thoughts, which come back upon him with a certain alienated majesty." And thus is his genius, like a delicate pencil ray, insinuating its gentle way into the midst of us. He has been compared to Carlyle, but has less pictorial power, and not a particle of his savage mirth. Here and there a shooting phrase, a glancing metaphor, the startling abruptness of a sentiment, remind you of something in the Scotsman; but the thought is more condensed into aphoristic mould; the style has few of the gigantic oddities and impertinencies which so stimulate and provoke you in Carlyle; and now and then the eye gets a quieter and farther gleam of insight—and altogether you see a stiller, more entire, more equable spirit. Our final and fearless verdict on Emerson is, that no mind in the present generation lies more abandoned to the spirit-breath of Eternal Nature. None admits through it more transparently, as through the soft veil of a summer tree, the broken particles (a sun shivered into fragments of glory!) of

"The light that never was on sea or shore,  
The consecration and the poet's dream."

*Note.*—A second series of Essays has recently issued from Emerson's pen, which, instead of showing in him spiritual progress, denote the very reverse, and have mortified all his British friends. He seems staring himself blind at the sun of absolute truth.

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

“HE was,” says some one of Rousseau, “a lonely man—his life a long soliloquy.” And the same words may be applied to the “sole king of Rocky Cumberland,” the lord of Rydal Mount, the sultan of Skiddaw, the warlock of Windermere, William Wordsworth. He has indeed mingled much with men, but reluctantly; and even while amidst them, his spirit has preserved its severe seclusion. He has strode frequently into society, but with an impatient and hasty step. It is this lofty insulation which marks out Wordsworth from the eminent of his era. While they have been tremulously alive to every breath of public praise or blame, and never so much so as when pretending to despise the one and defy the other, he has maintained the tenor of his way, indifferent to both. While his name was the signal for every species of insult—while one Review was an incessant battery against his poetical character, and another, powerful on all other topics, returned it only a feeble reply on this—while stupidity itself had learned to laugh and sneer at him—while the very children of the nursery were taught to consider his rhymes as too puerile even for them, he remained unmoved; and leaving poor Coleridge to burst into tears, the majestic brow of Wordsworth only acknowledged by a transient frown the existence of his assailants. And now that his name is a household word, and that his works have found their way to the heart of the nation, we believe that he has never once been betrayed into an expression of undue complacency—that he feels himself precisely the man he was before—that he moves in his elevated sphere as “native and endued”

unto its element ; and that the acclamations as well as the abuse of the public have failed to draw him forth from the sublime solitudes of his own spirit.

And we do think that this manly self-appreciation is one of the principal marks of true greatness. We find it in Dante, daring, in his gloomy banishment, to make himself immortal, by writing the "Inferno." We find it in Milton, "in darkness, and with dangers compassed round," rolling out nevertheless the deep bass notes of his great poem as from some mighty organ, seated in his own breast. We find it in Burns, confessing that, at the plough, he had formed the very idea of his poems to which the public afterwards set its seal. We find it *not* in Byron, who, while professing scorn for the finest contemporary specimens of his species, nay, for his species in the abstract, was yet notoriously at the mercy of the meanest creature that could handle a quill, to spurt venom against the crest of the noble Childe. But we do find it in Wordsworth, and still more in Scott, the one sustaining a load of detraction, and the other a burden of popularity, with a calm, smiling, and imperturbable dignity. The author of the "Excursion" has indeed been called an egotist ; but while there is one species of egotism which stamps the weak victim of a despicable vanity, there is another which adheres to a very exalted order of minds, and is the needful defence of those who have stout burdens to bear, and severe sufferings to undergo. The Apostle Paul, in this grand sense, was an egotist when he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." Dante was an egotist. Luther was an egotist. Milton was an egotist ; and in this sense Wordsworth is an egotist too.

But what, it may be asked, is his burden and his mission ? It is seen now not to have been the composition of peddler poems—the sacrifice of great powers to petty purposes—

the indulgence of a weak, though amiable eccentricity ; or the mere love of being singular at the expense of good taste and common sense. But many still, we fear, are not aware of its real nature and importance. Wordsworth's mission has been a lofty one, and loftily fulfilled,—to raise the mean, to dignify the obscure, to reveal that natural nobility which lurks under the russet gown and the clouted shoe ; to extract poetry from the cottage, and from the turf-fire upon its hearth, and from the solitary shieling, and from the mountain tarn, and from the gray ancestral stone at the door of the deserted mansion, and from the lichens of the rock, and from the furze of the melancholy moor. It is to “hang a weight of interest”—of brooding, and passionate, and poetical feeling upon the hardest, the remotest, and the simplest objects of nature—it is to unite gorgeousness of imagination with prosaic literality of fact—it is to interweave the deductions of a subtle philosophy with the “short and simple annals of the poor.” And how to the waste and meaningless parts of creation has he, above all men, given a voice, an intelligence, and a beauty ! The sweet and solitary laugh of a joyous female, echoing among the hills, is to his ear more delightful than the music of many forests. A wooden bowl is dipped into the well, and comes out heavy, not merely with water, but with the weight of his thoughts. A spade striking into the spring ground moves in the might of his spirit. A village drum, touched by the strong finger of his genius, produces a voice which is poetry. The tattered cloak of a poor girl is an Elijah's mantle to him. A thorn on the summit of a hill, “known to every star and every wind that blows,” bending and whispering over a maniac, becomes a banner-staff to his imagination. A silent tarn collects within and around it the sad or terrible histories of a sea ; and a fern stalk

floating on its surface has the interest of a forest of masts. A leech gatherer is surrounded with the sublimity of "cloud, gorse, and whirlwind, on the gorgeous moor." A ram stooping to see his "wreathed horns superb," in a lake among the mountains, is to his sight as sublime as were an angel glancing at his features in the sea of glass which is mingled with fire. A fish leaps up in one of his tarns like an immortal thing. If he skates, it is "across the image of a star." Icicles to him are things of imagination. A snowball is a Mont Blanc; a little cottage girl a Venus de Medicis, and more; a water-mill, turned by a heart-broken child, a very Niagara of wo; the poor beetle that we tread upon is "a mailed angel on a battle day;" and a day-dream among the hills, of more importance than the dates and epochs of an empire. Wordsworth's pen is not a fork of the lightning—it is a stubble-stalk from the harvest field. His language has not the swell of the thunder, nor the dash of the cataract—it is the echo of the "shut of eve,"—

"When sleep sits dewy on the labourer's eye."

His versification has not the "sweet and glorious redundancy" of Spenser, nor the lofty rhythm of Milton, nor the uncertain melody of Shakspeare, nor the rich swelling spiritual note of Shelley, nor the wild, airy, and fitful music of Coleridge, nor the pointed strength of Byron—it is a music sweet and simple as the running brook, yet profound in its simplicity as the unsearchable ocean. His purpose is to extract what is new, beautiful, and sublime, from his own heart, reflecting its feelings upon the simplest objects of nature, and the most primary emotions of the human soul. And here lies the lock of his strength. It is comparatively easy for any gifted spirit to gather off the poetry creaming upon lofty

subjects—to extract the imagination which such topics as heaven, hell, dream-land, faery-land, Grecian or Swiss scenery, almost involve in their very sounds; but to educe interest out of the every-day incidents of simple life—to make every mood of one's mind a poem—to find an epic in a nest, and a tragedy in a tattered cloak—thus to “hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear”—to find “sermons in stones,” and poetry in every thing—to have “thoughts too deep for tears” blown into the soul by the wayside flower,—this is one of the rarest and most enviable of powers. And hence Wordsworth's song is not a complicated harmony, but a “quiet tune,”—his instrument not a lyre, but a rustic reed—his poetic potation not Hippocrene, but simple water from the stream—his demon no Alecto or Tisiphone, but a sting-armed insect of the air—his emblem on earth not the gaudy tulip nor the luscious rose, but the bean-flower, with its modest, yet arrowy odour—his emblem in the sky not the glaring sun, nor the gay star of morning, nor the “sun of the sleepless, melancholy star,” nor the “star of Jove, so beautiful and large”—it is the mild and lonely moon shining down through groves of yew upon pastoral graves.

The mind of Wordsworth is a combination of the intellectual, the imaginative, and the personal. His intellect, though large and powerful, does not preside over the other faculties with such marked superiority as in the case of Milton, the most intellectual of all poets; but it maintains its ground, and, unlike the reasoning faculty of many men of genius, never submits to a degrading vassalage. Destitute of Milton's scholastic training, it has evidently gone through the still severer crucible of a self-taught and sublime metaphysics. His imagination, again, is not rich and copious like Spenser's, nor is it omnivorous and omnific like Shakspeare's, nor uniformly gigantic like Milton's, nor is it the mere hand-

maid of the passions like Byron's, nor voluptuous and volatile like Moore's, nor fastidious like Campbell's, nor fantastic like Southey's. It is calm, profound, still, obscure, like the black eye of one of his own tarns. The objects he sets before us are few; the colours he uses are uniform; the tone is somewhat sombre, but the impression and intensity with which they stamp themselves on the view are immense. A sonnet with Wordsworth often goes as far as an ordinary epic; a single line does the work of an ordinary canto. This power of concentration, however, is only occasional—it is spontaneous, not involuntary, and alternates with a fine diffusion, so that, while at one time he compresses meaning into his words as with the Bramah press of Young, at another his poetry is as loosely and beautifully dispread as the blank verse of Wilson or Graham. But that which undoubtedly gives to the poetry of Wordsworth its principal power is its personal interest. His works are all confessions, not of crimes, (unless to love nature too well be a sin,) but of all the peculiarities of a poetical temperament. He retains and reproduces the boyish feelings which others lose with their leading-strings;—he carries forward the first fresh emotions of childhood into the powers and passions of manhood—he links the cradle to the crutch by the strong tie of his genius. Nothing which reminds him of his own youth—which awakens some old memory—which paints on an airy canvas some once familiar face—which vibrates on some half-forgotten string, comes amiss to Wordsworth. His antiquity may be said to begin with his own birth; his futurity to extend to the day of his own funeral. His philosophy may be summed up in the one sentence, “the child is father of the man.”

If we were to try to express our idea of Wordsworth's poetry in a word, we might call it microscopic. Many apply a telescope to nature, to enlarge the great: he employs a mi-



roscope to magnify the small. Many, in their daring flights, treat a constellation with as much familiarity as if it were a bunch of violets: he leans over a violet with as much interest and reverence as if it were a star. Talk of the Pleiades! "Lo, five blue eggs are gleaming there," to him a dearer sight. He turns to the works of nature the same minutely magnifying lens as Pope to the works of art. The difference is, that while the bard of Twickenham uses his microscope to a lady's lock, or to a gentleman's clouded cane, the poet of Windermere applies it to a mountain daisy or a worn-out spade.

In speaking of Wordsworth's writings, we must not omit a juvenile volume of poems, which we have never seen, but which we believe is chiefly remarkable as showing how late his genius was of flowering, and how far in youth he was from having sounded the true depths of his understanding. We have somewhere read extracts from it, which convinced us, that at an age when Campbell wrote his "Pleasures of Hope," Pope his sparkling "Essay on Criticism," Keats his "Hyperion,"—Wordsworth, so far from being a like miracle of precocity, could only produce certain puerile prettinesses, with all the merit which arises from absence of fault, but with all the fault which arises from absence of merit.

The "Lyrical Ballads" was the first effusion of his mind which bore the broad arrow of a peculiar genius; the first to cluster round him troops of devoted friends, and the first to raise against him that storm of ridicule, badinage, abuse, and misrepresentation, which has so recently been laid for ever. And, looking back upon this production through the vista of years, we cannot wonder that it should so have struck the mind of the public. Poetry was reduced to its beggarly elements. In the florid affectation of Darwin, and the tame, yet turgid verse of Hayley, it was breathing its last. Cowper, meanwhile, had maddened and died. It was not sur-

prising, that in the dreary dearth which succeeded, a small bunch of wild-flowers, with the scent of the moors, and the tints of the sun, and the freshness of the dew upon them, shot suddenly into the hands of the public, should attract immediate notice ;—that, while they disgusted the fastidious, they should refresh the dispirited lovers of truth and nature ; that, while the vain and the worldly tore and trampled them under foot with fierce shouts of laughter, the simple-hearted took them up, and folded them to their bosoms ; and that while the old, prepossessed in favour of Pope and Voltaire, threw them aside as insipid, the young, inspired by the first outbreak of the French Revolution, and flushed by its golden hopes, caught and kissed them in a transport of enthusiasm. Such a bunch were the “Lyrical Ballads,” and such was their reception. Destitute of all glitter, glare, pretension, they were truly “wildings of nature.” Not that they mirrored the utmost depth or power of their author’s mind—not that they gave more than glimpses of the occasional epic grandeur of the “Excursion,” or the Miltonic music of the “Sonnets ;”—but they discovered all the simplicity, if not all the strength of his genius. They were like droppings from the rich honey-comb of his mind. Their faults we seek not to disguise or palliate—the wilful puerility, the babyish simplicity which a few of them affected—but still, as long as Derwentwater reflects the burning west in her bosom, and Windermere smiles to her smiling shores, and the Langdale Giants “parley with the setting sun,” shall men remember Harry Gill, chattering for evermore ; and Ruth with the water-mills of her innocence, and the “tumultuous songs” of her frenzy ; and Andrew Jones, with his everlasting drum ; and the Indian mother, with her heart-broken woes ; and last, not least, glorious old Matthew, with his merry rhymes and melancholy moralizings.

The next poetic production from his pen was entitled,

“Poems, in two volumes.” And here, interspersed with much of the childishness of the Ballads, are some strains of a far higher mood. Here we meet, for instance, with the song of Brougham Castle, that splendid lyric which stirs the blood like the first volley of a great battle. Here, too, are some of his sonnets, the finest we think, ever written, combining the simplicity, without the bareness, of Milton’s, the tender and picturesque beauty of Warton’s, with qualities which are not prominent in theirs,—originality of sentiment, beauty of expression, and loftiness of tone.

Passing over his after effusions—his “Peter Bell” and the “Wagoner,” two things resembling rather the wilder mood of Coleridge than the sobriety of their actual parent, and his “Ecclesiastical Sonnets,” a production scarcely worthy of the subject or author, though relieved by gleams of real poetry, and the “White Doe of Rylstone,” with this single remark that of all the severe criticisms inflicted on Wordsworth, the review of this particular poem in the *Edinburgh* stands *facile princeps* for glaring injustice; and his series of “Sonnets on the River Duddon, a most original and happy thought, which we would like to see applied to other streams, as the Tay, the Earn, the Nith, the Dee, &c.—passing over one smaller poem of exquisite beauty on the “Eclipse in Italy,” and with still more reluctance “Laodamia,” the most chaste and classic of his strains, and which, says one, “might have been read aloud in Elysium to the happy dead,” we would offer a few remarks upon the huge half-finished pile called the “Excursion,” the *national monument* of its author’s mind.

It professes to be part of a poem called the “Recluse.” So many witty, or would-be witty things, have been said about this profession by so many critics and criticasters, that we have not a single joke to crack on the subject. The

magnitude of the entire poem is to us, as well as to them, a wonder and a mystery. Its matter is a topic more attractive. We remember asking De Quincey if he had seen the "Recluse," and why it was not given to the world? He answered, that he had read, or heard read, large portions of it; that the principal reason for its non-publication as yet was, that it contained (who would have expected it!) much that was political, if not personal, and drew with a strong and unflattering hand some of the leading characters of the day. He added that it abounded with passages equal to any thing in the "Excursion," and instanced one, descriptive of France during the Revolution, contrasting the beauty and fertility of its vine-covered valleys and summer landscapes with the dark and infernal passions which were then working like lava in the minds of its inhabitants, as magnificent.

So much for the "Recluse," which the people of the mil-  
lenium may possibly see. The "Excursion," professing to be only part of a poem, was, nevertheless, criticised as a finished production, and condemned accordingly. A finished production it certainly is not. Cumbrous, digressive, unwieldy, abounding with bulky blemishes, not so witty as "Candide," nor so readable as "Nicholas Nickleby,"—these are charges which must be allowed. But after granting this, what remains? Exquisite pathos, profound philosophy, classic dignity, high-toned devotion, the moral sublime. The tale of Margaret opens new fountains in the human heart. The account of the first brilliant sun-burst of the French Revolution is sublime. The description of the churchyard among the mountains, with its tender memories and grass-green graves, would float many such volumes. But far the finest passage is that on the origin of the Pagan mythology. And yet we never feel so much, as when reading it, the greater grandeur which our system possesses from its cen-

tral principle, the Unity of the Divine Nature ; a doctrine which collects all the scattered rays of beauty and excellence from every quarter of the universe, and condenses them into one august and overpowering conception ; which traces back the innumerable rills of thought and feeling to the ocean of an infinite mind, and thus surpasses the most elegant and ethereal polytheism infinitely more than the sun does the “ cinders of the element.” However beautiful the mythology of Greece, as interpreted by Wordsworth—however instinct it was with imagination—however it seemed to breathe a supernatural soul into the creation, and to rouse and startle it all into life—to fill the throne of the sun with a divine tenant—to hide a Naiad in every fountain—to crown every rock with its Oread—to deify shadows and storms—and to send sweeping across “ old ocean’s gray and melancholy waste” a celestial emperor,—it must yield, without a struggle, to the thought of a great one Spirit, feeding by his perpetual presence the lamp of the universe ; speaking in all its voices ; listening in all its silence ; storming in its rage ; reposing in its calm ; its light the shadow of his greatness ; its gloom the hiding-place of his power ; its verdure the trace of his steps ; its fire the breath of his nostrils ; its motion the circulation of his untiring energies ; its warmth the effluence of his love ; its mountains the altars of his worship ; and its oceans the “ mirrors” where his form “ glasses itself in tempests.” Compared to this idea, how does the fine dream of the Pagan Mythos tremble and melt away—Olympus, with its multitude of stately celestial natures, dwindle before the solitary, immutable throne of Jehovah—the poetry, as well as the philosophy of Greece, shrink before the single sentence, “ Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord”—and Wordsworth’s description of the origin of its multitudinous gods look tame beside the mighty lines of Milton :

" The oracles are dumb :  
     No voice or hideous hum  
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.  
     Apollo from his shrine,  
     Can no more divine  
 With hollow shriek the sleep of Delphos leaving.  
 No nightly trance or breathed spell  
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.  
     He feels from Judah's land  
     The dreadful Infant's hand.  
 The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne.  
     Nor all the gods beside  
     Dare longer now abide ;  
 Nor Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine.  
 Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,  
 Can in his swaddling-bands control the damned crew."

Shall we rob ourselves of the varied beauties of the "Excursion," because one of the *dramatis personæ* is a peddler, and because the book was originally a quarto of the largest size? No. Wordsworth is like his own cloud, ponderous, and moveth altogether, if he move at all." His excursions are not those of an ephemeron, and disdain duodecimos. We dare not put this *chef-d'œuvre* of his genius on the same shelf with the "Paradise Lost;" but there are passages in both which claim kindred, and the minds of the twain dwell not very far apart. Having no wish to sacrifice one great man to the manes of another—to pull down the living that we may set up the cold idol of the dead—we may venture to affirm, that if Milton was more than the Wordsworth of the seventeenth, Wordsworth is the Milton of the nineteenth century.

Among his later and smaller poems, the best, perhaps, is his "Ode on the Power of Sound." It is a little laboured and involved, but the labour is that of a giant birth, and the involution is that of a close-piled magnificence. Up the

gamut of sound how does he travel, from the sprinkling of earth on the coffin lid to the note of the eagle, who rises over the arch of the rainbow, singing his own wild song ; from the Ave Maria of the pilgrim to the voice of the lion, coming up vast and hollow on the winds of the midnight wilderness ; from the trill of the blackbird to the thunder speaking from his black orchestra to the echoing heavens ; from the

“ Distress gun on a leeward shore,  
Repeated, heard, and heard no more ;”

to the murmur of the main, for well

“ The towering headlands crowned with mist,  
Their feet among the billows, know  
That ocean is a mighty harmonist ;”

from the faintest sigh that stirs the stagnant air of the dungeon, to the “ word which cannot pass away,” and on which the earth and the heavens are suspended. This were, but for its appearance of having effort, a lyric fit to be placed beside Shelley’s “ Ode to Liberty,” and Coleridge’s “ France.” Appropriately, it has a swell of sound, and a pomp of numbers, such as he has exhibited in no other of his poems. And yet there are moods in which we would prefer his “ We are Seven,” or one of his little poems on Lucy, to all its laboured vehemence and crudded splendour.

We have never seen the “ old man eloquent,” but can well picture him to our fancy. Yonder he stands, under the shadow of the fine wood near his cottage, reading a portion of the “ Recluse ” to the echoes !

“ Ah, Bard, tremendous in sublimity,  
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,  
Wandering alone, with finely frenzied eye,  
Beneath some vast, old, tempest-swinging wood,  
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood,  
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy.”

He has a forehead broad and high, and bent under the weight of brooding thought; a few gray hairs streaming over it; an eye which, when still, seems to "see more in nature than the eyes of other men," and when roused beams forth with preternatural meaning; a face furrowed with thought; a form bent with study; a healthy glow upon his cheek, which tells of moorland walks and mountain solitude; a deep-toned voice; he excels in reading his own poetry; is temperate in his habits; serene in his disposition; has been fortunate in his circumstances and family connexions; has lived, and is likely to die, one of the happiest of men. His religion is cheerful, sanguine, habitual; and we need not say how much it has done to colour his poetry and to regulate his life.

It is much to have one's fame connected vitally with the imperishable objects of nature. It is so with Burns, who has written his name upon Coila's plains, and rivers, and woods, in characters which shall never die. It is so with Scott, who has for monument the "mountains of his native land," and the rustling of the heather of Caledonia, as a perpetual pibroch of lament over his ashes. So we believe that the memory of the great man whose character we have been depicting, is linked indissolubly with the scenery of the Lakes, and that men in far future ages, when awed in spirit by the gloom of Helvellyn—when enchanted by the paradisaal prospects of the vale of Keswick—when catching the first gleam of the waters of Windermere—or when taking the last look of Skiddaw, the giant of the region,—shall mingle with every blessing they utter, and every prayer they breathe, the name of William Wordsworth.



## ROBERT POLLOK.

OUR readers are aware that there once existed a strong prejudice against what was called religious poetry. The causes of this feeling were long to tell and wearisome to trace. Not the least of them was the authority of Dr. Johnson, who, though enamoured of the sanctimonious stupidity of Blackmore, had yet an inveterate prejudice against religious poetry *per se*, and was at the pains to enshrine this "folly of the wise," in some of the tersest and most energetic sentences which ever dropped from his authoritative pen. Another cause lay, we think, in the supreme badness of the greater part of the *soi-disant* poetry which professed to be religious. Lumbering versions of the winged words of inspired men of God,—verses steeped in maudlin sentiment, when not touched into convulsive life by fanaticism,—hymns—how different from those of Milton or of the Catholic litany—full of sickly unction or of babyish prattle; such was, during the eighteenth century, the staple of our sacred song. If any one thinks our statement overcharged, let him put it to the test, by taking up one of our old hymn-books, and comparing it, in its pert jingle and impudent familiarities, to the "strains which once did sweet in Zion glide," to our own rough but manly version of the Psalms, or to the later hymns of Cowper and Montgomery. It is like a twopenny trump, or a musical snuff-box beside the lyre of David, or the organ of Isaiah. And just when the splendid success of Cowper, Montgomery, &c., had wiped out this bad impression of religious poetry, and when the oracular dogma of the lexicographer was dying into echo, a new source of prejudice was opened in the uprising of a set

of pretended pious poets, or poetasters, headed by Robert Montgomery, and, with the author of the *Age* for tailpiece, —who, approaching the horns of the altar, not only held, but tugged with all their might,—who treated Divine things with the utmost coolness of familiarity,—rushing within the hallowed circle of Scripture truth to snatch a selfish excitement,—passing their own tame thoughts across the flame of the sanctuary, if they might thus kindle them into life ; and doing all in their power to render the great little, the reverend ridiculous, and the divine disgusting. These mock Miltons, though they had established a railway communication with the lower regions, and took monthly “Descents into Hell”—were quite intimate with the angel Gabriel, and conflagrated the creation as coolly as you would set up a rocket,—made no very deep impression upon the public mind. Dismay and disgust, dying into laughter, were the abiding feeling with which they were regarded. And we know no better proof of Robert Pollok’s essential superiority, than the fact, that his poem, amid the general nausea of such things, has retained its place ; that the sins of his imitators have not been visited on his head ; and that, while their tiny tapers have been all eclipsed, his solemn star shines on undimmed, reminding us, in its sombre splendour, of Mars, that dark red hermit of the heavens.

In examining Pollok’s character as a poet, we are greatly helped by the compact unity of his actual achievement.—When we speak of Pollok, we mean the “*Course of Time*.” He did not, like many of greater mark, fritter down his powers in fugitive effusions. He is not remembered or forgotten as the author of literary remains, occasional essays, or posthumous fragments. He has, incontestably, written a book aspiring to completeness, of proud pretensions, hewn out of the quarry of his own soul,—begun early, prosecuted

with heroic perseverance, and cemented by his own life's blood. Whatever we may think of the design or the execution,—of the taste or the style,—honour to the man who, in this age of fragments, and factions of fragments, and first drafts, and tentative and tantalizing experiments, has written an undeniable book! Nor let us forget the age of the writer. The fact, that a youth so impressed, by one effort of his mind, many,—who were not straightway deemed insane,—as to draw forth the daring of equalling him with Milton, and his work with *Paradise Lost*,—speaks much in its favour. Ere the majority of educated men have completed their mental training, or even formed the first vague dream of a *magnum opus*, his was resolved, revolved, rolled over in his mind for years, written, rewritten, published, praised, and the author himself was away! Was not this much? And whatever malignity may say or “shriek,” the mere unbounded and unequalled popularity of the book does prove a little more. We, indeed, look upon the nineteenth century as a very young century in the world's history,—as but a babe in leading strings. Still we do not think so little of it, after all, as to deem that a tissue of wordy worthlessness would run like wildfire,—pass through some score of editions in less than eighteen years, and take its place, if not with the *Paradise Lost*, with which it ought never to be named; yet certainly with the “Grave” and the “Night Thoughts.” Let those who, in the face of the general estimate of a tolerably enlightened public, deny “The Course of Time” any merit, be “choked with their own bile!” There were, indeed, we admit, certain circumstances which, in some measure, explained the popularity of the poem, apart altogether from its intrinsic merit. First of all, it was a religious poem, and this at once awakened a wide and warm interest in its favour. Galled by the godless ridicule of Byron, and cha-

grined by what they thought the vague and mystic piety of the Lakers, the religious community hailed the appearance of a new and true poet, who was ashamed of none of the peculiarities of one of the straitest of all their sects, with a tumult of applause. It was, besides, a poem by a dissenter. And between the gentle but timid genius of Michael Bruce, and the far more energetic song of Pollok, no poetry deserving the name had been produced among them. It was natural, therefore, that when, at length, a brilliant star broke forth in their firmament, they should salute its arrival with lawful and general pride. A few, indeed, of the more malignant of those who found themselves eclipsed, felt hatred, and pretended to feel contempt for the poem. But the principal cause of its popularity was the premature death of the poet. This lent, instantly, a consecrating magic to its every line,—passed over it like a pitying hand, hiding its bulky faults,—caused the poisoned arrows of many an intended critic to fall powerless from his grasp,—aroused a tide of universal sympathy, and sympathy is akin to applause; put, in a word, the copestone on its triumph. Still the book had much merit of its own. It was, in the first place, on the whole, an original production. There were, it is true, as in all youthful works, traces of resemblance, and even imitation of favourite authors. Here Milton's majestic tones and awful sanctity were emulated. There a shadow of a shade of Dante's terrible gloom was caught. In another place, the epigrammatic turns of Young were less successfully mimicked. Many passages resembled Blair's "Grave" in their rough vigour of style and unsparing anatomy of human feelings and foibles. Cowper's sarcasm and strong simplicity, had also been studied to some purpose. Nor had the author feared to sharpen his holy weapons at the forge of Byron—that Philistine, who had come forth to defy the armies of the

living God. Of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley he seemed to know little, else, perhaps, his tone had been more ethereal, and his verse more harmonious. And yet, notwithstanding such resemblances, and conscious or unconscious imitations, you felt, from the first, that you had to do with a man who thought, and looked, and wrote for himself. A strong and searching intellect looked out on you from the whole poem. And, scattered throughout, in nooks and corners of its scathed surface, were gleams of genuine genius,—touches of natural pathos,—strange and wild imaginings,—rays of terrible truthfulness and moral sentiment,—lines memorable as if written in red characters, which, even more than its long and laboured passages, “gave the world assurance of a man.” And thus, though the design was somewhat clumsy, and the painting coarse, and some parts of the execution little better than deliberate daubings, there was, nevertheless, a soul in the entire picture,—an eye looking forth from it which followed, pierced, and detained you. Another striking quality was its truth. It was no “sham, but reality.” Here was an honest, earnest man, talking to you, in solemn tones, of the most solemn things, and believing every word which he uttered. The awful truths of our faith had made, early, a profound impression upon his mind. The doctrine of future punishment, especially, had seized hold on his imagination as with iron talons; and had found a fit commentary in the wild and desolate scenery where his infancy was nurtured. He never, for a moment, falters in pronouncing the tidings of wo against transgressors,—he is full of the terrors of the Lord; and, with prophetic earnestness, and prophetic severity, he voices them fearlessly forth, and we seem to hear the thunder talking to us of the eternal decrees, and describing to us the everlasting burnings. His descriptions of Hell, show a man who had long brooded over

the overwhelming thought,—who had rolled the red idea in the furnace of his mind, till it was rounded into fearful distinctness of shape and symmetry,—who had studied the scenery of Pandemonium, under the canopy of the thunder-cloud, in lone and wizard glens, in desolate moors, in sullen tarns, miniatures of the “last lake of God’s wrath,” in midnight dream, and drearer midnight wakefulness on his own pillow. And all such dark broodings he has collected and condensed into the savage figures which he has sculptured on the wall of the dwelling-place of the second death. And his pictures of punishment, though often tasteless, exaggerated, and unideal, are redeemed by their intense and burning sincerity. There is, indeed, around the whole poem, what we may call a flush of hectic truth; and you fancy mind and body crumbling down a step further to the tomb, in every succeeding syllable of the sepulchral work. It is, verily, written with his heart’s blood. We find the same quality in a work of far more artistic, though fragmentary merit, written, too, by a dying hand, namely, “Hyperion,” where the splendours are all hectic, and the power projected forward from eternity.

The next quality we find in the “Course of Time” is its gloomy cast and tone. Save the “Night Thoughts,” and, perhaps, the “Divina Comedia,” it is the most mournful of books; perhaps more so than either. A load of darkness lies upon the whole. In vain he struggles to smile; his smiles remind you of those which hideously disguise the tortures of the rack-writhen victim. His sarcasms are searing; his invectives Tartarean; and, to our minds, the enumeration of the pleasures of earth, in the fifth Book, is the most melancholy passage of the poem. It is a cold, forced labouring against the grain. It is a collection of dead joys, pumped up artificially, not welling freely forth from a glad soul. How different from L’Allegro, or even Byron’s enu-

meration of sweets. So faded and forlorn are the pleasures he recounts, that you hardly wonder that he introduces among them a description of a sister's death-bed. And when he tries, at the close, to sing the millennial glory, his harp seems to refuse its office; and, as if prophetically conscious of the after-arrear of woes, it is "turned into mourning and into the voice of those that weep." The poet's fingers seem paralyzed—able only to take down the Glasgow Geography, whence to transcribe the names of the nations who shall come to its light, but not to roll out the full diapason of a world's joy. The gloom of Pollok's poetry is evidently, like Dante's, indigenous. The darkness of Milton's mind sprung from excess of light; Blair's was the result of subject; Young's of circumstances; Cowper's of nervous disease; whereas Pollok's is flung from the forehead of his soul. It is no acquired or affected melancholy: like one of the stars described by Origen, he "rays out darkness" from the central gloom of his own heart; and not only the flowers of earth, but the splendours of heaven, crossed by the wind of his spirit, "darken like water in the breeze." Now, we regret exceedingly that he had not done more justice to the bright side of the picture. Nothing, we think, has injured Christianity more, than the melancholy and miserable tone of the greater part of its authorship. We attribute much of the prejudice which exists against religion, to the severe and sombre light in which many of its poets constantly represent that gospel, which means, "News that it is well." Shame to those who, by the infused blackness of their own bile, have turned the fountain of the water of life into a Marah—the river of salvation into an Acheron,—and have cast the shadow of their own disappointment, or disquiet, or disgust, upon the crystal transparency of the Sea of Glass and the golden pavement of the City of Glory! Thus has Dante

carried the gloom of Gehenna with him into the heaven of heavens, and dared to darken with his frown the throne of the universe. Thus has Young breathed up his own personal sorrow upon the midnight sky, and seen the stars, those bright milestones on the way to immortality, through the mist of his own burning tears. Thus has Cowper seen little in Scripture save the grim reflection of his own mania, and read it chiefly as the charter of his perdition. And thus has Pollok discoloured the long tract of Millennial day by the shadow of his personal melancholy, leaving the Pleasures of Piety to be sung by a far feebler minstrel.

The book, again, is remarkable for its lofty and daring tone. Perhaps, indeed, this is a blemish rather than a beauty. Milton was lofty, because he could not help it. Sublimity is the shadow of his soul. It falls off gigantic from all his motions. He was daring, because in his glorious blindness the veil between heaven and earth was dropped. The medium of the interjacent universe was removed. Heaven became his mind's home, and he might be said to "lie in Abraham's bosom all the year." Dante's daring is that of a wounded and desperate spirit, treading upon terrible thoughts as upon burning ploughshares; with frightful accuracy and minuteness, writing the diary, and becoming the De Foe of Perdition. In all the calmness of disgust and recklessness, he treads alike the marvellous light of Heaven, the twilight of Purgatory, and the gloom of that "Other place." About Pollok's loftiness there lies an air of effort; and about his daring a slight taint of presumption. A youth, though of "great religious soul, retired in voluntary loneliness, and dipping oft his pen to write immortal things," may not be permitted the privileges of an old demi god of song, whose sole sun was the Shechinah, and whose only stars were the eyes of angels looking in upon his holy darkness;



or of a deep-browed, eagle-eyed Italian, who, after his poem appeared, was pointed out in the streets as the "man who had been in hell." Still, if overdaring, he is original in his aspirings. His Hell is not Milton's hell, nor Quevedo's, nor Dante's, nor Bunyan's. It is Pollok's own; and came to him in the night visions of his own spirit. We envy him not his property in the two terrible figures on the wall of the place. These are miscreations, spasmodic beyond the worst of Michael Angelò's. How far inferior to that one inscription in Dante, "Who enters here leaves hope behind." Substantially the two (the Worm that dieth not, and Eternal Death) are the same thing; and yet after describing, at full length the first, he says of the second, as if it were worse, "For ever undescribed let it remain." Both, nevertheless, are the product of his own mind; and the "sculptor sure is a strong spirit." His Heaven, too, is the building of his own genius; and his conception of wastes and wildernesses existing even there is one of the finest in the poem: one gifted spirit, we know, loved it for nothing else. His angels and devils play no conspicuous or important part. Perhaps the first are too prying and curious to be sublime: the others too hateful to excite our sympathies. His pictures of earth, its scenery, and its characters, are too dark to be true. His conception of the universe, as possessed of two centres—the one drawing up its subject orbs in the direction of heaven, and the other sucking down the "objects and slaves of concupiscence" to where "attraction turns the other way, and all things to some infernal centre tend"—is compounded of two images or theories, one occurring in Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," where the creation is represented revolving round the throne of God, and the other in Scott's "Christian Life," (a book much in favour with Pollok,) where all things evil and abhorred are described as "pressing down by a

necessity of their own nature," in search of some hidden magnet. How many efforts has the human mind made to figure to itself that vastitude of material existence which is above, and below, and around it! And how few even approach to the grandeur of the subject! Orreries are contemptible; at best pretty playthings. Pitifuller still the idea of a vast machine, as if space were only an enormous factory. Somewhat better, the idea of an immense book—the stars letters, the constellations words, and the firmaments leaves of glory. Better still the fine thought of Campbell, if it indeed originated with him. Another, partly suggested by the old Scandinavian idea, came forcibly on us lately while riding through dark fir woods in a moonlight autumn night: why not call the creation a tree, its root the throne, its leaves the stars, earth one withered leaf amid the great green constellations, growing upwards towards boundless, measureless perfection; and the music of the spheres just the waving of the eternal boughs, in the one wind-like spirit which pervades them all? The "future," says Rahel, the celebrated Germaness, "does not come from before to meet us, but comes streaming from behind over our heads." So, streaming up from the uncreated seed, which we call the First Cause, does creation germinate, and for ever grow! Pollok's book, too, is remarkable in general for its clearness and simplicity of thought and style; so much so, that we almost long for a little more of that fine German mysticism, without which it is, perhaps, after all, impossible to speak of the deepest and the loftiest—of eternity, space, night, infinitude. This element is too rare for Pollok's wing. When he tries to be obscure and profound, his fluttering is "unearthly." Nay, sometimes, like Satan in the war of chaotic elements, he plumps down, fathoms and fathoms more, into a vague, void, and unimaginative darkness. Many of

Milton's lines he might have written; but how far above the path of his genius were such words as these, "The dreaded Name of Demogorgon!" And what abject nonsense he perpetrates in the description of the "atom which God had made superfluously, and needed not to build creation with, but cast aside with everlasting sense that once it was!" His peculiar power is understanding: he ratiocinates, declaims, inveighs, but rarely feels on his half-blinded eyes flashes of intuitive and transcendental truth. His is a thoroughly Scottish soul; clear even in its extravagances,—common sense even in its wildness. His description of the resurrection, though vivid and vigorous, is as coarse as though done by a *resurrection-man*. We notice, too, the awful holiness of the spirit of this poem. There are few books in the language over whose frontispiece the inscription is so legibly written, "Off, ye profane;" if not the still more solemn motto, "Holiness to the Lord." We feel treading on ground consecrated by the shadow of the great Tribunal. Even Milton sometimes quits his Lebanon for Pindus, disports himself with the dreams of the Pagan mythology, and "wreathes his little proboscis" into giant mirth at the follies of the schools. Young, in multitudinous tropes and glittering antitheses, often trifles with his tremendous themes. Sometimes across the most solemn and spiritual pages of Cowper humour steals like a guilty thing. Blair's piety is sincere; but hangs round him in light and easy folds. But with Pollok there is no mirth, no trifling, and not a particle of genuine playfulness. All is severe and saturnine to repulsion and dismay. You are disposed to ask, Is this really piety, after all? Is she not a gladder, franker, milder, more amiable thing? Whether has this gloomy limner or Jeremy Taylor, Howe, Milton, and Hall succeeded in drawing the truer likeness? Is this she whom Jesus has represented in

his divine Sermon on the Mount, or any one of the three fair sisters painted by Paul—Faith, with eagle-eye, contemplating the Invisible; Hope, looking as beautiful and happy as if a breeze from heaven were playing around her temples, and stirring her golden hair; and Charity, weeping over a perishing world, and all the more lovely for her tears? Must there not be some mistake, or has Pollok's temperament, or the disease which was preying on his vitals as he wrote the poem, somewhat dimmed and distorted the features of the Bride of Heaven? Assuredly, holy ought to have been the spirit which dared to roll such withering numbers, and pass such sweeping verdicts, down the "tide of time."

Akin to this, the poem is distinguished by its tone of intellectual and spiritual assurance. In respect of a sort of divine dogmatism, it more resembles Milton's great work than in any thing else. There is no doubt, nor shadow of a doubt, upon his mind; first, as to every part of his creed; and next, as to his individual capacity for expounding the same. No grand Perhaps is ever uttered; the very word never occurs. Sawing his path through difficulties, cutting Gordian knots, striking down all opponents, without modesty and without hesitation, he builds up his system, and clears his way. He addresses himself with unfaltering confidence to greatest things. He has no momentary misgivings of his own fitness. He seems leaping up to meet the descending mantle half-way. Like Milton, he is intensely conscious of his dignity and size. And it is not his fault that his port is less princely, his panoply less terrible, his preparation less severe, his afflatus less powerful, and his stature less gigantic.

A pleasing feature of the poem, is the vein of fine egotism which pervades it, and breaks out frequently in personal allusions, and pensive reminiscences. This is one principal

cause of its popularity. The poet who makes a harp of his own heart, and strikes its ruddy chords with skilful fearlessness, is sure of awakening the sympathies of the public. What so affecting in Milton as his allusions to his solitary position, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues;" or the melancholy magnanimity with which he touches, as it were, his blind orbs, and mourns over their premature eclipse? What finer in Cowper, than his "Castaway," or than his description of the "stricken deer that left the herd;" or in Burns, than his "Vision," and his picture of himself, the inspired boy, in the lines,

The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide  
Among the bearded bear;  
I turned the clipper-weeds aside,  
And spared the symbol dear.

So in Pollok, there is nothing to our mind so beautiful as his allusions to "Scotia's northern battlement of hills" seen from his father's house, in "morn of life," or than the brief history of himself which occurs in the earlier part of the poem. It adds to the effect of such passages, that the plan of the poem leads us to regard them as the reminiscences of a spirit shrined in heaven, and yet, from the centre of eternal glories, looking back with a moist eye and a full heart, to the experiences of its earthly pilgrimage. And to sum up the excellencies of the book, there are in it some sustained and eloquent passages, which were alone sufficient to buoy up the entire poem, were it much more cumbrous, unequal, and faulty, than it is. The "Byron" will occur to the mind of every reader,—a picture in which the artist seems for a season to become the subject as he paints him. The red source of Byron's genius, shut in death, sullenly opens at his spell, and, dipping his pencil in it, the painter hastily limns him in

burning colours ; and it closes again for ever. Byron has never himself described one of his burning heroes better, than Pollok, the soul which created them. How well has he caught, especially, the self-involved and haughty repulsion of his spirit, "stooping to touch the loftiest thought," the education by which his soul was nurtured into poetry, and the waste and howling wilderness of its ultimate misery. Not so well, we think, has he given the characteristics of his genius. Byron is not the ethereal being whom he describes. He is not at "home where angels bashful look ;" he is at home rather where demons pale and tremble. He is not an "old acquaintance of Nature." He has not the freedom of that city of God : it is but a city of refuge to him : he has been driven to it by disgust and agony. A "comet" he is, revered by the stars and responded to by the volcanoes of creation, but he is no "bird of heavenly plumage fair," descended from higher regions : he *has* "laboured up from beneath," and his wing wears the darkest soil of earthly passion. He "talks with the thunder as friend to friend," not because it is his most congenial companion, but because his miseries have left him no choice,—the countenance of man is averted from him, and he is glad to gaze on the face of the thunder-cloud ; his laurels withered or torn away, he must hide his bald head with a garland of the lightning's wing. He lays his hand upon the "ocean's mane ;" but it is in despair, not familiarity. These, however, are petty blemishes in this noble passage. As a whole, it is powerfully conceived, and most powerfully expressed. Its words are winged, forked, and tempest tuned : its motion is free, bold, vaulting : it is a rough, rapid, masculine, moral sketch, done apparently at one fierce sitting.

Other splendid passages we might name ; such as that descriptive of the preparations for the Resurrection, the Ad-

dress to the Ocean, &c. But we hasten to the less gracious task of pointing out a few of the faults of this remarkable book. And here a malignant critic might find "ample room and verge enough." Let us touch them as tenderly as we can. The book, first of all, is the most unequal of all works. While some parts of it are pure poetry, others are little better than stilted and stumbling prose. In aiming at the bare and bald simplicity of Homer, Dante, and Milton, its author sinks sometimes into sheer drivel. If Homer nods, Pollok must snore. The work is altogether, too, of a loose and shambling structure. It is a straggling street rather than a solid fortress. If a poem mean a piece of mental masonry, firm, compact, complete, the "Course of Time" is no poem at all. It is, in fact, a nondescript. It is not epic, it is not didactic. It has no story, and an exceedingly imperfect plan. In defect of incident, it is full of descriptions and moral portraitures, of all varieties and all merits, strung together on a dusky thread called the Course of Time. Consequently, as a whole, it lacks interest. Your eye kindles, and your heart heaves, over certain passages; but over the rest you yawn portentously. Its moral pictures are repeated till you sicken, and spun out till you weary. Sometimes they are too general to be true, and are always painted in a chiaroscuro, which, though true to principles, is false to fact. Often, though he be rarely verbose, he states common truths with ridiculous emphasis, and heaps strong words, like too much fuel on a little fire, till it is utterly quenched. His imagination has force, but little richness; his intellect strength, but no subtlety; his language pith, but no melting beauty. He can command terror, but seldom tears. His genius has grasp, but no refinement. His tone, in reference to sinners, is far too harsh and exulting. He seems sometimes to insult and trample on their eternal sepulchre, as if the pressure of

Almighty vengeance were not enough without the makeweight of his tread. His flames are fiercer than those of Dante and Milton; and he leaves none of their lingering touches of beauty and pathos on the surface of the lurid lake. Though writing in the nineteenth century, he has not sought to grapple with the grand moral aspects of punishment,—never ventured beyond the familiar images of material pain,—never tried to paint the successive descending stages of degradation in a spiritual being, given up to itself, as into the hands of a dire tormentor. This is a task which lies over for some profounder artist. He is better, too, at sounding the key-note than at finishing the melody. His prefatory flourishes are startling, but the anthem is not always worthy of the prelude. Had he ventured to describe the Flood, he would have expended his strength in the gathering of the animals and the elements: his pen had faltered in describing the unchained deluge—the darkened sun—the torrents of rain cleaving the gloom—the varied groups of drowning wretchedness—the ark riding in melancholy grandeur on the topmost billow of an ocean planet. As it is, he sweeps the stage nobly, for the “great vision of the guarded throne;” he excites a thrill of shuddering expectation; on the tremendous lyre of judgment, he strikes some brief strong notes, but recoils from the sounds he himself has made; and from an attempt to lift up his hand to the last trembling cords, he falls back exhausted and helpless. In fact, the poet reaches his climax at the sixth book. After this, he sinks down, struggling sore, but vainly, to break his fall. The last six books might almost have been spared. The subject, like strong sun-light, presses too heavily on his eye. He has a “vision of his own,” but it is not, on the whole, a happy vision. It does not fill and satisfy his own imagination, and how can it satisfy ours? Indeed, the theme is too majestic for pencil or for pen. We felt this strongly when



looking at Danby's grand, but glaring, "Opening of the Sixth Seal." Notwithstanding the prodigality of blazing colour, the energy of some of the figures, and the mingled modesty and daring of the design, we not only felt a sense of oppressive splendour, but an overpowering sense of the unfitness of the topic for any pictorial representation. Danby, very properly, it is true, ventures not to draw the features of that face from which heaven and earth are fleeing away; a small quiet cross alone, surrounded by the divine glory, gives the meaning and moral of the picture; but how feeble a simulacrum, even of the other features of the scene, is, after all, presented! What idea does that one wave of volcanic fire give of a world in "fiery deluge and without an ark?"—that flash of lightning splitting the rocks, of the thousand thunders on which the Judge shall be enthroned?—those scattered groups of surprised men and women, of the inhabitants of the whole earth arrested by the crash of doom?—that city toppling, of the capitals of the world reeling into ruin?—that one slave lifting up his arms to the morning of liberty which is dawning, of Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God. Nor, in the compass of poetry, do we know any thing, save the *Dies iræ*, entirely worthy of the overwhelming subject. Prose pictures of it are common in sermons; and, when well delivered, they may tell in the pulpit, but are perfectly powerless in print. Even in the pulpit, it is ridiculous enough to see a well dressed youth, in gown and bands, with elaborately arranged hair, and elaborately balanced periods, and "start theatric practised at the glass," setting about the destruction of the universe,—deliberately snuffing out its stars, like tapers,—applying his match to the pillars of the globe,—springing a mine under its cities, wiping away its oceans, as easily as, with cambric handkerchief, he does the sweat-drops from his lady-like brow; and closing, with a smile of

supreme complacency, by quoting the words of Robert Montgomery,—

Creation shudders with sublime dismay,  
And, in a blazing tempest, whirls away.

Poets, too, and poetasters, have here alike signally failed. Young flutters toward it like a bird whose strong wing has been broken. The author of *Satan* rushes up, at first, with screams of ambitious agony; but, in fine, subsides and falls flat as a log. Pollok, as, we have seen, gives the subject the slip, shrinking back, paralyzed by its sublimity. Had Byron been a believer, he might have done it in the style of his "*Darkness*." But not till another Milton arise can we hope to see the epic of

"That day of wrath—that dreadful day,  
When heaven and earth shall pass away."

Upon the whole, this poem, though it be no finished piece of art, and no impetuous sunburst of nature,—though its blemishes outnumber its beauties, must yet be admitted a powerful production, full of "things which the world will not willingly let die," and which, separated, possibly, from their context, and floating on the waters into which the volume itself shall have gone down, may long preserve the memory of the ambitious and resolute spirit whence they emanated. Class it with the highest productions of the human mind—with the *Iliad*, the *Prometheus Vincetus*, the *Lear*, and the *Paradise Lost*, we may not, as long as the moon may not be ranked with the sun, nor *Ceres* with *Sirius*. Place it even in the second file of poetical master-pieces,—with the *Manfred*, the *Cenci*, the *Paradise Regained*, and the *Excursion*, we dare not, so long as

"Jove's satellites are less than Jove."

But let it have its praise as belonging to the order which we may call "third among the sons of light," and its place on a sloping shelf, at the top of which shines in its starry lustre, the "Night Thoughts," perched

"Like some dark beauteous bird, whose plume  
Is sparkling with a thousand eyes."

Robert Pollok was, himself, a remarkable man. All the anecdotes we have heard of him, leave the impression of a strong minded, courageous, determined, sarcastic, earnest, and somewhat dogmatic spirit; with a thoroughly formed and fledged opinion of himself—with a hectic heat in his blood,—holy contempt, rather than love, the element of his soul; and with a gay and bitter principle alternating in his mind and talk, now eliciting stormy glee, and now severe and pungent sarcasm. At college, he scarcely signaled himself at all;—how could he, whose thoughts were already consecrated to the "Course of Time." He was no great prizeman; none of those who effloresce early and die away soon,—who mortgage the chance of immortality for a gilded book,—who leave college loaded with laurels, and are never heard of more. For this he was at once too modest and too proud. Yet, during his curriculum, he wrote those little tales, "Helen of the Glen," &c., which, though full of fine descriptive touches, are hardly equal to "Arcades" and "Lycidas," and will never, even in the deep wake of "The Course of Time," sail on to posterity. Every one has heard the fate of his first sermon in the hall,—the loud and silly laughter with which that boyish burst was received,—the fierce retort which broke from his lips, and the lofty indignation with which he drew back the first feeler of his great poem into the den, and sheathed, for years, the bright weapon of his imagination. Every one knows, too,

the effect which the buzzing announcement of a great forthcoming work made, in Secession circles especially, and all the particulars of its after history. The despised of the hall "awoke one morning and found himself famous." He was straightway fawned on, and crouched to, by many who had derided him before. He bore ill the strictures of honest and sincere friends. A review of the poem appeared in *Blackwood*, written by a friend of our own, which, though by many thought too favourable, roused Pollok's ire, and terminated their friendship. It is told, in illustration of his excessive elation with his success, that, going in from his father's farm to Glasgow, it was proposed that he should ride, as he had often done when a boy, in a butter-milk cart. At this he stormed, and exclaimed, "What! do you imagine that the author of 'The Course of Time' would demean himself by riding in a milk cart?" although, had he known it, the chariot of the sun had not been a nobler vehicle. Meanwhile the arrow of death had fixed itself deeply in his vitals. He resolved on many plans of works never to be accomplished; among others, a huge libel upon the ancient heathen world, which he wanted the learning to have executed, and which would have been the grave of his reputation. He died at length, in a strange land, unknowing and unknown; but exchanging, we trust, the fast brightening blaze of earthly fame for the glories of Immanuel's land.

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CHARLES LAMB.

It is a singular circumstance, in the present day, that the commercial and the literary character have, in certain

instances, been blended, without destroying each other. Literature, in our strange era, has entered the counting-room. Wit, of the rarest grain, has assisted in unpacking bales of goods. Genius, of the true and sovereign seed, has seated itself upon the tall three-legged stool, and worn a quill, instead of laurel, behind its "trembling ears." The genius, thus enthroned, has not, to be sure, been of the most romantic or ethereal order. The idea is ridiculous, of a clerk, now with fire and fury inditing a Mystery, and now taking in a consignment of muslin;—dropping the pen, which had been dashing down the terrible syllables of a Walpurgis night, to make out an invoice of yarns. With all reverence for trade, in its various departments, we cannot believe it possible for a Goethe or a Schiller, a Byron or a Shelley, a Coleridge or a Wilson, to have been bred in a warehouse. Had they not been "wild and woodland rovers," known, through broad lands, to "every star and every wind that blows," with foot free to tread, as it listed, the deck or the heather, the soft sod or the incrustated lava, the sand or the snow; and, with faces embrowned by the sunbeams which had smote them by day, and spiritualized by the starry eyes which had shot down influence upon them by night, they could not have been what, to the honour of their species and the glory of the universe, they have become. Only conceive Goethe, with that lofty forehead, and stately form, bending over a ledger; or the wizard Coleridge, with those dreamy eyes, deep in calculation of the price of stocks. And yet Charles Lamb, Coleridge's dear friend, thus spent the greater portion of his life. But then Charles Lamb, though as true a genius as any of those we have named, was a genius of quite a different and inferior order. And we know not how much greater he might have become, had he received a diverse training, and instead of

being a slave of a counting-room, had been free of that city, the builder and maker of which is God. Meanwhile, let us be thankful for him as he was. If not a passionate, and earnest, and high-toned poet, he was a gay and chirruping rhymster,—the quaintest of humorists—the most delicate and refined of critics,—the most delightful of essayists,—the most genial of companions. We have a theory—nor do we hold it alone—that heart and soul are always found together,—that a man sees as he loves, and loves as he sees; that the distinction between cherubim, knowing ones, and seraphim, burning ones, (unknown to Scripture,) must be spurned away, as we mount up along the ladder of being, to the throne of Him, all whose perfections meet in that one transcendent love, which is his essence and his all. The heart has an eye of its own, and its vision is clear, far, and true. In Charles Lamb, at least, the two qualities were one. He reasoned with his heart,—with his heart he loved, with his heart he laughed, in heart he lived, moved, and had his being. And what a strange, wild, hot, large heart Lamb's was! It was only less than that which lies in Dumfries kirk-yard, belonging to the man of whom it was said, that if you touched his hand, it would have burnt yours. And, as this heart taught him to love the outcasts of society, to associate with its excommunicates, to cry halves to every pelt of calumny which assailed their devoted heads, so it led him, in search of matter for his genius, into the oddest and most out-of-the-way corners. From the beaten track of authorship he turned aside into a narrow zig-zag footpath, where he has, hitherto, had no follower. He shunned aerial heights of speculation, and vertigo raptures of passion; he cut no Gordian knots; he winked hard at all abstruse questions; he babbled not about green fields; he detested politics; he had small sympathies with

the spirit and literature of his age; but he sat still in his study, with Ben Jonson and Webster, or he puffed out poetry from his inseparable pipe—or he looked into Mary's face till quiet tears bedimmed his eyelids—or he mounted the old Margate hoy, and enjoyed its strange humours—or he strolled forth alone into the "sweet security of streets"—or he bent over a book-stall, rather in search of his former self than to read—or he threw in puns like small crackers between the cannonades of Coleridge's talk—or he shook poor Hazlitt by the hand till the blood was like to ooze out at his finger nails—or he threw forth the deepest strokes of sense and sagacity, as if he were ashamed of them—or he blurted out the strangest, wildest paradoxes till he made some people take him for a madman, and others for an atheist—or he revelled like a Rabelais in the regions of abyssmal nonsense. Lamb's works excel all men's in this, that they fully reflect and embalm his own singular character. Every line, every word, is just like him. In fact, he could write nothing that was not instinct with himself. In his smallest composition you find all his qualities—his serious laugh—his quaint originality—his intolerance of cant—his instinctive attachment to all odd things, and all queer ambiguous people—his "very tragical mirth," the arabesque border of fun that edges his most serious speculations—his hatred of solitude—his love of cities—his shyness of all contested questions—his style so antique, yet racy, imitative, yet original—his passion for old English authors—his enjoyment of recondite beauties, and the fine subtlety of his critical judgment.

His poetry is the least poetical thing he has written. He wants the highest form of the "vision and the faculty divine." And that very veering between the serious and the comic, which renders it difficult for you to tell whether he be in jest

or earnest, though it be the life of his prose, is perdition to his poetry. A poet must either be manifestly in earnest, or manifestly in sport. Lamb is neither bard nor jester; or rather, the jingle of the cap and bells mingles with and mars the melody of the lyre. Yet there is much that is genuinely poetical in his verse, and more that is richly and uproariously comic.

His "Rosamund Gray," it has been fashionable of late years to praise, and, as it is very short, even fashionable to read. We have striven hard to see its beauty, but probably owing to the obtuseness of our optics, have striven in vain. We concede to it, however, the possession of simplicity, but it is the simplicity of nakedness, not precisely that of the story of Joseph and his brethren.

As a critic, Lamb's forte lay in seeing and showing new and unsuspected beauties in his author. He hangs and broods over the page, till all the secrets of its spirit are open to him. As Herschell seldom looked at the larger stars with that mighty telescope which swept the remoter firmaments, so Lamb's eye turns from the glare of the more prominent and dazzling qualities, to those far deep nooks and corners, in which the very marrow of meaning is or seems to be collected. Often, indeed, he attributes emphasis and intention to particular passages which never belonged to the author. And, as is natural to a discoverer, he sometimes exaggerates the value of what he has found. No man has ever seen Hogarth so clearly, or brought out so eloquently the moral and tragical qualities which lie like abysses beneath the thin, light, transparent ice of his humour.

Of the "Essays" of Elia, why need we say any thing? They are "nests of spicery," sweet, subtle extracts from that rarest of hearts, and most curiously-unique of intellects. Best in them, we like those reminiscences by which they are



furnished : of his own early days, of Christ-church school, of his young companions, with whom he paced the cloisters, of the clerks who sat with him in the old South-Sea House, of dear sister Bridget, and, above all, of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, " logician, metaphysician, bard ; while Hope still rose before him like a fiery column, the dark side not yet turned." Lamb is the last essayist of England, and fitly and beautifully closes the fine line which Steele and Addison began.

It was to be expected that, as the essayist merges naturally into the letter-writer, the letters of Lamb should be worthy of his fame. We wish we could say something of this elegant species of literature, the letter ; of the beauty of the first idea of extracting the private passages of one's life, recording, rolling up, sealing down into compact unity, and sending off by trusty transmission, little fragments of one's soul ; of circulating the tinier griefs and fainter joys and more evanescent emotions, as well as the larger incidents and deeper passions of existence ; of adding wings to conversation, and, by the soft soundless touch of a paper-wand, and the wave of a rod of feather, annihilating time and space, truly a " delicate thought, and softly bodied forth ;" of the motley freightage which this little ark, once launched, has been compelled to bear : now called on to transmit a weight of written tears, and now of eager and expansive joys ; now to " waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole," and now to echo a compliment or circulate a sneer ; now to convey the gall of malice, and now to reflect the " bloom of young desire and purple light of love ;" now to popularize the cogitations of the philosopher, and now to creak and tremble under the awful burdens of the inspired Apostle :—of the principal writers of this fine species of composition,—of Gray, with his ease, purity of style, and picturesqueness of description,—of the letters of Cowper, with their refined sim-

plicity, and their depths of humour,—of Burns's, written on the top of deal tables, or chests of drawers, in wayside inns, and in the fire of potatoes pottle deep, coarse, consequently, wild, extravagant, but bold, forcible, sincere,—of the epistolary vein which at length opened in Byron, like the minor mouth of a volcano, and prompted those melancholy yet instructive missives of Venetian lewdness, infamy, and despair, over which the *elite* of London society met regularly to chuckle, in John Murray's back shop,—of Shelley's letters, so simple, stately, and eloquent,—of Sir Walter Scott's plain, downright, business-like style of letter,—of Conversation Sharp's nice little morsels,—of Miss Seward's pert prettiness,—of Mrs. Grant's lively and most feminine epistles,—and of the two finest letters ever written, both, strange to tell, proceeding from an artificial and scholastic man,—we refer to those addressed by Mackintosh to Hall, on his recovery from derangement,—solemn as offerings on a shrine, tinged with reverence toward the great spirit which had just come down from the "thunder hill" of Frenzy, touching with a bold, yet tender finger, the delicate and dangerous topic—breathing the purest spirit of attachment, and written with an elegance, a purity, and a pathos superior to aught in his more elaborate productions—they form among the sublimest memorials which genius has ever consecrated to friendship. What a cheering welcome did they furnish to the smitten and bewildered being, as he came back from that wild land to the experiences of the cold common world, and found his oldest and most congenial friend waiting on the border with a pressure of hand so soft and thrilling, and a smile of welcome so gravely sweet and reverently solemn, as must have melted his strong man to tears.

Lamb's letters are full of himself, and of his usual, incessant, and delightful mannerism. They abound in heart,

peculiarity, unworldly pathos, humour, irony, fun, nonsense, balderdash, madness, yet all so deliciously fresh and rich, so peppered with old world condiments, so brimful of the sparkling "wine of life," so tartly singular in their spirit and style, that you sigh to think that they are included in that every thing which has an end.

Elia ! we must reluctantly bid thee adieu ! We have not done justice to thy inimitable merits ; but assuredly it is from no defect of love ! We feel almost as if we had known thee personally, sat at thy bounteous board, seen thy dark noble countenance, the "painful sweetness" of thy smile, thy small, slight, quivering form, seen by thy side, Mary, thy more than sister, linked to thee in "dual loneliness," thy tender nurse, thy mild companion, sometimes, alas ! in her turn, the object of thy deep solicitude and awful care,—as if we had seen around the table "many glittering faces looking on," the faces of immortals—the serene front of Wordsworth, the mild mystic gaze of Coleridge, Hazlitt's pallid face and eager eye, Southey's Roman carriage, Hunt's thoughtful yet joyous visage,—as if we had heard the colloquies which hung wings of gold upon each dark hour, as it chased the other away. For the dead we may not and need not pray ; but surely, as we wave farewell, we may say, Blessings on thy kind heart, oblivion to thy errors, immortality to thy name.

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## ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

AND THE RURAL POETS.

"God made the country, and man made the town," says Cowper, in his brief, blunt, decisive way. It is a daring

common-place. It is a line which no man would have ventured to utter if he had lived all his days in cities, if he had not, like Peter Bell, set his face against the open sky "on mountains and on lonely moors." It contains in it a profound truth; for, as long as the architecture of the heavens surpasses the masonry of men, and the dome of the sky is nobler than that of St. Paul's, and the smoke of the solitary cottage, ascending with its waving tongue as from the altar of the morning sacrifice, is more spiritual than the huge black column vomited from the mill, and leaves glancing in the sunbeams are more beautiful than red bricks, and torrents flashing in the red light of the receding storm are more glorious to behold than the putrid puddles and mud-cataracts of the streets, and avenues of oaks, of "old prodigious growth," better than dirty and vicious lanes, and mighty glens mantled with sunshine or with shade, and the solemn streets of forests, and the deep hollows of the everlasting hills, and the wild paths cut by cataracts for their own irresistible way, and rocks, the gigantic gateways of the thunder, are finer than squares however splendid, and streets however broad, and spires however lofty,—as long as the span of the rainbow surpasses the arch of the bridge, and the harmonies of nature are more musical than the roar of sin arising from the twilight town, and the colour of health on the cheek of the peasant more pleasing than the cadaverous hue of disease, whitening the cheek of the artisan, and man leaning over the fresh reeking earth is a more natural object than man bending above the forge and the furnace, shall we, with Cowper, continue to prefer the country to the town, and for the same reason—the one is the production of the gross breath of miserable man, the other, each new morning, is the new emanation of eternal love and wisdom.

"God made the country, and man made the town."

True, O bard of Olney ! But true too it is, that God made the country poet, and man only the town. The anointing, at least, of the former is of a purer and richer kind. And all greatest poets, accordingly, have been more or less rural. How did Homer love this green earth, and that ever sounding sea ! And what a host of glad or terrible images has he culled from woody Ida, reedy Simois, Scamander's roaring waves, and the scenery of that Chian strand, whereon standing, he saw

“ The Iliad and the Odyssee  
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.”

And how numerous the descriptions of nature which abound in the Greek tragedians ; in Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion ; in Lucretius, who loved the rounded wholes as well as the sifted atoms of the universe ; in Virgil, whose “ Georgics,” next to the “ Seasons,” is the finest commentary genius has ever written upon nature ; in Dante, who was haunted by images of “ trim gardens” and golden fruitage, all down the descending circles of the Inferno ; in Shakspeare, who created the forest of Arden, and the island of Prospero, and dreamed the “ Midsummer Night's Dream ;” in Milton, the Milton of “ Paradise” and “ Comus ;” in Spenser, who “ lays us in the lap of a lovelier nature, by stiller streams, and fairer meadows ;” in Bunyan, whose little bits of scenery, from that “ very solitary place, the Valley of Humiliation,” and the green meadow called Ease, up to the high platform of Mount Clear, and the precipices of Mount Danger, and the table-land of Beulah, are done in the finest style of simple pastoral painting ; in Dryden, even, and Pope, who are masters in describing, the one the plain bold majesty of English landscapes, the pomp of avenues, the sweep of tree-surrounded parks,—the other, all artificial glooms, which man can, in

grove and grotto, and monastic aisle, and concealed cascade, create in mimicry of the mightier shadows by which nature girds in her solitudes ; in Byron, who, like a demon-painter, pounces upon all congenial objects, the mountain-peak islanded in perpetual snow, the glacier asleep in its old path of ruin, all "hells of waters," the tormented river, the possessed cataract, the ocean in its hour of exorcism, "wallowing and foaming again," the "sun of the sleepless," or the blind staggering scenery of a darkened universe ; and in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Wilson, Southey, Keats, &c., who aim at catching, not the external face, nor the pervading expression merely, but the inmost soul, the subtlest meaning of nature's solemn countenance.

But there is a class of poets who have come still more closely in contact with nature ; who may be called naked, native men, newly dug out, and panting with the first strong throbbings of God-given existence. Such are Burns, Bloomfield, Clare, Hogg, and Cunningham. These all fall spontaneously into one bright cluster, which we may call the Constellation of the Plough. They are all, in current phrase, self-educated, though verily we like not the phrase. Either all men are self-educated or none. We incline to the latter alternative. A poor weakling were one who, in the strict sense, could be called a self-educated man. To educate any man it takes a universe ; for what is any man but the complex result or focus of ten thousand lines of education, coming in from the extremities of the creation to meet in him ? Call the men of whom we speak not self, but heaven-taught men, and you approximate the truth. Such an one stepping forth into consciousness, finds himself in an illustrious academy, and his head schoolmaster is the sun. Subordinate teachers he has not a few, in the "silent stars," the whispering breezes, the waving trees, the sparkling waters, and the voices within

his own soul, which respond to these in pre-established harmony. And thus does his education go on briskly with the revolving seasons, till his overflowing thoughts "voluntarily move harmonious numbers;" and because he cannot speak, he sings his emotions. Speak!—he cannot speak; but neither can a nightingale. Like her he pours out the modulations of rude and artless melody:—

"He lisps in numbers, for the numbers come."

We select as specimens of this class James Hogg and Allan Cunningham. And first, for the Ettrick Shepherd. Had he not been a shepherd he had never been the peculiar poet he was—he would never have passed by acclamation into the post of poet-laureate to the "Fairy Queen," with gallons of dew, collected into the cool basins of the rocks, instead of butts of sack—had he not innumerable times seen their misty scarfs exchanged by the morning hills for the sunny mantles of dawn, and a hundred streams surprised into glory by the fresh upland day—had he not a thousand times watched alone, and with kindling eye, the old struggle of the sun and the mist, ever renewed, never ending, on the hill—had he not slept all night in his plaid amid the coves of Ben-macdhui, and heard in half dream the sough of the "spirit of the storm"—had he not shouted on its top, in the triumphant intuition that he stood on the highest land in Britain—had he not seen six times double at its base, magnifying Loch Avon from two miles to twenty-four in length (an assertion which he persisted in to the last)—had he not revelled with the fairies in the green moonlight, and met with ghosts past reckoning, and seen his own image, mist-magnified and bowing to him from an opposite mountain, and slid down on ice from the top to the bottom of the huge Benmore, and thrust his arm into the solid snow of a storm tumbling

down *en masse* from the blackest of heavens—had he not, in short, been born and bred, nursed and dandled in the arms of sublime superstition, and in the cradle of the forest, he had never been any more than a shrewd gossip, or the vain and vulgar burgess of a country town. But for the accidental circumstances and scenery of his birth, the one wild vein given him would never have bled. Off the green sward or the heather, for in both he was at home, though most on the former—out of the mist and the spray of the linn—he was the very commonest of men. The Grey Mare's Tail was the lock of his strength, the maud his mantle of inspiration. To talk of Sir Walter Scott being strong only on the heather is absurd; he was equally powerful on the turf of Sherwood Forest, amid the lilies of France, and on the sands of Syria. But Hogg could not transplant: the mountain air was the very necessity of his intellectual life, and the mystic ring of superstition the limit of his power. Out of this dread circle he resembled, not the magician, but the magician's victim—weak, panting, powerless. No man has written such loads of dull insensate trash. No man was ever so careless of his reputation, or knew less wherein, not merely his great strength, but his poetic identity, lay; but no man, at the same time, could so easily and rapidly regain the position where he was all-powerful. He had but to shut his eyes—to touch his organ of wonder—to name the name *diablerie*—to tap on the wall, whence the death-tick was coming thick and strong, for a ghost, and James Hogg was himself again. Call not this, after all, a narrow range—it was unmeasured as superstition—it included in its dark span the domain of Faery Land—the grave—

“Hell, Hades, Heaven, the eternal How and Where,  
The glory of the dead, and their despair.”



He was emphatically a "minion of the moon." Had that shadowy orb not existed, (discovered now to be, for all her shy and timid ways, little else than one great volcano, with enormous perforated craters in her, ready to bombard earth on the first opportunity, and in the mean time laughing in her green sleeves at the silly praises she has been receiving from immemorial scribblers as the "mild moon," the "mild Hecla!" the "pensive moon," the "pensive Vesuvius!" the "sweet moon," "sweet Mount Etna!") neither had the "Queen's Wake." Hogg writes with a moon-beam on the semi-transparent leaves of the forest trees. "Labour dire it is, and weary wo" to climb with his celestial wanderers in their pilgrimage to the sun. His genius is not supernal enough to climb to that old flame—to overleap his dazzling fence of rays—to rest on his round black ball—to look up to the arch of overhanging glory, shutting out from him the universe—to enter his metropolis—to follow his march, "lingering not, hasting not," in the train of some vaster luminary—or to anticipate the results of that swift suction, by which he may yet draw all his subject worlds into his one whirlpool solitude; stripping himself of his own august retinue; rolling himself together, to be in his turn engulfed in the stream of some distant vortex. Better, though still with a coarse pencil, does he depict that lonely traveller, that Cain-world, which, thrust out of his native sphere, dreaded of men and angels, pursues his hideous way, "showering thin flame" through the solitudes of space. It was a stroke of genius transferring the conception of a wandering Jew to the heavens, though the description of his progress, "clattering down the steeps of night for ever," reminds us, in its grotesque familiarity, of the worst style of Blair and Pollok. It is curious, however, that though so elegant and refined in almost all his pictures of the supernatural on earth, he is so coarse and

commonplace in mating with the magnificence of the heavens. Why does a man, who must so often, lying on his back on a midnight hill, have seen the whole ocean of stars, now twinkling and shivering in the frosty air, now seemingly swept and burnished by the wind, now crossed by sudden meteors shooting like sea-mews over the bosom of the deep, always looking as if they wished to sparkle down some deep intelligence to man, whom they love and pity, but are for ever unable—so calm in their high eternity, so fixed yet fluctuating in their aspect, so fantastic and ideal in their forms, asking so little from us, giving so much, seeking only from us a loving look, and giving in return “thoughts that wander through eternity”—why does he who must so often (like an artist on the floor of the Sistine Chapel, looking aloft at the spells which are pictured there,) have studied in such favourable circumstances this gallery of Heaven’s own paintings, never describe, in language more choice than that of Sturm or Hervey, his impressions of their grandeur so unspeakable, their silence so profound, their separation from the world below and from each other so entire, their multitude so immense, their lustre so brilliant, their order so regular, their motions so majestic and so calm? The reason perhaps lies in a theory we hold, which is, that mere genius, without what is usually called education, can never enter fully into the severe and spiritual beauty of the heavenly bodies. Either there is an aristocracy about the science of the stars which repels that class of minds of which we are now discoursing, or it may be, that loving earth so well, the countenance of the sky is to them, far, foreign, and insipid. Certain it is, we find little sympathy with the discoveries of modern science in this high field in any of their writings. Their allusion to them are few and not very happy. To them the low fire on the hearth is more interesting than a

sun when he shineth in his strength. Burns himself, sooth to say, has no great liking to the day-star, under whose beams he has so often sweltered: he loves him principally as the evening sun, lighting him home to his cottage, or beckoning him to his assignation what time the "plantain tops are tinged wi' goud by yon burn side." He likes the moon chiefly as it shines through the stacks in the barn-yard, or on the corn-rigs, amid which he is courting his Jean—the morning star as it reminds him of the dread day his "Mary from his soul was torn." He watches with more interest the flight of trooping plovers on a gray October morning, than the roll of systems; and the solitary cry of a curlew affects him more than the "thunder-psalm" of a thousand worlds. Bloomfield and Clare fly lower still; and a gorse bush, bending under its buds of gold, is to them a more enchanting sight than the "milky-way." To Hogg, again, the moon is just the fairies' lamp, when she is not the accomplice of the ghost, or shines not with fond consenting ray upon the witches' caldron;—the sun himself a plaything for the power of sorcery—the stars not nearly such imaginative objects as the "fairy ringlets" he meets upon the hill.

Omitting any special notice of the "Mountain Bard," "Madoc of the Moor," "Queen Hynde," "Winter Evening Tales," &c. &c., we have a word, and no more, to say of the "Queen's Wake." Its framework, so much admired at the time, and so essential to the immediate popularity of the book, is now little else than a pretty impertinence. The power has shrunk up into one or two of the separate ballads, which, embalmed in their own wild odour, shall find their floating way into all after time. "Kilmeny" we love, like all the world, for its sweetness and spirituality; a sweetness more unearthly—a spirituality more intense than are to be

found any where else in the language of men, save (at a vast distance of superiority) in the songs of Ariel in the "Tempest." We love it, too, because we know well, and from infancy have known, the glen up which went alone the maid in the "pride of her purity." It lies along a deep green valley, sunk in between two high chains of hills—those of Abruchill and Dundurn—lifting their "giant snouted" crags on the south, and on the north the hills of Crappich and Cluan, piled up like leaning Titans. This valley has evidently been once a part of Loch Earn. It is level, but sprinkled with little wooded eminences, once, no doubt, islets, and toward its western end rises a remarkable hill, called the hill of St. Fillans, strangely contrasting with the black and heathery mountains which tower above it. It is green, round-headed, grassy, like a young Ochil which had been flung down among the gloomy Grampians. At the foot of the northern bulwark of the valley lies Dunira, alluded to in the poem, ("It was na to meet wi Dunira's men,") a place where the utmost refinement of art, in the form of a white-washed mansion, rich lawns, "shaven by the scythe and smoothed by the roller," fine shrubbery and elegant garden, is brought into contact, contrast, yet harmony, with the utmost wildness and grandeur of nature—a bare, knotted hill before, and behind it a mountain, wooded almost to the summit, like some awful countenance veiled, but speaking in the tongues of a hundred waterfalls, which you hear, but see not, dashing, leaping and murmuring down their downright and headlong course till reaching the plain, and as if in deference to the inmates of the dwelling, they hush their voices, and become " stillest streams watering fairest meadows." To the west of this lovely place lies the blue sheet of Loch Earn, back from which retires Benvoirlich, like a monarch, almost unseen by the lake, which yet owns his sway.

We have seen this scene from the summit of Dunmore and the side of Melville's monument, which stands upon it; seen it at all hours, in all circumstances, and in all seasons—in the clear morning, while the smoke of a thousand cottages was seen rising through the dewy air, and when the mountains seemed not thoroughly awakened from their night's repose—in the garish noon-day, when the feeling of mystery was removed by the open clearness, but that of majesty in form and outline remained—in the afternoon, with its sunbeams streaking huge shadows, and writing characters of fire upon all the hills—in the golden evening, when the sun was going down over Benmore in blood—in the dim evening, to us dearer still, when a faint rich mist was steeping all the landscape in religious hues—in the waste night, while the moon was rising red in the northeast, like a beacon, or a torch uplifted by some giant-hand—under the breezes and bashful green of spring—in the laughing luxuriance of summer—under the yellow shade of autumn—at the close of autumn, when the woods were red and the stubble sovereign of the fields—and again when hill, valley, and wood were spotted with snow, have seen it in a hush so profound that you might have imagined nature listening for some mysterious tidings, and hardly dared to breathe; and in the cloudy and dark day, while the thunder was shaking the column and the lightning painting the landscape. And gazing at it, whether in glimmer or in gloom, have we sometimes fancied that we saw that fearless form "gaeing" up through the plains of Dalwhinnie and the fairy plantations of Dunira,

"To pu' the cress-flower from the well,  
The scarlet hyp and the hynd berrye,  
And the nut that hang frae the hazel tree,  
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be."

And when gloaming especially had poured her dim divine lustre over the dark hills and white castle of Abruchill, and allowed the last lingering ray of sunshine to rest on the crest of Benvoirlich, and hushed the streams of Glenlednick behind, and drawn a dewy veil over the plain of Dalginross before, and softened the call of the Cauldron in the glen below, and suffused over all the landscape of earth and heaven a sense unutterable of peace, and introduced into the scene, as a last glorious touch, the moon, to enhance the sense of solemnity, and to deepen the feeling of repose, have we, reclining on the hill, and seeing the stars coming out above the silent column, thought of the "eve in a sinless world," when,

" In ecstasy of sweet devotion,  
O then the glen was all in motion ;"

and owned the power of the "consecration," and felt the might of the "poet's dream."

Since we began the composition of these little sketches, Allan Cunningham, the honest, genial, dark-eyed, eloquent spirit, has departed. He is gone, not to his tryste beside "Arbigland tree," but to a darker assignation. No more he sings in firm, unquaking voice,—

" There's tempest in yon horned moon,  
And lightning in yon cloud,  
And hark the music, Marineres,  
The wind is piping loud ;"

but has become himself a pale and piping shade.

With his memory are connected tender and unmingled emotions. He was a genuine "son of the soil." Nationality was his principal characteristic. His blood was as deeply imbued with Scottish feeling as one of our own upland rivers with the colour and flavour of the moss. In this respect he

was a Burns,—but a Burns, shorn of all that was troubled and lurid in his idiosyncrasy. With Burns, he must have breathed the wish,

That he, for poor auld Scotland's sake,  
Some usefu' plan or book micht make,  
Or sing a sang at least.

And, like Burns, his wish was granted; and many a sang, sweet and strong, pathetic and bold, shall continue to link his name with that of his country. His genius was not only national but provincial. It clung to Criffel, and swam in Solway, and haunted the groves and scaurs of the Nith to the last. Dumfriesshire has reason to be proud of Allan Cunningham, and prouder because, in distance and absence, he never allowed his imagination, or his heart, to travel away from her well-beloved fields.

Cunningham's mind was essentially lyrical; but the airy strings of his lyre were set in a strong, rough, oaken frame. Masculine boldness, verging often on extravagance, was his leading feature as a writer. You saw the strong stone-cutter in all that he did. He hewed out his way through a subject, as he was wont to do through many a block of granite and marble. Yet is his execution hardly so exact, and finished, and harmonious as you might have expected from one whose trade brought him so closely in contact with the proportions of things. It is often loose, disjointed, uneven; more like the work of a common mason, thoughtful only of the position of separate stones, than of an architect solicitous of the effect and grand outline of the whole. The Pagans represented their gods each with a musical instrument in his hand, denoting thus the exquisite and eternal harmony which prevails throughout the universe. So should all great artists be pictured, at once inspiring and

controlling their conceptions, awakening and soothing their fires to the measured modulations of music. In this high sense Allan Cunningham was not an artist at all. He never felt on his intellect the control of the "spirit of law," that serene omnipresence which surrounds the steps of the highest genius, wherever it goes, and invests its own ideal of excellence with the authority of conscience. His mind wanders untamed, like a giant of the infant world, striding, with large uneven steps, through the monstrous wildernesses of that early time,—startling, with careless step, the coiled-up dragons of the desert,—dipping his fearless foot into the wet nest of the scorpion and the centipede,—shouting from the volcanic summit to some huge being unknown, sitting, silent, on the opposite peak—laying his lubber length on the dry bald burning rock, and snorting out from his deep chest terrific slumber—listening, now and then, to some snatch of melody from a distant vale, and controlling, for a while, his wild step to its tone, or even dancing to its music—but relapsing as fitfully into his eccentric and uncontrollable motion. So particularly in Sir Marmaduke Maxwell and Michael Scott does his genius run riot in conscious and glorying error. His wanderings have about them this peculiarity,—they are never those of the speculative intellect, moon-struck, and gathering mist as it deviates, but of the mere young fancy, burdening itself with a profusion of harmless flowers. He never returns, like some of your Germans and Germanized French, laden with poisons,—mandragora and hemlock, opium and night-shade, nux vomica and henbane, which they have culled in the glooms of nature, and baptized in the blaspheming bitterness of their own spirits. His wanderings are those of hopeful and happy youth, not of fever, escaped from its keepers, harrowing the awe-struck woods, or ending its agonies in the embrace of the "melan-



choly main." Health, indeed, genial robust health, was the moral element of Cunningham's being. You say, as you read him, this is the hand-writing of a happy man. Pleasure he has known; but he is not, manifestly, that degraded and most unblest being who has said to pleasure, thou art my god; and you never find in his writings that stimulating and well-nigh putrid flavour which indulgence bequeaths to the writings of a Byron. Nor is his that rarer blessedness which, wrung out from conflict and sorrow, lies on the page of Sartor like moonshine distilled into something stiller, softer, and sadder far, and which is as much "better than happiness, as happiness is better than pleasure." His abiding feeling, judging from his works, is a happiness compounded of "many simples," of a fine bodily temperament—enthusiasm fresh, but never fierce—wishes moderate and subdued—speculative intellect quiescent—habits of thought and action well intermingled, and both adjusted according to genuine moral and poetic method, a quiet, deep principle of common sense intermingling with imagination, and an enacted consciousness of the God-like fact, that the strong arm of man is the "sceptre of this planet;" and that he has a strong arm.

He was a poet, a novelist, a sketcher, and a critic. As a poet he stood high in the second class. He never ventured the conception or execution of any piece of rhymed heroism,—any massive structure, rising slowly with elaborate pomp, and far-seen stress, and far-heard panting of divine endeavour; or else rushing up, with startling haste, like an exhalation. His erections are small and scattered, though denoting a muscular power equal to greater things. How fine those ballads in Cromek's collection in their rude simplicity, their touches of fearless pathos, their originality, but slenderly disguised under the pretext of imi-

tation—their quaint turns of expression, and their frequent escapes into real daring and grandeur of conception and language! They remind us, at a great interval, of the ballads of Schiller. They possess the abruptness, the direct dealing, the strong simplicity, the enthusiasm, of those extraordinary compositions; but have none of their depth of thought, their width of philosophic view, or the power and pressure, as if on the very sense, of their individual descriptions. Cunningham brings us no tidings from the “innermost main,” where Schiller, a “diver lean and strong,” disports himself among the mighty shapes, and mightier shadows;—the salamanders, snakes, dragons; hammerfish “darkening the dark of the sea;” and “terrible sharks, the hyenas of ocean;” giving to the depths of the sea a life more dreadful than utter death—a motion more appalling than the uniformity of eternal silence. Yet Allan was a genuine lover of old ocean. Love to her, rather than that other feeling shadowed in Wordsworth’s line, “of the old sea some reverential fear,” in all her changing moods and Protean forms, was one of the ruling passions of his nature; and of him it might have been said, that

“His march was o’er the mountain wave,  
His home was on the deep.”

Hence those foam-drops of song, such as “A wet sheet and a flowing sea,” which are in every body’s mouth, and his more elaborate romance of “Paul Jones,” which nautical men blame as not smelling strongly enough of the brine, and which critics coincide in censuring as having rather the fade flavour of a cask of salt water carted inwards than that of the real ocean,

“Rolling the wild profound eternal Bass  
In Nature’s harmonies.”

It can hardly be said, with all its occasional splendour, and incessant energy, to have become a romance of even average popularity.

“Every man carries in him a madman.” So is every author big with some mad project or other, which sooner or later blossoms into a deranged, or demi-deranged, volume. Sometimes it is its author’s first, and then it either hurries him before a storm of laughter, into oblivion, or it gains him only so much ridicule as to rouse him, by the rebound of indignation, into after excellence and immortal fame. Sometimes it is his last, and shelters under the charitable presumption of dotage. Sometimes it is mistaken for a quiz; and sometimes it is pardoned for the method, meaning, and otherwise inexpressible confidence which, as in Sartor Resartus, its fantastic structure faintly conceals. Under none of those pleas can “Michael Scott” be defended. It is neither a sin of youth, nor a drivel of age,—neither a quiz nor a splendid quaintness. It was written in sober earnest, and as a trial of strength; and yet, with all its wasted power, and spilt splendour, can be likened to nothing in earth, sea, or air, but the caldron of a Canidia or a Hecate, with thick sparkles interpiercing a thick smoke, through which you see, or seem to see, amid a tremendous “bubble and squeak,”—a hell-broth in the act of cookery, which a Cerberus might, with sputtering noise, reject; and which you are thankful that no power in air, earth, or sea, can compel you to swallow.

How different the “Maid of Elvar,” with its soft shine of imagery, its lapse of Spenserian rhyme, its picturings of towered, and treed, and cottage-belted scenery, its murmuring tone, as of a “noon-tide bee,” and all the separate beauties which nestle so thickly among its embowering branches! How different, too, that series of traditions,

tales, and sketches, which he wrote in the *London Magazine*, and by which he turned up, with a share at once bold and tender, a tilth as yet rich and untried. Truly it was a palmy periodical during its brief reign, that same *London Magazine*, whence the just elegant genius and Addisonian style of John Scott had departed, early quenched, alas ! and quenched in blood ; where Hazlitt's penetrating pen was scratching as in scorn his rude immortalities ; where De Quincey was transcribing, with tremulous hand, the most sublime and terrific dreams which opium and genius, things too kin to marry, had ever bred between them, by unnatural union ; where Reynolds was edging in among graver matters, his clever Cockneyisms ; where Lamb was lispng his wondrous prattle ; and where the idiomatic mind of Allan Cunningham was adding a flavour of Scottish romance, as of mountain honey, to the fine medley.

As a critic, his character may be estimated from his pen and ink sketches in the *New Monthly*, his life of Burns, his critique on Thomson, and his "Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects of Great Britain." His leading quality was constant healthiness of taste. He had no profound insight into principles, but neither was he ever misled into one-sided judgments ; he was no monster of discrimination, nor do you ever find in him volcanic bursts of enthusiasm, the violence of which is proportioned to the depth of dreary depression from which they spring, and which remind you of the snatches which a miserable man takes of all the pleasures within his reach, eager, short, hurrying. His criticisms are sweet-toned, sensible, generous, and as the building proceeds, the chisel ever and anon tunes itself to sudden impulse, and moves quick as to some unseen power, and you feel that the builder is a poet. He excels rather in critical talk, than criticism. He seldom

hazards a new opinion ; never a paradox. He is content to catch the cream of common opinion into his own silver cup. His originality lies in the power of modifying the opinions of others, and in that fine forge of imagery which stands permanently in his own mind. His book on Painters is a gallery in itself. The English artists were precisely the theme for him. We question if he could have coped so worthily with the great Italians, in their knotty muscle, daring liberties, ethereal combinations, or in that palpable determination they evince to find their sole religion in their art—a determination so plain, that we could conceive them breaking up the true Cross for pencils, as we know they crucified slaves for subjects. Leaving them to the tingling brush of Fuseli, Cunningham shows us, in a fine mellow light, Gainsborough seated silent on his stile ; Morland among his pigs ; Barry propounding his canons of austere criticism, and cooking the while his steak ; West arranging the tail of the

“ Giant steed to be bestrode by Death,  
As told in the Apocalypse,”

with as much coolness as he would his own cravat ; Wilson with his hand trembling at his palette, half with enthusiasm, half with brandy ; dear enthusiastic Blake painting Satan from the life—asking, “ Jane Boucher, do you love me, lass ?” and there at once a beginning and an end of the courtship ; or seeing the great vision pictured in the lines—

“ Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forest of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Framed thy fearful symmetry ?  
In what distant depths or skies  
Burnt the fervour of thine eyes ?

Did he that made the lamb make thee ?”

Opie lying all night awake with rapture, after his successful debüt as a lecturer ; or retorting the frown Peter Pindar sometimes cast at him from his enormous brows ; Reynolds shifting his trumpet, or gazing with blandest look on his beautiful " child-cherubs ;" Flaxman cherishing his lofty ideals ; Fuseli rising on tiptoe, the bursting little man, towards the creations of the giant Italians, or bristling up against the Academy in such sort as to teach them that an inspired prophet of Lilliput was worth a whole Brobdignag of blockheads. Thus are Allan's figures not set still and stiff at their palettes, but live, move, breathe, battle, love, burn, and die.

We are thankful to Cunningham for this book, not only because it is a monument of his own powers, but because it does justice to the claims of British art ;—an art which, considering the disadvantages of climate and sky, and national coldness of feeling, and taste, and bigoted religious prejudices, with which it has had to contend, when compared with the Italian school, is perhaps the greater wonder of the two. We admit that we have had no prodigies like Michael Angelo and Leonardo Da Vinci—those kings of the beautiful, who ruled with sway so absolute over all its regions, and shot their souls with equal ease and energy into a tower and a tune, a picture or a statue, a dome or a sonnet. These were monsters rather than men. We grant, too, that there has been but one Raffaele—who was a man and no monster—and who of all men knew best the art of lifting man and woman quite out of earth " within the veil," and of showering on their face, and form, and bosom, and dress, beauty which is not of this cold clime—lustre unborrowed of that dim king of earthly day—meanings travelling out from eyes which seem set in eternity—motions of supernal grace and dignity—and who seemed made to supply the Christian's most craving desire after a pictured image of that face which was more marred than that of man—that form bent under the burden

of a world's atonement, in a bend more glorious than the bend of the rainbow—those arms which were instinct and vibrating with everlasting love—those long curling locks which seemed to twine lovingly round the thorns which pierced his pale majestic brow. No Raffaele have we: the world has but one. Let Italy boast in him the Milton of painting, we have the Shakspeare. Hogarth is ours—in his comic lights and tragic shadows—in his humour, force, variety, truth, absolute originality, quaint, but strong moral, and in that alchymy, all his own, by which, from the very worst materials, he deduces the richest laughter, or a sense of moral sublimity which is more precious than pure gold. And, not to speak of many other great names, we can challenge the world from the beginning to show a genius more unique, more insulated in his craggy solitude—like a volcanic cliff shot up as by unseen and unmeasured catapult from the depth of the sea—more an embodied idea—a world in himself—less prefigured by any preceding mind—less likely to be eclipsed by any other—more signally demonstrative in his single self of the truth, that the human mind is sometimes a native voice speaking immediately from the deep to the day—than the painter—the poet—the creator of the Deluge and Belshazzar's Feast.

We thank him, in fine, for this book, because, like ourselves, he loves the painter. We know nothing of the technicalities of the “serene and silent art:” we leave these to the “artist and his ape; let such describe the indescribable.” But we dearly love our own ideal of the painter—as a graceful *alias* of the poet—as a genuine and bending worshipper of the forms by which the Great Artist has redeemed his creation from chaos, and of the colours by which he has enchanted it into heaven—as himself, one of the finest figures in the landscapes of earth, sitting motionless

under the rainbow ; or dumb as the pencil of the lightning is dashing its fiery lines upon the black scroll of the thunder-cloud ; or copying in severe sympathy from the cataract ; or seated "knitting" the mountain to the sky, on a crag above the eagle's eyrie ; or leaning over the rural bridge, over which, perchance, in his reverie he bedrops his pencil into the still water ; or mixing unnoticed in the triumphal show, which, after living its little hour on the troubled street-page, shall live on his canvass for evermore ; or gazing like a spirit into the eye of genius or on the brow and blush of beauty ; or in his still studio, sitting alone, chewing the cud of those sweet and bitter fancies he is afterwards to embody in form ; or looking through hopeless, yet happy tears, at the works of elder masters ; or spreading before him the large canvass which he must cause to glow into a princely painting, or perish in the attempt ; or even drooping over an abortive design ; or dashing his brush across it in the heat of his spirit ; or maddening in love to the fair creation of his hands ; or haunted by some terrible figure of his own drawing ; or filling his asylum-cell with the chimeras of his soul ; or dying with the last touch given to an immortal work, and with no wish for any epitaph but this, "I also was a painter." "Somewhat too much of this ;" therefore, dear Allan Cunningham, farewell !

"Perhaps in some far future land  
We yet may meet—we yet may dwell—  
If not, from off this mortal strand,  
Immortal, fare-thee-well !"



## EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

WE have sometimes wondered that the forge has not sooner sent forth its poetical representative. It is undoubtedly one of the most imaginative of the objects of artificial life, especially when standing solitary, and on the edge of a dark wood. Hear how a man of genius describes it:—"As I rode through the Schwarzald, I said to myself, That little fire, which glows across the dark-growing moor, where the sooty smith bends over the anvil, and thou hopest to replace thy lost horse-shoe, is it a detached separated speck, cut off from the whole universe, or indissolubly united to the whole? Thou fool! that smithy fire was primarily kindled at the sun; is fed by air that circulates from before Noah's Deluge—from beyond the dog-star,—therein, with iron force, and coal force, and the far stronger force of man, are battles and victories of force brought about. It is a little ganglion or nervous centre in the great system of immensity. Call it, if thou wilt, an unconscious altar, kindled on the bosom of the All, whose iron smoke and influence reach quite through the All—whose dingy priest, not by word, but by brain and sinew, preaches forth the mystery of Force." A smith, surrounded by an atmosphere of sparkles—sending out that thick thunder which Schiller seems to have loved above all other music—presiding at the wild wedlock of iron and flame, and baptizing the progeny of the terrible Hymen in the hissing trough—so independent in his lonely stithy—lord of his hammer and his strong right arm—carrying back your imagination to the days when the hammer of Tubal-Cain awoke the virgin echoes of the antediluvian world, and made him a mythic one, by first bending the stiff neck of the iron

and the brass—or to the bowels of Etna, and Vulcan—or to the groves and lucid streams of Damascus—or to Spain, and the Ebro, and Andrew Ferrara—while, perhaps, sweeps before the mind's eye a procession of the instruments of death, from the first shapeless mass of iron, fitted to the giant-hand of a son of Cain, down through the Grecian javelin; the Roman spear; the Persian scimitar; the Saracen blade, bright and sharp as the crescent-moon; the great two-handed sword of the middle ages; the bayonet, which bored a passage for the armies of Turenne; the pike; the battle-axe; the claymore of Caledonia: thus does imagination pile up a pedestal, on which the smith, and his dusky visage, and his uplifted hammer, and his patient anvil, look absolutely ideal; and the wonder is excited why till of late no "Message *from the Forge*," has been conveyed to the ears of men beyond its own incessant and victorious sound. And yet the forge had wrought and raved for ages, and amid all its fiery products reared no poet till it was said, "Let Ebenezer Elliott be." And though he stands forward somewhat ostentatiously as the self-chosen deputy to Parnassus of the entire manufacturing class, it is easy to find, in the large rough grasp of his intellect, in the daring of his imagination, in the untameable fire of his uneven, yet nervous line, in his impatient and contemptuous use of language, traces of the special trade at which he has all along wrought; of the impression which a constant circle of fire has made upon his imagination; and of the savage power which has taught him to wield the hammer and the pen with little difference in degree of animal exertion and mental fury. We can never divest our minds as we read him of the image of a grim son of the furnace, black as Erebus, riving, tearing, and smiting at his reluctant words; storming now and then at the disobedient ends of sentences; clutching his broad-nibbed quill, an

closing the other and the other paragraph with the flourish of one who brings down upon the anvil a last sure and successful blow.

Elliott is unquestionably one of the most masculine men of our era. His poorest copy of verses; his wildest sins against good taste and propriety; his most truculent invective; and even the witless personalities by which it pleases him so often to poison his poetry and his prose, will not conceal the brawny muscle, the strong intellect, and the stronger passions of a man. Burns, in his haughtiest moment, never grasped the sickle with a sturdier independence. From the side of his furnace he speaks in a tone of authority; and stern, decisive, and oracular, are his sentences. Indeed, his dogmatism is so incessant and so fierce, that were it not backed by such manifest power and earnestness, it would excite no feelings but disgust or pity. But we defy you to pity a man who points his abuse by shaking such a strong fist in your face. You feel, too, that your pity were quite thrown away, since he would not feel it through his tough hide. Restraining therefore your pity, and biting down the lip of your disgust, you start back, and keep at a respectful distance from a customer so formidable. Glancing aesthetically at the inspired ironmonger, you see at once that strength is his principal characteristic; nor do you care to settle the question whether it be strength or intellect, or passion, or imagination, or a triple twist of all three. You are tempted, indeed, while looking at him, to believe that a really strong man is strong all around; and whatever fatal flaw may run through all his faculties, they must all support each other—intellect supplying the material, imagination the light, passion the flame, of the one conflagration. You say as you look at him, whether hammering at a steelyard or a sonnet, hewing his way through nervous verse or rugged prose, here

is a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—a Demi-urgus, like those giant-muscled three in Raffaele's Building the Ark, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, sawing at the massive timbers which are to swim the Deluge and rest on Ararat, with a force, a gusto, and a majesty suitable to the tenants of an undrowned world; or, like those "Vulcanian three, that in sounding caverns under Mongibello, wrought in fire—Brontes, and black Steropes, and Pyracmon." So stands, leans, labours, growls and curses at times, not loud but deep, with foot firmly planted, and down-bent flaming eye, this

"Titan of the age of tools."

You see, too, that he has the true vision of the poet—that mysterious eyesight which sees the spiritual as well as the material shadow which falls from off all things, and which to the bard alone is naked and bare. Be this penetrating and incommunicable glance a blessing or a curse; and, as in the case of the second sight, it is the one or the other, according to the objects presented—being, if a genial temperament show the unseen border of beauty which edges and flowers all things, one of the greatest of blessings; but if accident or position, or a black bilious medium discover the halo of misery which invisibly surrounds every object in this strange world, one of the greatest of curses: be it the one or the other, it has, and for ever, unsealed his eye. You regret to perceive, on more narrow inspection, that he has fixed his piercing gaze too much on the dark side of things—that his view is angular, not comprehensive—that passion has given his eye now a portentous squint, and now a ferocious glare—that he has seen through "shame," not in the sense of seeing what even they contain of good and true, but seen through them as through empty spaces into the vast, black, hollow, and hideous night.

well as the divine vision. His sight is not a struggling but an

You acknowledge, too, the presence of the "faculty" as open sight. He has found, though a self-educated man, as it is called, fit and noble expression for his burning thoughts. His language is not rich, fluent, refined, or copious, but knotty, direct, and with a marrowy race and strength about it which are truly refreshing to those who are tired of reflection after reflection of a great native style, fading gradually away, (like those small faint segments of rainbows mimicking the bow of heaven,) till all is gloom. Elliott's language reminds you of the blue and nervous veins of a strong hand, so surcharged are his words with the blood of thought and passion. And when it rises to the breath of his indignation, like some "tumultuous moon-stirred Atlantic,"—when he mounts on the full whirlwind of his soul—you are irresistibly reminded of that impetuous prophet who gazed on the "terrible crystal," and stood below the shadow of the visionary wheels, and walked barefoot upon the stones of fire, and saw in the porch the "dark idolatries of the alienated Judah," and plucked down forks of the lightning for words to express the fury of his ire, and heaved up from his breast burdens that "made the pagan mountains shake and Zion's cedars bow." Elliott has unquestionably, as the spirit moves him, at times, if not all the inspiration, all the fury of the prophet—his forgetfulness of self—his heat of spirit—the contortions and spasms by which he was delivered of his message—as of a demon.

And yet, when it chooses him to "look abroad into universality," and instead of inveighing against a corn-law, to walk forth into the corn-fields—to pierce the shady solitude of the lane—to converse with

"Cloud, gorse, and whirlwind on the gorgeous moor"—

to spend his solitary Sabbath upon the mountain,—to bare his heated brow in the fresh breeze, as an act—as an altar of worship to the poor man's God,—what a delightful companion does the stern iron-worker become! You can scarcely believe that it is the same person, or that such bland and balmy accents could flow from the lips which, a little before, you saw white with foam, and writhen with denunciations. Striking, with large strides, through the silent suburbs of the morning city, he gets into the clear country,—selects, from some imaginative motive, one among the many quiet paths which would be proud of the presence and ennobling step of a poet,—absolutely shivers with the joy, springing from a sense of security and solitude,—enacts, in the fulness of his heart, a thousand wild vagaries,—leaps aloft, or throws himself down, at large, upon the green bank, or talks eloquently to himself,—or bespeaks the patient cow, or big-browed bull, in the pasture—or sits motionless upon the stile, “gazing himself away” at some point in the distant landscape—or prays aloud,—plunges, at noon, into a wood, and lies dissolved in its shady coolness,—emerges and pursues his way—reaches some “Kirk of Ulpha,” with trees shadowing its horologe, and a river laving its church-yard wall—enters, with sturdy yet reverend step—bends his anointed head under the consecrated roof—amazes the simple worshippers, who see, from his eye and brow, that he is no common wanderer—climbs a hill behind, and has all the sublime savage re-born within him, at the sight of the far-off city, and heaves out, like an opened crater, some wild and angry breathings—returns wearied, yet heart-full, in the evening shadows—dreams it all over in his bed, and rises in the morning to his strong hammer and fierce philippics again.

You are impressed always, as you consider this strong man, with the respect—the almost awe, which perfect honesty

inspires. Here, you say, is one who has trampled down the Python Falsehood—who loves truth with a passion, and all whose utterances come from the sincere and boiling heart within. Here is one who can bear all the charges of imprudence, recklessness, folly, or madness, with which an honest man is sure to be saluted, as he ploughs on his straight strong furrow, through the field of the world. Here is one who covets no other epitaph upon his sepulchre than the words, “Here lies one who, in an age of brazen-faced falsehood, of colossal cant,—cant moral, cant political, cant religious, lived and died an honest man.

Reverting to his poetical and literary character, you miss much that might complete the character of the accomplished artist. Not only have you no great work, but no conception of it—no panting after it—no spirit of design adequate to even its idea. There is much muscular power, but it is an Apollyon, not an artistic energy. What a rare “Architect of Ruin,” you say, would he be in a work of uncreation ; but no Amphion lyre does he, or can he sway. He is not one of the “kings of melody ;” his song has no linked sweetness—no long reach of swelling power,—only transient touches, rude and sudden strokes, endangering the integrity of the instrument,—groans and half blasphemies instead of airs, wrung out from its chords as from a spirit in pain, confess the hand of the master. You discern, too, a concentration of interest, eddying round one egotistic centre, which renders his genius essentially undramatic, and his Kerhonah a failure. In that massed up midnight of the primeval forests, Elliott walks with infirm foot, and seems to miss the greensward of the English lane, the springy heath of the English upland, and the breezy clearness of the English day.

You are not surprised, in fine, to find him not only an

original poet, but a generous and eloquent critic. His criticism is that of a fresh and fearless mind; never balancing his praise against his blame, in petty grocer-like scales—never checking a current of eulogium by some small jet of carping snarl—never doling out his praise in meagre modica—never passing, with the bound of malignant exultation, from drops of preliminary and extorted approbation to the more congenial work of wholesale detraction—never wrapping up his oracular praise or censure (as is becoming the fashion,) in mysterious and unmeaning slang—never determinedly praising a man for what he possesses not, but stamping, at once, either the broad arrow of his approbation, or the broad black seal of his disgust, upon the particular author or book, and there an end. His verdicts have all the gusto of a native mind unhackneyed in the ways of literature—uninitiated in the mystery of puffery, and in the darker mystery of slander. They are written out, too, with the flourishes and dashes of a poet's hand-writing, and remind us of Burns' frank and fire-blooded panegyrics.

His rhymes and hymns carry the seed of oblivion within themselves; but there is much in the Corn-law rhymer which the world will not so readily let die. Above all, it will cherish the memory of the man; as, when was a true man ever forgotten? Mists may, for a season, hide or exaggerate his proportions,—winds of abuse may blow him out of sight,—he may be riddled with calumny, or starved to death,—his ashes may fly, "no marble tells us whither;" but, sooner or later, (for "a man, in the long run, has, and is, just what he is and has,") he will be revealed in his proper dimensions, his contribution to the great stock of manly thoughts and utterances, accurately ascertained,—his niche settled and railed in,—his statue elevated, and set unalterably upon its own base. High prospect to the true and the



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manly, and to them alone. The earth has never yet had so many real men as to afford to be able to drop even one of them from its list ; and Elliott, too, will feel, and, we believe, feels already, that

“ The Great Soul of the world is just.”

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### JOHN KEATS.

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been written about the morale of men of genius. A nervous temperament has been ascribed to them, to which, as causes of unhappiness, are added indolence, vanity, irritability, insulation, and poverty. D'Israel, in his “ Calamities of Authors,” has taken up the doleful Jeremiad, and made a book of it. He could have made just as large a book about the calamities of cadgers. Our own experience of men of genius, and we have known not a few, is, that they are very much like their neighbours, in the qualities and circumstances referred to. Let us try the point by a brief induction of facts, ere proceeding to the unfortunate child of genius whose name heads the sketch. And, first, as to indolence. Homer seems to have been as active as most ballad-singers ; and, verily, their trade is no sinecure. Eschylus was a tragedian, a leader of armies, and a writer of ninety plays. Demosthenes talked perpetually ; and, to talk, at his pitch, for a lifetime, was something. Pindar added the activity of an Olympic jockey to the fury of a Pythoness. Virgil polished away all his life, and the labour of the file is no trifle. On what subject has Cicero not written ? and an encyclopædiast is not thought the most indolent of animals. Horace, we admit, was indolent ; not

so Lucretius, who, besides other things, was at the pains of building up an entire system of the universe, in a long and lofty poem. Michael Angelo, Raffaele, and all the great painters of Italy, worked without ceasing. Dante was far too fierce and restless a spirit to be indolent. Erasmus made a book while on a journey. Shakspeare wrote thirty plays ere he was fifty. Milton felt himself ever in his "great task-master's eye:" need we add, that he laboured? Dryden is one of the most voluminous of writers. Pope wrote much and polished more. Daniel De Foe was one of the most active men of the age. Goldsmith had too much writhing vanity to remain at repose. Johnson and Thomson were, indeed, indolent; but, in the former, it sprang from disease, and it prevented neither from doing great things. Cowper was indolent only when the fit of derangement was upon him. Alfieri might be called the galloping genius, and clearing thousands of miles, and writing tragedies by the dozen, are no despicable affairs. Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber, were never done with their graceful labours. Byron had all the activity of a scalded fiend. Wordsworth has been called indolent. He has, however, written "The Recluse;" and it is long since Jeffrey sought for a "powerful calculus" to compute its colossal magnitude. Southey was the most regularly industrious man of the day. Coleridge was of an indolent constitution; and yet, besides talking incessantly, he wrote a great deal. Shelley gave himself no rest till his glorious eyes were shut, and his warm heart hushed in death. He had drank poison and he slept no more. The names of Scott, Goethe, Godwin, Schiller, Richter, Chalmers, &c. &c., need only be mentioned. We might just as easily dispose of the charges of vanity, irritability, insulation, and all that sort of thing. As to poverty, Leigh Hunt, in an exquisite paper which

appeared in the *New Monthly*, many years ago, has knocked this vulgar error effectually on the head. And, with respect to happiness, we may give a few instances to show that men of genius are made of a "mingled yarn," like the rest of the poor sons of Adam. We begin with Homer. Of his private life we know nothing. We must judge of him by the spirit of his works. It may be said, indeed, that this is scarcely fair, as a book is often a bad index of circumstances, and a worse of character. We are convinced, however, that the tone of a work is, generally, a fair mirror of a man's happiness. It gives, at least, an indefinite impression about it, against which it is vain to struggle. Exceptions may be named; and, among others, the levity of Don Juan. Alas! that is a ghastly gaiety. It is forced and frantic, the smile of a galvanized corpse. The pervading tone of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is very different. They are the healthiest of works. There are, in them, no fits, no sullenness, no querulous complaints, not one personal allusion. Homer must have been a happy man. Eschylus was a darker spirit, but it was the darkness of elevation and grandeur, not of wretchedness, that surrounded him. His soul dwelt too much in the wilderness of the universe; but there he would seem, nevertheless, to have had a large measure of enjoyment. His excitements are recorded to have been tremendous. No one had more of the Pythonic inspiration and rapture. Anacreon was as happy as good nature and a pampered imagination could make him. Virgil seems to have had much quiet and tranquil enjoyment. To this, his being pathetic is no objection; for there is such a thing as the "joy of grief." And no miserable man could have counterfeited that serene grandeur and cheerful majesty that distinguish all his writings. Horace, again, is all careless hilarity. He runs over his subject with an ease and a

grace quite peculiar to himself, and denoting any thing but wretchedness. He is, in fact, Anacreon, with a deeper dash of lyric rapture and enthusiasm. Those who deny happiness to genius, must prove that Shakspeare was miserable. What an *onus probandi*! What dire work must they have to accomplish it! There is not a morbid line in all his writings. He has never (except, perhaps, in "Timon") cast one shadow on a human spirit. His pathos melts, but never crushes; and how easy and beautiful the bound from his deepest scenes of tragedy to the gaiety of his comedies! In fact, there is little known about Shakspeare but that he was a cheerful man. Spenser seems to have passed his existence in a delightful dream. Refined luxury is, indeed, the element of the "The Faery Queen." Though he had dined on ambrosia, and sojourned in Elysium, he could not have written with a more intense feeling of the soft, the lovely, and the ecstatic. Considering all Milton's circumstances, is it wonderful that a shade of sorrow lies lightly on the pages of the "Paradise Lost;" that the sunny spirit of the L'Allegro and the Comus is not there? It is in these earlier productions that we are to look for the real tendencies and dispositions of his being. And where, except in Shakspeare, shall we find more geniality and true cheerfulness? A vein of wit, sometimes darkening into sarcasm, but more frequently venting itself in light sallies, is not the least wonderful thing about his prose compositions. The "Areopagitica" appears to be an index at once to his intellect and his dispositions; and amid all its excellencies, its sublimity, its depth, its completeness, the "deep organ tones" of its diction, nothing strikes us so much as its sustained, cheerful, and majestic calmness. It is as "thunder mingled with clear echoes." And the "many-folded" shell of Prometheus himself never discoursed more soothing and

eloquent music. Dryden was a squabbling, impatient spirit, a man of strong passions and little principle; but there is no evidence of his having been a particularly miserable person. Although he fell away from his original faith, his conscience seems to have remained tolerably quiet. We might mention, too, some minor poets, who show what even a moderate portion of the poetical temperament will do, in the production of happiness: such as Phillips, an agreeable and pleasing person, by all accounts; and Parnell, who, though rendered less happy by particular circumstances, deserves to be mentioned as one of those who, half miserable and half happy, owe their misery to their circumstances, and their happiness to their mind; and Prior, who, like Cobbett, rusticated when he got out of the jail, where his political manœuvres, and nothing else, had placed him, and ended his days in a truly Roman retirement; and Gay, who did not belie his name; and Green, the strong-minded author of the "Spleen," who had very little of the splenetic about him; and, lastly, Tickell, whose very name savours of laughter, and who was, in fact, a very happy fellow, though, indeed, little else. Addison belongs to a higher region, and both Pope and Steele bear testimony to the enthralling influence of his private society. That he was used ill by his wife was not his fault. Byron says, he "died drunk." His habits during life were, indeed, too convivial.

But what authority there is for this horrible statement, except a rumour circulated by an inveterate gossip, (Horace Walpole,) we have yet to learn. In spite of his acknowledged errors, however, and this reckless and malignant calumny, Addison was a sincere Christian, and a happy man. Pope was querulous and vain; but his bodily infirmities accounted for this. He felt composition an intense delight, and he did little else but compose. Swift was, indeed,

wretched ; but was the creator of the Yahoos, and the betrayer of Stella, worthy to be called a man ? Thomson was seen eating peaches off a wall, with his hands in both pockets. He that could write the magnificent description of the "Torrid Zone," and enjoy this, must have been tolerably happy. We know but one story equal to it : it is that of a youth of talent, who, after a successful college campaign, was wont to go to bed in broad day-light, and take with him a new novel (cut, of course) and a couple of buttered rolls ! Young's son told Johnson that his father was gloomy when alone. He might be so ; but assuredly much of the gloom of the "Night Thoughts" is counterfeited. A man all his life notoriously hunting for preferment, had scarcely time to gather such a load of solid darkness. Though he could hardly be abler than he was, he was evidently much happier than he pretended. True grief vents itself in monosyllables and gasps of sound, not in mountainous accumulation of forced metaphors. Gray, and Allan Ramsay, seem both to have been happy men in different ways. Savage, in spite of Boswell's doubts, might still, we think, if there were time, be proved to have been the victim of a mother's mean revenge and unnatural cruelty. Boswell, indeed, leaves it at most doubtful, though Johnson's, Fielding's, and Steele's belief, added to universal impression, might, we think, have convinced him. One would feel regret if the most interesting section of the most unique, if not the finest biography in the language, were to turn out a fiction. Johnson's gloom was confined to his solitary hours. The case of Cowper was, indeed, a singular one. He was not only a great genius, but a perfectly virtuous man, and yet miserable to madness. How is this to be accounted for ? Religious melancholy will not do. If religion were productive of melancholy, why have so many religious men been cheerful ?

why have so many found in religion their chief consolation and enjoyment? Who ever felt miserable while the majestic organ was uplifting his soul to heaven? Or, if there were sadness, who would exchange it for a millennium of earthly delights? Religion has, over all spirits who feel its genuine influences, a power like that of the highest harmony. It may sadden, but it must elevate and ennoble. It was not, then, religion that overshadowed the soul of Cowper; nor was it even the Calvinistic rigour of his opinions. How many Calvinists could we name, as cheerful as it is possible to conceive, and who have yet held these doctrines, not as a cold confessional cant, but in the warm grasp of a living faith. Cowper, we imagine, was the victim of circumstances, acting on a highly morbid temperament—a species of temperament no more necessarily connected with genius, than a particular stature or a prominent nose. First of all, he was brutally used when a fag at school. This was well calculated to imbitter his existence; for who ever forgets an injury or outrage inflicted at that season, which is emphatically the season of memories, and when the arrow of anguish, being barbed, sticks in the wound for ever? Again, he had a love disappointment; and this, though it may only provoke the fop to one flutter of absurdity, and then leave him, does not part so easily with the intense spirit of the poet. It generally tears a portion of his life and vigour along with it. It may nerve his powers; but it certainly injures his happiness. Perhaps, too, regret for early levities, if not vices, may have mingled in his “cup of trembling.” Yet even he had elements of happiness in him: he had great enjoyment in composition and translation; perhaps greater still among his tame hares, and an affection for Mary Unwin that must have been productive of pure and deep delight. It is almost presumptuous in any one to speak of that affec-

tion. Well has it been called a specimen of the love that is "indestructible." No one who is even a little lower than the angels, is qualified to speak of it, except in accents of humble and wondering admiration. Beattie and Wolcot seem to have enjoyed themselves much in their respective and very different places. Edmund Burke was as happy as attachment to party politics would permit him to be. His protégée Crabbe was a man of quiet but constant happiness. The "law" of Robert Hall's existence, we are told, was "happiness." Scott was constitutionally a happy man; so were Cobbett and Godwin; so are Moore, Rogers, Wordsworth, and Wilson. From this imperfect induction, we may draw two inferences: first, that genius and happiness frequently hunt in couples; and, secondly, when they do not, accidental circumstances generally account for their divorce. Byron's success in getting public attention to his personal woes, has produced two bad consequences; it has taught many to counterfeit sadness, and it has produced a false sentiment in the public mind. "How care-worn and wretched that man looks!" "Oh, no wonder, he's a man of genius; preserve me from his midnights!" This is a common feeling, and not too absurd to be beneath refutation. We hope we have said enough to excite doubts as to whether it be as true as it is prevalent.

Not unbecoming are these remarks, for at least the sake of contrast, to introducing to us John Keats, the hapless apothecary's boy. Seldom were circumstances less propitious to the growth of genius than those in which this fine spirit was reared. Michael Bruce had Lochleven and its romantic shores to awaken his vein of verse; Chatterton the inspiring environs of Bristol; Kirke White the placid richness of Nottinghamshire; Keats nothing but the scenery of his own soul! Transient and occasional were his



glimpses of nature, but what a load of impression did he carry away with him! A mere boy, he seems an old acquaintance of nature, as if he had seen and studied her features in an antenatal state. His sense of beauty has been well called a disease. Whether, as De Quincey says of Wordsworth, his eye had more than a common degree of organic pleasure from the shows of earth and air, we cannot tell; but to us it appears as if the hue of the tulip were richer and more luscious, and the colour of the "gold cloud metropolitan" more intensely lustrous, and the smell of the bean-flower more arrowy in its odour, and the note of the nightingale more suggestive and sweet, and the shade of the pines productive of a diviner horror to him than to others, even of the inspired sons and daughters of mankind. We find scarcely any where but in his verse and in the minor poems of Milton such lingering luxury of descriptive beauty—such a literal, yet ideal translation of nature. Scarcely second to this painful and torturing sense of the beautiful, which detained and riveted his young soul to all that was lovely in idealism or reality, was his feeling of the most Eschylean shape of the sublime. He contrived, even through the thin and scraggy pipe of translation, to suck out the genuine spirit of the Grecian drama. The rough mantle, with its studs of gold, which the author of "Prometheus Vincit" wore so proudly, fell on, without crushing, the Cockney boy! And then, a glorious truant, he turned aside into the heart of the wilderness of the Titans, and saw here Prometheus writhing on his rock, and yonder, in the shady sadness of a vale, "gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone;" below "Coeus, and Gyges, and Briareus, Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon, with many more, the brawniest in assault, pent up in regions of laborious breath;" and above "blazing Hyperion on his orb'd throne;" here

Thea, leaning over the discrowned deity, with "parted lips and posture motionless, like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;" and there Apollo, in the pangs of his divine birth, as "knowledge enormous makes a god of him." And seeing all this, and shrieking out his last word, "celestial," the pale youth died.

"Hyperion" is the greatest of poetical Torsos. "Left untold," like "Cambuscan" and "Christabel," and Burns' speech of Liberty, it is perhaps better that it remains a fragment. Had only the two first Books of "Paradise Lost" come down to us, we question if they had not impressed us with a higher opinion of the author's powers than the completed work. Such magnificent mutilations are regarded with a complex emotion, composed of admiration, expectation, and regret. Short and sustained, they seldom tire or disappoint. And the poem itself is so bold in its conception, so true to the genuine classical spirit, so austere and statuesque in its still or moving figures, so antique to awfulness in its spirit, and, above all, indicates a rise so rapid and so great from his other works, as from Richmond-hill to an Alp, that those who love not Keats are compelled to admire "Hyperion." It is, says Byron, "as sublime as Eschylus."

"Endymion" is the dyspeptic dream of a boy of genius. Steeped in Spenserian imagination, it is, on the other hand, stuffed with affectations and poornesses, and pure silliness of fancy, thought and language, almost incredible. Yet is there a beseeching innocence in its very weakness, which, while the imagination and beauty of parts ought to have commanded the admiration, might have awakened the pity of the harshest critic. Like a boy lost in a wide wood, who now shrieks for terror under the hollow shade, now shouts for joy as he gains an eminence whence he commands a far view over the surging tree-tops, now weeps aloud as he loses

a path which promised to conduct him homewards, or as he stumbles into a morass, now plucks a wild flower or a bunch of blue-berries, and now defiles his hands by the merest fungus—so is Keats led astray through the tangled woodland of the Grecian Mythology, and “Endymion” is precisely such a “boy’s progress.” Brutal the beadle, who, meeting such a bewildered child, should, notwithstanding the eloquence of his bright eyes, profuse and beautiful hair, bleeding hands and trickling tears, avenge his wanderings by the lash. And surely cruel the *Quarterly* critic, who stripped, and striped, and cut, and branded the muse’s Son.

“Isabella” is a versification of one of Boccaccio’s finest stories; but on the simple thread of the narrative Keats has suspended some of his own richest gems. The story is that of two lovers who loved “not wisely but too well.” The brothers of the maiden, seducing the youth away under the guise of a journey, kill and bury him in the forest. Isabella, after long watching, and weeping, and uncertainty as to his fate, is warned of it in a dream, and repairing to the forest where her true love lies, digs up his head, and hides it in a pot of sweet basil, over which she prays and weeps out her heart incessantly. Her cruel kinsmen, finding out the secret, remove the basil-pot, banish themselves, and their sister pines away. The story is told with exquisite simplicity, pathos, and those quiet quaint touches so characteristic of the author. Two expressions, instinct with poetry, cling to our memories. They occur in the same stanza.

“So the two brothers and their *murdered man*  
Rode past fair Florence to where Arno’s stream  
Gurgles through straitened banks.

—— Sick and wan

The brothers’ faces in the ford did seem—  
Lorenzo’s flush with love—they passed the water  
Into a forest *quiet for the slaughter.*”

What an awful leap forward of imagination in the first line ! Florence saw no gore on Lorenzo's garments as he rode by ; but the guilty eye of the brothers, and the purged eye of the poet, saw it all bedropped with goutts of blood—the deed already done—the man murdered. No spectre bestriding spectre-steed, no fiend mounted on black charger, joining a solitary traveller at twilight among trackless woods, was ever such a terrible companion as to the two brothers and to us is the murdered man—his own apparition. And then, how striking the contrast between the wan, sick, corpse-like faces of the brothers and his, shining with the rose-hue of love ! They enter an old forest, not swinging its dark cones in the tempest, but “quiet for the slaughter,” as if supernaturally hushed for the occasion, as if by a special decree prepared and predestined to the silence of that hour, as if dumbly sympathizing through all its red trunks and black rounded tops, with the “deed without a name.”

Much more gorgeous in style, and colouring, and breathing a yet more intensely poetical spirit, is “St. Agnes' Eve.” It is a dream within a dream. Its every line wears *couleur de rose*. A curious feature of Keats' mind was its elegant effeminacy. No poet describes dress with more gust and beauty. Witness his picture of Madeline kneeling at her devotions, and seeming, in the light of the painted window, “a splendid angel, newly dressed, save wings, for heaven,” or “trembling in her soft and chilly nest,” after having freed her hair from her “wreathed pearls,” “unclasped her warmed jewels,” “loosened her fragrant bodice,” and,

“by degrees,  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees.”

None save Keats, and Tennyson after him, has adventured on the delicate yet lovely theme, the poetry of dress ; a sub-

ject which, artificial as it is, is capable, in chaste and tender hands, of the most imaginative treatment. Who, following in their footsteps, shall write the rhymed history of dress, from the first reeking lion-hide worn by a warrior of the infant world, down through the coloured skins of the Picts, the flowing toga of the ancients, the "garb of old Gaul," the turban of the Turks, the picturesque attire of the American Indians, the gorgeous vestments of God's ancients people, the kilt, the trews, and the plaid of Caledonia, the sandal or symar, or cloak, or shawl, or head-dress of various ages to the great-coat of the modern Briton, who, in the description of Cowper, is

"An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,  
Broad-cloth without, and a warm heart within."

The finest of Keats' smaller pieces are, "Lines written on Chapman's Homer," (the only translation which gives the savageism, if not the sublimity of Homer—his wild beasts muzzling and maddening in their fleshy fury, and his heroes "red-wat-shod," and which, in its original folio, Charles Lamb is said once to have kissed in his rapturous appreciation); the "Ode to a Nightingale," or rather to its voice, "singing of summer in full-throated ease;" the "Ode to a Grecian Urn," elegant as that "sylvan historian itself," (what a sigh for eternity in its description of the pair of pictured lovers, whom he congratulates

"that ever thou wilt love, and she be fair;")

the "Ode to Autumn" "sitting careless on a granary floor," "her hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;" and the dewy sonnet beginning—

"Happy is England, I could be content  
To see no other verdure but its own."

In originality Keats has seldom been surpassed. His works "rise like an exhalation." His language had been formed on a false system; but, ere he died, was clarifying itself from its more glaring faults, and becoming copious, clear and select. He seems to have been averse to all speculative thought, and his only creed, we fear, was expressed in the words—

"Beauty is truth,—truth beauty."

His great defect lay in the want, not of a man-like soul or spirit, but of a man-like constitution. His genius lay in his body like sun-fire in a dew-drop, at once beautifying and burning it up. Griffin, the author of the "Collegians," describes him (in deep consumption the while) hanging over the fatal review in the *Quarterly* as if fascinated, reading it again and again, sucking out every drop of the poison. Had he but had the resolution, as we have known done in similar circumstances, of dashing it against the wall, or kicking it into the fire! Even Percival Stockdale could do this to *The Edinburgh Review* when it cut up his "Lives of the English Poets;" and John Keats was worth many millions of him. But disappointment, disease, deep love, and poverty, combined to unman him. Through his thin materialism he "felt the daisies growing over him." And in this lowly epitaph did his soaring ambitions terminate:—"Here lies one whose name was writ in water." But why mourn over his fate when the lamentation of all hearts has been already enshrined in the verse of "Alastor?" Let "Adonais" be at once his panegyric and his mausoleum.

"The inheritors of unfulfilled renown  
 Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,  
 Far in the unapparent. Chatterton  
 Rose pale: his solemn agony had not  
 Yet faded from him.

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And many more, whose names on earth are dark,  
Though their transmitted effluence cannot die  
So long as fire outlives its parent spark,  
Rose robed in dazzling immortality.  
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry ;  
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long  
Swung blind in unascended majesty,  
Silent alone, amid a heaven of song.  
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng.' "

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### THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

WE heard recently a keen discussion on the question, Is Thomas Macaulay, in the strict sense, a man of genius? Now in order to qualify ourselves for determining this question, we must first inquire what genius is? a question of some moment in a book which professes to be a gallery of contemporary genius.

We can conceive of nothing more undefinable than genius. It is so on account of the complexity of the elements which make it up. It is not one thing, nor is it many things, but it is the one subtle result of many elements subordinated into harmony and completeness. We shall perhaps best attain our object by showing, after the fashion of the scholastic divines, what genius is not, ere we proceed to inquire what it is.

Genius, then, first of all, is not mental dexterity. How many seem to think that it is! With how many people does the expert player of chess, and the acute solver of riddles, and the accurate summer up of intricate accounts, and the man of mere verbal memory, who has equally by heart Milton and Mallet, and the expert versifier, and the

flippant declaimer, pass, each and all of them, for men of genius! One reason of this is, that this kind of power is so tangible in its effects that only the external senses are required to perceive its results. It can neither be disputed or denied. All are agreed about it. It needs no exertion of mind to form an opinion about its merit; and an opinion, when once formed, is rarely, if ever, altered. No circumstance can fritter away the character of the man who has only to open his mouth to pour forth puns and acrostics by the thousand. The merit, mean as it may be, is something positive and incontestable. Again, this sort of cleverness is habitual and inveterate; hence its displays are masterly and imposing: the thing is done, and done quickly, and as well as it is possible to conceive. The achievement, whatever it may be, has distinctness, prominence, and perfection. Perhaps mechanical were a better name than mental dexterity. Mechanism performs its wonders with unerring effect, and at all times equally. In given circumstances the application of steam has, of course, the same result. So, set a man of this kind to write, and he writes, and writes well, but writes like an automaton. And yet the impression made by this kind of merit upon the majority is wonderful. A man of genius may go on for a lifetime digging wells of beauty and rapture, and one out of ten may talk about him, and one out of a hundred may read him, and one out of a thousand may partially understand him, and he may die unappreciated. But let one arise who can express commonplace in sounding phraseology, or work up weakness into epigram, or even disguise nonsense under copious and splendid verse, and he will be appreciated and admired as infallibly as any able mender of soles or stitcher of broadcloth. Wordsworth, (to translate principle into fact,) during half his long lifetime is neglected, while Waller



is loaded and suffocated with panegyric. The reason is, Wordsworth is a poet, and Waller was a mere mechanist. It is easy distinguishing the characters. The mechanist has probably not one original thought in his mind. He is perhaps even incapable of appreciating the original thoughts of others. It is to say much if we grant that a "plastic stress," such as called in chaos, might perhaps stir him into the genuine animation of mind. As it is, he neither thinks, nor dreams of thinking. Far from welcoming those impulses to deep and thrilling meditation, which more or less affect all intellects, he repulses them, and turns eagerly to his machinery. There, however, he is perfectly at home. He can handle his tools to admiration. He can throw off a poem, which, though not a "Paradise Lost," tickles the ear a great deal more, and is far more easily understood. He can dash down commonplaces on any given subject as fast as his pen can move. He can perhaps mimic all sorts of styles in succession with the skill of a mocking-bird. He can write a "Poetical Mirror," though a "Kilmeny" be beyond him. Nay, he can perhaps even shed off apparent and surface originalities as fast as the thistle its down: and he may be able to do all this, and much more, without the appearance of effort, at a moment's warning, and at all times equally. He is subject to no moods, no shadows, no sudden loathings of his occupation, no ambitious towering above the dead level of the paper on which he is inscribing his thoughts. His merit is thus great; and, what is more, is beyond all question. He has done all this; and no one doubts but he will do it again. Still his merit is very different from the merit of a man of genius. What his merit is we may afterwards see; what it is not let us now partially notice:—The man of genius, then, cannot refrain from thinking. All impulses which affect him are

so many summonses to vigorous intellectual exertion. His originality, never ostentatious, is nevertheless the element of his mind. He cannot stifle an inducement to thought, except it be for the sake of indulging in imagination, which is just thought on fire. He cannot sacrifice sense to sound, except it be for an instant, that he may afterwards link both in unchanging harmony. He cannot complacently indite commonplace, unless it be for the purpose of relieving the pressure of his originality. He can write centos, but he will do so rarely, and only for the pleasure of gratifying his sympathy by plunging more completely into another's habits of thought and feeling. He cannot, finally, do any thing equally well at any time. It may be asked, why not? We reply, because he is a man, not a machine. He is not screwed up to a pitch whence he can only descend by a struggle. His brains move freely. The constant whirl supposed can only be produced by two causes: first, the result of mechanical straining, and, secondly, madness. He is neither mad nor a machine. It may be asked, Does not cultivation bring the powers to such perfection that their fruit in any circumstances must be excellence? All things, no doubt, are possible, and consistency of style may thus be secured even by men of impulse; but we believe that the highest pressure can rarely effect any more. Who more intensely cultivated than Milton? And yet who more dependent upon moods and moments? If nobody has written better, who has written worse? We are far indeed from denying that some men have great mechanical power added to their genius; and that it is better that they have. But such a conjunction is rare; and when it does occur, the mechanical part of the power ever appears to be subordinate. It must indeed have this appearance, else the man may deserve the name of a man of skill and tact, but never

for a moment of a man of genius. And better want art entirely than sacrifice to its shrine one atom of nature. Better, than that Apollo's locks be cropped and queued, that they be dashed and dishevelled by the hurricane. Mechanism has done much ;—it has often licked the rude offspring of genius into shape—dissipated the darkness that often shrouds the tabernacle of original thought—not only translated but improved the productions of original genius. Still it must ever be kept separate and inferior.

Dexterity, then, or cleverness, is not genius. So neither is talent. By talent we understand the power of acute and metaphysical analysis. This is doubtless a nearer approximation to the *beau-ideal* of power ; and it is often found in waiting upon genius. It is just the mode of accounting for and substantiating the products of original thoughts. It is the art of rendering reasons for the intuitions of the poet. We may distinguish it from cleverness by saying, that cleverness is a mere cast from the features of original genius, while talent enters into the rationale of the painting, the adjustment of the proportions, and the quality of the colouring ; attempting to explain and to sanction what has been executed only from a fine and original sense of the natural and the beautiful. Cleverness makes the parody, talent the dissertation and the review. Cleverness is generally acknowledged, talent is a deeper and stronger power, and may be as little appreciated as genius. Genius and talent are often combined. Newton had genius, and it gave him the thought of gravitation ; but he had also talent, and he proved it. Had Newton died after the sublime conjecture, he had still been counted a man of genius, and his follower, who should have afterwards substantiated his assertion, would never have been placed above him, nor by his side. Thirdly, Genius is not mere imagination. Nat Lee had probably as vivid impres-

sions as those of any poet that ever lived, because his impressions were those of dreams or of madness; but such impressions have no ultimate end. They resemble separated shadows, with no body behind or before them. They suppose the dormancy of the reasoning faculty. They resemble the Northern Lights, which appear to flash and flicker in ragged confusion, as if they embraced earth by chance, not sun-beams, shed from a steadfast centre on an attendant and worshipping world. They are as incapable of being subordinated to the great purposes of thought or passion, as a madman's dreams of basing a moral or metaphysical system. They stand for themselves as distinctly as if they were bits of chaos. Imagination is doubtless essential to genius. Even although the man of genius be not born in its light, he must grow to meet it; but it cannot of itself constitute genius, as long as bedlam is not the temple of fame. Had Milton created only the "Limbo of Vanity," or the "Sin and Death," would he have had more reputation now than any visible victim of inveterate night-mare? This test will, we think, be enough to blow Macpherson's fame to fragments. We hear continually of the imagination of "Ossian's Poems." Doubtless there is imagination; but may we not ask with Newton, what does it prove?—nothing; illustrate?—nothing; enforce?—nothing. Is it the appropriate drapery of original characters? No; there is only one very interesting character in it all, and that is Ossian himself; and, after all, he is but Milton transplanted into Morven. Or is it the grand accompaniment to illustrious action? No: Fingal's striking, amid the shadows of midnight, at the mighty form of the spirit of Loda, is the only powerful incident we remember. Homer, however, had sent a mightier than he bellowing to heaven ere Macpherson was born. And even in him the incident, so redolent of "celestial ichor," was evidently a

piece of glorious humbug. And if mere effect be considered, a hundred ghost stories have raised the hair higher than the tale of Loda's gigantic ghost. By the way, what a striking proof have we here of the force of Scottish prejudice! Who ever mentioned the Mars affair without laughing at it? and who, from Blair downwards, has ever alluded to the Loda miscreation without admiration? What do either of them prove? The important lessons, first, that spirit is matter; and, secondly, that it is no difficult matter to take the conceit out of a god.

Poetry must prove something ere it be good for much. Newton's error lay in not perceiving what the "Paradise Lost" did prove,—in not perceiving the sublime moral lessons which are scattered over its every page. Perhaps no new principle is demonstrated in it; but every book cannot be expected to contain a principle like gravitation. It brings, however, a logic of its own,—a testimony of fire to the great Christian moralities. The character of Moloch is worth the whole work on "Fanaticism." In Satan, it is as if the hell of a thousand hearts, burning with pride and ambition, were disclosed. And, in Raphael, has not Milton represented the perfection of moral excellence, blended with the perfection of the affable and the tender—something softer than angel, and sublimer than man? And to the question, were it asked, what do Shakspeare's works prove? we could as easily find a reply, for there is not one of them that is destitute of its deep and distinct moral. It may be asked, what does Falstaff prove? Why, it proves what rigid moralists are very apt to forget, that sensuality and selfishness may co-exist with much that is amiable. Who does not love Falstaff, and wish him a better man? But, again, for Timon's frantic misanthropy, we would have wanted the strong light cast on the character of the faithful Flavius.

What finer moral than thus to wring from maddened misery a testimony to human worth and virtue? It is far better than Byron's sneering, reluctant, and sullen acknowledgment, that "virtue is no jest, and happiness no dream." And, for a final instance, think on Othello. Perhaps, as Coleridge holds, it is not jealousy that is dissected there; perhaps Othello's passion is just injured pride struggling to get rid of boundless and unutterable affection, by cutting the tie at once and for ever. Jealousy, indeed, supposes doubt. It is a transition state—a state of struggle when the elements of strong hope, and stronger fear, contend for mastery. Now Shakspeare hurries over this point. Othello is very soon convinced of Desdemona's worthlessness; and certainty is no more jealousy than despair is doubt. And Othello is as indignant as if a man were to find himself, by some monstrous means, in love with an object which he felt and knew to be despicable. It is this feeling which spurs him to the murder. He at once loves and contemns her. And the moral, therefore, lies in the vileness of the malignity which has driven him to this. All the blame is thus shifted on Iago. He collects the gloom of the whole passion of the play; and, to use an expression of Foster's, "the mind labours for a greater ability" of detesting him, and, in the fury of its hatred, regrets that his intellect has exalted him above the relief we should receive from equally despising him. Thus it appears that all great works of genius have a moral and a meaning, while mere imagination may be found disconnected from both.

Fourthly, The mere expression of passion is not genius. Genius, indeed, includes passion. But it is not identical with strong passion, nor with its expression; else every man that could swear were a man of genius, and the blackguard and the bully might set up claims to the title. It is true, that

passion lifts even the low into something like genius ; in other words, rouses them to express their feelings in the language of imagination. We have heard a very competent judge declare, that the most powerful eloquence he ever heard was that of an insulted carter. But, in general, passion finds its vulgar vent in mere gesticulation or blasphemy. Burns does not thus inveigh. Nor does Timon. His curses have oracular dignity and grandeur. The dark pages of his passion are laid before us in the light of imagination. We do not recollect a more striking example of the distinctions we are drawing, than the difference between Titus Andronicus and Lear. In the one, a man is outraged, and his complaints have passion, but no poetry. In the other, the injured old man appeals to the heavens to avenge his cause, "as they themselves are old." He erects, on the basis of his wrong, a majestic morality,—he ascends, on the ladder of madness, the highest heaven of invention. In the one, passion stands alone ; in the other, it is linked to imagination, to morality, and to reason ; it agitates the whole being like an earthquake ; it does not hurry, with selfish instinct, to that mode of expression which shall soonest relieve its paroxysms and its pangs, but accumulates and intensifies till it becomes a delight and a luxury.

Ere now proceeding to say what genius is, we may, in order to narrow the ground a little more, mention some things which, though never said to be genius, are yet, somehow, thought to be necessarily connected with it. Genius is not necessarily connected with taste. This, perhaps, requires no proof ; for if by taste is meant a keen sense of minute delicacies and beauties, then a thousand instances of acknowledged genius will occur, where this was wanting. Although, if by taste we mean the feeling connected with the operations of genius, then, as it obviously springs from the power, what-

ever it be, it may, at least in our imaginations, be identified with it. Nor is genius necessarily connected with judgment; or, in other words, with an intense perception and avoidance of the bad and the absurd. The author of *Lear* wrote "*Love's Labours Lost*," and had, very likely, far less feeling of the inferiority of the latter than other men. Wordsworth does not yet perceive the inanity of a few of the "*Lyrical Ballads*." Genius is not necessarily connected with any particular kind of intellectual thought, far less with any mechanical mode of expressing that thought. That is to say, a man with the essential elements of genius may be a mathematician or a poet,—may write in verse or in prose; in other words, poetry, which is the essence of genius, is extractable from every thing. Genius is not necessarily connected with the moral nature. It has, indeed, been described, by a high authority, as "steeped and saturated in the moral nature." If facts could be forgotten, these words might pass for true, as well as beautiful. These, however, we fear, only teach us that instances of *gross* disconnexion are rare. But the existence of even a few such cases, destroys the idea of necessary connexion. Was Rousseau's genius "steeped and saturated" in the moral nature, or Voltaire's, or Byron's? It would be very easy to deny these men's claims to genius, but not so easy to convince us, that the denial was any thing else than an interested impertinence. With Heart we hold genius to be inseparably united, but Heart is only one element in the moral nature. Genius, then, if we may hazard a definition, is natural or original thought invested with the power of passion, and expressed in the language of the imagination. It is just the highest power of reason, added to the force of imagination and passion. We have thus three results secured, which are actually those of genius; first, truth, or originality of thought; secondly, impulsive power;



and thirdly, a peculiar diction. First, originality of thought. The thought, however, must not only be new, but of such importance as to stir the surges of passion. It must also be true, that is, consistent with nature, and having even a rigid logic of its own, else it is mere fancy. The second element is passion. Genius moves as well as makes. All passion, more or less, moves, and genius is a stronger breath, doubling the agitation. The last element, and that which colours its language, is imagination. Without it thought, unless of an inferior quality, could not adequately express itself. All great thought links itself instantaneously to imagery, and imagery, as we have seen already, is the life of passion. Genius thus appears to be the joint product of three elements, different, but intimately connected. And these exhaust the depth and the power of the human spirit.

Has Thomas Macaulay genius? He has, but he has got it as the alchemists expected to get gold, by transmutation. He has transmuted vast learning, and varied accomplishments into one sweet and subtle thing, which really deserves the name of genius. He was wont, even when young, to be surnamed, by his associates, "Macaulay the Omniscient." History, law, literature, political economy, nay, theology and science seem, so far as purposes of illustration require, to be perfectly at his command. There are, probably, many who know as much, or more than he; but few have so wrought their knowledge into the substance of their minds—few have so sublimated the dead fuel into flame—flame brisk and unburdened by the masses it has consumed. Many call for their stores of knowledge, and it comes forth from the lumber-room of their mind—lumber, as it had entered, cold, and stiff, and dead; but, from Macaulay's inner chamber, it issues "as in dance;" warm, spiritualized, moving to the music of his eloquent mind. Thomas Macaulay is not an original

thinker; he has no insight into any part of this universe entirely new,—no burning gold of inspiration has been emptied on his young head,—no swarm of bees fastened on his infant lips; he has not been called, like Milton, Burke, and Coleridge, by a special mission to utter transcendental truth in transcendental eloquence; nor, like Bentham, to lay the foundations of a new science, deep, strong, and smooth, as “a pavement of adamant;” but he is the poet of facts. In conversation he pours out torrents of facts. In his review articles you find floods of facts. In his speeches, he hangs strings of facts around one or two master principles. In his poetry, he sets fire to facts, in themselves as dry as Homer’s catalogue of ships, and you are reminded of stubble a-blaze. Like his own favourite, Bunyan, he unites prosaic and literal to ideal and imaginative qualities. Scarcely one of his sentences is poetical, and yet the whole of his article is a perfect poem. Just as hardly a sentence of Bunyan has an image or flower, and yet the whole is steeped in the essence of imagination. The stream of poesy flowing under ground, is in both betrayed by now and then a solitary word. And the reason is, that, to both, facts are real existences,—they do not lie leaning upon the cold page,—they stand upright, and, through the golden haze which covers the eye of the seer, look ideal. The facts, too, though simple, are select, and suitable for imaginative treatment. There is a youthful freshness of imagination about Macaulay, which is most delightful to see. Shallow criticasters say of him, in rebuke and derision, that he writes like a schoolboy, paying him, unintentionally, one of the highest compliments they could bestow upon a full grown and thoroughly furnished man. The secret, as it seems to us, of perfect composition, is manly wisdom, uttered in youthful language. Coleridge calls genius “the power of producing the feelings and freshness of

youth into the powers and passions of manhood." So Macaulay, to this hour, talks of the deepest speculations of policy and poesy with all the enthusiasm of an Eton boy. One "childish thing," however, it were well for him to put away ; we mean a certain mannerism of style, which adheres to all his articles. He is the most easily detected of writers, except, perhaps, Christopher North. You cannot read two sentences without being aware of his identity. All his prominent qualities,—his muscular nerve,—his balanced antithesis,—his sharp short form of sentence,—his thoroughly English spirit,—his enthusiasm breaking out at intervals,—his elaborate pictures set at distances,—his decisive tone,—his unbounded command of illustration,—his keen and crushing contempt,—his intimate knowledge of personal history, all these lie upon the surface, and are perpetually reproduced, in every one of his compositions. He is not the most profound, or poetical, or ingenious, but he is the most rhetorical of critics. Byron was often blamed for snatching the sentiments of the Lakers out of their mouths, and uttering them in prouder and more impassioned accents. So Macaulay seizes the paradoxes of Coleridge and Hazlitt, and presents them in more imposing and commanding forms, and bedecks them from the exuberant riches of his own learning ; and announces them in a tone of more perfect assurance. And, as Byron was the interpreter between the Lakers, as poets, and the public, so is Macaulay between them and the public, as critics. Men receive from him dicta, which were caviare to them from less popular authorities. And an eloquent Aaron he is ! Who looks not back to the first perusal of his Milton with delight ? The picture of the Puritans "looking down upon the rich and the eloquent, upon nobles and upon priests, with contempt, esteeming themselves rich in a more enduring treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language,

—nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand,”—was magnificent. And with a like power has he since depicted Dryden and Machiavelli, Byron and Johnson, Bunyan and Bacon, Frederick the Great and Warren Hastings. Some poet says, that after reading Dante he could never write—from sheer despair of emulating his excellence. So to a critic, reading Macaulay is the worst possible preparative for composition. He can only wonder and shrink into insignificance.

But far better than even these celebrated articles are his “Lays of Ancient Rome.”\* He goes down the battle like a scythed chariot. What homely grandeur stamps their every line! How completely does he reproduce those early Roman days! Standing on the old Tarpeian rock, he blows his magic horn, and History gives up the dead which are in it, and the “foster babes” of the old she-wolf,—“the men of iron,” rise an exceeding great army, and range around him, and, hark, he shouts, and they echo the thrilling cry:—

“Hail to the great Asylum ;  
Hail to the hill-tops seven ;  
Hail to the fire which burns for aye,  
And the shield which fell from Heaven.”

Since Homer or since Hardyknute, we have had nothing like those ballads except Lockhart’s, and his own brilliant fragment, the Armada.

And yet there are those who talk as if Macaulay had come to the dregs and lees of his mind,—had, forsooth, exhausted himself. So is the sky exhausted at the close of a long day of rain. But the clouds, after the rain, return ; and so, if he has exhausted one vein, there are hundreds—

\* Can the reader guess where the “Lays” were written? In the War Office,—a most appropriate place.

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thousands—ampler and deeper still, which it is in his power to open and to empty. We wish him God-speed, especially in the devoirs which, if report speak correctly, he is paying to the Muse of History. Let Hallam, and Alison, and Tytler, in this case, look to their laurels. Dear, and deservedly dear, are they to Clio; but dearer still is our illustrious author, any one of whose articles is worth a hundred of the ordinary works which are dignified by the proud name of history.

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#### THOMAS AIRD.

*Blackwood's Magazine* has unquestionably collected around it one of the most distinguished of the many clusters into which the literary men of the present day have gravitated. Its roll of names is a brilliant one, including "that great Scotsman with the meteor-pen," as the Corn-law Rhymer calls him, Wilson; Lockhart, the sharp, and caustic, and manly spirit; Hogg, the "poet-laureate to the Faery Queen;" Galt, the De Foe of Scotland," the only writer we know completely up to Sawney in all his wily ways; Delta, the tender and beautiful poet; MacGinn, the wild wag; De Quincey, the lawful inheritor of Coleridge's mystic throne, and appetite for the poppy; Doubleday, the elegant and accomplished; Warren, the brilliant weaver of melodramatic tale; Croly, the impetuous and eloquent; Simmons, that fine scion of the Byronic school of poetry; Moir, the exquisite critic; Ferrier, the profound metaphysician; Aytoun, the pleasing, nor yet uninspired versifier; and last, not least, Thomas Aird, author of "Religious Characteristics," "Othuriel," &c., whom we propose, as he is compar-

atively little known, more particularly to introduce to our readers, and who certainly, in point of original genius, is surpassed by few of the names we have just cited.

Thomas Aird is, we say, a man of original genius. He sees all things, from a constellation to a daisy, in a certain severe and searching light. His mind is stiffened by nature's hand, into one sublime position. His stream of thought is not broad, nor winding, but narrow, deep, moving right onward, and lured in its lustre, as though a thunder-cloud were "bowed" over it, throughout its entire course. His original sympathies are obviously with the dark, the stern, and the terrible. He delights, or rather is irresistibly led to paint the fiercer passions of the human soul, the drearier aspect of nature, the gloomy side of the future world. While his heart is full of the milk of human kindness, his genius has a raven wing, and an almost Dantesque dreadfulness of tone. All his works are studies from Scripture, but breathe more of the element of Sinai than of Calvary. He has evidently spent his youth in meditative solitude, with more thoughts than books; Bunyan and the Bible all his library, but these deeply pondered, have pressed down a load of influence upon his genius, and account at once for its monotony and its power. He "curdles up" meaning into his words, oftentimes to an oppressive degree. In his desire to do justice to the fulness of the view presented him of a scene or a subject, in manly aversion to the gingerbread, the lackadaisical, the merely pretty, he is apt to become harsh, elliptic, abrupt, obscure, at once to stuff too much thought into his words, and to pack it too closely together. His great power lies in description—knotty, minute, comprehensive, and piercing portraiture. He has hardly the constructive faculty, is perhaps unable to produce a whole; but what a strange, unearthly light he casts on the jagged edges and

angles of things! How admirably does he transfer to paper his own impressions to their last tiny and trembling peculiarity! How "severely sifted" are his rugged lines! How close his system of mental concentration! How absolute the seclusion from commonplace of his every thought, and sentence, and word! How inevitably does he leave the impression upon you, as you read, whether it be to blame or to praise, "this is no echo, but a native voice, sounding from the immediate penetralia of nature's own temple!" "His mind," says Wilson, "dwells in a lofty sphere." He breathes freely an air which it is difficult for inferior men to respire. He is drawn by a native attraction to the snowy summits of high and holy thought. There, as the "moon glazes the savage pines" around, as the wind lifts the unre-sisting snow at his feet, as the melancholy song of the Aurora sounds past him like the pant of spirits, he meditates strangely, and with folded arms, upon life and death—"Erebus and old Nox," Chaos and Demogorgon—wild shapes, meanwhile, sweeping by, in the wan moonlight, Demoniacs from Galilee, who seem already to "dwell mid horned flames and blasphemy in the red range of hell; gibbering ghosts, with "fire-curved cinder-cruled tongues;" a Father's form, dilating wrathfully as it comes; sooty negroes, with black enormous trumpets at their lips; Nebuchadnezzar, with insane eyes, lightening through his feathery hairs; and bringing up the rear, the "Grizzly terror" himself, the fiend-dreamer on Mount Aksbeck, "like fiery arrow shot aloft from some unmeasured bow." This sphere is certainly lofty, but remote from human sympathies; as solitary as it is sublime, a "dread circle" carved by the magician, like a scalp on a snowy and savage hill, and across which few, save purged and prepared spirits, can ever break. Aird's genius, indeed, is not, like that of Milton, one, to the appreciation of which

men must and will grow. It is rather, in its intense peculiarity, like that of Coleridge or Shelley, which, if you hate, you hate at once and for ever; which, if you love, you love at first sight, and "even to the end." Hopeless of his works ever becoming popular in any sense, we do not despair of seeing them take up, in the hearts of a select few, the place due to their originality, their power, their daring, and their religious spirit. His faults are obscurity, mannerism, a want of flow and fluency of verse, a style often cumbered and perplexed, and an air—it is no more—of elaborate search after the peculiarities of thought and expression. Such are, however, we believe, nothing but excrescences upon the robust oak of his essential originality. It is the struggle of a native mind to convey itself in a vehicle so imperfect as words, which has begot all those minute strangenesses of style, which are but the wild veerings of a strong-winged bird, beating up against a contrary wind. Nature has given Aird genius, power, "energetic reason, and a shaping mind," in high measure, but withheld, at least, the calm and completeness of an equal empire over words. His power over them is great; but it is a convulsive despotism, rather than a mild, steady, and legitimate sway. His language is picturesque and powerful; but comes from far, and comes as a captive. His obscurity, the grievous fault of his earlier productions, has been manfully sifted out of his later writings. His mannerism he has not been able altogether to remove. It adheres to him, and will, as the bur did to the voice of Coleridge, equally natural, and equally cureless.

Such is the short portraiture of a unique, who, had his ambition been equal to his powers, might have taken, long ere now, the place to which, sooner or later, his accession is sure,—of one who is strong and rounded in his originality as in a castle, but who has laid down all the peculiarities of



that genius, and all the keys of that castle, meekly and gently at the foot of the Cross; who has never, we believe, sung one strain which did not mount, ere its close, as if by instinct, to heaven. He is, in the true sense, a religious poet, not merely making an occasional irruption into the consecrated region with some; not singing with others certain sickly strains of loathsome sweetness and affected unction; not, with a third class, "breaking into blank verse the gospel of St. Luke, and boldly pilfering from the Pentateuch," but viewing the Cross through the medium of his own genius. His soul dwells in the haunted climes of Palestine, "tosses its golden head afar on the snowy mountains cold" of Mount Lebanon, reclines on the banks of the lake of Galilee, mounts Tabor hill, and sees, with kindling rapture, the eclipsed light of heaven bursting forth from every pore of the Saviour's transfigured frame,—his form, long bent under a weight of wo, erecting itself like a palm-tree against pressure; his eye shining out like a sun from the skirts of a departed cloud; his brow expanding into its true dimensions, its wrinkles fleeing away, its sweat-drops of climbing toil changed by that sudden radiance into bright bubbles of glory, when

"Light o'erflowed him like a sea, and raised his shining brow,  
And the voice came forth that bade all worlds the Son of God avow."

In another and a darker mood, he follows the demoniac amid the tombs, or traces him along the crackling margin of the Dead Sea, or pursues Nebuchadnezzar into the wilderness, or catches the skirts of Ezekiel, advancing under the very ring of the wheels, so high that they were dreadful; or reverently, tenderly, and from afar off, follows the footsteps of the awful sufferer into the gloom of Gethsemane, or up the ascent of Calvary's quaking hill. He has caught much of

the spirit of the olden Hebrew prophet bards; their abruptness and austere imagination; their shadowy sanctities, their mystic grandeur. He has drunk out his inspiration from those deep springs, which, at the rod of prophecy, sprang out in the Syrian wilderness. His genius, as is said of Bunyan, has not been dipped in dews of Castalie, but baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

His first work (beyond a volume of juvenile poems, inclusive of "Murtzouffe," a tragedy, which we have never read) is entitled "Religious Characteristics." It attracted at the time considerable notice, and is still fresh in the memories, and much in the hands of those who allowed their generous penetration to pierce past the rough rind of its style, into the rare power and beauty which its core contained.—Among these, we can enumerate Wilson, who introduced it to the world, in one of those glowing panegyrics which, able to stamp splendour on mediocrity itself, are ever sure to wreath round genius a supplementary halo, and accomplish the paradox of the poet, by gilding refined gold, painting the lily, and perfuming the violet. Dr. Chalmers, too, we have occasion to know, has expressed his sympathy in terms of high approbation. If the public did not, to the full, corroborate those high verdicts, the fault was not with the substance of the book, but lay partly in the loose, crude, and elliptic style in which its conceptions were cloudily involved, and partly in the disjointed and fragmentary character of the plan. It seemed less a book, growing up from the seed of the first conception, into one regular and living whole, like a tree with one root, one trunk, one circulating sap, and one apex, than a succession of loose, lettered, brilliant leaves, shed down on the tempest,—some fresh and vivid, others withered and dark, and others red with fiery and convulsive life. Its power, therefore, lay in parts, as its weakness was in the

total and ultimate effect. It contained the crowding and unmethodized thoughts of a young and ardent mind, on the most solemn subjects, and showed how deeply such meditations had already wrought themselves into the tissue of his thoughts. It testified, too, to his early intimacy with the olden giants of English theology, especially with the "glad prose" of Jeremy Taylor; and the thought, in its unexpectedness and elevation, and quaintness, and the style, in its rugged involutions, and careless splendour, and frequent alternation of blotches and beauties, bore a striking resemblance to "all of dark and bright" which met in theirs. Besides sudden sparkles of that beautiful and peculiar imagery in which all Aird's conceptions immediately, and of necessity, incarnate themselves, there were two or three passages long, sustained, gathering a glow from the friction of their own majestic movement, which ought alone to have buoyed up the book. We refer to one especially in a chapter on Christian Principles, inclusive, in its long and sounding sweep, of a panegyric on the character of Christ, which equals Rousseau, at once in genuine appreciation and in eloquence, and, by a strange and rapid transition, of a picture of the place of punishment, which, in power intertangled with power, like yew branches in a storm, and horror accumulated upon horror, and a dreary pathos breathing around all, and language sweating under the demands of the stern moral limner, leaves all prose portraiture of the ghastly thing behind. Not Jeremy Taylor, not John Scott, not John Howe, not Baxter, not Smith, in his description of the sinner "with the crown of vengeance set upon his head, and many glittering faces looking on," has surpassed Aird's woodcut of that "Other place," as he drearily calls it, with its "soliloquies that fearfully mouth the far off heavens;" its "sounding rains of fire that come ever on;" its Ambition, "lashed with a bigger and

redder billow ;” its “ Avarice crying through hell for all his gold to buy off the sharking worm that will not die nor let him alone ;” its “ awful laver of fierce but unregenerating fire.” We have read this passage—itsself a poem—to ourselves, till our blood ran cold ; we have read it to others, till shaken by its power, from shivering crown to trembling toe, they have implored us to read no more. It is, indeed, in Wilson’s language, “ a grand and a magnificent strain, not easy to be surpassed.”

Another similar burst closes the volume. It is a dream of the Millennium, which, painting itself on the retina of a poet’s eye, towers up, a rainbow above the gloomy future. In this animated sketch, after a short struggle between intellect and genius, the latter, a fierce-eyed charioteer, mounts the car, snatches the reins, and rushes forward impetuously with sounding thongs and wheels, that

“ Bicker and burn to gain the expected goal.”

The description every where effloresces into poetry, and emulates those found in “ The Task ” and “ The Course of Time ;” but, no more than these, contains any deep, distinct, and philosophical plan of the probable phenomena of a realized Millennium. This is a *désideratum* reserved for such an intensely methodical mind as that of Isaac Taylor, the author of the “ Physical Theory of Another Life.” He, we think, could, using Scripture images as stepping stones, bridge the chasm which separates us from the latter day glory, and give us firm footing on its aerial continents. It is the part of poets to build up each his own Utopia, “ like gay castles in the clouds that pass for ever flushing round a summer sky,” to wax eloquent in picturing the splendid sunset of the world’s day, the golden pinnacle in which its rising fabric is to terminate, “ the aery dome ” catching the

colours of heaven which is to be suspended o'er its finished temple, the glories half of earth and half of a loftier climate, which are to change it from a "dark opprobrious den of shame," into a Beulah-world, risen from its place nearer to the sun, moving in more solemn yet swifter paces in the galaxy of its Creator's favour, and "rolling the rapturous hosanna round" of its Redeemer's praise. To show us all this through an atmosphere of imagination, is easy for a mind like Aird's or Pollok's; but to accumulate sedate probabilities, to follow the future germination of great principles into great results, to reduce the estimates of exaggeration to a calm and modest amount, to settle the questions as to the beginning, the duration, the nature, and the close of this expected period; to remove, by an induction at once philosophic and religious, the difficulties which oppose, and the doubts which deny the progress and perfectibility of the species; to trace the various lines of prediction, inspired and uninspired, all meeting in this ultimate focus; to unravel the dazzling hieroglyphics of poetic language, and to substitute for their cloudy light the clear, chaste and consummate radiance of Christianized philosophy;—this would require powers almost Baconian in their depth and range. And even though such powers thus exerted did produce a theory of a Millennium, still more exquisitely vraisemblable than the aforesaid of Taylor's, their possessor would probably be mortified to find the structure he had raised mistaken for a vagary of a vaster and more perplexed, and less pleasing character, than the poet's,—deemed a vision equally with his, but shorn of all that makes a vision valuable, lovely, or dear.

Mr. Aird's next work of size, is the "Captive of Fez." It is a tale of love, intrigue, captivity, and battle. As a story its interest is slight, and rendered less by the obscurity in which many of its strongest points are sheathed, and by

the extreme perplexity, obliqueness, and involution of the purely dramatic part of the volume. The light of the narrative, which often, in condensation and rapid energy, reminds you of "The Corsair," is carefully clouded by the speeches. Strangest peculiarities of expression and epithet are needlessly introduced, as if for the purpose of marring the classic force and dignity of the diction. There are, however, single lines of much force and picturesqueness, certain situations and scenes of barbaric impressiveness; two or three of the characters show that not in vain have they breathed the atmosphere of Africa, felt its sands scorch their feet, and its suns smite their cheeks, and its heat, like lion's blood, injected into their veins; and here, too, as in all Mr. Aird's works, the descriptive passages are uniformly excellent—terse, peculiar, yet genuine transcripts of whatever scene presents itself to his eye. Were the "Captive of Fez" rewritten, its smaller knottinesses lopped off, its dense dialogue clarified, its narrative and description retained, we know no poem in heroic rhyme more worthy to be placed beside Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite," and Byron's "Lara."

The larger portion of his other poems have appeared in *Blackwood*. From these we single out three for special notice: "The Devil's Dream on Mount Aksbeck," "The Demoniack," and "Nebuchadnezzar." Of all Mr. Aird's productions, the first of these impresses us with the deepest respect for his genius. It is one of the most original poems in this or any language. It has evidently been poured out entire, "as from a mould," burning, molten, its every line and word fused in the one dark alembic. How he contrived to write it, we cannot tell. It is a pure creation. Standing alone at midnight, he turns his visionary eye to the north, the most poetical quarter of the sky, and perceives a glow suffusing it, as though a sun were about to rise where sun

never rose before. At the same time, a noise as of tramping waves is heard. He continues to gaze, till, lo! no sun, or star, or even lurid comet, but a "grizzly terror," starting up from below. Who can it be? It is no obedient seraph, calmly cleaving the air on some great behest of the Eternal King. No: it is an unclean spirit, whose hurry proclaims his hell. It is he who erst alighted on "Niphates' Mount." It is the Infernal King.

"And up he went, from native might, or holy sufferance given,  
As if to *strike the starry boss of the high and vaulted heaven.*"

Following with eager, yet cowering eye, the terrible parabola of his flight, he descries him, after scouring the Syrian wilderness, and catching, as in a mirage, one joyful glimpse of the triumphs of Mahomet, his chosen child, perching upon Tabor-hill, still hallowed by memories of the hour when Jesus, on its summit, became unretentive of his hidden glory, and let it out in a sea-like flood. Startled at the thought of this, and shrinking even from the image of that awful brow, the Fiend can find no rest there for the sole of his feet any more than in the immediate shadow of the throne; and down, a wild diver in search of oblivion, he plunges over "Tabor's trees." Westward, then, and right on, like a raven seeking her twilight crag, he "tracks his earnest way." Rising, next, till lost in the beams of day, he flits like a cloud over Africa, and exults in the seen slavery of her sable children. Again he mounts the chariot of the Night, and sails with her till Mount Aksbeck, shining through the gloom, attracts his eye. The poet stays not to tell us where Aksbeck is, or that it is nowhere but in his own imagination; not in Caucasus, not in Himmaleh, not in the Andes, perhaps in the Delectable Mountains, where Mount Clear looks through crystalline air, right upward to the golden gates of heaven, and

where Mount Danger, shuddering, looks down evermore its own dark precipices: suffice it, an Aksbeck was needed, and from the depth of the poet's soul an Aksbeck was upheaved, and there the wild traveller "closed at length his weary wing, and touched the shining hill." As he pauses, and rests on the mountain, the poet pauses too, to trace more closely the features of his own sublime recreation; to see "Care a shadow" far down in the pool of his "proud immortal eye;" to count the "spots of glory" which here and there his "saddened aspect mock;" to pass his finger across the deep scars of the old thunder uneffaced on his brow; to sound the "master-passions" which within are weaving the "tempest of his soul;" and to mark a sullen slumber, a "grim and breathless gleam," stealing over his lurid and dragon-lidded eyes. Yes, the Fiend sleeps, and dreams—and such a dream! It represents, in three dread galleries, his future history. In the first, he finds himself borne away

"where Lethe's slippery wave  
Creeps like a black and shining snake into a silent cave."

It is a place of "still and pictured life;" its roof is "ebon air;" and, drearily down, shining through it, "blasted as with dim eclipse," the ghosts of the sun and the moon "are there." It is the grave of the lost world; and the Fiend exults as he sees the workmanship of his own hands, "beauty caught by blight;" the thunder-fires of heaven hanging like snow upon the cedar branches above; beneath the simulacrum of the creation shrunk and travailing in pain, and all around diffused the silent river of Oblivion. Short-lived the joy of the Demon over this place of "God's first wrath." He is hurried on to the place of which his throne is the centre, and never did it look so ghastly to him as now, through the light of his "Dream." In the midst of this second lake, his



soul, as with "meshes of fire," is bowed down, to mark what may thence be seen above and around. And there follows a picture of the place of punishment as tremendous in its condensation, its hieroglyphic horror, as any thing even in Dante; it may be called, indeed, the essence of the "Inferno," and reminds us of Hall's daring expression, "distilled damnation." "Far off, upon the fire-burnt coast," some beings are seen standing. They are naked; and o'er them rests no red sheet of fire, nor are there wafted down upon them from above, as in Dante, flakes of flame, but, like a "stream of mist," in mockery of coolness, the "wrath is seen to brood." Half-way stands an angel-form, covering his face with his wing (ah, how like, yet how different from the attitude of the cherubim on high, veiling their faces with their wings!) "intent to shield his special suffering." Nearer, as if from above, rueful voices are heard, which, in reality, come from the depths of the lake. And—but it were wrong not to quote the following stanza:—

"And ever as, with grizly gleam, the crested waves came on,  
 Uprose a melancholy form with short impatient moan,  
 Whose eyes like living jewels shone, clear-purged by the flame,  
 And sore the salted fires had washed the thin immortal frame;  
 And backward, in sore agony, the being stripped its locks,  
 As maiden in her beauty's pride her clasped tresses strokes."

There is nothing in Dante superior to this. Imagination shrieks as she sees through the hideous surge, ever and anon, the eyes of Eternal Torture shining out, like "living jewels." And what a picture is this of the being stripping its locks, as a maiden her clasped tresses! The revulsion here from the thin, shivering, withered, writhing hairs of this lost one, to the thick and clustering tresses of beauty, is appalling. Meanwhile, around the lake high hills seem reeling in sym-

pathy with the breaking waves, a circumstance reminding us of Hogarth's houses in Gin Alley, sharing in the fell spirit, and tumbling in the contagious drunkenness of the scene ; and above there is a dance of lightnings,

“ crossing ever more,

“ Till like a red bewildered map the sky is scribbled o'er ;”

a line of inspired coarseness ; and in the unseen cupola over all are heard the mutterings of the mustering stores and thunders of wrath ! Nor must the Fiend rest even here. From the company and the sounds, and the bustle, dreary as they are, of the second lake, he is “ stormed away ” to experience the tormenting powers which are folded up in Idleness and Silence. At first, the vision sweeps through soft and unsubstantial shades, till, in the gloom, he descries, like a “ red and angry plate,” a lake, a lonely lake, prepared for his abode. It is the “ last lake of God's wrath,” and may well therefore be

“ A mirror where Jehovah's wrath in majesty alone

Comes in the Night of Worlds to see its armour girded on.”

“ Thou glorious mirror,” says Byron, “ where the Almighty's form glasses itself in tempests ;” but grander than even the stormy ocean, catching the dim contour of Deity, is this grim Lake looking-glass for the Wrath of the Eternal, travelling from afar to see its “ armour girded on.” “ All here is solemn idleness :” Silence guards the coast, and broods over the lake ; no islands begem that ocean, no sun shines above, one “ rim of restless halo marking the internal heat,” is all the illumination ; “ no lonely harper comes to harp upon that fiery coast,” and the Fiend feels as he enters it, that

“ He is the first that ever burst upon that silent sea.”

Ten thousand years of tranced agony pass away, when, lo!  
 "a change comes o'er the spirit of his dream:" a sound is  
 in his ears, breaking the hot and hideous silence. It is the  
 sound as of the "green-leaved earth," and there is balm and  
 moisture in every accent; a form of beauty, soft and cool,  
 flits into the gloom,—

"A low sweet voice is in his ear, thrills through his inmost soul,  
 And these the words that bow his heart with softly-sad control."

And there follow words worthy of cherubic lips, like the drop-  
 pings of Hybla's honey or as the dew of Hermon; words beau-  
 tiful exceedingly in themselves, in the rich flow of their mu-  
 sic, in their melting tenderness, in their chastened imagery;  
 but far more beautiful from the stern and awful groundwork  
 amid which they are set, and the contrast they supply to the  
 harsh and difficult numbers which crash and jar out the mu-  
 sic of perdition after and before. They rise like an island  
 of flowers upon the surface of the burning lake; they are  
 like moonbeams softening and paling the light of the eternal  
 flames:—

"No sister e'er hath been to thee, with pearly eyes of love—  
 No mother e'er hath wept for thee, an outcast from above—  
 No hand hath come from out the cloud, to wash thy scarred face—  
 No voice to bid thee lie in peace, the noblest of thy race.  
 But bow thyself to God of love, and all shall yet be well;  
 And yet in days of holy peace and love thy soul shall dwell;  
 And thou shalt dwell 'mid leaves and rills, far from this torrid heat,  
 And I, with streams of cooling milk, will bathe thy blistered feet.  
 And when the unbidden tears shall start, to think of all the past,  
 My mouth shall haste to kiss them off, and chase thy sorrows fast.  
 And thou shalt walk in soft white light, with kings and priests abroad,  
 And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the hills of God."

And while those sweetest accents are falling like snow upon

his parched ears, "dewy lips" are kissing his, till his "lava breast is cool." He wakes, and behold it is a dream! He wakes in dread revulsion, "as from a mighty blow." He wakes, and springs a moment upon his wing, to know if his wonted strength has left him. He wakes, and all the fiend is re-born within his breast. Haunted by the image of that last lake, with its tide of "idle, dull" eternity approaching, he would bury himself in blank oblivion—but,

"From his fear recoils again, in pride like mighty bow."

Turning his eyes up to the silent night, he sees, not as his ambition would desire, trouble and terror shed from his presence over the works of God—no flying angels watching his career, but all silently, scornfully calm. The

"Planets, undisturbed by him, are shining in the sky;"

and, as they shine, they seem to smile out still—infinite, eternal contempt upon him. Every star is as a finger of scorn pointed at his head. And, on his great lurid wing, that living thunder-cloud, the dews are distilling as on the blade of summer grass. This, oh! this stings him to madness.

"The silent magnanimity of Nature and her God

With anguish smote his haughty soul, and sent his hell abroad."

This calm universal neglect is to him more horrible than the horned flames of Hell. Has he for this "led the embattled seraphim to war,"—fronted the thunder of Jehovah,—felt the down-grinding sword of Michael,—seen the rushing chariot of Immanuel,—sat for ages unshrinking on the burning throne—borne, on his solitary shoulder, the Atlantean weight of the Infernal Empire,—for this! to be no more noticed in the silent universe than is one leaf of nettle, or nightshade, carelessly floating on the breeze. And this shall he continue to

bear ! No ; no more tame truces. He shall do open battle  
once more for his old domains.

“ He shall upward go, and pluck the windows of high Heaven,  
And stir their calm insulting peace, though tenfold Hell be given.”

Like the lightning which, in “haste, licks up the life of man,” aloft he springs, and is lost to sight in the far upper ether. The poet’s heart now heaves high, expecting some signal judgment to go forth from the bosses of the Almighty’s buckler, on which the Fiend has rushed so madly. But he waits in vain. No disturbance “blenches the golden tress, or dims the eye sublime,” of the stars, “those watchers and holy ones,” shining aloft in the fields of air. No red arm of anger is bared against their assailant. “Down headlong through the firmament he falls upon the north,” with drooping pinion, reversed arms, despairing eye, he sets where he rose ;

“ ’Twas God that gave the Fiend a space, to prove him still the same,  
Then bade wild Hell, with hideous laugh, be stirred its prey to claim.”

Such is a faint analysis of a very remarkable production, which bears no more resemblance to the majority of so-called poems, than does a meteoric stone, hissing from the upper air, to a piece of vulgar whin-stone. It is enough of itself to make a reputation. A single poem can do this in one of three cases,—when it is the only production of its author’s mind, as in the case of Pickens’ “Donochthead ;” or when it is either exquisitely excellent, or intensely peculiar, as with Wolf’s “Lines on the Burial of Sir John Moore,” and Christopher Smart’s “David.” Now, “The Devil’s Dream” has both the latter recommendations. It is altogether unlike any other poem ever written ; and it is possessed, besides, of exalted merit. Every thing is in intense keeping. Its large

volume of verse,—its rugged rhythm,—the impenetrable obscurities which, like jet-black ornaments, are wreathed around it,—its severe and awful spirit,—its unearthly diction,—the throes and labours of its execution,—the daring homeliness of its imagery, and the whole conception of the character of its hero, are terribly true to each other, and entitle it to rank with any one book of the “Inferno.” As in that great poem, too, beauty, like a vein of vegetation led along the margin of the eternal pit, and down its very sides, wins its irresistible way into the centre of the horror.

Oh how would honest Jean Paul, that dear dreamer of all gorgeous and grotesque chimeras, have rejoiced over this Bowden emulation of his Baireuth inspirations. He would have dreamed it over again, with variations, all his own rays shooting still farther and more daringly into the abysses of night. Yet we doubt if even he could have *compressed* so much mystic meaning into the same compass,—have struck off, from the mint of his imagination, an infernal medal, so thickly inscribed. And it is clear that the Scotsman has not copied from the German. The resemblances are produced by a kindred genius, the peculiarity of which, perhaps, is, that its wing loves, in serious sport, to dip into the darkness which envelops the left side of Mirza’s ocean of eternity. Both are birds of the tempest, but it is that storm which beats upon the shore which is “heaped with the damned like pebbles.” Both “affect the shade;” but it is of the worm that dieth not, and eternal darkness.

The “Demoniac” is distinguished by a bare and nervous simplicity, which sorts well with the scene and the time of the story,—the scene being Judea; the time, when it was being consecrated by the tread of blessed feet, and the baptism of divine blood. The riot of imagination, the pomp of words, the melody of numbers, are exchanged for a breath-

less air, a severe reserve, a prosaic literality, which fall with the precision and power of statuary upon the soul. The tale is told, as it might have been, by one to his fellow standing under the darkness, which, above the cross, blotted out the universe! Thus, in guttural pantings,—in rude interjections,—in sounds straggling and simple, is the powerful, strange, and most melting story disclosed. We admire, especially, the picture of the fiend possessed, into the sad secrets of whose very soul the poet seems privileged to pierce; and surely never was there finer subject for idealizing verse than those ancient demoniacs, with their wild locks floating in the wind of hell,—“tormented before the time,” with Satan instead of soul, all luminous with unearthly light, pacing the tombs, or plunging into the lake of Sodom, or crunching the salt ashes by its sides, or driven away, away, on the breath of their dreadful inmates, or crying to the rocks to cover them; or, in the intervals of their bondage, waiting with breathless hearts and bloodshot staring eyne, for the coming of their tormentors; or wallowing and foaming in the pangs of their exorcism; or, in a milder light, afterwards clothed and in their right mind, at the feet of their deliverer. All this Aird has included in the one figure of Herman, whose young, fresh, joyous hunter soul is supplanted by a demon, till breathed back by Jesus. We like, too, the modesty with which the poet has abstained from a subject so tempting to the rash and reckless, as the Crucifixion. Feeling that this is a subject too “solemn for fiction—too majestic for ornament,”—a scene across which a curtain should be sacredly stretched,—he stands, like Peter, “afar off.” His genius, he feels, may disport itself upon the breakers of the burning lake, but here must furl its plume of fire. And yet how impressive his representation, and how worthy of a great artist! He watches the tragedy of the universe, through

the eyes of Herman's heart-sick mother, who, disappointed in her search for Christ to cure her son, has entered a wood in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, when a "horror of great darkness falls—the quenched day is done;" and, though that darkness sounds first a dull deep shock, as of some far-fallen pile of ages, and then "steps, as if shod with thunder," are heard amid the gloom; and then outsprings, from that brief eclipse, the day, with livelier, fresher beam, as if from the womb of the morning; and seems to ray out, even to *her* half-taught soul, the intelligence that "the Great Redemption is complete, and Satan's power o'erthrown."

We like this looking at the cross, as men do to the sun, through the half shut eye. It contrasts well with the impudent familiarities of French preachers,—of Robert Montgomery,—shall we add of Klopstock? It reminds us of the turning aside from this great sight of Milton himself, who, not choosing to look at it, even as Aird does, through the double darkness of a forest and a quenched sun, has, in his "Paradise Regained," avoided the subject altogether. The close of the poem, again, is just the calm of the mildest of sunsets, transferred to the page, which softly pictures the evening life of the heroine, "setting in the bosom of her God;" and is, we know, almost the only passage, in all his works, which satisfies the fastidious taste of the author.

A nobler subject than Nebuchadnezzar, for tragedy or epic, Scripture does not furnish. There is an Oriental gusto about all he does,—a passionate pomp,—a wild vein of poetry running up through his proud heart, which invest him, from first to last, with a dream-like magnificence. Whether we see him, that patient Apollyon! growing gray with his soldiers before the indomitable Tyre,—nursing in his breast, the while, a deadly revenge for his deferred hopes—or riding into the affronted temple of Jehovah—or rising, in affright,



from his dream of the dreadful image and the more dreadful stone that smote it to dust—or rearing, in mimicry of his vision, the image on the plains of Dura—or, with flushed face, looking into the burning fiery furnace, and seeing *four* men walking therein—or listening, again, in the land of dream, to the fell cry, “Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches” —or walking in the palace of Babylon—or driven from men, with dew for his perfumes, grass for his delicate bread, feathers instead of hairs, claws digging into the dust, instead of nails dyed in henna—or, in fine, a meek worshipper of him who removeth kings,—he furnishes scope the most abundant for artistic treatment, and for more than Mr. Aird has accomplished. He has written neither a tragedy nor an epic; but the most finished of all his poems; a firm, nervous, and manly narrative, with fewer prominent beauties, or glaring defects, than some of his other works. We admire in it the strong simplicity of the diction—the wild energy of parts of the dialogue—the precision and pomp of some individual descriptions—the conception of Ezekiel, turning from men to mountains, as more congenial companions, and continuing, even in the wilderness, very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and of Cyra, sweetest daughter of Israel. She, indeed, is one of the finest of female natures. Her love is wonderful, passing that of women; but the soul of Deborah mounts often to her wild eyes. Her lips have never been kissed but by “a prophetess’ fire.” Every inch a woman—nay a child—the hand of God is on her head; and it is no secular fury which slumbers in those fairy fingers, and amid the strings of that lightsome lyre, by which she soothes the soul of the imperial maniac. The maniac himself, perhaps, is not drawn in such vivid and startling colours as we should have liked. He is too tame, too submissive;—lacks the touch of insane grandeur which would

have befitted his character,—should have been made to fight his battles o'er again in the desert,—to have taken a rock for the platform of his palace,—a pool for the sea which laved imperial Tyre,—and have tossed from his white lips the eloquence of a noble despair. Nor do we much admire the conception or execution of the under-plot of the piece—the attempt on the king's life. It violates probability; who durst have sought a life protected by the inviolate sacredness of madness? circled in by the curse of the Eternal? Thank God, bad as human nature is, that curse has generally been a hedge round its victim, a hedge at least as strong as his blessing. Few have sought to “break those whom God hath bowed before.” It distracts, too, the tissue and interest of the tale. It is like inserting a thorn into the foot of the Laocoon, while clothed with snakes, as if that could add to the severity of the anguish, or to the grandeur of the agonized figure. The apparition of the king, in his own palace, at the critical moment, is, however, managed with much art and energy. The close has that unexpectedness of simplicity which distinguishes one or two of Hall's perorations; that, for instance, in the sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte, in which you are permitted, contrary to what you supposed from the elaboration of previous parts, to slide gently down from the subject, not hurled headlong from the back of a rolling period. Altogether, it is an epic in miniature, though the poetry mantles most around the bushy locks of Ezekiel, and the subtle lyre of Cyra.

We must not dilate on Mr. Aird's other poems; on his “Father's Curse,” with the calm sweet stream of its commencement, and the red torrent of energy which forms its close; on his “Mother's Grave,” lines more tender than any since Cowper's on the receipt of his “Mother's Picture,” though without the uniform simplicity and clearness of that

delicious poem; on his "Mother's Blessing," a series of beautiful descriptions, suspended on the string of a rather improbable and mediocre story; on his "Byron," a high mettled gallop upon an old road, with more flow of sound and less energy of sense than is wont; or on his "Churchyard Eclogues," like the reveries of some sublime sexton—like apple-trees growing near a graveyard rich with the fatness of death. One figure in the second of those strange poems, we particularly remember. It is that of a lost one, whose eternal employment is, on the sand of his own place, "aye to write his mother's name," and for ever does a horned tongue of flame pass by which erases that sad literature, and chases the wretch along the waste. 'Tis a dreary figure, and may be called a "character omitted in the Devil's Dream." Othuriel, again, is the ghost of Nebuchadnezzar, with all its simplicity, but without its strength. The tale is somewhat tamely told; and, as you read, the fear will not flee. "Has his strength gone out from him, has he become weak as other men?"

He has written, besides, in *Blackwood* and *Fraser*, some prose stories of great power. Who that has read has forgot "Buy a Broom," the most poetical of tales, and one of the most interesting. A tale is seldom read twice; but this tale has a charm besides the story,—that of exquisite description, and fine, rich, mellow, and musical writing. Oh, for a century, a decameron, of such stories! They would positively raise the standard of the kind of composition. A strong prejudice exists against a tale; when once it "has been told" it is treated with contempt. And yet tales have constituted some of the finest productions of the human mind. What is the "Falcon?"—a tale. What "Tam O'Shanter?"—a tale. What one of Shakspeare's finest dramas?—the Winter's Tale. What the noblest flight of Scott in the region

of the supernatural?—"Wandering Willie's Tale." A tale is the germ of every other kind of composition—of Novel, Tragedy, Comedy, Epic, and all. It is the first key to turn the infant heart, which swells up to the very eyes at its mother's tale. It is often the last to win its way into the fastness of age, which weeps, and thrills, and shakes its gray locks at nothing so much as at a tale. Remember, ye sneerers at stories, the "Tale of Troy Divine," the "Arabian Nights," the tales told by Turcomans to rapt audiences, in the glorious evenings of the East; the tales of the Great Spirit, and the Great Waters, recounted by half-inspired red men to their children, in the forests and by the beacon fires of the West.

Mr. Aird is a native of Rowden, Roxburghshire. His parents, who still live, are in humble circumstances, but of the most amiable and respectable characters. He was originally intended for the church, but chose to turn aside into the flowery by-paths of literature. He was much distinguished at college; and his productions in *Blackwood* gained him a large share of notice among the more discriminating. He was employed for some time in editing the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, after the death of James Ballantyne. He passed from thence to the editorship of the *Dumfries Herald*, an office which he still fills with great ability.

Mr. Aird is a man of simple, unassuming manners, and high moral character. In Dumfries, no man is more respected and loved. His appearance is striking. His figure is erect and manly. His head is well developed, especially in the moral organs. His lips are singularly rich and expressive. His whole appearance denotes a man whose "soul is like a star, and dwells apart." Pity that he is not in a sphere worthier of his talents. Deeper pity still that, from his connexion with politics, we are obliged to apply

to him the words of Goldsmith, originally uttered about Burke—

“ Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.”

*Note.*—Mr. Aird has lately, we are glad to learn, rewritten, and intends to republish, his “Characteristics,” and “Captive of Fez.” He is also soon to issue a work in prose, containing his previous and additional tales.

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### ROBERT SOUTHEY, LL. D.

ALAS, now, for the glories of the Lake country! Some score of years ago, proudly did it lift its head above the champaign of England to the south, and even toss northwards defiance from its Skiddaw and Saddleback towards “stately Edinburgh throned on crags,” and the waving outline of the Grampian giants. Not only did it enclose, in its fine sweep, peaceful lakes, valleys “flat as the floor of a temple,” tarns of austere beauty, forsses flashing amid greenest umbrage, or bedewing grim rocks with an everlasting baptism; mountains, carrying off and up, by fine gradation, (as if the one grew into the other while you gazed,) beauty into grandeur; but it had attracted to its bosom a cluster of the wisest and rarest spirits then breathing in Britain. Sheltering the most of them from the non-appreciation or contempt of the critics of the era, an era which was “neither light nor dark,” but lying betwixt the gross darkness of Darwin and Hayley, and the broad and blood-red uprising of Byron,—they had sought a refuge from the mountains and the woods, which was not denied them. There stalked or sat, as it

suited his quaint humour, and "murmured to the running brooks a music sweeter than their own," Wordsworth, the quiet tune of his verse not yet become a harmony, to which nations listened in reverence. There Coleridge "talked like an angel, and did nothing at all." There Southey pursued his indefatigable labours, under the sting of that long impulse which was so characteristic of him. There Wilson, De Quincey, Lloyd, and Hartley Coleridge, to say nothing of Bishop Watson, &c., were content and proud, to be *Dii Minorum Gentium*. And now, where is all this illustrious company? Coleridge is dead, and died far from the murmur of Grasmere springs, and the rustle of the heath of Helvellyn. Wilson's princely figure is seen no more among the woods of Elleray. De Quincey is now, they say, a denizen of the sweet village of Lasswade. Bishop Watson has left the plantations of Calgarth for ever. Lloyd is dead—a maniac. Hartley Coleridge lives; but "happy, in my mind, was he that died." And of late, Wordsworth has been left absolutely alone, since Southey, having first sent his mind before him, has now at last sighed out his animal breath, and "returned to God who gave him." Long did the world sympathize with that mysterious obscuration which rested on his powers; and when the trembling hand of his wife drew half aside the curtain of his malady, many were the tears shed; but now the eclipse has passed away, and the orb with it. It were idle, and worse than idle, to grieve. More entirely, perhaps, than any man of his generation, except Wordsworth, Scott, and Goethe, had Southey done the work allotted him to do, and given the world assurance, full and heaped, and running over, of what he meant, and what was meant, by his existence. While the premature departure of a Schiller, a Byron, a Keats, gives you emotions similar to those wherewith you would behold the crescent

moon snatched away, as by some "insatiate archer," up into the infinite, ere it grew into its entire glory, Southey, with his three great contemporaries, was permitted to fill his full sphere, as broad, if not so bright, as theirs.

It was given to this illustrious man to unite powers usually deemed incompatible,—a wild and daring fancy, a clear and ample intellect, unequalled perseverance of pursuit, attainments marvellous for variety, and minute mastery of their details, a flaming genius, and a patient research, a tone of mind the most ethereal, and habits of action the most mechanical; the utmost exaggeration, as a poet, to the utmost propriety, and elegance, and minute grace, as a writer of prose. As an author, he was at once the most eccentric and the most industrious. He is now as lawless as Shelley, and now as graceful as Addison; now erratic as Coleridge, and now plodding as Blackmore. His castles in the clouds are of solid masonry; his very abortions have marks of care and elaboration. This probably has injured our conception of his power. We hate to see a wizard for ever astride on his broom-stick. We wish piles of magic to rise magically, and not by slow and laborious accumulation. We hear of the building of the Ark, but not of that of Jacob's ladder. It was let down, flashing suddenly its spiritual light across the desert and the brow of the sleeping patriarch. Southey's supernaturalisms smell too much of the oil,—there's "magic in the web;" but the web is so vast, that the witchery thins away, by diffusion, into shadow; he forgets that tedium is the antithesis of terror, that it is the etiquette of ghosts to make short calls; that, when they stay too long, we think them bores, and that a yawn is more effectual in remanding them to limbo than even the crowing of the cock. We refer, in these remarks, partly to "Thalaba," but principally to the "Curse of Kehama," which is little else than a magni-

ficient mistake, and where, while admiring the quantity of imagery and language, many of the separate incidents, and the lovely female character of Kailyal, we own, with something like a sigh, that not more are the pomps of Indian ceremonial thrown away on the idol, sitting stolid in the midst, than is all this wealth of mind lavished upon a legend so incredible and so stupid withal. In this, and in one or two other of his larger poems, his mind follows that stream of tendency which, some years ago, drew our higher poetical genius towards the east, as if the font of Castalia were a travelling spring, and had thither transferred its waters. And there are in that region very potent attractions to the imagination. Its associations, as the cradle of the human race, as the seat of the primeval Paradise, as the throne of defunct empires, as the scene of miracles at which the cheek of man still turns pale ; as the stage on which angels, prophets, and sages, played their parts ; as the fountain of the three Faiths (how divers in character ! ) which have principally swayed the minds of intelligent man—Judaism, Mahometanism, and Christianity ; as the parent, besides, of those enormous superstitions, which appear indigenious as its tigers and reptiles, immense effluvia springing from the heat of its imagination, as these from the heat of its climate ; as the land of the sun, who casts over it all a glare of awful appropriation, from Jerusalem to Japan ; as swarming with vices and crimes, which surround it with a haze of moral horror ; as teeming with wild and wondrous poetry ; as the source of almost all pestilence and sweeping judgments ; as abounding in barbaric wealth, “ from its earth coming bread, and under it, turned up, as it were, fire—the stones of it sapphires, and the dust thereof gold ; ” and above all, as nurturing a gorgeous scenery of wide-spread jungle, great sweeping rivers, deserts naked and bare, vast lonely plains, large tracts of



territory stripped of their cities, peeled of their verdure, sucked dry of their rivers, and given up to eternal barrenness; and of mountains, every name of which is a poem, from where Lebanon looks down through his cedars to Calvary, to where Caucasus gazes on the Caspian, with his eye of snow; and to where, again, the Himalayan hills, supreme in height, withdrawn, as if in scorn, into their own inaccessible summits, carry up the outline of our planet nearest to the sun, to Sirius, to the throne of God. Associations of this kind have invested the East with a varied charm, and drawn toward it Byron, Moore, Southey, Croley, Beckford, the author of "Anastasius," and a host of others, in search of the inspiration still supposed to linger about its sparkling waters and its golden groves. And while Moore has caught its sunny spirit, its effervescent liveliness of fancy, its elegance of costume, its profusion of colour, and its voluptuousness of tone; and Byron bathed in its darker fountains of passion, and revived its faded blasphemies, and sucked poison from its brilliant flowers,—Southey has aspired to mate with the mightier and elder shapes of its superstition; to reanimate the cold idols of its worship; to climb its Swerga, to dive into its dreary Domdaniel caves, to rekindle the huge heaps of its ashes, or to rear over them a mausoleum, proud, large, and elaborate, as their own forms. In this attempt he has had little sympathy. Hindostan is too far gone in dotage and death, to bleed the generous life-blood of poetry to any lancet. Its forms are too numerous, capricious, and ugly; its mythology too intricate, its mummeries too ridiculous, its colouring of blood too uniform. Byron and Moore knew this; and while the former, except in one instance, where he bursts into the neighbourhood of Eden, has never gone farther east than Turkey; the other flits about the fire summits of Persia, and seeks to collect in his

crystal goblet no element more potent or hazardous than the poetical essence of the faith of Mahomet. In "Madoc," again, Southey has gone to the opposite quarter of the globe; has leaped into the new world, disturbed by his foot a silence unbroken from the creation, and led us amid those abysses of primeval darkness into which a path for the sunbeams must be hewn, and amid which the lightning, sole visiter since the deluge, enters trembling, and withdraws in haste. Tearing, without remorse, the crown of discovery from the head of Columbus, he guides the bark of Madoc, a Welsh prince, through silent seas, to that most prodigious of all foundlings, the American continent, and recounts many strange adventures which befell him there. There is much boldness, some poetry, and more tediousness in the attempt; and we could have wished that the shade of Columbus had appeared (like that dire figure in Scott's noble picture of Vasco di Gama passing the Cape,) to his slumbering spirit, and warned him off the forbidden shores. "Wat Tyler" is a feverish effusion of youth, love, and revolutionary mania. "Joan of Arc" we have never read. Many of his smaller poems are fine, particularly the "Holly Tree." Ah, he foresaw not that the high smooth leaves on its top were to be withered and blackened where they grew! But "Roderick the Last of the Goths," is the main pillar of his poetical reputation. It is a deep, sober, solemn narrative, less ambitious and more successful than his others. The author, as well as the hero, appears in it, a penitent for his former sins of subject and treatment. A shade of pensive piety hovers meekly over it. It is written all in a quiet under tone, which were monotonous but for the varied and picturesque story it tells. And behind it, in noble back-ground, lies the scenery of Spain, with its mountain masses, cork tree groves, orange tints, and dancing fire-flies—the country of Cervantes and

Don Quixote, where they still sing, as they go forth to labour, the "ancient ballad of Roncesvalles." His laureate odes are, in general, failures. Who can write poems any more than "yield reasons upon compulsion, Hal?" It is an incubus of obligation, under which the wings of the loftiest genius might succumb. We have sometimes figured to ourselves the horrible plight of one who were compelled to preach two poems in a week as a minister has to preach two sermons. Scarce inferior to such a slavery, is that of a laureate who must sweat poetry out of every birth, baptism, burial, and battle, that occurs in the circle of the royal household or in the public history of the country. "The Vision of Judgment" brings this deplorable bondage to a point. We know not whether its design or its execution, its spirit or its versification, be more unworthy of the writer. It is half ludicrous, half melancholy, to see it now preserving its sole existence in the notes to Byron's parody. There, degraded as if to the kitchen of that splendid but wicked *jeu d'esprit*, it serves only to sauce its poignancy. When shall the lines on the "Burial of Sir John Moore," or the "Dream," or Campbell's "Last Man," be thus kicked down stairs by their caricatures? Never. Had not Southey's poem been worthless it would have defied fifty parodies to laugh it out of circulation.

The leading qualities of his poetry are exuberance of imagery; diffusion of style; manifest facility of execution; a somewhat ostentatious display of intimacy with the costume, or history, of the theme, or period; a wild, varied, and often exquisite versification; a frequent looseness and vagueness of phrase, strangely connected with an utter absence and abhorrence of mysticism, in the proper sense of the term; a sluggishness of occasional movement; a general want of condensation and artistic finish; and a pervading

tone of moral and religious principle. His genius emits a deep, steady, permanent glow—never those sharp tongues of flame which in some other authors of the age appear to smite and educe sound from the darkness. His poems, excellent in most of their parts, are heavy as wholes: and he must have been mortified, but need not have been surprised, that while the brilliant pamphlets of Byron were racing on through instant popularity to eternal fame before his very eyes, his own larger, equally genuine, and far more laboured works, were so slowly gaining their way to a doubtful and disputed immortality. After all, his principal defect as a poet is size;—his ghosts are too tall—his quaintnesses are in quarto—his airy verse, which had been admirable in short effusions, wearies when reverberated throughout the long vista of interminable narratives—his genius wears a train—with it has been entangled, and over it has wellnigh fallen. Very different it is with his prose. Here his fatal facility of verse forsakes him. He knows where to stop; and his language is pure, pellucid, simple, proper words dropping as by instinct into proper places. We prefer his style to Hall's, as less finished, but more natural, and better adapted for the uses of every-day composition. You never, go as early as you please, catch the one in undress, the other always wears an elegant dishabille. Had Hall written a history or biography, it had been a stiff brocade business. Southey tells his story almost as well as Herodotus or Walter Scott. His lives of Henry Kirke White and Nelson attest this; but so do also his other works—the “Life of Wesley,” the “Book of the Church,” the “Doctor,” (containing, besides, so many odd fancies, and so much quaint humour, that men were slow to believe it his,) his “Colloquies on Society,” his lives of Cowper and Bunyan, and his articles in the *Quarterly*, many of which, it is said, were purchased cheaply at £100 each.

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We love him for his liking to dear old John Bunyan, though it cost him a wry face or two to digest the tough old Baptist. Next to the Bible, the "Pilgrim's Progress" is to us the Book. Never while our soul is in time or eternity, can we forget thee, "gentle dreamer," or that immortal road which thy genius has mapped out. Never can we forget the cave where thou dreamest, Dante-like, thy dream—the man with the book in his hand—the Slough of Despond—the apparition of Help—the sigh with which we saw Pliable turning round on the wrong side—the starry wicket-gate shining through the darkness—the cliffs of Sinai overhanging the bewildered wanderer—the Interpreter's house, with its wondrous visions—its man in the cage; and Him, the nameless, rising from the vision of the Judgment for ever more—the Hill Difficulty, with the two dreary roads, Danger and Destruction, diverging from its base—the harbour half way up—the lions on the summit—the house Beautiful—that very solitary place the Valley of Humiliation, with now Apollyon spreading his dragon-wings in the gloom, and now, how sweet the contrast! the boy with the herb "heart's-ease" in his bosom, and that soft hymn upon his lips, reclining fearless among its gentle shades—that "other place," the Valley of the Shadow of Death, with its shuddering horrors—the town of Vanity—the dungeons of Despair—the Delectable Mountains, overtopped by Mount Clear, and that again by the golden gates of the city—the short cut to hell—the enchanted ground—Beulah, that lovely land, where the sun shineth night and day—the dark river over which there is no bridge, the ridges of the Everlasting Hills rising beyond. As to the characters, we love them all—Christian with his burden, and the key called Promise in his bosom; Hopeful, ever answering to his name; Faithful, mounting on his fiery whirlwind the nearest way to the Celestial Gate; good Evangelist;

manly Great-heart ; Valiant-for-truth, with "right Damascus blade" cleaving in blood to his hand ; Little-faith, grasping his jewels ; Fearing wallowing in his slough ; Despondency and Much-afraid ; even green-headed Ignorance and his complacent ferry-man ; and have a lurking tenderness for Byends himself, and that strange figure Old Atheist, with his hollow laughter ; and "one will we mention dearer than the rest," Mercy, whom we love for the sweet name she bears, and because she approaches the very ideal of womanliness and modesty of character. "O rare John Bunyan !" what a particle of power was deposited in thy rude body and ruder soul ! With a "burnt stick for a pencil," what graphic, pathetic, powerful, tender, true, and terrible pictures, hast thou drawn ! Thou hast extorted admiration from infidels and high churchmen ; from boys and bearded men ; from a clown and a Coleridge ; (who read it now as a critic, regarding it as the first of allegories ; now as a theologian, considering it the best system of divinity ; and again as a boy, surrendering himself to the stream of the story ;) from a Thomas Campbell and a Robert Southey.

Southey was a very eloquent and generous critic, when no prejudice stood in the way. As a thinker he was clear, rather than profound ; fond of crotchets, and infected with a most unaccountable and unreasonable aversion to the periodical press. As a religionist his views were exceedingly definite and decided. His formula of Church of Englandism fitted his mind exactly as a glove his hand. He had no patience with the mystic piety of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and would have recoiled from the transcendental charity of Carlyle. His opinions on all subjects were sharp, narrow, and firm, as the corners of a triangular hat. Perhaps he had been yet more amiable if his virtues had hung about him in softer and easier folds—if they had not been gathered in

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around him with such austere and Roman precision ; and if they had rendered him more tolerant to the failings of others. Fiercely assailed by William Smith and Lord Byron, his retorts, keen and eloquent as they were, showed too plainly that the iron had entered into his soul. His change of political principle we hope to have been the result of conscientious conviction. The only blot on his escutcheon we know was his conduct to poor Shelley. We do not refer to his transcription and circulation of the mad post-fix in the album at Montanvert, but to the dark hints he threw out in one of his letters in reference to disclosures Shelley had made to him about himself, in the confidence of private communication. No provocation could justify such a breach of trust towards one who, as a "pilgrim of his genius," had visited his home. The obscurity of the insinuations only makes the matter worse.

Southey had much, it is said, of the poet in his appearance—was stately in form—had the "eye of the hawk and the fire therein"—a Roman nose forming his most expressive feature. On the whole, if not the greatest poet, he was the most industrious and accomplished litterateur of the day ; and if not the most marked, or unique, or attractive, was probably the most faultless of its literary characters.

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### JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

THERE is a certain stern, masculine, and caustic type of mind, which is, we think, disappearing from the higher walks of our literature. It is as if the English element were departing from the English mind, and were being exchanged,

partly for good and partly for evil, for an infusion of foreign blood. Our national peculiarities of thought are fast melting down into the great general stream of European literature. Where now that rugged Saxon strength, sagacity, and sarcastic vein—that simple manly style—that clear logical method—that dogged adherence to the point in hand—that fearless avowal of national prejudices, hatreds, and contempts—that thorough-going insular spirit which distinguished the Drydens, the Swifts, and, in part, the Johnsons of a by-gone period? They are, in a great measure, gone; and in their stead we have the vagueness, the mistiness, the exaggeration, the motley and mosaic diction, along with the earnestness, the breadth, and the cosmopolitanism, “wide and general as the casing air,” of Germany, transferred or transfused into our English tongue. It were vain to protest against, or to seek to retard, an influence which is fast assuming the character of an irresistible infection. There is no disguising the fact. For better or for worse, our poetry and our prose, our history and our criticism, our profane and our sacred literature, are fast charging with Germanism, as clouds with thunder. Be this potent element a devil’s elixir, or the wine of life, the thinkers of both Britain and America seem determined to dare the experiment of draining its cup to the dregs. And at this stage of the trial, it is enough for us to note the pregnant fact, and also to record the names of those among our higher writers, who have kept themselves clear from, if they have not opposed and counteracted, this “mighty stream of tendency.”

Prominent among these stand Byron, Southey, Macaulay, and Lockhart, who all, amid their variety of gifts, are distinguished by an intense Anglicanism of spirit and style. Byron—spurned by England, and spurning England in return—yet bore with him into his banishment all the peculiarities



of his country's literature: its directness, its dogmatism, its clearness, and its occasional caprice. And never is he so heartily and thoroughly English as when he is denouncing or ridiculing the land of his fathers. It is impossible to conceive of him, in any circumstances, sinking down to the level of an Italian improvisatore, or subliming into a German mystic, or of being aught but what he was—a strange compound of English blackguard, English peer, and English poet. His knowledge of German was limited; and even when he stole from it, it was what it had stolen from the elder authors of England. His admiration of Goethe was about as genuine and profound as a schoolboy's of Homer, who has read a few pages of the Iliad in Greek, and has not read Pope's or Cowper's translation. And though he talked of writing his *magnum opus* in Italian, after he had fully mastered the language, it was easy to perceive that to his "land's language" he in reality desired to commit the perpetuity of his fame, and that England was the imaginary theatre before which he went through his attitudes of enthusiasm, and assumed his postures of despair. Southey, again, in creed, in character, in purpose, in genius, and in diction, was English to exclusiveness. Macaulay's writings, starred so richly with allusions to every other part of every other literature, do not, we are positive, above half-a-dozen times, recognize the existence of the German,—a single sneer is all he vouchsafes to our modern Germanized English authors: his strongest sympathies are with our native literature; and his sharp, succinct, and nervous manner, is the exact antithesis of that which is the rage of the Continent. And Lockhart, the subject of this notice, though he is versant with foreign tongues—though he has translated from the Spanish, has travelled in Germany, and gazed on the Jove-like forehead of

the author of *Faust*, was, is, and is likely to continue a Saxon to the backbone.

We had almost called Lockhart the Dryden of his day. Certainly he has much of glorious John's robust and careless strength of style, and of his easy and vaulting vigour of versification. Like Dryden, too, whether lauding his friends, or vituperating his foes—whether applying the caustic of satire, or inditing the fiery lyric—whether bursting into brief and chary raptures, or sneering behind the back of his own enthusiasm, he is always manly, measured, disdainful alike of petty faults and petty beauties. Like Dryden, he is never greater than when, in translation or adaptation, he is rekindling the embers of other writers. Like Dryden, he is never or rarely caught into the "seventh heaven of invention:" he is sometimes majestic, but never sublime; and has little pure passion, no dramatic vein, and but occasional command over the fountain of tears. From Dryden, however, he differs in this, that while he is equally good at reasoning in rhyme, or expressing didactic truth, as at painting character or scenery, Lockhart's great strength lies in picturesque and powerful description of the oddities of character, of the darker vagaries of the human heart, or of the broader and more general features of Nature.

The two main characteristics of this writer's mind are, we think, sympathy with the sterner passions, and scorn for the lighter foibles and frailties of man. From the first have sprung those energetic, though somewhat overcharged, pictures, which startle and appall us in "*Adam Blair*" and "*Matthew Wald*." To the latter we owe the sparkling humour, the bitter satire, and the brilliant badinage of "*Peter's Letters*," "*Reginald Dalton*," and all his splendid sins in the pages of *Blackwood*. Besides those master fea-

tures, he possesses, beyond all question, a strong and sagacious intellect, a clear and discriminating vein of criticism, a vigorous rather than a copious imagination, thorough rather than profound learning, and a style, destitute, indeed, of grace or elegance, but native, nervous, and powerful. He has, withal, no great subtlety of view, or width of comprehension, or generosity of feeling, and not a particle of that childlike simplicity, earnestness, and abandonment, which are so often the accompaniments of genius. Indeed, if genius be, as we deem it is, a voice from the depths of the human spirit; the utterance, native and irresistible, of one possessed by an influence which, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth; comes, he knows not whence; and goes, he knows not whither—a fainter degree of that inspiration which, to the rapt eye of the ancient prophet, made the future present, and the distant near—a lingering echo of that infinite ocean from which we have all come—the bright limit between the highest form of the intellectual, and the lowest form of the divine—if the man under its influence be a “maker,” working out, in imitation of the great demiurgic artist, certain imitations of his own; a “declarer,” more or less distinctly, of the awful will of the unseen Lawgiver, seated within his soul—a string to an invisible harper—a pen guided by a superhuman hand—a trumpet filled with a voice which is as the sound of many waters:—if this definition of genius be admitted, we question if he possesses it at all; if it be not, in truth, only high talent which sharpens his keen nostril, while genius flames and fluctuates around the eagle eye, and the meteoric hair adorning the head of his friend and craft-brother, Professor Wilson.

As a novelist, his first production was “Valerius,” which he read, Willis tells us, sheet after sheet, as it was written, to Christopher North, and was encouraged, by his approba-

tion, to put it to press. It is a stern and literal re-production of the classical periods. Its style has, in general, the coldness and chasteness of a translation from the Latin. Its best passage is that descriptive of the amphitheatre, which is written with a rugged power worthy of the scene, in which the

Buzz of eager nations ran  
 In murmur'd pity, or loud-roared applause,  
 As man was slaughtered by his fellow-man.  
 And wherefore slaughter'd? Wherefore, but because  
 Such were the bloody circus' genial laws,  
 And the imperial pleasure.

And yet we question if one line of Childe Harold, or one stanza of the "Prophecy of Capys," do not more to *refresh* the Titanic skeleton of ancient Rome to the imagination and heart, than the entire novels of "Valerius" and "Salathiel."

In "Adam Blair," he strikes upon a deeper and darker chord. It is a tale of guilt, misery, and repentance. "Adam Blair," the happy father, husband, and minister, becomes, in the providence of God, a prostrate widower; and afterwards, in a sudden gust of infatuated passion, a miserable sinner. He repents in sackcloth and ashes—receives, in himself, that reward of his error which was meet—retires into private life—and dies, a humbled but happy man. Over the whole tale, as Mrs. Johnstone beautifully says,—there lies the "shadow of the hour and power of darkness." We will not soon forget that figure of the new made widower, tossing, amid the twilight trees, while, in moments of time, "ages of agony are passing over his bruised spirit." But with deeper interest imagination follows Adam Blair rushing from the scene of his guilt, into the heart of the Highland wilderness, where the dark eye of a tarn stares up at him, like an exaggeration of his own guilty conscience; and

where he curdles into one gloomy rehearsal all the after-experiences of humiliation, and madness, and misery, which are before him. Suddenly the scene changes—a milder but solemn light falls upon the picture, as, a sadder and wiser man, the culprit enters the assembly of his brethren, and himself declares the fact and circumstances of his fearful fall. It is a scene for a great moral painter. The assembly met in full conclave—a crown of glory rising here and there on a hoary patriarchal head—the entrance, like that of a stray spirit, of the bewildered man,—the solemn faces, “darkening like water in the breeze,” as his appearance outruns his words, in telling the dismal tale—might well inspire the truest and finest of pencils.

The moral of this story has been objected to; but we think without sufficient grounds. What is the real moral of any tale? Is it not its permanent impression—the last burning trace it leaves upon the soul? And who ever read “Adam Blair” without rising from the perusal saddened—solemnized—smit with a profound horror at the sin which had wrought such hasty havock in a character so pure, and a nature so noble? This effect produced, surely the tale has not been told in vain.

“Matthew Wald,” is a series of brief and tragic sketches, ending in melo-dramatic madness and horror. Matthew is a soured, disappointed man. His wife, Joan, answers to that best description of a good wife,—a leaning-prop to her husband. Katherine Wald, his early but lost love, comes and goes, like a splendid apparition. A sadder shadow,—poor Perling Joan,—passes to perish below the chariot wheels of her proud seducer. Her tale is told with exquisite beauty and pathos. But by far the most powerful thing in the book is the murder in Glasgow. Matthew Wald goes to reside with an old and, seemingly, pious couple, John Macewan, a shoe-

maker, and his wife. They are very industrious, but very poor. One market-day John brings in a drover with him to his inner apartment, and, after a short crack, goes out again, telling his wife and lodger, who are in the kitchen, that the drover is drunk—has gone to bed, and must not be disturbed for a while. In a little, Matthew notices a dark something creeping toward him, from the door of the room. It is a stream of blood. He bursts open the door and finds the drover robbed and murdered. Meanwhile John pursues his way westward—comes, at evening, to a cottage on a lonely moor—enters to ask a drink of water—discovers a woman dying—kneels down by her bedside and prays a “long, a powerful, an awful, a terrible prayer”—rises and pursues his way. He is arrested in Arran—tried and condemned—protesting that it was a “sair temptation of the evil one.” He is brought to the scaffold—the people hoot, and cast dead cats in his face—he says only, “Poor things, they kenna what they do.” Wald, the moment ere he is turned off, feels the old murderer’s pulse; its beat is as calm, even, and iron as his own. The whole story is recounted with a sort of medical coolness which renders it appalling.

We forget the exact date of “Reginald Dalton;” but, from internal evidence, we might almost conclude that it was written during, or shortly after, the author’s honeymoon, amid the groves of Chiefswood, and with the murmurs of the Tweed and the voice of the gentle Sophia Scott mingling in his ear. “Valerius” was the flower of his early scholarship; “Adam Blair” and “Matthew Wald” seem to have been both conceived, if not both written, in that dark passage through which often the youth of high intellect enters into manhood. But “Reginald Dalton,” gay, lively, varied, only slenderly shadowed with the hues of sorrow, is the work of a matured and married man, whose aims in life are taken, and whose

prospects in it are fair. It is one of the most agreeable of tales. With no passages in it so powerful as some in "Adam Blair," and "Matthew Wald,"—framed of a less unique and indivisible structure than "Valerius," which reads like one letter found in Pompeii, it is much more bustling, and animated, and readable than any of the three. The scene is chiefly, and the interest entirely, in Oxford. The step of the author becomes inspired so soon as it touches the streets of the old city. And, while deeply reverent of his Alma Mater, he is not afraid to dash a strong and fearless light upon her errors of discipline and abuses of practice. The incidents of the tale, however, are rather improbable and involved. Its love scenes are tedious,—its pathos feeble,—its characters, with the signal exception of the Edinburgh writer, neither striking nor new. The merit lies entirely in the truth and vigour of the description—in the lively manner in which the tale is told, and in the incessant stream of clever and sparkling things which run down throughout the whole.

"Peter's Letters" excited a prodigious sensation at the time of its appearance. It was so personal—so quizzical—so impudent, and so desperately clever. Its illustrations were so good, and so grotesque withal. And then there was the slightest possible shade of mystification about the fact of the authorship, to give a last tart tinge to the interest. It, accordingly, ran like wild-fire. Steamers and track-boats were not considered complete without a copy. It supplanted guide-books in inns. A hundred country towns, aware that a "chield was taking notes" among them, were on the daily look-out for the redoubtable Peter, with his spectacles—his Welsh accent—his Toryism—his inordinate thirst for draught porter, and his everlasting shandry-dan. Playfair, Leslie, &c., writhed under its personalities, but much more under its pictures. It became so popular, in Leicester, that Robert

Hall actually attacked it from the pulpit. After all it is one of the most harmless and amusing of brochures. We like even its broad unblushing and unwinking bigotry,—the hearty openness with which he brandishes his knife and fork,—the force of its more elaborate sketches, such as those of John Clerk, and Dr. Chalmers,—his famous funny pictures of the Burns dinner,—the day at Craigcrook; and, above all, the Monday dinner, of thirty years ago, given to, and a little beyond, the life; and, better still, the faces and heads seen as if through a microscope, which lent their left-handed illustration to the whole. Those of Jeffrey, Hogg, and Chalmers, *alias* the “Wee reekit deil of criticism,” the “inspired sheepshead,” and the “eloquent gravedigger,” were particularly felicitous.

In the year 1826, Lockhart left the bar, where he had paid unsuccessful homage to Themis, for the editorship of *The Quarterly Review*. On the occasion of leaving Edinburgh for London, a dinner was given him, where he happily enough excused himself from making a long speech, on the plea, that if he could have made such a speech, no such occasion had ever occurred. Great expectations were formed about his management of that powerful periodical. Gifford had only a little before dropped his bloody *ferula* in death; and it became an eager question with the literary world, whether Lockhart would introduce a milder regime, or only exchange whips for scorpions. Not a few expected the latter to be the more probable consequence. We remember a periodical writer at the time raising a warning cry to the Cockneys, whose enemy was now coming up among them. Lockhart, however, knew better than to take up all the quarrels, and perpetuate all the feuds of his predecessor. The times, too, had changed, and with the times the tastes. The objects, moreover, of assault were now *hors de combat*.



Shelley was dead ; Hunt was bankrupt and broken-hearted ; Hazlitt was desperate and at bay—and a rumour ran that his horns were tipped with poison ; the minor writers of the school had perished under the crush of their ponderous enemy ; Lamb's gentle luminary had slowly risen into " a star among the stars of mortal night ; " and it was not now safe to howl at Hesperus. Besides, Lockhart was a man of another spirit from his forerunner ; and it must be admitted, that though he has several times sinned, and sinned deeply, yet that, on the whole, his management of *The Quarterly* has been manly and open, as well as able and energetic. If he has not, on the one hand, been a pervading spirit, giving life and unity to the entire journal, neither has he been a mere string of red tape, tying the articles together ; and far less an omnipresent poison, collecting here and there into a centre its deadlier virus, and tinging the whole with its dilution of death.

As a biographer, he has written lives of Burns, of Napoleon, and of his great father-in-law. His biography of Burns, is rather a thick and strongly-chiselled inscription upon his tombstone, than a minute, careful, and complete estimate of his character and genius ; or call it rather a rude, but true bust, of the poet, and, like all busts, it contains the intellect, but omits the heart. It possesses, however, one or two noble passages, and altogether forms a fit introduction to Allan Cunningham's loving and lingering biography, and to the splendid marginal commentaries of Carlyle and Wilson.

His *Life of Napoleon* (in "The Family Library") is also no more than a sketch, though a vigorous, faithful, and *con amore* contribution, to the preparations for a yet unwritten life of the Corsican prodigy. Lockhart, as well as Croly, and all the abler conservative writers, does full justice to the genius of Napoleon. Like Madame de Stäel, he is ready to exclaim,

“It will never do to tell us that all Europe was for years at the mercy of a coward and a fool.” He thinks it intensely ridiculous for writers to try to show, by lengthy argumentation, how absurd it was for a man to have gained the battles which, by all the rules of war, he ought to have lost ; what a pity it was that the Archduke Charles and Blucher had not learned the all-important lesson, “never to know when they were beaten ;” and that, on the whole, Napoleon was the stupidest man in Europe, and his career little else than one glorious blunder ! This, with minds like Lockhart’s and Croly’s, verily, “will never do.” If Napoleon were a block-head, what a “thrice double ass” was that vast mooncalf of a world, which, from California to Japan, either trembled at or adored him !

In writing the “Life of Scott,” the Napoleon of the novelists, Lockhart undertook a far more difficult and delicate task. And without pretending that he had solved altogether the problem of the mighty wizard’s life, and without entering at all into the moot points and fretting details of the execution, we feel thankful for the work, on the whole, as furnishing a variety of interesting and select facts. The philosophy of the life it was not his part, else it was fully in his power to have contributed. And if the panegyric be now and then too unsparing, and the style here and there be a little careless, and the tones be sometimes too snappish and overbearing ; and if he seem, once or twice, too lean back too ostentatiously upon the merits of his subject, and the advantages of his position ; and if his general estimate of his hero be rather that of the son-in-law than of the critic, let us, remembering the difficulties of the undertaking, forgive its defects.

It were unpardonable to omit notice of his “Spanish Ballads ;” some of which the hero of that romantic land

might sing, as he was rushing into the midst of the fray ; while others might be chanted by the labourer going forth to his toil, mingling on his lips with the " Ancient Ballad of Roncesvalles," and others by the village beauty, mourning the loss of her " ear-rings," which have dropt into the envious way-side well. They are, to use a fine distinction, not translations but transfusions of the soul and spirit of the original Spanish.

After all, why are the powers which have done all this not doing more ? Why do we recognize his " fine Roman hand" so seldom even in his own review ? Above all, why have we no more " Adam Blairs ?" " Reginald Daltons ?" and " Spanish," or other " Ballads ?" Why must we close this short sketch by the complaint—

" Why slumbers Lockhart ?" once was asked in vain ;  
Why slumbers Lockhart ?—now is asked again ?"

Thus closes our " Gallery of Contemporary Genius." We have acted in it on the general principle of selecting those who have departed from the arena, or who have been so long on it, that their fame may be considered established. We might have included the familiar and brilliant names of Byron, Scott, Crabbe, Moore, Rogers, Joanna Baillie, Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Johnstone, Sir J. Mackintosh, Fonblanque, Leigh Hunt, Edward Lytton Bulwer, Isaac Taylor, Dr. MacGinn, &c., but refrained from some of them, because the field was completely exhausted by other critics ; and from others, because our sympathies with them were but partial, and perhaps our knowledge of them imperfect. We would have had much pleasure in extending

our notices to the rising spirits of the time ;—to have enriched our Gallery with the names of Charles Dickens, at once the Smollett, Fielding, and Richardson of his day ; of Mary Howitt ; of Lady Blessington ; of Henry Taylor, the profound and classic creator of “ Philip Van Artevelde ” and “ Edwin the Fair ; ” of Alfred Tennyson, who seems the lawful heir of our lost Hyperion ; of Robert Browning, who will yet redeem his bright pledge of “ Paracelsus ; ” of John Robertson, Talfourd, Horne, D’Israeli, &c. ; and of our own extraordinary friend Samuel Brown, who, apart from his reputation as a chemist, is the author of a production, “ Lay Sermons, by a Society of Brethren,” which contains glimpses into the very deepest, and of whom we never think without recalling the words of Keats,—

And other spirits there do stand apart,  
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;  
 These, these will give the world another heart  
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum  
 Of mighty workings ?  
 Listen a while, ye nations, and be dumb.

We never, however, intended the book to be a complete literary history of the period, but only a desultory record of our own enthusiastic appreciation of some of its more illustrious luminaries. As such it is now *finished* ; and—

“ To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”

THE END.

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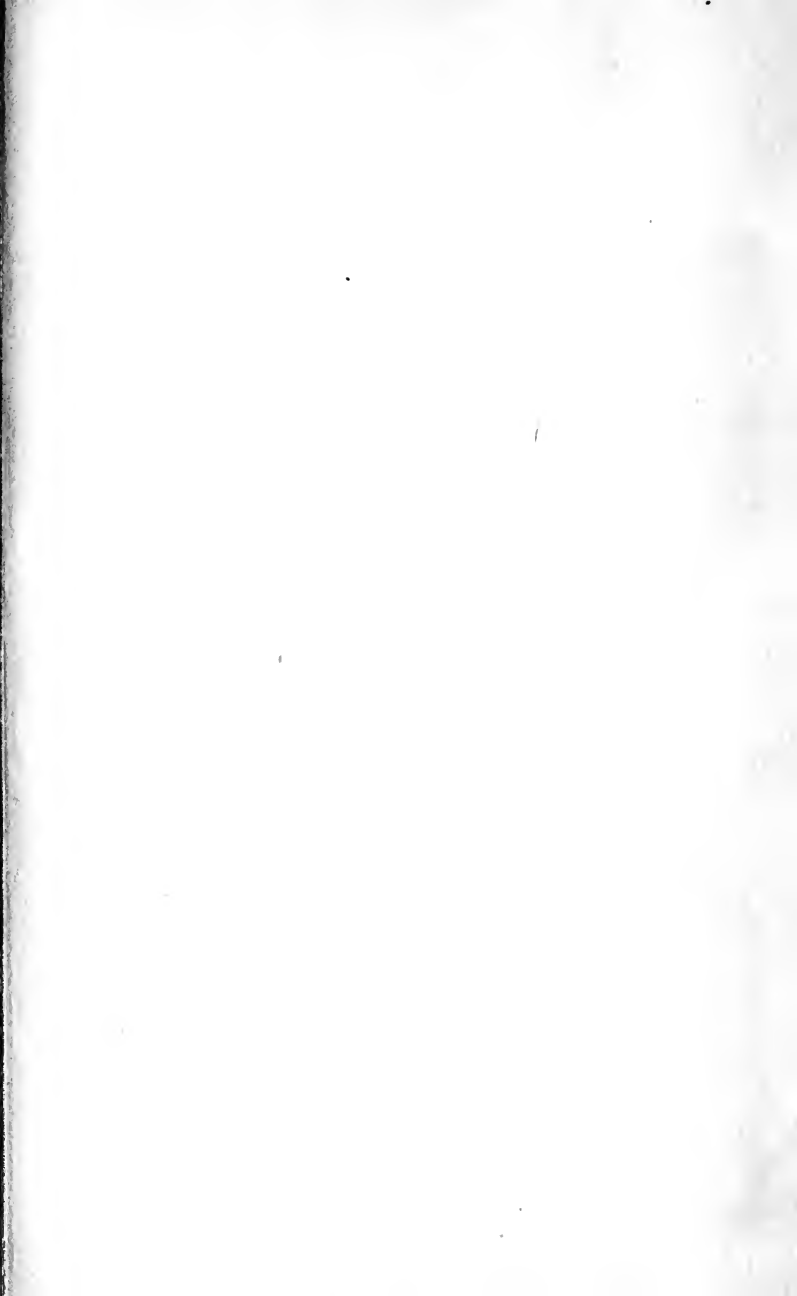
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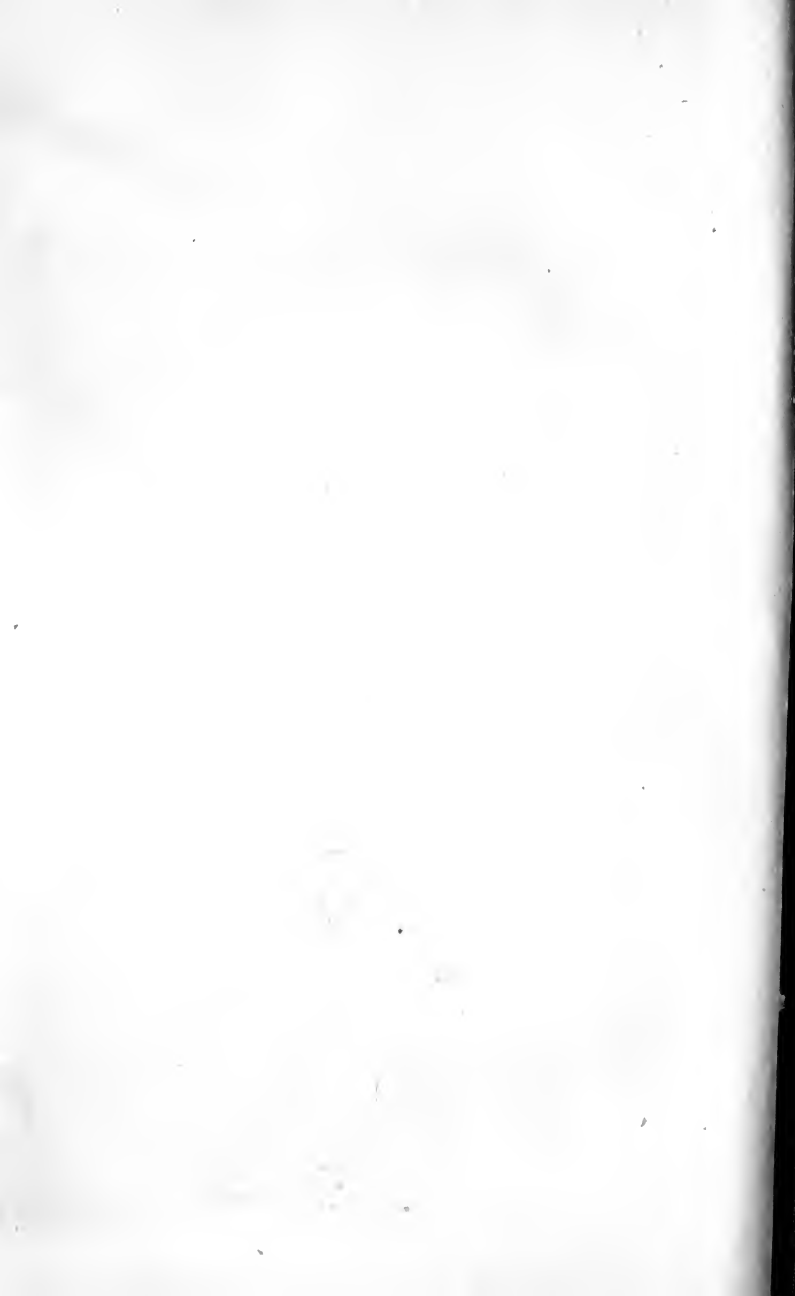
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