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TABLE-TALK:

ORIGINAL ESSAYS

ON

MEN AND MANNERS.

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

THIRD EDITION.

Edited by his Son.

VOL. I.

LONDON: C. TEMPLEMAN,
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TO LEIGH HUNT,

WHOM THE AUTHOR ALIKE ADMIRERD AND ESTEEMED;

THE "ROCHESTER WITHOUT THE VICE, THE

MODERN SURREY,"

WHOM HE CELEBRATES IN ONE OF THESE ESSAYS,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

WITH HEREDITARY ADMIRATION AND ESTEEM,

BY THE AUTHOR'S SON.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present Volume contains, in addition to matter published in the former editions of 'Table Talk,' an Essay, now for the first time printed, and another now for the first time collected. The former, the Essay 'On Travelling Abroad,' I found amongst other manuscripts of my father's, most of them merely *the copy* whence 'Table Talk' and other works of his were printed, and I at first concluded that this also had been used. A diligent search, however, not merely through all the collected volumes of his works, but through all the various publications to which he contributed, regularly or occasionally, in which search I have been aided by the keen eye of my friend Mr Raymond Yates, whose earnest devotion to the author has rendered this and other cooperation, for which I stand indebted to him, truly a labour of love, I have no hesitation in announcing the Essay in question to be entirely new. It is, to say the truth, somewhat fragmentary, and would,

doubtless, have undergone revision and correction at the author's hands, had he, happily, lived to publish it himself; but as it is, I have no doubt it will be received by his friends and the public with much interest. The Essay 'On the Spirit of Controversy' is taken from the *London Weekly Review*. Volume II of 'Table Talk' will appear shortly after Christmas.

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

Middle Temple, Nov. 1845.

The volumes of Hazlitt's Works already published in this series are :—

1. CHARACTERS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS.
2. SKETCHES AND ESSAYS.
3. LECTURES ON THE LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH.
4. LECTURES ON THE COMIC WRITERS.
5. LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS.
6. THE ROUND TABLE.
7. CRITICISMS ON ART. FIRST SERIES.
8. ————— SECOND SERIES.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE PAST AND FUTURE.

I HAVE naturally but little imagination, and am not of a very sanguine turn of mind. I have some desire to enjoy the present good, and some fondness for the past ; but I am not at all given to building castles in the air, nor to look forward with much confidence or hope to the brilliant illusions held out by the future. Hence I have perhaps been led to form a theory, which is very contrary to the common notions and feelings on the subject, and which I will here try to explain as well as I can.—When Sterne in the *Sentimental Journey* told the French Minister that if the French people had a fault, it was that they were too serious, the latter replied that if that was his opinion, he must defend it with all his might, for he would have all the world against him ; so I shall have enough to do to get well through the present argument.

I cannot see, then, any rational or logical

ground for that mighty difference in the value which mankind generally set upon the past and future, as if the one was everything, and the other nothing, of no consequence whatever. On the other hand, I conceive that the past is as real and substantial a part of our being, that it is as much a *bonâ fide*, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life, as the future can possibly be. To say that the past is of no importance, unworthy of a moment's regard, because it has gone by, and is no longer anything, is an argument that cannot be held to any purpose: for if the past has ceased to be, and is therefore to be accounted nothing in the scale of good or evil, the future is yet to come, and has never been anything. Should any one choose to assert that the present only is of any value in a strict and positive sense, because that alone has a real existence, that we should seize the instant good, and give all else to the winds, I can understand what he means (though perhaps he does not himself):* but I cannot comprehend how this distinction between that which

* If we take away from *the present* the moment that is just gone by and the moment that is next to come, how much of it will be left for this plain, practical theory to rest upon? Their solid basis of sense and reality will reduce itself to a pin's point, a hair-line, on which our moral balance-masters will have some difficulty to maintain their footing without falling over on either side.

has a downright and sensible, and that which has only a remote and airy existence, can be applied to establish the preference of the future over the past ; for both are in this point of view equally ideal, absolutely nothing, except as they are conceived of by the mind's eye, and are thus rendered present to the thoughts and feelings. Nay, the one is even more imaginary, a more fantastic creature of the brain than the other, and the interest we take in it more shadowy and gratuitous ; for the future, on which we lay so much stress, may never come to pass at all, that is, may never be embodied into actual existence in the whole course of events, whereas the past has certainly existed once, has received the stamp of truth, and left an image of itself behind. It is so far then placed beyond the possibility of doubt, or as the poet has it,

“ Those joys are lodg'd beyond the reach of fate.”

It is not, however, attempted to be denied that though the future is nothing at present, and has no immediate interest while we are speaking, yet it is of the utmost consequence in itself, and of the utmost interest to the individual, because it will have a real existence, and we have an idea of it as existing in time to come. Well, then, the past also has no real existence ; the actual sensation and the interest belonging to it are both fled ; but it has had a real existence,

and we can still call up a vivid recollection of it as having once been ; and therefore, by parity of reasoning, it is not a thing perfectly insignificant in itself, nor wholly indifferent to the mind, whether it ever was or not. Oh no ! Far from it ! Let us not rashly quit our hold upon the past, when perhaps there may be little else left to bind us to existence. Is it nothing to have been, and to have been happy or miserable ? Or is it a matter of no moment to think whether I have been one or the other ? Do I delude myself, do I build upon a shadow or a dream, do I dress up in the gaudy garb of idleness and folly a pure fiction, with nothing answering to it in the universe of things and the records of truth, when I look back with fond delight or with tender regret to that which was at one time to me *my all*, when I revive the glowing image of some bright reality,

leave

“The thoughts of which can never ~~from~~ ^{leave} my heart?”

Do I then muse on nothing, do I bend my eyes on nothing, when I turn back in fancy to “those suns and skies so pure” that lighted up my early path ? Is it to think of nothing, to set an idle value upon nothing, to think of all that has happened to me, and of all that can ever interest me ? Or, to use the language of a fine poet (who is himself among my earliest and not least painful recollections—

“What though the radiance which was once so bright
 Be now for ever vanish'd from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
 Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flow'r”—

yet am I mocked with a lie, when I venture to think of it? Or do I not drink in and breathe again the air of heavenly truth, when I but “retrace its footsteps, and its skirts far off adore?” I cannot say with the same poet—

“And see how dark the backward stream,
 A little moment past so smiling”—

for it is the past that gives me most delight and most assurance of reality. What to me constitutes the great charm of the Confessions of Rousseau is their turning so much upon this feeling. He seems to gather up the past moments of his being like drops of honey-dew to distil a precious liquor from them; his alternate pleasures and pains are the bead-roll that he tells over, and piously worships; he makes a rosary of the flowers of hope and fancy that strewed his earliest years. When he begins the last of the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*—“*Aujourd'hui, jour de Pâques Fleuries, il y a précisément cinquante ans de ma première connaissance avec madame de Warens,*” what a yearning of the soul is implied in that short sentence! Was all that had happened to him, all that he had thought and felt in that sad interval of time, to be accounted nothing?

Was that long, dim, faded retrospect of years happy or miserable, a blank that was not to make his eyes fail and his heart faint within him in trying to grasp all that had once filled it and that had since vanished, because it was not a prospect into futurity? Was he wrong in finding more to interest him in it than in the next fifty years—which he did not live to see; or if he had, what then? Would they have been worth thinking of, compared with the times of his youth, of his first meeting with Madame de Warens, with those times which he has traced with such truth and pure delight “in our heart’s tables?” When “all the life of life was flown,” was he not to live the first and best part of it over again, and once more be all that he then was?—Ye woods that crown the clear lone brow of Norman Court, why do I revisit ye so oft, and feel a soothing consciousness of your presence, but that your high tops waving in the wind recal to me the hours and years that are for ever fled, that ye renew in ceaseless murmurs the story of long-cherished hopes and bitter disappointment, that in your solitudes and tangled wilds I can wander and lose myself as I wander on and am lost in the solitude of my own heart; and that as your rustling branches give the loud blast to the waste below—borne on the thoughts of other years, I can look down with patient anguish at the cheerless desolation which I feel within! Without

that face pale as the primrose with hyacinthine locks, for ever shunning and for ever haunting me, mocking my waking thoughts as in a dream, without that smile which my heart could never turn to scorn, without those eyes, dark with their own lustre, still bent on mine, and drawing the soul into their liquid mazes like a sea of love, without that name trembling in fancy's ear, without that form gliding before me like Oread or Dryad in fabled groves, what should I do, how pass away the listless leaden-footed hours? Then wave; wave on, ye woods of Tuderly, and lift your high tops in the air; my sighs and vows uttered by your mystic voice breathe into me my former being, and enable me to bear the thing I am!—The objects that we have known in better days are the main props that sustain the weight of our affections, and give us strength to await our future lot. The future is like a dead wall or a thick mist hiding all objects from our view: the past is alive and stirring with objects, bright or solemn, and of unfading interest. What is it in fact that we recur to oftenest? What subjects do we think or talk of most? Not the ignorant future, but the well-stored past. Othello, the Moor of Venice, amused himself and his hearers at the house of Signor Brabantio by “running through the story of his life, e’en from his boyish days;” and oft “beguiled them of their tears, when he did speak of some disastrous

stroke which his youth suffered." This plan of ingratiating himself would not have answered, if the past had been, like the contents of an old almanac, of no use but to be thrown aside and forgotten. What a blank, for instance, does the history of the world for the next six thousand years present to the mind, compared with that of the last six thousand ! All that strikes the imagination or excites any interest in the mighty scene is what has been ! *

Neither in itself then, nor as a subject of general contemplation, has the future any advantage over the past. But with respect to our grosser passions and pursuits it has. As far as regards the appeal to the understanding or the imagination, the past is just as good, as real, of as much intrinsic and ostensible value, as the future ; but there is another principle in the human mind, the principle of action or will ; and of this the past has no hold, the future en-

* A treatise on the Millennium is dull ; but who was ever weary of reading the fables of the Golden Age ? On my once observing I should like to have been Claude, a person said, "he should not, for that then by this time it would have been all over with him." As if it could possibly signify when we live (save and excepting the present minute), or as if the value of human life decreased or increased with successive centuries. At that rate, we had better have our life still to come at some future period, and so postpone our existence century after century *ad infinitum*.

grosses it entirely to itself. It is this strong lever of the affections that gives so powerful a bias to our sentiments on this subject, and violently transposes the natural order of our associations. We regret the pleasures we have lost, and eagerly anticipate those which are to come: we dwell with satisfaction on the evils from which we have escaped (*posthæc meminisse jurabit*)—and dread future pain. The good that is past is in this sense like money that is spent, which is of no further use, and about which we give ourselves little concern. The good we expect is like a store yet untouched, and in the enjoyment of which we promise ourselves infinite gratification. What has happened to us we think of no consequence: what is to happen to us, of the greatest. Why so? Simply because the one is still in our power, and the other not—because the efforts of the will to bring any object to pass or to prevent it strengthen our attachment or aversion to that object—because the pains and attention bestowed upon anything add to our interest in it, and because the habitual and earnest pursuit of any end redoubles the ardour of our expectations, and converts the speculative and indolent satisfaction we might otherwise feel in it into real passion. Our regrets, anxiety, and wishes are thrown away upon the past: but the insisting on and exaggerating the importance of the future

is of the utmost use in aiding our resolutions, and stimulating our exertions. If the future were no more amenable to our wills than the past ; if our precautions, our sanguine schemes, our hopes and fears were as of little avail in the one case as the other ; if we could neither soften our minds to pleasure, nor steel our fortitude to the resistance of pain beforehand ; if all objects drifted along by us like straws or pieces of wood on a river, the will being purely passive, and as little able to avert the future as to arrest the past, we should in that case be equally indifferent to both ; that is, we should consider each as they affected the thoughts and imagination with certain sentiments of approbation or regret, but without the importunity of action, the irritation of the will, throwing the whole weight of passion and prejudice into one scale, and leaving the other quite empty. While the blow is coming, we prepare to meet it, we think to ward off or break its force, we arm ourselves with patience to endure what cannot be avoided, we agitate ourselves with fifty needless alarms about it ; but when the blow is struck, the pang is over, the struggle is no longer necessary, and we cease to harass or torment ourselves about it more than we can help. It is not that the one belongs to the future and the other to time past ; but that the one is a subject of action, of uneasy apprehension, of strong passion, and that the

other has passed wholly out of the sphere of action into the region of

“Calm contemplation and majestic pains.”*

It would not give a man more concern to know that he should be put to the rack a year hence, than to recollect that he had been put to it a year ago, but that he hopes to avoid the one, whereas he must sit down patiently under the consciousness of the other. In this hope he wears himself out in vain struggles with fate, and puts himself to the rack of his imagination every day he has to live in the meanwhile. When the event is so remote or so independent of the will as to set aside the necessity of immediate action, or to baffle all attempts to defeat it, it gives us little more disturbance or emotion than if it had already taken place, or were something to happen in another state of being, or to an indifferent person. Criminals are observed to grow more anxious as their trial approaches ; but after their sentence is passed they become

* In like manner, though we know that an event must have taken place at a distance, long before we can hear the result, yet as long as we remain in ignorance of it, we irritate ourselves about it, and suffer all the agonies of suspense, as if it was still to come ; but as soon as our uncertainty is removed, our fretful impatience vanishes, we resign ourselves to fate, and make up our minds to what has happened as well as we can.

tolerably resigned, and generally sleep sound the night before its execution.

It in some measure confirms this theory, that men attach more or less importance to past and future events, according as they are more or less engaged in action and the busy scenes of life. Those who have a fortune to make, or are in pursuit of rank and power, think little of the past, for it does not contribute greatly to their views: those who have nothing to do but to think, take nearly the same interest in the past as in the future. The contemplation of the one is as delightful and real as that of the other. The season of hope has an end; but the remembrance of it is left. The past still lives in the memory of those who have leisure to look back upon the way that they have trod, and can from it "catch glimpses that may make them less forlorn." The turbulence of action, and uneasiness of desire, must point to the future: it is only in the quiet innocence of shepherds, in the simplicity of pastoral ages, that a tomb was found with this inscription—"I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN!"

Though I by no means think that our habitual attachment to life is in exact proportion to the value of the gift, yet I am not one of those splenetic persons who affect to think it of no value at all. *Que peu de chose est la vie humaine*—is an exclamation in the mouths of mo-

ralists and philosophers, to which I cannot agree. It is little, it is short, it is not worth having, if we take the last hour, and leave out all that has gone before, which has been one way of looking at the subject. Such calculators seem to say that life is nothing when it is over, and that may in their sense be true. If the old rule—*Respice finem*—were to be made absolute, and no one could be pronounced fortunate till the day of his death, there are few among us whose existence would, upon those conditions, be much to be envied. But this is not a fair view of the case. A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle; and this, I say, is considerable, and not a little matter, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains. To draw a peevish conclusion to the contrary from our own superannuated desires or forgetful indifference, is about as reasonable as to say, a man never was young because he is grown old, or never lived because he is now dead. The length or agreeableness of a journey does not depend on the few last steps of it, nor is the size of a building to be judged of from the last stone that is added to it. It is neither the first nor last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two—not our exit nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do, feel, and think while there—that we are to attend to in pronouncing sentence upon it. Indeed it

would be easy to show that it is the very extent of human life, the infinite number of things contained in it, its contradictory and fluctuating interests, the transition from one situation to another, the hours, months, years spent in one fond pursuit after another; that it is, in a word, the length of our common journey and the quantity of events crowded into it, that, baffling the grasp of our actual perception, make it slide from our memory, and dwindle into nothing in its own perspective. It is too mighty for us, and we say it is nothing! It is a speck in our fancy, and yet what canvas would be big enough to hold its striking groups, its endless subjects! It is light as vanity, and yet if all its weary moments, if all its head and heart aches were compressed into one, what fortitude would not be overwhelmed with the blow! What a huge heap, a "huge, dumb heap," of wishes, thoughts, feelings, anxious cares, soothing hopes, loves, joys, friendships, it is composed of! How many ideas and trains of sentiment, long and deep and intense, often pass through the mind in only one day's thinking or reading, for instance! How many such days are there in a year, how many years in a long life, still occupied with something interesting, still recalling some old impression, still recurring to some difficult question and making progress in it, every step accompanied with a sense of power,

and every moment conseious of "the high endeavour or the glad success;" for the mind seizes only on that which keeps it employed, and is wound up to a certain pitch of pleasurable excitement or lively solicitude, by the necessity of its own nature. The division of the map of life into its component parts is beautifully made by King Henry VI :

"Oh God! methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run ;
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times;
So many hours must I tend my flock,
So many hours must I take my rest,
So many hours must I contemplate,
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young,
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean,
So many months ere I shall shear the fleece:
So many minutes, hours, weeks, months, and years
Past over to the end they were created,
Would bring grey hairs unto a quiet grave."

I myself am neither a king nor a shepherd: books have been my fleecy charge, and my thoughts have been my subjects. But these have found me sufficient employment at the

time, and enough to think of for the time to come.

The passions contract and warp the natural progress of life. They paralyse all of it that is not devoted to their tyranny and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the crabbedness of age. A load of cares lies like a weight of guilt upon the mind: so that a man of business often has all the air, the distraction and restlessness and hurry of feeling, of a criminal. A knowledge of the world takes away the freedom and simplicity of thought as effectually as the contagion of its example. The artlessness and candour of our early years are open to all impressions alike, because the mind is not clogged and pre-occupied with other objects. Our pleasures and our pains then come single, make room for one another, and the spring of the mind is fresh and unbroken, its aspect clear and unsullied. Hence "the tear forgot as soon as shed, the sunshine of the breast." But as we advance farther, the will gets greater head. We form violent antipathies, and indulge exclusive preferences. We make up our minds to some one thing, and if we cannot have that, will have nothing. We are wedded to opinion, to fancy, to prejudice; which destroys the soundness of our judgments, and the serenity and buoyancy of our feelings. The chain of habit coils itself

round the heart, like a serpent, to gnaw and stifle it. It grows rigid and callous; and instead of the softness and elasticity of childhood, is full of proud flesh and obstinate tumours. The violence and perversity of our passions come in more and more to overlay our natural sensibility and well-grounded affections; and we screw ourselves up to aim only at those things which are neither desirable nor practicable. Thus life passes away in the feverish irritation of pursuit and the certainty of disappointment. By degrees nothing but this morbid state of feeling satisfies us: and all common pleasures and cheap amusements are sacrificed to the demon of ambition, avarice, or dissipation. The machine is over-wrought: the parching heat of the veins dries up and withers the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy; and any pause, any release from the rack of ecstacy on which we are stretched, seems more insupportable than the pangs which we endure. We are suspended between tormenting desires, and the horrors of *ennui*. The impulse of the will, like the wheels of a carriage going down hill, becomes too strong for the driver, reason, and cannot be stopped nor kept within bounds. Some idea, some fancy, takes possession of the brain; and however ridiculous, however distressing, however ruinous, haunts us by a sort of fascination through life.

Not only is this principle of excessive irrita-

bility to be seen at work in our more turbulent passions and pursuits, but even in the formal study of arts and sciences, the same thing takes place, and undermines the repose and happiness of life. The eagerness of pursuit overcomes the satisfaction to result from the accomplishment. The mind is overstrained to attain its purpose; and when it is attained, the ease and alacrity necessary to enjoy it are gone. The irritation of action does not cease and go down with the occasion for it; but we are first uneasy to get to the end of our work, and then uneasy for want of something to do. The ferment of the brain does not of itself subside into pleasure and soft repose. Hence the disposition to strong *stimuli* observable in persons of much intellectual exertion, to allay and carry off the over-excitement. The *improvisatori* poets (it is recorded by Spence in his Anecdotes of Pope) cannot sleep after an evening's continued display of their singular and difficult art. The rhymes keep running in the head in spite of them, and will not let them rest. Mechanics and labouring people never know what to do with themselves on a Sunday, though they return to their work with greater spirit for the relief, and look forward to it with pleasure all the week. Sir Joshua Reynolds was never comfortable out of his painting-room, and died of chagrin and regret because he could not paint on to the

last moment of his life. He used to say that he could go on retouching a picture for ever, as long as it stood on his easel; but as soon as it was once fairly out of the house, he never wished to see it again. An ingenious artist of our own time has been heard to declare, that if ever the Devil got him into his clutches, he would set him to copy his own pictures. Thus the secure self-complacent retrospect to what is done is nothing, while the anxious, uneasy looking forward to what is to come is everything. We are afraid to dwell upon the past, lest it should retard our future progress; the indulgence of ease is fatal to excellence; and to succeed in life, we lose the ends of being!

ESSAY II.

ON GENIUS AND COMMON SENSE.

WE hear it maintained by people of more gravity than understanding, that genius and taste are strictly reducible to rules, and that there is a rule for everything. So far is it from being true that the finest breath of fancy is a definable thing, that the plainest common sense is only what Mr Locke would have called a mixed mode, subject to a particular sort of acquired and undefinable tact. It is asked: "If you do not know the rule by which a thing is done, how can you be sure of doing it a second time?" and the answer is: "If you do not know the muscles by the help of which you walk, how is it you do not fall down at every step you take?" In art, in taste, in life, in speech, you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind, which impression is true and well-founded, though you may not be able to analyse or account for it in the several

particulars. In a gesture you use, in a look you see, in a tone you hear, you judge of the expression, propriety, and meaning from habit, not from reason or rules; that is to say, from innumerable instances of like gestures, looks, and tones, in innumerable other circumstances, variously modified, which are too many and too refined to be all distinctly recollected, but which do not therefore operate the less powerfully upon the mind and eye of taste. Shall we say that these impressions (the immediate stamp of nature) do not operate in a given manner till they are classified and reduced to rules, or is not the rule itself grounded upon the truth and certainty of that natural operation? How then can the distinction of the understanding as to the manner in which they operate be necessary to their producing their due and uniform effect upon the mind? If certain effects did not regularly arise out of certain causes in mind as well as matter, there could be no rule given for them: nature does not follow the rule, but suggests it. Reason is the interpreter and critic of nature and genius, not their lawgiver and judge. He must be a poor creature indeed whose practical convictions do not in almost all cases outrun his deliberate understanding, or who does not feel and know much more than he can give a reason for.—Hence the distinction between eloquence and wisdom, between in-

genuity and common sense. A man may be dextrous and able in explaining the grounds of his opinions, and yet may be a mere sophist, because he only sees one half of a subject. Another may feel the whole weight of a question, nothing relating to it may be lost upon him, and yet he may be able to give no account of the manner in which it affects him, or to drag his reasons from their silent lurking-places. This last will be a wise man, though neither a logician nor rhetorician. Goldsmith was a fool to Dr Johnson in argument; that is, in assigning the specific grounds of his opinions: Dr Johnson was a fool to Goldsmith in the fine tact, the airy, intuitive faculty with which he skimmed the surfaces of things, and unconsciously formed his opinions. Common sense is the just result of the sum total of such unconscious impressions in the ordinary occurrences of life, as they are treasured up in the memory, and called out by the occasion. Genius and taste depend much upon the same principle exercised on loftier ground and in more unusual combinations.

I am glad to shelter myself from the charge of affectation or singularity in this view of an often debated but ill-understood point, by quoting a passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, which is full, and, I think, conclusive to the purpose. He says:

“ I observe, as a fundamental ground common

to all the Arts with which we have any concern in this Discourse, that they address themselves only to two faculties of the mind, its imagination and its sensibility.

“All theories which attempt to direct or to control the Art, upon any principles falsely called rational, which we form to ourselves upon a supposition of what ought in reason to be the end or means of Art, independent of the known first effect produced by objects on the imagination, must be false and delusive. For though it may appear bold to say it, the imagination is here the residence of truth. If the imagination be affected, the conclusion is fairly drawn; if it be not affected, the reasoning is erroneous, because the end is not obtained; the effect itself being the test, and the only test, of the truth and efficacy of the means.

“There is in the commerce of life, as in Art, a sagacity which is far from being contradictory to right reason, and is superior to any occasional exercise of that faculty; which supersedes it; and does not wait for the slow progress of deduction, but goes at once, by what appears a kind of intuition, to the conclusion. A man endowed with this faculty feels and acknowledges the truth, though it is not always in his power, perhaps, to give a reason for it; because he cannot recollect and bring before him all the materials that gave birth to his opinion; for

very many and very intricate considerations may unite to form the principle, even of small and minute parts, involved in, or dependent on, a great system of things:—though these in process of time are forgotten, the right impression still remains fixed in his mind.

“This impression is the result of the accumulated experience of our whole life, and has been collected, we do not always know how, or when. But this mass of collective observation, however acquired, ought to prevail over that reason, which, however powerfully exerted on any particular occasion, will probably comprehend but a partial view of the subject; and our conduct in life, as well as in the arts, is, or ought to be, generally governed by this habitual reason: it is our happiness that we are enabled to draw on such funds. If we were obliged to enter into a theoretical deliberation on every occasion before we act, life would be at a stand, and Art would be impracticable.

“It appears to me, therefore” (continues Sir Joshua), “that our first thoughts, that is, the effect which anything produces on our minds, on its first appearance, is never to be forgotten; and it demands for that reason, because it is the first, to be laid up with care. If this be not done, the artist may happen to impose on himself by partial reasoning; by a cold consideration of those animated thoughts which

proceed, not perhaps from caprice or rashness (as he may afterwards conceive), but from the fulness of his mind, enriched with the copious stores of all the various inventions which he had ever seen, or had ever passed in his mind. These ideas are infused into his design, without any conscious effort; but if he be not on his guard, he may reconsider and correct them, till the whole matter is reduced to a common-place invention.

“This is sometimes the effect of what I mean to caution you against; that is to say, an unfounded distrust of the imagination and feeling, in favour of narrow, partial, confined, argumentative theories, and of principles that seem to apply to the design in hand; without considering those general impressions on the fancy in which real principles of sound reason, and of much more weight and importance, are involved, and, as it were, lie hid under the appearance of a sort of vulgar sentiment. Reason, without doubt, must ultimately determine everything; at this minute it is required to inform us when that very reason is to give way to feeling.”—Discourse XIII.

Mr Burke, by whom the foregoing train of thinking was probably suggested, has insisted on the same thing, and made rather a perverse use of it in several parts of his *Reflections on the French Revolution*; and Windham, in one

of his Speeches, has clenched it into an aphorism—"There is nothing so true as habit." Once more I would say, common sense is tacit reason. Conscience is the same tacit sense of right and wrong, or the impression of our moral experience and moral apprehensions on the mind, which, because it works unseen, yet certainly, we suppose to be an instinct, implanted in the mind; as we sometimes attribute the violent operations of our passions, of which we can neither trace the source nor assign the reason, to the instigation of the Devil!

I shall here try to go more at large into this subject, and to give such instances and illustrations of it as occur to me.

One of the persons who had rendered themselves obnoxious to Government, and been included in a charge for high treason in the year 1794, had retired soon after into Wales to write an epic poem and enjoy the luxuries of a rural life. In his peregrinations through that beautiful scenery, he had arrived one fine morning at the inn at Llangollen, in the romantic valley of that name. He had ordered his breakfast, and was sitting at the window in all the dalliance of expectation, when a face passed of which he took no notice at the instant—but when his breakfast was brought in presently after, he found his appetite for it gone, the day had lost its freshness in his eye, he was un-

easy and spiritless ; and, without any cause that he could discover, a total change had taken place in his feelings. While he was trying to account for this odd circumstance, the same face passed again—it was the face of Taylor the spy ; and he was no longer at a loss to explain the difficulty. He had before caught only a transient glimpse, a passing side-view of the face ; but though this was not sufficient to awaken a distinct idea in his memory, his feelings, quicker and surer, had taken the alarm ; a string had been touched that gave a jar to his whole frame, and would not let him rest, though he could not at all tell what was the matter with him. To the flitting, shadowy, half-distinguished profile that had glided by his window was linked unconsciously and mysteriously, but inseparably, the impression of the trains that had been laid for him by this person ;—in this brief moment, in this dim, illegible short-hand of the mind he had just escaped the speeches of the Attorney and Solicitor-General over again ; the gaunt figure of Mr Pitt glared by him ; the walls of a prison enclosed him ; and he felt the hands of the executioner near him, without knowing it till the tremor and disorder of his nerves gave information to his reasoning faculties that all was not well within. That is, the same state of mind was recalled by one circumstance in the series of association that had been

produced by the whole set of circumstances at the time, though the manner in which this was done was not immediately perceptible. In other words, the feeling of pleasure or pain, of good or evil, is revived, and acts instantaneously upon the mind, before we have time to recollect the precise objects which have originally given birth to it.* The incident here mentioned was merely, then, one case of what the learned understand by the *association of ideas*: but all that is meant by feeling or common sense is nothing but the different cases of the association of ideas, more or less true to the impression of the original circumstances, as reason begins with the more formal development of those circumstances, or

* Sentiment has the same source as that here pointed out. Thus, the *Ranz des Vaches*, which has such an effect on the minds of the Swiss peasantry, when its well-known sound is heard, does not merely recal to them the idea of their country, but has associated with it a thousand nameless ideas, numberless touches of private affection, of early hope, romantic adventure, and national pride, all which rush in (with mingled currents) to swell the tide of fond remembrance, and make them languish or die for home. What a fine instrument the human heart is! Who shall touch it? Who shall fathom it? Who shall "sound it from its lowest note to the top of its compass?" Who shall put his hand among the strings, and explain their wayward music? The heart alone, when touched by sympathy, trembles and responds to their hidden meaning!

pretends to account for the different cases of the association of ideas. But it does not follow that the dumb and silent pleading of the former (though sometimes, nay, often mistaken) is less true than that of its babbling interpreter, or that we are never to trust its dictates without consulting the express authority of reason. Both are imperfect, both are useful in their way, and therefore both are best together, to correct or to confirm one another. It does not appear that in the singular instance above mentioned, the sudden impression on the mind was superstition or fancy, though it might have been thought so, had it not been proved by the event to have a real physical and moral cause. Had not the same face returned again, the doubt would never have been properly cleared up, but would have remained a puzzle ever after, or perhaps have been soon forgot.—By the law of association, as laid down by physiologists, any impression in a series can recal any other impression in that series without going through the whole in order: so that the mind drops the intermediate links, and passes on rapidly and by stealth to the more striking effects of pleasure or pain which have naturally taken the strongest hold of it. By doing this habitually and skilfully with respect to the various impressions and circumstances with which our experience makes us acquainted, it forms a

series of unpremeditated conclusions on almost all subjects that can be brought before it, as just as they are of ready application to human life; and common sense is the name of this body of unassuming but practical wisdom. Common sense, however, is an impartial, instinctive result of truth and nature, and will therefore bear the test and abide the scrutiny of the most severe and patient reasoning. It is indeed incomplete without it. By ingrafting reason on feeling, we "make assurance double sure."

" 'Tis the last key-stone that makes up the arch—
Then stands it a triumphal mark ! Then men
Observe the strength, the height, the why and when
It was erected : and still walking under,
Meet some new matter to look up, and wonder."

But reason, not employed to interpret nature, and to improve and perfect common sense and experience, is, for the most part, a building without a foundation.—The criticism exercised by reason then on common sense may be as severe as it pleases, but it must be as patient as it is severe. Hasty, dogmatical, self-satisfied reason is worse than idle fancy, or bigoted prejudice. It is systematic, ostentatious in error, closes up the avenues of knowledge, and "shuts the gates of wisdom on mankind." It is not enough to show that there is no reason for a thing, that we do not see the reason of it: if the common feeling, if the involuntary prejudice sets in strong in

favour of it, if, in spite of all we can do, there is a lurking suspicion on the side of our first impressions, we must try again, and believe that truth is mightier than we. So, in offering a definition of any subject, if we feel a misgiving that there is any fact or circumstance omitted, but of which we have only a vague apprehension, like a name we cannot recollect, we must ask for more time, and not cut the matter short by an arrogant assumption of the point in dispute. Common sense thus acts as a check-weight on sophistry, and suspends our rash and superficial judgments. On the other hand, if not only no reason can be given for a thing, but every reason is clear against it, and we can account from ignorance, from authority, from interest, from different causes, for the prevalence of an opinion or sentiment, then we have a right to conclude that we have mistaken a prejudice for an instinct, or have confounded a false and partial impression with the fair and unavoidable inference from general observation. Mr Burke said that we ought not to reject every prejudice, but should separate the husk of prejudice from the truth it encloses, and so try to get at the kernel within; and thus far he was right. But he was wrong in insisting that we are to cherish our prejudices, "because they are prejudices;" for if they are all well-founded, there is no occasion to inquire into their origin or use; and he

who sets out to philosophise upon them, or make the separation Mr Burke talks of in this spirit and with this previous determination, will be very likely to mistake a maggot or a rotten canker for the precious kernel of truth, as was indeed the case with our political sophist.

There is nothing more distinct than common sense and vulgar opinion. Common sense is only a judge of things that fall under common observation, or immediately come home to the business and bosoms of men. This is of the very essence of its principle, the basis of its pretensions. It rests upon the simple process of feeling, it anchors in experience. It is not, and it cannot be, the test of abstract, speculative opinions. But half the opinions and prejudices of mankind, those which they hold in the most unqualified approbation, and which have been instilled into them under the strongest sanctions, are of this latter kind, that is, opinions, not which they have ever thought, known, or felt one tittle about, but which they have taken up on trust from others, which have been palmed on their understandings by fraud or force, and which they continue to hold at the peril of life, limb, property, and character, with as little warrant from common sense in the first instance as appeal to reason in the last. The *ultima ratio regum* proceeds upon a very different plea. Common sense is neither priestcraft nor state

policy. Yet "there's the rub that makes absurdity of so long life;" and, at the same time, gives the sceptical philosophers the advantage over us. Till nature has fair play allowed it, and is not adulterated by political and polemical quacks (as it so often has been), it is impossible to appeal to it as a defence against the errors and extravagances of mere reason. If we talk of common sense, we are twitted with vulgar prejudice, and asked how we distinguish the one from the other: but common and received opinion is indeed "a compost heap" of crude notions, got together by the pride and passions of individuals, and reason is itself the thrall or manumitted slave of the same lordly and besotted masters, dragging its servile chain, or committing all sorts of Saturnalian licences, the moment it feels itself freed from it. If ten millions of Englishmen are furious in thinking themselves right in making war upon thirty millions of Frenchmen, and if the last are equally bent upon thinking the others always in the wrong, though it is a common and national prejudice, both opinions cannot be the dictate of good sense: but it may be the infatuated policy of one or both governments to keep their subjects always at variance. If a few centuries ago all Europe believed in the infallibility of the Pope, this was not an opinion derived from the proper exercise or erroneous direction of the common sense of the people: common

sense had nothing to do with it—they believed whatever their priests told them. England at present is divided into Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Dissenters: both parties have numbers on their side; but common sense and party spirit are two different things. Sects and heresies are upheld partly by sympathy, and partly by the love of contradiction: if there was nobody of a different way of thinking, they would fall to pieces of themselves. If a whole court say the same thing, this is no proof that they think it, but that the individual at the head of the court has said it: if a mob agree for a while in shouting the same watch-word, this is not to me an example of the *sensus communis*; they only repeat what they have heard repeated by others. If indeed a large proportion of the people are in want of food, of clothing, of shelter, if they are sick, miserable, scorned, oppressed, and if each feeling it in himself, they all say so with one voice and with one heart, and lift up their hands to second their appeal, this I should say was but the dictate of common sense, the cry of nature. But to waive this part of the argument, which it is needless to push farther, I believe that the best way to instruct mankind is not by pointing out to them their mutual errors, but by teaching them to think rightly on indifferent matters, where they will listen with patience in order to be amused, and where they do

not consider a definition or a syllogism as the greatest injury you can offer them.

There is no rule for expression. It is got at solely by feeling, that is, on the principle of the association of ideas, and by transferring what has been found to hold good in one case (with the necessary modifications) to others. A certain look has been remarked strongly indicative of a certain passion or trait of character, and we attach the same meaning to it or are affected in the same pleasurable or painful manner by it, where it exists in a less degree, though we can define neither the look itself nor the modification of it. Having got the general clue, the exact result may be left to the imagination to vary, to extenuate or aggravate it according to circumstances. In the admirable profile of Oliver Cromwell after ———, the drooping eye-lids, as if drawing a veil over the fixed, penetrating glance, the nostrils somewhat distended, and lips compressed so as hardly to let the breath escape him, denote the character of the man for high-reaching policy and deep designs, as plainly as they can be written. How is it that we decipher this expression in the face? First, by feeling it: and how is it that we feel it? Not by pre-established rules, but by the instinct of analogy, by the principle of association, which is subtle and sure in proportion as it is variable and indefinite. A circumstance, apparently of

no value, shall alter the whole interpretation to be put upon an expression or action; and it shall alter it thus powerfully because in proportion to its very insignificance it shows a strong general principle at work that extends in its ramifications to the smallest things. This in fact will make all the difference between minuteness and subtlety or refinement; for a small or trivial effect may in given circumstances imply the operation of a great power. Stillness may be the result of a blow too powerful to be resisted; silence may be imposed by feelings too agonising for utterance. The minute, the trifling and insipid, is that which is little in itself, in its causes and its consequences: the subtle and refined is that which is slight and evanescent at first sight, but which mounts up to a mighty sum in the end, which is an essential part of an important whole, which has consequences greater than itself, and where more is meant than meets the eye or ear. We complain sometimes of littleness in a Dutch picture, where there are a vast number of distinct parts and objects, each small in itself, and leading to nothing else. A sky of Claude's cannot fall under this censure, where one imperceptible gradation is as it were the scale to another, where the broad arch of heaven is piled up of endlessly intermediate gold and azure tints, and where an infinite number of minute, scarce noticed particulars blend and

melt into universal harmony. The subtlety in Shakspeare, of which there is an immense deal everywhere scattered up and down, is always the instrument of passion, the vehicle of character. The action of a man pulling his hat over his forehead is indifferent enough in itself, and, generally speaking, may mean anything or nothing: but in the circumstances in which Macduff is placed, it is neither insignificant nor equivocal.

“What! man, ne’er pull your hat upon your brows,” &c.

It admits but of one interpretation or inference, that which follows it:—

“Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o’er-fraught heart, and bids it break.”

The passage in the same play, in which Duncan and his attendants are introduced commenting on the beauty and situation of Macbeth’s castle, though familiar in itself, has been often praised for the striking contrast it presents to the scenes which follow.—The same look in different circumstances may convey a totally different expression. Thus the eye turned round to look at you without turning the head indicates generally slyness or suspicion: but if this is combined with large expanded eye-lids or fixed eye-brows, as we see it in Titian’s pictures, it will denote calm contemplation or piercing sagacity, with-

out anything of meanness or fear of being observed. In other cases, it may imply merely indolent enticing voluptuousness, as in Lely's portraits of women. The langour and weakness of the eye-lids gives the amorous turn to the expression. How should there be a rule for all this beforehand, seeing it depends on circumstances ever varying, and scarce discernible but by their effect on the mind? Rules are applicable to abstractions, but expression is concrete and individual. We know the meaning of certain looks, and we feel how they modify one another in conjunction. But we cannot have a separate rule to judge of all their combinations in different degrees and circumstances, without foreseeing all those combinations, which is impossible: or if we did foresee them, we should only be where we are, that is, we could only make the rule as we now judge without it, from imagination and the feeling of the moment. The absurdity of reducing expression to a preconcerted system was perhaps never more evidently shown than in a picture of the Judgment of Solomon by so great a man as Nicolas Poussin, which I once heard admired for the skill and discrimination of the artist in making all the women, who are ranged on one side, in the greatest alarm at the sentence of the judge, while all the men on the opposite side see through the design of it. Nature does not go to work or cast things in a

regular mould in this sort of way. I once heard a person remark of another—"He has an eye like a vicious horse." This was a fair analogy. We all, I believe, have noticed the look of a horse's eye, just before he is going to bite or kick. But will any one, therefore, describe to me exactly what that look is? It was the same acute observer that said of a self-sufficient prating music-master—"He talks on all subjects at sight"—which expressed the man at once by an allusion to his profession. The coincidence was indeed perfect. Nothing else could compare to the easy assurance with which this gentleman would volunteer an explanation of things of which he was most ignorant, but the *nonchalance* with which a musician sits down to a harpsichord to play a piece he has never seen before. My physiognomical friend would not have hit on this mode of illustration without knowing the profession of the subject of his criticism; but having this hint given him, it instantly suggested itself to his "sure trailing." The manner of the speaker was evident; and the association of the music-master sitting down to play at sight, lurking in his mind, was immediately called out by the strength of his impression of the character. The feeling of character, and the felicity of invention in explaining it, were nearly allied to each other. The first was so wrought up and running over, that the transition to the last was

easy and unavoidable. When Mr Kean was so much praised for the action of Richard in his last struggle with his triumphant antagonist, where he stands, after his sword is wrested from him, with his hands stretched out, "as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power," he said that he borrowed it from seeing the last efforts of Painter in his fight with Oliver. This assuredly did not lessen the merit of it. Thus it ever is with the man of real genius. He has the feeling of truth already shrined in his own breast, and his eye is still bent on nature to see how she expresses herself. When we thoroughly understand the subject, it is easy to translate from one language into another. Raphael, in muffling up the figure of Elymas the Sorcerer in his garments, appears to have extended the idea of blindness even to his clothes. Was this design? Probably not; but merely the feeling of analogy thoughtlessly suggesting this device, which being so suggested was retained and carried on, because it flattered or fell in with the original feeling. The tide of passion, when strong, overflows and gradually insinuates itself into all nooks and corners of the mind. Invention (of the best kind) I therefore do not think so distinct a thing from feeling, as some are apt to imagine. The springs of pure feeling will rise and fill the moulds of fancy that are fit to receive it. There are some

striking coincidences of colour in well-composed pictures, as in a straggling weed in the foreground streaked with blue or red to answer to a blue or red drapery, to the tone of the flesh or an opening in the sky:—not that this was intended, or done by rule (for then it would presently become affected and ridiculous), but the eye being imbued with a certain colour, repeats and varies it from a natural sense of harmony, a secret craving and appetite for beauty, which in the same manner soothes and gratifies the eye of taste, though the cause is not understood. Tact, *finesse*, is nothing but the being completely aware of the feeling belonging to certain situations, passions, &c., and the being consequently sensible to their slightest indications or movements in others. One of the most remarkable instances of this sort of faculty is the following story, told of Lord Shaftesbury, the grandfather of the author of the *Characteristics*. He had been to dine with Lady Clarendon and her daughter, who was at that time privately married to the Duke of York (afterwards James II), and as he returned home with another nobleman who had accompanied him, he suddenly turned to him, and said, “Depend upon it, the Duke has married Hyde’s daughter.” His companion could not comprehend what he meant; but on explaining himself, he said, “Her mother behaved to her with an attention and a marked respect that

it is impossible to account for in any other way ; and I am sure of it." His conjecture shortly afterwards proved to be the truth. This was carrying the prophetic spirit of common sense as far as it could go.

ESSAY III.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENIUS or originality is, for the most part, some strong quality in the mind, answering to and bringing out some new and striking quality in nature.

Imagination is, more properly, the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations, which must be done best according to the hold which the feeling itself has taken of the mind.* In new and unknown combinations, the impression must act by sympathy, and not by rule; but there can be no sympathy, where there is no passion, no original interest. The personal interest may in some cases oppress and circumscribe the imaginative faculty, as in the instance of Rousseau: but in general the strength and consistency of the imagination will be in

* I do not here speak of the figurative or fanciful exercise of the imagination, which consist in finding out some striking object or image to illustrate another.

proportion to the strength and depth of feeling; and it is rarely that a man even of lofty genius will be able to do more than carry on his own feelings and character, or some prominent and ruling passion, into fictitious and uncommon situations. Milton has by allusion embodied a great part of his political and personal history in the chief characters and incidents of *Paradise Lost*. He has, no doubt, wonderfully adapted and heightened them, but the elements are the same; you trace the bias and opinions of the man in the creations of the poet. Shakspeare (almost alone) seems to have been a man of genius, raised above the definition of genius. "Born universal heir to all humanity," he was "as one, in suffering all who suffered nothing;" with a perfect sympathy with all things, yet alike indifferent to all; who did not tamper with nature or warp her to his own purposes; who "knew all qualities with a learned spirit," instead of judging of them by his own predilections; and was rather "a pipe for the Muse's finger to play what stop she pleased," than anxious to set up any character or pretensions of his own. His genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose: his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it. He was the Proteus of human intellect. Genius in ordinary is

a more obstinate and less versatile thing. It is sufficiently exclusive and self-willed, quaint and peculiar. It does some one thing by virtue of doing nothing else : it excels in some one pursuit by being blind to all excellence but its own. It is just the reverse of the chameleon ; for it does not borrow, but lend its colours to all about it : or like the glow-worm, discloses a little circle of gorgeous light in the twilight of obscurity, in the night of intellect, that surrounds it. So did Rembrandt. If ever there was a man of genius, he was one, in the proper sense of the term. He lived in and revealed to others a world of his own, and might be said to have invented a new view of nature. He did not discover things out of nature, in fiction or fairy land, or make a voyage to the moon "to descry new lands, rivers, or mountains in her spotty globe," but saw things in nature that every one had missed before him, and gave others eyes to see them with. This is the test and triumph of originality, not to show us what has never been, and what we may therefore very easily never have dreamt of, but to point out to us what is before our eyes and under our feet, though we have had no suspicion of its existence, for want of sufficient strength of intuition, of determined grasp of mind to seize and retain it. Rembrandt's conquests were not over the ideal, but the real. He did not contrive a new

story or character, but we nearly owe to him a fifth part of painting, the knowledge of *chiaroscuro*—a distinct power and element in art and nature. He had a steadiness, a firm keeping of mind and eye, that first stood the shock of “fierce extremes” in light and shade, or reconciled the greatest obscurity and the greatest brilliancy into perfect harmony; and he therefore was the first to hazard this appearance upon canvas, and give full effect to what he saw and delighted in. He was led to adopt this style of broad and startling contrast from its congeniality to his own feelings: his mind grappled with that which afforded the best exercise to its master-powers: he was bold in act, because he was urged on by a strong native impulse. Originality is then nothing but nature and feeling working in the mind. A man does not affect to be original: he is so, because he cannot help it, and often without knowing it. This extraordinary artist indeed might be said to have had a particular organ for colour. His eye seemed to come in contact with it as a feeling, to lay hold of it as a substance, rather than to contemplate it as a visual object. The texture of his landscapes is “of the earth, earthy”—his clouds are humid, heavy, slow; his shadows are “darkness that may be felt,” a “palpable obscure;” his lights are lumps of liquid splendour! There is something more in this than can be accounted for

from design or accident: Rembrandt was not a man made up of two or three rules and directions for acquiring genius.

I am afraid I shall hardly write so satisfactory a character of Mr Wordsworth, though he, too, like Rembrandt, has a faculty of making something out of nothing, that is, out of himself, by the medium through which he sees and with which he clothes the barrenest subject. Mr Wordsworth is the last man to "look abroad into universality," if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into himself, and is "content with riches fineless." He would in the other case be "poor as winter," if he had nothing but general capacity to trust to. He is the greatest, that is, the most original poet of the present day, only because he is the greatest egotist. He is "self-involved, not dark." He sits in the centre of his own being, and there "enjoys bright day." He does not waste a thought on others. Whatever does not relate exclusively and wholly to himself, is foreign to his views. He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity. He thrusts aside all other objects, all other interests with scorn and impatience, that he may repose on his own being, that he may dig out the treasures of thought contained in it, that he may unfold the precious stores of a mind for ever brooding over

itself. His genius is the effect of his individual character. He stamps that character, that deep individual interest, on whatever he meets. The object is nothing, but as it furnishes food for internal meditation, for old associations. If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr Wordsworth's poetry would have been just what it is. If there had been neither love nor friendship, neither ambition nor pleasure nor business in the world, the author of the Lyrical Ballads need not have been greatly changed from what he is—might still have “kept the noiseless tenour of his way,” retired in the sanctuary of his own heart, hallowing the Sabbath of his own thoughts. With the passions, the pursuits, and imaginations of other men, he does not profess to sympathise, but “finds tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.” With a mind averse from outward objects, but ever intent upon its own workings, he hangs a weight of thought and feeling upon every trifling circumstance connected with his past history. The note of the cuckoo sounds in his ear like the voice of other days; the daisy spreads its leaves in the rays of boyish delight, that stream from his thoughtful eyes; the rainbow lifts its proud arch in heaven but to mark his progress from infancy to manhood; an old thorn is buried, bowed down under the mass of associations he

has wound about it; and to him, as he himself beautifully says,

— “The meanest flow’r that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

It is this power of habitual sentiment, or of transferring the interest of our conscious existence to whatever gently solicits attention, and is a link in the chain of association, without rousing our passions or hurting our pride, that is the striking feature in Mr Wordsworth’s mind and poetry. Others have felt and shown this power before, as Withers, Burns, &c., but none have felt it so intensely and absolutely as to lend to it the voice of inspiration, as to make it the foundation of a new style and school in poetry. His strength, as it so often happens, arises from the excess of his weakness. But he has opened a new avenue to the human heart, has explored another secret haunt and nook of nature, “sacred to verse, and sure of everlasting fame.” Compared with his lines, Lord Byron’s stanzas are but exaggerated common-place, and Walter Scott’s poetry (not his prose) old wives’ fables.* There is no one in whom I have been more disappointed than in the writer here spoken

* Mr Wordsworth himself should not say this, and yet I am not sure he would not.

of, nor with whom I am more disposed on certain points to quarrel: but the love of truth and justice which obliges me to do this, will not suffer me to blench his merits. Do what he can, he cannot help being an original-minded man. His poetry is not servile. While the cuckoo returns in the spring, while the daisy looks bright in the sun, while the rainbow lifts its head above the storm—

“Yet I'll remember thee, Glencairn;
And all that thou hast done for me!”

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in endeavouring to show that there is no such thing as proper originality, a spirit emanating from the mind of the artist and shining through his works, has traced Raphael through a number of figures which he has borrowed from Masaccio and others. This is a bad calculation. If Raphael had only borrowed those figures from others, would he, even in Sir Joshua's sense, have been entitled to the praise of originality? Plagiarism, I presume, in so far as it is plagiarism, is not originality. Salvator is considered by many as a great genius. He was what they call an irregular genius. My notion of genius is not exactly the same as theirs. It has also been made a question whether there is not more genius in Rembrandt's Three Trees than in all Claude Lorraine's landscapes? I do not know how that may be: but it was enough

for Claude to have been a perfect landscape painter.

Capacity is not the same thing as genius. Capacity may be described to relate to the quantity of knowledge, however acquired; genius to its quality and the mode of acquiring it. Capacity is a power over given ideas or combinations of ideas; genius is the power over those which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down. Or capacity is power of any sort: genius is power of a different sort from what has yet been shown. A retentive memory, a clear understanding is capacity, but it is not genius. The admirable Crichton was a person of prodigious capacity; but there is no proof (that I know) that he had an atom of genius. His verses that remain are dull and sterile. He could learn all that was known of any subject: he could do anything if others could show him the way to do it. This was very wonderful: but that is all you can say of it. It requires a good capacity to play well at chess: but, after all, it is a game of skill, and not of genius. Know what you will of it, the understanding still moves in certain tracks in which others have trod before it, quicker or slower, with more or less comprehension and presence of mind. The greatest skill strikes out nothing for itself, from its own peculiar resources; the nature of the game is a thing determinate

and fixed : there is no royal or poetical road to check-mate your adversary. There is no place for genius but in the indefinite and unknown. The discovery of the binomial theorem was an effort of genius ; but there was none shown in Jedediah Buxton's being able to multiply 9 figures by 9 in his head. If he could have multiplied 90 figures by 90 instead of 9, it would have been equally useless toil and trouble.* He is a man of capacity who possesses considerable intellectual riches : he is a man of genius who finds out a vein of new ore. Originality is the seeing nature differently from others, and yet as it is in itself. It is not singularity or

* The only good thing I ever heard come of this man's singular faculty of memory was the following. A gentleman was mentioning his having been sent up to London from the place where he lived to see Garrick act. When he went back into the country, he was asked what he thought of the player and the play. "Oh!" he said, "he did not know : he had only seen a little man strut about the stage, and repeat 7,956 words." We all laughed at this, but a person in one corner of the room, holding one hand to his forehead, and seeming mighty delighted, called out, "Ay, indeed? And pray, was he found to be correct?" This was the supererogation of literal matter-of-fact curiosity. Jedediah Buxton's counting the number of words was idle enough ; but here was a fellow who wanted some one to count them over again to see if he was correct.

"The force of dulness could no farther go!"

affectation, but the discovery of new and valuable truth. All the world do not see the whole meaning of any object they have been looking at. Habit blinds them to some things: short-sightedness to others. Every mind is not a gauge and measure of truth. Nature has her surface and her dark recesses. She is deep, obscure, and infinite. It is only minds on whom she makes her fullest impressions that can penetrate her shrine or unveil her Holy of Holies. It is only those whom she has filled with her spirit that have the boldness or the power to reveal her mysteries to others. But nature has a thousand aspects, and one man can only draw out one of them. Whoever does this, is a man of genius. One displays her force, another her refinement, one her power of harmony, another her suddenness of contrast, one her beauty of form, another her splendour of colour. Each does that for which he is best fitted by his particular genius, that is to say, by some quality of mind into which the quality of the object sinks deepest, where it finds the most cordial welcome, is perceived to its utmost extent, and where again it forces its way out from the fulness with which it has taken possession of the mind of the student. The imagination gives out what it has first absorbed by congeniality of temperament, what it has attracted and moulded into itself by elective affinity, as the loadstone draws

and impregnates iron. A little originality is more esteemed and sought for than the greatest acquired talent, because it throws a new light upon things, and is peculiar to the individual. The other is common ; and may be had for the asking, to any amount.

The value of any work is to be judged of by the quantity of originality contained in it. A very little of this will go a great way. If Goldsmith had never written anything but the two or three first chapters of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, or the character of a *Village-Schoolmaster*, they would have stamped him a man of genius. The Editors of Encyclopedias are not usually reckoned the first literary characters of the age. The works, of which they have the management, contain a great deal of knowledge, like chests or warehouses, but the goods are not their own. We should as soon think of admiring the shelves of a library ; but the shelves of a library are useful and respectable. I was once applied to, in a delicate emergency, to write an article on a difficult subject for an Encyclopedia, and was advised to take time and give it a systematic and scientific form, to avail myself of all the knowledge that was to be obtained on the subject, and arrange it with clearness and method. I made answer that as to the first, I had taken time to do all that I ever pretended to do, as I had thought incessantly on different matters for

twenty years of my life;* that I had no particular knowledge of the subject in question, and no head for arrangement; and that the utmost I could do in such a case would be, when a systematic and scientific article was prepared, to write marginal notes upon it, to insert a remark or illustration of my own (not to be found in former Encyclopedias) or to suggest a better definition than had been offered in the text. There are two sorts of writing. The first is compilation; and consists in collecting and stating all that is already known of any question in the best possible manner, for the benefit of the uninformed reader. An author of this class is a very learned amanuensis of other people's thoughts. The second sort proceeds on an entirely different principle. Instead of bringing down the account of knowledge to the point at which it has already arrived, it professes to start from that point on the strength of the writer's individual reflections; and supposing the reader in possession of what is already known, supplies deficiencies, fills up certain blanks, and quits the beaten road in search of new tracts of observation or sources of feeling. It is in vain to object to this last style that it is disjointed, dis-

* Sir Joshua Reynolds being asked how long it had taken him to do a certain picture, made answer, "All my life."

proportioned, and irregular. It is merely a set of additions and corrections to other men's works, or to the common stock of human knowledge, printed separately. You might as well expect a continued chain of reasoning in the notes to a book. It skips all the trite, intermediate, level common-places of the subject, and only stops at the difficult passages of the human mind, or touches on some striking point that has been overlooked in previous editions. A view of a subject, to be connected and regular, cannot be all new. A writer will always be liable to be charged either with paradox or common-place, either with dulness or affectation. But we have no right to demand from any one more than he pretends to. There is indeed a medium in all things, but to unite opposite excellencies, is a task ordinarily too hard for mortality. He who succeeds in what he aims at, or who takes the lead in any one mode or path of excellence, may think himself very well off. It would not be fair to complain of the style of an Encyclopedia as dull, as wanting volatile salt; nor of the style of an Essay because it is too light and sparkling, because it is not a *caput mortuum*. So it is rather an odd objection to a work that is made up entirely of "brilliant passages"—at least it is a fault that can be found with few works, and the book might be pardoned for its singularity. The

censure might indeed seem like adroit flattery, if it were not passed on an author whom any objection is sufficient to render unpopular and ridiculous. I grant it is best to unite solidity with show, general information with particular ingenuity. This is the pattern of a perfect style: but I myself do not pretend to be a perfect writer. In fine, we do not banish light French wines from our tables, or refuse sparkling Champagne because it has not the body of Old Port. Besides, I do not know that dulness is strength, or that an observation is slight, because it is striking. Mediocrity, insipidity, want of character, is the great fault. *Mediocribus esse poetis non Dii, non homines, non concessere columnæ.* Neither is this privilege allowed to prose writers in our time, any more than to poets formerly.

It is not then acuteness of organs or extent of capacity that constitutes rare genius or produces the most exquisite models of art, but an intense sympathy with some one beauty or distinguishing characteristic in nature. Irritability alone, or the interest taken in certain things, may supply the place of genius in weak and otherwise ordinary minds. As there are certain instruments fitted to perform certain kinds of labour, there are certain minds so framed as to produce certain *chefs-d'œuvre* in art and literature, which is surely the best use they can be put to. If a

man had all sorts of instruments in his shop and wanted one, he would rather have that one than be supplied with a double set of all the others. If he had them all twice over, he could only do what he can do as it is, whereas without that one he, perhaps, cannot finish any one work he has in hand. So if a man can do one thing better than anybody else, the value of this one thing is what he must stand or fall by, and his being able to do a hundred other things merely as well as anybody else, would not alter the sentence or add to his respectability; on the contrary, his being able to do so many other things well would probably interfere with and incumber him in the execution of the only thing that others cannot do as well as he, and so far be a drawback and a disadvantage. More people, in fact, fail from a multiplicity of talents and pretensions than from an absolute poverty of resources. I have given instances of this elsewhere. Perhaps Shakspeare's tragedies would in some respects have been better, if he had never written comedies at all; and in that case, his comedies might well have been spared, though they might have cost us some regret. Racine, it is said, might have rivalled Molière in comedy; but he gave up the cultivation of his comic talents to devote himself wholly to the tragic Muse. If, as the French tell us, he in consequence attained to the perfection of tragic com-

position, this was better than writing comedies as well as Molière and tragedies as well as Crebillon. Yet I count those persons fools who think it a pity Hogarth did not succeed better in serious subjects. The division of labour is an excellent principle in taste as well as in mechanics. Without this, I find from Adam Smith, we could not have a pin made to the degree of perfection it is. We do not, on any rational scheme of criticism, inquire into the variety of a man's excellences, or the number of his works, or his facility of production. 'Venice Preserved' is sufficient for Otway's fame. I hate all those nonsensical stories about Lope de Vega and his writing a play in a morning before breakfast. He had time enough to do it after. If a man leaves behind him any work which is a model in its kind, we have no right to ask whether he could do anything else, or how he did it, or how long he was about it. All that talent which is not necessary to the actual quantity of excellence existing in the world, loses its object, is so much waste talent or talent to let. I heard a sensible man say he should like to do some one thing better than all the rest of the world, and in everything else to be like all the rest of the world. Why should a man do more than his part? The rest is vanity and vexation of spirit. We look with jealous and grudging eyes at all those qualifications which are not essential;

first, because they are superfluous, and next, because we suspect they will be prejudicial. Why does Mr Kean play all those harlequin tricks of singing, dancing, fencing, &c.? They say, "It is for his benefit." It is not for his reputation. Garrick indeed shone equally in comedy and tragedy. But he was first, not second-rate in both. There is not a greater impertinence than to ask, if a man is clever out of his profession. I have heard of people trying to cross-examine Mrs Siddons. I would as soon try to entrap one of the Elgin Marbles into an argument. Good nature and common sense are required from all people: but one proud distinction is enough for any one individual to possess or to aspire to!

ESSAY IV.

ON PEOPLE WITH ONE IDEA.

THERE are people who have but one idea: at least, if they have more, they keep it a secret, for they never talk but of one subject.

There is Major Cartwright: he has but one idea or subject of discourse, Parliamentary Reform. Now Parliamentary Reform is (as far as I know) a very good thing, a very good idea, and a very good subject to talk about; but why should it be the only one? To hear the worthy and gallant Major resume his favourite topic, is like law-business, or a person who has a suit in Chancery going on. Nothing can be attended to, nothing can be talked of but that. Now it is getting on, now again it is standing still; at one time the Master has promised to pass judgment by a certain day, at another he has put it off again and called for more papers, and both are equally reasons for speaking of it. Like the piece of packthread in the barrister's hands, he turns and twists it all ways, and cannot proceed a step

without it. Some school-boys cannot read but in their own book : and the man of one idea cannot converse out of his own subject. Conversation it is not ; but a sort of recital of the preamble of a bill, or a collection of grave arguments for a man's being of opinion with himself. It would be well if there was anything of character, of eccentricity in all this ; but that is not the case. It is a political homily personified, a walking common-place we have to encounter and listen to. It is just as if a man was to insist on your hearing him go through the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges every time you meet, or like the story of the Cosmogony in the Vicar of Wakefield. It is a tune played on a barrel-organ. It is a common vehicle of discourse into which they get and are set down when they please, without any pains or trouble to themselves. Neither is it professional pedantry or trading quackery : it has no excuse. The man has no more to do with the question which he saddles on all his hearers than you have. This is what makes the matter hopeless. If a farmer talks to you about his pigs or his poultry, or a physician about his patients, or a lawyer about his briefs, or a merchant about stock, or an author about himself, you know how to account for this, it is a common infirmity, you have a laugh at his expense, and there is no more to be said. But here is a man who goes out of his way to be

absurd, and is troublesome by a romantic effort of generosity. You cannot say to him, "All this may be interesting to you, but I have no concern in it:" you cannot put him off in that way. He retorts the Latin adage upon you—*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*. He has got possession of a subject which is of universal and paramount interest (not "a fee-grief, due to some single breast")—and on that plea may hold you by the button as long as he chooses. His delight is to harangue you on what nowise regards himself: how then can you refuse to listen to what as little amuses you? Time and tide wait for no man. The business of the state admits of no delay. The question of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments stands first on the order of the day—takes precedence in its own right of every other question. Any other topic, grave or gay, is looked upon in the light of impertinence, and sent to Coventry. Business is an interruption; pleasure a digression from it. It is the question before every company where the Major comes, which immediately resolves itself into a committee of the whole world upon it, is carried on by means of a perpetual virtual adjournment, and it is presumed that no other is entertained while this is pending—a determination which gives its persevering advocate a fair prospect of expatiating on it to its dying day. As Cicero says of study, it follows him into the country, it

stays with him at home: it sits with him at breakfast, and goes out with him to dinner. It is like a part of his dress, of the costume of his person, without which he would be at a loss what to do. If he meets you in the street, he accosts you with it as a form of salutation: if you see him at his own house, it is supposed you come upon that. If you happen to remark, "It is a fine day, or, the town is full," it is considered as a temporary compromise of the question; you are suspected of not going the whole length of the principle. As Sancho, when reprimanded for mentioning his homely favourite in the Duke's kitchen, defended himself by saying—"There I thought of Dapple, and there I spoke of him"—so the true stickler for Reform neglects no opportunity of introducing the subject wherever he is. Place its veteran champion under the frozen North, and he will celebrate sweet smiling Reform: place him under the mid-day Afric sun, and he will talk of nothing but Reform—Reform so sweetly smiling and so sweetly promising for the last forty years—

Dulce ridentem Lalagen,

Dulce loquentem !

A topic of this sort, of which the person himself may be considered as almost sole proprietor and patentee, is an estate for life, free from all incumbrance of wit, thought, or study; you live upon it as a settled income; and others might as well

think to eject you out of a capital freehold house and estate as think to drive you out of it into the wide world of common sense and argument. Every man's house is his castle; and every man's common-place is his stronghold, from which he looks out and smiles at the dust and heat of controversy, raised by a number of frivolous and vexatious questions—"Rings the world with the vain stir!" A cure for this and that and every other evil would be a Parliamentary Reform; and so we return in a perpetual circle to the point from which we set out. Is not this a species of sober madness more provoking than the real? Has not the theoretical enthusiast his mind as much warped, as much enslaved by one idea as the acknowledged lunatic, only that the former has no lucid intervals? If you see a visionary of this class going along the street, you can tell as well what he is thinking of and will say next as the man that fancies himself a teapot or the Czar of Muscovy. The one is as inaccessible to reason as the other: if the one raves, the other dotes!

There are some who fancy the Corn Bill the root of all evil, and others who trace all the miseries of life to the practice of muffling up children in night-clothes when they sleep or travel. They will declaim by the hour together on the first, and argue themselves black in the face on the last. It is in vain that you give up

the point. They persist in the debate, and begin again—"But don't you see—?" These sort of partial obliquities, as they are more entertaining and original, are also by their nature intermittent. They hold a man but for a season. He may have one a year or every two years; and though, while he is in the heat of any new discovery, he will let you hear of nothing else, he varies from himself, and is amusing undesignedly. He is not like the chimes at midnight.

People of the character here spoken of, that is, who tease you to death with some one idea, generally differ in their favourite notion from the rest of the world; and indeed it is the love of distinction which is mostly at the bottom of this peculiarity. Thus one person is remarkable for living on a vegetable diet, and never fails to entertain you all dinner-time with an invective against animal food. Dr Lamb, one of this self-denying class, who adds to the primitive simplicity of this sort of food the recommendation of having it in a raw state, lamenting the death of a patient whom he had augured to be in a good way as a convert to his system, at last accounted for his disappointment in a whisper—"But she ate meat privately, depend upon it." It is not pleasant, though it is what one submits to willingly from some people, to be asked every time you meet, whether you have quite left off drinking wine, and to be complimented or con-

doled with on your looks according as you answer in the negative or affirmative. Abernethy thinks his pill an infallible cure for all disorders. Once complaining to my physician, Dr Oliphant, that I thought his mode of treatment had not answered, he assured me it was the best in the world,—“and as a proof of it,” says he, “I have had one gentleman, a patient with your disorder, under the same regimen for the last sixteen years!”—I have known persons whose minds were entirely taken up at all times and on all occasions with such questions as the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the Restoration of the Jews, or the progress of Unitarianism. I myself at one period took a pretty strong turn to inveighing against the doctrine of Divine Right, and am not yet cured of my prejudice on that subject. How many projectors have gone mad in good earnest from incessantly harping on one idea, the discovery of the philosopher’s stone, the finding out the longitude, or paying off the national debt! The disorder at length comes to a fatal crisis; but long before this, and while they were walking about and talking as usual, the derangement of the fancy, the loss of all voluntary power to control or alienate their ideas from the single subject that occupied them, was gradually taking place, and overturning the fabric of the understanding by wrenching it all on one side. Alderman Wood has, I should

suppose, talked of nothing but the Queen in all companies for the last six months. Happy Alderman Wood! Some persons have got a definition of the verb, others a system of shorthand, others a cure for typhus fever, others a method for preventing the counterfeiting of bank notes, which they think the best possible, and indeed the only one. Others insist there have been only three great men in the world, leaving you to add a fourth. A man who has been in Germany will sometimes talk of nothing but what is German: a Scotchman always leads the discourse to his own country. Some descant on the Kantian philosophy. There is Worgman, a conceited fellow about town, who talks always and everywhere on this subject. He wears the Categories round his neck like a pearl-chain; he plays off the names of the primary and transcendental qualities like rings on his fingers. He talks of the Kantian system while he dances; he talks of it while he dines, he talks of it to his children, to his apprentices, to his customers. He called on me to convince me of it, and said I was only prevented from becoming a complete convert by one or two prejudices. He knows no more about it than a pike-staff. Why then does he make so much ridiculous fuss about it? It is not that he has got this one idea in his head, but that he has got no other. A dunce may talk on the subject of

the Kantian philosophy with great impunity: if he opened his lips on any other, he might be found out. A French lady, who had married an Englishman who said little, excused him by saying—"He is always thinking of Locke and Newton." This is one way of passing muster by following in the *suite* of great names! A friend of mine, whom I met one day in the street, accosted me with more than usual vivacity, and said, "Well, we're selling, we're selling!" I thought he meant a house. "No," he said, "haven't you seen the advertisement in the newspapers? I mean five-and-twenty copies of the Essay." This work, a comely, capacious quarto on the most abstruse metaphysics, had occupied his sole thoughts for several years, and he concluded that I must be thinking of what he was. I believe, however, I may say I am nearly the only person that ever read, certainly that ever pretended to understand it. It is an original and most ingenious work, nearly as incomprehensible as it is original, and as quaint as it is ingenious. If the author is taken up with the ideas in his own head and no others, he has a right: for he has ideas there, that are to be met with nowhere else, and which occasionally would not disgrace a Berkeley. A dextrous plagiarist might get himself an immense reputation by putting them in a popular dress. Oh! how little do they know, who have never done

anything but repeat after others by rote, the pangs, the labour, the yearnings, and misgivings of mind it costs, to get the germ of an original idea—to dig it out of the hidden recesses of thought and nature, and bring it half-ashamed, struggling, and deformed into the day—to give words and intelligible symbols to that which was never imagined or expressed before! It is as if the dumb should speak for the first time, as if things should stammer out their own meaning, through the imperfect organs of mere sense. I wish that some of our fluent, plausible declaimers, who have such store of words to cover the want of ideas, could lend their art to this writer. If he, “poor, unfledged” in this respect, “who has scarce winged from view o’ th’ nest,” could find a language for his ideas, truth would find a language for some of her secrets. Mr Fearn was buried in the woods of Hindostan. In his leisure from business and from tiger-shooting, he took it into his head to look into his own mind. A whim or two, an odd fancy, like a film before the eye, now and then crossed it: it struck him as something curious, but the impression at first disappeared like breath upon glass. He thought no more of it; yet still the same conscious feelings returned, and what at first was chance or instinct, became a habit. Several notions had taken possession of his brain relating to mental processes which he had

never heard alluded to in conversation, but not being well versed in such matters, he did not know whether they were to be found in learned authors or not. He took a journey to the capital of the Peninsula on purpose, and bought Locke, Reid, Stewart, and Berkeley, whom he consulted with eager curiosity when he got home, but did not find what he looked for. He set to work himself; and in a few weeks sketched out a rough draught of his thoughts and observations on bamboo paper. The eagerness of his new pursuit, together with the diseases of the climate, proved too much for his constitution, and he was forced to return to this country. He put his metaphysics, his bamboo manuscript, into the boat with him, and as he floated down the Ganges, said to himself, "If I live, this will live; if I die, it will not be heard of." What is fame to this feeling? The babbling of an idiot! He brought the work home with him, and twice had it stereotyped. The first sketch he allowed was obscure, but the improved copy he thought could not fail to strike. It did not succeed. The world, as Goldsmith said of himself, made a point of taking no notice of it. Ever since he has had nothing but disappointment and vexation—the greatest and most heart-breaking of all others—that of not being able to make yourself understood. Mr Fearn tells me there is a sensible writer in the 'Monthly Review' who

sees the thing in its proper light, and says so. But I have heard of no other instance. There are, notwithstanding, ideas in this work, neglected and ill-treated as it has been, that lead to more curious and subtle speculations on some of the most disputed and difficult points of the philosophy of the human mind (such as relation, abstraction, &c.) than have been thrown out in any work for the last sixty years; I mean since Hume; for since his time, there has been no metaphysician in this country worth the name. Yet his 'Treatise on Human Nature,' he tells us, "fell still-born from the press." So it is that knowledge works its way, and reputation lingers far behind it. But truth is better than opinion, I maintain it; and as to the two stereotyped and unsold editions of the 'Essay on Consciousness,' I say, *Honi soit qui mal y pense**!—My Uncle Toby had one idea in his head, that of his bowling-green; and another, that of the Widow Wadman. Oh, spare them both! I will only add one more anecdote in illustration of this theory of the mind's being occupied with

* Quarto poetry, as well as quarto metaphysics, does not always sell. Going one day into a shop in Paternoster Row to see for some lines in Mr Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' to interlard some prose with, I applied to the constituted authorities, and asked if I could look at a copy of the 'Excursion?' The answer was—"Into which county, Sir?"

one idea, which is most frequently of a man's self. A celebrated lyrical writer happened to drop into a small party where they had just got the novel of 'Rob Roy,' by the author of 'Waverley.' The motto in the title-page was taken from a poem of his. This was a hint sufficient, a word to the wise. He instantly went to the book-shelf in the next room, took down the volume of his own poems, read the whole of that in question aloud with manifest complacency, replaced it on the shelf, and walked away; taking no more notice of Rob Roy than if there had been no such person, nor of the new novel than if it had not been written by its renowned author. There was no reciprocity in this. But the writer in question does not admit of any merit, second to his own.*

Mr Owen is a man remarkable for one idea:

* These fantastic poets are like a foolish ringer at Plymouth whom Northcote tells the story of. He was proud of his ringing, and the boys who made a jest of his foible used to get him in the belfry, and ask him, "Well now, John, how many good ringers are there in Plymouth?"—"Two," he would say, without any hesitation. "Ay, indeed! and who are they?"—"Why, first, there's myself, that's one: and—and—"—"Well, and who's the other?"—"Why there's, there's—Ecod, I can't think of any other but myself." Talk we of one Master Lancelot! The story is of ringers: it will do for any vain, shallow, self-satisfied egotist of them all.

it is that of himself and the Lanark cotton-mills. He carries this idea backwards and forwards with him from Glasgow to London, without allowing anything for attrition, and expects to find it in the same state of purity and perfection in the latter place as at the former. He acquires a wonderful velocity and impenetrability in his undaunted transit. Resistance to him is vain, while the whirling motion of the mail-coach remains in his head.

“Nor Alps nor Apennines can keep him out,
Nor fortified redoubt.”

He even got possession, in the suddenness of his onset, of the steam-engine of the ‘Times’ newspaper, and struck off ten thousand woodcuts of the ‘Projected Villages,’ which afforded an ocular demonstration to all who saw them of the practicability of Mr Owen’s whole scheme. He comes into a room with one of these documents in his hand, with the air of a schoolmaster and a quack-doctor mixed, asks very kindly how you do, and on hearing you are still in an indifferent state of health owing to bad digestion, instantly turns round, and observes, “That all that will be remedied in his plan: that indeed he thinks too much attention has been paid to the mind, and not enough to the body; that in his system, which he has now perfected, and which will shortly be ge-

nerally adopted, he has provided effectually for both : that he has been long of opinion that the mind depends altogether on the physical organization, and where the latter is neglected or disordered, the former must languish and want its due vigour : that exercise is therefore a part of his system, with full liberty to develop every faculty of mind and body : that two objections had been made to his 'New View of Society,' viz. its want of relaxation from labour, and its want of variety ; but the first of these, the too great restraint, he trusted he had already answered, for where the powers of mind and body were freely exercised and brought out, surely liberty must be allowed to exist in the highest degree ; and as to the second, the monotony which would be produced by a regular and general plan of co-operation, he conceived he had proved in his 'New View,' and 'Addresses to the Higher Classes,' that the co-operation he had recommended was necessarily conducive to the most extensive improvement of the ideas and faculties, and where this was the case, there must be the greatest possible variety instead of a want of it." And having said this, this expert and sweeping orator takes up his hat and walks down stairs after reading his lecture of truisms like a play-bill or an apothecary's advertisement ; and should you stop him at the door to say, by way of putting in a word in

common, that Mr Southey seems somewhat favourable to his plan in his late 'Letter to Mr William Smith,' he looks at you with a smile of pity at the futility of all opposition and the idleness of all encouragement. People who thus swell out some vapid scheme of their own into undue importance, seem to me to labour under water in the head—to exhibit a huge hydrocephalus! They may be very worthy people for all that, but they are bad companions and very indifferent reasoners. Tom Moore says of some one somewhere, "That he puts his hand in his breeches' pocket like a crocodile." The phrase is hieroglyphical: but Mr Owen and others might be said to put their foot in the question of social improvement and reform much in the same unaccountable manner.

I hate to be surfeited with anything, however sweet. I do not want to be always tied to the same question, as if there were no other in the world. I like a mind more Catholic.

"I love to talk with mariners,
That come from a far countrée."

I am not for "a collusion," but "an exchange," of ideas. It is well to hear what other people have to say on a number of subjects. I do not wish to be always respiring the same confined atmosphere, but to vary the scene, and get a little relief and fresh air out of doors.

Do all we can to shake it off, there is always enough pedantry, egotism, and self-conceit left lurking behind : we need not seal ourselves up hermetically in these precious qualities ; so as to think of nothing but our own wonderful discoveries, and hear nothing but the sound of our own voice. Scholars, like princes, may learn something by being *incognito*. Yet we see those who cannot go into a bookseller's shop, or bear to be five minutes in a stage-coach, without letting you know who they are. They carry their reputation about with them as the snail does its shell, and sit under its canopy, like the lady in the lobster. I cannot understand this at all. What is the use of a man's always revolving round his own little circle ? He must, one should think, be tired of it himself, as well as tire other people. A well-known writer says with much boldness, both in the thought and expression, that "a Lord is imprisoned in the Bastille of a name, and cannot enlarge himself into man : " and I have known men of genius in the same predicament. Why must a man be for ever mouthing out his own poetry, comparing himself with Milton, passage by passage, and weighing every line in a balance of posthumous fame which he holds in his own hands ? It argues a want of imagination as well as of common sense. Has he no ideas but what he has put into verse ; or none in common

with his hearers? Why should he think it the only scholar-like thing, the only "virtue ex-tant," to see the merit of his writings, and that "men were brutes without them?" Why should he bear a grudge to all art, to all beauty, to all wisdom, that does not spring from his own brain? Or why should he fondly imagine that there is but one fine thing in the world, namely, poetry, and that he is the only poet in it? It will never do. Poetry is a very fine thing; but there are other things besides. Everything must have its turn. Does a wise man think to enlarge his comprehension by turning his eyes only on himself, or hope to conciliate the admiration of others by scouting, proscribing, and loathing all that they delight in? He must either have a disproportionate idea of himself, or be ignorant of the world in which he lives. It is quite enough to have one class of people born to think the universe made for them!—It seems also to argue a want of repose, of confidence, and firm faith in a man's real pretensions to be always dragging them forward into the fore-ground, as if the proverb held here—"Out of sight out of mind." Does he, for instance, conceive that no one would ever think of his poetry, unless he forced it upon them by repeating it himself? Does he believe all competition, all allowance of another's merit, fatal to him? Must he, like

Moody in the 'Country Girl,' lock up the faculties of his admirers in ignorance of all other fine things, painting, music, the antique, lest they should play truant to him? Methinks such a proceeding implies no good opinion of his own genius or their taste:—it is deficient in dignity and in decorum. Surely, if any one is convinced of the reality of an acquisition, he can bear not to have it spoken of every minute. If he knows he has an undoubted superiority in any respect, he will not be uneasy because every one he meets is not in the secret, nor staggered by the report of rival excellence. One of the first mathematicians and classical scholars of the day was mentioning it as a compliment to himself that a cousin of his, a girl from school, had said of him—"You know Martin Burney is a very plain good sort of a young man, but he is not anything at all out of the common." Leigh Hunt once said to me—"I wonder I never heard you speak upon this subject before, which you seem to have studied a good deal." I answered, "Why, we were not reduced to that, that I know of!"—

There are persons who, without being chargeable with the vice here spoken of, yet "stand accountant for as great a sin:" though not dull and monotonous, they are vivacious mannerists in their conversation, and excessive egotists. Though they run over a thousand subjects in

mere gaiety of heart, their delight still flows from one idea, namely, themselves. Open the book in what page you will, there is a frontispiece of themselves staring you in the face. They are a sort of Jacks o' the Green, with a sprig of laurel, a little tinsel, and a little smut, but still playing antics and keeping in incessant motion, to attract attention and extort your pittance of approbation. Whether they talk of the town or the country, poetry or politics, it comes to much the same thing. If they talk to you of the town, its diversions, "its palaces, its ladies, and its streets," they are the delight, the grace, and ornament of it. If they are describing the charms of the country, they give no account of any individual spot or object or source of pleasure but the circumstance of their being there. "With them conversing, we forget all place, all seasons, and their change." They perhaps pluck a leaf or a flower, patronise it, and hand it you to admire, but select no one feature of beauty or grandeur to dispute the palm of perfection with their own persons. Their rural descriptions are mere landscape back-grounds with their own portraits in an engaging attitude in front. They are not observing or enjoying the scene, but doing the honours as masters of the ceremonies to nature, and arbiters of elegance to all humanity. If they tell a love-tale of enamoured princesses, it is plain

they fancy themselves the hero of the piece. If they discuss poetry, their encomiums still turn on something genial and unsophisticated, meaning their own style: if they enter into politics, it is understood that a hint from them to the potentates of Europe is sufficient. In short, as a lover (talk of what you will) brings in his mistress at every turn, so these persons contrive to divert your attention to the same darling object—they are, in fact, in love with themselves; and, like lovers, should be left to keep their own company.

ESSAY V.

ON THE IGNORANCE OF THE LEARNED.

“ For the more languages a man can speak,
His talent has but sprung the greater leak :
And, for the industry he has spent upon’t,
Must full as much some other way discount.
The Hebrew, Chaldee, and the Syriac,
Do, like their letters, set men’s reason back,
And turn their wits that strive to understand it
(Like those that write the characters) left-handed.
Yet he that is but able to express
No sense at all in several languages,
Will pass for learned than he that’s known
To speak the strongest reason in his own.”

BUTLER.

THE description of persons who have the fewest ideas of all others, are mere authors and readers. It is better to be able neither to read nor write, than to be able to do nothing else. A loungeur who is ordinarily seen with a book in his hand, is (we may be almost sure) equally without the power or inclination to attend either to what passes around him, or in his own mind. Such

a one may be said to carry his understanding about with him in his pocket, or to leave it at home on his library shelves. He is afraid of venturing on any train of reasoning, or of striking out any observation, that is not mechanically suggested to him by passing his eyes over certain legible characters; shrinks from the fatigue of thought, which, for want of practice, becomes insupportable to him; and sits down contented with an endless wearisome succession of words and half-formed images, which fill the void of the mind, and continually efface one another. Learning is, in too many cases, but a foil to common sense; a substitute for true knowledge. Books are less often made use of as "spectacles" to look at nature with, than as blinds to keep out its strong light and shifting scenery from weak eyes and indolent dispositions. The book-worm wraps himself up in his web of verbal generalities, and sees only the glimmering shadows of things reflected from the minds of others. Nature puts him out. The impressions of real objects, stripped of the disguises of words and voluminous round-about descriptions, are blows that stagger him; their variety distracts, their rapidity exhausts him; and he turns from the bustle, the noise, and glare, and whirling motion of the world about him (which he has not an eye to follow in its fantastic changes, nor an understanding to re-

duce to fixed principles), to the quiet monotony of the dead languages, and the less startling and more intelligible combinations of the letters of the alphabet. It is well, it is perfectly well. "Leave me to my repose," is the motto of the sleeping and the dead. You might as well ask the paralytic to leap from his chair and throw away his crutch, or, without a miracle, to "take up his bed and walk," as expect the learned reader to throw down his book and think for himself. He clings to it for his intellectual support; and his dread of being left to himself is like the horror of a vacuum. He can only breathe a learned atmosphere, as other men breathe common air. He is a borrower of sense. He has no ideas of his own, and must live on those of other people. The habit of supplying our ideas from foreign sources "enfeebles all internal strength of thought," as a course of dram-drinking destroys the tone of the stomach. The faculties of the mind, when not exerted, or when cramped by custom and authority, become listless, torpid, and unfit for the purposes of thought or action. Can we wonder at the languor and lassitude which is thus produced by a life of learned sloth and ignorance; by poring over lines and syllables that excite little more idea or interest than if they were the characters of an unknown tongue, till the eye closes on vacancy, and the book

drops from the feeble hand ! I would rather be a wood-cutter, or the meanest hind, that all day "sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and at night sleeps in Elysium," than wear out my life so, 'twixt dreaming and awake. The learned author differs from the learned student in this, that the one transcribes what the other reads. The learned are mere literary drudges. If you set them upon original composition, their heads turn ; they don't know where they are. The indefatigable readers of books are like the everlasting copiers of pictures, who, when they attempt to do anything of their own, find they want an eye quick enough, a hand steady enough, and colours bright enough, to trace the living forms of nature.

Any one who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. It is an old remark, that boys who shine at school do not make the greatest figure when they grow up and come out into the world. The things, in fact, which a boy is set to learn at school, and on which his success depends, are things which do not require the exercise either of the highest or the most useful faculties of the mind. Memory (and that of the lowest kind) is the chief faculty called into play, in conning over and repeating lessons by rote in grammar, in languages, in

geography, arithmetic, &c., so that he who has the most of this technical memory, with the least turn for other things, which have a stronger and more natural claim upon his childish attention, will make the most forward school-boy. The jargon containing the definitions of the parts of speech, the rules for casting up an account, or the inflections of a Greek verb, can have no attraction to the tyro of ten years old, except as they are imposed as a task upon him by others, or from his feeling the want of sufficient relish or amusement in other things. A lad with a sickly constitution, and no very active mind, who can just retain what is pointed out to him, and has neither sagacity to distinguish nor spirit to enjoy for himself, will generally be at the head of his form. An idler at school, on the other hand, is one who has high health and spirits, who has the free use of his limbs, with all his wits about him, who feels the circulation of his blood and the motion of his heart, who is ready to laugh and cry in a breath, and who had rather chase a ball or a butterfly, feel the open air in his face, look at the fields or the sky, follow a winding path, or enter with eagerness into all the little conflicts and interests of his acquaintances and friends, than doze over a musty spelling-book, repeat barbarous distichs after his master, sit so many hours pinioned to a writing-desk, and receive his reward for the loss

of time and pleasure in paltry prize-medals at Christmas and Midsummer. There is indeed a degree of stupidity which prevents children from learning the usual lessons, or ever arriving at these puny academic honours. But what passes for stupidity is much oftener a want of interest, of a sufficient motive to fix the attention, and force a reluctant application to the dry and unmeaning pursuits of school-learning. The best capacities are as much above this drudgery, as the dullest are beneath it. Our men of the greatest genius have not been most distinguished for their acquirements at school or at the university.

“Th’ enthusiast Fancy was a truant ever.”

Gray and Collins were among the instances of this wayward disposition. Such persons do not think so highly of the advantages, nor can they submit their imaginations so servilely to the trammels, of strict scholastic discipline. There is a certain kind and degree of intellect in which words take root, but into which things have not power to penetrate. A mediocrity of talent, with a certain slenderness of moral constitution, is the soil that produces the most brilliant specimens of successful prize-essayists and Greek epigrammatists. It should not be forgotten, that the least respectable character among modern politicians was the cleverest boy at Eton.

Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known to others, and which we can only derive at second-hand from books or other artificial sources. The knowledge of that which is before us, or about us, which appeals to our experience, passions, and pursuits, to the bosoms and business of men, is not learning. Learning is the knowledge of that which none but the learned know. He is the most learned man who knows the most of what is farthest removed from common life and actual observation, that is of the least practical utility, and least liable to be brought to the test of experience, and that, having been handed down through the greatest number of intermediate stages, is the most full of uncertainty, difficulties, and contradictions. It is seeing with the eyes of others, hearing with their ears, and pinning our faith on their understandings. The learned man prides himself in the knowledge of names, and dates, not of men or things. He thinks and cares nothing about his next-door neighbours, but he is deeply read in the tribes and casts of the Hindoos and Calmuc Tartars. He can hardly find his way into the next street, though he is acquainted with the exact dimensions of Constantinople and Peking. He does not know whether his oldest acquaintance is a knave or a fool, but he can pronounce a pompous lecture on all the principal characters in history.

He cannot tell whether an object is black or white, round or square, and yet he is a professed master of the laws of optics, and the rules of perspective. He knows as much of what he talks about, as a blind man does of colours. He cannot give a satisfactory answer to the plainest question, nor is he ever in the right in any one of his opinions, upon any one matter of fact that really comes before him, and yet he gives himself out for an infallible judge on all those points, of which it is impossible that he or any other person living should know anything but by conjecture. He is expert in all the dead and in most of the living languages; but he can neither speak his own fluently, nor write it correctly. A person of this class, the second Greek scholar of his day, undertook to point out several solecisms in Milton's Latin style; and in his own performance there is hardly a sentence of common English. Such was Dr ———. Such is Dr ———. Such was not Porson. He was an exception that confirmed the general rule,—a man who, by uniting talents and knowledge with learning, made the distinction between them more striking and palpable.

A mere scholar, who knows nothing but books, must be ignorant even of them. "Books do not teach the use of books." How should he know anything of a work, who knows nothing of the subject of it? The learned pedant is

conversant with books only as they are made of other books, and those again of others, without end. He parrots those who have parroted others. He can translate the same word into ten different languages, but he knows nothing of the thing which it means in any one of them. He stuffs his head with authorities built on authorities, with quotations quoted from quotations, while he locks up his senses, his understanding, and his heart. He is unacquainted with the maxims and manners of the world, he is to seek in the characters of individuals. He sees no beauty in the face of nature or of art. To him "the mighty world of eye and ear" is hid; and "knowledge," except at one entrance, "quite shut out." His pride takes part with his ignorance; and his self-importance rises with the number of things of which he does not know the value, and which he therefore despises as unworthy of his notice. He knows nothing of pictures;—"of the colouring of Titian, the grace of Raphael, the purity of Domenichino, the *corregiescity* of Corregio, the learning of Poussin, the airs of Guido, the taste of the Caracci, or the grand contour of Michael Angelo,"—of all those glories of the Italian and miracles of the Flemish school, which have filled the eyes of mankind with delight, and to the study and imitation of which thousands have in vain devoted their lives. These are to him as

if they had never been, a mere dead letter, a bye-word ; and no wonder : for he neither sees nor understands their prototypes in nature. A print of Rubens's Watering-place, or Claude's Enchanted Castle, may be hanging on the walls of his rooms for months without his once perceiving them ; and if you point them out to him, he will turn away from them. The language of nature, or of art (which is another nature), is one that he does not understand. He repeats indeed the names of Apelles and Phidias, because they are to be found in classic authors, and boasts of their works as prodigies, because they no longer exist ; or when he sees the finest remains of Grecian art actually before him in the Elgin marbles, takes no other interest in them than as they lead to a learned dispute, and (which is the same thing) a quarrel about the meaning of a Greek particle. He is equally ignorant of music ; he " knows no touch of it," from the strains of the all-accomplished Mozart to the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain. His ears are nailed to his books ; and deadened with the sound of the Greek and Latin tongues, and the din and smithery of school-learning. Does he know anything more of poetry ? He knows the number of feet in a verse, and of acts in a play ; but of the soul or spirit he knows nothing. He can turn a Greek ode into English, or a Latin epigram into Greek verse, but whether

either is worth the trouble, he leaves to the critics. Does he understand “the act and practice part of life” better than “the theorique?” No. He knows no liberal or mechanic art; no trade or occupation; no game of skill or chance. Learning “has no skill in surgery,” in agriculture, in building, in working in wood or in iron; it cannot make any instrument of labour, or use it when made; it cannot handle the plough or the spade, or the chisel or the hammer; it knows nothing of hunting or hawking, fishing or shooting, of horses or dogs, of fencing or dancing, or cudgel-playing, or bowls, or cards, or tennis, or anything else. The learned professor of all arts and sciences cannot reduce any one of them to practice, though he may contribute an account of them to an *Encyclopædia*. He has not the use of his hands or of his feet; he can neither run, nor walk, nor swim; and he considers all those who actually understand and can exercise any of these arts of body or mind, as vulgar and mechanical men;—though to know almost any one of them in perfection requires long time and practice, with powers originally fitted, and a turn of mind particularly devoted to them. It does not require more than this to enable the learned candidate to arrive, by painful study, at a doctor’s degree and a fellowship, and to eat, drink, and sleep, the rest of his life!

The thing is plain. All that men really

understand, is confined to a very small compass : to their daily affairs and experience ; to what they have an opportunity to know, and motives to study or practise. The rest is affectation and imposture. The common people have the use of their limbs ; for they live by their labour or skill. They understand their own business, and the characters of those they have to deal with ; for it is necessary that they should. They have eloquence to express their passions, and wit at will to express their contempt and provoke laughter. Their natural use of speech is not hung up in monumental mockery, in an obsolete language ; nor is their sense of what is ludicrous, or readiness at finding out allusions to express it, buried in collections of *Anas*. You will hear more good things on the outside of a stage-coach from London to Oxford, than if you were to pass a twelvemonth with the undergraduates, or heads of colleges, of that famous university : and more home truths are to be learnt from listening to a noisy debate in an ale-house, than from attending to a formal one in the House of Commons. An elderly country gentlewoman will often know more of character and be able to illustrate it by more amusing anecdotes taken from the history of what has been said, done, and gossiped in a country town for the last fifty years, than the best blue-stocking of the age will be able to glean from that sort of

learning which consists in an acquaintance with all the novels and satirical poems published in the same period. People in towns, indeed, are wofully deficient in a knowledge of character, which they see only in the bust, not as a whole length. People in the country not only know all that has happened to a man, but trace his virtues or vices, as they do his features, in their descent through several generations, and solve some contradiction in his behaviour by a cross in the breed, half a century ago. The learned know nothing of the matter, either in town or country. Above all, the mass of society have common sense, which the learned in all ages want. The vulgar are in the right when they judge for themselves; they are wrong when they trust to their blind guides. The celebrated nonconformist divine, Baxter, was almost stoned to death by the good women of Kidderminster, for asserting from the pulpit that "hell was paved with infants' skulls;" but, by the force of argument, and of learned quotations from the Fathers, the reverend preacher at length prevailed over the scruples of his congregation, and over reason and humanity.

Such is the use which has been made of human learning. The labourers in this vineyard seem as if it was their object to confound all common sense, and the distinctions of good and evil, by means of traditional maxims, and

pre-conceived notions, taken upon trust, and increasing in absurdity, with increase of age. They pile hypothesis on hypothesis, mountain high, till it is impossible to come at the plain truth on any question. They see things, not as they are, but as they find them in books; and “wink and shut their apprehensions up,” in order that they may discover nothing to interfere with their prejudices, or convince them of their absurdity. It might be supposed that the height of human wisdom consisted in maintaining contradictions, and rendering nonsense sacred. There is no dogma, however fierce or foolish, to which these persons have not set their seals, and tried to impose on the understandings of their followers, as the will of Heaven, clothed with all the terrors and sanctions of religion. How little has the human understanding been directed to find out the true and useful! How much ingenuity has been thrown away in the defence of creeds and systems! How much time and talents have been wasted in theological controversy, in law, in politics, in verbal criticism, in judicial astrology, and in finding out the art of making gold! What actual benefit do we reap from the writings of a Laud or a Whitgift, or of Bishop Bull or Bishop Waterland, or Prideaux’ *Connections*, or Beausobre, or Calmet, or St Augustine, or Puffendorf, or Vattel, or from the more literal but equally

learned and unprofitable labours of Scaliger, Cardan, and Scioppius?" How many grains of sense are there in their thousand folio or quarto volumes? What would the world lose if they were committed to the flames to-morrow? Or are they not already "gone to the vault of all the Capulets?" Yet all these were oracles in their time, and would have scoffed at you or me, at common sense and human nature, for differing with them. It is our turn to laugh now.

To conclude this subject. The most sensible people to be met with in society are men of business and of the world, who argue from what they see and know, instead of spinning cobweb distinctions of what things ought to be. Women have often more of what is called good sense than men. They have fewer pretensions; are less implicated in theories; and judge of objects more from their immediate and involuntary impression on the mind, and, therefore, more truly and naturally. They cannot reason wrong; for they do not reason at all. They do not think or speak by rule; and they have in general more eloquence and wit, as well as sense, on that account. By their wit, sense, and eloquence together, they generally contrive to govern their husbands. Their style, when they write to their friends (not for the booksellers) is better than that of most authors.—Uneducated

people have most exuberance of invention, and the greatest freedom from prejudice. Shakspeare's was evidently an uneducated mind, both in the freshness of his imagination, and in the variety of his views; as Milton's was scholastic, in the texture both of his thoughts and feelings. Shakspeare had not been accustomed to write themes at school in favour of virtue or against vice. To this we owe the unaffected, but healthy tone of his dramatic morality. If we wish to know the force of human genius, we should read Shakspeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning, we may study his commentators.

ESSAY VI.

THE INDIAN JUGGLERS.

COMING forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it, then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity, which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, over-anxious application up to manhood, can accomplish or make even a slight approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account!—To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration

breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's-breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succession in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness to the hand again, to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres, to make them chase one another like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors, to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck like ribbons or like serpents, to do what appears an impossibility, and to do it with all the ease, the grace, the carelessness imaginable, to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries, to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire, or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired anything in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally resolved

itself into ease and grace, and as if to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process. It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill; though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result, and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I saw the Indian Juggler do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves.—The hearing of a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their common-places, which any one could repeat after them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself: but the seeing the Indian Jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of my-

self. I ask what is there that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to show for all my labour and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions, and polish my periods: but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond of arguing: yet, with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as

much as I can do to beat my man ; though he may be a very indifferent hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be shown there : and you hardly know the professor from the impudent pretender or the mere clown.*

I have always had this feeling of the inefficacy and slow progress of intellectual compared to mechanical excellence, and it has always made me somewhat dissatisfied. It is a great many years since I saw Richer, the famous rope-dancer, perform at Sadler's Wells. He was

* The celebrated Peter Pindar (Dr Wolcot) first discovered and brought out the talents of the late Mr Opie, the painter. He was a poor Cornish boy, and was out at work in the fields, when the poet went in search of him. "Well, my lad, can you go and bring me your very best picture?" The other flew like lightning, and soon came back with what he considered as his masterpiece. The stranger looked at it, and the young artist, after waiting for some time without his giving any opinion, at length exclaimed eagerly, "Well, what do you think of it?"—"Think of it?" said Wolcot, "why I think you ought to be ashamed of it—that you who might do so well, do no better!" The same answer would have applied to this artist's latest performances, that had been suggested by one of his earliest efforts.

matchless in his art, and added to his extraordinary skill exquisite ease, and unaffected natural grace. I was at that time employed in copying a half-length picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds's; and it put me out of conceit with it. How ill this part was made out in the drawing! How heavy, how slovenly this other was painted! I could not help saying to myself, "If the rope-dancer had performed his task in this manner, leaving so many gaps and botches in his work, he would have broken his neck long ago; I should never have seen that vigorous elasticity of nerve and precision of movement!"—Is it then so easy an undertaking (comparatively) to dance on a tight-rope? Let any one, who thinks so, get up and try. There is the thing. It is that which at first we cannot do at all, which in the end is done to such perfection. To account for this in some degree, I might observe that mechanical dexterity is confined to doing some one particular thing, which you can repeat as often as you please, in which you know whether you succeed or fail, and where the point of perfection consists in succeeding in a given undertaking.—In mechanical efforts, you improve by perpetual practice, and you do so infallibly, because the object to be attained is not a matter of taste or fancy or opinion, but of actual experiment, in which you must either do the thing or not do it. If a man

is put to aim at a mark with a bow and arrow, he must hit it or miss it, that's certain. He cannot deceive himself, and go on shooting wide or falling short, and still fancy that he is making progress. The distinction between right and wrong, between true and false, is here palpable; and he must either correct his aim or persevere in his error with his eyes open, for which there is neither excuse nor temptation. If a man is learning to dance on a rope, if he does not mind what he is about, he will break his neck. After that, it will be in vain for him to argue that he did not make a false step. His situation is not like that of Goldsmith's pedagogue.—

“In argument they own'd his wondrous skill,
And e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still.”

Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars. So are disgrace, defeat, exposure to immediate scorn and laughter. There is no opportunity in such cases for self-delusion, no idling time away, no being off your guard (or you must take the consequences)—neither is there any room for humour or caprice or prejudice. If the Indian Juggler were to play tricks in throwing up the three case-knives, which keep their positions like the leaves of a crocus in the air, he would cut his fingers. I can make a very bad antithesis without cutting my fingers.

The tact of style is more ambiguous than that of double-edged instruments. If the Juggler were told that by flinging himself under the wheels of the Jaggernaut, when the idol issues forth on a gaudy day, he would immediately be transported into Paradise, he might believe it, and nobody could disprove it. So the Brahmins may say what they please on that subject, may build up dogmas and mysteries without end, and not be detected: but their ingenious countryman cannot persuade the frequenters of the Olympic Theatre that he performs a number of astonishing feats without actually giving proofs of what he says.—There is then in this sort of manual dexterity, first a gradual aptitude acquired to a given exertion of muscular power, from constant repetition, and in the next place, an exact knowledge how much is still wanting and necessary to be supplied. The obvious test is to increase the effort or nicety of the operation, and still to find it come true. The muscles ply instinctively to the dictates of habit. Certain movements and impressions of the hand and eye, having been repeated together an infinite number of times, are unconsciously but unavoidably cemented into closer and closer union; the limbs require little more than to be put in motion for them to follow a regular track with ease and certainty; so that the mere intention of the will acts mathematically, like touching

the spring of a machine, and you come with Locksley in 'Ivanhoe,' in shooting at a mark, "to allow for the wind."

Farther, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself, the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to : but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this to perfection ; but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted it. That is, the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another.* But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what nature has done, and this it appears is more difficult, viz. to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or "human face divine," entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant ; for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be. Upon the whole, therefore, I have more respect for Reynolds, than I have for Richer ;

* If two persons play against each other at any game, one of them necessarily fails.

for, happen how it will, there have been more people in the world who could dance on a rope like the one than who could paint like Sir Joshua. The latter was but a bungler in his profession to the other, it is true; but then he had a harder task-master to obey, whose will was more wayward and obscure, and whose instructions it was more difficult to practise. You can put a child apprentice to a tumbler or rope-dancer with a comfortable prospect of success, if they are but sound of wind and limb: but you cannot do the same thing in painting. The odds are a million to one. You may make indeed as many H——s and H——s, as you put into that sort of machine, but not one Reynolds amongst them all, with his grace, his grandeur, his blandness of gusto “in tones and gestures hit,” unless you could make the man over again. To snatch this grace beyond the reach of art is then the height of art—where fine art begins, and where mechanical skill ends. The soft suffusion of the soul, the speechless breathing eloquence, the looks “commencing with the skies,” the ever-shifting forms of an eternal principle, that which is seen but for a moment, but dwells in the heart always, and is only seized as it passes by strong and secret sympathy, must be taught by nature and genius, not by rules or study. It is suggested by feeling, not by laborious microscopic inspection: in

seeking for it without, we lose the harmonious clue to it within: and in aiming to grasp the substance, we let the very spirit of art evaporate. In a word, the objects of fine art are not the objects of sight but as these last are the objects of taste and imagination, that is, as they appeal to the sense of beauty, of pleasure, and of power in the human breast, and are explained by that finer sense, and revealed in their inner structure to the eye in return. Nature is also a language. Objects, like words, have a meaning; and the true artist is the interpreter of this language, which he can only do by knowing its application to a thousand other objects in a thousand other situations. Thus the eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between the warm or cold tone of a deep blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch—

“ And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough.”

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through the medium of sentiment and passion, as each

object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that,

"Thrill's in each nerve, and lives along the line."

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments, as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point, everything is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road, or in a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imagi-

nary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, "half flying, half on foot." The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain knack or aptitude at doing certain things, which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, &c. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to sleight of hand, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a watch. Accomplishments are certain external graces, which are to be learned from others, and which are easily displayed to the admiration of the beholder, viz. dancing, riding, fencing, music, and so on. These ornamental acquirements are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who, if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have been the most accomplished gentleman of the age. He would have been the delight and envy of the circle in which he moved—would have graced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand

at picquet or the lead at the piano, and have set and sung his own verses—*nugæ canoræ*—with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer, and the application of the man of business.—Talent is the capacity of doing anything that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do anything well, whether it is worth doing or not: a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public

mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this two-fold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do with space and time. No man is truly great, who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides, what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A lord mayor is hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only show, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the state, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man, we gaze at. Any one else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country girl who having seen a king expressed her disappointment by saying, "Why, he is only a man!" Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man.—To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes no-

thing for the character of greatness. To throw a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues infinite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to feel it. It must be communicated to their understandings in the shape of an increase of knowledge, or it must subdue and overawe them by subjecting their wills. Admiration to be solid and lasting, must be founded on proofs from which we have no means of escaping; it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before, imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes. Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and sciences, are great men; for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakspeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men; for they showed great power by acts and thoughts, which have

not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man ; for Moliere was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of 'Don Quixote' was a great man. So have there been many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor then a great man, because "he dies and leaves the world no copy?" I must make an exception for Mrs Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shows the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathise with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or mystery. John Hunter was a great man—that any one might see without the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner showed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcase of a whale with the same greatness of gusto that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great

naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a sea-faring life. Sir Humphry Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, and I never met with any one that was. But it is in the nature of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a coxcomb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that "Such a one was a considerable man in his day." Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a "great scholar's memory outlives him half a century," at the utmost. A rich man is not a great man, except to his dependants and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title. I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St Peter's at Rome) that when he first entered it, he was rather awe-struck, but that as he walked up it, his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it, and at last to fill the whole building—the other said that as he saw more of it, he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he

took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathises with greatness, and littleness shrinks into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a Mendicant Friar—or there might have been court reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Moliere, Rabelais, and Montaigne.

To return from this digression, and conclude the Essay. A singular instance of manual dexterity was shown in the person of the late John Cavanagh, whom I have several times seen. His death was celebrated at the time in an article in the 'Examiner' newspaper (Feb. 7, 1819), written apparently between jest and earnest: but as it is pat to our purpose, and falls in with my own way of considering such subjects, I shall here take leave to quote it.

"Died at his house in Burbage street, St Giles's, John Cavanagh, the famous hand fives-player. When a person dies, who does any one thing better than any one else in the world, which so many others are trying to do well, it leaves a gap in society. It is not likely that any one will now see the game of fives played in its perfection for many years to come—for

Cavanagh is dead, and has not left his peer behind him. It may be said, that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall—there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches and answering them, making verses and blotting them; making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said, that ‘Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts.’ But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor the future ‘in the instant.’ Debts, taxes, ‘domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.’ He has no other wish, no other thought, from the moment the game begins, but that of striking the ball, of placing it, of *making* it! This Cavanagh was sure to do. Whenever he touched the ball, there was an end of the chase. His eye was certain, his hand fatal, his presence of mind complete. He could do what he pleased, and he always knew exactly what to do. He saw the whole game, and played it; took instant advantage of his adversary’s weakness, and recovered balls, as if by a miracle and from

sudden thought, that every one gave for lost. He had equal power and skill, quickness, and judgment. He could either outwit his antagonist by finesse, or beat him by main strength. Sometimes, when he seemed preparing to send the ball with the full swing of his arm, he would by a slight turn of his wrist drop it within an inch of the line. In general, the ball came from his hand, as if from a racket, in a straight horizontal line; so that it was in vain to attempt to overtake or stop it. As it was said of a great orator that he never was at a loss for a word, and for the properest word, so Cavanagh always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent. He did his work with the greatest ease; never took more pains than was necessary; and while others were fagging themselves to death, was as cool and collected as if he had just entered the court. His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude, or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than any one else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual—lumbering like Mr Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short

of the mark like Mr Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr Canning's wit, nor foul like the 'Quarterly,' not *let* balls like the 'Edinburgh Review.' Cobbett and Junius together would have made a Cavanagh. He was the best *up-hill* player in the world; even when his adversary was fourteen, he would play on the same or better, and as he never flung away the game through carelessness and conceit, he never gave it up through laziness or want of heart. The only peculiarity of his play was, that he never *volleyed*, but let the balls hop; but if they rose an inch from the ground, he never missed having them. There was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him. It is supposed that he could give any other player half the game, or beat him with his left hand. His service was tremendous. He once played Woodward and Meredith together (two of the best players in England) in the Fives-court, St Martin's street, and made seven-and-twenty aces following by services alone—a thing unheard of. He another time played Peru, who was considered a first-rate fives-player, a match of the best out of five games, and in the three first games, which of course decided the match, Peru got only one ace. Cavanagh was an Irishman by birth, and a house-painter by profession. He had once laid aside his working-dress, and walked up, in his smartest

clothes, to the Rosemary Branch to have an afternoon's pleasure. A person accosted him, and asked him if he would have a game. So they agreed to play for half a crown a game, and a bottle of cider. The first game began—it was seven, eight, ten, thirteen, fourteen, all. Cavanagh won it. The next was the same. They played on, and each game was hardly contested. 'There,' said the unconscious fives-player, 'there was a stroke that Cavanagh could not take: I never played better in my life, and yet I can't win a game. I don't know how it is.' However, they played on, Cavanagh winning every game, and the by-standers drinking the cider, and laughing all the time. In the twelfth game, when Cavanagh was only four, and the stranger thirteen, a person came in, and said, 'What! are you here, Cavanagh?' The words were no sooner pronounced than the astonished player let the ball drop from his hand, and saying, 'What! have I been breaking my heart all this time to beat Cavanagh?' refused to make another effort. 'And yet, I give you my word,' said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, 'I played all the while with my clenched fist.'—He used frequently to play matches at Copenhagen house for wagers and dinners. The wall against which they play is the same that supports the kitchen chimney, and when the wall resounded louder than usual

the cooks exclaimed, 'Those are the Irishman's balls,' and the joints trembled on the spit!—Goldsmith consoled himself that there were places where he too was admired: and Cavanagh was the admiration of all the fives-courts, where he ever played. Mr Powell, when he played matches in the Court in St Martin's street, used to fill his gallery at half-a-crown a head, with amateurs and admirers of talent in whatever department it is shown. He could not have shown himself in any ground in England, but he would have been immediately surrounded with inquisitive gazers, trying to find out in what part of his frame his unrivalled skill lay, as politicians wonder to see the balance of Europe suspended in Lord Castlereagh's face, and admire the trophies of the British Navy lurking under Mr Croker's hanging brow. Now Cavanagh was as good-looking a man as the Noble Lord, and much better looking than the Right Hon. Secretary. He had a clear, open countenance, and did not look sideways or down. He was a young fellow of sense, humour, and courage. He once had a quarrel with a waterman at Hungerford stairs, and, they say, served him out in great style. In a word, there are hundreds at this day, who cannot mention his name without admiration, as the best fives-player that perhaps ever lived (the greatest excellence of which they have any notion)—and the noisy shout of

the ring happily stood him in stead of the unheard voice of posterity !—The only person who seems to have excelled as much in another way as Cavanagh did in his, was the late John Davies, the racket-player. It was remarked of him that he did not seem to follow the ball, but the ball seemed to follow him. Give him a foot of wall, and he was sure to make the ball. The four best racket-players of that day were Jack Spines, Jem Harding, Armitage, and Church. Davies could give any one of these two hands a time, that is, half the game, and each of these, at their best, could give the best player now in London the same odds. Such are the gradations in all exertions of human skill and art. He once played four capital players together, and beat them. He was also a first-rate tennis-player, and an excellent fives-player. In the Fleet or King's Bench, he would have stood against Powell, who was reckoned the best open-ground player of his time. This last-mentioned player is at present the keeper of the Fives-court, and we might recommend to him for a motto over his door—‘Who enters here, forgets himself, his country, and his friends.’ And the best of it is, that by the calculation of the odds, none of the three are worth remembering !—Cavanagh died from the bursting of a blood-vessel, which prevented him from playing for the last two or three years. This, he

was often heard to say, he thought hard upon him. He was fast recovering, however, when he was suddenly carried off, to the regret of all who knew him. As Mr Peel made it a qualification of the present Speaker, Mr Manners Sutton, that he was an excellent moral character, so Jack Cavanagh was a zealous Catholic, and could not be persuaded to eat meat on a Friday, the day on which he died. We have paid this willing tribute to his memory.

“ Let no rude hand deface it,
And his forlorn ‘*Hic Jacet.*’ ”

ESSAY VII.

ON LIVING TO ONE'S-SELF.*

“Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po.”

I NEVER was in a better place or humour than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come.

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the

Written at Winterslow Hut, January 18th-19th, 1821.

misty moon-light air see the woods that wave
over the top of Winterslow,

“While Heav’n’s chancel-vault is blind with sleet,”

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader.

Lady G., in a letter to Miss Harriet Byron, assures her that “her brother Sir Charles lived to himself:” and Lady L. soon after (for Richardson was never tired of a good thing) repeats the same observation; to which Miss Byron frequently returns in her answers to both sisters — “For you know Sir Charles lives to himself,” till at length it passes into a proverb among the fair correspondents. This is not, however, an example of what I understand by living to one’s-self, for Sir Charles Grandison was indeed always thinking of himself; but by this phrase I mean never thinking at all about one’s-self, any more than if there was no such person in existence. The character I speak of is as little of an egotist as possible: Richardson’s great favourite was as much of one as possible. Some satirical critic has represented him in Elysium “bowing over the faded hand of Lady Grandison” (Miss Byron

that was)—he ought to have been represented bowing over his own hand, for he never admired any one but himself, and was the god of his own idolatry. Neither do I call it living to one's-self to retire into a desert (like the saints and martyrs of old) to be devoured by wild beasts, nor to descend into a cave to be considered as a hermit, nor to get to the top of a pillar or rock to do fanatic penance and be seen of all men. What I mean by living to one's-self is living in the world, as in it, not of it: it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wished no one to know it: it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loop-holes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing

to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moaning of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style, without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines—

“The man whose eye is ever on himself,
Doth look on one, the least of nature's works ;
One who might move the wise man to that scorn;
Which wisdom holds unlawful ever”—

he looks out of himself at the wide extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond

his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Woe be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him. While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briers and thorns, vexation and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side—

“To see the children sporting on the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year; and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experimentalist Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever fresh delight, “never ending, still beginning,” and had no occasion to

write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern : if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed as favourably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity, and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the state, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others : I had neither friend nor mistress, wife nor child. I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities, generally barter repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From that instant he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks askant at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure ; from a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double : he takes no farther interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them : instead of opening his senses, his under-

standing, and his heart to the resplendent fabric of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions, and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become a slave of opinion. He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion. He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze, but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear. He himself is mixed up with, and spoils everything. I wonder Buonaparte was not tired of the N.N.'s stuck all over the Louvre and throughout France. Goldsmith (as we all know), when in Holland, went out into a balcony with some handsome Englishwomen, and on their being applauded by the spectators, turned round, and said peevishly:—"There are places where I also am admired." He could not give the craving appetite of an author's vanity one day's respite. I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite

are the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity; numberless the failures; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success:

—— “Whose top to climb

Is certain falling, or so slippery, that

The fear's as bad as falling.”

“Would to God,” exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at any time thwarted by the Parliament, “that I had remained by my wood-side to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this!” When Buonaparte got into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove, and singing the air, “*Malbrook s'en va t'en guerre*,” he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself. We see and hear chiefly of the favourites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career:—not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with “the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;” how many half-starved strolling players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country-

places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement ; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics ; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions farther known than the Poet's-Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame ! Suppose an actor, for instance, “ after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to,” *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne ; to be second or only equal to another, is to be nothing : he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp : perhaps as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him, and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again : he is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumour of the appearance of a new actor : “ a mouse that takes up its lodging in a cat's ear ”* has a mansion of peace to him : he dreads every hint of an objec-

* Webster's ‘Duchess of Malfy.’

tion, and least of all can forgive praise mingled with censure : to doubt is to insult, to discriminate is to degrade : he dare hardly look into a criticism unless some one has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it : if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep ; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can “eat his meal in peace,” he then becomes surfeited with applause, and dissatisfied with his profession : he wants to be something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half retracts it before he utters it, lest, if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that *Mr — was only clever as an actor !* If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau, was no other than a fool. A country gentleman near Taunton spent his whole life in making some hundreds of wretched copies of second-rate pictures, which were bought up at his death by a neighbouring baronet, to whom

“Some demon whisper'd, Lethbridge, have a taste !”

A little Wilson in an obscure corner escaped the man of *virtù*, and was carried off by a Bristol picture dealer for three guineas, while the

muddled copies of the owner of the mansion (with the frames) fetched ten, twenty, thirty, forty pounds a piece. A friend of mine found a very fine Canaletti in a state of strange disfigurement, with the upper part of the sky smeared over and fantastically variegated with English clouds; and on inquiring of the person to whom it belonged whether something had not been done to it, received for answer, "that a gentleman, a great artist in the neighbourhood, had retouched some parts of it." What infatuation! Yet this candidate for the honours of the pencil might probably have made a jovial fox-hunter or respectable justice of the peace, if he could have only stuck to what nature and fortune intended him for. Miss —— can by no means be persuaded to quit the boards of the theatre at ——, a little country town in the West of England. Her salary has been abridged, her person ridiculed, her acting laughed at; nothing will serve—she is determined to be an actress, and scorns to return to her former business as a milliner. Shall I go on? An actor in the same company was visited by the apothecary of the place in an ague-fit, who, on asking his landlady as to his way of life, was told that the poor gentleman was very quiet and gave little trouble, that he generally had a plate of mashed potatoes for his dinner, and lay in bed most of his time, repeating his part.

A young couple, every way amiable and deserving, were to have been married, and a benefit-play was bespoke by the officers of the regiment quartered there, to defray the expense of a license and of the wedding, but the profits of the night did not amount to the necessary sum, and they have, I fear, "virgined it e'er since!" Oh for the pencil of Hogarth or Wilkie to give a view of the comic strength of the company at —, drawn up in battle-array in the 'Clandestine Marriage,' with a *coup-d'œil* of the pit, boxes, and gallery, to cure for ever the love of the *ideal*, and the desire to shine and make holiday in the eyes of others, instead of retiring within ourselves and keeping our wishes and our thoughts at home!

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintance. Old companions are like meats served up too often that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise: but let no man fall in love, for from that moment he is "the baby of a girl." I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play of 'Mirandola'—

—“With what a waving air she goes
 Along the corridor. How like a fawn !
 Yet statelier. Hark ! No sound, however soft,
 Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,
 But every motion of her shape doth seem
 Hallowed by silence”—

but however beautiful the description, defend
 me from meeting with the original !

“The fly that sips treacle
 Is lost in the sweets ;
 So he that tastes woman
 Ruin meets.”

The song is Gay's, not mine, and a bitter-sweet
 it is.—How few out of the infinite number of
 those that marry and are given in marriage,
 wed with those they would prefer to all the
 world ; nay, how far the greater proportion are
 joined together by mere motives of convenience,
 accident, recommendation of friends, or indeed
 not unfrequently by the very fear of the event,
 by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination :
 yet the tie is for life, not to be shaken off but
 with disgrace or death : a man no longer lives
 to himself, but is a body (as well as mind)
 chained to another in spite of himself—

“Like life and death in disproportion met.”

So Milton (perhaps from his own experience)
 makes Adam exclaim in the vehemence of his
 despair,—

“For either

He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him or mistake ;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse ; or if she love, withheld
By parents ; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate and shame ;
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound.”

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind offices ; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and chilled by indifference and scorn ; if so many lovers both before and since the madman in ‘Don Quixote’ had not “worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert ;” if friendship were lasting ; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches and long life ; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings ; then, indeed, I might be of opinion that it is better to live to others than one's-self : but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question.*—

* Shenstone and Gray were two men, one of whom pretended to live to himself, and the other really did so. Gray shrunk from the public gaze (he did not even like his portrait to be prefixed to his works) into his own thoughts and indolent musings ; Shenstone affected pri-

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me ;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo ; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such ; I stood
Among them, but not of them ; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
But let us part fair foes ; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful nor weave
Snares for the failing : I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve ;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem—
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy : but woe betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus dare to compare notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the prologues to his plays, I think I should do

vacy, that he might be sought out by the world ; the one courted retirement in order to enjoy leisure and repose, as the other coquetted with it, merely to be interrupted with the importunity of visitors and the flatteries of absent friends.

it in good set terms, nearly as follows. There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldy, overgrown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumour, lest it should be behind-hand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment, so that in short the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true: but we know or fancy that others believe it—we dare not contradict or are too indolent

to dispute with them, and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay more, we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the imposture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if any one has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant-phrase or nickname; and, by dint of effrontery and perseverance, make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false. The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said; by that circumstance alone we know that they produce a certain effect on the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far then is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight and shallow and variable to the last degree—the bubble of the moment—so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent. The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak. It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has

no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty. It is hasty in taking up its favourites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case. It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common sense nor common honesty to the other side. It reads the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale. Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* in about three months, but that after the *Quarterly Review* of the book came out, they never sold another copy. The public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance, then, but cowardice that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at *Edinburgh* having fixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in *London* became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh brave public! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow in his heart. Poor *Keats*! What was sport to the town was

death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

“A bud bit by an envious worm,
Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun”—

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.—The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered—

“A huge-sized monster of ingrattitudes.”

It reads, it admires, it extols, only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pretext, to pick a quarrel with you, and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature that gaped and wondered only because others did so, is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself, and that an author is not, after all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound

hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanour; a contempt of court, an extreme piece of impertinence. Or if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracting their error, or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity; they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation on their judgment. The celebrated Bubb Doddington, when out of favour at court, said "he would not justify before his sovereign: it was for Majesty to be displeased, and for him to believe himself in the wrong!" The public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the Scotch Novels as over-rated. How then can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule, all those who live by the public starve, and are made a bye-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton and Shakespear. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead, they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate

the anniversary of his birth-day in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were living? No!—I was complaining of this to a Scotchman who had been attending a dinner and a subscription to raise a monument to Burns. He replied, he would sooner subscribe twenty pounds to his monument than have given it him while living; so that if the poet were to come to life again, he would treat him just as he was treated in fact. This was an honest Scotchman. What *he* said, the rest would do.

Enough: my soul, turn from them, and let me try to regain the obscurity and quiet that I love, “far from the madding strife,” in some sequestered corner of my own, or in some far-distant land! In the latter case, I might carry with me as a consolation the passage in Bolingbroke’s ‘Reflections on Exile,’ in which he describes in glowing colours the resources which a man may always find within himself, and of which the world cannot deprive him.

“Believe me, the providence of God has established such an order in the world, that of all which belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which contemplates and admires the world

whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one we shall enjoy the other. Let us march therefore intrepidly wherever we are led by the course of human accidents. Wherever they lead us, on what coast soever we are thrown by them, we shall not find ourselves absolutely strangers. We shall feel the same revolution of seasons, and the same sun and moon* will guide the course of our year. The same azure vault, bespangled with stars, will be everywhere spread over our heads. There is no part of the world from whence we may not admire those planets which roll, like ours, in different orbits round the same central sun; from whence we may not discover an object still more stupendous, that army of fixed stars hung up in the immense space of the universe, innumerable suns whose beams enlighten and cherish the unknown worlds which roll around them; and whilst I am ravished by such contemplations as these, whilst my soul is thus raised up to heaven, imports me little what ground I tread upon."

* "Plut. of Banishment. He compares those who cannot live out of their own country, to the simple people who fancied the moon of Athens was a finer moon than that of Corinth.

——*Labentem cœlo quæ ducitis annum.*

VIRG. Georg ic."

ESSAY VIII.

ON THOUGHT AND ACTION.

THOSE persons who are much accustomed to abstract contemplation are generally unfitted for active pursuits, and *vice versâ*. I myself am sufficiently decided and dogmatical in my opinions, and yet in action I am as imbecile as a woman or a child. I cannot set about the most indifferent thing without twenty efforts, and had rather write one of these Essays than have to seal a letter. In trying to throw a hat or a book upon a table, I miss it; it just reaches the edge and falls back again, and instead of doing what I mean to perform, I do what I intend to avoid. Thought depends on the habitual exercise of the speculative faculties; action on the determination of the will. The one assigns reasons for things, the other puts causes into act. Abraham Tucker relates of a friend of his, an old special pleader, that once coming out of his chambers in the Temple with him to take

a walk, he hesitated at the bottom of the stairs which way to go—proposed different directions, to Charing cross, to St Paul's,—found some objection to them all, and at last turned back for want of a casting motive to incline the scale. Tucker gives this as an instance of professional indecision, or of that temper of mind which having been long used to weigh the reasons for things with scrupulous exactness, could not come to any conclusion at all on the spur of the occasion, or without some grave distinction to justify its choice. Louvet, in his Narrative, tells us, that when several of the Brissotin party were collected at the house of Barbaroux (I think it was) ready to effect their escape from the power of Robespierre, one of them going to the window and finding a shower of rain coming on, seriously advised their stopping till the next morning, for that the emissaries of government would not think of coming in search of them in such bad weather. Some of them deliberated on this wise proposal, and were nearly taken. Such is the effeminacy of the speculative and philosophical temperament, compared with the promptness and vigour of the practical! It is on such unequal terms that the refined and romantic speculators on possible good and evil contend with their strong-nerved, remorseless adversaries, and we see the result. Reasoners in general are undecided, wavering, and scepti-

cal, or yield at last to the weakest motive, as most congenial to their feeble habit of soul.*

Some men are mere machines. They are put in a go-cart of business, and are harnessed to a profession—yoked to fortune's wheels. They plod on, and succeed. Their affairs conduct them, not they their affairs. All they have to do is to let things take their course, and not go out of the beaten road. A man may carry on the business of farming on the same spot and principle that his ancestors have done for many generations before him without any extraordinary share of capacity: the proof is, it is done every day in every county and parish in the kingdom. All that is necessary is that he should not pretend to be wiser than his neighbours. If he has a grain more wit or penetration than they, if his vanity gets the start of his avarice only half a neck, if he has ever thought or read anything upon the subject, it will most probably be the ruin of him. He will turn theoretical or experimental farmer, and no more

* When Buonaparte left the Chamber of Deputies to go and fight his last fatal battle, he advised them not to be debating the forms of Constitutions when the enemy was at their gates. Benjamin Constant thought otherwise. He wanted to play a game at *cat's-cradle* between the Republicans and Royalists, and lost his match. He did not care, so that he hampered a more efficient man than himself.

need be said. Mr Cobbett, who is a sufficiently shrewd and practical man, with an eye also to the main chance, had got some notions in his head (from Tull's Husbandry) about the method of sowing turnips, to which he would have sacrificed not only his estate at Botley, but his native county of Hampshire itself, sooner than give up an inch of his argument. "Tut! will you baulk a man in his humour?" Therefore, that a man may not be ruined by his humours, he should be too dull and phlegmatic to have any; he must have "no figures nor no fantasies which busy thought draws in the brains of men." The fact is, that the ingenuity or judgment of no one man is equal to that of the world at large, which is the fruit of the experience and ability of all mankind. Even where a man is right in a particular notion, he will be apt to over-rate the importance of his discovery, to the detriment of his affairs. Action requires co-operation, but in general, if you set your face against custom, people will set their faces against you. They cannot tell whether you are right or wrong, but they know that you are guilty of a pragmatical assumption of superiority over them, which they do not like. There is no doubt that if a person two hundred years ago had foreseen and attempted to put in practice the most approved and successful methods of cultivation now in use, it would have been a death-blow

to his credit and fortune. So that though the experiments and improvements of private individuals from time to time gradually go to enrich the public stock of information and reform the general practice, they are mostly the ruin of the person who makes them, because he takes a part of the whole, and lays more stress upon the single point in which he has found others in the wrong, than on all the rest in which they are substantially and prescriptively in the right. The great requisite, it should appear then, for the prosperous management of ordinary business, is the want of imagination, or of any ideas but those of custom and interest on the narrowest scale:—and as the affairs of the world are necessarily carried on by the common run of its inhabitants, it seems a wise dispensation of Providence that it should be so. If no one could rent a piece of glebe-land without a genius for mechanical inventions, or stand behind a counter without a large benevolence of soul, what would become of the commercial and agricultural interests of this great (and once flourishing) country? I would not be understood as saying that there is not what may be called a *genius for business*, an extraordinary capacity for affairs, quickness and comprehension united, an insight into character, an acquaintance with a number of particular circumstances, a variety of expedients, a tact for finding out what will do: I

grant all this (in Liverpool and Manchester they would persuade you that your merchant and manufacturer is your only gentleman and scholar)—but still, making every allowance for the difference between the liberal trader and the sneaking shopkeeper, I doubt whether the most surprising success is to be accounted for from any such unusual attainments, or whether a man's making half a million of money is a proof of his capacity for thought in general. It is much oftener owing to views and wishes bounded but constantly directed to one particular object. To succeed, a man should aim only at success. The child of Fortune should resign himself into the hands of Fortune. A plotting head frequently overreaches itself: a mind confident of its resources and calculating powers enters on critical speculations, which, in a game depending so much on chance and unforeseen events, and not entirely on intellectual skill, turn the odds greatly against any one in the long run. The rule of business is to take what you can get, and keep what you have got: or an eagerness in seizing every opportunity that offers for promoting your own interest, and a plodding persevering industry in making the most of the advantages you have already obtained, are the most effectual as well as safest ingredients in the composition of the mercantile character. The world is a book in which the *Chapter of*

Accidents is none of the least considerable ; or it is a machine that must be left, in a great measure, to turn itself. The most that a worldly-minded man can do is, to stand at the receipt of custom, and be constantly on the look-out for windfalls. The true devotee in this way waits for the revelations of Fortune as the poet waits for the inspiration of the Muse, and does not rashly anticipate her favours. He must be neither capricious nor wilful. I have known people untrammelled in the ways of business, but with so intense an apprehension of their own interest, that they would grasp at the slightest possibility of gain as a certainty, and were led into as many mistakes by an overgripping usurious disposition as they could have been by the most thoughtless extravagance.— We hear a great outcry about the want of judgment in men of genius. It is not a want of judgment, but an excess of other things. They err knowingly, and are wilfully blind. The understanding is out of the question. The profound judgment which soberer people pique themselves upon is in truth a want of passion and imagination. Give them an interest in any thing, a sudden fancy, a bait for their favourite foible, and who so besotted as they ? Stir their feelings, and farewell to their prudence ! The understanding operates as a motive to action only in the silence of the passions. I have

heard people of a sanguine temperament reproached with betting according to their wishes, instead of their opinion who should win: and I have seen those who reproached them do the very same thing the instant their own vanity or prejudices were concerned. The most mechanical people, once thrown off their balance, are the most extravagant and fantastical. What passion is there so unmeaning and irrational as avarice itself? The Dutch went mad for tulips, and ——— for love!—To return to what was said a little way back, a question might be started, whether, as thought relates to the whole circumference of things and interests, and business is confined to a very small part of them, viz. to a knowledge of a man's own affairs and the making of his own fortune, whether a talent for the latter will not generally exist in proportion to the narrowness and grossness of his ideas, nothing drawing his attention out of his own sphere, or giving him an interest except in those things which he can realize and bring home to himself in the most undoubted shape? To the man of business all the world is a fable but the Stock-Exchange: to the money-getter nothing has a real existence that he cannot convert into a tangible feeling, that he does not recognize as property, that he cannot "measure with a two-foot rule or count upon ten fingers." The want of thought, of imagination, drives the

practical man upon immediate realities: to the poet or philosopher all is real and interesting that is true or possible, that can reach in its consequences to others, or be made a subject of curious speculation to himself!

But is it right, then, to judge of action by the quantity of thought implied in it, any more than it would be to condemn a life of contemplation for being inactive? Or has not everything a source and principle of its own, to which we should refer it, and not to the principles of other things? He who succeeds in any pursuit in which others fail, may be presumed to have qualities of some sort or other which they are without. If he has not brilliant wit, he may have solid sense; if he has not subtlety of understanding, he may have energy and firmness of purpose: if he has only a few advantages, he may have modesty and prudence to make the most of what he possesses. Propriety is one great matter in the conduct of life; which, though like a graceful carriage of the body it is neither definable nor striking at first sight, is the result of finely-balanced feelings, and lends a secret strength and charm to the whole character.

— *Quicquid agit, quoquo vestigia vertit,
Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.*

There are more ways than one in which the various faculties of the mind may unfold them-

selves. Neither words, nor ideas reducible to words, constitute the utmost limit of human capacity. Man is not a merely talking nor a merely reasoning animal. Let us then take him as he is, instead of "curtailing him of nature's fair proportions" to suit our previous notions. Doubtless, there are great characters both in active and contemplative life. There have been heroes as well as sages, legislators and founders of religion, historians and able statesmen and generals, inventors of useful arts and instruments, and explorers of undiscovered countries, as well as writers and readers of books. It will not do to set all these aside under any fastidious or pedantic distinction. Comparisons are odious, because they are impertinent, and lead only to the discovery of defects by making one thing the standard of another which has no relation to it. If, as some one proposed, we were to institute an inquiry, "Which was the greatest man, Milton or Cromwell, Buonaparte or Rubens?" — we should have all the authors and artists on one side, and all the military men and the whole diplomatic body on the other, who would set to work with all their might to pull in pieces the idol of the other party, and the longer the dispute continued, the more would each grow dissatisfied with his favourite, though determined to allow no merit to any one else. The mind is not well competent to take in the

full impression of more than one style of excellence or one extraordinary character at once; contradictory claims puzzle and stupefy it; and however admirable any individual may be in himself, and unrivalled in his particular way, yet if we try him by others in a totally opposite class, that is, if we consider not what he was but what he was not, he will be found to be nothing. We do not reckon up the excellences on either side, for then these would satisfy the mind and put an end to the comparison: we have no way of exclusively setting up our favourite but by running down his supposed rival; and for the gorgeous hues of Rubens, the lofty conceptions of Milton, the deep policy and cautious daring of Cromwell, or the dazzling exploits and fatal ambition of the modern chieftain, the poet is transformed into a pedant, the artist sinks into a mechanic, the politician turns out no better than a knave, and the hero is exalted into a madman. It is as easy to get the start of our antagonist in argument by frivolous and vexatious objections to one side of the question, as it is difficult to do full and heaped justice to the other. If I am asked which is the greatest of those who have been the greatest in different ways, I answer, the one that we happen to be thinking of at the time, for while that is the case, we can conceive of nothing higher. If there is a propensity in the vulgar to admire

the achievements of personal prowess or instances of fortunate enterprise too much, it cannot be denied that those who have to weigh out and dispense the meed of fame in books, have been too much disposed, by a natural bias, to confine all merit and talent to the productions of the pen, or at least to those works which, being artificial or abstract representations of things, are transmitted to posterity, and cried up as models in their kind. This, though unavoidable, is hardly just. Actions pass away and are forgotten, or are only discernible in their effects: conquerors, statesmen, and kings live but by their names stamped on the page of history. Hume says rightly that more people think about Virgil and Homer (and that continually) than ever trouble their heads about Cæsar or Alexander. In fact, poets are a longer-lived race than heroes: they breathe more of the air of immortality. They survive more entire in their thoughts and acts. We have all that Virgil or Homer did, as much as if we had lived at the same time with them: we can hold their works in our hands, or lay them on our pillows, or put them to our lips. Scarcely a trace of what the others did is left upon the earth, so as to be visible to common eyes. The one, the dead authors, are living men, still breathing and moving in their writings. The others, the conquerors of the world, are but the

ashes in an urn. The sympathy (so to speak) between thought and thought is more intimate and vital than that between thought and action. Thought is linked to thought as flame kindles into flame: the tribute of admiration to the *manes* of departed heroism is like burning incense in a marble monument. Words, ideas, feelings, with the progress of time harden into substances: things, bodies, actions, moulder away, or melt into a sound, into thin air! Yet though the Schoolmen in the middle ages disputed more about the texts of Aristotle than of the battle of Arbela, perhaps Alexander's generals in his life-time admired his pupil as much, and liked him better. For not only a man's actions are effaced and vanish with him; his virtues and generous qualities die with him also:—his intellect only is immortal, and bequeathed unimpaired to posterity. Words are the only things that last for ever.

If however the empire of words and general knowledge is more durable in proportion as it is abstracted and attenuated, it is less immediate and dazzling: if authors are as good after they are dead as when they were living, while living they might as well be dead: and moreover with respect to actual ability, to write a book is not the only proof of taste, sense, or spirit, as pedants would have us suppose. To do anything well, to paint a picture, to fight a battle, to make a

plough or a threshing machine, requires, one would think, as much skill and judgment as to talk about or write a description of it when done. Words are universal, intelligible signs, but they are not the only real, existing things. Did not Julius Cæsar show himself as much of a man in conducting his campaigns as in composing his Commentaries? Or was the Retreat of the Ten Thousand under Xenophon, or his work of that name, the most consummate performance? Or would not Lovelace, supposing him to have existed and to have conceived and executed all his fine stratagems on the spur of the occasion, have been as clever a fellow as Richardson, who invented them in cold blood? If to conceive and describe an heroic character is the height of a literary ambition, we can hardly make it out that to be and to do all that the wit of man can feign, is nothing. To use means to ends, to set causes in motion, to wield the machine of society, to subject the wills of others to your own, to manage abler men than yourself by means of that which is stronger in them than their wisdom, viz. their weakness and their folly, to calculate the resistance of ignorance and prejudice to your designs, and by obviating to turn them to account, to foresee a long, obscure, and complicated train of events, of chances and openings of success, to unwind the web of others' policy, and weave your own out of it, to judge

of the effects of things not in the abstract but with reference to all their bearings, ramifications and impediments, to understand character thoroughly, to see latent talent or lurking treachery, to know mankind for what they are, and use them as they deserve, to have a purpose steadily in view and to effect it after removing every obstacle, to master others and be true to yourself, asks power and knowledge, both nerves and brain.

Such is the sort of talent that may be shown, and that has been possessed by the great leaders on the stage of the world. To accomplish great things argues, I imagine, great resolution: to design great things implies no common mind. Ambition is in some sort genius. Though I would rather wear out my life in arguing a broad speculative question than in caballing for the election to a wardmote, or canvassing for votes in a venal borough, yet I should think that the loftiest Epicurean philosopher might descend from his punctilio to identify himself with the support of a great principle, or to prop a falling state. This is what the legislators and founders of empire did of old; and the permanence of their institutions showed the depth of the principles from which they emanated. A tragic poem is not the worse for acting well; if it will not bear this test, it savours of effeminacy. Well-digested schemes will stand the touchstone

of experience. Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts. Again, great acts grow out of great occasions, and great occasions spring from great principles, working changes in society, and tearing it up by the roots. But still I conceive that a genius for action depends essentially on the strength of the will rather than on that of the understanding; that the long-headed calculation of causes and consequences arises from the energy of the first cause, which is the will, setting others in motion and prepared to anticipate the results; that its sagacity is activity delighting in meeting difficulties and adventures more than half way, and its wisdom courage not to shrink from danger, but to redouble its efforts with opposition. Its humanity, if it has much, is magnanimity to spare the vanquished, exulting in power but not prone to mischief, with good sense enough to be aware of the instability of fortune, and with some regard to reputation. What may serve as a criterion to try this question by is the following consideration, that we sometimes find as remarkable a deficiency of the speculative faculty, coupled with great strength of will and consequent success in active life, as we do a want of voluntary power and total incapacity for business, frequently joined to the highest mental qualifications. In some cases it will happen that "to be wise, is to be obstinate." If you are deaf

to reason but stick to your own purposes, you will tire others out, and bring them over to your way of thinking. Self-will and blind prejudice are the best defence of actual power and exclusive advantages. The forehead of the late king was not remarkable for the character of intellect, but the lower part of his face was expressive of strong passions and fixed resolution. Charles Fox had an animated, intelligent eye, and brilliant, elastic forehead (with a nose indicating fine taste), but the lower features were weak, unsettled, fluctuating, and without *purchase*—it was in them the Whigs were defeated. What a fine iron binding Buonaparte had round his face, as if it had been cased in steel! What sensibility about the mouth! What watchful penetration in the eye! What a smooth, unruffled forehead! Mr Pitt, with little sunken eyes, had a high, retreating forehead, and a nose expressing pride and aspiring self-opinion: it was on that (with submission) that he suspended the decisions of the House of Commons, and dangled the Opposition as he pleased. Lord Castlereagh is a man rather deficient than redundant in words and topics. He is not (any more than St Augustine was, in the opinion of La Fontaine) so great a wit as Rabelais, nor is he so great a philosopher as Aristotle: but he has that in him which is not to be trifled with. He has a noble mask

of a face (not well filled up in the expression, which is relaxed and dormant) with a fine person and manner. On the strength of these he hazards his speeches in the House. He has also a knowledge of mankind, and of the composition of the House. He takes a thrust which he cannot parry on his shield—is “all tranquillity and smiles” under a volley of abuse, sees when to pay a compliment to a wavering antagonist, soothes the melting mood of his hearers, or gets up a speech full of indignation, and knows how to bestow his attentions on that great public body, whether he wheedles or bullies, so as to bring it to compliance. With a long reach of undefined purposes (the result of a temper too indolent for thought, too violent for repose) he has equal perseverance and pliancy in bringing his objects to pass. I would rather be Lord Castlereagh, as far as a sense of power is concerned (principle is out of the question), than such a man as Mr Canning, who is a mere fluent sophist, and never knows the limits of discretion, or the effect which will be produced by what he says, except as far as florid commonplaces may be depended on. Buonaparte is referred by Mr Coleridge to the class of active rather than of intellectual characters: and Cowley has left an invidious but splendid eulogy on Oliver Cromwell, which sets out on much the same principle. “What,” he says, “can be

more extraordinary, than that a person of mean birth, no fortune, no eminent qualities of body, which have sometimes, or of mind, which have often raised men to the highest dignities, should have the courage to attempt, and the happiness to succeed in, so improbable a design, as the destruction of one of the most ancient and most solidly-founded monarchies upon the earth? That he should have the power or boldness to put his prince and master to an open and infamous death; to banish that numerous and strongly-allied family; to do all this under the name and wages of a Parliament; to trample upon them too as he pleased, and spurn them out of doors when he grew weary of them; to raise up a new and unheard-of monster out of their ashes; to stifle that in the very infancy, and set up himself above all things that ever were called sovereign in England; to oppress all his enemies by arms, and all his friends afterwards by artifice; to serve all parties patiently for a while, and to command them victoriously at last; to over-run each corner of the three nations, and overcome with equal facility both the riches of the south and the poverty of the north; to be feared and courted by all foreign princes, and adopted a brother to the gods of the earth; to call together parliaments with a word of his pen, and scatter them again with the breath of his mouth; to be humbly and daily petitioned that he would please

to be hired, at the rate of two millions a year, to be the master of those who had hired him before to be their servant; to have the estates and lives of three kingdoms as much at his disposal, as was the little inheritance of his father, and to be as noble and liberal in the spending of them; and lastly, (for there is no end of all the particular of his glory) to bequeath all this with one word to his posterity; to die with peace at home, and triumph abroad; to be buried among kings, and with more than regal solemnity; and to leave a name behind him, not to be extinguished but with the whole world; which as it is now too little for his praises, so might have been too [narrow] for his conquests, if the short line of his human life could have been stretched out to the extent of his immortal designs!"

Cromwell was a bad speaker and a worse writer. Milton wrote his dispatches for him in elegant and erudite Latin: and the pen of the one, like the sword of the other, was "sharp and sweet." We have not that union in modern times of the heroic and literary character which was common among the ancients. Julius Cæsar and Xenophon recorded their own acts with equal clearness of style and modesty of temper. The Duke of Wellington (worse off than Cromwell) is obliged to get Mr Mudford to write the History of his Life. Sophocles, Æschylus, and Socrates were distinguished for

their military prowess among their contemporaries, though now only remembered for what they did in poetry and philosophy. Cicero and Demosthenes, the two greatest orators of antiquity, appear to have been cowards: nor does Horace seem to give a very favourable picture of his martial achievements. But in general there was not that division in the labours of the mind and body among the Greeks and Romans that has been introduced among us either by the progress of civilisation or by a greater slowness and inaptitude of parts. The French, for instance, appear to unite a number of accomplishments, the literary character and the man of the world, better than we do. Among us, a scholar is almost another name for a pedant or a clown: it is not so with them. Their philosophers and wits went into the world, and mingled in the society of the fair. Of this there needs no other proof than the spirited print of most of the great names in French literature, to whom Molière is reading a comedy in the presence of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos. D'Alembert, one of the first mathematicians of his age, was a wit, a man of gallantry and letters. With us a learned man is absorbed in himself and some particular study, and minds nothing else. There is something ascetic and impracticable in his very constitution, and he answers to the description of the old Monk—

“ From every work he challenged essoin
For contemplation's sake ”——

Perhaps the superior importance attached to the institutions of religion, as well as the more abstracted and visionary nature of its objects, has led (as a general result) to a wider separation between thought and action in modern times.—Ambition is of a higher and more heroic strain than avarice. Its objects are nobler, and the means by which it attains its ends less mechanical.

“ Better be lord of them that riches have,
Than riches have myself, and be their servile slave.”

The incentive to ambition is the love of power ; the spur to avarice is either the fear of poverty, or a strong desire of self-indulgence. The amassers of fortunes seem divided into two opposite classes, lean, penurious-looking mortals, or jolly fellows who are determined to get possession of, because they want to enjoy the good things of the world. The one have famine and a workhouse always before their eyes, the others, in the fulness of their persons and the robustness of their constitutions, seem to bespeak the reversion of a landed estate, rich acres, fat beeves, a substantial mansion, costly clothing, a chine and turkey, choice wines, and all other good things consonant to the wants and full-fed desires of their bodies. Such men charm fortune by the

sleekness of their aspects and the goodly rotundity of their honest faces, as the others scare away poverty by their wan, meagre looks. The last starve themselves into riches by care and carking: the first eat, drink, and sleep their way into the good things of this life. The majority of *warm* men in the city are good, jolly fellows. Look at Sir William Curtis: callipash and callipee are written in his face: he rolls about his unwieldy bulk in a sea of turtle-soup. How many haunches of venison does he carry on his back! He is larded wit jobs and contracts; he is stuffed and swelled out with layers of bank-notes, and invitations to dinner! His face hangs out a flag of defiance to mischance: the roguish twinkle in his eye with which he lures half the city and beats Alderman —— hollow, is a smile reflected from heaps of unsunned gold! Nature and fortune are not so much at variance as to differ about this fellow. To enjoy the good the gods provide us, is to deserve it. Nature meant him for a knight, alderman, and city member; and Fortune laughed to see the goodly person and prospects of the man!*—I am not, from certain

* A thorough fitness for any end implies the means. Where there is a will there is a way. A real passion, an entire devotion to any object, always succeeds. The strong sympathy with what we wish and imagine, realizes it, dissipates all obstacles, and removes all scruples. The

early prejudices, much given to admire the ostentatious marks of wealth (there are persons enough to admire them without me)—but I confess there is something in the look of the old banking-houses in Lombard-street, the posterns covered with mud, the doors opening sullenly

disappointed lover may complain as much as he pleases ; he was himself to blame. He was a half-witted, *wishy-washy* fellow. His love might be as great as he makes it out : but it was not his ruling passion. His fear, his pride, his vanity was greater. Let any one's whole soul be steeped in this passion, let him think and care for nothing else, let nothing divert, cool, or intimidate him, let the *ideal* feeling become an actual one and take possession of his whole faculties, looks, and manner, let the same voluptuous hopes and wishes govern his actions in the presence of his mistress that haunt his fancy in her absence, and I will answer for his success. But I will not answer for the success of "a dish of skimmed milk" in such a case. I could always get to see a fine collection of pictures myself. The fact is, I was set upon it. Neither the surliness of porters, nor the impertinence of footmen, could keep me back. I had a portrait of Titian in my eye, and nothing could put me out in my determination. If that had not (as it were) been looking on me all the time I was battling my way, I should have been irritated or disconcerted, and gone away. But my liking to the end conquered my scruples or aversion to the means. I never understood the Scotch character but on these occasions. I would not take "No" for an answer. If I had wanted a place under government, or a writership to India, I could have got it from the same importunity, and on the same terms.

and silently, the absence of all pretence, the darkness and the gloom within, the gleaming of lamps in the day-time,

“Like a faint shadow of uncertain light,”

that almost realises the poetical conception of the cave of Mammon in Spenser, where dust and cobwebs concealed the roofs and pillars of solid gold, and lifts the mind quite off its ordinary hinges. The account of the manner in which the founder of Guy's Hospital accumulated his immense wealth has always to me something romantic in it, from the same force of contrast. He was a little shopkeeper, and out of his savings bought Bibles, and purchased seamen's tickets in Queen Anne's wars, by which he made a fortune of two hundred thousand pounds. The story suggests the idea of a magician; nor is there anything in the Arabian Nights that looks more like a fiction.

ESSAY IX.

ON WILL-MAKING.

FEW things show the human character in a more ridiculous light than the circumstance of will-making. It is the latest opportunity we have of exercising the natural perversity of the disposition, and we take care to make a good use of it. We husband it with jealousy, put it off as long as we can, and then use every precaution that the world shall be no gainer by our deaths. This last act of our lives seldom belies the former tenor of them, for stupidity, caprice, and unmeaning spite. All that we seem to think of is to manage matters so (in settling accounts with those who are so unmannerly as to survive us) as to do as little good, and to plague and disappoint as many people as possible.

Many persons have a superstition on the subject of making their last will and testament, and think that when everything is ready signed and sealed, there is nothing farther left to delay their departure. I have heard of an instance of one person who, having a feeling of this kind on his

mind, and being teased into making his will by those about him, actually fell ill with pure apprehension, and thought he was going to die in good earnest, but, having executed the deed over-night, awoke, to his great surprise, the next morning, and found himself as well as ever he was.* An elderly gentleman possessed of a good estate and the same idle notion, and who found himself in a dangerous way, was anxious to do this piece of justice to those who remained behind him, but, when it came to the point, his heart failed him, and his nervous fancies returned in full force:—even on his death-bed he still held back and was averse to sign what he looked upon as his own death-warrant, and just at the last gasp, amidst the anxious looks and silent

* A poor woman at Plymouth who did not like the formality, or could not afford the expense of a will, thought to leave what little property she had in wearing-apparel and household moveables to her friends and relations, *vivâ voce*, and before Death stopped her breath. She gave and willed away (of her proper authority) her chair and table to one, her bed to another, an old cloak to a third, a night-cap and petticoat to a fourth, and so on. The old crones sat weeping round, and soon after carried off all they could lay their hands upon, and left their benefactress to her fate. They were no sooner gone than she unexpectedly recovered, and sent to have her things back again; but not one of them could she get, and she was left without a rag to her back, or a friend to condole with her.

upbraidings of friends and relatives that surrounded him, he summoned resolution to hold out his feeble hand which was guided by others to trace his name, and he fell back—a corpse! If there is any pressing reason for it, that is, if any particular person would be relieved from a state of harassing uncertainty, or materially benefited by their making a will, the old and infirm (who do not like to be put out of their way) generally make this an excuse to themselves for putting it off to the very last moment, probably till it is too late: or where this is sure to make the greatest number of blank faces, contrive to give their friends the slip, without signifying their final determination in their favour. Where some unfortunate individual has been kept long in suspense, who has been perhaps sought out for that very purpose, and who may be in a great measure dependent on this as a last resource, it is nearly a certainty that there will be no will to be found; no trace, no sign to discover whether the person dying thus intestate ever had any intention of the sort, or why he relinquished it. This it is to bespeak the thoughts and imaginations of others for victims after we are dead, as well as their persons and expectations for hangers-on while we are living. A celebrated beauty of the middle of the last century, towards its close sought out a female relative, the friend and companion of her youth, who had lived

during the forty years of their separation in rather straitened circumstances, and in a situation which admitted of some alleviations. Twice they met after that long lapse of time—once her relation visited her in the splendour of a rich old family-mansion, and once she crossed the country to become an inmate of the humble dwelling of her early and only remaining friend. What was this for? Was it to revive the image of her youth in the pale and care-worn face of her friend? Or was it to display the decay of her charms and recal her long-forgotten triumphs to the memory of the only person who could bear witness to them? Was it to show the proud remains of herself to those who remembered or had often heard what she was—her skin like shrivelled alabaster, her emaciated features chiseled by nature's finest hand, her eyes that when a smile lighted them up, still shone like diamonds, the vermilion hues that still bloomed among wrinkles? Was it to talk of bone-lace, of the flounces and brocades of the last century, of race-balls in the year '62, and of the scores of lovers that had died at her feet, and to set whole counties in a flame again, only with a dream of faded beauty? Whether it was for this, or whether she meant to leave her friend any thing (as was indeed expected, and all things considered, not without reason) nobody knows—for she never breathed a syllable on the

subject herself, and died without a will. The accomplished coquette of twenty, who had pampered hopes only to kill them, who had kindled rapture with a look and extinguished it with a breath, could find no better employment at seventy than to revive the fond recollections and raise up the drooping hopes of her kinswoman only to let them fall—to rise no more. Such is the delight we have in trifling with and tantalising the feelings of others by the exquisite refinements, the studied sleights of love or friendship.

Where a property is actually bequeathed, supposing the circumstances of the case and the usages of society to leave a practical discretion to the testator, it is most frequently in such portions as can be of the least service. Where there is much already, much is given; where much is wanted, little or nothing. Poverty invites a sort of pity, a miserable dole of assistance; necessity neglect and scorn; wealth attracts and allures to itself more wealth, by natural association of ideas, or by that innate love of inequality and injustice, which is the favourite principle of the imagination. Men like to collect money into large heaps in their life-time: they like to leave it in large heaps after they are dead. They grasp it into their own hands, not to use it for their own good, but to hoard, to lock it up, to make an object, an idol, and a

wonder of it. Do you expect them to distribute it so as to do others good; that they will like those who come after them better than themselves; that if they were willing to pinch and starve themselves, they will not deliberately defraud their sworn friends and nearest kindred of what would be of the utmost use to them? No, they will thrust their heaps of gold and silver into the hands of others (as their proxies) to keep for them untouched, still increasing, still of no use to any one, but to pamper pride and avarice, to glitter in the huge, watchful, insatiable eye of fancy, to be deposited as a new offering at the shrine of Mammon, their God—this is with them to put it to its intelligible and proper use, this is fulfilling a sacred, indispensable duty, this cheers them in the solitude of the grave, and throws a gleam of satisfaction across the stony eye of death. But to think of frittering it down, of sinking it in charity, of throwing it away on the idle claims of humanity, where it would no longer peer in monumental pomp over their heads; and that too when on the point of death themselves, *in articulo mortis*, oh! it would be madness, waste, extravagance, impiety! Thus worldlings feel and argue without knowing it; and while they fancy they are studying their own interest or that of some booby successor, their *alter idem*, are but the dupes and puppets of a favourite

idea, a phantom, a prejudice, that must be kept up somewhere (no matter where) if it still plays before and haunts their imagination while they have sense or understanding left—to cling to their darling follies.

There was a remarkable instance of this tendency *to the heap*, this desire to cultivate an abstract passion for wealth, in a will of one of the Thellusons some time back. This will went to keep the greater part of a large property from the use of the natural heirs and next-of-kin for a length of time, and to let it accumulate at compound interest in such a way and so long, that it would at last mount up in value to the purchase-money of a whole county. The interest accruing from the funded property or the rent of the lands at certain periods was to be employed to purchase other estates, other parks and manors in the neighbourhood or farther off, so that the prospect of the future demesne that was to devolve at some distant time to the unborn lord of acres, swelled and enlarged itself, like a sea, circle without circle, vista beyond vista, till the imagination was staggered, and the mind exhausted. Now here was a scheme for the accumulation of wealth, and for laying the foundation of family-aggrandisement purely imaginary, romantic—one might almost say disinterested. The vagueness, the magnitude, the remoteness of the object, the

resolute sacrifice of all immediate and gross advantages, clothe it with the privileges of an abstract idea, so that the project has the air of a fiction or of a story in a novel. It was an instance of what might be called posthumous avarice, like the love of posthumous fame. . It had little more to do with selfishness than if the testator had appropriated the same sums in the same way to build a pyramid, to construct an aqueduct, to endow an hospital, or effect any other patriotic or merely fantastic purpose. He wished to heap up a pile of wealth (millions of acres) in the dim horizon of future years, that could be of no use to him or to those with whom he was connected by positive and personal ties, but as a crotchet of the brain, a gew-gaw of the fancy.* Yet to enable himself to put this scheme in execution, he had perhaps toiled and watched all his life, denied himself rest, food, pleasure, liberty, society, and persevered with the patience and self-denial of a martyr. I have insisted on this point the more, to show how much of the imaginary and speculative there is interfused even in those passions and purposes which have not the good of others for their object, and how little reason this honest citizen and builder of castles in the air would have had

* The law of primogeniture has its origin in the principle here stated, the desire of perpetuating some one palpable and prominent proof of wealth and power.

to treat those who devoted themselves to the pursuit of fame, to obloquy and persecution for the sake of truth and liberty, or who sacrificed their lives for their country in a just cause, as visionaries and enthusiasts, who did not understand what was properly due to their own interest and the securing of the main-chance. Man is not the creature of sense and selfishness, even in those pursuits which grow up out of that origin, so much as of imagination, custom, passion, whim, and humour.

I have heard of a singular instance of a will made by a person who was addicted to a habit of lying. He was so notorious for this propensity (not out of spite or cunning, but as a gratuitous exercise of invention), that from a child no one could ever believe a syllable he uttered. From the want of any dependence to be placed on him, he became the jest and bye-word of the school where he was brought up. The last act of his life did not disgrace him. For having gone abroad, and falling into a dangerous decline, he was advised to return home. He paid all that he was worth for his passage, went on ship-board, and employed the few remaining days he had to live in making and executing his will; in which he bequeathed large estates in different parts of England, money in the funds, rich jewels, rings, and all kinds of valuables, to his old friends and acquaintance, who not knowing

how far the force of nature could go, were no for some time convinced that all this fairy wealth had never had an existence anywhere but in the idle coinage of his brain whose whims and projects were no more! The extreme keeping in this character is only to be accounted for by supposing such an original constitutional levity as made truth entirely indifferent to him, and the serious importance attached to it by others an object of perpetual sport and ridicule!

The art of will-making chiefly consists in baffling the importunity of expectation. I do not so much find fault with this when it is done as a punishment and oblique satire on servility and selfishness. It is in that case *Diamond cut Diamond*—a trial of skill between the legacy-hunter and the legacy-maker which shall fool the other. The cringing toad-eater, the officious tale-bearer, is perhaps well paid for years of obsequious attendance with a bare mention and a mourning-ring; nor can I think that Gil Blas' library was not quite as much as the coxcombry of his pretensions deserved. There are some admirable scenes in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, showing the humours of a legacy-hunter, and the different ways of fobbing him off with excuses and assurances of not being forgotten. Yet it is hardly right, after all, to encourage this kind of pitiful, bare-faced intercourse, without meaning to pay for it; as the coquette has

no right to jilt the lovers she has trifled with. Flattery and submission are marketable commodities like any other, have their price, and ought scarcely to be obtained under false pretences. If we see through and despise the wretched creature that attempts to impose on our credulity, we can at any time dispense with his services; if we are soothed by this mockery of respect and friendship, why not pay him like any other drudge, or as we satisfy the actor who performs a part in a play by our particular desire? But often these premeditated disappointments are as unjust as they are cruel, and are marked with circumstances of indignity, in proportion to the worth of the object. The suspecting, the taking it for granted that your name is down in the will, is sufficient provocation to have it struck out: the hinting at an obligation, the consciousness of it on the part of the testator, will make him determined to avoid the formal acknowledgment of it, at any expense. The disinheriting of relations is mostly for venial offences, not for base actions: we punish out of pique, to revenge some case in which we have been disappointed of our wills, some act of disobedience to what had no reasonable ground to go upon; and we are obstinate in adhering to our resolution, as it was sudden and rash, and doubly bent on asserting our authority in what we have least right to inter-

fere in. It is the wound inflicted upon our self-love, not the stain upon the character of the thoughtless offender, that calls for condign punishment. Crimes, vices may go unchecked, or unnoticed: but it is the laughing at our weaknesses, or thwarting our humours, that is never to be forgotten. It is not the errors of others, but our own miscalculations, on which we wreak our lasting vengeance. It is ourselves that we cannot forgive. In the will of Nicholas Gimcrack, the virtuoso recorded in the Tatler, we learn, among other items, that his eldest son is cut off with a single cockle-shell for his undutiful behaviour in laughing at his little sister whom his father kept preserved in spirits of wine. Another of his relations has a collection of grasshoppers bequeathed him, as in the testator's opinion an adequate reward and acknowledgment due to his merit. The whole will of the said Nicholas Gimcrack, Esq. is a curious document and exact picture of the mind of the worthy virtuoso defunct, where his various follies, littlenesses, and quaint humours are set forth, as orderly and distinct as his butterflies' wings and cockle-shells and skeletons of fleas in glass-cases.* We often successfully

* It is as follows :

“ *The Will of a Virtuoso.*

“ I, Nicholas Gimcrack, being in sound Health of Mind, but in great Weakness of Body, do by this my

try in this way to give the finishing stroke to our pictures, hang up our weaknesses in per-

Last Will and Testament bequeath my worldly Goods and Chattels in Manner following :

Imprimis, To my dear Wife,
 One Box of Butterflies,
 One Drawer of Shells,
 A Female Skeleton.
 A dried Cockatrice.

Item, To my Daughter *Elizabeth*,
 My Receipt for preserving dead Caterpillars.
 As also my Preparations of Winter May-Dew, and
 Embrio Pickle.

Item, To my little Daughter *Fanny*,
 Three Crocodiles' eggs.
 And upon the Birth of her first Child, if she marries
 with her Mother's Consent,
 The Nest of a Humming-Bird.

Item, To my eldest Brother, as an Acknowledgement for
 the Lands he has vested in my Son Charles, I
 bequeath
 My last Year's Collection of Grasshoppers.

Item, To his Daughter *Susanna*, being his only Child, I
 bequeath my
 English Weeds pasted on Royal Paper,
 With my large Folio of *Indian* Cabbage.

Having fully provided for my Nephew Isaac, by
 making over to him some years since

 A Horned *Scarabæus*,
 The Skin of a Rattle-Snake, and
 The Mummy of an *Egyptian* King,

I make no further Provision for him in this my Will.

My eldest Son *John* having spoken disrespectfully of

petuity, and embalm our mistakes in the memories of others.

“ Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.”

I shall not speak here of unwarrantable commands imposed upon survivors, by which they were to carry into effect the sullen and revengeful purposes of unprincipled men, after they had breathed their last : but we meet with continual examples of the desire to keep up the farce (if not the tragedy) of life, after we, the performers in it, have quitted the stage, and to have our parts rehearsed by proxy. We thus make a caprice immortal, a peculiarity proverbial. Hence we see the number of legacies and fortunes left, on condition that the legatee

his little Sister, whom I keep by me in Spirits of Wine, and in many other Instances behaved himself undutifully towards me, I do disinherit, and wholly cut off from any Part of this my Personal Estate, by giving him a single Cockle-Shell.

To my Second Son *Charles*, I give and bequeath all my Flowers, Plants, Minerals, Mosses, Shells, Pebbles, Fossils, Beetles, Butterflies, Caterpillars, Grasshoppers, and Vermin, not above specified: As also all my Monsters, both wet and dry, making the said *Charles* whole and sole Executor of this my Last Will and Testament, he paying or causing to be paid the aforesaid Legacies within the space of Six Months after my Decease. And I do hereby revoke all other Wills whatsoever by me formerly made.”—TATLER, Vol. IV. No. 216.

shall take the name and style of the testator, by which device we provide for the continuance of the sounds that formed our names, and endow them with an estate, that they may be repeated with proper respect. In the *Memoirs* of an Heiress, all the difficulties of the plot turn on the necessity imposed by a clause in her uncle's will that her future husband should take the family-name of Beverley. Poor Cecilia ! What delicate perplexities she was thrown into by this improvident provision ; and with what minute, endless, intricate distresses has the fair authoress been enabled to harrow up the reader on this account ! There was a Sir Thomas Dyot in the reign of Charles II, who left the whole range of property which forms Dyot street, in St Giles's, and the neighbourhood, on the sole and express condition that it should be appropriated entirely to that sort of buildings, and to the reception of that sort of population, which still keeps undisputed, undivided possession of it. The name was changed the other day to George street as a more genteel appellation, which, I should think, is an indirect forfeiture of the estate. This Sir Thomas Dyot I should be disposed to put upon the list of old English worthies—as humane, liberal, and no flincher from what he took in his head. He was no common-place man in his line. He was

the best commentator on that old fashioned text—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."—We find some that are curious in the mode in which they shall be buried, and others in the place. Lord Camelford had his remains buried under an ash-tree that grew on one of the mountains in Switzerland; and Sir Francis Bourgeois had a little mausoleum built for him in the college at Dulwich, where he once spent a pleasant, jovial day with the master and wardens.* It is, no doubt, proper to attend, except for strong reasons to the contrary, to these sort of requests; for by breaking faith with the dead, we loosen the confidence of the living. Besides, there is a stronger argument; we sympathise with the dead as well as with the living, and are bound to them by the most sacred of all ties, our own involuntary fellow-feeling with others!

Thieves, as a last donation, leave advice to their friends, physicians a nostrum, authors a

* Kellerman lately left his heart to be buried in the field of Valmy where the first great battle was fought in the year 1792, in which the Allies were repulsed. Oh! might that heart prove the root from which the tree of Liberty may spring up and flourish once more, as the basil-tree grew and grew from the cherished head of Isabella's lover!

manuscript work, rakes a confession of their faith in the virtue of the sex—all, the last drivellings of their egotism and impertinence. One might suppose that if anything could, the approach and contemplation of death might bring men to a sense of reason and self-knowledge. On the contrary, it seems only to deprive them of the little wit they had, and to make them even more the sport of their wilfulness and short-sightedness. Some men think that because they are going to be hanged, they are fully authorised to declare a future state of rewards and punishments. All either indulge their caprices or cling to their prejudices. They make a desperate attempt to escape from reflection by taking hold of any whim or fancy that crosses their minds, or by throwing themselves implicitly on old habits and attachments.

An old man is twice a child: the dying man becomes the property of his family. He has no choice left, and his voluntary power is merged in old saws and prescriptive usages. The property we have derived from our kindred reverts tacitly to them: and not to let it take its course, is a sort of violence done to nature as well as custom. The idea of property, of something in common, does not mix cordially with friendship, but is inseparable from near relationship. We owe a return in kind, where we feel

no obligation for a favour; and consign our possessions to our next of kin as mechanically as we lean our heads on the pillow, and go out of the world in the same state of stupid amazement that we came into it! *Cætera desunt.*

ESSAY X.

ON PARADOX AND COMMON-PLACE.

I HAVE been sometimes accused of a fondness for paradoxes, but I cannot in my own mind plead guilty to the charge. I do not indeed swear by an opinion, because it is old : but neither do I fall in love with every extravagance at first sight, because it is new. I conceive that a thing may have been repeated a thousand times, without being a bit more reasonable than it was the first time : and I also conceive that an argument or an observation may be very just, though it may so happen that it was never stated before. But I do not take it for granted that every prejudice is ill-founded ; nor that every paradox is self-evident, merely because it contradicts the vulgar opinion. Sheridan once said of some speech in his acute, sarcastic way, that “ it contained a great deal both of what was new and what was true : but that unfortunately what was new was not true, and what was true was not new.” This appears to me to express the whole

sense of the question. I do not see much use in dwelling on a common-place, however fashionable or well-established: nor am I very ambitious of starting the most specious novelty, unless I imagine I have reason on my side. Originality implies independence of opinion; but differs as widely from mere singularity as from the tritest truism. It consists in seeing and thinking for one's-self: whereas singularity is only the affectation of saying something to contradict other people, without having any real opinion of one's own upon the matter. Mr Burke was an original, though an extravagant writer; Mr Windham was a regular manufacturer of paradoxes.

The greatest number of minds seem utterly incapable of fixing on any conclusion, except from the pressure of custom and authority: opposed to these there is another class less numerous but pretty formidable, who in all their opinions are equally under the influence of novelty and restless vanity. The prejudices of the one are counterbalanced by the paradoxes of the other; and folly, "putting in this scale a weight of ignorance, in that of pride," might be said to "smile delighted with the eternal poise." A sincere and manly spirit of inquiry is neither blinded by example nor dazzled by sudden flashes of light. Nature is always the same, the store-house of lasting truth, and teeming with

inexhaustible variety ; and he who looks at her with steady and well-practised eyes, will find enough to employ all his sagacity, whether it has or has not been seen by others before him. Strange as it may seem, to learn what any object is, the true philosopher looks at the object itself, instead of turning to others to know what they think or say or have heard of it, or instead of consulting the dictates of his vanity, petulance, and ingenuity, to see what can be said against their opinion, and to prove himself wiser than all the rest of the world. For want of this, the real powers and resources of the mind are lost and dissipated in a conflict of opinions and passions, of obstinacy against levity, of bigotry against self-conceit, of notorious abuses against rash innovations, of dull, plodding, old-fashioned stupidity against new-fangled folly, of worldly interest against headstrong egotism, of the incorrigible prejudices of the old and the unmanageable humours of the young ; while truth lies in the middle, and is overlooked by both parties. Or as Luther complained long ago, “human reason is like a drunken man on horseback : set it up on one side, and it tumbles over on the other.”—With one sort, example, authority, fashion, ease, interest, rule all : with the other, singularity, the love of distinction, mere whim, the throwing off all restraint and showing an heroic disregard of consequences, an impatient

and unsettled turn of mind, the want of sudden and strong excitement, of some new play-thing for the imagination, are equally "lords of the ascendant," and are at every step getting the start of reason, truth, nature, common sense, and feeling. With one party, whatever is, is right; with their antagonists, whatever is, is wrong. These swallow every antiquated absurdity: those catch at every new, unfledged project—and are alike enchanted with the velocipedes or the French Revolution. One set, wrapped up in impenetrable forms and technical traditions, are deaf to everything that has not been dinned in their ears, and in those of their forefathers, from time immemorial: their hearing is *thick* with the same old saws, the same unmeaning form of words, everlastingly repeated: the others pique themselves on a jargon of their own, a Babylonish dialect, crude, unconcocted, harsh, discordant, to which it is impossible for any one else to attach either meaning or respect. These last turn away at the mention of all usages, creeds, institutions of more than a day's standing as a mass of bigotry, superstition, and barbarous ignorance, whose leaden touch would petrify and benumb their quick, mercurial, "apprehensive, forgetive" faculties. The opinion of to-day supersedes that of yesterday: that of to-morrow supersedes by anticipation this of to-day. The wisdom of the ancients, the doc-

trines of the learned, the laws of nations, the common sentiments of morality, are to them like a bundle of old almanacs. As the modern politician always asks for this day's paper, the modern sciolist always inquires after the latest paradox. With him instinct is a dotard, nature a changeling, and common sense a discarded bye-word. As with the man of the world, what everybody says must be true, the citizen of the world has a quite different notion of the matter. With the one the majority, "the powers that be," have always been in the right in all ages and places, though they have been cutting one another's throats and turning the world upside down with their quarrels and disputes from the beginning of time: with the other, what any two people have ever agreed in, is an error on the face of it. The credulous bigot shudders at the idea of altering anything in "time-hallowed" institutions; and under this cant phrase can bring himself to tolerate any knavery, or any folly, the Inquisition, Holy Oil, the Right Divine, and so on; the more refined sceptic will laugh in your face at the idea of retaining anything which has the damning stamp of custom upon it, and is for abating all former precedents, "all trivial, fond records," the whole frame and fabric of society as a nuisance in the lump. Is not this a pair of wiseacres well-matched? The one stickles through thick and thin for his own

religion and government; the other scouts all religions and all governments with a smile of ineffable disdain. The one will not move for any consideration out of the broad and beaten path; the other is continually turning off at right angles, and losing himself in the labyrinths of his own ignorance and presumption. The one will not go along with any party; the other always joins the strongest side. The one will not conform to any common practice; the other will subscribe to any thriving system. The one is the slave of habit; the other is the sport of caprice. The first is like a man obstinately bed-ridden; the last is troubled with St Vitus's dance. He cannot stand still, he cannot rest upon any conclusion. "He never is—but always to be *right*."

The author of the *Prometheus Unbound* (to take an individual instance of the last character) has a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic. He is sanguine-complexioned, and shrill-voiced. As is often observable in the case of religious enthusiasts, there is a slenderness of constitutional *stamina*, which renders the flesh no match for the spirit. His bending, flexible form appears to take no strong hold of things, does not grapple with the world about him, but slides from it like a river—

“ And in its liquid texture mortal wound
Receives no more than can the fluid air.”

The shock of accident, the weight of authority make no impression on his opinions, which retire like a feather, or rise from the encounter unhurt, through their own buoyancy. He is clogged by no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices, by nothing that belongs to the mighty trunk and hard husk of nature and habit, but is drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy, to the sphere of air and fire, where his delighted spirit floats in “seas of pearl and clouds of amber.” There is no *caput mortuum* of worn-out, threadbare experience to serve as ballast to his mind; it is all volatile intellectual salt of tartar, that refuses to combine its evanescent, inflammable essence with anything solid or anything lasting. Bubbles are to him the only realities:—touch them, and they vanish. Curiosity is the only proper category of his mind, and though a man in knowledge, he is a child in feeling. Hence he puts everything into a metaphysical crucible to judge of it himself and exhibit it to others as a subject of interesting experiment, without first making it over to the ordeal of his common sense or trying it on his heart. This faculty of speculating at random on all questions may in its overgrown and uninformed state do much mischief without intend-

ing it, like an overgrown child with the power of a man. Mr Shelley has been accused of vanity—I think he is chargeable with extreme levity, but this levity is so great, that I do not believe he is sensible of its consequences. He strives to overturn all established creeds and systems: but this is in him an effect of constitution. He runs before the most extravagant opinions, but this is because he is held back by none of the merely mechanical checks of sympathy and habit. He tampers with all sorts of obnoxious subjects, but it is less because he is gratified with the rankness of the taint, than captivated with the intellectual phosphoric light they emit. It would seem that he wished not so much to convince or inform as to shock the public by the tenor of his productions, but I suspect he is more intent upon startling himself with his electrical experiments in morals and philosophy; and though they may scorch other people, they are to him harmless amusements, the coruscations of an Aurora Borealis, that “play round the head, but do not reach the heart.” Still I could wish that he would put a stop to the incessant, alarming whirl of his Voltaic battery. With his zeal, his talent, and his fancy, he would do more good and less harm, if he were to give up his wilder theories, and if he took less pleasure in feeling his heart flutter in unison with the panic-struck appre-

hensions of his readers. Persons of this class, instead of consolidating useful and acknowledged truths, and thus advancing the cause of science and virtue, are never easy but in raising doubtful and disagreeable questions, which bring the former into disgrace and discredit. They are not contented to lead the minds of men to an eminence overlooking the prospect of social amelioration, unless, by forcing them up slippery paths and to the utmost verge of possibility, they can dash them down the precipice the instant they reach the promised Pisgah. They think it nothing to hang up a beacon to guide or warn, if they do not at the same time frighten the community like a comet. They do not mind making their principles odious, provided they can make themselves notorious. To win over the public opinion by fair means is to them an insipid, common-place mode of popularity: they would either force it by harsh methods, or seduce it by intoxicating potions. Egotism, petulance, licentiousness, levity of principle (whatever be the source) is a bad thing in any one, and most of all, in a philosophical reformer. Their humanity, their wisdom is always "at the horizon." Anything new, anything remote, anything questionable, comes to them in a shape that is sure of a cordial welcome—a welcome cordial in proportion as the object is new, as it is apparently impracti-

cable, as it is a doubt whether it is at all desirable. Just after the final failure, the completion of the last act of the French Revolution, when the legitimate wits were crying out, "The farce is over, now let us go to supper," these provoking reasoners got up a lively hypothesis about introducing the domestic government of the Nays into this country as a feasible set-off against the success of the Boroughmongers. The practical is with them always the antipodes of the ideal; and like other visionaries of a different stamp, they date the Millennium or New Order of Things from the Restoration of the Bourbons. Fine words butter no parsnips, says the proverb. "While you are talking of marrying, I am thinking of hanging," says Captain Macheath. Of all people the most tormenting are those who bid you hope in the midst of despair, who, by never caring about anything but their own sanguine, hair-brained Utopian schemes, have at no time any particular cause for embarrassment and despondency because they have never the least chance of success, and who by including whatever does not hit their idle fancy, kings, priests, religion, government, public abuses or private morals, in the same sweeping clause of ban and anathema, do all they can to combine all parties in a common cause against them, and to prevent every one else from advancing one step farther in the

career of practical improvement than they do in that of imaginary and unattainable perfection.

Besides, all this untoward heat and precocity often argues rottenness and a falling off. I myself remember several instances of this sort of unrestrained licence of opinion and violent effervescence of sentiment in the first period of the French Revolution. Extremes meet: and the most furious anarchists have since become the most barefaced apostates. Among the foremost of these I might mention the present poet-laureate and some of his friends. The prose-writers on that side of the question, Mr Godwin, Mr Bentham, &c. have not turned round in this extraordinary manner: they seem to have felt their ground (however mistaken in some points) and have in general adhered to their first principles. But poets have *such seething brains*, that they are disposed to meddle with everything, and mar all. They make bad philosophers and worse politicians.*

* "As for politics, I think poets are *tories* by nature, supposing them to be by nature poets. The love of an individual person or family that has worn a crown for many successions, is an inclination greatly adapted to the fanciful tribe. On the other hand, mathematicians, abstract reasoners, of no manner of attachment to persons, at least to the visible part of them, but prodigiously devoted to the ideas of virtue, liberty, and so forth, are generally *whigs*. It happens agreeably enough to this

They live, for the most part, in an ideal world of their own; and it would perhaps be as well if they were confined to it. Their flights and fancies are delightful to themselves and to every body else: but they make strange work with matter of fact; and if they were allowed to act in public affairs, would soon turn the world the wrong side out.. They indulge only their own flattering dreams or superstitious prejudices, and make idols or bug-bears of whatever they please, caring as little for history or particular facts as for general reasoning. They are dangerous leaders and treacherous followers. Their inordinate vanity runs them into all sorts of extravagances; and their habitual effeminacy gets them out of them at any price. Always pampering their own appetite for excitement, and wishing to astonish others, their whole aim is to produce a dramatic effect, one way or other—to shock or delight the observers; and they are apparently as indifferent to the consequences of what they write, as if the world were merely a stage for them to play their fantastic tricks on, and to make their admirers weep. Not less romantic in their servility than their independence, and equally importunate candidates for fame or

maxim, that the whigs are friends to that wise, plodding, unpoetical people, the Dutch.”—Shenstone’s Letters, 1746, p. 105.

infamy, they require only to be distinguished, and are not scrupulous as to the means of distinction. Jacobins or anti-Jacobins—outrageous advocates for anarchy and licentiousness, or flaming apostles of political persecution—always violent and vulgar in their opinions, they oscillate, with a giddy and sickening motion, from one absurdity to another, and expiate the follies of youth by the heartless vices of advancing age. None so ready as they to carry every paradox to its most revolting and ridiculous excess—none so sure to caricature, in their own persons, every feature of the prevailing philosophy! In their days of blissful innovation, indeed, the philosophers crept at their heels like hounds, while they darted on their distant quarry like hawks; stooping always to the lowest game; eagerly snuffing up the most tainted and rankest scents; feeding their vanity with a notion of the strength of their digestion of poisons, and most ostentatiously avowing whatever would most effectually startle the prejudices of others.* Preposterously seeking for

* To give the modern reader *un petit aperçu* of the tone of literary conversation about five or six and twenty years ago, I remember being present in a large party composed of men, women, and children, in which two persons of remarkable candour and ingenuity were labouring (as hard as if they had been paid for it) to prove that all prayer was a mode of dictating to the Almighty,

the stimulus of novelty in abstract truth, and the eclat of theatrical exhibition in pure reason, it is no wonder that these persons at last became disgusted with their own pursuits, and that in consequence of the violence of the change, the

and an arrogant assumption of superiority. A gentleman present said, with great simplicity and *naïveté*, that there was one prayer which did not strike him as coming exactly under this description, and being asked what that was, made answer, "The Samaritan's—'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!'" This appeal by no means settled the sceptical dogmatism of the two disputants, and soon after the proposer of the objection went away; on which one of them observed with great marks of satisfaction and triumph—"I am afraid we have shocked that gentleman's prejudices." This did not appear to me at that time quite the thing, and this happened in the year 1794. Twice has the iron entered my soul. Twice have the dastard, vaunting, venal crew gone over it; once as they went forth, conquering and to conquer, with reason by their side, glittering like a faulchion, trampling on prejudices and marching fearlessly on in the work of regeneration: once again, when they returned with retrograde steps, like Cacus's oxen dragged backward by the heels, to the den of legitimacy, "rout on rout, confusion worse confounded," with places and pensions and the Quarterly Review dangling from their pockets, and shouting, "Deliverance for mankind," for "the worst, the second fall of man." Yet I have endured all this marching and countermarching of poets, philosophers, and politicians over my head, as well as I could, like "the camomile that thrives, the more 'tis trod upon." By Heavens, I think I'll endure it no longer!

most inveterate prejudices and uncharitable sentiments have rushed in to fill up the void produced by the previous annihilation of common sense, wisdom, and humanity!

I have so far been a little hard on poets and reformers. Lest I should be thought to have taken a particular spite to them, I will try to make them the *amende honorable* by turning to a passage in the writings of one who neither is nor ever pretended to be a poet or a reformer, but the antithesis of both, an accomplished man of the world, a courtier, and a wit, and who has endeavoured to move the previous question on all schemes of fanciful improvement, and all plans of practical reform, by the following declaration. It is in itself a finished *common-place*; and may serve as a test whether that sort of smooth, verbal reasoning which passes current because it excites no one idea in the mind, is much freer from inherent absurdity than the wildest paradox.

“My lot,” says Mr Canning in the conclusion of his Liverpool speech, “is cast under the British Monarchy. Under that I have lived; under that I have seen my country flourish;* under that I have seen it enjoy as great a share of prosperity, of happiness, and of glory, as I believe any modification of human society to be

* Troja fuit.

capable of bestowing ; and I am not prepared to sacrifice or to hazard the fruit of centuries of experience, of centuries of struggles, and of more than one century of liberty, as perfect as ever blessed any country upon the earth, for visionary schemes of ideal perfectibility, for doubtful experiments even of possible improvement.”—*Mr Canning’s Speech at the Liverpool Dinner, given in celebration of his Re-election, March 18, 1820. Fourth Edition, revised and corrected.*

Such is Mr Canning’s common-place ; and in giving the following answer to it, I do not think I can be accused of falling into that extravagant and unmitigated strain of paradoxical reasoning, with which I have already found so much fault.

The passage then which the gentleman here throws down as an effectual bar to all change, to all innovation, to all improvement, contains at every step a refutation of his favourite creed. He is not “prepared to sacrifice or to hazard the fruit of centuries of experience, of centuries of struggles, and of one century of liberty, for visionary schemes of ideal perfectibility.” So here are centuries of experience and centuries of struggles to arrive at *one century of liberty* ; and yet, according to Mr Canning’s general advice, we are never to make any experiments or to engage in any struggles either with a view to future improvement, or to recover benefits

which we have lost. Man (they repeat it in our ears, line upon line, precept upon precept) is always to turn his back upon the future, and his face to the past. He is to believe that nothing is possible or desirable but what he finds already established to his hands in time-worn institutions or inveterate abuses. His understanding is to be buried in implicit creeds, and he himself is to be made into a political automaton, a go-cart of superstition and prejudice, never stirring hand or foot but as he is pulled by the wires and strings of the state-conjurors, the legitimate managers and proprietors of the show. His powers of will, of thought, and action are to be paralysed in him, and he is to be told and to believe that whatever is, must be. Perhaps Mr Canning will say that men were to make experiments, and to resolve upon struggles formerly, but that now they are to surrender their understandings and their rights into his keeping. But at what period of the world was the system of political wisdom *stereotyped*, like Mr Cobbett's 'Gold against Paper,' so as to admit of no farther alterations or improvements, or correction of errors of the press? When did the experience of mankind become stationary or retrograde, so that we must act from the obsolete inferences of past periods, not from the living impulse of existing circumstances, and the consolidated force of the knowledge and reflec-

tion of ages up to the present instant, naturally projecting us forward into the future, and not driving us back upon the past? Did Mr Canning never hear, did he never think, of Lord Bacon's axiom, "That those times are the ancient times in which we live, and not those which counting backwards from ourselves, *ordine retrogrado*, we call ancient?" The latest periods must necessarily have the advantage of the sum-total of the experience that has gone before them, and of the sum-total of human reason exerted upon that experience, or upon the solid foundation of nature and history, moving on in its majestic course, not fluttering in the empty air of fanciful speculation, nor leaving a gap of centuries between us and the long-mouldered grounds on which we are to think and act. Mr Canning cannot plead with Mr Burke that no discoveries, no improvements have been made in political science and institutions; for he says we have arrived through centuries of experience and of struggles at one century of liberty. Is the world then at a stand? Mr Canning knows well enough that it is in ceaseless progress and everlasting change, but he would have it to be the change from liberty to slavery, the progress of corruption, not of regeneration and reform. Why, no longer ago than the present year, the two epochs of November and January last presented (he tells us in this very speech) as great

a contrast in the state of the country as any two periods of its history the most opposite or most remote. Well then, are our experience and our struggles at an end? No, he says, "the crisis is at hand for every man to take part for, or against the institutions of the British Monarchy." His part is taken: "but of this be sure, to do aught good will never be his task!" He will guard carefully against all possible improvements, and maintain all possible abuses sacred, impassive, immortal. He will not give up the fruit of centuries of experience, of struggles, and of one century at least of liberty, since the Revolution of 1688, for any doubtful experiments whatever. We are arrived at the end of our experience, our struggles, and our liberty—and are to anchor through time and eternity in the harbour of passive obedience and non-resistance. We (the people of England) will tell Mr Canning frankly what we think of his magnanimous and ulterior resolution. It is our own; and it has been the resolution of mankind in all ages of the world. No people, no age, ever threw away the fruits of past wisdom, or the enjoyment of present blessings, for visionary schemes of ideal perfection. It is the knowledge of the past, the actual infliction of the present, that has produced all changes, all innovations, and all improvements—not (as is pretended) the chimerical anticipation of possible

advantages, but the intolerable pressure of long-established, notorious, aggravated, and growing abuses. It was the experience of the enormous and disgusting abuses and corruptions of the Papal power that produced the Reformation. It was the experience of the vexations and oppressions of the feudal system that produced its abolition after centuries of sufferings and of struggles. It was the experience of the caprice and tyranny of the Monarch that extorted *Magna Charta* at Runnymede. It was the experience of the arbitrary and insolent abuse of the prerogative in the reigns of the Tudors and the first Stuarts that produced the resistance to it in the reign of Charles I and the Grand Rebellion. It was the experience of the incorrigible attachment of the same Stuarts to Popery and Slavery, with their many acts of cruelty, treachery, and bigotry, that produced the Revolution, and set the House of Brunswick on the Throne. It was the conviction of the incurable nature of the abuse, increasing with time and patience, and overcoming the obstinate attachment to old habits and prejudices, an attachment not to be rooted out by fancy or theory, but only by repeated, lasting, and incontrovertible proofs, that has abated every nuisance that ever was abated, and introduced every innovation and every example of revolution and reform. It was the experience of the abuses, licentiousness,

and innumerable oppressions of the old Government in France that produced the French Revolution. It was the experience of the determination of the British Ministry to harass, insult, and plunder them, that produced the Revolution of the United States. Away then with this miserable cant against fanciful theories, and appeal to acknowledged experience! Men never act against their prejudices but from the spur of their feelings, the necessity of their situations—their theories are adapted to their practical convictions and their varying circumstances. Nature has ordered it so, and Mr Canning, by shewing off his rhetorical paces, by his “ambuling and lipping and nicknaming God’s creatures,” cannot invert that order, efface the history of the past, or arrest the progress of the future.—Public opinion is the result of public events and public feelings; and government must be moulded by that opinion, or maintain itself in opposition to it by the sword. Mr Canning indeed will not consent that the social machine should in any case receive a different direction from what it has had, “lest it should be hurried over the precipice and dashed to pieces.” These warnings of national ruin and terrific accounts of political precipices put one in mind of Edgar’s exaggerations to Gloster: they make one’s hair stand on end in the perusal; but the poor old man, like poor Old England, could fall no lower

than he was. Mr Montgomery, the ingenious and amiable poet, after he had been shut up in solitary confinement for a year and a half for printing the Duke of Richmond's Letter on Reform, when he first walked out into the narrow path of the adjoining field, was seized with an apprehension that he should fall over it, as if he had trod on the brink of an abrupt declivity. The author of the loyal Speech at the Liverpool Dinner has been so long kept in the solitary confinement of his prejudices, and the dark cells of his interest and vanity, that he is afraid of being dashed to pieces if he makes a single false step, to the right or the left, from his dangerous and crooked policy. As to himself, his ears are no doubt closed to any advice that might here be offered him ; and as to his country, he seems bent on its destruction. If, however, an example of the futility of all his projects and all his reasonings on a broader scale, "to warn and scare, be wanting," let him look at Spain, and take leisure to recover from his incredulity and his surprise. Spain, as Ferdinand, as the Monarchy, has fallen from its pernicious height, never to rise again : Spain, as Spain, as the Spanish people, has risen from the tomb of liberty, never (it is to be hoped) to sink again under the yoke of the bigot and the oppressor !

ESSAY XI.

ON VULGARITY AND AFFECTATION.

FEW subjects are more nearly allied than these two—vulgarity and affectation. It may be said of them truly that “thin partitions do their bounds divide.” There cannot be a surer proof of a low origin or of an innate meanness of disposition, than to be always talking and thinking of being genteel. One must feel a strong tendency to that which one is always trying to avoid: whenever we pretend, on all occasions, a mighty contempt for anything, it is a pretty clear sign that we feel ourselves very nearly on a level with it. Of the two classes of people, I hardly know which is to be regarded with most distaste, the vulgar aping the genteel, or the genteel constantly sneering at and endeavouring to distinguish themselves from the vulgar. These two sets of persons are always thinking of one another; the lower of the higher with envy, the more fortunate of their less happy neighbours with contempt. They are habitually placed in

opposition to each other; jostle in their pretensions at every turn; and the same objects and train of thought (only reversed by the relative situation of either party) occupy their whole time and attention. The one are straining every nerve, and outraging common sense, to be thought genteel; the others have no other object or idea in their heads than not to be thought vulgar. This is but poor spite; a very pitiful style of ambition. To be merely not that which one heartily despises, is a very humble claim to superiority: to despise what one really is, is still worse. Most of the characters in Miss Burney's novels, the Branghtons, the Smiths, the Dubsters, the Cecilias, the Delvilles, &c. are well met in this respect, and much of a piece: the one half are trying not to be taken for themselves, and the other half not to be taken for the first. They neither of them have any pretensions of their own, or real standard of worth. "A feather will turn the scale of their avoirdupois:" though the fair authoress was not aware of the metaphysical identity of her principal and subordinate characters. Affectation is the master-key to both.

Gentility is only a more select and artificial kind of vulgarity. It cannot exist but by a sort of borrowed distinction. It plumes itself up and revels in the homely pretensions of the mass of mankind. It judges of the worth of every-

thing by name, fashion, opinion; and hence, from the conscious absence of real qualities or sincere satisfaction in itself, it builds its supercilious and fantastic conceit on the wretchedness and wants of others. Violent antipathies are always suspicious, and betray a secret affinity. The difference between the "Great Vulgar and the Small" is mostly in outward circumstances. The coxcomb criticises the dress of the clown, as the pedant cavils at the bad grammar of the illiterate, or the prude is shocked at the backslidings of her frail acquaintance. Those who have the fewest resources in themselves, naturally seek the food of their self-love elsewhere. The most ignorant people find most to laugh at in strangers: scandal and satire prevail most in country-places; and a propensity to ridicule every the slightest or most palpable deviation from what we happen to approve, ceases with the progress of common sense and decency.*

* "If an European, when he has cut off his beard and put false hair on his head, or bound up his own natural hair in regular hard knots, as unlike nature as he can possibly make it; and after having rendered them immoveable by the help of the fat of hogs, has covered the whole with flour, laid on by a machine with the utmost regularity; if when thus attired he issues forth, and meets a Cherokee Indian, who has bestowed as much time at his toilet, and laid on with equal care and attention his yellow and red oker on particular parts of his forehead or cheeks, as he judges most becoming;

True worth does not exult in the faults and deficiencies of others; as true refinement turns away from grossness and deformity, instead of being tempted to indulge in an unmanly triumph over it. Raphael would not faint away at the daubing of a sign-post, nor Homer hold his head the higher for being in the company of a Grub-street bard. Real power, real excellence, does not seek for a foil in inferiority; nor fear contamination from coming in contact with that which is coarse and homely. It reposes on itself, and is equally free from spleen and affectation. But the spirit of gentility is the mere essence of spleen and affectation;—of affected delight in its own *would-be* qualifications, and of ineffable disdain poured out upon the involuntary blunders or accidental disadvantages of those whom it chooses to treat as its inferiors. Thus a fashionable Miss titters till she is ready to burst her sides at the uncouth shape of a bonnet, or the abrupt drop of a courtesy (such as Jeannie Deans would make) in a country-girl who comes to be hired by her Mamma as a servant:—yet to show how little foundation there is for this hysterical expression of her extreme good opinion of herself and contempt

whoever of these two despises the other for this attention to the fashion of his country, whichever first feels himself provoked to laugh, is the barbarian.”—Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Discourses.

for the untutored rustic, she would herself the next day be delighted with the very same shaped bonnet if brought her by a French milliner and told it was all the fashion, and in a week's time will become quite familiar with the maid, and chatter with her (upon equal terms) about caps and ribbons and lace by the hour together. There is no difference between them but that of situation in the kitchen or in the parlour: let circumstances bring them together, and they fit like hand and glove. It is like mistress, like maid. Their talk, their thoughts, their dreams, their likings and dislikes are the same. The mistress's head runs continually on dress and finery, so does the maid's: the young lady longs to ride in a coach and six, so does the maid, if she could: Miss forms a *beau ideal* of a lover with black eyes and rosy cheeks, which does not differ from that of her attendant: both like a smart man, the one the footman and the other his master, for the same reason: both like handsome furniture and fine houses: both apply the terms, *shocking* and *disagreeable*, to the same things and persons: both have a great notion of balls, plays, treats, song-books and love-tales: both like a wedding or a christening, and both would give their little fingers to see a coronation, with this difference, that the one has a chance of getting a seat at it, and the other is dying with envy that she has not. Indeed, this

last is a ceremony that delights equally the greatest monarch and the meanest of his subjects—the vilest of the rabble. Yet this, which is the height of gentility and the consummation of external distinction and splendour, is, I should say, a vulgar ceremony. For what degree of refinement, of capacity, of virtue is required in the individual who is so distinguished, or is necessary to his enjoying this idle and imposing parade of his person? Is he delighted with the state-coach and gilded pannels? So is the poorest wretch that gazes at it. Is he struck with the spirit, the beauty and symmetry of the eight cream-coloured horses? There is not one of the immense multitude, who flock to see the sight from town or country, St Giles's or White-chapel, young or old, rich or poor, gentle or simple, who does not agree to admire the same object. Is he delighted with the yeomen of the guard, the military escort, the groups of ladies, the badges of sovereign power, the kingly crown, the marshal's truncheon and the judge's robe, the array that precedes and follows him, the crowded streets, the windows hung with eager looks? So are the mob, for they "have eyes and see them!" There is no one faculty of mind or body, natural or acquired, essential to the principal figure in this procession, more than is common to the meanest and most despised attendant on it. A wax-work figure

would answer the same purpose: a Lord Mayor of London has as much tinsel to be proud of. I would rather have a king do something that no one else has the power or magnanimity to do, or say something that no one else has the wisdom to say, or look more handsome, more thoughtful or benign, than any one else in his dominions. But I see nothing to raise one's idea of him in his being made a show of: if the pageant would do as well without the man, the man would do as well without the pageant! Kings have been declared to be "lovers of low company;" and this maxim, besides the reason sometimes assigned for it, viz., that they meet with less opposition to their wills from such persons, will, I suspect, be found to turn at last on the consideration I am here stating, that they also meet with more sympathy in their tastes. The most ignorant and thoughtless have the greatest admiration of the baubles, the outward symbols of pomp and power, the sound and show, which are the habitual delight and mighty prerogative of kings. The stupidest slave worships the gaudiest tyrant. The same gross motives appeal to the same gross capacities, flatter the pride of the superior, and excite the servility of the dependant: whereas a higher reach of moral and intellectual refinement might seek in vain for higher proofs of internal worth and inherent majesty in the object of its idolatry,

and not finding the divinity lodged within, the unreasonable expectation raised would probably end in mortification on both sides! There is little to distinguish a king from his subjects but the rabble's shout—if he loses that, and is reduced to the forlorn hope of gaining the suffrages of the wise and good, he is of all men the most miserable.—But enough of this.

“I like it,” says Miss Branghton,* in *Evelina*, (meaning the Opera), “because it is not vulgar.” That is, she likes it, not because there is anything to like in it, but because other people are prevented from liking or knowing anything about it. Janus Weathercock, Esq. laugheth to scorn and spitefully entreateth and hugely condemneth my dramatic criticisms in the ‘*London*,’ for a like exquisite reason. I must therefore make an example of him, *in terrorem* to all such hypercritics. He finds fault with me and calls my taste vulgar, because I go to Sadler’s Wells (“a place he has heard of”—O Lord, Sir!)—because I notice the Miss Dennetts, “great favourites with the Whitechapel orders”—praise Miss Valancy, “a bouncing Columbine at

* This name was originally spelt Braughton in the manuscript, and was altered to Branghton by a mistake of the printer. Branghton, however, was thought a good name for the occasion, and was suffered to stand. “Dip it in the ocean,” as Sterne’s barber says of the buckle, “and it will stand!”

Ashley's and them there places, as his barber informs him," (has he no way of establishing himself in his own good opinion but by triumphing over his barber's bad English?)—and finally, because I recognise the existence of the Cobourg and the Surrey theatres, at the names of which he cries "Faugh!" with great significance, as if he had some personal disgust at them, and yet he would be supposed never to have entered them. It is not his cue as a well-bred critic. *C'est beau ça*. Now this appears to me a very crude, unmeaning, indiscriminate, wholesale, and vulgar way of thinking. It is prejudging things in the lump, by names, and places, and classes, instead of judging of them by what they are in themselves; by their real qualities and shades of distinction. There is no selection, truth, or delicacy in such a mode of proceeding. It is affecting ignorance, and making it a title to wisdom. It is a vapid assumption of superiority. It is exceeding impertinence. It is rank coxcombry—it is nothing in the world else. To condemn because the multitude admire is as essentially vulgar as to admire because they admire. There is no exercise of taste or judgment in either case: both are equally repugnant to good sense; and of the two I should prefer the good-natured side. I would as soon agree with my barber as differ from him: and why should I make a point of re-

versing the sentence of the Whitechapel orders? Or how can it affect my opinion of the merits of an actor at the Cobourg or the Surrey theatres, that these theatres are in or out of the Bills of Mortality? This is an easy, short-hand way of judging, as gross as it is mechanical. It is not a difficult matter to settle questions of taste by consulting the map of London, or to prove your liberality by geographical distinctions. Janus jumbles things together strangely. If he had seen Mr Kean in a provincial theatre, at Exeter or Taunton, he would have thought it vulgar to admire him: but when he had been stamped in London, Janus would no doubt show his discernment and the subtlety of his tact for the display of character and passion, by not being behind the fashion. The Miss Dennetts are "little unformed girls," for no other reason than because they danced at one of the Minor Theatres: let them but come out on the Opera boards, and let the beauty and fashion of the season greet them with a fairy shower of delighted applause, and they would outshine Milanie "with the foot of fire." His gorge rises at the mention of a certain quarter of the town: whatever passes current in another, he "swallows total grist unsifted, husks and all." This is not taste, but folly. At this rate, the hackney-coachman who drives him, or his horse Contributor, whom he has introduced as a select

personage to the vulgar reader, knows as much of the matter as he does. In a word, the answer to all this in the first instance, is to say what vulgarity is. Now its essence, I imagine, consists in taking manners, actions, words, opinions, on trust from others, without examining one's own feelings, or weighing the merits of the case. It is coarseness or shallowness of taste, arising from want of individual refinement, together with the confidence and presumption inspired by example and numbers. It may be defined to be a prostitution of the mind or body to ape the more or less obvious defects of others, because by so doing we shall secure the suffrages of those we associate with. To affect a gesture, an opinion, a phrase, because it is the rage with a large number of persons, or to hold it in abhorrence because another set of persons, very little, if at all, better informed, cry it down to distinguish themselves from the former, is in either case equal vulgarity and absurdity. A thing is not vulgar merely because it is common. 'Tis common to breathe, to see, to feel, to live. Nothing is vulgar that is natural, spontaneous, unavoidable. Grossness is not vulgarity, ignorance is not vulgarity, awkwardness is not vulgarity: but all these become vulgar when they are affected and shown off on the authority of others, or to fall in with *the fashion* or the company we keep. Caliban is coarse enough, but

surely he is not vulgar. We might as well spurn the clod under our feet, and call it vulgar. Cobbett is coarse enough, but he is not vulgar. He does not belong to the herd. Nothing real, nothing original can be vulgar: but I should think an imitator of Cobbett a vulgar man. Emery's Yorkshireman is vulgar, because he is a Yorkshireman. It is the cant and gibberish, the cunning and low life of a particular district; it has "a stamp exclusive and provincial." He might "gabble most brutishly," and yet not fall under the letter of the definition: but "his speech bewrayeth him," his dialect (like the jargon of a Bond-street loungee) is the damning circumstance. If he were a mere blockhead, it would not signify: but he thinks himself a *knowing hand*, according to the notions and practices of those with whom he was brought up, and which he thinks *the go* everywhere. In a word, this character is not the offspring of untutored nature, but of bad habits; it is made up of ignorance and conceit. It has a mixture of *slang* in it. All slang phrases are for the same reason vulgar; but there is nothing vulgar in the common English idiom. Simplicity is not vulgarity; but the looking to affectation of any sort for distinction is. A cockney is a vulgar character, whose imagination cannot wander beyond the suburbs of the metropolis: so is a fellow who is always thinking of the

High street, Edinburgh. We want a name for this last character. An opinion is vulgar that is stewed in the rank breath of the rabble: nor is it a bit purer or more refined for having passed through the well-cleansed teeth of a whole court. The inherent vulgarity is in having no other feeling on any subject than the crude, blind, headlong, gregarious notion acquired by sympathy with the mixed multitude or with a fastidious minority, who are just as insensible to the real truth, and as indifferent to everything but their own frivolous and vexatious pretensions. The upper are not wiser than the lower orders, because they resolve to differ from them. The fashionable have the advantage of the unfashionable in nothing but the fashion. The true vulgar are the *servum pecus imitatorum*—the herd of pretenders to what they do not feel and to what is not natural to them, whether in high or low life. To belong to any class, to move in any rank or sphere of life, is not a very exclusive distinction, or test of refinement. Refinement will in all classes be the exception, not the rule; and the exception may fall out in one class as well as another. A king is but an hereditary title. A nobleman is only one of the House of Peers. To be a knight or alderman is confessedly a vulgar thing. The king the other day made Sir Walter Scott a baronet, but not all the power of the three

estates could make another Author of Waverley. Princes, heroes, are often common-place people: Hamlet was not a vulgar character, neither was Don Quixote. To be an author, to be a painter, is nothing. It is a trick, it is a trade.

“An author! ’tis a venerable name:
How few deserve it, yet what numbers claim.”

Nay, to be a Member of the Royal Academy, or a Fellow of the Royal Society, is but a vulgar distinction. But to be a Virgil, a Milton, a Raphael, a Claude, is what fell to the lot of humanity but once! I do not think *they* were vulgar people, though for anything I know to the contrary, the First Lord of the Bedchamber may be a very vulgar man: for anything I know to the contrary, he may not be so.—Such are pretty much my notions of gentility and vulgarity.

There is a well-dressed and an ill-dressed mob, both which I hate. *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.* The vapid affectation of the one is to me even more intolerable than the gross insolence and brutality of the other. If a set of low-lived fellows are noisy, rude, and boisterous to show their disregard of the company, a set of fashionable coxcombs are, to a nauseous degree, finical and effeminate to show their thorough breeding. The one are governed by their feelings, however coarse and misguided, which is something: the others consult only appearances,

which are nothing, either as a test of happiness or virtue. Hogarth in his prints has trimmed the balance of pretension between the downright blackguard and the *soi-disant* fine gentleman unanswerably. It does not appear in his moral demonstrations (whatever it may do in the genteel letter-writing of Lord Chesterfield, or the chivalrous rhapsodies of Burke) that vice, by losing all its grossness, loses half its evil. It becomes more contemptible, not less disgusting. What is there in common, for instance, between his beaux and belles, his rakes and his coquets, and the men and women, the true heroic and ideal characters in Raphael? But his people of fashion and quality are just upon a par with the low, the selfish, the *unideal* characters in the contrasted view of human life, and are often the very same characters, only changing places. If the lower ranks are actuated by envy and uncharitableness towards the upper, the latter have scarcely any feelings but of pride, contempt, and aversion to the lower. If the poor would pull down the rich to get at their good things, the rich would tread down the poor as in a vine-press, and squeeze the last shilling out of their pockets, and the last drop of blood out of their veins. If the headstrong self-will and unruly turbulence of a common ale-house are shocking, what shall we say to the studied insincerity, the insipid want of common sense, the

callous insensibility, of the drawing-room and *boudoir*? I would rather see the feelings of our common nature (for they are the same at bottom) expressed in the most naked and unqualified way, than see every feeling of our nature suppressed, stifled, hermetically sealed, under the smooth, cold, glittering varnish of pretended refinement and conventional politeness. The one may be corrected by being better informed; the other is incorrigible, wilful, heartless depravity. I cannot describe the contempt and disgust I have felt at the tone of what would be thought good company, when I have witnessed the sleek, smiling, glossy, gratuitous assumption of superiority to every feeling of humanity, honesty, or principle, as a part of the etiquette, the mental and moral *costume* of the table, and every profession of toleration or favour for the lower orders, that is, for the great mass of our fellow-creatures, treated as an indecorum and breach of the harmony of well-regulated society. In short, I prefer a bear-garden to the adder's den. Or to put this case in its extremest point of view, I have more patience with men in a rude state of nature outraging the human form, than I have with apes "making mops and mows" at the extravagances they have first provoked. I can endure the brutality (as it is termed) of mobs better than the inhumanity of courts. The violence of the one rages like a

fire; the insidious policy of the other strikes like a pestilence, and is more fatal and inevitable. The slow poison of despotism is worse than the convulsive struggles of anarchy. "Of all evils," says Hume, "anarchy is the shortest lived." The one may "break out like a wild overthrow;" but the other, from its secret, sacred stand, operates unseen, and undermines the happiness of kingdoms for ages, lurks in the hollow cheek, and stares you in the face in the ghastly eye of want, and agony, and woe. It is dreadful to hear the noise and uproar of an infuriated multitude stung by the sense of wrong, and maddened by sympathy: it is more appalling to think of the smile answered by other gracious smiles, of the whisper echoed by other assenting whispers, which doom them first to despair and then to destruction. Popular fury finds its counterpart in courtly servility. If every outrage is to be apprehended from the one, every iniquity is deliberately sanctioned by the other, without regard to justice or decency. The word of a king, "Go thou and do likewise," makes the stoutest heart dumb: truth and honesty shrink before it.* If there are watch-

* A lady of quality, in allusion to the gallantries of a reigning Prince, being told, "I suppose it will be your turn next," said, "No, I hope not, for you know it is impossible to refuse!"

words for the rabble, have not the polite and fashionable their hackneyed phrases, their fulsome, unmeaning jargon as well? Both are to me anathema!

To return to the first question, as it regards individual and private manners. There is a fine illustration of the effects of preposterous and affected gentility in the character of Gertrude, in the old comedy of *Eastward Hoe*, written by Ben Jonson, Marston, and Chapman in conjunction. This play is supposed to have given rise to Hogarth's series of prints of the *Idle* and *Industrious Apprentice*; and there is something exceedingly Hogarthian in the view both of vulgar and of genteel life here displayed. The character of Gertrude in particular, the heroine of the piece, is inimitably drawn. The mixture of vanity and meanness, the internal worthlessness and external pretence, the rustic ignorance and fine lady-like airs, the intoxication of novelty and infatuation of pride, appear like a dream or romance, rather than anything in real life. *Cinderella* and her glass slipper are common-place to it. She is not, like *Millimant* (a century afterwards), the accomplished fine lady, but a pretender to all the foppery and finery of the character. It is the honey-moon with her ladyship, and her folly is at the full. To be a wife and the wife of a knight are to her pleasures "worn in their newest gloss," and nothing can

exceed her raptures in the contemplation of both parts of the dilemma. It is not familiarity but novelty, that weds her to the court. She rises into the air of gentility from the ground of a city life, and flutters about there with all the fantastic delight of a butterfly that has just changed its caterpillar state. The sound of My Lady intoxicates her with delight, makes her giddy, and almost turns her brain. On the bare strength of it she is ready to turn her father and mother out of doors, and treats her brother and sister with infinite disdain and judicial hardness of heart. With some speculators the modern philosophy has deadened and distorted all the natural affections: and before abstract ideas and the mischievous refinements of literature were introduced, nothing was to be met with in the primeval state of society but simplicity and pastoral innocence of manners—

“And all was conscience and tender heart.”

This historical play gives the lie to the above theory, pretty broadly yet delicately. Our heroine is as vain as she is ignorant, and as unprincipled as she is both; and without an idea or wish of any kind but that of adorning her person in the glass, and being called and thought a lady, something superior to a citizen's

wife.* She is so bent on finery that she believes in miracles to obtain it, and expects the fairies

* “ *Girtred.* For the passion of patience, look if Sir Petronel approach. That sweet, that fine, that delicate, that ——, for love’s sake, tell me if he come. Oh, sister Mill, though my father be a low-capt tradesman, yet I must be a lady, and I praise God my mother must call me madam. Does he come? Off with this gown for shame’s sake, off with this gown! Let not my knight take me in the city cut, in any hand! Tear’t! Pox on’t (does he come?), tear’t off! *Thus while she sleeps, I sorrow for her sake.* (Sings.)

Mildred. Lord, sister, with what an immodest impatience and disgraceful scorn do you put off your city-tire! I am sorry to think you imagine to right yourself in wronging that which hath made both you and us.

Gir. I tell you, I cannot endure it: I must be a lady: do you wear your quoiff with a London licket! your stamel petticoat with two guards! the buffin gown with the tuf-tafitty cap and the velvet lace! I must be a lady, and I will be a lady. I like some humours of the city dames well: to eat cherries only at an angel a pound; good: to dye rich scarlet black; pretty: to line a grogram gown clean through with velvet; tolerable: their pure linen, their smocks of three pound a smock, are to be borne withal; but your mincing niceries, taffity pipkins, durance petticoats, and silver bodkins—God’s my life! as I shall be a lady, I cannot endure it.

Mil. Well, sister, those that scorn their nest, oft fly with a sick wing.

Gir. Bow-bell! Alas, poor Mill, when I am a lady, I’ll pray for thee yet i’faith; nay, and I’ll vouchsafe to call thee sister Mill still: for though thou art not likely

to bring it her. She is quite above thinking of a settlement, jointure, or pin-money. She

to be a lady as I am, yet surely thou art a creature of God's making, and may'st peradventure be saved as soon as I—does he come? *And ever and anon she doubled in her song.*

Mil. Now, lady's my comfort, what a profane ape's here!

Enter Sir PETRONEL FLASH, Mr TOUCHSTONE, and Mrs TOUCHSTONE.

Gir. Is my knight come? O the lord, my band! Sister do my cheeks look well? Give me a little box o' the ear that I may seem to blush. Now, now! so, there, there! here he is! O my dearest delight! Lord, lord! and how does my knight?

Touchstone. Fie, with more modesty.

Gir. Modesty, why, I am no citizen now. Modesty! am I not to be married? You're best to keep me modest, now I am to be a lady.

Sir Petronel. Boldness is a good fashion, and court-like.

Gir. Aye, in a country lady I hope it is, as I shall be. And how chance ye came no sooner, knight?

Sir Pet. Faith, I was so entertained in the progress with one Count Epernoun, a Welsh knight: we had a match at baloon too with my Lord Whackum for four crowns.

Gir. And when shall's be married, my knight?

Sir Pet. I am come now to consummate: and your father may call a poor knight son-in-law.

Mrs Touchstone. Yes, that he is a knight: I know where he had money to pay the gentlemen usher and heralds their fees. Aye, that he is a knight: and so might you have been too, if you had been aught else but

takes the will for the deed all through the piece, and is so besotted with this ignorant, vulgar

an ass, as well as some of your neighbours. An' I thought you would not ha' been knighted, 'as I am an honest woman, I would ha' dubbed you myself. I praise God, I have wherewithal. But as for you, daughter —

Gir. Aye, mother, I must be a lady to-morrow ; and by your leave, mother (I speak it not without my duty, but only in the right of my husband), I must take place of you, mother.

Mrs Touch. That you shall, lady-daughter ; and have a coach as well as I.

Gir. Yes, mother ; but my coach-horses must take the wall of your coach-horses.

Touch. Come, come, the day grows low ; 'tis supper-time : and, sir, respect my daughter ; she has refused for you wealthy and honest matches, known good men.

Gir. Body o' truth, citizens, citizens ! Sweet knight, as soon as ever we are married, take me to thy mercy, out of this miserable city. Presently : carry me out of the scent of Newcastle coal and the hearing of Bow-bell, I beseech thee ; down with me for God's sake."—Act i. scene 1.

[This dotage on sound and show seemed characteristic of that age (see *New Way to Pay Old Debts*, &c.)—as if in the grossness of sense, and the absence of all intellectual and abstract topics of thought and discourse (the thin, circulating medium of the present day), the mind was attracted without the power of resistance to the tinkling sound of its own name with a title added to it, and the image of its own person tricked out in old-fashioned finery. The effect, no doubt, was also more marked and striking from the contrast between the ordinary penury and poverty of the age and the first and

notion of rank and title, as a real thing that cannot be counterfeited, that she is the dupe of her own fine stratagems, and marries a gull, a dolt, a broken adventurer for an accomplished and brave gentleman. Her meanness is equal to her folly and her pride (and nothing can be greater),

more extravagant demonstrations of luxury and artificial refinement.]

* * * * " *Girtred*. Good lord, that there are no fairies now-a-days, Syn.

Syncliff. Why, madam?

Gir. To do miracles, and bring ladies money. Sure, if we lay in a cleanly house, they would haunt it, Synne? I'll try. I'll sweep the chamber soon at night, and set a dish of water o' the hearth. A fairy may come and bring a pearl or a diamond. We do not know, Synne: or there may be a pot of gold hid in the yard, if we had tools to dig for 't. Why may not we two rise early i' the morning, Synne, afore anybody is up, and find a jewel i' the streets worth a hundred pounds? May not some great court-lady, as she comes from revels at midnight, look out of her coach as 'tis running, and lose such a jewel, and we find it? ha!

Syn. They are pretty waking dreams, these.

Gir. Or may not some old usurer be drunk overnight with a bag of money, and leave it behind him on a stall? For God's sake, Syn, lets rise to-morrow by break of day, and see. I protest, la, if I had as much money as an alderman I would scatter some on 't i' the streets, for poor ladies to find when their knights were laid up. And now I remember my song of the Golden Shower, why may not I have such a fortune? I'll sing it, and try what luck I shall have after it."—Act v. Scene 1.

yet she holds out on the strength of her original pretensions for a long time, and plays the upstart with decent and imposing consistency. Indeed her infatuation and caprices are akin to the flighty perversity of a disordered imagination; and another turn of the wheel of good or evil fortune would have sent her to keep company with Hogarth's *Merveilleuses* in Bedlam, or with Deckar's group of coquets in the same place. The other parts of the play are a dreary lee-shore, like Cuckold's Point on the coast of Essex, where the preconcerted shipwreck takes place that winds up the catastrophe of the piece. But this is also characteristic of the age, and serves as a contrast to the airy and factitious character which is the principal figure in the plot. We had made but little progress from that point till Hogarth's time, if Hogarth is to be believed, in his description of city manners. How wonderfully we have distanced it since!

Without going into this at length, there is one circumstance I would mention in which I think there has been a striking improvement in the family economy of modern times—and that is in the relation of mistresses and servants. After visits and finery, a married woman of the old school had nothing to do but to attend to her housewifery. She had no other resource, no other sense of power, but to harangue and lord it over her domestics. Modern book-edu-

cation supplies the place of the old-fashioned system of kitchen persecution and eloquence. A well-bred woman now seldom goes into the kitchen to look after the servants:—formerly what was called a good manager, an exemplary mistress of a family, did nothing but hunt them from morning to night, from one year's end to another, without leaving them a moment's rest, peace, or comfort. Now a servant is left to do her work without this suspicious and tormenting interference and fault-finding at every step, and she does it all the better. The proverbs about the mistress's eye, &c. are no longer held for current. A woman from this habit, which at last became an unconquerable passion, would scold her maids for fifty years together, and nothing could stop her: now the temptation to read the last new poem or novel, and the necessity of talking of it in the next company she goes into, prevent her—and the benefit to all parties is incalculable!

ESSAY XII.

THE FIGHT.

——— “The *fight*, the *fight*’s the thing,
Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.”

Where there’s a will, there’s a way.—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery lane, about half-past six o’clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall’s where the fight the next day was to be; and I found the proverb nothing “musty” in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did, in great style. It was my *first fight*, yet it more than answered my expectations. Ladies! it is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues; and may they never look cold and askance on one another! Think, ye fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye

kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the ring; and listen with subdued air and without shuddering, to a tale tragic 'only in appearance, and sacred to the FANCY!

I was going down Chancery lane, thinking to ask at Jack Randall's where the fight was to be, when looking through the glass-door of the *Hole in the Wall*, I heard a gentleman asking the same question at Mrs Randall, as the author of 'Waverley' would express it. Now Mrs Randall stood answering the gentleman's question, with all the authenticity of the lady of the Champion of the Light Weights. Thinks I, I'll wait till this person comes out, and learn from him how it is. For to say a truth, I was not fond of going into this house of call for heroes and philosophers, ever since the owner of it (for Jack is no gentleman) threatened once upon a time to kick me out of doors for wanting a mutton-chop at his hospitable board, when the conqueror in thirteen battles was more full of *blue ruin* than of good manners. I was the more mortified at this repulse, inasmuch as I had heard Mr James Simpkins, hosier in the Strand, one day when the character of the *Hole in the Wall* was brought in question, observe—"The house is a very good house, and the company quite genteel: I have been there myself!" Remembering this unkind treatment of mine host, to which mine hostess was also a party, and not wishing

to put her in unquiet thoughts at a time jubilant like the present, I waited at the door, when, who should issue forth but my friend Joe P——s, and, seeing him turn suddenly up Chancery lane with that quick jerk and impatient stride which distinguish a lover of the FANCY, I said, "I'll be hanged if that fellow is not going to the fight, and is on his way to get me to go with him." So it proved in effect, and we agreed to adjourn to my lodgings to discuss measures with that cordiality which makes old friends like new, and new friends like old, on great occasions. We are cold to others only when we are dull in ourselves, and have neither thoughts nor feelings to impart to them. Give a man a topic in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets. Joe and I, though we seldom meet, were an *alter idem* on this memorable occasion, and had not an idea that we did not candidly impart; and "so carelessly did we fleet the time," that I wish no better, when there is another fight, than to have him for a companion on my journey down, and to return with my friend Jack Pigott, talking of what was to happen or of what did happen, with a noble subject always at hand, and liberty to digress to others whenever they offered. Indeed, on my repeating the lines from Spenser in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm,

“What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?”

my last-named ingenious friend stopped me by saying that this, translated into the vulgate, meant “*Going to see a fight.*”

Joe and I could not settle about the method of going down. He said there was a caravan, he understood, to start from Tom Belcher’s at two, which would go there *right out* and back again the next day. Now I never travel all night, and said I should get a cast to Newbury by one of the mails. Joe swore the thing was impossible, and I could only answer that I had made up my mind to it. In short, he seemed to me to waver, said he only came to see if I was going, had letters to write, a cause coming on the day after, and faintly said at parting (for I was bent on setting out that moment)—“Well, we meet at Philippi?” I made the best of my way to Piccadilly. The mail coach stand was bare. “They are all gone,” said I—“this is always the way with me—in the instant I lose the future—if I had not stayed to pour out that last cup of tea, I should have been just in time;”—and cursing my folly and ill-luck together, without inquiring at the coach-office whether the mails were gone or not, I walked on in despite, and to punish my own dilatoriness and want of determination. At any rate, I would not turn back: I might get to Hounslow,

or perhaps farther, to be on my road the next morning. I passed Hyde park corner (my Rubicon), and trusted to fortune. Suddenly I heard the clattering of a Brentford stage, and the fight rushed full upon my fancy. I argued (not unwisely) that even a Brentford coachman was better company than my own thoughts (such as they were just then), and at his invitation mounted the box with him. I immediately stated my case to him—namely, my quarrel with myself for missing the Bath or Bristol mail, and my determination to get on in consequence as well as I could, without any disparagement or insulting comparison between longer or shorter stages. It is a maxim with me that stage-coaches, and consequently stage-coachmen, are respectable in proportion to the distance they have to travel: so I said nothing on that subject to my Brentford friend. Any incipient tendency to an abstract proposition, or (as he might have construed it) to a personal reflection of this kind, was however nipped in the bud; for I had no sooner declared indignantly that I had missed the mails, than he flatly denied that they were gone along, and lo! at the instant three of them drove by in rapid, provoking, orderly succession, as if they would devour the ground before them. Here again I seemed in the contradictory situation of the man in Dryden who exclaims,

“I follow Fate, which does too hard pursue!”

If I had stopped to inquire at the White Horse Cellar, which would not have taken me a minute, I should now have been driving down the road in all the dignified unconcern and *ideal* perfection of mechanical conveyance. The Bath mail I had set my mind upon, and I had missed it, as I miss everything else, by my own absurdity, in putting the will for the deed, and aiming at ends without employing means. "Sir," said he of the Brentford, "the Bath mail will be up presently, my brother-in-law drives it, and I will engage to stop him if there is a place empty." I almost doubted my good genius; but, sure enough, up it drove like lightning, and stopped directly at the call of the Brentford Jehu. I would not have believed this possible, but the brother-in-law of a mail-coach driver is himself no mean man. I was transferred without loss of time from the top of one coach to that of the other, desired the guard to pay my fare to the Brentford coachman for me as I had no change, was accommodated with a great coat, put up my umbrella to keep off a drizzling mist, and we began to cut through the air like an arrow. The mile-stones disappeared one after another, the rain kept off; Tom Turtle* the trainer sat before me on the coach-box, with whom I exchanged civilities as a gentle-

* John Thurtell, to wit.

man going to the fight ; the passion that had transported me an hour before was subdued to pensive regret and conjectural musing on the next day's battle ; I was promised a place inside at Reading, and upon the whole, I thought myself a lucky fellow. Such is the force of imagination ! On the outside of any other coach on the 10th of December, with a Scotch mist drizzling through the cloudy moonlight air, I should have been cold, comfortless, impatient, and, no doubt, wet through ; but seated on the Royal mail, I felt warm and comfortable, the air did me good, the ride did me good, I was pleased with the progress we had made, and confident that all would go well through the journey. When I got inside at Reading, I found Turtle and a stout valetudinarian, whose costume bespoke him one of the FANCY, and who had risen from a three months' sick bed to get into the mail to see the fight. They were intimate, and we fell into a lively discourse. My friend the trainer was confined in his topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers ; beyond this he was "quite chap-fallen," had not a word to throw at a dog, or indeed very wisely fell asleep, when any other game was started. The whole art of training (I, however, learnt from him) consists in two things, exercise and abstinence, abstinence and exercise, repeated alternately and without end. A yolk of an egg

with a spoonful of rum in it is the first thing in a morning, and then a walk of six miles till breakfast. This meal consists of a plentiful supply of tea and toast and beef-steaks. Then another six or seven miles till dinner-time, and another supply of solid beef or mutton with a pint of porter, and perhaps, at the utmost, a couple of glasses of sherry. Martin trains on water, but this increases his infirmity on another very dangerous side. The Gas-man takes now and then a chirping glass (under the rose) to console him, during a six weeks' probation, for the absence of Mrs Hickman—an agreeable woman, with (I understand) a pretty fortune of two hundred pounds. How matter presses on me! What stubborn things are facts! How inexhaustible is nature and art! “It is well,” as I once heard Mr Richmond observe, “to see a variety.” He was speaking of cock-fighting as an edifying spectacle. I cannot deny but that one learns more of what is (I do not say of what *ought to be*) in this desultory mode of practical study, than from reading the same book twice over, even though it should be a moral treatise. Where was I? I was sitting at dinner with the candidate for the honours of the ring, “where good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both.” Then follows an hour of social chat and native glee; and afterwards, to another breathing over heathy hill or dale.

Back to supper, and then to bed, and up by six again—Our hero

“ Follows so the ever-running sun,
With profitable *ardour* ”—

to the day that brings him victory or defeat in the green fairy circle. Is not this life more sweet than mine? I was going to say; but I will not libel any life by comparing it to mine, which is (at the date of these presents) bitter as *coloquintida* and the dregs of *aconitum*!

The invalid in the Bath mail soared a pitch above the trainer, and did not sleep so sound, because he had “more figures and more fantasies.” We talked the hours away merrily. He had faith in surgery, for he had three ribs set right, that had been broken in a *turn-up* at Belcher’s, but thought physicians old women, for they had no antidote in their catalogue for brandy. An indigestion is an excellent common-place for two people that never met before. By way of ingratiating myself, I told him the story of my doctor, who, on my earnestly representing to him that I thought his regimen had done me harm, assured me that the whole pharmacopeia contained nothing comparable to the prescription he had given me; and, as a proof of its undoubted efficacy, said, that “he had had one gentleman with my complaint under his hands for the last fifteen years. This

anecdote made my companion shake the rough sides of his three great coats with boisterous laughter; and Turtle, starting out of his sleep, swore he knew how the fight would go, for he had had a dream about it. Sure enough the rascal told us how the three first rounds went off, but "his dream," like others, "denoted a foregone conclusion." He knew his men. The moon now rose in silver state, and I ventured, with some hesitation, to point out this object of placid beauty, with the blue serene beyond, to the man of science, to which his ear he "seriously inclined," the more as it gave promise *d'un beau jour* for the morrow, and showed the ring undrenched by envious showers, arrayed in sunny smiles. Just then, all going on well, I thought on my friend Joe, whom I had left behind, and said innocently, "There was a block-head of a fellow I left in town, who said there was no possibility of getting down by the mail, and talked of going by a caravan from Belcher's at two in the morning, after he had written some letters." "Why," said he of the lapels, "I should not wonder if that was the very person we saw running about like mad from one coach-door to another, and asking if any one had seen a friend of his, a gentleman going to the fight, whom he had missed stupidly enough by staying to write a note." "Pray, Sir," said my fellow-traveller, "had he a plaid-

cloak on?" "Why, no," said I, "not at the time I left him, but he very well might afterwards, for he offered to lend me one." The plaid-cloak and the letter decided the thing. Joe, sure enough, was in the Bristol mail, which preceded us by about fifty yards. This was droll enough. We had now but a few miles to our place of destination, and the first thing I did on alighting at Newbury, both coaches stopping at the same time, was to call out, "Pray is there a gentleman in that mail of the name of P—s?" "No," said Joe, borrowing something of the vein of Gilpin, "for I have just got out." "Well!" says he, "this is lucky; but you don't know how vexed I was to miss you; for," added he, lowering his voice, "do you know when I left you I went to Belcher's to ask about the caravan, and Mrs Belcher said very obligingly, she couldn't tell about that, but there were two gentlemen who had taken places by the mail and were gone on in a landau, and she could frank us. It's a pity I didn't meet with you; we could then have got down for nothing. But *mum's the word*." It's the devil for any one to tell me a secret, for it is sure to come out in print. I do not care so much to gratify a friend, but the public ear is too great a temptation to me.

Our present business was to get beds and supper at an inn; but this was no easy task.

The public-houses were full, and where you saw a light at a private house, and people poking their heads out of the casement to see what was going on, they instantly put them in and shut the window, the moment you seemed advancing with a suspicious overture for accommodation. Our guard and coachman thundered away at the outer gate of the Crown for some time without effect—such was the greater noise within; and when the doors were unbarred, and we got admittance, we found a party assembled in the kitchen round a good hospitable fire, some sleeping, others drinking, others talking on politics and on the fight. A tall English yeoman (something like Matthews in the face, and quite as great a wag)—

“A lusty man to ben an abbot able,”—

was making such a prodigious noise about rent and taxes, and the price of corn now and formerly, that he had prevented us from being heard at the gate. The first thing I heard him say was to a shuffling fellow who wanted to be off a bet for a shilling glass of brandy and water—“Confound it, man, don’t be *insipid*!” Thinks I, that is a good phrase. It was a good omen. He kept it up so all night, nor flinched with the approach of morning. He was a fine fellow, with sense, wit, and spirit, a hearty body and a joyous mind, free-spoken, frank, convivial—one

of that true English breed that went with Harry the Fifth to the siege of Harfleur—"standing like greyhounds in the slips," &c. We ordered tea and eggs (beds were soon found to be out of the question), and this fellow's conversation was *sauce piquante*. It did one's heart good to see him brandish his oaken towel and to hear him talk. He made mince-meat of a drunken, stupid, red-faced, quarrelsome, *frowsy* farmer, whose nose "he moralized into a thousand similes," making it out a firebrand like Bardolph's. "I'll tell you what, my friend," says he, "the landlady has only to keep you here to save fire and candle. If one was to touch your nose, it would go off like a piece of charcoal." At this the other only grinned like an idiot, the sole variety in his purple face being his little peering grey eyes and yellow teeth; called for another glass, swore he would not stand it; and after many attempts to provoke his humorous antagonist to single combat, which the other turned off (after working him up to a ludicrous pitch of choler) with great adroitness, he fell quietly asleep with a glass of liquor in his hand, which he could not lift to his head. His laughing persecutor made a speech over him, and turning to the opposite side of the room, where they were all sleeping in the midst of this "loud and furious fun," said, "There's a scene, by G—d, for Hogarth to paint. I think he and

Shakspere were our two best men at copying life." This confirmed me in my good opinion of him. Hogarth, Shakspere, and Nature, were just enough for him (indeed for any man) to know. I said, "You read Cobbett, don't you? At least," says I, "you talk just as well as he writes." He seemed to doubt this. But I said, "We have an hour to spare: if you'll get pen, ink, and paper, and keep on talking, I'll write down what you say; and if it doesn't make a capital 'Political Register,' I'll forfeit my head. You have kept me alive to-night, however. I don't know what I should have done without you." He did not dislike this view of the thing, nor my asking if he was not about the size of Jem Belcher; and told me soon afterwards, in the confidence of friendship, that "the circumstance which had given him nearly the greatest concern in his life, was Cribb's beating Jem after he had lost his eye by racket-playing." —The morning dawns; that dim but yet clear light appears, which weighs like solid bars of metal on the sleepless eyelids; the guests dropped down from their chambers one by one—but it was too late to think of going to bed now (the clock was on the stroke of seven), we had nothing for it but to find a barber's (the pole that glittered in the morning sun lighted us to his shop), and then a nine miles' march to Hungerford. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the

mists were retiring from the marshy ground, the path was tolerably dry, the sitting-up all night had not done us much harm—at least the cause was good; we talked of this and that with amicable difference, roving and sipping of many subjects, but still invariably we returned to the fight. At length, a mile to the left of Hungerford, on a gentle eminence, we saw the ring surrounded by covered carts, gigs, and carriages, of which hundreds had passed us on the road; Joe gave a youthful shout, and we hastened down a narrow lane to the scene of action.

Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four. Gully had been down to try Neate, and had backed him considerably, which was a damper to the sanguine confidence of the adverse party. About 200,000*l.* were pending. Gas says, he has lost 3,000*l.*, which were promised him by different gentlemen if he had won. He had presumed too much on himself, which had made others

presume on him. This spirited and formidable young fellow seems to have taken for his motto, the old maxim, that "there are three things necessary to success in life—*Impudence ! Impudence ! Impudence !*" It is so in matters of opinion, but not in the *Fancy*, which is the most practical of all things, though even here confidence is half the battle, but only half. Our friend had vapoured and swaggered too much, as if he wanted to grin and bully his adversary out of the fight. "Alas! the Bristol man was not so tamed!"—"This is the *grave-digger*" (would Tom Hickman exclaim in the moments of intoxication from gin and success, showing his tremendous right hand), "this will send many of them to their long homes; I haven't done with them yet!" Why should he—though he had licked four of the best men within the hour—why should he threaten to inflict dishonourable chastisement on my old master Richmond, a veteran going off the stage, and who has borne his sable honours meekly? Magnanimity, my dear Tom, and bravery, should be inseparable. Or why should he go up to his antagonist, the first time he ever saw him at the Fives Court, and measuring him from head to foot with a glance of contempt, as Achilles surveyed Hector, say to him, "What, are you Bill Neate? I'll knock more blood out of that great carcase of thine, this day fortnight, than you ever

knock'd out of a bullock's!" It was not manly, —'twas not fighter-like. If he was sure of the victory (as he was not), the less said about it the better. Modesty should accompany the *Fancy* as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gas-man could not have lived) were civil, silent men. So is Cribb; so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose. I enlarged on this topic in the mail (while Turtle was asleep), and said very wisely (as I thought) that impertinence was a part of no profession. A boxer was bound to beat his man, but not to thrust his fist, either actually or by implication, in every one's face. Even a highwayman, in the way of trade, may blow out your brains, but if he uses foul language at the same time, I should say he was no gentleman. A boxer, I would infer, need not be a blackguard or a coxcomb, more than another. Perhaps I press this point too much on a fallen man—Mr Thomas Hickman has by this time learnt that first of all lessons, "That man was made to mourn." He has lost nothing by the late fight but his presumption; and that every man may do as well without! By an over display of this quality, however, the public had been prejudiced against him, and the *knowing ones* were taken in. Few but those who had

bet on him wished Gas to win. With my own prepossessions on the subject, the result of the 11th of December appeared to me as fine a piece of poetical justice as I had ever witnessed. The difference of weight between the two combatants (14 stone to 12) was nothing to the sporting men. Great, heavy, clumsy, long-armed Bill Neate kicked the beam in the scale of the Gas-man's vanity. The amateurs were frightened at his big words, and thought they would make up for the difference of six feet and five feet nine. Truly, the *Fancy* are not men of imagination. They judge of what has been, and cannot conceive of anything that is to be. The Gas-man had won hitherto; therefore he must beat a man half as big again as himself—and that to a certainty. Besides, there are as many feuds, factions, prejudices, pedantic notions in the *Fancy* as in the state or in the schools. Mr Gully is almost the only cool, sensible man among them, who exercises an unbiassed discretion, and is not a slave to his passions in these matters. But enough of reflections, and to our tale. The day, as I have said, was fine for a December morning. The grass was wet, and the ground miry, and ploughed up with multitudinous feet, except that, within the ring itself, there was a spot of virgin-green, closed in and unprofaned by vulgar tread, that shone with dazzling brightness in the mid-day sun.

For it was now noon, and we had an hour to wait. This is the trying time. It is then the heart sickens, as you think what the two champions are about, and how short a time will determine their fate. After the first blow is struck, there is no opportunity for nervous apprehensions; you are swallowed up in the immediate interest of the scene—but

“Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

I found it so as I felt the sun's rays clinging to my back, and saw the white wintry clouds sink below the verge of the horizon. “So,” I thought, “my fairest hopes have faded from my sight!—so will the Gas-man's glory, or that of his adversary, vanish in an hour.” The *swells* were parading in their white box-coats, the outer ring was cleared with some bruises on the heads and shins of the rustic assembly (for the *cockneys* had been distanced by the sixty-six miles); the time drew near; I had got a good stand; a bustle, a buzz, ran through the crowd; and from the opposite side entered Neate, between his second and bottle-holder. He rolled along, swathed in his loose great coat, his knock-knees bending under his huge bulk; and, with a modest, cheerful air, threw his hat into the ring. He then just looked round, and begun quietly to undress; when from the other side there was a

similar rush and an opening made, and the Gas-man came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the-walk. He strutted about more than became a hero, sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head, and went up and looked at Neate, which was an act of supererogation. The only sensible thing he did was, as he strode away from the modern Ajax, to fling out his arms, as if he wanted to try whether they would do their work that day. By this time they had stripped, and presented a strong contrast in appearance. If Neate was like Ajax, "with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear" the pugilistic reputation of all Bristol, Hickman might be compared to Diomed, light, vigorous, elastic, and his back glistened in the sun, as he moved about, like a panther's hide. There was now a dead pause—attention was awe-struck. Who at that moment, big with a great event, did not draw his breath short—did not feel his heart throb? All was ready. They tossed up for the sun, and the Gas-man won. They were led up to the *scratch*—shook hands, and went at it.

In the first round every one thought it was all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two

more, right and left, and down he fell, a mighty ruin. There was a shout, and I said, "There is no standing this." Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in that right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms at full length straight before him, like two sledge hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored—the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adversary's neck, with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another

shout—a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and “grinned horrible a ghastly smile,” yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrance, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened,—his blows could not tell at such a distance,—he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. There was little cautious sparring—no half-hits—no tapping and trifling, none of the *petit-maitreship* of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows:—the fight was a good stand-up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then,

before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand ready to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other "like two clouds over the Caspian"—this is the most astonishing thing of all:—this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle, he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or forwards; he hung suspended for a minute or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw anything more terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's head spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's *Inferno*. Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do;

and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over.* Ye who despise the Fancy, do something to show as much *pluck*, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!—When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, “Where am I? What is the matter?” “Nothing is the matter, Tom,—you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive.” And Jackson whispered to him, “I am collecting a purse for you, Tom.”—Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, “Ah! you always said I couldn’t fight—What do you think now?” But all in good humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had

* Scroggins said of the Gas-man, that he thought he was a man of that courage, that if his hands were cut off, he would still fight on with the stumps—like that of Widdrington,—

——— “In doleful dumps,
Who, when his legs were smitten off,
Still fought upon his stumps.”

won the fight. When it was over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one? He said, "*Pretty well!*" The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs Neate. Alas, for Mrs Hickman!

Mais au revoir, as Sir Fopling Flutter says. I went down with Joe P——s; I returned with Jack Pigott, whom I met on the ground. Toms is a rattle-brain; Pigott is a sentimentalist. Now, under favour, I am a sentimentalist too—therefore I say nothing, but that the interest of the excursion did not flag as I came back. Pigott and I marched along the causeway leading from Hungerford to Newbury, now observing the effect of a brilliant sun on the tawny meads or moss-coloured cottages, now exulting in the fight, now digressing to some topic of general and elegant literature. My friend was dressed in character for the occasion, or like one of the Fancy; that is, with a double portion of great coats, clogs, and overhauls: and just as we had agreed with a couple of country-lads to carry his superfluous wearing-apparel to the next town, we were overtaken by a return post-chaise, into which I got, Pigott preferring a seat on the bar. There were two strangers already in the chaise, and on their observing they supposed I had been to the fight, I said I had, and concluded

they had done the same. They appeared, however, a little shy and sore on the subject; and it was not till after several hints dropped, and questions put, that it turned out that they had missed it. One of these friends had undertaken to drive the other there in his gig: they had set out, to make sure work, the day before at three in the afternoon. The owner of the one-horse vehicle scorned to ask his way, and drove right on to Bagshot, instead of turning off at Hounslow: there they stopped all night, and set off the next day across the country to Reading, from whence they took coach, and got down within a mile or two of Hungerford, just half an hour after the fight was over. This might be safely set down as one of the miseries of human life. We parted with these two gentlemen who had been to see the fight, but had returned as they went, at Wollhampton, where we were promised beds (an irresistible temptation, for Pigott had passed the preceding night at Hungerford as we had done at Newbury), and we turned into an old bow-windowed parlour with a carpet and a snug fire; and after devouring a quantity of tea, toast, and eggs, sat down to consider, during an hour of philosophic leisure, what we should have for supper. In the midst of an Epicurean deliberation between a roasted fowl and mutton chops with mashed potatoes, we were inter-

rupted by an inroad of Goths and Vandals—*O procul este profani*—not real flash-men, but interlopers, noisy pretenders, butchers from Tothill-fields, brokers from Whitechapel, who called immediately for pipes and tobacco, hoping it would not be disagreeable to the gentlemen, and began to insist that it was *a cross*. Pigott withdrew from the smoke and noise into another room, and left me to dispute the point with them for a couple of hours *sans intermission* by the dial. The next morning we rose refreshed; and on observing that Jack had a pocket volume in his hand, in which he read in the intervals of our discourse, I inquired what it was, and learned to my particular satisfaction that it was a volume of the ‘New Eloise.’ Ladies, after this, will you contend that a love for the Fancy is incompatible with the cultivation of sentiment?—We jogged on as before, my friend setting me up in a genteel drab great coat and green silk handkerchief (which I must say became me exceedingly), and after stretching our legs for a few miles, and seeing Jack Randall, Ned Turner, and Scroggins, pass on the top of one of the Bath coaches, we engaged with the driver of the second to take us to London for the usual fee. I got inside, and found three other passengers. One of them was an old gentleman with an aquiline nose, powdered hair, and a pig-tail, and who looked as if he had played many a

rubber at the Bath rooms. I said to myself, he is very like Mr Windham; I wish he would enter into conversation, that I might hear what fine observations would come from those finely-turned features. However, nothing passed, till, stopping to dine at Reading, some inquiry was made by the company about the fight, and I gave (as the reader may believe) an eloquent and animated description of it. When we got into the coach again, the old gentleman, after a graceful exordium, said, he had, when a boy, been to a fight between the famous Broughton and George Stevenson, who was called the *Fighting Coachman*, in the year 1770, with the late Mr Windham. This beginning flattered the spirit of prophecy with me, and riveted my attention. He went on—"George Stevenson was coachman to a friend of my father's. He was an old man when I saw him some years afterwards. He took hold of his own arm and said, 'there was muscle here once, but now it is no more than this young gentleman's.' He added, 'well, no matter; I have been here long, I am willing to go hence, and I hope I have done no more harm than another man.' Once," said my unknown companion, "I asked him if he had ever beat Broughton? He said Yes; that he had fought with him three times, and the last time he fairly beat him, though the world did not allow it.

‘I’ll tell you how it was, master. When the seconds lifted us up in the last round, we were so exhausted that neither of us could stand, and we fell upon one another, and as Master Broughton fell uppermost, the mob gave it in his favour, and he was said to have won the battle. But the fact was, that as his second (John Cuthbert) lifted him up, he said to him, “I’ll fight no more, I’ve had enough ;” which,’ says Stevenson, ‘you know gave me the victory. And to prove to you that this was the case, when John Cuthbert was on his death-bed, and they asked him if there was anything on his mind which he wished to confess, he answered, “Yes, that there was one thing he wished to set right, for that certainly Master Stevenson won that last fight with Master Broughton ; for he whispered him as he lifted him up in the last round of all, that he had had enough.”’ “This,” said the Bath gentleman, “was a bit of human nature ;” and I have written this account of the fight on purpose that it might not be lost to the world. He also stated as a proof of the candour of mind in this class of men, that Stevenson acknowledged that Broughton could have beat him in his best day ; but that he (Broughton) was getting old in their last rencounter. When we stopped in Piccadilly, I wanted to ask the gentleman some questions about the late Mr Windham, but had not courage. I got out,

resigned my coat and green silk handkerchief to Pigott (loth to part with these ornaments of life), and walked home in high spirits.

P.S. Joe called upon me the next day, to ask me if I did not think the fight was a complete thing? I said I thought it was. I hope he will relish my account of it.

ESSAY XIII.

ON TRAVELLING ABROAD.

“Ha! here’s some of us are sophisticated!”—LEAR.

I AM one of those who do not think that much is to be gained in point either of temper or understanding by travelling abroad. Give me the true, sturdy, unimpaired John Bull feeling that keeps fast hold of the good things it fancies in its exclusive possession, nor ever relaxes in its contempt for foreign fashions and frivolities. What is the use of keeping up an everlasting *see-saw* in the imagination, between small beer and *vin ordinaire*, between long and short waists, between English gravity and French levity? The home-brewed, the home-baked, the home-spun, “filthy Dowlas,” for me! What, in short, do we gain by the contrary method of fidgety, vexatious comparison, but jealousy of the advantages of others, and dissatisfaction with our own position? Why are the French

so delighted with themselves? They never quit Paris. Why do they talk so fast? French is the current language of Europe. Man was made to stay at home—(why else have there been so many millions born who were never meant to stir from it?)—to vegetate, to be rooted to the earth, to cling to his prejudices and luxuriate in his follies. At present, we are like a set of exotics, and fine, sickly plants, tossed and flirled about from shore to shore—not like our native oaks, sturdy, vigorous, gnarled, growing to the soil—but “now a wood is come to Dunsinane”—and clouds of English hover on the steam-boat and darken every strand. Why, the sun shone just the same, and this earth of ours rolled round, and the peasant toiled “in the eye of Phœbus, and all night slept in Elysium”—

“Next day after dawn,
Did rise and help Hyperion to his horse;
And follow'd so the ever-running year,
With profitable labour to his grave”—

long before this sailing of steam-boats and starting of diligences, this cracking of whips and rattling of wheels, this exposing our own folly and learning other people's vices, was heard of. We now only seem to exist where we are not,—to be always hurrying on to what is before us, or looking back to what is behind us, never to be fixed to any spot or to settle to any

employment. We dart to and fro, like the dragon-fly, on the surface of the map, in search of our insect, glittering prey, and exhibit a picture of impatience, insignificance, and irritability. Formerly an English country squire was like the genius of the woods, enclosed in the heart of one of his own oak trees: in the present day, he resembles rather a moody spirit, wandering from one land to another in search of rest, and finding none. Enough, enough! Return, ye Absentees—Mr Macculloch will not prevent you! Break up, ye Travellers' Club, nor longer bestride the world, with one foot of the compasses stuck in Pall Mall, and the other in Palmyra. Your country can dispense with your omnipresence.

Dr Johnson remarked long ago how little addition was made to the conversation of sensible men by foreign travel. Pedants and *petits-maitres*, indeed, are always taken up with what they think nobody knows but themselves. It has been proposed as a problem to ascertain whether the slightest trace could be discovered of any impression whatever made on French art by the works of the Italian and other great painters during the sixteen or seventeen years that these remained among them:—it is true, the having the Greek statues in their possession, served to confirm and encourage them in all their faults. They smiled to see the resemblance

between a marble statue and their own style of painting; and thought that "if 'twere painted 'twould be twice as fine." Antique symmetry and elegance only wanted a modern French air added to it, to be perfect. Thus we turn away from the lessons afforded to our vanity and want of taste, and only attend to what flatters the original disease or superficial bias of our minds. We learn nothing from others, for we see nothing in them but through the medium of our self-love. Not a particle of advance is made, even in boasted candour and liberality; for we continue with all that candour and liberality to turn the flank of their virtues, and to circumvent their good qualities by some insidious concession or crafty qualifications, in such a manner as to turn them into an indirect compliment to ourselves. If we praise them, it is with a mental reservation, and we are studying all the time how by the aid of a But or an If we may retract the lukewarm donation. Liberality begins and ends at home. It is not a neighbourly accomplishment. Or its professions are verbal, strained, affected, without vital heat or efficacy in them. We make a great gulp to swallow down our prejudices, resolve to be magnanimous, and say: come, let us acknowledge the plain truth; the French do not all get drunk, nor do they all rob or murder people for their money. We do not think one bit the better of them for

this triple certificate of merit, and absolution from moral turpitude, but of ourselves for our condescension in giving it them. We are twisting the thing about somehow, in some secret corner of our heart, to prove that all these negative recommendations manifest a want of spirit, of manly nerve, are effeminate and sneaking, the virtues of women. Like the patriotic judge in the time of Queen Elizabeth, who accounted for the comparative honesty of the Scotch in the same way, we say that the French do not rob as the English do, "because they have not such good hearts."* As to our drunkenness, as far as this practice still sticks to us as a national reproach, the truth is that, with the lover in the play, "We would not change that fault (great it is) for their best virtue." All our acknowledgments on this head are essentially insincere, lip-deep, and, at bottom, so many tacit and side-long compliments to ourselves. The egotism of a whole people is proof both against conviction and shame. It is not so if we can discover any opening, any loop-hole for fault-finding. We are then keen enough on the scent, and "stand like greyhounds on the slip, eager to start away." "Oh! most small fault, how ugly in another dost thou show!" If a servant leaves a door open at night, her defence that there is no

* Meaning, *stout* or *bold* ones.

danger stands her or her nation in no stead—we are furious at the carelessness of French servants, and forget the implied reproof to ourselves that we come from a place where such carelessness might be fatal. What monstrous injustice! We turn the matter over in our minds, and twist it into this solution, that the superior security is owing not to any greater goodness in the national character, but to the greater severity and arbitrariness of the police; a mighty relief to our feelings, which were beginning to be hurt at there being no chance of our having our throats cut while we slept, even though the doors were left open. “But then look at our liberty!” charming liberty of being knocked on the head, or of knocking others on the head and being hanged for it. The English claim a chartered right to be blackguards, and this is all they care for. But if a French marquis filches a table-spoon, or pockets a reckoning, then joy to the English! The jubilee is great! We are satisfied that the French are a despicable, worthless nation, and the English “all honourable men.” One argues that the titled offender ought to have been pumped upon, while another traces it to the corruption of the old privileged orders in France, among whom every meanness and profligacy could be practised with impunity, and consequently all sense of honour and propriety was lost. If things are

dirty, there is a great outcry ; but if they are nice, it is so much the worse. What nonsense ! What refinements ! What effeminacy ! We do not like another man's house for being finer than our own ; nor a country neither. It is an insult on our ordinary ideas. The country squires and neighbouring dames went away, grumbling and sulky, from the finery of Font-hill Abbey, and no doubt talked a great deal about real comfort when they got home. The French people ask : if everything is so disagreeable to us abroad, why do we come ? or, having come, why do we stay ? And the plea seems unanswerable. I get into a great many scrapes by maintaining that the mutton is good in Paris—a paradox for which I deserve to be stuck in the Quarterly Review, or turned out of the Edinburgh. A girl in the diligence coming along was very angry the first day, because the dinner was bad ; there was not a thing she could eat, she was sorry she had ever come to such a place, she would go back again immediately, &c. The next day the dinner was admirable ; this made her more angry than ever : so many things, she did not know which to choose ; she hated such a quantity thrown away, and she would eat nothing out of spite and vexation that her former predictions did not continue to be made good. We can forgive anything sooner than a real superiority over us. We would

thankfully, joyfully put up with any inconveniences, annoyances, abominations, while from home, to go back with a thorough conviction of our taking the lead of all the rest of the world in the arts and comforts of life. An acquaintance of mine is settled in a French boarding house. What scenes we have, what chucklings, in going over the messes and the manners of the place. How we exult in the *soup-maigre*. How we triumph over the *bouillé*, as tough and tasteless as a bullet. If a single thing had been good at dinner, it would ruin us for the evening. Not a knife will cut,—and what a thing to set down a single duck before six people, who seem all ready to fall upon it and tear it in pieces. What meanness! Why don't they get a good substantial joint of meat, in which there would be cut and come again? If they had common sense, they would; but what can be expected of such people? The want of decency and propriety is another never-failing and delightful topic. They don't care a bit what they say or do before company! That master of the house is a true Frenchman! When carving, he flourishes his knife about in such a manner as to endanger those who are near him; and stops in the middle of his work with the wing of a fowl suspended on the point of his fork, to spout a speech out of some play. Dinner is no sooner over than, watching

his opportunities, he collects all the bottles and glasses on the table, beer, wine, porter, empties them into his own, heaps his plate with the remnants of bones, gravy, vegetables, melted butter, and sops them up with a large piece of bread, clears his plate of everything as if a dog had licked it, dips his bread in some other dish that had escaped him, and finishes off by picking his teeth with his fork. Having thus satisfied his principal wants, he amuses himself during the dessert by putting salt in the Governess's fruit, and giving a pinch of snuff to a cat which is seated in his lap, with a string of beads round its neck. And this, say we, is your exquisite French refinement! These are the people who are a century a-head of the English in civilization. And is it not worth while to pay a hundred and sixty francs a-month and be starved, poisoned, talked, bit to death, to arrive at so consolatory a reflection? It may be said that this is a vulgar Frenchman, in a low rank of life: I answer that there is no such character in any rank of life in London—who spouts Shakespear one moment, the next picks his teeth with his fork, and then with the same fork helps you to a potato. There are four charges that I would bring seriously against the French, and which they themselves are not prepared to expect:—1. the want of politeness; 2. the want of imagination; 3. the want of

and 4.

liberality, and ^{3.} the want of grace, All this being contrary to first appearances and received opinion, may seem to require proof, and it may have it thus:—First, as to want of politeness: the French are deficient in it for this reason, that they have no sense of pain, no nervous (or, if you will, morbid) sensibility, and consequently can have little delicacy. They aim at the agreeable, I grant, and succeed, but they have no idea of the disagreeable, and therefore take no pains to avoid giving offence. A Frenchman coughs in your face, and spits on the floor. He runs up against you in the street, not to affront you, for he very politely begs your pardon, but because he thinks of nothing but himself, and never anticipates the shock he may give you. For myself, English-like, as one whom disagreeable contingencies meet half-way and follow after, if I see a person coming at the end of a street, I am not easy till I have taken my own side of the pavement, lest it should be thought possible I do not mean to take it. I contradict another bluntly and argue tenaciously, which a Frenchman would not do; on the other hand, a French traveller will thrust his body out of a coach window, if there is anything he wishes to see, and keep all the air from you, as if the carriage were his own property, because he has a pleasure in looking out, and has no idea that you have any objection to being stifled. On the same principle he takes

his dog into the coach with him,—not having the shadow of a conception how either he or his dog can be offensive to the most delicate constitutions.

French politeness consists in officiousness and complaisance; they are quick in seeing what will please, and ready to oblige when the way is pointed out to them; they do not idly torment themselves, nor knowingly persist in giving pain to others. They incline to make the best of things; are easy-tempered, conciliating, affable; have no stubbornness nor haughty reserve; nor do they gnaw their hearts out like the English, and vent their accumulated ill-humours upon their neighbours. A proof of the natural sociability of the French has been deduced from this circumstance, that they cannot exist as new settlers in a wilderness, where they have no one to talk to but themselves. A Frenchman's ideas rise so fast to the surface, that unless they can communicate them readily, they strike inward and produce a most uncomfortable kind of melancholy. Flattery and compliments are one great ingredient in the French school of politeness. You are most secure on the side of their vanity, for this faculty is tolerably alert in them, and they are less apt to wound than of others from being a little sore themselves. And yet it is not so; for their own opinion of themselves is so difficult to be staggered, that they do not very well believe

you can be amazed or put out of countenance by trifling mortifications. Secondly, as to imagination; they are lamentably at a loss in this respect. The French, as a nation, have no idea of anything but what is French. They are too well pleased with themselves to be at the trouble of going out of themselves. This is one reason of their dislike of drunkenness. It puts them quite beside themselves, and disturbs that natural intoxication and flow of animal spirits in which they delight to contemplate their own image as in a glass. A drunken man is no longer a Frenchman. The consciousness of himself and others is gone. I wonder what a Frenchman's dreams are made of? There is no trace of them in his poetry—nought is there but *idées nettes*. A proof of their inherent want of imagination is, that when they had got the Apollo Belvedere into their possession, they declared it was “to remain there for ever!” They did not conceive a change in the affairs of the world possible—the present moment, the present object, is with them the whole of time, the whole universe. So if you have no money in your pocket when they call with a bill, they are in utter despair, and think you can never have any—if you bring out a bag of crowns, they will go away with part of their demand, or even without any, as well satisfied as if you had paid the whole. They have no notion how the Russians could burn Moscow.

Paris is with them the whole of the world; and they conceive of those who live out of it as breathing an atmosphere of barbarism. They have some respect for the English, as having beat them—which they take to be owing to some superiority in our Jack Tars, and that Paris is not a sea-port. When David was looking round at some *chefs-d'œuvre* in the Louvre, he said: “We thought these pictures fine once.” He looked for the traces of his own style in them, and saw little of that. All that has an appearance of imagination or invention in the French is plagiarism, a mere *false* *setto*, and decking themselves out in borrowed plumes. So they engraft their grand style in historical painting on the Greek statues, their tragedies on the Greek drama, and they stole their philosophy and their Revolution from us. They make a caricature and burlesque of what they thus copy at second-hand. Buonaparte says of the Romans, “that they had an instinct of whatever was great, and deserved to be the conquerors of the world.” When he wanted to make the French a great people, he proposed to bring all the works of art, all the records of learning, and lastly, the Pope, to Paris. *Why* thrust greatness upon a people, to whom it is not natural? Or convert a great capital into a pawnbroker’s shop? A people who have original pretensions of their own, should leave it to others to vouch

for them. Thirdly. The French “want grace, who never wanted wit.” Grace is not composed of angles. A Frenchwoman walks as if she had tender feet. She does not, in fact, walk, but fidget and shuffle along, like a Fantoccini figure on a board. I have heard Mr Northcote describe Marie Antoinette as gliding across an ante-room where he stood to see her coming, with her large hoop sideways, as if she was borne on a cloud. This was no doubt the perfection of the thing, but the ordinary practice is deficient. I deny that a wriggle, however quick or light, or erect, is grace. At the same time I allow that the Englishwomen in Paris (even those of quality) look like country people in London. Yet the Frenchwomen look well in London. The Frenchwomen have too sudden a jerk in their movements, and keep their muscles too tight and too incessantly at work, while the English seem as if their bodies were a burden to them, and only move their joints to get forward; they have no elasticity or firmness. *There are faults on both sides.* Any one may caricature the common French walk by twisting, and tripping, and ambling on tip-toe: but real grace is not to be caricatured. If I want to know what real grace is, I ask myself how the Venus de Medicis would move from her pedestal? Not like a Frenchwoman, but like —— . Grace is made of carved lines, of continuous, undulating

movements; but with the French all is discontinuous, pointed, angular. They are light and airy, it is true, and borne along by their good spirits, with apparent ease and confidence in themselves, which is perhaps better than our lumpish, clodhopping, slouching gait. We are in all respects a contradiction to each other; but it does not follow that either is perfect. Fourthly. The French are full of *tracasserie*, of cheating; it is they who are a thorough "nation of shop-keepers." Their mean ways must arise from habitual poverty; their barefaced distrust of you from an extreme want of honour and integrity among themselves. They try to bow and laugh it off at first, but the first opportunity they have, they cheat you; and when they can no longer make a dupe of you, they insult you. All their *bon-homme* and complaisance are abuse, and as soon as their interest is no longer concerned, they are rude or polite, as they think they can get most by it.

A French gentleman, travelling in company with an English party, gets a cup of coffee at a little shop for three halfpence, and laughs at you for paying two francs for a bad breakfast at the inn; and they are so shabby to the conductors and drivers, that these things are at present regulated by the police. They demand payment for your board and lodging beforehand, which shows either a grasping disposition or a

want of confidence. Besides, you cannot depend on them for a moment. A restless inconsequentiality seems to run, as it were, mechanically, through all they do. They appear naturally desirous of escaping from obligations of every kind. If they cut a throat, it is that of some relation, from being *ennuyé* with a repetition of the same ideas—*toujours perdrix*. If you have made a bargain with them, and some one comes and offers them a franc more, they take it and laugh at you, or pretend not to have understood you. If they can impose on you once, they think it an achievement, and consider the loss of your custom nothing. This would be looking too far forward; therefore they can never be a commercial people; for commerce has a long memory and long hands. To return to our own good folks. Really, it is not wonderful that they meet with such an *accueil* abroad, that they are surrounded and stared at and made a prize of, like some outlandish beast cast upon hostile shores. Instead of having arrived in the usual conveyances, they seem to have been thrown out of a balloon—dropped from the clouds, they are so bewildered, and stupified, and jammed altogether, without any variety of character or appearance. There is no perceptible difference between the lord and the commoner, the lady and the maid. A pert French *soubrette* laughs at them all alike. Travelling, like death, levels

all distinctions. The toe of the citizen treads on the courtier, and galls his kibe. We are all hail-fellow well-met. The difference is not worth the counting. It is as if one great personification of John Bull had been suspended over the Continent, and been dashed to the ground in a thousand fragments, all stunned and stupified alike. The national character is fastened to our backs like a pedler's pack. It is in vain for any one to think of holding up his head, of straightening his back, of quickening his step, or unloosening his tongue—we are still outdone in all these particulars by the French, who appear an impertinent antithesis to us; and we turn back to join the awkward squad of our countrymen, and make common cause with them. What signify our poor individual pretensions, if we see a whole nation superior to us and determined to mortify us? No one pretends to be any better than his neighbours; or if he does step forward to distinguish himself with a vapid air of assurance, is soon put back. Like a clown in company who forgets all his jokes, one would suppose there had been no such thing as wit in England, because a French barber is unacquainted with it; we veil our proud pretensions before the genius of French grimace—in pure sheepishness and *mauvaise honte*, we give up Fielding and Congreve, as dull Englishmen or raw pretenders; Prior's

Chloe is a dowdy fiction, and Waller's Sacharissa a mistake. But, on the other hand, we have a *corps de reserve* to retire to in our wisdom and our philosophy, in our Newton and our Locke (Shakespear we are shy of bringing forward), in our trade and commerce, our courage, our religion, our government, and every one struts a hero, a great merchant, and a sage. Then all our men are honest, and all our women virtuous, and not like the French men, who are all rogues, and the French women, who are all no better than they should be. We persuade ourselves that we are just the reverse of all that we despise or hate in others. We mix up our foibles and our virtues, our heroism and our dulness, our wisdom and our gravity, in the same dish, and like people out at sea in a boat in the last extremity, every one fancies himself entitled to an equal share in the common lot. One Englishman is as good as another. Can anything be more unfriendly than this state of exacerbation of our personal and national prejudices, in which everything is transposed and confounded in the mere spirit of contradiction, to the knowledge either of ourselves or of others. We feel at a loss abroad, or like fish out of water, because nobody takes much notice of or knows anything about us. But is it not the same in going into any country town in England? Does a deputation wait upon us from

the principal inhabitants when we arrive at Birmingham or Lichfield? An Englishman has so far more honour out of his own country, and is, as Cowley expresses it, a species by himself, and entitled to some distinction as a novelty or nondescript. But in the one case we do not care about the people in a provincial town taking notice of us, because we know they are no better than we: in a foreign country we are not sure of this, and then their indifference becomes connected with a feeling of insignificance on our part. In London we have common topics and common amusements, as inhabitants of the same great city, and the *esprit de cockagne* in some measure qualifies and carries off petty chagrins and individual slights. What adds to the feeling of dissipation, littleness, and vulgarity in Paris, is that you are taken up only with the present, passing object—the shops, the houses, the dirt, the finery, the walks, the people, the dogs, the monkeys: in London you have certain associations with the past, and the metropolis grows and emerges out of its original obscurity in the mind's eye. The sprightly author of the *Indicator* will point to you the house in York street where Milton lived, and in passing through the fruit-stalls of Covent garden, his countenance gladdens with recollections of the favourite haunts of Steele and Addison. In Paris his only delight was in hunting about the book-

stalls—though I think he was wrong in not seeing the Louvre. The house in the Rue de Chantereine where Buonaparte alighted after the battle of Marengo is hardly known. It is the order of the day among them to efface the memory of their short-lived greatness.

The present object, torn out of its place in the order of events, does not satisfy the minds of an Englishman. We have not faith, we have not interest in it. This is the reason of the sense of littleness, of fretfulness and disgust, whenever we are thrown into a crowd, particularly at a distance from home. Yet why must we be in the secret in the Cabinet Council of events? Are they not to go on without us? Is nothing to be looked at without our *fiat*? Is no book to be printed without our *imprimatur*? Cannot a French milliner sit in a shop gracefully without asking our leave? Oh! it is wretched, this importunate humour of making ourselves the pivot on which the whole world turns round. How do they go on in our absence? We find them just the same when we return. The English are not the sun that shines on France. How did they manage before we were born, in the times of Mademoiselle de la Valliere and Madame de Pompadour? Were they to wait to know our pleasure before they gave their answers to Louis XIV and Louis XV? One would think, at first, reading and reflection would cure this

teasing egotism; and yet, by giving us a kind of factitious interest and omnipresence in such cases, it mixes up with everything again, and confirms our original self-importance, as if we had a right to be consulted and to give our opinion on what passes in review before us. Nature is incorrigible—there is no crevice so small or intricate, at which our self-love will not continue to creep in. *Expella furcá, ultro recurret.*

The only way to visit Paris is to go abroad with all the ignorance, wonder, and disposition to admire everything with which Sir Francis Wronghead and his family came up to London, not to spit our spite at everything, and be determined to condemn in the lump, like Matthew Bramble. The half-way plan of questioning, and criticising, and accounting for everything, is intolerable.

Come then away from all this cabal and impertinence, and let us cross the Alps. Pictures, Italian cities, mountains, defy this petty personality and painful jealousy. They are abstractions of the mind. In Italy, you leave yourself behind, and travel through a romance, in a dream of the distant and the past. Who in crossing Mount Cenis thinks of Tottenham court road? Who in the Galleries of Rome or Florence is jealous of native art? Who in the Forum looks back to the House of Commons?

Who in the streets of Turin or Ferrara does not find himself at home—in the home of early imagination, in the palaces and porticos of his youth's thoughts? Here the whole impression tells for itself, and has no pitiful drawback of cowardly comparison. What is there in England like Rome? We may have read of it in books, or had glimpses of it in our dreams, but these are a part of ourselves, and we have no jealousy on that head. Here nothing that can be connected with upstart pretensions or personal competition, or the fashion of the hour; all speaks of the past, of glory departed, of the races that are gone, and between whom and us death and fame have placed a proud barrier. The cities of Italy are the cities of the dead—from their worn battlements the faces of rugged warriors still look out. Sometimes here, as I am sitting by the fire and gaze upon the dying embers, the ruddy lights and nodding fragments shape themselves into an Italian landscape, and Radicofani rises in the distance, receding into the light of setting suns, that seem bidding the world farewell for ever from their splendour, their gorgeousness, and the gloom around it! Or Perugia opens its cloistered gates, and you look down upon the world below, and Foligno and Spoleto stretch out their shining walls and dark groves behind you! You seem walking in the shadow of the valley of

life ; and ideal palaces, groves, and cities (realized to the bodily sense), everywhere rise up before you. You scale the heavens, or you descend into the tomb ; but you are always taken out of yourselves and lifted above this earth. A purple light hovers in the air in Italy, as in Homer's Elysian fields. In Switzerland, the magnitude of the objects, as well as the quiet and retirement of the vallies, annihilate all personal pretensions, all the "vain pomp and glory of the world !" If you fall from the top of one of those crags, you will break your neck, whether you are Frenchman or Englishman. In all other places I am a citizen of the world : but in France I never forget I am an Englishman. One is never less at home than when at home. It is well to be a citizen of the world, to fall in with the ways and feelings of others, and make one's self at home wherever one comes ; or it is still better to live in an ideal world superior to the ordinary one ; so to carry calm peace and self-possession in one's own breast, that no accident of time or place, irritation or distress, ever can assail us, except for a moment ; and to make the best of all our comings and goings, crossings and returns, good or bad roads, as only passages of that after all short journey which conducts us to our native dust and final home !

ESSAY XIV.

ON THE SPIRIT OF CONTROVERSY.

THE spirit of controversy has often been arraigned as the source of much bitterness and vexation, as productive of "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness," and the charge, no doubt, is too well founded. But it is said to be *an ill wind which blows nobody good*; and there are few evils in life that have not some qualifying circumstance attending them. It is one of the worst consequences of this very spirit of controversy that it has led men to regard things too much in a single and exaggerated point of view. Truth is not one thing, but has many aspects and many shades of difference; it is neither all black, nor all white; sees something wrong on its own side, something right in others; makes concessions to an adversary, allowances for human frailty, and is nearer akin to charity than the dealers in controversy or the

declaimers against it are apt to imagine. The bigot and partisan (influenced by the very spirit he finds fault with) sees nothing in the endless disputes which have tormented and occupied men's thoughts but an abuse of learning and a waste of time; the philosopher may still find an excuse for so bad and idle a practice. One frequent objection made to the incessant wrangling and collision of sects and parties is, What does it all come to? And the answer is, What would they have done without it? The pleasure of the chase, or the benefit derived from it, is not to be estimated by the value of the game after it is caught, so much as by the difficulty of starting it, and the exercise afforded to the body, and the excitement of the animal spirits in hunting it down; and so it is in the exercises of the mind and the pursuit of truth, which are chiefly valuable (perhaps) less for their results when discovered, than for their affording continual scope and employment to the mind in its endeavours to reach the fancied goal, without its being ever (or but seldom) able to attain it.

Regard the end, is an ancient saying and a good one, if it does not mean that we are to forget the *beginning* and the middle. By insisting on the ultimate value of things when all is over, we may acquire the character of *grave* men, but not of wise ones. *Passe pour cela*. If we would set up such a sort of fixed and

final standard of moral truth and worth, we had better try to construct life over again, so as to make it a *punctum stans*, and not a thing in progress; for as it is, every end, before it can be realized, implies a previous imagination, a warm interest in, and an active pursuit of, itself, all which are integral and vital parts of human existence; and it is a begging of the question to say that an end is only of value in itself, and not as it draws out the living resources, and satisfies the original capacities of human nature. When the play is over, the curtain drops, and we see nothing but a green cloth; but before this there have been five acts of brilliant scenery and high-wrought declamation, which, if we come to plain matter-of-fact history, are still something. According to the contrary theory, nothing is real but a blank. This flatters the paradoxical pride of man, whose motto is, *all or none*. Look at that pile of school divinity. Behold where the demon of controversy lies buried! The huge tomes are mouldy and worm-eaten:—did their contents the less eat into the brain, or corrode the heart, or stir the thoughts, or fill up the void of lassitude and *ennui* in the minds of those who wrote them? Though now laid aside and forgotten, if they had not once had a host of readers, they would never have been written, and their hard and solid bulk asked the eager tooth of curiosity and

zeal to pierce through it. We laugh to see their ponderous dullness weighed in scales and sold for waste paper. We should not laugh too soon. On the smallest difference of faith or practice discussed in them, the fate of kingdoms hung suspended; and not merely this (which was a trifle), but Heaven and Hell trembled in the balance, according to the full persuasion of our pious forefathers. Many a stream of blood flowed in the field, on the scaffold, from these tangled briars and thorns of controversy: many a man marched to the stake to bear testimony to the most frivolous and incomprehensible of their dogmas. This was an untoward consequence; but if it was an evil to be burnt at a stake, it was well and becoming to have an opinion (whether right or wrong) for which a man was willing to be burnt at a stake. Read BAXTER'S *Controversial Works*: consider the flames of zeal, the tongues of fire, the heights of faith, the depths of subtlety, which they unfold as in a darkly illuminated scroll: and then ask how much we are gainers by an utter contempt and indifference to all this? We wonder at the numberless volumes of sermons that have been written, preached, and printed, on the Arian and Socinian controversies; on Calvinism and Arminianism, on surplices and stoles, on infant or adult baptism, on image-worship and the defacing of images; and we forget that it em-

ployed the preacher all the week to prepare his sermon (be the subject what it would) for the next Lord's day, with infinite collating of texts, authorities, and arguments; that his flock were no less edified by listening to it than he in framing it, and how many David Deans came away convinced that they had been listening to the "root of the matter." See that group, collected after service-time and poring over the gravestones in the churchyard, from whence, to the eyes of faith, a light issues that points to the skies! See them disperse; and, as they take different paths homeward while the evening closes in, still discoursing of the true doctrine, and the glad tidings they have heard, how "their hearts burn within them by the way!" Then, again, we should set down, among other items in the account, how the schoolboy is put to it to remember the text, and how the lazy servant wench starts up to find herself asleep in church-time! Such is the march of human life; and we who fancy ourselves above it are only so much the more taken up with follies of our own. We look down, in this age of reason, on those controverted points and nominal distinctions which formerly kept up such a "coil and pudder" in the world, as idle and ridiculous because we are not parties to them; but if it was the egotism of our predecessors that magnified them beyond all rational bounds, it is no less

egotism in us who undervalue their opinions and pursuits because they are not ours; though, indeed, to leave egotism out of human nature, is to "leave the part of Hamlet out of the play of Hamlet." Or what are we the better with our *utilitarian controversies*, Mr Taylor's discourses (delivered in canonicals) against the evidences of the Christian religion, or the changes of Ministry and disagreements between the Duke of Wellington and the Duke of Newcastle?

"Strange that such difference should be
'Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee!"

But the prevalence of religious controversy is reproached with fomenting spiritual pride and intolerance, and sowing heart-burnings, jealousies and fears, "like a thick scurf o'er life;" yet, had it not been for this, we should have been tearing one another to pieces like savages for fragments of raw flesh, or quarrelling with a herd of swine for a windfall of acorns under an oak-tree. The world has never yet done, and will never be able to do, without some apple of discord—some bone of contention—any more than courts of law can do without pleadings, or doctors without the sick. When a thing ceases to be a subject of controversy it ceases to be a subject of interest. Why need we regret the various hardships and persecutions for conscience' sake, when men only cling closer to

their opinions in consequence? They loved their religion in proportion as they paid dear for it. Nothing could keep the Dissenters from going to a conventicle while it was declared an unlawful assembly, and was the high road to a prison or the plantations;—take away tests and fines, and make the road open and easy, and the sect dwindles gradually into insignificance. A thing is supposed to be worth nothing that costs nothing. Besides, there is always pretty nearly the same quantity of malice afloat in the world; though with the change of time and manners it may become a finer poison, and kill by more unseen ways. When the sword has done its worst, slander, ‘whose edge is sharper than the sword,’ steps in to keep the blood from stagnating. Instead of slow fires and paper caps fastened round the heads of the victims, we arrive at the same end by the politer way of nicknames and anonymous criticism. *Blackwood’s Magazine* is the modern version of Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*. Discard religion and politics (the two grand topics of controversy), and people would hate each other as cordially, and torment each other as effectually, about the preference to be given to Mozart or Rossini, to Pasta or Malibran. We indeed fix upon the most excellent things, as God, our country, and our King, to account for the excess of our zeal; but this depends much less upon the goodness of

our cause than on the strength of our passions, and our overflowing gall and rooted antipathy to whatever stands in the way of our conceit and obstinacy. We set up an idol (as we set up a mark to shoot at) for others to bow down to, on peril of our utmost displeasure, let the value of it be what it may ;

“ Of whatsoe’er descent his godhead be,
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,
In his defence his servants are as bold,
As if he had been made of beaten gold.”

It is however but fair to add, in extenuation of the evils of controversy, that if the points at issue had been quite clear, or the advantage all on one side, they would not have been so liable to be contested. We condemn controversy, because we would have matters all our own way, and think that ours is the only side that has a title to be heard. We imagine that there is but one view of a subject that is right ; and that all the rest being plainly and wilfully wrong, it is a shocking waste of speech, and a dreadful proof of prejudice and party spirit, to have a word to say in their defence. But this is want of liberality and comprehension of mind. For in general we dispute either about things respecting which we are a good deal in the dark, and where both parties are very possibly in the wrong, and may be left to find out their mutual error ; or about those points where there is an

opposition of interests and passions, and where it would be by no means safe to cut short the debate by making one party judges for the other. They must therefore be left to fight it out as well as they can; and, between the extremes of folly and violence, to strike a balance of common sense and even-handed justice. Every sect or party will, of course, run into extravagance and partiality; but the probability is that there is some ground of argument, some appearance of right, to justify the grossest bigotry and intolerance. The fury of the combatants is excited because there is something to be said on the other side of the question. If men were as infallible as they suppose themselves, they would not dispute. If every novelty were well founded, truth might be discovered by a receipt; but as antiquity does not always turn out an old woman, this accounts for the *vis inertie* of the mind in so often pausing and setting its face against innovation. Authority has some advantages to recommend it as well as reason, or it would long ago have been scouted. Aristocracy and democracy, monarchy and republicanism, are not all pure good or pure evil, though the abettors or antagonists of each think so, and that all the mischief arises from others entertaining any doubt about the question, and insisting on carrying their absurd theories into practice. The French and English are grossly

prejudiced against each other; but still the interests of each are better taken care of under this exaggerated notion than if that vast mass of rights and pretensions which each is struggling for were left to the tender mercies and ruthless candour of the other side. "Every man for himself and God for us all" is a rule that will apply here. Controversy, therefore, is a necessary evil or good (call it which you will) till all differences of opinion or interest are reconciled, and absolute certainty or perfect indifference alike takes away the possibility or the temptation to litigation and quarrels. We need be under no immediate alarm of coming to such a conclusion. There is always room for doubt, food for contention. While we are engrossed with one controversy, indeed, we think everything else is clear; but as soon as one point is settled, we begin to cavil and start objections to that which had before been taken for gospel. The reformers thought only of opposing the Church of Rome, and never once anticipated the schisms and animosities which arose among Protestants; the Dissenters, in carrying their point against the Church of England, did not dream of that crop of infidelity and scepticism which, to their great terror and scandal, sprung up in the following age, from their claim of free inquiry and private judgment. The *non-essentials* of religion first came into dispute; then the

essentials. Our own opinion, we fancy, is founded on a rock; the rest we regard as stubble. But no sooner is one outwork of established faith or practice demolished, than another is left a defenceless mark for the enemy, and the engines of wit and sophistry immediately begin to batter it. Thus we proceed step by step, till, passing through the several gradations of vanity and paradox, we come to doubt whether we stand on our head or our heels, alternately deny the existence of spirit and matter, maintain that white is black, or black white, call evil good, and good evil, and defy any one to prove the contrary. As faith is the prop and cement that upholds society, by opposing fixed principles as a barrier against the inroads of passion, so reason is the *menstruum* which dissolves it, by leaving nothing sufficiently firm or unquestioned in our opinions to withstand the current and bias of inclination. Hence the decay and ruin of states—their barbarism, sloth, and ignorance—and so we commence the circle again of building up all that is possible to conceive out of a rude chaos, and the obscure shadowings of things, and then pulling down all we have built up till not a trace of it is left. Such is the effect of the ebb and flow and restless agitation of the human mind.

ESSAY XV.

ON THE WANT OF MONEY.

IT is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—for where there is a downright absence of the common necessities of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea and the next that we may have the

good luck to encounter.. This gap, this unwelcome interval constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this Essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort, for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," to learn, the first thing

after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter, in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and buttermilk have refused to give any further credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source—the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled bank-note in your breeches pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-

paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources, which form a legal tender in the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket that one could part with? nothing belonging to one's-self or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old-clothes man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like a premeditated insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do anything!—The late Mr Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighbourhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and

French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner ; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot : the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of 'The School for Scandal,' to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day.*

* Taylor, of the Opera House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds ; and if he stopped to speak to him it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth*. He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed ; and yet nobody can tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post chaises and four ; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course accumulate to a dreadful amount. "Such gain the cap of him who makes

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear

them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed." Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn's to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs Barber (I think it was) made answer that the time was short, but that ready money was a very charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr Sheridan, who sent out a Mr Grimm (one of his jackals) to say he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound bank note in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident, and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for farther instructions; who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs B. said she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room, at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good humour, and paid her the amount of her bill, in ten, five, and one pound notes. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment, which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend," said Sheridan, "take it home, and write it upon *parchment*!" He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was showing off

up against this calamity better than the former, which really "blights the tender blos-

near a coffee-house at the bottom of St James's street, rode it to Tattersall's and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him ; and, in a quarter of an hour afterwards they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr Sheridan was not yet up, and shown into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted he asked, "Are those doors all shut, John ?" and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old city friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long-standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favourite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again : but when they came to the door they were told by the checktakers there was none for them, for that Mr Sheridan had been in the meantime, and had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it was

som and promise of the day." With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger and

with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, "What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?" When he got to Covent Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-house, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—"Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience. The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of; but that" (laying his hand upon his heart), "but that, thank God, I have never felt!" I have been told that these were nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr Mathews the player, who was on the spot at the time,—a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was,

moralize upon temperance. One has time to turn one's-self and look about one—to “screw one's courage to the sticking-place,” to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weathercock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison or a brace of pheasants from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

“As kind as kings upon their coronation-day;”

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.* Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need. How many expedients are there in this great city,

“I am Mr Wilberforce!”—is well known, and shows that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

* In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whisky with which you commence the day, is emphatically called, “taking your *morning*.”

time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for tenpence, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such a precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring, having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without a family (for what business has a man without money with one?)—See *English Malthus* and *Scotch Macculloch*—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a

Manchester manufacturer, who died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, "of formal cut," to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of 'Gil Blas,' containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII, over an oyster-pâté, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury* better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author) in the contrivance of old Caleb, in 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they

had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton:—

“And ever against *eating* cares,
Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!”

Defoe, in his ‘Life of Colonel Jack,’ gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a threepenny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—“and every time,” he says, “we called for bread, or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, ‘coming, gentlemen, coming;’ and this delighted me more than all the rest!” It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, “the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!” Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel about wealth and finery, from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labour, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond’s admiration of the old man at the banking-house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager anxious visits, day by day, to the hoard he had

deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his riches, in the 'City Madam,' and in the extraordinary raptures of the 'Spanish Rogue' in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which to our present more refined and tamer apprehensions sound like blasphemy.* In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god!

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken

* Shylock's lamentation over the loss of "his daughter and his ducats," is another case in point.

out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's-day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery-ticket, by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties; or to find a letter lying for you at a country post-office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and be obliged to return for it the next day. The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which in some measure indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalization is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting; as authors are prevented from finishing a work,

for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance in the progress of it. There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piece-meal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds, and Funds for Decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class.

If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled "by their so potent art" to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock-dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shows the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragements; and want and infirmities press upon them at once. "We know what we are," as Ophelia says, "but we know not what we shall be." A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—"within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us." I heard not long ago of a poor man, who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and

who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonizing threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, “MY DEAR MISS NANCY!”

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully, yet the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-

repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt but by incurring pity. The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard run, as to be induced to request a repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honour and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money-lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If anything can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes

in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress,' where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it:—"Your play has been read, and won't do."* To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. We have heard it remarked, that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, "Ah! he was a fine fellow once!"

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty

* It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favours.

has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shows us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing

to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the background or play an under part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris: the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons are brilliant; at the theatre there is *Made-moiselle Mars*—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Bonaparte was yet beaten, “with wine of attic taste,” when wit, beauty, friendship presided at the board! But no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth

the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a race-ball, or to give their servants new liveries. I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library; and the Duchess of —— has immortalized herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that “if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard.’”

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of it is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion con-

sulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in one's own country; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you would wish; or to go out to the East or West Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief; or to be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, backbiting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a gaol, by the fickleness

of taste and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman is something more. Echard's book 'On the Contempt of the Clergy' is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above

actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroical aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is neither worth a doit nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humour of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them walking out in the summer's-evenings at Somers' Town, in their long great coats, their beards covered

with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestage of the *ancien regime*, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendour of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—"pure in the last recesses of the mind"—unmixed with, or unalloyed by "baser matter!"—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalizes all situations, and by which the absence of anything only gives us a more intense and intimate

perception of the reality ; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward to ease with delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavoury morsel that is to save it from perishing ; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls ; in short, that “ we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus ”—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people’s. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having anything to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time ; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors ; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home : and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them.

With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a single bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage; whereas with a little management and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep anything you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must*: if you let them have anything to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he

will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubble bursts at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highwayman of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connexion with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want, in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, scarcely allow themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat, are in dread of coming to

the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram :

“ Here lies Father Clarges,
Who died to save charges ! ”

ESSAY XVI.

ON MILTON'S SONNETS.

THE great object of the Sonnet seems to be, to express in musical numbers, and as it were with undivided breath, some occasional thought or personal feeling, "some fee-grief due to the poet's breast." It is a sigh uttered from the fulness of the heart, an involuntary aspiration born and dying in the same moment. I have always been fond of Milton's Sonnets for this reason, that they have more of this personal and internal character than any others; and they acquire a double value when we consider that they come from the pen of the loftiest of our poets. Compared with *Paradise Lost*, they are like tender flowers that adorn the base of some proud column or stately temple. The author in the one could work himself up with unabated fortitude "to the height of his great argument;" but in the other he has shown that he could

condescend to men of low estate, and after the lightning and the thunder-bolt of his pen, lets fall some drops of natural pity over hapless infirmity, mingling strains with the nightingale's, "most musical, most melancholy." The immortal poet pours his mortal sorrows into our breasts, and a tear falls from his sightless orbs on the friendly hand he presses. The Sonnets are a kind of pensive record of past achievements, loves, and friendships, and a noble exhortation to himself to bear up with cheerful hope and confidence to the last. Some of them are of a more quaint and humorous character; but I speak of those only which are intended to be serious and pathetic.—I do not know indeed but they may be said to be almost the first effusions of this sort of natural and personal sentiment in the language. Drummond's ought perhaps to be excepted, were they formed less closely on the model of Petrarch's, so as to be often little more than translations of the Italian poet. But Milton's Sonnets are truly his own in allusion, thought, and versification. Those of Sir Philip Sydney, who was a great transgressor in this way, turn sufficiently on himself and his own adventures; but they are elaborately quaint and intricate, and more like riddles than sonnets. • They are "very tolerable and not to be endured." Shakespear's, which some persons better-informed in such matters

than I can pretend to be, profess to cry up as "the divine, the matchless, what you will,"—to say nothing of the want of point or a leading, prominent idea in most of them, are I think overcharged and monotonous, and as to their ultimate drift, as for myself, I can make neither head nor tail of it. Yet some of them, I own, are sweet even to a sense of faintness, luscious as the woodbine, and graceful and luxuriant like it. Here is one.

"From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow, I with these did play."

I am not aware of any writer of Sonnets worth mentioning here till long after Milton, that is, till the time of Warton and the revival of a taste for Italian and for our own early literature. During the rage for French models, the Sonnet had not been much studied. It is a mode of composition that depends entirely on

expression; and this the French and artificial style gladly dispenses with, as it lays no particular stress on anything—except vague, general common-places. Warton's Sonnets are undoubtedly exquisite, both in style and matter: they are poetical and philosophical effusions of very delightful sentiment; but the thoughts, though fine and deeply felt, are not, like Milton's subjects, identified completely with the writer, and so far want a more individual interest. Mr Wordsworth's are also finely conceived and high-sounding Sonnets. They mouth it well, and are said to be sacred to Liberty. Brutus's exclamation, "Oh Virtue, I thought thee a substance, but I find thee a shadow," was not considered as a compliment, but as a bitter sarcasm. The beauty of Milton's Sonnets is their sincerity, the spirit of poetical patriotism which they breathe. Either Milton's or the living bard's are defective in this respect. There is no Sonnet of Milton's on the Restoration of Charles II. There is no Sonnet of Mr Wordsworth's corresponding to that of "the poet blind and bold," *On the late Massacre in Piedmont*. It would be no niggard praise to Mr Wordsworth to grant that he was either half the man or half the poet that Milton was. He has not his high and various imagination, nor his deep and fixed principle. Milton did not wor-

ship the rising sun, nor turn his back on a losing and fallen cause.

“Such recantation had no charms for him!”

Mr Southey has thought proper to put the author of *Paradise Lost* into his late Heaven, on the understood condition that he is “no longer to kings and to hierarchs hostile.” In his life-time, he gave no sign of such an alteration; and it is rather presumptuous in the poet-laureate to pursue the deceased antagonist of *Salmasius* into the other world to compliment him with his own infirmity of purpose. It is a wonder he did not add in a note that Milton called him aside to whisper in his ear that he preferred the New English hexameters to his own blank verse!

Our first of poets was one of our first of men. He was an eminent instance to prove that a poet is not another name for the slave of power and fashion; as is the case with painters and musicians—things without an opinion—and who merely aspire to make up the pageant and show of the day. There are persons in common life who have that eager curiosity and restless admiration of bustle and splendour, that sooner than not be admitted on great occasions of feasting and luxurious display, they will go in the character of livery-servants to stand behind

the chairs of the great. There are others who can so little bear to be left for any length of time out of the grand carnival and masquerade of pride and folly, that they will gain admittance to it at the expense of their characters as well as of a change of dress. Milton was not one of these. He had too much of the *ideal* faculty in his composition, a lofty contemplative principle, and consciousness of inward power and worth, to be tempted by such idle baits. We have plenty of chaunting and chiming in among some modern writers with the triumphs over their own views and principles; but none of a patient resignation to defeat, sustaining and nourishing itself with the thought of the justice of their cause, and with firm-fixed rectitude. I do not pretend to defend the tone of Milton's political writings (which was borrowed from the style of controversial divinity) or to say that he was right in the part he took:—I say that he was consistent in it, and did not convict himself of error: he was consistent in it in spite of danger and obloquy, “on evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,” and therefore his character has the salt of honesty about it. It does not offend in the nostrils of posterity. He had taken his part boldly and stood to it manfully, and submitted to the change of times with pious fortitude, building his consolations on the resources of his own mind and the recollection of the

past, instead of endeavouring to make himself a retreat for the time to come. As an instance of this, we may take one of the best and most admired of these Sonnets, that addressed to Cyriac Skinner, on his own blindness.

“Cyriac, this three years’ day, these eyes, though clear,
 To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
 Bereft of light their seeing have forgot,
 Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
 Of sun or moon or star throughout the year,
 Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
 Against Heav’n’s hand or will, nor bate a jot
 Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
 Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
 The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overply’d
 In liberty’s defence, my noble task,
 Of which all Europe talks from side to side.
 This thought might lead me through the world’s vain
 mask,
 Content though blind, had I no better guide.”

Nothing can exceed the mild, subdued tone of this Sonnet, nor the striking grandeur of the concluding thought. It is curious to remark what seems to be a trait of character in the two first lines. From Milton’s care to inform the reader that “his eyes were still clear to outward view of spot or blemish,” it would be thought that he had not yet given up all regard to personal appearance ; a feeling to which his singular beauty at an earlier age might be supposed naturally enough to lead.—Of the political or

(what may be called) his *State-Sonnets*, those to Cromwell, to Fairfax, and to the younger Vane, are full of exalted praise and dignified advice. They are neither familiar nor servile. The writer knows what is due to power and to fame. He feels the true, unassumed equality of greatness. He pays the full tribute of admiration for great acts achieved, and suggests becoming occasion to deserve higher praise. That to Cromwell is a proof how completely our poet maintained the erectness of his understanding and spirit in his intercourse with men in power. It is such a compliment as a poet might pay to a conqueror and head of the state, without the possibility of self-degradation.

“ Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud,
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,
And on the neck of crowned fortune proud
Hast rear'd God's trophies and his work pursued.
While Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureat wreath. Yet much remains
To conquer still ; peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than war : new foes arise
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains ;
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.”

The most spirited and impassioned of them all, and the most inspired with a sort of pro-

phetic fury, is the one entitled, *On the late Massacre in Piedmont*.

“ Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter’d saints, whose bones
Lie scatter’d on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our fathers worshipp’d stocks and stones,
Forget not : in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll’d
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heav’n. Their martyr’d blood and ashes sow
O’er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learn’d thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

In the Nineteenth Sonnet, which is also *On his blindness*, we see the jealous watchfulness of his mind over the use of his high gifts, and the beautiful manner in which he satisfies himself that virtuous thoughts and intentions are not the least acceptable offering to the Almighty.

“ When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide ;
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied,
I fondly ask : But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts ; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ; his state

Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Those to Mr Henry Lawes *on his Airs*, and to Mr Lawrence, can never be enough admired. They breathe the very soul of music and friendship. Both have a tender, thoughtful grace; and for their lightness, with a certain melancholy complaining intermixed, might be stolen from the harp of Æolus. The last is the picture of a day spent in social retirement and elegant relaxation from severer studies. We sit with the poet at table, and hear his familiar sentiments from his own lips afterwards.

"Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining ? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well-touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air ?
He who of these delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

In the last, *On his deceased Wife*, the allusion to Alcestis is beautiful, and shows how the poet's mind raised and refined his thoughts by exquisite classical conceptions, and how these again

were enriched by a passionate reference to actual feelings and images. It is this rare union that gives such voluptuous dignity and touching purity to Milton's delineation of the female character.

“Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heav'n without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight:
But O as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.”

There could not have been a greater mistake or a more unjust piece of criticism than to suppose that Milton only shone on great subjects; and that on ordinary occasions and in familiar life his mind was unwieldy, averse to the cultivation of grace and elegance, and unsusceptible of harmless pleasures. The whole tenour of his smaller compositions contradicts this opinion, which however they have been cited to confirm. The notion first got abroad from the bitterness (or vehemence) of his controversial writings, and has been kept up since with little meaning and with less truth. His Letters to

Donatus and others are not more remarkable for the display of a scholastic enthusiasm, than for that of the most amiable dispositions. They are "severe in youthful virtue unreprieved." There is a passage in his prose-works (the Treatise on Education) which shows, I think, his extreme openness and proneness to pleasing outward impressions in a striking point of view. "But to return to our own institute," he says, "besides these constant exercises at home, there is another opportunity of gaining experience to be won from pleasure itself abroad. *In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoicing with Heaven and earth.* I should not therefore be a persuader to them of studying much then, but to ride out in companies with prudent and well-staid guides, to all quarters of the land," &c. Many other passages might be quoted, in which the poet breaks through the groundwork of prose, as it were, by natural fecundity and a genial, unrestrained sense of delight. To suppose that a poet is not easily accessible to pleasure, or that he does not take an interest in individual objects and feelings, is to suppose that he is no poet; and proceeds on the false theory, which has been so often applied to poetry and the Fine Arts, that the whole is not made up of the particulars. If our author,

according to Dr Johnson's account of him, could only have treated epic, high-sounding subjects, he would not have been what he was, but another Sir Richard Blackmore.—I may conclude with observing, that I have often wished that Milton had lived to see the Revolution of 1688. This would have been a triumph worthy of him, and which he would have earned by faith and hope. He would then have been old, but would not have lived in vain to see it, and might have celebrated the event in one more undying strain!

ESSAY XVII.

ON GOING A JOURNEY.

ONE of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

“The fields his study, nature was his book.”

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer incumbrances. I like solitude, when

I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude;
nor do I ask for

————— “a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.”

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty,
to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a
journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and
of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind,
much more to get rid of others. It is because
I want a little breathing-space to muse on indif-
ferent matters, where Contemplation

“May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,”

that I absent myself from the town for awhile,
without feeling at a loss the moment I am left
by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise
or in a tilbury, to exchange good things with,
and vary the same stale topics over again, for once
let me have a truce with impertinence. Give
me the clear blue sky over my head, and the
green turf beneath my feet, a winding road
before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—
and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot
start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh,
I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point
of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past
being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian

plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasures," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff of the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon

such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomize them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briers and thorns of controversy. For once I like to have it all my own way; and this

is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud, which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recal a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company, seems extravagance or affectation; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not

answered) is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend Coleridge, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had;" and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:—

—— "Here be woods as green
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine, caves and dells;
Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes to make many a ring
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies;
How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep

Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
'To kiss her sweetest.'——

FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out at the spot; I must have time to collect myself.

In general a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. Lamb is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of night-fall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at

one's inn!" These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea,

"The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,"

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul, este profani!* These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do

not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits ; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world : but your “unhoused free condition is put into circumscription and confine.” The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges — “lord of one’s-self, uncumber’d with a name.” Oh ! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweet-breads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour* ! One may take one’s choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty

as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed common-places that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham-common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in the boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention, luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read Paul and Virginia, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day;

and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's *Camilla*. It was on the 10th of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, and which I had brought with me as a *bonne bouche* to crown the evening with. It was my birth-day, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot: The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high road that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters

large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

“The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.”

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou then wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind

revives again ; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight, also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nut-shell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast ;—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of

territory and population, known by the name of China, to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived, and with which we have intimate associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former

reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place;" nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *eclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

"With glistening spires and pinnacles adorn'd"—

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Cicerone that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to common-place beauties in matchless pictures.—As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners

and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support.—Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like

a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people!—There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must “jump” all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

“Out of my country and myself I go.”

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do

well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recal them : but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home !—

END OF VOL. I.

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